

Environmental perennialism in “pitutur pikukuh” local wisdom of Baduy indigenous community

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Abstract. Modern environmental crisis is the direct impact of unethical management. Materialism has pushed humans to continuously exploit and pollute natural resources. Thus, plenty of damages and degradation upon environmental quality are resulted. Perennialism sees wisdom in traditional moral values as a way to overcome the world that is full of turmoil. This descriptive-qualitative research examined the significance of environmental moral values in “pitutur pikukuh” local wisdom”. Such values can be transformed into geography learning. Result of study found that environmental moral values lie within “pitutur pikukuh” local wisdom are values of honesty, simplicity, environmental awareness, and cautious behavior. These moral values in a main aspect of character building to be transformed through its integration in geography learning. Model of local-wisdom based learning can be best applied through the implementation of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) to the suitable subject matters and learning objectives. Program of Reinforcement of Character Building is the medium to optimize environmental education.

1 Introduction

Perennialism sees the world of today as having full of turmoil, uncertainty, and disorganization, particularly in moral livings, intellectual, and socio-cultural. For instance, human greed had caused plenty of damages, by an excuse of fulfilling life desires and modernization. Environmental crises faced by modern civilization is the direct effect of a “non-ethical” resource management [1]. Ethical crisis is arguably the root of problem to environmental and ecological crisis. Modernization tends to bring human being into rather materialistic life as a distinctive character of modern society. Matter has become the main predictor of success with the abstinence of life ethics and norms. Philosophical thought of materialism constructs teachings of seeing a phenomenon from concrete facts and denying spiritual variants [2]. Natural resources have been targeted to satisfy these material needs through continuous exploitation without any feeling of guilt. Environmental damages occur throughout the globe, weathers are not in order, food crises emerged not knowing when would it be over. These are the examples of turmoil that falls on human lives due to their own deeds. There has to be an effort to overcome such problems through the revitalization of the solid traditional values and principles.

Perennialism can be defined as the discourse on perpetuity or eternity [3]. Stated that perennialism placed its values on the highest truth supremacy sourced from God and supernatural truth [4]. This philosophy was first introduced in the western world in 1540 on the book titled *De Perenni Philosophia* by Augustinus Steuchus. Perennialism was brought to its previous popularity as an intellectual discourse, in response to the turmoil caused by ethical crisis, some referred to moral crisis. Adolf Huxley in his book titled “*The Perennial Philosophy*” mentioned that perennialism have three core tradition, among those is the ethic that lays transcendent knowledge as the final destiny of human lives [5]. Thus, ethical crisis marked by materialistic way of thinking was responded by ethics that are superior to materialistic thought. In regards to this definition, perennialism is an environmental ethic discourse.

Moral wisdom on human and environmental interaction constitutes the definition of environmental ethics. This paradigm is needed aiming for a cautious consideration on natural resources utilization in the frame of ecological equilibrium [6]. Relationship among human beings or with other creatures left certain effects on the environment. Both direct or indirect, realized or not, certain limits of human management had to be set based on natural tolerance. Environmental damages are the example of limitless human management. Therefore, perceptual changes toward the environment are necessary, with materialistic turned into conservative outlook. This can be attained through internalization of values referenced to the supreme truth [7], which is the meaning of environmental perennialism itself.

Many of excellent and ideal values are found in Indonesian socio-cultural society, particularly to indigenous community that lives to this day. Inheritance of these values occur in society through the preservation of local wisdom. Concept of local wisdom intersect with the term local knowledge or local genius [8]. Local wisdom is “nothing but a collection of knowledge as a result of thoughts and actions done by people in a place (area) or location” [5]. More than solely a knowledge, local wisdom is a form of values, perception, behavior, and response of local community in their wise interaction to life system, their nature, and area of living. Formation of these customs is based on the adaptation toward the environment [9]. Life experiences, daily habits, and inherited values are internalized as reference to local knowledge indicated from candid action. This is the form of a ‘blessed’ societal living [10].

Baduy indigenous community is one of cultural group in Indonesia where their original values are strictly preserved, among very progressive development in the neighboring areas. This community is located in Kanekes Village, Leuwidamar sub-district, Lebak Regency, Province of Banten. It is the form of social uniformity whose lives have never been away from their local culture [11]. People of Baduy preferred to be called “Kanekes people” or “Rawayan people”. Instead of being isolated, the community is isolating and excluding themselves from the influence of outer world which is precepted to be negative. The lives of these community members are intended to protect the ancestral heritage preserved across generations. Their daily lives characterized as “majestic”, simple living, and barring themselves on an earthly desire or exaggerated materialism [12]. Local belief adhered in Baduy called “Sunda Wiwitan”, with a customary law called “pikukuh”. Most of these people are illiterate. Medium to inherit these values between generations occurred in oral tradition. Local wisdom of Baduy community are the knowledge, intelligence, and local rulings on human-nature interaction. This research aims to describe moral values in the local wisdom of “pitutur pikukuh” to be developed and transformed in geography learning.

