

Culture Degradation of Minangkabau Dance as the Reflection of Nagari Government Transition

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Abstract—This article aims to reveal and explain the decline or degradation of cultural activities of Minangkabau dance in the society resulted from the transition of the government system in Nagari. Nagari government was originally a buffer of the cultural heritage of Minangkabau dance, which in turn after turning into the village, had an impact on the existence of Minangkabau dance in local communities. Minangkabau dance activities and civilization shifted from a cultural focus to alternative culture. The era of returning to the nagari government, Minangkabau dance experienced difficulties in starting a new chapter in its socialization and culture, so that the existence of Minangkabau dance would no longer be fully a culture for the lives of today's Minangkabau people in many Nagari.

Keywords—*Minangkabau dance, culture degradation, Nagari government*

I. INTRODUCTION

The change of authority system according to Jasmiati [1] affects cultural activities in a particular area. As a result, the existence of dance in a society is related to the power orientation. Due to the changes in the system, it may bring a new cultural trend used in social activities. Therefore, the Minangkabau dance during the village administration has reduced its activities in the local community. The village government considers that the dance tradition has no longer been important.

A village is a new territorial area in the 1980s to 1999 in West Sumatra. The village is a fraction of Nagari government. Nagari was previously the lowest administrative territory in West Sumatra, the system of which, was inherited from the government in Minangkabau monarchy. Nagari government will have the same amount of financial support such as a village in Java. Moreover, Nagari has wider territorial compared to the villages in Jawa. The area of Nagari will have 5 to 8 even 10 villages on Java island.

With the expansion of Nagari into a village, there is a cultural breakdown, and it is difficult to determine from what village the parent culture comes from. The divided villages come from one Nagari culture. As an example, *Lubuk Kilangan* before 1980 was governed by a Nagari guardian (*penghulu*) with one traditional leader, as well as a homogeneous culture for the entire indigenous Nagari society. With that expansion, the responsibility of cultural management becomes unclear, so that there will be

accusations because the villages of *Indarung*, *Baringin*, *Buek*, *Padang Besi*, and *Koto Lalang* having their own platform on culture will refer the guidance from the national government. After the formation of a village administration in West Sumatra, the system of government has become centralized. When it was in the form of Nagari government, the system used decentralized one.

The transition of the government system has, in fact, affected the existence of Nagari culture such as traditional dance, which was managed by one Nagari leader, one *penghulu pucuk*, and one *penghulu kaum* scattered in the villages. When Nagari government was still in power, the issue of Nagari cultural activities like dance was controlled by *niniak mamak*, *wali nagari*, *wali kampung*, and *pengulu*. Therefore, a saying that is often understood by the Minangkabau people "**Adat salingka Nagari**" does no longer exist. It is due to the villages as the smallest part of Nagari have become villages, so that Nagari culture or *selingkar* Nagari does no longer exist. Nagari referred to customary and state government that has been divided into villages.

In the village government, Minangkabau dance is rarely used for tradition or ceremonial purposes. The village government has referred to the state government. The entire culture in the village is controlled by the state government. Moreover, the existence of Minangkabau dance as Nagari cultural heritage is increasingly neglected and only depends on each local policy as well as *penghulu pucuk* who used to supervise Nagari culture which is now impossible to reach the the village government, except their own villages. It means that the power of *pengulu* is only concentrated in one village, or in the village of the female parent because he serves as *penghulu*, not in his place. Referring to this condition, the existence of Minangkabau dance is decreasing.

Culture is very closely related to society. Through the process of interaction between humans, it creates language, social order, traditions, norms, and so on. Certain groups in a social community create strata that differentiate certain people or groups from others. It then produces a power system (politics). Here, power itself is a cultural product. Every nation has its own power system. However, history is a dialogical process that involves humans with complex and dynamic realities of life [2].

Power influences activities and culture developments such as the development of tradition dance in certain

villages; this depends on the power of the village leader. Based on the fact finding, many villages, as well as local governments in West Sumatra, are lead by the village leaders who are not from those villages. This is very different from Nagari, where a Nagari guardian must be a native, and also as a traditional leader who nurtures his people in Nagari. Therefore, it is reasonable why a village leader is less responsive to the art or traditional dance in a village since he is not from the village or Nagari. As a result, the village leader does not have responsibility and sense of belonging unless there is pressure from the elite. Meanwhile, the elites have also moved to some other villages.

The change of government system from Nagari into the village or local government affects on how the traditional dances are rarely used or performed in many formal official events. Every official event is considered to be a waste of time and it is costly. Therefore, this issue has an influence on the development of the Minangkabau dance. The local government rarely promotes dance activity. Then, the government does not recognize the existence of traditional dance as part of the cultural heritage of the local village, which on the other hand, must be preserved. It also results from the reason that the dance tradition is a nagari cultural heritage, while nagari itself has been divided into villages and it is difficult to find the elites of Nagari who will be responsible.

