

THE PHENOMENON OF THE DIAMOND ARISAN COMMUNITY OF URBAN WOMEN IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF POST-COLONIALISM THEORY

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A. Introduction

Arisan is a gathering in which its members meet at regular intervals with a main activity to draw, lottery like, who shall get the accumulated money in a rotating manner. The money drawn during the event is the result of regular contributions from each member. The drawing is conducted in a stay in touch type of ambience, *silaturahmi*; the gathering is synonymous with a unifying event for friends, relatives or family.

In Indonesia social gatherings are common habitual practices carried out by various levels of the society. Arisans take place in many forms, ranging from money gatherings, motorcycle gatherings, religious pilgrimage gatherings, to diamond gatherings.

There are at least two important phenomena occurring in arisan activities (Suhendar, 1994: 38 – 39). Firstly, the mobilization and distribution of public funds within a more restricted community and secondly, a portrait of a community self-help which operates outside the formal economic-financial systems. Although it involves money or goods, arisan emphasizes the principles of cooperation and kinship rather than economic benefits.

In its development, arisan has experienced shifts in its meaning from a means for saving, *silaturahmi*, staying in touch to getting one's own saved money in rotation; arisan is also a place to show one's existence in a symbolic contestation manner. For example, in such social gatherings of friends, sometimes the meeting becomes a place to show off wealth and achievements by wearing certain fashion or jewelry.

One of the social gatherings that are organized by elite communities or socialites in modern urban society is the diamond arisan. Basically, a diamond arisan is the same as other social gatherings, it's just that the object contributed and drawn in rotation is in the form of diamonds that cost tens to hundreds of millions. In the course of its development arisan communities which consist not only groups of socialites but members of general public involving diamond prices in the range of under 10 million Rupiah appear.

Arisan, in certain respects, is in line with the stereotyped values existing in Indonesian societies, namely the habit of gathering and *silaturahmi*. However, when perceived from a different context, arisan has much of non-Indonesian or in this case 'Western' influences. Here 'West' is meant as habit related to modern urban life which expresses individual achievements based on certain symbols. This kind of habit is certainly difficult to imagine in pre-modern or rural communities which are societies with collective and communal paradigms.

Here "West" and "East" are not assumed as something parallel or equal, especially when considered from post-colonial theory. Post-colonialism can be defined as the influence of the colonizing party has on the colonized which can still be felt culturally even though colonialism itself has officially ended (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1990: 2). "East", in the context of post-colonialism, is often seen as subordinate to "West", which although physically is no longer colonized, it mentally is still basically colonized. However, it cannot be said that the "colonized" people are completely colonized. In the view of Homi Bhabha, a thinker from India, the colonized has actually a number of strategies in dealing with the post-colonial mode, one of which is hybridity.

Hybridity is simply defined as a 'new' concept resulting from an intercultural encounter between the cultures of the colonizer and the colonized. This paper seeks to explore the possibility of the eminence of hybridity in the relationship between prevailing community phenomena including diamond arisans with modern urban society.

B. Discussion

Traditionally, social gatherings can be said to have become part of the daily life of Indonesian people, independent of their economic groups. However, in the context of the diamond arisan and the communities it involves, they may be perceived in another way; the activity may be considered as something that has been influenced by 'other' cultures. On that basis, it is necessary to first dissect what elements are present in a diamond arisan activities.

First, an arisan is called a diamond arisan if it involves a group of people, more than one or two people, who gather in a planned manner at a certain place and time. This means that diamond arisan is not possible if the community gathers accidentally. Second, the dispensing of the accumulated

regular contributions as main agenda. Third, diamond gathering is called diamond arisan if it makes diamonds as the object being contributed and dispensed in rotations.

With the elements above as background, the postcolonialism element is invisible and may be regarded as something 'neutral'. It becomes obvious when one take into account the other elements that make up the diamond arisan communities, namely the elite or socialite groups. To refine the analysis, the author opts to take one of the famous socialite groups in Indonesia, Girls Squad, as group to be observed. The choice to study Girls Squad is also based on the fact that they hold diamond arisan gatherings regularly and some of their meetings are even covered by the media.

Girls Squad is a socialite community which consists of mostly celebrities. Founded by Nia Ramadhani, Girls Squad membership consists of Jessica Iskandar, Jennifer Bachdim, Chacha Federica, Theresa Wienathan, Farah Balkis, Sally Adelia Soraya, Rozma Suhardi, dr. Irene, Karenina Sunny, Hertika Putri, and several other socialites. Based on the profile of its members, it is clear that Girls Squad members are people with the profile of urban women who are economically elite.

Urban women can simply be interpreted as women whose activities are in urban areas. But the definition can be more complex than that. For example, urban women are women whom discourses on their beauty cannot be separated from the construction of patriarchal culture. Unarguably what women display through their bodies is what men really want to see (Sapentri, 2017). Because of the impact of the gaze of men (male gaze), women are targeted for various beauty advertisements which display the "ideal" figure of a woman's body (Prabasmoro, 2003).

