

## **The Diversity of Surakarta Community: A Blessing toward Democracy**

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### **Abstract**

*Surakarta is a city with multiethnic, multireligious, and multicultural diversity. Surakarta population had been very heterogeneous since 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century, because river transportation has been available from Surabaya port to river port in Surakarta. Javanese, Balinese, Maduranese, Banjar (Borneo), Chinese, Arab, and Indian ethnics live in Surakarta City. With such the ecology, the dynamic characteristic grows from within Surakarta people. Until 19<sup>th</sup> century, ethnic or religion conflict has never developed into social conflict. Instead, the existence of Dutch colonial strengthening feudalism resulted in dissension within multiethnic and multireligious community. Nevertheless, such the *devide et impera* politics was not successful completely, because Javanese community prioritized life harmony. Life harmony principle was framed in the values of respecting each other, concord, building tranquility in their social environment, and dealing with inter-members of society conflict through discussion. This cultural orientation results in harmony, and the harmony building on diversity serves as the foundation of democracy growth*

**Keywords:** diversity, harmony, and democracy

### **Introduction**

Archipelago (*Nusantara*) was a sail and trade area, and many Asian and European merchants visited this area. Archipelago is an inter-island area developing maritime civilization, and this civilization encourages inter-island community to trade each other to fulfill their need. At the same times, surrounding community such as Indochinese, Chinese and Indian participated in trading activity (Nugroho, 2011: 1-20). Trade relation between them is described on Yupa Inscription in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, in Kutai - East Borneo. Fritjof Capra (2014: 43) interprets the interaction between traders in Archipelago, both during Hindu-Buddha and during Islam periods, constructed organic structure of society gradually. Organic structure of society at that time was still so simple that included material and spiritual aspects. Material aspect is indicated with trading interaction between them sowing mutual need for economic development. In spiritual aspect, they relate to each other and understand others' belief thereby conversing religion peacefully.

The existence of archipelago society is very solid and liquid in the terms of ethnicity, ethnoreligiosity, and ethnoculture with the social relation between them. This phenomenon can be observed from the entry of world religions (Hindu-Buddha, Islam and Christian) during the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century coloring the social diversity complexity. Seeing that complexity, we imagine that conflict will appear easily nowadays. Otherwise, social complexity in the 5<sup>th</sup>-16 centuries can be reconciled easily. The factor distinguishing ethnicity and ethnoreligiosity that can be reconciled is interdependency among them, in the terms of either economic or politic problem.

Surakarta is one of cities in Central Java inland constituting multi-ethnic area, pluralism. Pluralism of Surakarta community grows because of Bengawan Solo River transportation line encouraging multi-ethnics and multi-nation trade on the river line. Bengawan Solo River transportation line is connected to Surabaya City (Soedarmono, Kusumastuti & Utomo, 2004). When Bandar Surabaya is the first harbor, Bandar Surakarta is the last or the 44<sup>th</sup> one. Social artifact of Bandar Surakarta is kampong area in Semanggi. Historical data shows that Semanggi was called Wulayu or Wuluyu. Thus, Surakarta City is the trading activity area resulting in the cross ethnic and cross-nation cultural contact. The left social artifact observable until today is Arab kampong artifact in Pasar Kliwon, Chinese kampong in Pasar Gede, Balinese ethnic kampong in Kebalen, Madura kampong in Sampangan, Banjar and Flores ethnic kampong around Kepatihan, batik employer kampong in Laweyan, Javanese trading kampong in Kampung Sewu, and Dutch elite kampong in Banjarsari areas.

