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COMMUNICATION CULTURE OF SANGIRAN WORLD HERITAGE SITE SOCIETY: AN ETHNOGRAPHY STUDY

Kurnia Arofah

*Department of Communication Science, University of Pembangunan Nasional “Veteran”
Yogyakarta, Indonesia
kurnia.arofah@upnyk.ac.id*

Basuki Agus Suparno

*Department of Communication Science, University of Pembangunan Nasional “Veteran”
Yogyakarta, Indonesia
basukiagusuparno@upnyk.ac.id*

Abstract

Sangiran site in Indonesia, is one of world conservation sites listed by Unesco in 1996 in which many scholars and students give an attention to study the human evolution there, or tourists come to get a unique experience in archeological site. Problem arise when the development of the site expected by residents, contradict over the conservation principle of an archaeological site. Current solutions on the site’s conservation become grievance by the residents who feel that the conservation only concerns to fossils and sites, yet neglecting the existence of resident who has been living for long time in Sangiran area. This research use ethnography of communication methods to explore how communication culture in Sangiran site affecting the conservation effort. Result from the research shows: 1. There are two main themes of messages as narration that was shared an inside and an outside among group or community in Sangiran site. First narration was talking about Mythology vs Science perception related to Sangiran Site existence. Second, theme that was related to Economy vs Conservation perception in Sangiran; 2. There are

communication gap activity between Sangiran residents and some institutions that involved and interested in Sangiran and vice-versa. Therefore, prejudice, rumors and issues emerge between both sides hinder the spirit of conservation of site for the prosperity for all party related to Sangiran. In a nutshell, communication forum such as focus group discussion or public hearing needed to unite all party in Sangiran so the communication gap could be bridged.

Keywords

Communication Culture, Communication Gap, Conservation, Cultural Heritage

1. Introduction

Communication culture is a rare subject, or perhaps never considered as the main concern to the effort of Archaeological site conservation. Even though it stated that conservation of archaeological sites become the interest of various groups such as academics, government, local communities, and others, most conservations action are led by archaeology academics (Aslan, 1997; Sandes, 2007; Jones, 2007; Matero, 2008), geologist, microbiologist, anthropologist and historian (Alvarez, 2014). Most of the efforts are emphasized on how to protect the sites from damages while constructing the sites as cultural heritage. It was intended to secure authenticity and genuine of site

As a cultural heritage, some of the archaeological sites were found then constructed by the government while the residents who inhabit the place for years still lives in the area. One of the examples is Sangiran Site, in Indonesia. Nowadays, Sangiran known around the world as one of the oldest early man sites has attracted a variety of groups to come, for instance, academics, tourists, students, and governments. Since 1996, UNESCO listed Sangiran as the world conservation site, where everyone could study human evolution dated to 2.4 million years ago. However, the establishment of Sangiran as conservation sites remains unresolved problems and conflict to date (Sulistyanto, 2009; Rejeki, 2013; Afandi & Ali, 2015; Kurniawan, 2019). These problems could be grouped into three: geographical-geological problems; social-economy-cultural problems; and policy problems (Sukronedi & Haryono, 2015). Cultural landscape concept as world heritage itself includes the concepts of belonging, outstanding, significance, locality, meaning, value and singularity of place (Al-Saad, 2017).

Based on earlier research related to Sangiran conservation, one of the main problems in the area is the lack of benefit felt by Sangiran residents who already inhabit the area before this site listed into world heritage sites. Some Sangiran residents live in poverty since the area is

barren and desolate (Rejeki, 2013). Problems such as stealing, smuggling, and trading the fossil in the black market are common happening in Sangiran society since the first exploration conducted by Gustav Heinrich Ralph von Koenigswald, a German-Dutch paleontologist and geologist in 1934. This problem then solved by the Indonesian government via establishing a modest museum in 1988 to preserve the fossils were found in the area. Later this museum strengthened by the establishment of the Ancient Man Preservation Hall of Sangiran site (AMPHS – or BPSMPS in Bahasa Indonesia), in 2007, consist of one main Museum and four supporting Museum. The last solution, the government released Regulations of Cultural Heritage no 11, the year 2010 (UU Cagar Budaya no. 11 tahun 2010).

Three instrument solutions from the Indonesia government help the conservation effort. Museum through BPSMS is giving rewards as compensation for the fossil founder so the resident did not sell it to the middlemen who then sold the fossil to the black market. While, articles such as the prohibition to damage, steal, and trade the cultural heritage things such as fossils, stones, and landscape of sites presented on the Regulation no 11, 2010, was effectively frightening the Sangiran residents not to do so. Mostly after two cases of fossils smuggling that end up imprison two Sangiran Residents, conservation effort can be more controlled even before.