According to Alexander Von Humboldt, geography is a study on environmental effects to human. Geography is a science that studies causal relationship of physical and human phenomenon on earth, through spatial, ecological, and regional approaches [13]. Geography relates to the natural realms and each creature that lives within. Interaction between living beings and their environment has its own locality between each kind. In the national curriculum of Indonesia, the Curriculum 2013, geography is grouped among social science disciplines. Thus, its area of study focuses on human activities shaped by physical environment dynamics. Objectives of geography learning is to nurture environmental awareness, wise management of resources, along with tolerance toward cultural diversity.

2 Methods

Research method implemented is descriptive-qualitative. Main source used is the thorough observation of Baduy local wisdom “pitutur pikukuh, that acts as the material object of the study. Ecological moral values are set as formal object studied in this research. Researchers interpret moral values within the “pitutur pikukuh”. This study resulted in a description of the local wisdom has been interpreted. Data collection were carried through in-dept interview and recordings of informants within purposive technique. Sampling target are the key figures that is known for their knowledge on local wisdom, particularly to “pitutur pikukuh” oral literature. Transcription of recordings to the written form were carried to facilitate the process of data analysis.

3 Results and Discussion

Indonesian indigenous community are generally dependent on the nature and its preserved stability, as exemplified in the lives of Baduy community. There is a surviving local wisdom on natural resources management in form of customary law distribution in three zones, namely “reuma” or settlement, “heuma” or farmland and moorland, as well as “leuweung kolot” or “leuweung titipan” translated as the old growth forests. Relationship within Baduy societal living has synergetic integration for sustainable lives. Forms of environmental conservation carried by Baduy community involves (1) farming system; (2) knowledge system; (3) technological system, and (4) conservation system [14]. All of these were done in reference to customary command and prohibition are discharged with full awareness by all community members. The teaching of “Sunda Wiwitan” brought the belief that they are among the earliest descendant created to live on earth and given responsibility for its stability and sustainability. This local wisdom is preserved and performed by intense reinforcement out of their faith on the goodness of these values [15]. In other words, local wisdom has become part of their sagacious way of life to overcome challenges they face [16]. Local wisdom has to be seen as lofty value, which instead of focusing on right or wrong, that has the virtue in it. Regardless of being local to certain groups in specific geographic condition, local wisdom found within this community applies universally.

“Pikukuh Baduy” as the core belief of “Sunda Wiwitan” consist of command and prohibition being communicated from their ancestors to generations below. Thus, “pikukuh” Baduy is a form of oral literature on knowledge, intelligence, regulation, and societal moral upon interacting with the nature and surroundings.

Principle of this local wisdom is to let no changes occur. Environmental ethics is often depicted as natural evolution of the realm of moral [17]. Environmental ethics or morality are more understood as critics toward the sustained moral of human being. Term environmental ethics referred to behavior of Baduy community on their awareness toward the environment based on the communal moral code. Perennialism sees the world situation is full of disorders that needs to be mended. Returning to traditional values full of wisdom as showed in “pikukuh” of Baduy.

The “pikukuh” consist of “pikukuh sapuluh” and “pikukuh karuhun” [18]. “Pikukuh Sapuluh” is the customary law or rules contains command and prohibition firmly held by Baduy indigenous community, or called as *dasa dila* means “ten principles”. Meanwhile, “pikukuh karuhun” or “buyut”, is the principle consist of rule to carry out life inherited across generations. The custom had to be adhered not only by local communities, but to visitors as well [14]. In line with the research objectives, not all “pikukuh” being studied, only those which relates on the environment. Morales of the environment lies in “pikukuh” involves honesty, simplicity, awareness, and cautiousness.

a. Value of honesty

Act of honesty based on the effort of making oneself trustworthy both in the words and actions. The mess of modern human lives out of uncertainty is seen by perennialism as the lost of moral of honesty. Being honest is highly upheld by Baduy community is indicated by their habit of being talk less, particularly to the strange nature or people. Less talking is one of mandates of the ancestors. Found that the honesty of Baduy people is indicated through the words “*teu wasa*” translated as “incapable of...” . This phrase is mostly used upon saying something they do not dare of or when communicating with strangers. All of these mandates is in accordance with the saying “*buyut nu dititipkeun ka puun*” or “mandates that is entrusted to the leaders. These ancestral mandates experience no change, and that the custom, mountain, land, water, forest and all components within are attributed to the spirit of ancestors and ought to be protected and maintained. The sayings of “*lojor teu meunang dipotong*” or “the long may not be cut” and “*pondok teu meunang disambung*” or “the short may not be joined”. Two of these principles implies the nature of conservation without the desire to modify out of human satisfaction. The teachings of *pikukuh* consist of “*mipit kudu amit*” (begging for what is needed), “*ngala kudu menta*” (asking for permission), “*ngeduk cukur kudu mihatur*” (asking out of its owners’ knowledge), “*nyokel jahe kudu micarek*” (be aware when taking from the nature), and “*ngagedag kudu bewara*” (be cautious when utilizing natural resources). Educating community members with these values emphasize the act of honesty and avoidance of conflicts. For the people of Baduy, the state of peace is the effect of being honest (Kritianto & Seha, 2016). The tranquility of Baduy is the mixture of stability to the nature and balanced relationship among community members.