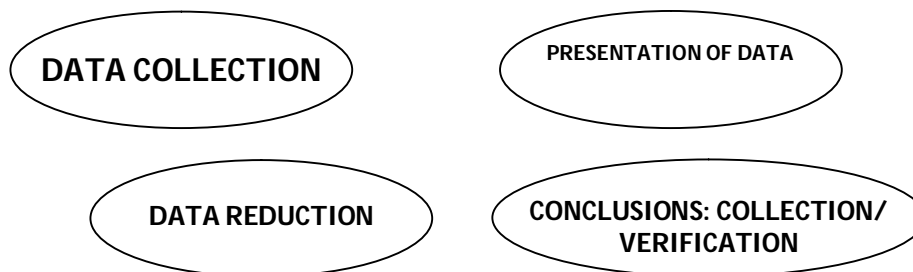
That historical heritage social artifact is very interesting to be the material to reinforce social studies in Junior High School. Some advantages of featuring social artifact as the historical heritage in social science learning are: (1) Social artifact media as historical heritage developed by teacher is a learning innovation activity. Innovation through media contributes very considerably to stimulate high order thinking skill, particularly competency of imagining how they relate to each other, from both ethnicity and ethnoreligiosity aspects, without resulting in conflict. Thinking process relating to social relation between different ethnic and religion without conflict is a learning activity process stimulating high order thinking skill. For that reason, high order thinking skill design is related to subject content knowledge, pedagogy knowledge, and pedagogy method. (2) Value and memory. That is, the students can understand that the social relation, whether ethnicity, ethnoreligiosity, or ethnoculture, does not result in social disintegration. Even social relation network then becomes intense. Exploration related to value and memory can trigger the social groups' spirit and power to maintain peaceful situation. (3) Ethnicity, ethnoreligiosity and ethnoculture, according to Dahl (1992), encourages the growth of modern, dynamic and pluralistic community.

Rabushka & Shesle (1972) and Geertz (1975) stated that Indonesian society has multiethnic characteristics, and ethnicity characteristic in multi ethnics is a very strong primordial. Multiethnic community is one element triggering the growth of democracy. On the other hand, less modern multiethnic community will be wrapped with their primordial characteristics, and primordial phenomenon inhibits the growth of democracy. Thus, this study focused on how the diversity of Surakarta Community becomes the factor supporting the growth of democracy community in Surakarta.

### **Method**

This study was a Descriptive Qualitative research. This research was taken place in Surakarta recalling that Surakarta community is the multiethnic and multicultural one. The data collected consisted of primary and secondary ones. The data collection was carried out using observation, interview, document analysis and focus group discussion methods. Interview and focus group discussion were carried out with the key informants and stakeholders selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The data sources included: (1) informants determined purposively, in this case, society leader, historicist and cultural observer; (2) result of field observation; and (3) document and library research. Data validation was carried out using source and method triangulations.

Technique of analyzing data used was an interactive analysis, including (1) data collection, (2) data reduction, (3) data display, and (4) conclusion/verification. The chart of data analysis is depicted as below.



**Chart: 1 Components of Data Analysis Interaction Model (Source: Miles and Huberman, 1992: 20).**

### **Discussion**

#### **1. Diversity or latent conflict**

Archipelago (*Nusantara*) was a sail and trade area to which many Asian and European merchants visit. They interacted, lived (stayed), and even got married with local people. They were interdependent and creative altruism grew among them to answer the challenge and response. The manifestation of challenge and response at that time is the mastery of new technology as a progressive self-determination articulation, because human being is a cultured creature standing on speaking, working, and creative activities. New creative altruism then becomes a sacred symbol, and the sacred symbol then becomes the value and belief believed as contributing to maintain their social bond intactness.

Indeed, the created multiethnic identity cannot marginalized politically (Vickers, 2009: 18), because they have lived adjacently. Political system constructed by Dutch colonialism has changed the social structure of multiethnic community living adjacently. In 19<sup>th</sup> century, discriminative policy and social segregation against the indigenous people seemed to be compelled as the colonial's politic safeguard web. The action above, of course, destroys social bond of Surakarta community. Political reality during Soekarno and Soeharto government periods did not rearrange the multiethnic social structure as the power of the united state. Those cracks were neglected, thereby becoming latent conflict.

The neglected social crack becomes this nation's weakness post-independence. The government has not constructed yet adequate infrastructure to support the improvement of social connectivity standing on the economic development intra-and inter-island. On the other hand, it has not developed identity politics as a means of peaceful negotiation between local cultures in archipelago community. Identity politics is the opposite of *the others* principle. Identity politics is a political movement growing some recognition over the symptoms of difference, and stimulates the growth of democratic thinking all at once leading to racism, intolerance and violence against local cultural identities (Amaladoss, 2001: 99-101).

The poor recognition over such the symptoms is due to the members of society's thinking process putting the social relation onto the stigma of *the others*. This discourse leads ethnic and religious cultures to be oppressed and dehumanized. Social cohesion between multiethnic, multiracial, and multireligious society occurring so far has not been able yet to lead to the growth of democratic life and identity politics. One factor causing it is the members of society seeing the ritual diversity and local cultural tradition from "the deck of ethnic, racial, and religious difference". The implication to the members of society is that it always creates new stigma to resist religious cultures and tradition the local society has. The creation of stigma shows hegemonic attitude that can trigger the growth of intolerance or latent conflict.

