

# Revitalizing Nationalism Through Commemoration Day of Historical Events

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**Abstract**—This paper aims to examine the dynamics of citizenship and identity formation through historical, social, and ideological-based model of commemorations day. Implementation of various activities to commemorate historical events or national days is often seen as a symbolic and serves as public ceremonial purposes only. This paper wants to criticize those pessimistic views. First, this article would probe the meaning of the commemoration of the national holiday. Then, it would explain various efforts implemented by the Government of Bandung City to preserve the values contained in the commemoration of national days. Through survey research, the results show that the commemoration form of activities conducted through the formal ceremony are still relevant and effective to disseminate, internalize, and institutionalize values and historical significance of the historical event. However, the commemoration days need to be enriched by socializing the local cultural and historical values behind the historical events.

**Keywords**—nationalism; commemoration day; collective awareness; identity

## I. INTRODUCTION

This paper is about the relevance of commemoration days in institutionalizing patriotic values among the youth generation and constructing new identity of citizenship. National days and the anniversary of Bandung City are routinely commemorated every year with various activities, such as flag ceremonies, attractions, exhibitions, competition, entertainment, et cetera. There are at least some national days which are routinely commemorated in Bandung City such as, Bandung *Lautan Api* or Bandung Sea of Fire Day (March, 24<sup>th</sup>), National Education Day (May, 2<sup>nd</sup>), National Awakening Day (May, 20<sup>th</sup>), Indonesian Independence Day (August, 17<sup>th</sup>) and Heroes' Day (November, 10<sup>th</sup>). Besides national days, Bandung City also specifically commemorates the Anniversary of Bandung City every September, 25<sup>th</sup>. Some of the commemoration events are conducted by the City Government and some are separately commemorated by related Local Apparatus Working Units of the City Government, such as the commemoration of Youth Pledge Day which is conducted by the Office of Youth and Sports

Affairs and the commemoration of Teachers' Day which is conducted by the Office of Education and the Indonesian Teachers Association.

The commemoration of national days is conducted with the purpose of preserving the values contained in each national day, such as the commemoration of National Awakening Day, Heroes' Day and Independence Day which aims to instill the spirit of nationalism, patriotism, and unity. Likewise, the commemoration of the Anniversary of Bandung City is intended to remember and to preserve the historical role of Bandung City in fighting against the colonial army. Through these activities, it is expected that the awareness and the sense of belonging of the citizen of Bandung to their city will grow and raise the sense of unity and motivation to reinforce the implementation of Government's agenda of Bandung *Juara* (Bandung the Champion) as communal identity.

During the implementation, some parties consider the commemoration of national days and the anniversary of Bandung City not effective because it is not able to preserve the values contained therein, so that it tends to be just ceremonial, symbolic and entertaining. Some indicators utilized as the reference are, among other things, the fading sense of nationalism, unity, the spirit of sacrifice, corruption, student brawls, et cetera. In the daily life, those behaviors appear among the public who are more interested to imported products than domestic ones, in the act of littering, in the lack of road discipline et cetera.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Some activities conducted to commemorate the days considered important in the historical journey of a nation are related to the effort to foster, to preserve and to strengthen the bonds of the nation. The effort is made particularly to preserve the memory of the events occurred in the past which have an important meaning in the historical journey. Therefore, considering that the formation of the community's life has gone through a quite long process, there are some "historical" momentums or events considered to be the starting point of civilization, the starting point of a struggle, the starting point of the independence, the starting point of a new life et cetera. All those things are pointed out by each community group

based on the agreement and consciousness as a certain cultural community group or as a certain nation.

The effort to form the identity of the concerned community is part of a social process which includes socialization, internalization and institutionalization. At the socialization stage an individual learns and adapts their mindset and attitude to the customs and traditions, the norm system and the rules living among the community. All her/his life an individual keeps on learning to process the sense, desire, passion and emotion which form her/his personality. In the context of the internalization process of the commemoration of historical days, some cultural values which are considered glorious and noble are protected and preserved by the community itself, in which they are expected to form the characters of humans and communities according with the meanings of the events. During the institutionalization process, a process of influencing each other occurs; therefore an institutionalization process must be established comprehensively or in multilevel or multidimensional models. Stages in the process of goal achievement are not something suddenly, spontaneously or experimentally made. They are a process which has taken place for a long time, has been known and accepted by many people and binds each member of the community.

