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Ceramics Enculturation of Artisans' Community in Mayong Lor Village: Adaptation Strategies in the Preservation and Continuation of Local Culture Creative Potential

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ABSTRACT

The facts show that traditional ceramic arts are one of the local cultural heritage in which their existence is not easily maintained and continued because of competition with modern industrial products in market. The opposite condition occurs in Mayong Lor village that this local cultural heritage is still well maintained and developed from generation to generation for about six centuries in communities. Thus, a fundamental question arises why and how this phenomenon occurs. This study examines ceramics enculturation problems of artisans in Mayong Lor village communities, Jepara, as the manifestation of adaptation strategies in the preservation and continuation of local culture creative potential. Two approaches are used as the basis of assessment strategies. First, the theoretical approach is applied through the approach of culture, aesthetics, structural functionalism, adaptation, and education. Next, the methodological approach is used through anthropological research approach operated by using qualitative research method. The result shows that the ceramics enculturation of artisans in Mayong Lor village communities naturally appear to function as a cultural mechanism of ceramics traditional activities in the environment of their families. This process of cultural mechanism is the form of informal education as the manifestation of adaptation strategies in maintaining and continuing creative potential of ceramics culture in the community, across generations since 15th to 21th century. The local culture stakeholders are recommended to adopt or adapt the findings of this study as a model in determining policies for the development of conservation programs and local culture potential in their respective regions.

Keywords: Artisan; ceramics, culture, education, enculturation.

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1.0 Introduction

Various forms of traditional arts often said to have alienation after entering the 21st century. Dozens or even hundreds types of arts day by day disappear from their existence. Along with it, their supporters are even more decreasing. Due to the modernization or industrialization, many traditional arts have turned to be "negative" leading to degeneration, marginalization, and even extinction (Jazuli, 2001; Wiyono, 2012; Dahana, 2012). One of traditional arts undergoing process of declining and even extinction is the community ceramic art (Iswidayati, 2009; Sidhartha, 1991). Although small parts of them can survive and develop (see: Gustami, et al, 2014), most changes are related to the degradation of traditional ceramic products in market through the time. Consequently, many ceramic industrial centers die.

Meanwhile, Mayong Lor village as one villages in the district of Mayong, Jepara, historically has long been known as the traditional ceramic industrial art centers. The fact shows that the presence of traditional ceramic art was about in 15th century (Harjito, 2002). The ceramic art has survived and continued from generation to generation for six centuries until now. The existence results in art works with the aesthetic values and becomes the cultural identity and the economic resources for the village (Karthadinata, 2005; Rahmawati, 2008; Mahbub, 2010). Although ceramics phenomena face many problems due to the modern industrial products in market (Chambers, 1988; Compass, 2012), they can still survive and continue until now. Thus, it raises some fundamental questions: first, what kind of knowledge, values, and beliefs guide artisans to keep doing these activities until now? Second, how can ceramics center in Mayong Lor survive and continue from generation to generation until now? Third, what cultural mechanisms are undertaken by the artisans to maintain and continue the ceramics?

Based on the above questions, the aim of the research is to discuss the problems and challenges of ceramics enculturation process. This is considered significant because the ceramics enculturation is one of strategies used to maintain and continue the ceramics activities from generation to generation related to cultural background, environment resources, and the function of ceramics in the community. To investigate the problems, two basic strategies are applied. First, the interdisciplinary theoretical approach is used involving theories of culture, structural functionalism, traditional art aesthetic, adaptation, and enculturation. Second, anthropological approach is employed by the use of qualitative method.

The result indicates that enculturation process of ceramics in the family of artisans in Mayong Lor village is naturally created in informal education. This can function as a cultural mechanism in maintaining and continuing ceramics activities through generations. This is due to its cultural and existing environment resources. Besides, the artisans' activities are functionally able to fulfill their basic, social, and cultural need.

The contribution of the research is addressed to policy makers of conservation and potential innovation of traditional arts. The policy makers can consider informal education as a part of enculturation process in planning and developing arts at their related regions. The other significant finding of this research is it is expected to create a cultural awareness for educational policy makers. They can consider the role of informal education in a family through enculturation process as the basis to maintain potential cultural art heritage of a nation.

