

THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE MASS CULTURAL INDUSTRIAL POWER RELATION OF THE WOODEN STATUE ARTISANS AT KEMENUH VILLAGE, SUKAWATI, BALI

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ABSTRACT

It is important to deconstruct the development of the mass wooden statue industry at Kemenuh, Sukawati District, Gianyar, Bali. The reason is that the artisans are presumed to have been marginalized by capital strength. This present study is intended to answer the ideology which has inspired the mass wooden statue industry, the power practice performed by the agencies, and its implication on the life of the artisans. The study used the approach of cultural studies and the critical social theories. The data were analyzed qualitatively.

The result of the study shows that, *first*, the ideology which has inspired the artisans to develop the mass wooden statue industry is the 'great' capitalistic ideology which is mixed with the Balinese ideology, causing the synthetic and pluralistic ideology to be formed. *Second*, the hierarchical and symmetrical power practice performed by the agencies. The capital owners, distributors and consumers dominate and exploit the artisans. *Third*, the mass cultural industry has economically, socially and culturally affected the life of the artisans. However, their economy has been better but they are getting marginalized; their gender equality is getting stronger but their traditional social structure is getting instable; and their art creativity has improved but the connotation of their mass culture is getting lower.

Keywords: deconstruction, ideology, mass cultural industry, power practice.

INTRODUCTION

History shows that the fast development of tourism in Bali has been followed the fast development of the centers of statue industry. Kemenuh Village is one of the centers of the statue industry. Economically, the statue industry plays a strategic role; therefore, statues have been used as the superior exported commodity and a cultural tourist attraction. However, the development of the mass statue industry at Kemenuh Village has faced a number of problems. The change from the traditional statue industry into the mass statue industry cannot be separated from the capitalistic system of economy. The artisans cannot feely create statues as they have to create the statues determined by the market. They

become the paid artisans; they only produce statues in order to fulfill what is ordered by the capital owners. However, the artisans are not aware of such unbalanced power relation. Furthermore, they still perform their profession comfortably to make both ends meet. Based on the background described above, this present study is intended to answer three main problems of the study. They are (1) what ideology has inspired the artisans at Kemenuh Village to produce mass statues. (2) How is the power practice between the artisans and capital owners/entrepreneurs, distributors and consumers? (3) What is the implication of the mass cultural industry on the life of the artisans?

In general, this present study is intended to understand and criticize the mass cultural industry developing in Bali in general and at Kemenuh Village in particular. In particular, this present study is intended to (1) identify the ideology which has inspired the wooden statue artisans at Kemenuh Village, (2) identify the discourse on the power practice performed by the capital owners, distributors, and consumers, and (3) identify things related to the implication of the mass cultural industry on the life of the artisans at Kemenuh Village.

In theory, it is expected that the result of the present study may enrich the treasure of cultural studies in general and the treasure of the mass cultural industry in particular, and the teaching material of the humanities. In practice, it is expected that the result of the present study can be used as guidance for formulating the policies related to the existence of the mass statue industry and make the artisans appreciate and critically aware of the products they produce. It is also expected that the result of the present study can be used as a reference referred to when discussing related matters.

This present study is based on the eclectically applied critical social theories. Four main theories which were used are the theory of commodification proposed by Marx (Mulyanto, 2012; 20—27; Suyanto, 2013: 174—175); the theory of power relation and knowledge proposed by Foucault (1980: 88-99), the theory of the arena of cultural production proposed by Bourdieu (2010), and the theory of deconstruction proposed by Derrida (Ritzer, 2003: 203—207).

RESEARCH METHOD

The study was conducted at Kemenuh Village, Sukawati District, Gianyar Regency, Bali. The village is well-known as the center of wooden statue industry where modern and traditional statues are produced. The village has developed into the one where statues are

produced, the arena where products are distributed and the transaction between the producers and consumers takes place.

The study was designed based on the qualitative method using the perspective of cultural studies. The main informants were the artisans determined using the snow ball technique. The data were collected using the techniques of participatory observation, in-depth interview, and documentation. The data were inductively, descriptively and qualitatively analyzed using the method of cultural studies including the genealogic, deconstruction, and semiotic methods. The result of data analysis is presented formally and informally.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The people living at Kemenuh Village had worked as farmers and traditional artisans until 1960s. In 1970 when Bali tourism developed, statues were produced and needed as souvenirs, causing the traditional artisans to become commercial ones. They became paid artisans and produced the statues ordered by the capital owners. They did not produce statues selectively anymore; they produced statues massively, based on what was desired by the market, distributors and exporters. Since then they have been trapped within the capitalistic economic system. Hokheimer and Ardono remind that the mass cultural industry has appeared as a capitalistic company, causing the cultural forms to be standardized and rationalized. The cultural products are produced in order to collect capital and obtain benefit (in Thompson, 2006: 151). The logical consequence of this phenomenon is that the impacts of the 'great' capitalistic ideology cannot be avoided, meaning that the mass statue industry cannot be avoided either.

