

Dynamics of Pottery Products in Bentangan Village Klaten

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Pottery is a craft made of clay that the Indonesian people are familiar with because it is spread throughout *Nusantara* (the Indonesian archipelago). One region that has long been known as a producer of pottery products for generations is Bentangan Village in Klaten Regency. Pottery production in this village is done to preserve the ancestral heritage and fulfill the community's daily needs. Society has a dynamic nature marked by changes in the community's way of life due to economic, social, political, and cultural shifts. Dynamics and alterations also occur in the pottery craftsman community in Bentangan Village, Klaten Regency. This study aims to describe, in general, the forms, functions, and characteristics of the dynamics of the craftsman's behavior that influence the development of the pottery business in Bentangan Village, Klaten Regency. This study used a qualitative descriptive method based on existing data in the field to provide an overview based on observations and studies at the research location. The pottery products from Bentangan Village, Klaten Regency, have unique values and advantages: the production process is carried out by hand, and the products have functional and economic value for the people of Bentangan Village. Pottery craft in this area is also one of the village's identities in the form of the local wisdom heritage. This legacy certainly contributes to the repertoire of the various kinds of ceramics and pottery in *Nusantara*.

Keywords: Pottery, Bentangan, Crafts, Ceramics

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INTRODUCTION

Nusantara, a term Indonesians refer to their country as, is rich in natural, human, and cultural resources. The culture that develops in Indonesia includes customs, music, products, and social arrangements from various elements of society, which are part of the cultural development in each region. Crafts or handicrafts from each region have different characteristics. This difference makes the archipelago have a variety of arts and crafts products that deserve appreciation. Geographical condition is one factor contributing to the differences in various work products in society. Contours and soil types in an area can produce natural resources that are different from other areas. For example, the village of Bentangan in Klaten Regency has hilly contours with soil that contains good plasticity and is sufficient to be used as the primary material for making earthenware products. Some arts and crafts products made from clay include pottery, ceramics, and porcelain. The people of Bentangan Village, Klaten, work as farmers and pottery craftsmen. According to the data obtained from local village officials, Bentangan Village has been producing pottery products since the 1900s. In an interview on October 30, 2021, Mbah Giyono (Yono), a 90 years old Elder in Bentangan Village, said that he is one of the successors to the pottery product business run by his family for generations, from his late ancestors until now. Today, Mbah Giyono's pottery business is inherited and continued by his children, who still live in the same house. Mbah Yono's current physical limitations indirectly affect his business productivity. According to his story, the tradition of making pottery has existed since the Japanese colonial era. Bentangan village has been one of the pottery-producing villages in the Klaten region since decades ago. Pottery in Bentangan Village has undergone several changes from the past to the present day. As a local product with local wisdom values, pottery has experienced degradation in several ways, including a decrease in the number of craftsmen, the number of products produced, and the attitude of the local people who are reluctant to develop pottery products for the better.

Based on previous research, Diki Riansyah (2021) stated that most craftsmen have the same problems, namely the decreasing number of craftsmen and increasing difficulty in finding raw materials. This finding is in line with the authors' observations and data collection results. In addition to these problems, the authors observed that entrepreneurship behaviors contribute significantly to the phenomena. These behaviors include age problems, the willingness to seek new insights to develop

products, especially in design, quality, and adequate packing, as well as branding and promotion to maintain product existence for the craftsmen in Bentangan village. Ideally, a business should have a balance between actors and products produced. If market demand exceeds production capacity, the product producer will find it hard to fulfill it, thus causing a problem in product marketing. Vice versa, if the number of craftsmen and the products produced is more than the market demand, an imbalance will occur and cause losses to the producers in the form of reduced income for the craftsmen, which in the long run can bankrupt them.