On the surface, Regulations of Cultural Heritage seems to settle the problem related to the conservation of the area. One of the spirits of the regulation is to conserve, develop, and utilize the national culture as much as possible for the prosperity of Indonesian (UU Cagar Budaya no. 11 tahun 2010). However, the implementation of this regulation is bothersome for most Sangiran Residents. The prohibition for damaging the landscape for example sometimes leaves Sangiran residents powerless even though the land is their own and they need it for their life necessities. The existence of Ancient Man Preservation Hall of Sangiran site also brings new problem since Sangiran resident expect the hall could help improve the quality of their life.

2. Research Issues

Currently, solutions over the site's conservation have to become unresolved between resident's expectation for prosperity and perception that stated the conservation only concerns on the fossils and sites, neglecting the existence of resident who lives in Sangiran area (H53-70, 2017). Conservation becomes harder from time to time due to the quality of life of Sangiran residents hardly improves. These sites also endangered by the natives and visitors who continuously explore this area for many reasons and intentions. By regarding the conservation

effort, cultural and community context are crucial (Matero, 2008). In Sangiran, conservation effort collides between Sangiran resident's context based on their basic needs, academician context, and government context on how they perceive the site's conservation. This collision happens since the first expedition until now, has shaped misconduct and led the wrong direction in any level of interactions.

Solutions and recommendations of research related to Sangiran, none are focused on the communication culture to explore Sangiran culture and Sangiran community context related to conservation. Therefore, the objective of this research follows:

- To identify the way people who live in Sangiran site communicate and express their value and beliefs toward the existence of Sangiran Site.

To fulfil these purposes, communication culture becomes an approach to reveals such as beliefs, values, and a social structure of society that construct the cultural and community context. Communication culture talks about the way people communicate every day in their daily activities, including what they feel and express, what they perceive and sense. This research aims to figure out how the communication culture in Sangiran community could help the conservation of Sangiran site.

3. Methods

Communication culture could be seen as: first, the genre of society talks which manifested in public area; second, permanent matters which relatively permanent and widely distributed in forms and ways of communication; third, interdependency between individuals who live within society (Philipsen, 2002). To figure out the communication culture in Sangiran community, this research applied ethnography of communication method.

Ethnography of communication different from general ethnography. Ethnography of communication covers the knowledge and skills needed by speakers if they want to communicate within a community including where and how they learn about this knowledge. Ethnography of communication focuses on the way communication patterned and organized as a system within the communication event, and the way these interact with all other systems in the culture (Saville-Troike, 2003). This method applied to uncover the communication pattern of a social group with the assumption all of the social group's members will generate meaning and use it together within the group (Iswatiningsih, 2016). Ethnography of communication could reveal: 1) shared identity use within cultural community members; 2) contradiction or paradoxes within a

community's culture (Zakiah, 2005). While communication sees as the lifeblood of any social relationship that connect between humans (Vaisnav, 2019).

The data used in this research is primary data and secondary data. Primary data gathered by observing the society lives in Sangiran area. The observation took 1 month. Primary data will also be gathered by interviews with selected interviewees. Criteria for interviewees are 1) natives of Sangiran site; 2) member of the community who actively involved in conserving Sangiran site. While Secondary data collected through journals, news and studies documents related to conservation in Sangiran site during the research.

4. Findings

Based on the observation and interview conducted, there are many communication themes occur and develop in Sangiran site. Sangiran site spreads into two districts, Sragen district and Karanganyar district in, Central Java Province, Indonesia. Its area range until 59 km² radius where around 166 villages inhabit the area. Three main parties form communication interaction in this area: first, Sangiran Residents; second, researchers, visitor or tourist in Sangiran site; third, personnel of Ancient Man Preservation Hall of Sangiran Site.

4.1 Sangiran: Mythology vs Science

Sangiran culture continuously changes from time to time since the first exploration of fossil held by Dutch who occupy Indonesia before the first world war (WW I). Fossils were common for Sangiran natives as they used to found it accidentally. Sangiran geographically consists of small hills that prone to avalanche. During the rainy season, the landslides and the fossils appear to the surface. Some also drifted away by a river stream.