Although the roots have been observable post-independence, the pattern of repression against culture and religious tradition grows very intensely post-reform. Even Soeharto's political attitude followed Snouck Hurgröje, meaning not desiring the opposition power of Islam religion. Soeharto holds on *jaladi matry* concept in dealing with opposition and radical groups (Lombard, 2008: 38-40). *Jaladi matry* is repressive politics through military power, so that the root of position can be extinguished. For that reason, *jaladi matry*, according to Soeharto, will suppress the opposition with subversive stigma. This political strategy is intended to facilitate himself to build political stability and government security. New order's political strategy is very dilemmatic. On the one hand, he wants to suppress latent conflict and primordial, but on the other hand there is the demand for uniformity neglecting the difference. In such the condition, democracy cannot grow. Why? It is because diversity identity was destroyed simultaneously by Soeharto and replaced with uniformity identity. The implication of uniformity above kindles the primordial growth in the beginning of reform.

Primordial grows into the trigger of conflict because multiethnic elites have dense and complicated alliance and opposition network, articulated in elitist and oligarchy. Elitist and oligarchy characteristics encourage the social life in "communal primordial" (Magnis-Suseno in Priyono, 2014), and civil elite becomes conservative and exclusive. They are then preoccupied themselves with interest group, regardless the urgency scale needed by the nation and state need. Reform phenomenon shows civil elite's craze of gaining and maintaining their political power. Through such the political power, they scoop up economic power, by means of making a lane to corrupt the state budget and state income budget. Post-reform ethnicity and ethnoreligious conflict was getting stronger, and this phenomenon endanger democratic bud struggled for by the reformist. Many ethnicity and ethnoreligiosity groups are organized politically, including sub-communities. In its development, sub-community builds territorial basis and constituents whose political orientations are affiliated with political power. The new bases above then become the mass power of political elite that will fight in general election (Rabushka & Shesle, 1972). Political territorial basis becomes the political parties' competing field with "communal primordial" soul. It is the problem that discourages the development of community multiculturalism, and actually the plurality is the power source for the growth of democracy.

## 2. Multiethnic and Democracy: Surakarta case

Democracy derives from the words *demos* and *kratia*. *Demos* means people (populace), and *kratia* means government. The essence of democracy is to open participatory space for people to participate in determining the direction of government's policy.

For the reformist, democracy also opens the space to participate and to criticize government's political policy. On the other hand, democracy is ideological power to erode and to destroy discriminative politics that has ever been implemented during new order. To realize the democratic government for new states, the following can be done: (1) controlling military and police under the civil government, and (2) civil government should be subjected to the running democratic processes. Two indicators above presuppose that government should emphasize more on persuasive aspect than the use of repression or *jaladi matry*. In such democratic procedure, civil government obligatorily develops poliarchy, developing political order expanding citizenship and citizens' right, and giving the citizen the space to resist and to dismiss the state's top officials from their job through voting. There are at least five procedures in voting: public position election, free and just general election, the vote is on the people's hand, the people have the right to nominate themselves to occupy the public position, and freedom of speech.

In 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Surakarta City is the area with multiethnic populations including Javanese, Maduranese, Banjar (Kalimantan), Balinese, Chinese, Arab, and India ethnics. Urban people largely earn living by means of trading, and those living around the city do so by means of farming. Multiethnic characteristics can be seen clearly from socio-fact still living in Surakarta community environment, particularly in their settlement. The settlement segregation problem maintained by the Dutch in post-colonial theory perspective shows Western nations' hegemony against Eastern ones (Heywood, 2013: 26-38). That hegemony characteristic is perceived differently by indigenous and Dutch nations. For the Dutch, segregation serves to prevent inter-ethnic social conflict and to maintain political and security stability. Meanwhile, for the indigenous people, it is interpreted as discrimination. Nevertheless, because the employer and trader characteristics of some Surakarta people, relation and interaction process kept running. They consider that inter-ethnic relation is very important because they are interdependent. Even these characteristics are maintained in Indonesia post-independence.

