

GUSJIGANG: THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP PHILOSOPHY FROM SUNAN KUDUS

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Abstract—Wong Kudus (Kudusnese) is famous for its tenacity in trading. Their trading area was expanded all over Java in the era of Sunan Kudus. Now, Wong Kudus are successful entrepreneurs who are successful in trading all over the world. The tremendous trading passion that embodies the entrepreneurial values is inherited from the prominent figure of the city, Kanjeng Sunan Kudus. Thus, the focus of this research is the entrepreneurship teaching of Sunan Kudus, that is *gusjigang* philosophy. This study used qualitative research method with phenomenological approach to identify the views, knowledge, values, norms, rules existing in a society. The findings showed that the philosophy of *Gusjigang* as the ideal profile of Wong Kudus is still upheld by most people in the Kudus society.

Keywords—*Gusjigang, Sunan Kudus*

I. INTRODUCTION

Drucker [1] suggested that entrepreneurship is an individual's spirit, ability, attitude and behavior in handling the business that leads to the searching, creating, and applying new working methods, technologies and products by increasing efficiency in order to provide better service and gain greater profits. Entrepreneurship has been defined by various professions to mean different things. Entrepreneurship as the pursuit of opportunity through innovative leverage of resources that are for the most part not controlled internally. Modern school of thought claims that the role of the entrepreneur is that of an innovator. Even though the definition of innovation is still widely debatable, it can be concluded that entrepreneurship is the process related risks. By combining the above thoughts, it can be generalized that entrepreneurs are risk bearers, coordinators, organizers, gap-fillers, leaders, and innovators or creative imitators [2].

The existence of entrepreneurial spirit is largely influenced by 1) the environment of habitation, 2) occupation, 3) association, 4) and family. A famous entrepreneur, Nitisemito is an economic activist of Kudus City shaped by the vibrant municipal atmosphere of trade activities. The trading center is located in the *Kliwon* market and the Kudus market in West Kudus and also in smaller markets spread in many villages. The Kudus

people are accustomed with trading world. The commerce actors are mostly committed by Javanese and the Chinese Muslims (the *santri*) [3].

When Sunan Kudus initially began to explore the city, the livelihood of the population was trading. Trade among the community had grown rapidly. It was because of the distance of Demak to Jepara is not too far so that those cities were the fairly busy trading centers at that time [4]. During the reign of Mataram, the area around Kudus is developed into a major rice supplier for Mataram. Towards the end of the 19th century, public prosperity increased again due to the abundance of agricultural products. These crops became important commodities for the traders of Kudus. The home range of Kudus traders come from widespread areas of Java Island [5].

The reliability of Kudus people on the world of commerce can be found in the writings of Lance Castles [5] and Clifford Geertz [6]. Both claimed that Kudus people have been "accustomed" to trade from one city to another in Java island. According to this belief, the trading skills of Kudus people had been inherited from Sunan Kudus as he was also excellent at trading. The truth should be proven since historically the people were not in the coastal area, but they had a "potential" trading skill, considering that they had interacted with the outsiders earlier. This phenomenon was in line with the existence of trading cities in that era [7].

The success of *santri*'s business in Kudus could not be separated from the prominent figure of the city, Sunan Kudus. Sunan Kudus had two teachings which consist of religious teachings or *dakwah* and worldliness teachings in the form of trade or entrepreneurship. Religious teachings were manifested in the form of a value system of harmony and tolerance among religious communities such as the prohibition of slaughtering cows to respect the Hindus. The second teaching was trade or entrepreneurship as exemplified by Sunan Kudus who was also a merchant. Even if drawn to the line of the Holy Prophet Muhammad PBUH, he was "the messenger" and a merchant, so it is reasonable that Muslim scholars are also mostly merchants. In other words, trading is a hallmark of Muslims. Based on the field observations, the

influence of the teaching of *Sunan* Kudus is still adhered to and lives in the behavior of most people in Kudus society nowadays.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative research method since there was a paradigm change in seeing the reality, phenomena, and symptoms. Qualitative research is a method of exploring and understanding the meaning which some individuals or groups of people attribute to social or humanitarian problems [8]. The phenomenological approach is used to study socio-cultural phenomena by initiating the underlying human behavior that is consciousness [9].

III. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Being a trader and a prominent figure, *Sunan* Kudus, is the idol of most people in Kudus. *Sunan* Kudus is also an indisputable merchant with relics whose age is equivalent to *KanjengSunan* life time. Until the day, the relics still can be seen as *dandangan*.

According to Suharso the *dandangan* tradition is initially an opportunity to find a spouse. At *dandangan* event, the prospective bride and groom are given the opportunity to meet. This is not strange considering that the Kudus community embraces an endogamous marriage system based on *nasab* or line of descent. The selection of spouse is also associated with *Gusjigang* that is a principle of choosing husband who has a good moral, is highly-educated, and has trading skill [10].

According to the explanation of an officer from the Mosque and Tomb of *KanjengSunan* Kudus Foundation, it is stated that *dandangan* comes from the word *ndang ...ndang ...ndang* (come on, let's go, or hurry up). The word is derived from the sound of the beaten mosque drum to summon people to pray or do various religious activities. (an interview with Dani, the secretary YM3SK on February 23, 2018).

Dandangan event is considered by some as the teaching of *Sunan* Kudus in terms of entrepreneurship and the characters of Kudus people who are kind and well-mannered, highly-educated, have good trading skill, then known as the character of *Gusjigang*.

The economic atmosphere exists in Kudus because of the *dandangan* event, but not so with the board of *Menara* Mosque and Tomb of *Sunan* Kudus Foundation. They did not even obtain the value of benefits from the event because all are regulated and controlled by the government. The retributions are all taken by the Government of Kudus Regency. However, viewed from historical side, they are supposed to play a role because *dandangan* is an event created from the activity of early announcement of Ramadhan done during *Sunan* Kudus time several centuries ago (interview with Dani Dayak, a secretary of *Menara* Mosque and Tomb of *Sunan* Kudus Foundation, May 25, 2018). Kudus is one of the coastal areas that has a unique cultural style. The Kudus society is a community of *santri* traders. They are

adherents of puritanical Islam as exemplified by *Sunan* Kudus. *Jigang*'s phrase which stands for *Ngaji* (learning) and *Dagang* (trading) gives the image of the Kudus people [11].

Sumintarsih stated that those who know *Gusjigang* are only partly upper-middle businessmen and government officials, and traders of Kudus. *Gusjigang* is the self-image of the Kudus people [12].

Maharromiyati suggested that *Gusjigang* character in practice is very reasonable because by trading, people are able to reach the welfare of life in the world, but they are also demanded to deepen knowledge so that their attitude and behavior become good or noble [13].

Meanwhile, Jalil described *Gusjigang* as the teaching of *Sunan* Kudus which is a spirit that must be maintained in order to improve the quality of self and economy as the provision of life. [14] To be called as *Wong Kudus* (Kudus people), one must have good physical behavior and appearance; good looks, attitude and behavior (*Gus*). This good behavior is then completed by the fact that they are always studying (*Ji*). Then, the word "studying" here means seeking knowledge of both religious and scientific knowledge as provision of life and proved by being trading experts (*Gang*)

Furthermore, Jalil [14] stated that the original meaning of *Gusjigang* was initially from the terminology of *wongngisormenoro*. *Gus* is good on the physical aspects with the appearance of "*maliter*" which is identical with good clothes, nice house, nice external appearance that is identical with a lot of fortune or "*bathi*". Therefore, the symbol of being grateful in enjoying its wealth will be displayed in a good physical form. *Ji* is a recitation associated with a public awareness to perform the pilgrimage while the *Gang* is the identification of economic business of Kudus society as traders.

Edris stated that *Gusjigang* is a teaching taught by *Sunan* Kudus while trade and entrepreneurship are a manifestation of worship that can lead to happiness of the world and the hereafter. Because trading or entrepreneurship does not only provide benefits for themselves, people also provide benefits for others and the surroundings [15].

According to Said, *Gusjigang* is a stereotype of Kudus people. To be called the Kudus people, one must be characterized as a *santri* or highly-educated Muslim as well as an excellent trader [16].