2.0 Research theoretical framework

Mayong Lor village is one of villages which is culturally located in North of coastal area in Java. Administratively, Mayong Lor is one of sub-districts in Jepara region of Central Java province. This area has been well known with its traditional ceramics art industrial center. The community, who is 98,84% Muslim, highly depends its economy on traditional ceramics as a business unit in the family (LKPP Mayong Lor 2013). Besides having faith on Islam as their religion, the people in this village behold their Javanese tradition existing in their environment.

The artisans still use manual-traditional technology to make the ceramics and work at their own house and yard. They do the work is not only economically-driven, but also as a responsibility to maintain their ancestors' heritage. Hence, they keep maintaining and continuing their business under the threat and competition of industrialization which have other similar products using plastic material. In fact, the artisans make some aesthetic adaptation and inherit the activities to their children. For them, making ceramics is not only economically important, but it is also regarded as a cultural identity symbol which is significant to maintain.

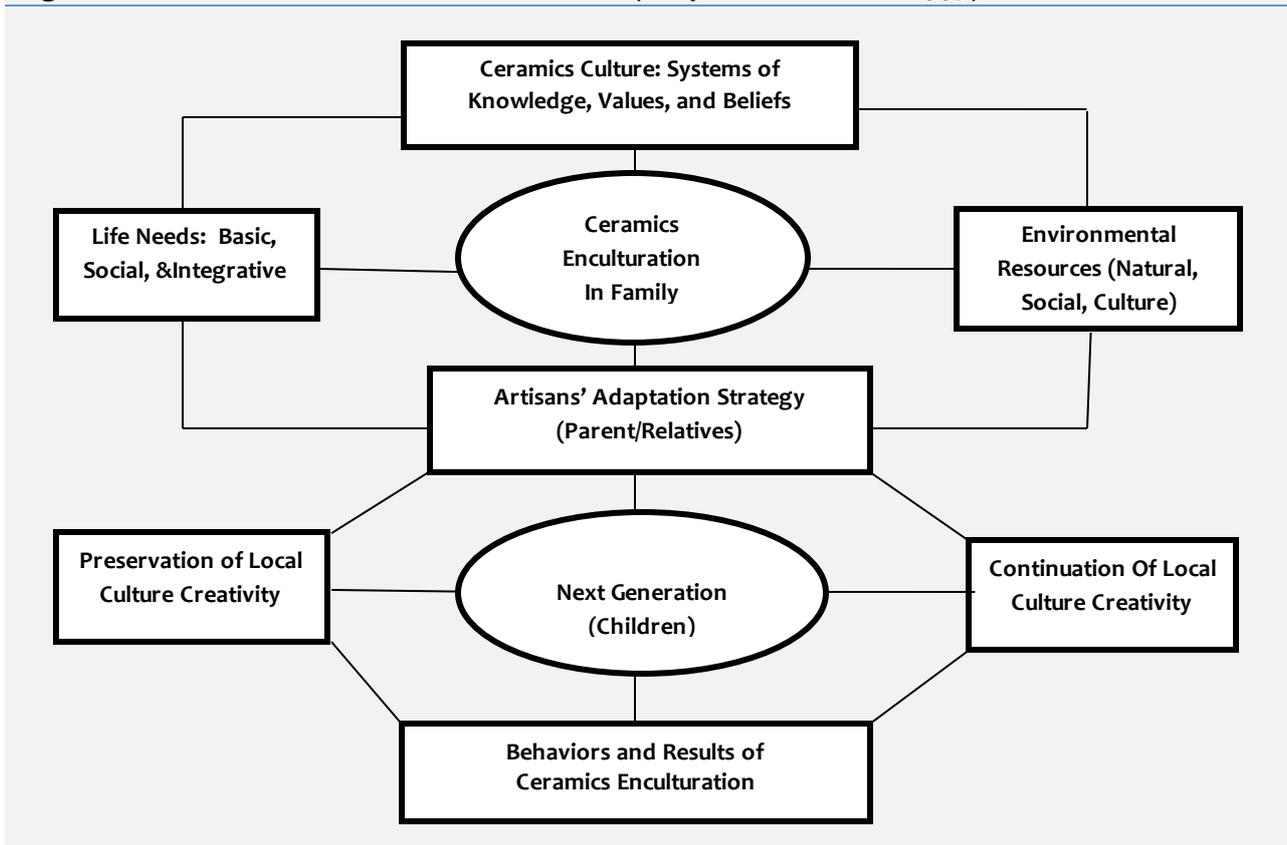
The above phenomena can be explained by looking at the theory of culture. A culture can exist, develop, and maintain in a social tradition in the community. Such social tradition involves a complex of knowledge, values, and beliefs to be used as a guidance or reference to act and behave to meet the need of community (Suparlan, 1983; Budhisantoso, 1987; Bahtiar, 1980). Having said this, a culture has a role as a control mechanism and system of symbol for human behaviour to adapt in their environment (See Geertz, 1973; Keesing & Keesing, 1971; Spradley, 1972; Rapport, 1980). The process of the adaptation, as explained by Kaplan and Manners (2002), is a process which connects a culture with its environment.