This paper examines the degradation problem of Minangkabau dance, which is caused by the consequences of a centralized Nagari government to a centralized one. The study analyzes the degradation problems that arise as a result of this power movement.

II. METHODOLOGY

The method used in this research is descriptive method, and the data was collected by interview technique, in which the questions are directed to the problem of the reason why the degradation of Minangkabau traditional dance happened in the village, and answers about the relationship between the power transition toward the degradation and development of Minangkabau dance culture in the villages of the former Nagari region. Beside, the data was also collected through observation by observing the attitudes and behavior of the elites, *penghulu*, village leaders, people, and artists or traditional dance administrators in the village or local government. In addition, the document was obtained from audio-visual recordings and from other literature, as well as audio-visual documents about the development of Minangkabau traditional dance in Nagari and current villages.

The instrument is the researcher himself equipped with an observation and interview guide. Also, other instruments are equipped with audio and audio-visual recording facilities, as well as notes and other information technology facilities. The approach for the review used multi-disciplinary such as sociology and cultural anthropology, as well as social politics.

The validity of the data is conducted by re-checking the data by testing it and comparing from the previous data. In addition, the validity of the data is also done by repeatedly considering the research context and data collected. The researcher also conducted a focus group discussion of the

collected data, and the validity was determined by the discussion with some appointed experts. Data analysis is carried out by collecting, selecting, exposing, testing and summarizing the results of data analysis collaborated with ethnographic methods.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Minangkabau people inherit cultural heritage from generation to generation related to a matrilineal system. This inheritance is used by Minangkabau people who have lived in many Nagari. Nagari is as the basis of autonomous cultural territories in Minangkabau until the end of 1979 when it was formally under the the Republic of Indonesia a part of West Sumatra province. Then, Minangkabau people call the inheritance as traditional and cultural heritage and name them as *sako* and *pusako*.

Cultural heritage such as dance, music, embroidering, marital procedures, death ceremony procedure, and procedures for organizing parties as well as *penghulu* inauguration are cultural heritage contained in Nagari governed by Minangkabau customs in accordance with the custom of *Salingka Nagari*. This means that the tradition is only applied to Nagari, and is made by the elites with the approval of the Nagari community of the past inherited in a sustainable manner to the present time.

Cultural heritage in Minangkabau society is sometimes associated with matrilineal systems. This means that cultural heritage such as traditional dance is managed by *niniak mamak* from one of the ethnic groups, or at least the development of traditional dance is determined by the role of *niniak mamak* or *penghulu* in the management.

Manan [3] explains that the social structure of the Minangkabau matrilineal society is in the form of level or leadership management that controls the extended family either *saparuik* and a group of ethnicity (clan) in a greater number. Furthermore, Manan revealed that the formation of the structure was based on conventions or agreements from *saparuik* family members, one relative and one family. This convention was obtained through a discussion from all members of the family and members of an ethnic group (clan).

In the social structure of matrilineal society, the highest level hierarchically is *penghulu* followed by three people namely *malin* or *khatib* even *imam* in other nagari, then *manti* and the last is *dubalang*. The people who are in those roles are called as *urang ampek jinih*, while those in the lower hierarchy level below is called *janang*. Each has a different task and responsibility according to the hierarchy, but *penghulu*, in fact, has the highest level in matrilineal ties.

The hierarchy presented in the previous discussion in the social system is still maintained in Nagari government. Here, the social system based on matrilineal is still implemented and the preservation of Minangkabau dance can still be carried out according to the rules and available norms of Minangkabau traditions found in many Nagari.

In the era of Nagari government, the management system of dance or art is the responsibility of the elite in that Nagari. In a matrilineal system, the development of art tradition depended on the elite's role in a Nagari. Therefore, the leadership of the elites also known as *niniak mamak* is highly expected by the community. In Minangkabau, a saying says "kamanakan saparintah mamak", which means

that the nephews must obey the commands of *niniak mamak* (his uncle). Here, the government system in Nagari places the position of *mamak* (uncle) as the controller of social, cultural, legal and political life.

The matrilineal system is a channel for Minangkabau people to control social relations in a civilized society. In the Minangkabau matrilineal system, controlling and managing inheritance and power in social structures is held by men [4].