The spirit of nationalism is also formed through ritual practices, both those conducted every day as part of the custom and those which are not conducted every day. A symbol is the cultural media which reflect a certain meaning of a phenomenon attached to certain people or objects (Geertz, 1973: 216). National symbols, such as flags, national anthems, statues and other objects are the artifacts that connect people to nationalism (Cerulo 1995; Smith 1986). Ritual practices, among other things, those conducted through commemoration ceremonies, provide the space to realize the meaning contained in the symbols, both visually and auditor. Durkheim (1995 and Turner (1969) have explained how the atmosphere established in the ceremonies becomes the momentum to foster the sense of nationalism. According to both Durkheim and Turner, choreographies and performances presented collectively in the ceremonies and commemoration activities will foster the awareness of social cohesion among the participants of the activities. The effervescence they experience among the crowd brings the individuals to collective situations, generating a 'collective atmosphere' (Durkheim 1995: 217- 18), or that which is called by Turner (1969: 132-36, 153) 'spontaneous community'.

Public spaces decorated with these symbols of identity, such as flags, banners, quotations or songs played during certain commemoration, become the parameter to form national solidarity (Turner, 1967). These objects form the bond that unites them, both auditor and visually (Cerulo, 1995). Nevertheless the existence of these objects does not automatically form a collective bond. Durkheim (1995) has stated that a collective bond is not merely formed through ritual behavior, but through collective actions while the ritual occurs.

### III. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted using the survey method through distribution of questionnaire to find out the response of the people who had participated in the commemoration activities of national days and the anniversary of Bandung City. Respondents of this research are the participants who had participated in those commemoration activities, consisting of students of junior high schools and senior high schools in Bandung City; the board or members of community organizations in Bandung City; civil servants of the Government of Bandung City; and legislators of the Local House of Representatives of West Java Province.

Respondents were selected purposively, according to the objective of the research, that is, to find out the experience in the commemoration of national days, thus the category of selected respondents were those who always attended every commemoration conducted by the Government of Bandung City. After finding out the category of respondents who always attended every commemoration, we sought the number of participants per category. The sample size was determined proportionally per category of respondents, using Taro Yamane's formula (in Rakhmat, 1999). The sample size is 376 respondents, consist of student, choir, community organization, civil servants, and members of local parliament.

The data from questionnaire was subsequently analyzed by using a descriptive statistical technique for quantitative data and an interpretative technique for reading the result of the data processing. The result of the data analysis is the answer to the problem studied.

### IV. FINDINGS

#### **Respondents' Opinion on Socialization, Internalization and Institutionalization of Values and Meaning in Commemoration Activities of National Days and the Anniversary of Bandung**

Formal ceremonies are one of the methods utilized by the government to instill the values of nationalism and patriotism among the next generation. Besides ceremonies, there are a variety of methods that can be utilized to achieve the objective. The main thing that becomes the essence of the commemoration is the inheritance of certain values which are viewed as important to form the identity of citizenship. The inheritance of those values occurs through a cultivation process which includes socialization, internalization and institutionalization.

Socialization is the inheritance process of values contained in the commemoration of national days, which is conducted by utilizing several ways and channels. Most of the respondents have known the meaning and importance of the commemoration of historical days, particularly the commemoration of Independence Day (see Table 1). It is not surprising because the Independence Day has been socialized even since the respondents have not yet attended school. The commemoration of Independence Day is also conducted up to the community level (neighborhood association and citizens'

association), therefore the respondents have a high level of knowledge on the values, meaning and importance of the commemoration.