However, Sangiran residents used to called the fossil as 'balung buto' or giant bones. Referring to the myth that was in Sangiran there was a battle between human and giant villains who try to wipe out humanity. The battle won by a human, leaving giant bones to remain in Sangiran. Often, when the resident found the 'balung buto', they will put it back or place it properly since they respect the myth. Some of the residents used to believe that 'balung buto' has special ability to cure some illness and neutralized poisonous animal bites, especially the ivory of ancient elephant. Some of them keep the 'balung buto' for this purpose. This knowledge passed from generation to generation through

The term 'balung buto' and its efficacy increasingly rarely used in the Sangiran region since researchers came to search for the existence of ancient life in Sangiran. Researchers came

and interacted through the recruitment of Sangiran residents as research staff and helpers. In large numbers, residents were involved as research assistance such as field helpers, cooking helpers, and washing researchers' clothes. The researcher gives a comprehend knowledge to the villagers involved, starts from the names of soil types and soil characteristics that may contain fossils. Research assistants were also taught to recognize the types of ancient human, ancient animal and ancient plant fossils regarding the age of the fossils. Knowledge of fossils and soil layers in Sangiran was deeply attached to the minds of research assistants. Until now, 80 years have passed since the time of the first expedition by von Konigswald, the knowledge of research assistant was increasingly forged by the interactions with researchers from Indonesia, the Netherlands, Japan, America, France and so on.

This condition makes research assistants are good at English, even Japanese language. This interaction makes field helpers, often claim to know even more about Sangiran's history, better than geologists, historians, anthropologists and archaeologists who later came to Sangiran. They believe their knowledge is true because it has been polished from the Dutch era to the present. The knowledge of the research assistants about this fossil then spread also through stories to other villagers. After the researchers' departure, residents who find fossils generally contacted these people to ask about the type and age of fossils.

The arrival of the Museum and BPSMPS also fade the mythological value of 'balung buto'. Nowadays, Sangiran residents rarely believe the efficacy and myths of 'balung buto'. Moreover, BPSMPS also provides information and socialization about fossils to fossil founders in Sangiran. This has changed the subject and the beliefs of the indigenous Sangiran people. Residents know that what they used to call as 'balung buto' is a fossil that attracts researchers and other visitors. Furthermore, after the Government issued cultural heritage law No. 11, 2010, messages regarding the prohibition of changing, storing and trading cultural objects, increasingly fade the memory of Sangiran residents toward myth.

The meaning of the myths contained in fossils is gradually lost. The message that was communicated by the government through warning signs and prohibitions spread from residential areas, roads, rice fields, to cliffs in a radius of 59 km² Sangiran area become everyday views for Sangiran. The message about Sangiran as a world heritage and various invitations to preserve the region also reinforce the disappearance of the myth of 'balung buto' that once existed. The Sangiran generation that considers 'balung buto' is full of magical values and should

not be disturbed from its place has been replaced by a generation that only considers 'balung buto' is a mere fossil.

4.2 Sangiran: Economy vs Conservation

The fading meaning of 'balung buto' mythology, followed by changing how the residents give the meaning to fossils gradually. This is due to the interaction of Sangiran residents with the Dutch explorers who gave money in return for every fossil found. To find the fossils, the Dutch spreads coins in the rivers, farms, and every corner where fossils might find in Sangiran soil. After Dutch leaves Sangiran, the knowledge of fossils embedded in Sangiran natives who were involved in the first Sangiran exploration, they perceive fossils as economic valuables.

Some residents become a local collector for fossils and trade it to interested buyers. They adopt the Dutch ways to collect the fossils. Fossil collector orders children to collect the fossils if the kids accidentally found it on their way home and give them books, pencils, or money as a reward. This practice is common happened within Sangiran natives during that time. Some of the fossils were collected by natives, then sold to anyone who wants to buy. Some of the fossils collected in hand then it moves over to the head of the village.

Before the museum established, there was Krikilan village's Headman in Sangiran site who follow the Dutch ways in treating the fossils. The Headman, Toto Marsono, sold some of his land and cows, so he could collect the fossils. He could give a reward to his people who found fossils. He then collected it in his house. Some of his collection ends up at the researcher from abroad and Indonesia's hand who give Toto and his villagers a reward in return. After the Indonesian government establishes a modest Museum, the government use Toto's collection to fulfill an ornament and diorama of the museum, but every fossil founder rewarded by Museum.