The matrilineal system can also indirectly support the implementation of inheritance and preservation of Minangkabau dance as a cultural heritage. In the matrilineal system, laws have been made regarding the process of cultural inheritance such as the inheritance of *sako* (nobility) or art inheritance such as the Minangkabau dance. For example, *Alang Suntieng Pangulu* dance from Padang Nagari is a classical dance of Minangkabau people which is now closely related to its inheritance in the matrilineal system. This dance is performed by the elite namely *niniak mamak* or by *penghulu* themselves. Also, the *Alang Suntieng Pengulu* dance may not be performed outside Nagari from where this dance was created and developed.

Nagari is a territorial area governed by a Nagari guardian (*wali*), as well as a *niniak mamak* or *pengulu*. Therefore, every Nagari guardian is as not only a government or political leader but also a customary leader. Therefore, during the nagari government, art and traditional art materials can run continuously. Nagari guardian is as a ruling person in the government as well as the traditional leader for his people and in Nagari. Thus, he must be responsible for the development and decline of the traditional dance in his Nagari.

After the era has changed by abolishing Nagari government into a village government, the supervision and management of art tradition such as the Minangkabau dance are continuously decreasing. It happens because the culture is managed by the village with its leader and officials, while the elite has scattered without any clear information for their existence. This has led to more displacement of activities and roles of traditional dances in the social life of the Minangkabau people in West Sumatra.

Sutopo [5] explains the role of regime and industry toward the art industry. It can be seen from an example given by Sutopo from a music case. In the old order, the national music industry did not develop due to anti-western politics, while in the new order the national music industry developed rapidly, but this industry was determined by the capital power. In the new order era, the existence of national television did not necessarily make art especially music developed. Pop music was growing faster than jazz or rock. According to Sutopo, the influence of politic and power will drag the interest and development of art as a part of the culture.

Based on the matrilineal system, a *mamak* or *niniak mamak* and *pengulu* are leaders who play an important role in various social activities carried out by their families and their respective families. They are believed to have the power to control their children and nephews and to receive the Minangkabau dance cultural heritage. Therefore, if *niniak mamak* becomes a traditional dance figure or expert (*tuo tari*) he must continue the inheritance of traditional dance to the next generation in his relatives. In the

expression of Minangkabau, it is called "**Bamamak ba kamanakan**". This means that a *mamak* inherits his cultural heritage to his nephews.

In fact, the social system that controls the art development which is considered ideal by the Minangkabau people such as in Nagari government system has been degraded in the era of village government in West Sumatra. In the era of village government, culture development was directly controlled by the central government through the provincial government and continued to the district government, and finally, the instructions were received by the village government. Moreover, in a hierarchical system of village government, a village leader is not obliged to be responsible for the customs and culture of the village. A village leader is only fully responsible for the stability issues of social, politics, economics, and the development of facilities and infrastructure.

Yunus [6] stated that the development of tradition and culture, such as traditional dance, is closely related to kinship issues. In the Nagari period, each kinship is responsible for the development and preservation of the tradition and culture in Nagari. In Minangkabau, each kinship must support the development and implementation of tradition and culture, so that they can be firmly rooted in everyday life.

Furthermore, Effendi [7] said that Nagari had the power related to tradition and culture. Therefore, Nagari has a socio-cultural system that can be referred by the government to build Nagari. Hence, Minangkabau dance can be used as a tool to build people's behavior and creativity of the local community. Here, Minangkabau dance is one focus on Nagari culture. The dance can be used for the purpose of Nagari development in social and cultural aspects.

Syafri Sairin [8] explains that in the government system in Nagari, the ethnic or clan is the main power that can control the continuity of the system. Here, *mamak* and *pengulu* are bonding aspects toward the ethnic members. As a result, the development of culture or government in Nagari must not be separated from the role of the matrilineal system. The matrilineal system influences the role of the ethnics in Nagari, while the ethnics are controlled by *mamak* and *pengulu* as bonding ties for the ethnic members.

Based on Syafri Sairin, the matrilineal system can support the civilization and development of Minangkabau cultural dance. By recasting the Minangkabau dance in various traditional and social activities by the entire people, this can have an impact on the eternal cultural dance in Nagari. As a result, the dance may disappear.

After the era has changed from Nagari into the village government, all the systems prevailing in Nagari government were not clear in the village government system. It means that the existence of culture must be in accordance with the centralization program from the central government, even though the village government continues to provide opportunities for local arts such as Minangkabau dance. However, without the power to control the community by the village leader to the elite, they did not have the power to control the children and nephews in the village or kinship. As a result, the authority has less power since all matters such as social, political, security, education and culture are controlled by the village leader.