Lifestyle was later becoming the strong characteristic for urban women. Lifestyle itself is defined as a way of life that is identified by how people spend their time in the way of activities, what they consider important in their environment and what they think about them and the world around. Based on observations and interviews conducted by the author, the lifestyle of urban women tends to avoid complexity and as much as possible it is aided with technology. To achieve this practicality, they are willing to spend money.

In addition, the lifestyle of urban women tends to be consumptive for tertiary interests such as mode that is fashionable, glamorous, and up-to-date. It is also seen in the way they choose places for recreation or socialization; urban women prefer comfortable places with a modern atmosphere such as cafes, supermarkets, malls, and salons. Thus, it can be perceived that urban women, based on their lifestyle, no longer think about basic or physiological needs such as eating, drinking, housing, and so on, because they have moved to the level of fulfilling tertiary needs.

This category of urban women is more appropriate to be perused in the context of post-colonialism. Diamond, in the author's view is only an object that attract the community to gather; it in itself is not a representation of postcolonialism. It is more accurate to say that the social construction of diamond positions it into objects that are associated with the elite.

The Girls Squad community consisting of elite urban women is under a strong 'Western' influence in the sense of its characters of being individualistic, modern, pragmatic, glamorous and actual. At this point, it can be said that there is colonialism in a mental and cultural sense, which makes these women very different from what we know as belonging to 'Eastern' culture. In 'Eastern' culture the stereotypes which are better known as communalistic do not highlight the individuals, and do not recognize the concept of glamor and actuality because these two traits are derived from developments in the society of the 'West', which are introduced to Indonesia among others through the influence of the media. It can also be said that this socialite communities are characterized by lifestyles resembling that which are presented in the mainstream media.

Homi K. Bhabha through his theory of hybridity emphasizes that the colonized will not be completely passive and accept the ideology of the colonizer, so that what emerge later is the interaction between the two cultures to give birth to a 'new' or hybrid culture. In this context, the diamond arisan community does adopt a 'Western' culture in the sense of individualistic and modern urban women merging it with the 'Eastern' culture which is characterized collectivism and communitarianism, gathering and friendship. A 'new' construction was then built based on the meeting of the two cultures creating diamond arisan as a moment to gather, stay in touch with diamonds as the object.

C. Closing

Based on the discussion above, the conclusions are as follows:

1. Diamond arisan can be said as a representation of "Eastern" culture in the sense that it involves collectivism and communitarian elements which are habits stereotype of Indonesian society.
2. Diamond arisan activities can also be said to be a representation of "Western" culture when viewed from the profiles of individuals belonging to that community; they are urban women with individualistic, modern and consumeristic lifestyle and who turns to the images displayed in mainstream media.
3. Hybridity is carried out by maintaining the "Eastern" culture which is manifested in the form of social gathering, arisan, a moment to gather and stay in touch and is merged with "Western" culture that is oriented towards individual interests and personal achievement.

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Glossary

Arisan	: Gathering activities that are driven by the rotational dispensing of accumulated contributions, lottery like, among members and is usually held regularly. There are many kinds of arisan from money gathering, motorcycle gathering, to diamond gathering.
Urban women	: Women who live in urban areas, specifically characterized by individualism, dependence on technology, consumeristic lifestyle and seeking to update their fashion by referring to the media.
Post-colonialism	: A school of thought holding a view that colonialism is still happening, not physically but in mentally and culturally.
Hybridity	: The strategy of merging the cultural influences instilled by the colonial party with the culture of the colonized to give birth to a "new" variant that is intercultural.



Dhyani Widyanti or Dhyani Widyanti Hendranto is an Indonesian-born art practitioner currently living in Sydney, Australia. Her experience of having lived in different geo-cultural locations of Asia, Europe and Australia has enriched her works with a multicultural nuance.

She often combines various aspects across media in the process of creating her works. Her main interest is in exploring issues related to urban cultural interventions in women's issues and gender equality. She has exhibited her works which include sculpture jewelries, installations, happening arts as well as video arts. She also has a great interest in research including writing in scientific journals on the subject of cultural studies, art and design.

She is currently undertaking a doctoral program at Sanata Dharma Catholic University Yogyakarta in arts and cultural studies focusing on contemporary urbanic jewelry art. She graduated with a Bachelor degree in Visual Communication Design at the Bandung Institute of Art and Design Technology

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In addition, she is co-founder of Urban Art Forum, an active member of Art Jewelry Forum, Indonesian Heritage Society and Nusantara Community of Science Writers, earned The New South Wales Government's Smart and Skilled Scholarships, experienced as Art Director at YTC Production House and Fortune Indonesia, now actively serving as founder, owner and designer in a contemporary jewelry company, Zhooba Design.