This research aims to identify problems and provide alternatives for pottery craftsmen to help them maintain their existence and the village's local wisdom. This will ultimately bring a positive economic impact on the Bentangan village community and provide added value to the local government. The potential of Bentangan Village can develop if appropriately handled in the correct stages. Assistance from other parties, especially the local government's active role in providing adequate attention and support to the people of Bentangan village, is also expected. The government can offer alternative discourse as a concrete form of development efforts by providing training and hiring appropriate experts. This can provide an alternative for the craftsmen in terms of better and more efficient procedures for processing raw materials, developing product designs, packaging, and marketing based on digitalization. The government can also provide display and marketing space for pottery products by holding national and international scale exhibitions with product criteria that must be fulfilled.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used the descriptive qualitative method. According to Ansem Strauss, qualitative research is a type of research whose findings are not obtained through statistics or other calculation forms (Strauss and Corbin, 2013: 4). According to Imam Gunawan, qualitative research does not start from a theory prepared beforehand but from the field phenomena based on the natural environment (Gunawan, 2013: 88). Qualitative research is also called natural research, a type of research with an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not tested or measured precisely and with data in the form of descriptive data. This study describes events heard, felt, and made in narrative or descriptive statements. This research has natural characteristics, the way it is, and phenomena that occur in the field that emphasize quality.

Research with qualitative methods aims to find and understand what is hidden behind phenomena (symptoms) that are difficult to know or understand (Yusanto, 2019:13). Qualitative methods are used to reach and obtain a new story or view of everything that is mainly known and can be known. Therefore, the qualitative method can provide a detailed explanation of phenomena difficult to convey with quantitative methods. The qualitative approach views social reality as holistic or whole, complex, dynamic, full of meaning, and interactive symptom relationships.

The qualitative method in this study was carried out by collecting field data using a verbal approach to narrate the dynamics of pottery products in Bentangan, Klaten. The qualitative method used is not only a systematic way of thinking but also a reflection to understand the existence of pottery craftsmen and the development of their handicrafts that adapt to changing times. The key informants of this research are local community leaders who understand the development of pottery in Bentangan Klaten Village. Data collection requires the proper technique so that the research results are under the objective. This study used data collection techniques that include observation, interviews, and document study.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Bentangan is a village in Wonosari District, Klaten Regency, Central Java Province. Bentangan Village consists of 8 hamlets: Bendungan, Bentangan, Jetis, Kajen, Karang, Sambirejo, Suruh Kidul, and Suruh Lor. Bentangan Village is bordered by Duwet hamlet in the north, Bulan/Lumbung Kerep hamlet in the south, Pandanaan hamlet in the east, and Boto/Sekaran hamlet in the west. The landscape area has hilly contours and the soil has good plasticity characteristics that can be used as the primary material for making pottery.

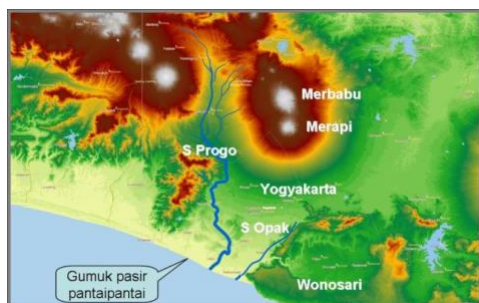


Figure 1. Topography of Klaten Regency and Surrounding Areas

<https://geologi.co.id/2009/05/30/topografi-dan-batuan-yang-menyusunnya/>

In its development, pottery has its place in the hearts of Indonesian people. This can be seen from the existence of pottery which can be found in the daily lives of Indonesians in the forms of water jugs, flower pots, *anglo* (traditional stove), *lemper* (traditional herbs and spice crusher), and various other products. Several areas in the archipelago still produce pottery today, such as Kasongan in Yogyakarta, Bayat in Klaten, Dinoyo in Malang, and Bentangan village in Klaten. Almost every day, Bentangan Village produces pottery that is sold and marketed in local and domestic markets around Klaten, Solo, Boyolali, Karanganyar, and Sragen regencies, as well as other surrounding areas. Some of the pottery products of Bentangan Village are also marketed in big cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, Semarang, Surabaya, Gombong, and others.

In terms of function, the pottery form of Bentangan village has its uniqueness, namely a minimalist design that emphasizes its functional value. This differs from pottery produced in the neighboring area, Bayat village, Klaten. Most of the pottery from Bayat village is dominated by decorative elements without neglecting their functional value. The basic principle of making pottery among craftsmen in Bentangan refers to supporting the people's daily needs. This principle has been passed down from generation to generation. It is still maintained today so that it has become a characteristic of the earthenware product commodity, which is the basis of the economy of the Bentangan village community.

