



The Evolution of Ceramic Crafts in Mayong Lor, Jepara: A Historical Perspective

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Abstract. This research aims to reveal the dynamics of the development of the ceramic craft industry in Mayong Lor Village, Jepara, from the time of Ratu Kalinyamat to the modern period. The historical method with the stages of heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography is used in this research. The results show that ceramic crafts in Mayong Lor have a long and rich history. The tradition is thought to have existed since the 6th century, perhaps even earlier. Some sources mention that Ratu Kalinyamat played an important role in the development of this industry. Mayong Lor ceramic craft is not only a source of livelihood for the community, but also a distinctive cultural identity. Over time, the Mayong Lor ceramic industry experienced ups and downs. During the colonial period, the Dutch government supported the development of this industry by building a market for ceramic products. After independence, the Mayong Lor ceramics industry continued to grow with government support through various training programmes and the establishment of cooperatives. In recent years, the Mayong Lor ceramics industry has been facing challenges, particularly in relation to the lack of interest among the younger generation to carry on the tradition. Competition with ceramic products from other regions and abroad, as well as job opportunities in other industrial sectors, are contributing factors. The Mayong Lor ceramic craft industry is a valuable cultural heritage. Despite facing various challenges, the industry has survived and continues to adapt to the times. Preservation and innovation efforts are needed to maintain the sustainability of this industry in the future.

Keywords: Ceramic Crafts, Mayong Lor, Jepara, History, Creative Industry

1 Introduction

The word ceramic is absorbed from the English word, ceramic. The word ceramic in Greek is called keramos, which means glassware or items made from burnt clay [1]. Keramos is the name of an area in Athens Greece where clay artisans lived [2]. Ceramics in Indonesian is then interpreted as burnt clay, mixed with other minerals or also called pottery (porcelain) [3]. It can be concluded that all objects made of burnt clay will be classified as ceramics.

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Ceramic crafts are one of the oldest forms of crafts that developed in various parts of Indonesia. Ceramic crafts from an archaeological point of view, that clay items began to be known since prehistoric times, precisely during the cultivation period in Indonesia. Ceramic crafts made at that time were very simple, found at Kendenglembu Site in Banyuwangi, Klapadua in Bogor, Serpong in Tangerang, and Kalumpang and Minanga Sipakka in Sulawesi. During the historical period, ceramic crafts developed not only from clay, but also from rock and porcelain. The development of ceramic crafts in Indonesia cannot be separated from the influence of mainland Southeast Asia to China. Ceramic crafts in Indonesia developed not only under the influence of Asia but even under the influence of Europe [4].

As a thriving port city, Jepara has been a bustling economic centre in northern Java for hundreds of years [5]. The ceramic crafts that developed in Jepara cannot be separated from Jepara's role as a maritime economic centre hundreds of years ago. Ceramic crafts in Jepara are thought to have existed since the 15th century or around the reign of the Demak kingdom [6]. The Jepara ceramic craft industry most likely began to develop along with the Jepara carving industry in the 16th century during the reign of Ratu Kalinyamat in Jepara [7][8]. Jepara's ceramic craft industry is centred in Mayong Lor Village, Mayong Sub-district. This area is known as the largest ceramic craft centre in Jepara since decades ago. Researchers are interested in looking at the dynamics of the development of the ceramic craft industry in Mayong Lor over the past 50 years. The ceramic craft industry has certainly experienced many dynamics, making it interesting to study.

2 Methods

The historical method is a systematic approach to investigating past events. In the context of this research, this method will be used to uncover the dynamics of the development of the ceramic craft industry in Mayong Lor Jepara from the time of Ratu Kalinyamat to the modern period. There are four stages in the historical method outlined [9]. The first stage in this research is heuristics or source collection by conducting observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. After all the sources have been collected, then criticism of the sources is carried out. External criticism to obtain authentic sources and internal criticism to obtain credible sources [10]. The third stage in historical research is interpretation. At this stage, objective accuracy is required, especially in terms of interpretation. Interpretation follows social, cultural and economic developments that show a multicomplex pattern of civilisation [11]. The fourth stage in research is writing or historiography.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 History of the Mayong Lor Jepara Ceramic Craft Industry

The people of Mayong Lor mostly work in the field of ceramic crafts. The ceramic industry in Mayong is a hereditary business from its ancestors, until now it still survives [12]. Expertise in processing clay into various ceramic products is passed down from generation to generation. Ceramic crafts in Mayong Lor were initially only local and used for daily needs. Ceramic products began to be recognised outside the Jepara region due to the development of technology and community skills. Improvements in product quality and design also boosted the popularity of ceramic crafts.