Having said the concept, function, and the role of culture, it can be seen that human behaviour is guided (ruled, directed, and controlled) symbolically by his culture consisting of knowledge system, values, and beliefs. Therefore, as cultural product, traditional ceramics can be seen as a symbol in reflecting its culture by its uniqueness in the form of the special aesthetic form; its routinized simplicity, uniformity, and populist (Sachari, 1989). This is also as life style of the people which is communal and simple in their life (Kayam, 1981). This is in line with Babcock (1989) who states that ceramics is the main means of collective production, yet it is symbolic. It means that it represents cultural values and model to reproduce and regenerate through times.

Ceramics activities which are named as a culture in Malong Lor village, are kept maintained function to meet their daily needs. Referring to the structural functionalism of Talcott Parsons (Ritzer & Goodman, 2007), it can be stated that the maintenance and continuation of ceramics activities in Mayong Lor village still function as social system conservation in the society.

Further, a culture is a social heritage (Rohidi, 1993) which is practiced through generations in enculturation (cultural process) in the form of socialisation, transmission, and internalisation from different times and generations. Kottak (in Washburn, 2008) mention that enculturation is a cultural process which educate people to accept norms and cultural values to make them accepted in a society. This process of enculturation is viewed by Kim (In Somani, 2008) as a process of cultural adaptation in which everyone adapts their behaviours with existing cultural power through years. In line with this statement, Little Soldier (In Somani, 2008) argues that in enculturation, everyone is directed to learn and identify his ethnical culture. Scupin (2005) highlights this statement by saying that without enculturation, someone cannot think, behave, and develop himself to function in society. This is also supported by (Rohidi, 1993) that cultural mechanism used in the society functions to maintain and continue the existing heritage to the next generation. This is conducted by creating social institutions in a family through enculturation process. Through this kind of process, someone learns his thought and behaviour correlated with existing customs, norms, and rules in the culture (Kodiran, 2004). Therefore, enculturation is a cultural process to inherit cultural tradition from generation to generation.

The above explanation can be schematically illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Research theoretical framework model (Adapted from Rohidi 1993)

Based on the above model, hypothesis can be stated as follows: "ceramics behavior and result from the artisan community members in Mayong Lor village can maintain and continue the ceramics culture to the next generations if artisans as parents can develop the adaptive strategies through enculturation in the family by utilizing environmental resources with the orientation to the fulfillment of life needs based on the systems of community residents' knowledge, values, and beliefs".

3.0 Research methodological framework

This study is conducted by using the anthropological approach (culture) which is operationally realized by elaborating the qualitative research method. The research location is in Mayong Lor village, Mayong Sub-district, Jepara District, Central Java Province, Indonesia. The main purpose of this study is related to the ceramic cultural patterns, processes of production, and distribution, ceramics function in maintaining the system of life needs, and ceramics enculturation processes within the family environment of artisan communities.

Subject of data source is the artisans, their family members, and the key informants: the local community leaders. The key informants include chief of the village and officers, Sub-district Head of Mayong, influential Kyai or Ustad (religious leader), junior high school teacher, Cultural or Village Artists, community elders, and Industrial Department Officials of Jepara. Data or information is collected by using participated observational technique, in-depth interviews, individual life's history, visual recording, and document data collection: archival recording data of village potential and history, photographs, and videos of cultural tradition activities of the community, and the previous research results upon Mayong Lor ceramics.

