

Conditions of carved furniture entrepreneurs in Telukawur Village, Jepara: between expectations and reality

Mudjahirin Thohir^{1*}

¹Indonesian Literature Study Program, Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University, Indonesia

Abstract.The people of Teluk Awur Jepara actually benefit from some of their potential. Among other things, the location of this village has the campus of Diponegoro University, sea tourism, and the people are known as furniture (carving) craftsmen. However, these various potentials have not shown maximum utilization, especially in carving, so that there are still many furniture entrepreneurs who have gone out of business and changed other businesses. Such conditions, invite curiosity to be explored, what causes it? For this reason, this study is focused on gathering data through personal interviews and focus group discussions with carver craftsmen, to find problems and solutions that they have been pursuing, as well as what empowerment model is considered appropriate.

¹Corresponding author: mudjahirinthohir@gmail.com

1 Introduction

In the 1990s, Jepara, including the village of Telukawur, was booming with the carved furniture business. In Teluk Awur village itself, in that era, there were hundreds of medium and small carving entrepreneurs. The average size of craftsmen has dozens of employees while the size of small craftsmen has about five employees. But today, the number of carving craftsmen in Teluk Awur Village is only in the tens. Even then in the small category. Many of them are out of business, changing jobs for various reasons. Such conditions are certainly interesting to study. Is it because of management errors in the business that there are more losses than profits; or because the business capital runs out so it is unable to produce; or because there are other, more profitable job options? What are the ways out to survive?

To obtain answers to these questions, field data was extracted by means of interviews and focus group discussions. The interviews were aimed at three categories of informants purposively, namely those who: (1) still continue to produce; (2) changing status from entrepreneur to employee; and (3) those who change businesses. From the results of the interviews, a cross-check was then carried out by means of a focus group discussion (FGD). FGD participants were individuals in the three categories, but not individuals who had been previously interviewed. The following two sources (interviews and focus groups) were analyzed qualitatively interpretatively (see Geertz, 1973; Creswell, 1984; Nicola, 2012).

2 Result and Discussion

2.1. The emergence and sinking of carved furniture

The boom in the carving business around the 1990s occurred for several reasons. First, consumer demand for Jepara carving products is very large. One of the reasons why Jepara carving products are known is the exhibition of Jepara carving products in tourist cities such as Bali. Seeing that the demand for carved furniture was very high, a number of Jepara entrepreneurs began to recruit employees, Jepara people who already had expertise in carving. Even Jepara people who have migrated to big cities like Jakarta, who have also become furniture employees, are asked to return home and promised to be given higher wages. At that time, especially after the fall of President Suharto, there were many cases of teak

logging, so that wood material was abundant at low prices. At the same time, many foreigners are ordering goods. They buy it for dollars, while furniture production costs for rupiah.

Jepara carved furniture products that were originally located in the city center (District Tahunan, Jepara) have rapidly expanded to various surrounding villages, including the village of Teluk Awur. (see Thohir, 2006). Prosperity in those years really felt by those engaged in carved furniture.

2.2. Social prestige

Work orientation for the general people of Jepara is to be self-employed, not to be a government employee. In their perception, being an entrepreneur is more prestigious than just being a government employee. They generally prove that the income earned as a private entrepreneur is far greater than the salary received by civil servants. This phenomenon presents two conditions in different spaces. For successful entrepreneurs, many are tempted to buy luxury goods that are considered to increase their social prestige, rather than saving money or developing furniture equipment for the advancement of their business. Meanwhile, for carved furniture employees, they are starting to be tempted to change status, from employees to entrepreneurs (compr. Thohir, 2006). In their view, apart from imagining the huge benefits of being a businessman, it also raises their social status at the same time. Employees are paid, while employers pay. Employees rule, employers rule.

Armed with carving skills and experience as carpenters, many made the decision "to open their own carving furniture business". Such a decision is similar to the theory of the "actor based model", which is just imitating opening a business like a successful entrepreneur. (compare to Essen, Johan von. 2014)

The increasing number of entrepreneurs is not balanced with the ability to sell products. In fact, every employer must provide definite funds for employee salaries every Thursday. What happened? The price of the goods had to be sold as long as they were sold for employee salaries, even though it was a loss if calculated by production costs.

It can be predicted that conditions like this, sooner or later will collapse and even collapse. If it falls maybe it's just the leaves on the twigs, from a refreshing green color to dry brown. But if it falls, it means that its roots have been uprooted, so it will not survive or grow again. This is a brief description of why the number of carved furniture entrepreneurs,

especially in Teluk Awur village, has changed and changed directions. From the beginning there were hundreds, today there are only tens

2.3. Self reflection

An informant, Abdurahim (a pseudonym) who has managed to keep his carving furniture business up to the present day, said that the reasons for surviving were because (1) maintaining product quality; (2) be patient to find buyers who are collectors who know the quality of goods so they dare to buy expensive ones; and (3) choose employees who are truly skilled and care about their employees. Another informant, Zawa (a pseudonym), admitted that it had been five years since he had changed direction, although his carving skills were still intact. Zawa is more interested in other trades with bigger profits than carving furniture. When Zawa told the case at the FGD forum, there was a spontaneous reaction from other participants, "if there were 1,000 Zawa in Jepara, then the carving activities in Jepara would only be a memory."

What about Nara (pseudonym) and other Nara-Nara? In boxing terms, it's been throwing the towel into the arena. Give up lose. Some of the inmates currently work fishing on the sea coast of Teluk Awur, some have changed direction to become bicycle repairmen; and some choose freelance work.

2.4. There are many ways to go to Rome

There is nothing to regret about the narrative of failure or changing direction from carving furniture to other jobs – in a focus group discussion atmosphere – let alone lamenting about it. Complaining does not solve problems. The wheel of life goes according to pedaling feet. The important thing is to be happy, to be able to gather harmoniously with family.

Now, according to the agreement of the focus group participants, we live in the village where the Undip campus is located. The question? What can Undip contribute to the people of Teluk Awur?

4 Conclusion

Carving furniture business, read by them as a choice and past experience. There is no need to try to get back up like it was in its prime. Rational empowerment is how the local government of Jepara district works together with UNDIP and investors, to design Teluk Awur sea coast as a national level tourist destination. There are sea tours with various ethnic archipelago boats; some of the UNDIP campus buildings were converted into: workshop rooms; exhibition halls for Jepara's superior products, Jepara souvenir shops; art performance building; as well as home stay.

That way, the Teluk Awur village community can be involved according to their expertise. Meanwhile, in the short term, needs related to students studying at the UNDIP Teluk Awur campus, such as student dormitories, student food needs, and student needs - are prioritized to be handed over to Teluk Awur residents. For all these needs, need guidance and facilities that allow. Hopefully

Reference

- 1 Creswell, John W. 2014. *Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. SAGE. Publication.
- 2 Simpson, New York: The Free Press. First published 1893.
- 3 Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books.
- 4 Essen, Johan von. 2014. *On the Meaning of Volunteering: A Study of Worldviews in Everyday Life*. Springer.
- 5 Nicola J. Petty. et. all. 2012. "Introducing the Philosophy of Qualitative Research". Journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/math
- 6 Sujatmiko, Edy 2022 *Overview and Socio-Cultural Conditions of Jepara Regency* (paper). Not published.
- 7 Thohir, Mujahirin. 2006. *Coastal Javanese Muslims*. Semarang: Fasindo