According to S.P Gustami, craft art products represent the process of the mind's wandering to reveal creative ideas. Although it does not always have the same term, the creation of craft art has been going on for a long time and has a lot of mythological content, rituals, and symbols (Gustami, 2004: 1). In reality, craft art is in the realm of fine arts and crafts as a product closely related to the business world. Craft art has two orientation categories: crafts oriented toward practical functions (applied art) and those oriented toward expression (fine art) (Guntur, 2009: 12). Gustami added that, in the past, the creation of applied art craft represented low art, and fine art craft represented high art. However, the arts of crafts do not always refer to artifacts. In this global era, craft art is more flexible in presenting works inspired by social conditions, reflecting the social-cultural representation. This gives the certainty that craft art provides space for expressing concern and sensitivity to the changing times (Raharjo, 2009).

The form of craft (pottery) produced in Bentangan village is a product of representation. It is a result of acculturation processes in the past that is passed down from generation to generation. It develops in each era until today, in which it is oriented towards applied art. Based on the function, art is classified into two: fine art and applied art. Fine art (aesthetic art) is an artwork category that prioritizes beauty rather than function. Meanwhile, applied art is an artwork category that emphasizes more on function.

In applied art, design elements play an essential role in the creation process. This is as stated by Denis Thomas in the Dictionary of Fine Art: Applied art is a general term for practical, artificial objects such as ceramics, leatherwork, or textiles, in which artistic skill or motivation can be regarded as intrinsic to the design (Thomas, 1981:8). Painting, sculpture, and sculpture are generally classified into fine art. In contrast, crafts (ceramics, leather, metal, etc.) and architecture are classified as applied art or applied art (useful art or applied art) (Sukarya, 2009).

The following are photos of the various forms of pottery products that the author obtained from observations.



Figure 2. *Anglo*. The top part holds the load with horizontal protrusions at the four corners to place the load (cooking utensils), and underneath there is a container for charcoal as fuel for cooking. There is a hole to dispose of the remaining charcoal burning on the bottom part. *Anglo* is often found in *wedangan* (street food stalls) in Solo and the surrounding area (Source: Personal Documentation, 2021.)



Figure 3. *Kendil* is a pottery serving as a water or cooking broth container. The wide top makes it easy to take water or broth/soup. The basic shape of the pottery is produced using a simple technique, namely the pinch technique (compression technique). It is made using a *plendes* or *prebot* foundation, a ply of wood cut horizontally in the shape of a circle (log cut), and given an axle in the middle so that it can be rotated on its axis (Source: Personal Documentation, 2021.)

Problems of Pottery Raw Materials

The problem faced by business actors and craftsmen of pottery production in Bentangan, Klaten, is the need for more natural resources or basic materials of clay. This is because natural resources in the landscape, especially clay, have been exploited for a long time, so it is increasingly depleted and finally run out. The limited raw materials force craftsmen to buy from other areas. In the past, pottery makers usually took lempung (Javanese for clay) from the hills around the Bentangan area. However, now they have to buy clay from other regions. Until now, pottery makers buy clay raw materials from Cokro and Jatinom districts (other districts in Klaten city) for IDR 300,000-IDR 600,000 per cubic meter, depending on the amount, type, and condition of the soil, whether it has gone through a filtering process or not. Craftsmen usually buy clay using a measurement of 1 dump truck container or 1 three-wheeled motorbike container for each shipment. Craftsmen must buy in large quantities to save their stock of raw materials for their production. Because they have to buy in large amounts, they have to spend a lot of capital first, whereas many craftsmen only have small capital. This makes it difficult for craftsmen to finance their production independently without capital assistance from other parties, such as banks or the government. The problem of raw clay material can still be solved by buying it from another place. However, clay purchased from elsewhere needs to be tested before being used as a base for making pottery. In this case, the craftsmen need to

cooperate with institutions with technology and laboratories to test and find out the content of the clay, especially its plasticity, to ensure that it is suitable for making pottery. In addition to cooperating with other parties, craftsmen can conduct their tests by mixing soil samples with various available soil materials and carrying out simple burning to obtain adequate clay material. Other raw materials needed in the pottery production process are straw, wood, and dry leaves, which are used as fuel in the pottery burning process.