**Table 1**  
**Tendencies of Respondents' Knowledge about the Values, Meaning, and Importance of the Commemoration of Historical Days**

Commemoration of Historical Day	Historical Value		Meaning		Importance	
	Tend to Know	Tend to Not Know	Tend to Know	Tend to Not Know	Tend to Know	Tend to Not Know
Bandung the Sea of Fire	92.12	7.87	83.47	16.53	87.67	12.34
National Awakening	84.77	15.22	81.1	18.9	85.04	14.95
National Education	87.67	12.33	89.24	10.75	90.56	9.45
Independence Day	97.64	2.36	98.16	1.83	96.85	3.15
Heroes' Day	95.54	4.46	95.54	4.46	95.27	4.73
Anniversary of Bandung City	88.97	11.02	87.4	12.6	90.03	9.97

Source: Research Result, processed, 2015

The data suggest that respondents tend to know the values, meaning and importance of the commemoration of Independence Day, Heroes' Day, National Education Day and Bandung the Sea of Fire Day. Meanwhile, the tendency of not knowing the values, meaning and importance of the commemoration occurs on National Awakening Day, Bandung the Sea of Fire Day (tending to not know the meaning and importance of the commemoration of Bandung the Sea of Fire Day). Respondents' tendency to know less about the historical value, meaning and importance of the commemoration of the anniversary of Bandung City is interesting to observe because it indicates that socialization of the Anniversary of Bandung City has not been optimally conducted.

The next process of the dissemination of struggle values in the commemoration of historical days is internalization. This is a process of cultivating the values, meaning and urgency of the commemoration within the individuals' self. In order to reach the process, after obtaining the knowledge, the individuals will change it into comprehension. The survey result shows that respondents have understood historical values and meaning contained in the commemoration of the six holidays. The data is not much different from the respondents' comprehension of the urgency or the importance of the commemoration of the six historical days, as depicted in the following table.

**Table 2**  
**Respondents' Comprehension of the Importance of the Commemoration of Historical Days**

Commemoration of Historical Day	%				
	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
a. Bandung the Sea of Fire	28.61	58.53	8.92	3.94	0
b. National Awakening	25.46	55.38	15.49	3.15	0.52
c. National Education	34.12	56.43	6.04	2.62	0.79
d. Independence Day	43.83	52.23	3.67	0.26	0
e. Heroes' Day	29.4	67.45	2.89	0.26	0
f. Anniversary of Bandung City	32.28	60.37	6.82	0.52	0

Source: Research Result, processed, 2015

**Note:** SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; NAND = Neither Agree Nor Disagree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

Based on the data on respondents' comprehension of the values, meaning and importance of the six historical days, it is known that respondents' comprehension of the values, meaning and importance of Proclamation Day and Heroes' Day tend to be well understood by the majority of respondents, while the commemoration of other days is not wholly understood. For example, some people tend to not understand the meaning and urgency of the commemoration of Bandung the Sea of Fire. Similarly, some respondents tend to not understand the values and meaning of the anniversary of Bandung City.

The next stage after internalization is institutionalization, which is a process to institutionalize or familiarize practices of the commemoration of historical days so that they become part of the respondents' daily life. In order to find out to what extent institutionalization has been established, it appears in the growth of the awareness, the sense of solidarity (togetherness), collective actions, cohesiveness, willingness to participate and the request to the City Government to conduct the commemoration (see Table 3). Generally, the opinion of most respondents on the indicators has indicated the tendency to be positive towards the six historical days. Most of the respondents agree that the commemoration activities which have been conducted have raised the public's awareness that such commemoration is important to conduct and that the public's consciousness about the meaning contained in the commemoration has been raised.

**Table 3**  
**The Rise of Public Awareness of the Urgency and Meaning of the Commemoration**

Commemoration of Historical Day	Awareness			
	Urgency		Meaning	
	Tend to Agree	Tend Not to Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend Not to Agree
a. Bandung the Sea of Fire	73.49	26.51	65.88	19.4
b. National Awakening	66.14	33.86	59.06	23.9
c. National Education	73.49	26.51	67.72	16.3
d. Independence Day	81.89	18.11	75.59	15
e. Heroes' Day	76.12	23.88	72.18	15.5
f. Anniversary of Bandung City	77.69	22.31	70.6	17.1

Source: Research Result, processed, 2015

In general, the research result revealed through the data processing above indicates that the cultivation process which includes socialization, internalization and institutionalization has taken place well through the forms of commemoration activities conducted by the City Government of Bandung. Nevertheless, the achievements differ in each kind of commemoration; some have obtained a fine achievement in knowledge, comprehension and habituating because the historical days have been popular among the public, such as Independence Day and Heroes' Day, but on the other hand some need an improvement in the achievement of knowledge, comprehension and habituating, such as the commemoration of the Anniversary of Bandung City, National Awakening Day and National Education.