Said's argument is in line with the explanation of a person from *KanjengSunan* Kudus Foundation during the interview. *Sunan* Kudus is indeed a trader, one of the symbols of his wealth is to attach the ceramics to the tower building as well as to reduce the resemblance of the tower with the Hindu temple building. *Sunan* Kudus is also a wood expert because his father comes from Cepu where teak is widely produced. The Bubar Market around the tower is the economic pulse, as well as the place where a number of traders gathered when *Sunan* Kudus was about to deliver the time of the beginning of Ramadhan which is

now known as *dandanganevent* "(an interview with Mr. Denny Dayak, January 28, 2018).

Based on the researchers, Maharrohmiyati, Jalil, and Edris, *Gusjigang* as a philosophy taught by Sunan Kudus is incorrect. The researchers agree with Sumintasih who mentioned that *Gusjigang* as a self-image and Said who called it as the stereotype of Kudus society and an ideal youth [6]. According to the researchers, the spirit of *Gusjigang* is derived from the teaching of *KanjengSunan* Kudus, but *Gusjigang* appeared later and was not at the same time with *Sunan* Kudus time. Therefore, *Gusjigang* exists in the Kudus society but it is not real or abstract. *Gusjigang* emerged later which was the stigma or outsider view of the behavior patterns belonging to the Kudus *santri* businessmen. The role of *Sunan* Kudus is to teach the *dakwah* related to religion together with the *dakwah* about the strategy to be a trader which is then inherited the figure of Kudus *santri* traders who have good behavior, well-studied, and become a trader (work ethic as *wali* and *santri* merchant).

As the time goes by, *Gusjigang* existing now and in the future generation. In addition, it is very interesting to be appointed as a symbol or icon of the Kudus society in order to foster their work ethos and characteristics, or many researchers call them as characters of wong Kudus. Thus, an upgraded *Gusjigang* which becomes a business icon of Kudus society is a figure of religious trader studying in public schools and madrasah (islamic) schools, sponsors of orphans, being active in social activities, and pursuing business rather than being civil servants. This is in line with the teachings of Islam stating that the strong (established) believer is more favored of Allah SWT, than the weak or poor (*daif*) believers. Therefore, poverty itself is explained close to *kufr* (unfaithfulness) (*kaada al-faqr an-yakuunakufra*).

Nevertheless, the present-day *Gusjigang* spirit needs to be actualized in a tangible form to support the development of Kudus people. The *santri* traders are well-behaved, obedient to carry out religious teachings and successful traders. This is the spirit of trade based on the religious teachings held, which Said (2010) called it as the spirit of religious capitalism, and Jalil (2013) called as Spiritual Entrepreneurship, and the researchers mentioned it as the work ethic of the *santri* Kudus.

Based on the results of research conducted to several Kudus people aged 45-50 years in Kudus, it can be proven that people who understand the philosophy of *Gusjigang* are only 36%. This may indicate that *Gusjigang* is not widely known by Kudus people. Thus, it can be concluded that the philosophy of *Gusjigang* is abstract and not real in Kudus. Furthermore, its form is not there but it can be felt by the people of Kudus and used as a guide to behave especially in trading life.

Referring to the theory of the form of culture, *Gusjigang* exists on the first and second form of Koentjaraningrat cultural form. As the ideal form of culture, it is abstract, intangible or photographed. The location is in the head, or in other words, in the mind of

the citizen where the culture lives. *Gusjigang* in Kudus is also referred as an ideal culture called custom governance to the behavior and actions of people in society. In other words, *Gusjigang* is abstract but it affects the minds of Kudus people. Moreover, it is also used as a guide for people's lives.

Gusjigang can also be referred as a social system that contains a patterned behavior of humans. The social system consists of human activities that interact, relate, and mingle with each other, from second to second, day to day, and from year to year following the certain patterns according to the rules of conduct. As a series of human activities in a society, social is concrete, going around every day, observable, photographed, and documented. It can happen because *Gusjigang* is implemented and exposed in action by the Kudus people in daily activities and life.

In short, *Gusjigang* is the crystallization of Sunan Kudus entrepreneurial values, although born or emerged later after the death of Sunan Kudus. Thus, it is being the self-image or stigma of the Kudus people and the hope of the Kudus community towards their children and the future.

IV. CONCLUSION

After in-depth analysis is done, the conclusion of this study is, that *Gusjigang* is a self-image, stereotype of the Kudus people, derived from their prominent figure that is Sunan Kudus but not as contemporaries when *Gusjigang* is manifested and implemented into a typical norm of *wong Kudus*.

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