The origin of the Mayong Lor community's expertise in ceramic crafts is still very clear. The community has some beliefs about the entry of ceramic crafts in Mayong Lor. The community believes that ceramic crafts have existed around the 6th century during the time of Kanjeng Roro Ayu Mas Semangkin. The figure of Kanjeng Roro Ayu Mas Semangkin is also the forerunner of Mayong Lor village [13]. Ki Datuk Singorojo was the first to teach ceramics-making skills at Padepokan Mayong Lor, led by Kanjeng Roro Ayu Mas Semangkin [14]. The development of ceramic crafts in Mayong Lor since the 6th century is in line with some evidence of ceramic findings from several ancient sites in Indonesia. In the 6th century, ceramics of various types (jugs, pots, bowls, plates, and saucers) have been found in Indonesia [15]. In the 6th century, the Jepara region was under the rule of Ratu Shima from the kingdom of Kalingga where at that time Kalingga was a prosperous kingdom. The Kalingga Kingdom had trade relations with kingdoms outside Indonesia, so it is possible that ceramic crafts had spread in Mayong Lor in the 6th century [16].

Another opinion is that ceramic crafts developed when entering the 15th century. Ceramic crafts in Mayong Lor are thought to have existed since the 15th century or around the reign of Ratu Kalinyamat in Jepara [17]. Ratu Kalinyamat is a figure who is credited with developing Jepara into one of the important economic centres during his time in power. Ratu Kalinyamat developed Jepara towards strengthening the trade and naval sectors. Ratu Kalinyamat became a respected figure on the north coast of Central Java and East Java [18]. The ceramic crafts that developed at that time were certainly not surprising considering the position of Jepara, which had developed into a bustling city of plebuan. Various influences including those related to crafts also began to develop including ceramic crafts.

The community also believes that before the birth of Mayong Lor village, the current Mayong Lor area was called Udagen village. The Udagen village was then famous as a producer of pottery, roof tiles, ceramics and carving. Udagen village continues to develop into a centre for ceramics and other crafts [19]. Mayong Lor village has long been a centre for ceramic handicrafts, with some folklore suggesting that ceramics have been known to the Mayong Lor community for hundreds of years. Historical records also support the existence of local wisdom of ceramic crafts in the Mayong Lor community since hundreds of years ago.

Mayong Lor ceramic crafts can also be referred to as cultural heritage, although it has not yet been recognized by the Indonesian government. Cultural heritage is an overall cultural heritage that has important values of history, science and technology, and or art. Cultural heritage is shared by a community or society and develops from generation to generation, in the flow of a tradition. Cultural heritage can be divided into two types, namely tangible cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage. Tangible and intangible cultural heritage are two types of permanent cultural heritage. These two categories belong to the same category, but have different properties [20].

Mayong Lor ceramic crafts in Jepara have important values in the aspects of history, science and technology, and art. Historically, this craft has been passed down from generation to generation, reflecting the cultural development of the local community that is closely related to ancestral traditions. This craft is not only a symbol of cultural heritage but also one of the evidences of the development of local technology, where ceramic manufacturing techniques have innovated over time. The artistic value contained in each ceramic work shows the aesthetic wealth that continues to grow. This ceramic craft is not only owned by the Mayong Lor community, but is also recognized as an integral part of the culture of the Jepara community as a whole, making this craft a shared cultural identity that continues to be preserved and developed in the midst of modernization.

3.2 Development of the Mayong Lor Jepara Ceramic Craft Industry

Ceramic crafts in Mayong Lor have experienced several dynamics since the colonial period until now (2024). Mayong Lor ceramic crafts have experienced changes in terms of increase and decrease in this long period of time. In 1937, the Dutch colonial government established Mayong Market to sell household pottery crafts and toys such as terbang-terbangan, sapi-sapian, gajah-gajahan, and manuk-manukan [21]. This was certainly very supportive of the Mayong Lor ceramic craft industry at the time. The market became the centre of sales for Mayong Lor ceramics products.