**The Impact of the Commemoration of Historical Days on the Rise of the Awareness of Citizenship and Identity as Residents of Bandung Champion**

The assessment of the result of the institutionalization of the values, meaning and urgency of the organization of commemoration activities has been confirmed in the respondents' answer related to the impact of the organization of the commemoration. Majority of respondents agree that the organization of commemoration activities can unite the residents of Bandung, revive the pride as the residents of Bandung and eventually form the identity as Bandung Juara. It appears in the following data.

**Table 4**  
**The Impact of the Organization of Commemoration Activities of Historical Days**

Commemoration of Historical Day	Impact					
	Uniting the residents		Reviving the pride		Forming the identity of Bandung Juara	
	Tend to Agree	Tend to Not Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to Not Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to Not Agree
a. Bandung the Sea of Fire	93.44	6.56	95.01	4.99	95.54	4.46
b. National Awakening	77.95	22.05	78.48	21.52	79.53	20.47
c. National Education	77.95	22.05	78.22	21.78	80.05	19.95
d. Independence Day	90.81	9.22	88.71	11.29	88.98	11.02
e. Heroes' Day	83.99	16.06	83.46	16.54	83.46	16.54
f. Anniversary of Bandung City	93.44	6.56	93.70	6.30	95.34	4.72

Source: Research Result, processed, 2015

The data above indicates that on the formation of the identity of Bandung Champion, respondents have an opinion that the commemoration Bandung the Sea of Fire Day and the Anniversary of Bandung City is important to conduct. It confirms that the commemoration of local events is more effective in forming the collective identity of the city residents compared to the commemoration of national days. There is geographical proximity that can be utilized to establish emotional closeness and eventually the identity as the resident of the city. Meanwhile, it needs attention that the respondents' assessment indicates a high tendency to not agree that the commemoration of National Awakening Day and National Education Day has an impact on the unity of the residents of Bandung, reviving the pride and identity of Bandung Champion. The identity of Bandung Champion also includes the achievement in education, but the respondents' assessment of the impact of the commemoration of National Education Day on the achievement of Bandung Champion indicates that the form of the commemoration activities which have been conducted needs to be revitalized with activities that directly relate to the improvement of the quality achievement of human resources in education.

**V. CONCLUSION**

The commemoration of local historical/important days can strengthen the identity of Bandung Champion. Related to the affirmation of this identity, it becomes important to integrate the commemoration event with other events which have cultural values because the identity of Bandung Champion can also formed by showing off the excellence of Sundanese culture as the majority and dominant culture of the residents of Bandung City.

This integrated commemoration model can also make the budgeting more efficient because in a commemoration some activities can be conducted simultaneously. Special features of Bandung City can also enrich the content of the commemoration; for example, the commemoration of Native

Language Day is filled with the introduction of the Sundanese year, the Sundanese alphabet, the Sundanese costume et cetera. This integrated commemoration model can be an alternative that the commemoration of important events should not always be conducted on separate days, but they can be commemorated together, provided that their value and meaning contents relate to each other.

In realizing the identity of Bandung Champion, the local culture, should be comprehensively and thoroughly studied or observed in order that the local wisdom contained within it can be revitalized as the content in the commemoration of important days for Bandung City. Comprehension of local culture needs to be specialization which complements the commemoration ceremonies of those historical days, for example, through a *road show* to socialize their historical values, so that the public will understand the background of the commemoration. The commemoration of important days should also become an event of nostalgia to appreciate the contribution of the leading figures of Bandung City; therefore they can pass down the values to the next generation. Historical context should enrich the content to affirm socialization, institutionalization and internalization. It can also be enriched with social context and ideological context.

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