The collected data or information is inductively analyzed by using interactive cycle analysis model developed by (Miles and Huberman, 1992) through the following stages: reduction, display, and verification of data. Ending these three stages of analysis is by using paradigmatic analysis by placing the

empirical facts of research results into the discussion of theoretical research problems abstracted in the theoretical framework model with the following research hypothesis.

4.0 Results and discussions

4.01 Mayong Lor village as research background

Mayong Lor village is part of Mayong sub-district, Jepara district, Central Java known as industrial centers of traditional ceramic craft of the ancestor heritage. The village is located approximately 1km to the Southwest of the Official District of Mayong. Around the office complex, there is a monument where the placenta of woman emancipation movement hero, R.A. Kartini, was planted. The village is approximately 24km to the west of the capital of Jepara. The village has an area of 289.8 hectares, which are divided into four hamlets: Gleget, Krajan, Karang Panggung, and Bendowangen. Krajan and Bendowangen is the central location of the ceramic industry.

Based on village archives data, the natural environment topography of Mayong Lor village is generally lowland with an average daily temperature of about 33°C. The soil condition is fertile with the color of reddish yellow. The soil texture is clay with the slope level of 0 to 2°. The air humidity is in medium categories with the average rain fall of 50 to 100mm. Therefore, it is not surprising if various types of plants and trees are well flourished coloring the atmosphere of natural environment. This topography and soil conditions are also used by the people as settlements, rice fields, and sources of raw material for ceramic making.

In general, Mayong Lor village has great facilities of physical, social environment, and cultures that support ceramics activities practiced by community both in production and distribution process. The majority of community is graduated from primary or secondary education as well as Puritan (devout) Muslim that generally on ceramics as their primary jobs. They are the artisans who live simple life and accept what *Gusti Allah* (God) has given them.

4.02 The culture of Mayong Lor village community

The culture of Mayong Lor community including knowledge, values, and beliefs, consciously or not, serves as guidance or normative reference to the attitude and behavior. Ceramics attitude and behavior, the community has the knowledge revealed in the cosmological view that this nature (earth) is the God's blessing that people should be grateful for and use it for their prosperity. Humans as *khalifatulfil ardhi* (rulers of the earth) have duties and responsibilities to manage and utilize the potential of earth as a means to worship God. In that context, the potential of earth (soil and waste of trees and plants) in its natural environment is used as clay raw material for the ceramic manufacture.

While the values of community life orientation in ceramics activities are reflected in their expressions that: *uripikukudu nyambut gawe* (to live, we have to work), *uripikuora usahngoyo* (don't be ambitious), *uripikukudu nrimo* (except your life), *pasrah* (surrender completely), *ikhlasingpandum* (sincere in everything), *uripikuwis tinekdir Gusti Allah* (God has destined life), *anak iku kudukurmat lanmemunding galanewong tuwo* (the child must respect and up hold parents' heritage), and, *uripikuoram bururaja-brana nanging kanggo sranan gibadahmarang Gusti Allah* (life is not merely to pursue possessions but as a means to worship God). These expressions have become the source of motivation, regulatory, or control for the artisans to preserve undergoing ceramics activity and pass it to their children.

The belief system of Mayong Lor village community is expressed in so merital ceremonies of social and cultural tradition, which seems to require ceramic "properties." In other words, the belief system of Mayong Lor village community is the determinant factor why ceramics activities continue from generation to generation.

4.03 The Ceramic production-distribution system and the visual forms of aesthetic characteristics

The production system starts from clay raw material obtained from their own environment, neighboring villages, or buying from suppliers. Every purchase is in the form of rough lumps of soil with the purchase unit of per dump truck. The clay soil is processed by utilizing the Molding service machine (Molding circumference). To make there fined products, the soil should be manually processed by pulping soil for filtering.

The ceramic forming process, especially for the traditional form is performed by female artisans with the traditional equipment called *perbot* (a tilting rotary table on the axis of rotation is given winding rope tied to the bamboo slats driven by foot). Besides, the formation process is performed with the standard equipment of turntable, bivalve, and single solid print. The combustion process is performed by the male artisans using traditional open stoves with the fuels of waste dry leaves, dry twigs of trees, *brambut* (skin of dry rice), and the wood waste production of wood furniture, Jepara. The finishing process is performed by both male and female artisans by brushing and painting the ceramic body with the can painting material, acrylic, and screen printing.