In 1980, Mayong Lor Village became the centre of the ceramic craft industry in Jepara Regency. The status of the centre was granted directly by the Ministry of Industry [22]. Mayong Lor ceramic crafts have not been well managed commercially in the past, the establishment of this industrial center further supports the development of Mayong Lor ceramic crafts. The Mayong ceramic industry center can also be referred to as a creative

industry. The Department of Media, Culture, and Sport (DCMS) of the UK government explains that creative industries are those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent, and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property. In Indonesia, the term creative industry is not used but creative economy. According to the Indonesian government, the creative economy is an economic activity based on individual creativity, skills, and talents to create individual creations and inventions that have economic value and affect the welfare of the Indonesian people. The creative industry in Indonesia can also be defined as the following Industry derived from the utilization of creativity, skills and talents of individuals to create prosperity and employment through the creation and utilization of the individual's creative power and inventiveness [23][24]. The Mayong Lor Ceramic Industry Center then also becomes one of the tools that bring community welfare through the creation of jobs and other economic benefits.

From 1980 to 2005, the government through its various agencies provided training and assistance to ceramic artisans in Mayong Lor. The Mayong Lor ceramic craft industry continues to grow in quantity and quality. The ceramics industry in Mayong Lor village has improved the socioeconomic life of the community because it has been able to absorb labour from within and outside the village. The people of Mayong Lor who previously worked as farmers began to switch to the ceramic craft industry. The community became ceramic entrepreneurs and ceramic craft industry workers. The ceramic handicraft industry has created new jobs such as providing raw materials, fuel and transport. The growing ceramic craft industry has indirectly led to improved transport and communication facilities in Mayong Lor Village. The ceramic craft industry also represents the Mayong Lor community in their efforts to preserve local arts and culture [25]. In 2005, the Pottery/Ceramic Craft Industry Cooperative (KOPINKRA) GEMA was established. This cooperative was used to support the development of the Mayong Lor ceramic craft industry. The cooperative ceased operations in 2024 [26].

The ceramic craft industry has a significant impact on the economy of the Mayong Lor village community. Many people depend on this industry for their livelihood. The Mayong Lor ceramic craft industry has survived to this day because of the cultural awareness of the crafters in carrying out the acculturation process in their families. This acculturation process is seen in social institutions and in informal education. The process contains rules and patterns of relationships aimed at creating an environmental climate for the teaching and learning process between parents and children in natural situations in daily activities in the family environment [27]. Ceramic crafts have become a distinctive cultural identity of Mayong Lor.

The Mayong Lor ceramic craft industry faces various challenges along with modernisation, such as competition with ceramic products from other regions and from abroad. However, innovations in design and production technology help the industry survive and thrive. In the last 5-7 years, ceramic craftsmen have made several innovations to respond to the challenges of the times. Ceramic craft products are not

only about household products, tiles, or bricks. The products produced in the last 5-7 years are more varied, ranging from children's toys that are always adapted to developments in society to aquarium decorations that are currently the latest style [28]. This innovation process is certainly done to adapt to the fast-changing times and modernity.

Mayong Lor's ceramic craft industry faces the challenge of finding young workers, as Mayong Lor's young people have less and less interest in ceramic craft. Young people in Mayong Lor prefer to work in factories in Jepara. The ceramic craft industry is currently dominated by workers aged 30 years and above [29]. Data from BPS Central Java shows that Jepara Regency had 359 large and medium-sized industrial companies in 2021, the second largest in Central Java [30]. This causes the number of labor needs in large and medium industries to increase, which will certainly attract young people, including young people in Mayong Lor. Young people are increasingly less interested in becoming ceramic craftsmen, making the number of ceramic craftsmen decrease every year. Youth in Mayong Lor and surrounding areas prefer to work in large and medium industries (garment industry) with more promising salaries [31].

4 Conclusion

The ceramic craft industry in Mayong Lor, Jepara is an industry that has been around for a long time. Some argue that ceramic crafts in Mayong Lor have existed since the 6th century, and there are also those who argue that ceramic crafts in Mayong Lor have existed since the 15th century. The development of the ceramic craft industry in Mayong Lor cannot be separated from government support. This can be seen from the status of the ceramic craft industry centre given to Mayong Lor village in 1980 by the Ministry of Industry. The ceramic craft industry in Mayong Lor had a heyday from 1980 to 2005. During this time, the government provided a lot of training and assistance to ceramic craftsmen in Mayong Lor. Currently, the ceramic handicraft industry in Mayong Lor faces challenges such as competition with ceramic products from other regions and from abroad, as well as difficulties in finding young workers.

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