At least there are six ideological forms which are adhered to by the mass statue artisans at Kemenuh Village; they are the market ideology, the money ideology, the gender ideology, the patriarchal ideology, the ideology of cultural tourism and the ideology of tourism culture. The fact that the artisans idolize the market can be seen from the commodities they produce, the forms of the statues produced are adjusted to what is desired by the market, and how the statues they produce are distributed is determined by the market (Atmadja, 2010: 136). The moneytheism in which money is idolized is indicated by the fact that the artisans work as the paid ones, meaning that they are paid for the statues they produce in order to make both ends meet. The belief which differentiates the role played by men and that played by women can be observed from the fact that the mass statue industry is a mass culture which is identical with women, and the difference between the jobs done by men and those

done by women (Murani, 2004: 62; Strinati, 292—293). The belief that men are superior over women is indicated by the evaluation that the wooden statue industry cannot be separated from the low quality products, and that the wages received by women are lower than those received by men (Fakih, 2008: 104—105). The belief that cultural tourism positively improves economy can be seen from the statute industrial products, daily life, and the environment where the artisans work becomes an object of cultural tourism (Picard, 2006: 194). The mental attitude of the artisans which attempt to adjust themselves to tourism and what it requires can be seen from the attempt made to give excessive appreciation and services to tourists. The forms of the statues they produce are also adjusted to what is desired by tourists (Picard, 2006: 247—249).

The six ideologies easily affect the artisans as, substantially, they have had their roots in the Balinese culture. The market and money ideologies can be observed from the fact that they believe in the existence of *Bethari Melanting* (Goddess of the market) and *Bethara Rambut Sedana* (God of Rambut Sedana) (Atmadja, 2010: 136). Similarly, the basis of the patriarchal and gender ideologies can be observed from the belief in what is called *purusa-prakerti*, and the patrilineal tradition which is so strong in the life of the Balinese society. The elements of the local culture are mixed with the dominant capitalistic ideology leading to the syncretic and pluralistic ideologies.

The power practice in the mass cultural industry involves three relations; they are the relation between the artisans and capital owners, the relation between the distributors and artisans, and the relation between the consumers and artisans. They all show the hierarchical and asymmetrical power relation. The capital owners, distributors, and consumers are in the position of dominating the artisans. The strong financial capital the capital owners have enables them to control, determine, and oppress the artisans. The capital owners dominate the artisans as the process of producing and distributing the statutes are determined by them. The capital owners exploit the artisans through low wages, physical disciplining practice, and modernization of tools which benefit the capital owners. The capital owners dominate the artisans by spreading knowledge of the process of production and distribution, making use of new technologies, and interrelation with media (Mulyanto, 2012: 263).

The power practice between the distributors including the mediating agencies, government, mass media, and financial institutions with the artisans also shows dominative and exploitative power. The collectors determine the forms, motives, number and prices of the products produced. The mediating agencies with their social capital can dominate the

artisans; they determine the forms of the statues which have to be produced and new creations. They also supervise the production process. Similarly, the non-class statue agencies such as the government, mass media and financial institutions are on the capital owners' side through the power practice over the artisans (Fakih, 2008: 55-56).

The power practice shown by the consumers to the artisans takes place in dominative and exploitative manners. The consumers cooperate directly with tourists, tour and travel agencies and art shops. They can dictate the artisans, as can be seen from when the artisans are supposed to demonstrate their skill to satisfy the perspective consumers and as a form of the services they can give to tourists. The consumers indirectly control the artisans by determining the number of products and how often orders are made by the importers for the exporters. The power practice is proved by the artisans' attitude to follow what is desired by the consumers (the market) when they produce and distribute the products.

The development of the mass cultural industry at Kemenuh Village has affected the economic, social and cultural aspects of the life of the artisans. From 1970 to 2000s, the development of the mass cultural industry could improve the society's economy; however, after that they have become marginalized. The economic improvement can be seen from the fact that their income improved, the industry was used as the income generating source, and the availability of new job opportunities. The low wages and no guaranteed jobs have caused the artisans to be marginalized. The artisans have become alienated due to the limited economic accessibility, job opportunities, and economic capital ownership. Socially, the development of mass cultural industry has caused the economy-based new middle class to appear which has destabilized the traditional social structure. The newly-born social class is based on the criterion of the economic aspect (for example, the success in becoming an entrepreneur undertaking statue industry). The destabilized traditional social structure includes the gender discrimination, the pattern of patron-client relation, and the system of solidarity value. Culturally, the mass cultural industry has affected the ethic and emic struggle for the discourse of arts, and art creativity is determined by what is desired by the market. Ethically, the internal struggle for the discourse of arts can be observed from the categorization of the canonic art, and the external struggle for the discourse of arts is affected by the pro-capital capitalistic penetration that oppresses the artisans. Emically, there has been a struggle for the discourse of arts such as fine art, mass culture, and the art of wooden painting.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

Based on what was described above, several conclusions can be drawn as follows. First, the form of the ideology which has been adhered to by the mass statue artisans at Kemenuh Village is dominated by the 'great' ideology mixed with the Balinese local ideology leading to the syncretic and pluralistic ideologies.

Second, the power practice in the mass cultural industry involving three relations such as the relation between the capital owners and the artisans, the relation between the distributors and artisans, and the relation between the consumers and artisans shows hierarchical and asymmetric power relation. The capital owners (the capitalists) occupy the hierarchical peak in the power relation between them and artisans through hegemonic, dominative, and exploitative practices of power relation.

Third, the implication of the mass cultural industry at Kemenuh Village on the life of the artisans is ambivalent economically, socially and culturally. On the one hand, the mass cultural industry can improve the society's economy, causing the economy-based new middle class to appear; on the other hand, it has marginalized the artisans, destabilized the traditional social structure, and caused the struggle for the discourse of mass statue art to appear.

Four suggestions are recommended in the present study to anticipate the artisans from being marginalized. First, it is necessary to transform knowledge to the artisans that they should be innovative and creative, strengthen their social capital and market line. Second, it is necessary for the government to become their partner, train them, promote their products, and give them capitals. Third, it is necessary to establish the center of the Kemenuh's statue industry as the creative cultural industry. Fourth, further research in, for example, the mass cultural industry from the perspective of consumerism, political culture, and critical archeology, needs to be conducted

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