The distribution or marketing system is performed with active, passive, and active-passive marketing patterns. The active marketing pattern was performed by artisans themselves out of town by selling to their colleagues and in public night fair son the sides of the roads on the annual activities of socio-cultural traditions, such as: Dandangan in Kudus, Grebeg Besar Demak, Dugderan in Semarang, and Sekaten an in Solo and Yogya. The passive marketing pattern is performed by waiting for buyers to visit their homes or ceramic vendors from various markets of different cities in Central Java, and the local middle men who use *ijon* system (purchasing things by lending money before or in the middle of standard production process with the lower market price). In this pattern, conflicts often arise due to the middlemen's competition in gaining crafters' sympathy. The active-passive marketing pattern is performed by both active and passive marketing patterns.

The forms of processed products include the traditional forms of predecessors' legacy such as *celengan*, *kendi*, *paso*, *padasan*, *cowek*, *kendil*, *gentong*, and *remitan* (girls' toys such as, small kitchen appliances in small size) and some "new" forms of well-developed pre-existing traditional or new creative products. Some booming forms of products are produced by developing the children cartoon figures, animals, and fruits to face the market competition.

In general, the visual aesthetic forms show its unique and simple characteristics. The aesthetic expression is the manifestation of natural symbolic of villagers' lives who are straight forward, innocent, and simple in life. These aesthetic natural forms can be categorized as "rough" art (Figure 2).

Having said that, in the context of production, cultural representation of society in Mayong Lor involving cosmological knowledge, values of life orientation, and belief system, can be summed up in three points. First, the clay which is used as the material of the ceramic making, is a form of cosmological view. It comes from nature (earth) created by *Gusti Allah* (God) which is used for human welfare. Therefore, the clay which is taken from the earth is regarded very precious to be processed and used for the welfare of the artisans. As a symbol of gratitude to the God, annually, the artisans conduct a tradition called *Sedekah Bumi* (give alms to the earth). Besides, the artisan community believes that making ceramic is a symbol of *memundi* (to appreciate or to honor) the heritage from parents of ancestors.