In fact, in the era of village government, according to Yahya, *Sidi Burak*, *Jasmiami* and *Lenggang*, traditional dance was rarely used by the community because every event which commonly used traditional dance, but when the village government was in power, traditional dance was rarely used for the traditional ceremony. As an example of the tradition of the event "**malam bainai**" and "**Babako**", as well as welcoming traditional guests as well as various art parties and night markets. This is seen as one of the factors causing the decline of Minangkabau dance culture in the era of village administration.

When ritual traditions are rarely performed by the people in the village, it indirectly will affect Minangkabau dance performances. In the era of Nagari government, the traditions were always conducted continuously. In conclusion, dancing traditions related to those activities will indirectly be followed by people.

Yahya said that the people had a very different view toward the dance traditions in Nagari and village government. In the village government, the dance traditions as the cultural heritage are no longer seen as the local culture of the people. As a result, the people are no longer impressed with the dance traditions to the people in the village. It is nowadays uneasy to find opportunities and settings to perform dance traditions. Also, it will have difficulties to find the event using the dance as the event is rarely conducted.

Thus, Sulastri explains that traditional dance gained a crisis of existence when the village government rules in West Sumatra. The attention given by the society related to the inheritance and preservation of traditional dance is considered different compared to the period of nagari government. The activity decreases and has been increasingly marginal. The villagers rarely use traditional dances in their social life. Hence, the existence of traditional dance is increasingly sinking in the social activities of the village community, which has shifted into creation dance.

The existence of traditional dance for the villagers is just an alternative art. Its existence has been marginalized by society. The traditional dance is rarely used and functioned by the people. The existence and activities of Minangkabau traditional dances are indirectly not responded positively by the people. This marginal issue influences the expulsion of the activities conducted by the artists. They feel that they have also been marginalized by society.

As a result, many artists seek other activities that are not related to their background as the artists of Minangkabau dance in their village. It affects the culture development of traditional dances in the local village. This reality is relevant to the opinion of Shafii [9], that political power is able to marginalize the existence of arts and tradition artists such as is a case of *Mak Yong* in Kelantan during the Japanese occupation. The decline of Minangkabau dance in the village results in the impact of the system transition and government power in the local village.

As stated by Patria about the relationship of intellectuals and political parties for their support toward the development of art, this was also quoted from the Gramsci describing the specific role of political parties to articulate the hegemony of the working class movement. The most important instrument for spreading the proletariat culture is

the political party which integrates collective intellectuality. Patria also said that power can change the map of culture or art in society and government. It can be seen from the case of Minangkabau dance after the transition from Nagari into village government all dance activities are determined by the leadership of the village leaders.

According to Budiman [10], the relationship between art and power or politics functioned as a trigger of the spirit in the colonial period, and as media campaign for political parties during the old to the new order. This is as a social expression because in a political movement in the performance can be built aimed at the audience. Whereas Nugroho [11] explained that art like a puppet (wayang) during the new order could be controlled by political power. This means that development and art policies were determined by political power.

The village as the governing territory with the village leader as the leader has played a role in changing the politic of the village culture. Meanwhile, a cultural heritage that is inherited and cultivated during the nagari administration, its existence depends on the power pattern of the village leader because the elites are no longer in full control of the development of the village's culture so that more cultural degradation of traditional Minangkabau dance happen.

IV. CONCLUSION

Nagari as a territorial area is governed by a wali nagari, and he is also a niniak mamak or pengulu. Therefore, every wali nagari is not only a government or politic leader but also a customary leader. During the nagari government, art and traditional material can occur continuously. It happens since wali nagari is not only as a ruling person in the government but also as a customary leader for his people in the nagari.

Based on the matrilineal system, a mamak or niniak mamak and pengulu are the leaders who play an important role in various social activities carried out by their families and their respective families. Pengulu is believed to have the power to control their children and nephews and to receive the cultural heritage of Minangkabau dance. Therefore, if niniak mamak becomes a figure or tradition dance expert (tuo tari) he must continue the inheritance of traditional dance to the next generation in his relatives. It is in Minangkabau tradition called as "**Bamamak ba kamanakan**". It means that a mamak inherits his cultural heritage to his nephews. This happens continually when the era of the nagari government is led by an elite.

After the era has changed from the nagari to the village government, all the systems prevailed in the nagari government were not clear in the village government system. It means that the existence of culture must be in accordance with the centralization program of the central government, even though the village government continues to provide opportunities for local arts such as Minangkabau dance. However, without power to control the community by the village leader to the elite, the strength of the elite such as in the nagari government era to suppress the children in the village or the family is no longer exists.

When the village government rules, the existence of traditional dance for villagers is only as an alternative art. The existence of the dance has been marginalized by the

people. Also, this traditional dance is rarely used and functioned by the villagers. Indirectly the existence and activities of Minangkabau traditional dance performances were not responded positively by the community.

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