b. Value of simplicity

The act of modesty is indicated through words and actions indicated by the value of simplicity or not exaggerating. Simplicity is the opposite of greediness. Out of satisfying human desire, greediness is often showed through exploitation of natural resources causing damages and disasters throughout the globe. Environmental perennialism command human being to bringing back traditional values, as of simplicity, to life. Value of simplicity is the remarkable characteristic of Baduy people expressed in *pikukuh*. There is a local saying of “*hayang aya kaberkahana, hayang aya kaberkatana, hayang saeutik mahi loba rea nyesa*”. The saying means “the need for blessing and grace, the need for sufficiency out of little use, instead of many leftovers out of abundance”. Simplicity is well resembled in these values. Simple living on fulfilling life needs require wisdom in treating the nature as mandated. The saying of “*ngagedag kudu bewara*” can be literally defined as taking the fruits only by shaking its tree, or has the meaning of efficient use of natural resources in accordance to the ability of natural production. Survival of this value is seen from the green and lush trees. Simplicity is also indicated by community members occupation as farmer. Crops cultivation has to be in harmony with the nature through the use of simple tools. Prohibitions were applied to the use of fertilizer, hoe, or any of modern equipment seen as posing harm to the nature. Habit of Baduy people is to carry certain activities in the designated times. As the primary intention upon any act is reached, excessive fulfillment is prohibited.

c. Value of environmental awareness

Attitude and action seek to avoid environmental damages embodied in environmental awareness and develop certain ways to rehabilitate existing ecological problems. The moral values expressed in the *pikukuh* stated that “*Gunung teu meunang di lebur*” or “the mountain shall not be destroyed”; “*lebak teu meunang dirusak*” or “the valley shall not be damaged”; “*larangan teu meunang ditempak*” or “commands shall not be violated”; as well as “*buyut teu meunang dirobah*” or “rules shall not be changed”. All of these values brought the principle not to let any changes to the rigid and virtuous ancestral teachings. Changes or violation of these teachings lead to the disasters that is harmful not only to them, but to the whole civilization as well. People of Baduy avoid the use of soap, toothpaste, or plastics in their hygiene habit. As stated in the *pikukuh* that “*nu lain kudu dilainkeun*” or the other (outside of the community) should be excluded and “*nu enya kudu dienyakeun*” or what has righteous had to be carried seriously. Therefore, any products or habit that is not belong to them shall be prohibited to protect the natural orders. Only those processed naturally and known to practiced by their ancestors can be applied to the community, which covers what can be consumed, medicine to be used, or materials for house works. The nature

is the only source of living for the community. Stability of the nature had to be protected and conserved. Saputra (1950) had documented that nature is the “scripture” for Baduy people. Living with natural order is the integral parts of their community.

d. Value of cautiousness

Other characteristic of Baduy people is to be cautious on their expression, particularly when interacting with strangers. Example in the strict prohibition of technologies as aforementioned is the example of cautiousness. Violations to the customary law is believed to cause damages and disasters. The *Pikukuh* mandated the whole community on the saying of “*kudu ngadek sacekna*” and “*kudu nilas saplasna*”. Two of these expressions left a message that upon committing any action, any consequences out of the action had to be carefully considered. In the other hand, the sayings mandated community members on hard-work, effective use of time and available opportunities. Compliance to the customary rule and values is believed to protect their existence from outer influences that may cause any harms on their eco-socio-cultural harmony.

Four moral values expressed in the *pikukuh* of Baduy are the recommended input for the government program of Penguatatan Pendidikan Karakter (PPK) or The Reinforcement of Character Education program in schools. Integration of the PPK and geography learning in high school helped to better introduce environmental education based on local wisdom. Implementation of this program can be carried through the internalization of cultural lesson on the suitable subject matter and learning objectives. High school geography learning based on local wisdom is indicated in the lesson plan made by teachers and initiation of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL).

4 Conclusion

Examination of “*pitutur pikukuh*” of the Baduy indigenous community during research process resulted in researchers’ understanding of four environmental moral values, namely value of honesty; value of simplicity; value of environmental awareness; and value of cautiousness. Environmental perennialism implementation in education practices aimed internalization of moral values found in socio-cultural lives of local community, particularly to geography teaching and learning. Through this, learning objective is to stimulate students on expressing their environmental awareness; efficient and wise utilization of natural resources; as well as tolerance to cultural diversity. Result of this research can be the basis for future development of local wisdom-based learning. Recommendation of future researches is the developmental and experimental research be conducted to determine structural steps of implementation and determine the relationship between local wisdom-based education as studied to any of considerable variables.

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