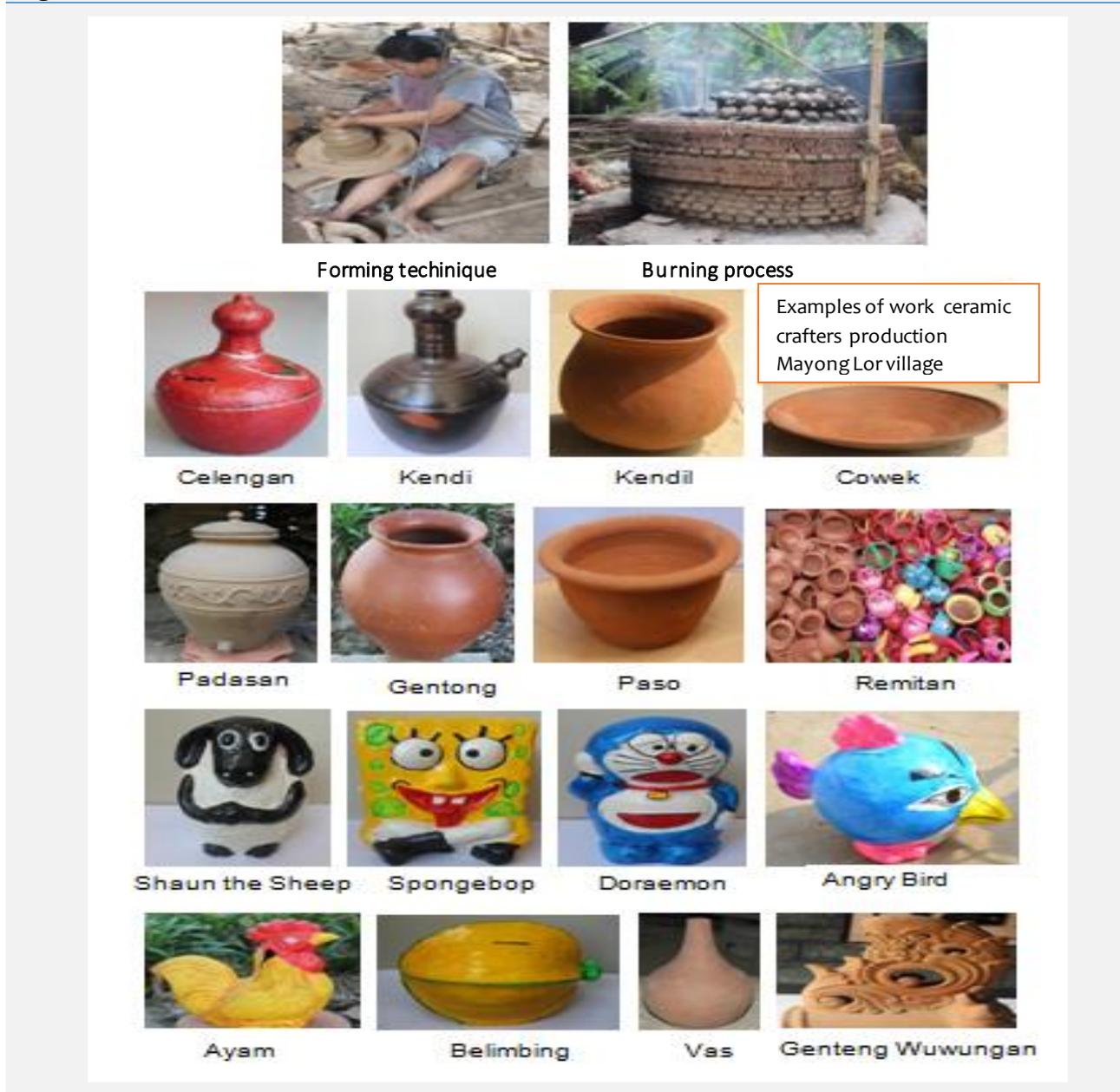
Second, in the production process, there are male and female artisans (husband and wife). The main job of male artisans are to process the material, fire the clay and the ceramics. Meanwhile, the male artisans' job is to *mbubut* (to make ceramic with oblique turntable tool). This is based on the belief that male artisans are not allowed to do *mbubut* because it will make his death faster. Hence, *mbubut* can only be done by female. It is also driven by the belief that the ceramics they make are mostly porcelain such as cooking tools or things related to the kitchen. This condition is considered as a domestic stuff for female. Meanwhile, the male artisans can make other kinds of ceramic by using new technique or creation. This

is done as an adaptation of aesthetic strategy to compete with similar product produced by modern industry that uses plastic material. Sadly, such similar products using plastic materials have been spread out in many traditional markets.

Third, the products made by both male and females, are visually aesthetic, unique, simple, and rough. This is due to its manual way of making- simple and as it is with its characteristics of coastal Java culture. It symbolizes *nrimo and opo anane* (as it is), less ambitious, and acceptance towards God because He has given them a lot of bless coming from the earth. This is contradictory with the characteristics of Kraton Java (Negari Gung) which is methaphoric, meticulous, careful, complex, and graceful in their behaviour and work (See Koentjaraningrat, 1984).

To put it in a nutshell, the characteristics of the products which are unique, simple, and rough are influenced by cosmological view on the land, values of life orientation, and the belief of the people living in the coastal area of Java. In other words, it is a symbol that represents the content of the culture that is knowledge or cosmological view, values of life orientation, and the belief system.

Figure 2: Visual aesthetic forms



4.04 Ceramics function in crafters' community life system

The ceramics of Mayong Lor village can survive and continue across generations, since it functionally meets the needs of the artisans. There are at least three categories of life necessities in the social system that can be fulfilled through the ceramics activities: basic, social, and integrative (cultural) needs.