Story related to fossils is a topic of daily conversation among Sangiran residents. The arrival from outsiders formed Sangiran Culture. Sangiran society becomes accustomed and open to the presence of strangers. The resident near Museum become fluent and tell the story about fossil to visitors. The arrival of researchers or any visitors means income for villagers involved in the research process. Many residents near Museum opens homestay and wildly sold fossil as a souvenir whether it was an imitation, recondition or even real fossil, openly and secretly. The middleman reports each other to the police office, and end up imprisonment of two Sangiran villagers, who suspected sold fossil to the foreigner. This story becomes a grim rumor in Sangiran society conformed with various prohibition signs on the whole site.

The closed opportunities for fossil transactions and the prohibition to change their land in the name of conservation make Sangiran residents expect a lot of museums and BPSMPS to change their lives. Residents hope their lives can change with the presence of the Museum. Not only for residents who live around the museum but for all residents Sangiran Site. Residents want the Museum and its infrastructure in Sangiran to develop so their economy also grows. The emergence of the museum brought hope for residents ranging from opening a homestay, souvenir business, food stalls and even residents hoping to become employees of the museum.

Residents also hope the museum will buy their hilly and less productive land. However, some of these hopes were not conveyed to the Museum because residents could not communicate directly with the museum. Residents were also disappointed that most Museum officials were Sangiran outsiders who did not live in the Sangiran area. Finally, residents make initiatives to survive according to their abilities. There are several conservation groups, tourism groups, and other Sangiran community groups that stand on their own to interpret the sustainability of the Sangiran site

On the other hand, BPSMPS who reside at the museum also had difficulty communicating directly with residents. BPSMPS feels that they are newcomers who are trying to mediate the problems of Sangiran residents. BPSMPS feel that its position is impossible to overcome all the problems. Mainly because it collided with the authority of the museum and BPSMPS which only deal with conservation. BPSMPS cannot even develop and build its infrastructure. There are at least three regulatory authorities in Sangiran Site. These are, the central government that can carry out infrastructure development, the local government that provides land and access, and Unesco which oversees the quality of Sangiran sustainability. Not to mention the Sangiran position which is currently becoming one of The Indonesia National Tourism Destination.

BPSMPS considers that some Sangiran people do not understand the authority and position of BPSMPS in Sangiran. BPSMPS hopes that the community can understand that BPSMPS is only a liaison that channels the desires of the people of various parties such as the central government, local governments as well as researchers. Usually, socialization on the preservation, development, and utilization of the site is carried out by BPSMPS to village heads and community leaders in the hope that the message will be delivered to other villagers. But so far it has not been felt successful because of the lack of human resources at BPSMPS, which was only active since 2009.

Representatives from community groups in Sangiran felt that communication was important. But unfortunately, all stakeholders in Sangiran have never sat together to discuss the conservation and economic development in Sangiran. This gives rise to prejudice and suspicion on all sides, leading to rumors that become the subject of discussion among citizen groups. On one hand, the community feels hampered because they cannot freely change their land because of the existence of the Law and the presence of BPSMPS in Sangiran, on the other hand, BPSMPS feel it never hinders any development as long as it does not harm the sustainability of the Sangiran site. Inter-community groups formed prejudices so that they expect a lot at the Museum to become a problem solver who. Meanwhile, the Museum finds it difficult to reach the wider community and hopes that people live in harmony for the conservation of the site.

5. Conclusions

From the communication culture view, Sangiran residents already have the same perception of fossils. Sangiran's view of fossils as an object containing mythical and magical values have been eroded by their interactions with researchers and the messages carried by the museum and the Regulation of Cultural Heritage. From the terms and meanings, citizens already have a common understanding that fossils are historical objects that contains knowledge, therefore must be preserved. However, the deadlock of communication between groups of citizens and also with BPSMPS as representatives of the government created a communication gap in which caused issues and rumors among all parties. This can harm the intention of conservation and the intention of fulfilling the welfare of the people following the mandate of the Cultural Heritage Act, as well as the mandate of UNESCO which states the obligation to involve residents around the conservation site in conservation. The meeting point related to this matter still blur.

Essentially, the expectations of all community groups and the government are the same as to create the greatest prosperity of the people with the existence of Sangiran site. However, the preservation messages that are expected to prosper the citizens are not well received by the residents as communicants. On the contrary, the feedback from the Sangiran community did not reach the government well. All parties in Sangiran have different interpretations of conservation and economic values depend on their respective contexts. Residents think the government is more concerned with inanimate objects, while the government is trying hard to maintain the condition of the site. Therefore, to overcome this problem of communication deadlock, there

needs to be an effective communication channel to gathered interested parties such as public hearings or Focus Group Discussions that bring all parties to sit together to solve the problem of preservation, development, and utilization of the site.

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