TRANSFORMATION OF KAMASAN PUPPET PAINTING ART IN POSTMODERN ERA

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ABSTRACT

The Kamasan Puppet Painting Art “Seni Lukis Wayang Kamasan (abbreviated to SLWK)” is a traditional art which grows and develops at Kamasana Village, Klungkung, Bali. Traditionally, it is used as the worshipping media; it is bound to the native puppetry story and is painted collectively and communally. In the modern era SLWK is commercialized by the painters as a profession in order to earn money to support their families. The postmodern era SLWK has been transformed, causing it to change. The data in the present study were taken from in-depth interview, observation, library research, and documentary study. The theory of practice, the theory of commodification, and the theory of postmodern aesthetics were used in the present study.

The result of the study shows; first, the things which have caused SLWK to be transformed are (1) economic motivation, (2) self identity, (3) painting creativity, (4) globalization, and (5) tourism. Second, the forms of the transformation of SLWK in the postmodern era are (1) change in production, (2) change in distribution, (3) change in consumption. Third, the implication of the transformation of SLWK in the postmodern era includes (1) the fact that the local traditional values are becoming degraded; (2) improvement in prosperity; (3) the fact that the freedom in painting is becoming shackled; (4) the social consumption and distribution are becoming wider; (5) the fact that female painters have appeared; and (6) the fact that the creative industry is becoming developed.

Keywords: Transformation, Seni Lukis Kamasan (SLWK), and Postmodern.

INTRODUCTION

SLWK is a traditional art work which has rapidly grown and developed at Kamasan Village, Klungkung, Bali. It is unique and has a highly specific identity, and is used as the religious ritual media by the Hindus. It is painted based on the original puppetry story, and standardized and binding norms. It is painted collectively and communally. The material used is taken from the nature and is processed using the traditional technique. In addition, the equipment used is traditional as well. Visually, SLWK contains artistic aesthetics; it contains symbolically philosophical values used to enlighten and reflect the human life both on earth and in hell.
In the modern era, SLWK is commercialized by the painters as a profession to support their families. The painters are strongly motivated to produce maximum works and show their identity. In general, the painters’ identity at Kamasan Village still refers to their collective identity. The more the number of tourists coming to Kamasan Village in the globalization era, the greater the number of souvenirs they demand for; as a result, SLWK is commodified as the tourism-supporting product. Fairclough states that commodification features postmodernism which is assumed to be the capitalism which can change objects, qualities, and signs into commodities to be distributed to the market (Barker, 2005: 517). The discourse which is developing in the postmodern era is that SLWK has been transformed. Giddens (2005: 49), in his book entitled “Reflexivity of Modernity”, states that a tradition is not entirely stable; a tradition is not strong enough to change. Kayam (1989: 1) states that transformation is a process of a total shift from one form into a new form which will be becoming established through a long time process. Transformation has to be understood through an ideal type of society which is intentionally created as a model and paradigm. As an illustration, Max Weber concludes that the European society has transformed into a capitalistic society as its body contains the “cultural ingredients” which will lead to capitalism (Sachari, 2002: 68). According to Tabrani (2006: 260), transformation is a manifestation of critical, flexible, free and cooperative personalities. If the aesthetic feasibility is not brave enough to surpass boundaries, then transformation will be brave enough to surpass them in order to create new things which are not only without a serious purpose, new or feasible but integral and honest as well. Transformation is not only faithful to norms, or situation and condition, but also integrates several norms in accordance with the supporting flexibility and freedom.

The phenomenon of the transformation of SLWK in the modern era is interesting to be critically and emancipatorily explored using the approach of cultural studies. The problems of the present study can be formulated into (1) why SLWK has been transformed; (2) what the transformation of SLWK is like in the postmodern era; and (3) what is the impact of the transformation of SLWK in the postmodern era on the people living at Kamasan Village.