Figure 4. Straw
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2021.)



Figure 5. *Tobong*/Furnace
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2021.)

The traditional furnace, often referred to as "*Tobong*," is a place to burn pottery with straw as fuel. The burning techniques and processes used in the pottery production process in Bentangan village are still simple. The craftsmen use the *tobong* to burn the pottery. The craftsmen can also use other furnaces, such as field furnaces, with the same fuel, straw, wood, and leaves. The walls of the furnace are made of bricks glued together with cement. This type of simple furnace is often found in Bentangan

Village area. Some craftsmen burn their pottery using a furnace in the form of a hole dug in the ground as deep as 50cm-1 meter. The pottery is placed and arranged in the hole, then covered with straw, leaves, or wood branches, and then burned. This burning process usually lasts between 4 hours to 6 hours. One of the indicators of a completed burning process is that the pottery will turn red after the burning. The duration of the burning process depends on the weather; if it rains, it will go through a longer stage, more than 6 hours.

Productive Age of Pottery Craftsmen

The creativity and productivity of craftsmen are essential factors in developing pottery products. However, several factors hinder the process of developing pottery, one of which is the age of the craftsmen. Generally, a person's productive age to develop and be productive properly and optimally is under 40 years. According to KBBI (Indonesian National Dictionary), productive age is when a person can still work and produce something. The productive age population has an age range of 15-64 years. The Gen Z age group, with an age range of 8-23 years, and Millennials, with an age of 24-39 years, still dominate the productive age group. Productive age is a significant capital to improve the economy, welfare, income, and competitiveness in work creativity and productivity. The average age of pottery makers in Bentangan area is over 40 years. This dramatically affects the amount of labor and handicraft products produced. The lack of productive craftsmen makes it difficult for pottery production to develop. The interest of local people of productive age in pottery could be much higher. Most of the population of productive age prefer to work in other fields that they think can provide higher economic value and increase their network of friendships in the workplace. Many of the productive age population prefer to become company employees. The number of craftsmen who have survived today is dominated by women, consisting of housewives and women over 60. This certainly contributes negatively to the productivity of pottery crafts.

Design and Packaging Development

Design development of pottery based on functions to add variants needs to be pursued to add value to pottery products. Apart from design, knowledge of the packaging importance also needs to be instilled. Packaging can add value to the product and guarantee product safety so that it is not damaged or broken during the shipping process. Paying attention to packaging is essential because the pottery products are not only marketed in the area around Bentangan but also outside. The packaging materials

can use natural materials such as bamboo tree fibers that are well-designed to add to the aesthetic value of pottery products. This can indirectly impact the price value of the pottery product because consumers will feel that the product's safety is guaranteed during the shipping process.



Figure 6. Product Packaging
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2021)

Inadequate packaging makes the pottery prone to breaking during the shipping process

Participation of Other Parties

Government involvement is urgently needed in developing and preserving Bentangan as a pottery-producing village. The government can start recording and mapping craftsmen based on where they live or work to produce pottery products. After the craftsmen's data are obtained, the resulting product data collection based on its type can be carried out. By doing this, the government can rearrange the clusters of craftsmen based on the type of pottery produced. With this arrangement, consumers can quickly shop and find the kind of craft they want. Environmental management also needs to be improved through renovation or construction of infrastructure, such as roads, to facilitate access to the craftsmen's locations. The government can also add monumental icons as symbols of pottery-producing villages. With the government's concern, the people of Bentangan village, especially the youth, are expected to be more confident and motivated in running their businesses as pottery makers. By including young people of productive age who were previously reluctant to work in this field, they can contribute to the development of the pottery business, which will undoubtedly have an impact on increasing the

creativity, quality, and productivity of pottery production.