First, the ceramics actions performed by crafters in Mayong Lor community, economically, are able to function as a principal means of daily livelihood to meet their basic needs: *pangan* (food), *sandang* (clothing), *papan* (settlement), and costs of education and health. Through ceramics, the average monthly income has met and even above the standards of District Minimum Salary and Living Needs established by Jepara Government. Second, the ceramics actions, ranging from production to distribution process, the social field has been created serving as vehicles for social interaction to meet the needs of business in order to develop and maintain the social system as the whole community. In addition, the social needs requiring social costs can be fulfilled from the income of ceramics business. Third, through ceramics, it unwittingly has become a means of integrative (cultural) need fulfillments related to the esthetical disclosure of feeling. No matter how simple it is, ceramic production is the artistic activity producing the aesthetically pleasing works. Besides, ceramics has become the cultural identity symbol that local residents are very proud of. This has raised awareness and cultural needs of people in community to maintain and sustain from generation to generation. These needs can be fulfilled through family inheritance system by involving the entire family in the process of production and distribution.

4.05 Ceramics enculturation: Family enculturation process

As an inheritance system, ceramics enculturation performed by artisans' community of Mayong Lor, is manifested through family patterns of ceramics parenting and informal learning. Parenting and learning is a social institution that contains rules, habits, and patterns of children and parents relationships in addition to prepare the next generation to have status and social role in the community in accordance with the customs, to introduce, maintain, and develop the traditional heritage of ceramics from their ancestors which is considered meaningful and valuable for their lives in the present and future.

The main pattern of parenting is a long process for parents to care for, maintain, introduce, and instill the values and customs to their children since they are in their mothers' wombs (when the pregnancy reaches seven months), childbirth, children, adolescents, up to become adults who are ready to become independent person. Meanwhile, the process of family ceramics enculturation is performed early informally taught, introduced, and socialized or conditioned involved in helping their parents in the process of production. The learning process conducted by parents using teaching approach based on context, which is gradually introduced and trained, learning the stages of production process. Children are learning by doing. Conditioning, modeling, and internalization methods are seen to be used in the learning process. When children enter formal educational period at school, the ceramics learning activities are conducted afterschool. Since learning process takes place in long period, unwittingly children learn and acquire a wide range of ceramics knowledge, values, beliefs, and skills that result in the future of their culture.

4.06 Ceramics behaviors and their enculturation results

The ceramics behaviors of artisans' community in Mayong Lor and their family enculturation results are overall based on empirical facts as presented above, connecting each other forming a system of social action to realize the actors' adaptation strategies maintaining and sustaining their creative potential on local culture. The elements in the ceramics social action system, simultaneously, are functioning as cybernetic energy and controller in maintaining their social life system.

Cultural system owned by ceramic crafter communities in Mayong Lor includes knowledge, values, and beliefs as controller (latent functions) for artisans' behaviors in their capacity as system of organisms and personality to adapt the available environmental resources (adaptation function) to achieve the goal to

fulfill their needs(goal achievement function) through social institutions developed in the form of rules, habits, and patterns of relationships in the production and distribution systems (integrated function).In the context of ceramics cultural inheritance need fulfillment, the developed social institution is family enculturation in the form of ceramics parenting and informal learning for children or the next generation. Through enculturation process, ceramics culture is maintained and continued from generation to generation.

What are performed by crafters in maintaining ceramics business, in fact, are the enculturation proofs conducted by their parents. In the efforts to develop this cultural heritage in the future, the crafters now also perform actions such enculturation to their children. All is performed as the cultural responsibility form of *memund i*(honoring) the legacy of their parents or ancestors.

5.0 Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the empirical facts of the above results, it can be concluded that the success of maintaining and continuing ceramics culture of crafters' community in Mayong Lor village was performed through family enculturation process. This enculturation process of ceramics in the family of artisans in Mayong Lor village is naturally created in informal education. This functions as a cultural mechanism in maintaining and continuing ceramics activities through generations. This is due to its cultural and existing environment resources. Therefore, the activities of the artisans function not only to fulfill their basic, social, and cultural need, but also to maintain and continue the local culture.

In short, ceramics enculturation of crafters' community is a social institution in which people in the artisans learn their thought, habit, and behaviour embedded with the existing customs, norms, and rules in their social life. This social institution serves as the cultural mechanism in achieving the adaptation strategies in maintaining and continuing the local culture creative potential from generation to generation.

Based on the results, stakeholders, who are involved in creating existing local culture potential, are expected to consider the findings of this research as an inputs in formulating the strategies or policies to implement the maintenance (conservation) and development (innovation) program upon local culture potential which are threatened by extinction based on their own situations and conditions.

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