RESEARCH METHOD

In general, this present study is intended to analyze, deconstruct, and understand the transformation of SLWK at Kamasan Village from the perspective of
cultural studies among the elites which support the old tradition, causing SLWK to be transformed. The theories used in the present study are the critical theories with the paradigm of cultural studies; they were eclectically used in accordance with the problems of the study. Such theories are the theory of practice proposed by Bourdieu, the theory of commodification proposed by Fairclough and the theory of aesthetics proposed by Baudrillard. The data were obtained through in-depth interview, observation, library research and documentary study. The data, after edited, were systematically presented and completed with photographs, pictures, and tables which technically support the data validity. The data were analyzed step by step from the time when the data were collected until the time they were discussed. The result of the study is reported in a descriptive and narrative manner, completed with pictures and tables to support the description.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The economic motivation, self identity, creativity, globalization and tourism have caused SLWK to be transformed. In general, most of the people living at Kamasan Village are farmers. However, the area of land cultivated averages 0.36 are/villager, meaning that they cannot support their families by working as farmers. The colonial Dutch government developed a new sector of employment, namely, tourism. Traditionally, SLWK is unique, has a very specific identity, and contains highly artistically symbolic values, and is used as the ritual media by the Hindu worshippers. SLWK is potentially commercialized as a product to support tourism. The money earned from tourism motivates the painters to work hard to show their self identities and can improve the prosperity of their families. The painting identities which are currently developing at Kamasan Village are the painting identity of Mangku Mura, the painting identity of Nyoman Mandra, and the market painting identity. The larger the number of tourists coming to Kamasan Village in the globalization era the larger the number of the products needed as souvenirs; as a result, SLWK is commercialized as the mass product which is distributed to the market to satisfy what the consumers need. Tourism is a globalized product which can distribute and consume souvenirs and handicrafts.

The transformation of SLWK in the postmodern era takes place in production, distribution, and consumption. Traditionally, SLWK is produced as the worshipping ritual by the Hindu worshippers. It is in the forms of kober (flag), umbul-umbul (banner), payung (umbrella), pagut, parba, ider-ider, tabing, pedapa, and leluhur. SLWK is
comodified as the mass product to satisfy what is needed by tourism. It is comodified into painting, bag, wallet, tissue paper box, the painting of eggs, and hotel facilities. Aesthetically, the market painting is highly dynamic; the space division, sketch and coloring are produced based on whether the product will benefit the painters or not. The theme, completion, and presentation are adjusted to what the market needs. The sacred art has been made to be the mass product which is propane in order to satisfy what is needed by the consumers. When SLWK is distributed in the market as the ritual media, then it is referred to as a sacred art; however, when it is pined up in shelves for sales it is referred to as a commodity. When it is used to decorate buildings and as souvenir, then it is referred to as a product of image. As the product of image, SLWK can satisfy what the consumers need and can improve the local people’s social status.

The impact of the transformation of SLWK in the postmodern era at Kamasan Village, Klungkung, is both positive and negative. The positive impact is that many job opportunities are made to be available for the local people to improve their prosperity. SLWK is not only distributed in the local market but it is also used to satisfy the ritual need, and can be distributed in the global market in the form of souvenirs to satisfy the consumer need. In addition, transformation has also caused the female painters to appear, meaning that there has been equality in gender as far as painting as a profession is concerned. The negative impact is that the painters are made not to be free to develop their creativity, as they are supposed to produce new mass products as what capitalism has ordered through the process of comodification. SLWK has been made to be degraded. SLWK has been used as souvenirs and handicrafts; they are decorated with the puppet painting completed with religious symbols. When SLWK is used to decorate wallets, bags, tissue paper boxes, key handles, fans, umbrellas and the painting of eggs, it is made to be profane, causing the local traditional cultural values to be degraded, and meaning that the sacred art values are made to be degraded as SLWK is produced as the mass product which is simply intended to attain profit in the form of money.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the result of the study, the novelties of the present study are as follows. First, SLWK has been transformed, meaning that it has changed. The factors which have caused it to be transformed are (1) the economic motivation; (2) self identity; (3) the area of creativity in which new products are created; (4) globalization, which has a
very wide and world scale network; (5) and tourism, which is a globalized industry which can consume the souvenir product for distribution in the market. Second, in the postmodern era SLWK has been commodified into the mass product; it is distributed in the market in order to satisfy the consumer need. SLWK has been made to be profane in order to satisfy the consumer need. Third, the impact of the transformation of SLWK is both positive and negative. The positive impact is that many job opportunities are made to be available for the local people, meaning that they can improve their prosperity. SLWK has been distributed and consumed more widely, and the appearance of the female painters indicates that there has been equality in gender. In addition, the creative industry has developed, inspiring new entrepreneurs to appear. The negative impact is that SLWK has been produced as the mass product, meaning that it has been degraded, causing the local traditional values to be degraded and the painters’ creativity to be shackled.

What can be suggested in the present is that; first, it is suggested to the government of Klungkung Regency that the cultural heritage of SLWK should be documented and conserved. Second, it is suggested to the government of Bali Province that it should develop the local culture-based creative industry. Third, it is suggested to the Department of Education, Youth, and Sports that it should empower the young people’s mentality to love their own culture which is becoming degraded. Fourth, it is suggested to the tour and travel agencies that they should be more aware of conserving the cultural values which are inherited by the ancestors, and pay more attention to the prosperity of the artists and craftsmen.

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