Instead, the openness in interethnic interaction and relation of Surakarta people is not favorable to the political strategy application of uniformity by new order. Political strategy of uniformity did not give the intellectual elite and Islam scholars the political participation room. Many of them repressed then moved under the ground later. Instead, the role of intellectual elite and Islam scholars was marginalized gradually. The condition of new order politics shows very different circumstance from that during the period of national movement (action) against Dutch colonialist. During colonial era, intellectuals and Islam scholar played a central role in driving the resistance wheel.

Political Strategy of uniformity is an insult against the dignity of intellectual elite and Islam scholars, and such the feeling appears in intellectual elite and Islam scholars' mind because they have dignity (Buchori, 2009: 113). Why? It is because many intellectual technocrats did not agree with new order's take-off development model that did not build the medium class strongly, interpreted a leading to worse condition (Buchori, 2009). New Order dealt with the intellectual technocrats' critique by removing or marginalizing them. Such the marginalization above triggered the growth of intellectuality culture amnesia among the society, having implication to the low quality of Indonesian national education. The problem of amnesia delivered by new order, then, attacked the aspects of nation life the society imagined post-reform. Amnesia also resulted in infertility in the relation between state and citizen. In education perspective, amnesia leads to failure in building *high order thinking skills*.

The interethnic relations in cultural perspective lead them to absorb and to process the cultures they find. Hoed (Sarumpaet, 2016: 60) considered epistemology of the words *absorb* and *process* as the growth of tolerance and adaptability, and then becoming their own culture. Tolerance and adaptation then become the foundation of social practice between them. Abdurrahman Wahid (Arif, 2013: 115-123) viewed social ethics as an important factor in building human life dignity. Social ethics is defined as social noble character, because its principles equally functions to bring about life welfare, to build social concord, and to criticizes socially the unethical social life running. It means that social noble character will guide the Muslims to understand the problems of *res privata* and *res publica* (Arif, 2013: 123-125).

Reform put ethnicity and religiosity violence forward; the performers swept the foreigners staying in hotels in Surakarta City. Even they did it in pub and café, considered as in contradiction with Islam religion sharia. Euphoria of political transformation framed in violent act and the violence itself are the implication of amnesia in a long period of time. Amnesia characterized with violence to realize Islam sharia shows that the nation community is encountering cultural and social crisis (Hoed in Sarumpaet, 2016: 61-62). Many of religious violence perpetrators forget that the establishment of a nation's social structure derived from the past cultural deposition.

The symbol of religious violence is anchorage symbol, and such the action is defined as getting sympathy from other Muslim communities intentionally. Furthermore, Sergei Moscovici (1961: 42-49) stated that: “anchoring involve the ascribing of meaning to new phenomena by means of integrating it into existing world view, so it can be interpreted and compared to already known”. As such, the symbols of anchorage appearing in public space show that the community has not been aware of their nation’s local wisdom. The anchorage of local wisdom is untouched in our education world to formulate the ethnicity and religiosity discourse as the foundation of community development dynamics (Sjaf, 2014: 11-14).

Ethnicity and religiosity violence can result in discrimination and marginalization, and even it can result in social conflict if it is uncontrollable. Ethnic and religion difference is then perceived as a social competition between them. Michael Foucault (Sjaf, 2014: 27) suggested that the violence committed by a group of ethnics reflects two important aspects. Firstly, it is the reflection of its actor and secondly it is the reflection of habitus and power in public space they have.

Abdurrahman Wahid (Wahid & Ikeda, 2010; cf. Barton, 2002) viewed that Islam needs democracy. He suggested that Islam needs democracy, and democracy process should be able to create the community’s life containing: (1) equality between Muslim and Non-Muslim in the participation in living within nation and state; (2) equality between men and women, particularly related to the problem of inheritance property problem; and (3) receiving Pancasila as the state philosophy, and declining the idea of Islam State implementation as a political life practice. Mohammad Hatta suggested that democratic life has been inherent to the community life, and nearly all communities themselves as the sovereign human being. The keyword of democracy is the people sovereign standing on their aspiration, and organized for the people benefit. Those sovereign, aspiration, and benefit shows that democracy is not only related to political participation aspect, but also related to economic building and implementation to realize the people’s prosperity.