Product Marketing

In today's digital era, the ability to market a product digitally is essential to compete with similar products. However, very few pottery craftsmen, who are above the productive age, master this skill. The craftsmen need to improve their skills to overcome this problem through training, courses, or collaborating with people or institutions who are experts and masters in the digital field to support product sales and increase their productivity. Considering the average age of craftsmen who are over 40 years old, many need to pay attention to this problem. They only work to fulfill existing targets and orders without seeking better improvements. And when viewed from the current trend, there is a tendency for a decrease in production in most pottery craftsmans' businesses. The marketing model used by pottery makers in Bentangan is still conventional and straightforward. Craftsmen usually sell their products through a traditional sales system in public trading centers such as markets, tourist attractions, etc. The craftsmen usually also act as sellers who bring their pottery products directly to the market to offer them directly to buyers. Another way of selling is when the buyer comes directly to the craftsmen's place to buy pottery products for his use or resell them at a higher price to make a profit.

According to Indra Hastuti, the right empowerment strategy for the pottery craftsmen community in Melikan Klaten Village needs to be implemented. The right strategy can be formulated using a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). A cross strategy can take advantage of all strengths to seize opportunities, overcome weaknesses to seize opportunities, utilize all strengths to overcome threats, and overcome weaknesses and threats. With this cross-strategy, several strategic concepts can be formulated to develop the pottery industry (Hastuti, 2016). Meanwhile, Timbul Raharjo, a researcher discussing handicraft issues in Kasongan, Jogjakarta, said that many modern people, including foreign tourists, feel bored with existing popular art. Thus, they try to find alternative art cultures that are natural, traditional, unique, and have an ethnic nuance. The turning point in the era of cultural globalization can be a way for the emergence of the attention of tourists and the global community toward cultural heritage with ethnic nuances, such as the art of Kasongan ceramics (Raharjo, 2009). From the two opinions, pottery has potential in terms of development and marketing. Thus, further analysis and solutions to problems

adapted to the needs of the times and the current market are essential.

Alternative Solution

For the dynamics in the Bentangan community, especially among pottery craftsmen, several efforts can be pursued, such as analyzing the existing dynamics using a SWOT analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, as well as providing several alternative solutions based on the root of the problem. This technique can be applied on a smaller scale to develop better development strategies for the potential of the Bentangan village community, a home industry with handmade product characteristics.

The involvement of other parties, both from the government and the private sector, is expected to help provide solutions, one of which is through village community empowerment programs that can be carried out in groups or community organizations. This community empowerment aims to optimize the competitiveness and potential of the community. By providing motivation and encouragement through education, training, and counseling, other parties can open the community's awareness for optimal self and community potential development to achieve better welfare quality.

Cooperating with art institutions can also be an alternative to producing more qualified and competitive products. Educational institutions will undoubtedly provide motivation and encouragement for product development that will strengthen the product value and the craftsmen's positioning institutionally so that they are not looked down upon as craftsmen who only have a professional background from a village in Klaten Regency.

In the process, it will certainly development, especially in the value of a function, if the function needs to experience a shift, it will be folded by other needs, or its proponents try to transform, modify, and or look for new, more innovative alternatives. If some of these things meet, it is possible that it will have a better economic impact. (Hidajat, R, 2021)

CONCLUSION

Pottery products from Bentangan village, Klaten, have dynamics that cause changes from time to time. These changes impact the economic, social, and political sectors, as well as the welfare of the local community. This dynamic, which has also resulted in changes in the community's way of life, also brings opportunities and various solutions to develop and empower the village community. The

involvement of the government or other parties is expected to assist and facilitate efforts to develop craft-based community businesses. Pottery, as a craft classified as applied art, is one of the cultural heritage identities of local wisdom in Bentangan Village. This certainly adds to the wealth of pottery repertoire in the Indonesian archipelago, which needs to be appreciated and preserved. From the simple hands of the pottery craftsmen in Bentangan village, a valuable lesson can be learned: that something of value does not have to be complicated and expensive but can also be something that can fulfill the immediate need of the people.

The concept of local genius that has been outlined by their elders is able to withstand foreign cultural influences, at least in absorbing influences they can integrate foreign cultural elements into their own regional culture. (Pendet, I. K. M, 2007:12)

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