Mohammad Hatta’s idea is correlated to Robert A. Dahl (1992), and as such political and economic aspect is the dominant reengineering domain of a nation’s democracy, because in political and economic domains always requires the creation of justice and honesty frame. In Islam religion’s perspective justice and honesty are the personification of social ethics containing political ethical and political moral aspects.

In democracy, *equality* and *egalitarianism* principles are designed urgently in social life. Equality in a variety of life aspects becomes is very important and will encourage the process toward equality and egalitarianism imperatively. Even it creates cosmopolitan (modern) community the democracy wants. To build modern community, community empowerment program is required to improve the need for achievement and this foundation is expected to improve intellectuality and welfare (Anwar, 2007).

Democratic practice has not run as expected, because both Sukarno and Suharto declined social and political critiques in public space. The design developed by Soekarno was guided democracy characterized as the form of indigenous politics (Aspinal & Fealy, 2010). However, the building is understood as the foundation hindering economic power of Western capitalism still entrenched in Indonesia earth. In Soekarno’s perception, guided democracy is the standing toward a true democracy. Soeharto chose *authoritarianism* called by Francis Fukuyama (2014) as the regime not wishing the growth of democracy. This system develops in South East Asian countries, particularly in Indonesia. Authoritarian system is put into Rousseau’s political philosophy that can be defined into two perspectives: (1) there is a will to build the human condition to realize the self as a free and autonomous human, and (2) there is a will to build the fulfillment of social life need physically (Beraf, 2012). Thus, the idealization of new order politics shows only the absence of freedom space autonomously, but they attempt to fulfill the social life physically.

The national political transition post-reform shows that both local and national elites have not understood well the political openness. Even the interventions the local elite made resulted in the damaged social harmony of local community. Some problems related to local society are:

- (1) The presence of local elite polarization. Local elite polarization is due to the national elite’s cooptation. On the other hand, political party in local area requires another figure. It is here that the seed of local general election conflict appears.

- (2) Identity and cultural pluralism. The prominent thing in this problem is always blown by the political opponent group to restrain the candidate's vote gain. The one usually blown is gender, religious, and racial issues. Ethnicity and ethno-religiosity issues in local general election will tease the nation life diversity.
- (3) The shift of political patronage is the direct implication of reform, in which the candidate of local leader is elected directly. The candidates of local leader do not come from political party dropping, but they can apply for the nomination to political party, of course with some concessions.
- (4) The maturity of local political elite shows their low maturity, particularly in the term of competition. When the incumbent is lost, the incumbent proponents coming from the local government employees are often moved from their position (Intarto, 2008).

Meanwhile, learning deeply the Javanese manuscript by Surakarta poets has taught the importance of having relation and interaction in social life. In this relationship, it is interesting to study *Serat Sasanasunu*, written by Yasadipura II. This *serat* (book) reveals the importance of having etiquette in building social relation and social interaction. Cited briefly, this *serat* suggests that: "...den eling salamine yen tinitah sireku saking ora maring dumadi dinadekken manungsa metu saking enur rira Jeng Nabi Muhammad...." (Meaning, keep remembering that you are destined from the absence to the presence as human being is released from the *nur* or light of Prophet Muhammad. The phrase *is released from the light of Prophet Muhammad* refers to the human's high nobleness).

Meanwhile, in *pupuh* 9, verse 7, it is mentioned: "...away sira angling luwih ing kat awengis sru angas yen tan lawan prayogane pangucap wengis iku ngumbar nepsu kawaron iblis ping tri sira reksaa...." (Don't ever say beyond the border with cruel say or arrogant say, and the cruel say will fire the passion up mixed with the devil passion). Thus, the brief citation of *Serat Sasansunu* above shows inter-individual relation should stand on the respect value, to enable the community to build the harmonious and peaceful social condition. The established concord is the social condition coming or growing suddenly but the implication of active willingness to respect each other and to adjust themselves to social condition of community.

### **Conclusion**

Political democracy is not a curse but the paradigm of political blessing because it supports the progress of community life. Although democratization process is still procedural in nature, democratic process is perceived as going toward the substantive democracy gradually. The amount of local general election capital used to buy the people's vote needs serious attention. The capital amount is counterproductive and worryingly derives from the corporation requiring the reward in the form of local projects. For that reason, it is required the design of local general election suppressing the capital but prioritizing "benefit program" for the community empowerment. Hopefully these big ideals can be realized by new government.

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