

**ISOLATED SOCIETY DESCRIPTION OF KANGEAN ISLAND  
IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIAN ERA:  
ANALYSIS OF DOCUMENTARY MOVIE  
"THE IRONY OF KANGEAN ISLANDS "**

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**ABSTRACT**

The research is a short documentary movie entitled “**The Irony of Pulau Kangean**”. This movie contains the meaning, symbol and the language that represents the phenomena of isolated society of Kangean island in contemporary Indonesian era. It describes the true life of Kangean islands between tradition and modern life that be avoided and how the isolated society of Kangeans island understand the meaningful life in the middle of current transformation in contemporary era. The method is visual method that refer to visual culture analysis that is not just how the picture looks, but how the picture is seen, what is important about the picture, what for the picture was made, not on the picture itself, but how the picture was seen and interpreted (Rose, 2011). The phenomena of Kangean society shown in the form of documentary movie that describe isolated society of Kangean islands in modern era. The purpose is to know how media and modern life affect the way they

interpret life through the visuals of this movie. Theories used in this research are documentary movie, visual anthropology, anthropology media and representation.

***Keywords: Documentary movie, visual anthropology, anthropological media and representation***

## **INTRODUCTION**

This research is an ethnographic documentary film. The reason why the researcher chooses documentary film because this film can show the real life. Documentary film can be as a medium for solve social problem such as justice, society, poverty exploitation and so on. This film also able to touch the moral, ethical dimensions and more deeply about human awareness. The documentary film on this research entitled "The Irony of Kangean Islands". This film describes isolated society life of Kangean islands in contemporary Indonesian era; how the isolated society of Kangean islands understand the meaningful life, how their socio-cultural practices and another phenomenon that happen in their modern life.

The history of Kangean islandw society is well-known, friendly, courteous, religious, upholding the values of culture, norms and ethics that adopted in society. Another, the society have different language and dialect between the regions. Kangean people are all Muslims<sup>1</sup>. Islamic culture are interpreted and actualized in the Kangean culture, so there will be variant. The role of the teacher (*guru mengaji/kyae morok*) becomes very important because learning Al-Qur'an is first and main for the people of Kangean. Children are able to read Al-Qur'an first taught by the teacher (*guru mengaji*). The development of the children to read Al-Qur'an will be meaningful for their parents, as the expression of reciting the Al-Qur'an for the hereafter (*ngaji reya bende akherat*). The location of the dispersed village on the coast (*paseser*), between the two hills (*lembe*) and the hills (*dera'*) make the influence of the teacher (*guru mengaji*) very strong in that area. The teacher (*guru mengaji*) is also ritual leader who master the religious magic (*pot eka*) so often called shaman (*dukun*) and village religious elite.

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<sup>1</sup>Badan Pusat Statistik Sumenep, *Sumenep dalam Angka 1999*. (Sumenep: BPS, 1999), 15-17.

There are many kinds of traditions and cultures in Kangean, such as *gendeng dumik*, *kokocoran*, *larung sesaji*, *ludruk*, and another activity like religious traditions; *takbir keliling*, *tadarus*, *kompolon ngaji*, and *ngaji kitab*. The adolescents usually play traditional games after school, such as *geseng*, *lajur*, *errem-erremen* and *lajengan*. Traditions and many kinds of traditional games happened at that time until 2000s.

Along with the development of era, at 2000s the technology, such as television and handphone enter this island. At that time, not many people that have television and handphone. There are two until three people that have that technology from five hundred population.

The presence of technology (television and handphone) are something special in Kangean islands. The society that know there are new technology they will go together in someone's house that has television for watch that, although the house is very far, and they have to through the forest and coast, bring torches and flashlights, they also have to pay five hundred rupiahs to watch that (at 2000s). Usually, they watch serial of *angling dharma* and mak *lampir*, so on. As time goes by, there are many of the society that have television. At 2011, most of the society has already have television and handphone. They are seldom to watch television in someone's house and borrow handphone for communication, because they already have that.

With the technology, they easier to get the information and for communication, such as news and television shows. In the other hand, from the information and television shows influence their life that make the culture and traditional values are friction. The most visible thing is the change of their life style, such as how to dress, how to make up, how to shopping and the adolescents' games. The changes are mostly from what they see from television shows. such as the style of dress like an actress (i.e.: Soimah, Ramzi), luxurious lifestyle and group like *boy anak jalanan* film. The other, there is a society willingness to buy something that is not important for them, but they buy that for fulfill their willingness with debt, because of their economics they cannot paid. The adolescents also seldom to play traditional games, such as *gasing*, *petak umpet*, *lajur* and *benteng-bentengan*, but many of them play modern games, such as POU, angry Bird, COC, and other games from handphone.

They like to imitate and applicate from the advertisement or television' shows in daily life. On the other hand, they less to get something that they want to have, it is from their financial and their morality. Kangean people have low salary, in real they have to get something that they want to get, if they cannot get that they will feel shy and when in the lower rank than the other, and it can emerge the mental disorder, such as envy. This situation is easy to trigger the out of the behavior norm and it can be to the law, because of their look. That phenomenon is happening in this contemporary era that will describe in this documentary film.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Ethnographic Documentary Film**

Ethnographic film is the results of reality creativity and made by documentary format. Ethnographic film contains of meaningful life philosophy that use speech language. Ethnographic film was introduced by Jean Rouch, an anthropologist and also one of the founders of New Wave in French cinema entitled *Les Maitres Fuos* (1952). Ethnographic documentary film has an objective principle that allows the spontaneity of objects to be filmed rather than changes like some other film. The director is only give the direction that does not has fixed scenario. Ethnographic photos or film also have a principle that is not really different, where the results are the picture of life or modern or traditional people' behavior. The picture or photo contains a meaningful behavior that can be interpreted so from that film or photo ethnography able to read the breadth and depth of life behavior. So, people is the subject in the photo or film ethnography that feel free and naturally.

### **Anthropology Visual**

Visual anthropology is a sub-division of anthropological disciplines, the use and anthropology visual studies focus on the use of visual systems and visual culture in anthropological research field applications. There are two focuses of visual anthropology, i.e.: first, the use of visual material in anthropological research and second, visual anthropology is a study of visual and cultural systems that are visible and produce and use

the results of visual anthropology (Morphy, 1999:1-2), to clarify it Ruby Jay said that anthropology visual studies is to analyze the various completeness of the visual systems, determine the completeness of the visual system and various conditions, include contained interpretation, and connect certain systems to the complexities of various social processes and political cultures where the systems are part of it, second, the visual study is to describe the various visual purpose or meaning of the dissemination of anthropological knowledge itself (Morphy 1999:2).

### **Anthropology Media**

Anthropology is disciplines which makes people with all the aspects that surround it or can be focused on the elements of culture in which the art, language, technology, livelihoods and etc. In coming to the object of course need media as intermediary connecting. Media actors of anthropology as we have seen that the focus of anthropological media is culture. The connection with Media Anthropology is the production and consumption of culture. How are cultural messages produced? Who is the actor? How are cultural messages consumed? Much research shows that the development of world culture is directly proportional to the production and consumption of culture itself. Cultural development is highly dependent on factors of production and cultural consumption. Basically, the scope of Media Anthropology comes from cultural Anthropology and journalistic practice, among others: 1. A study of the influence of the media, especially the audio-visual media and the internet relating to media consumption or media content, 2. The study of the process of creating cultural products into the mass media industry products, 3. The study of interpretation process of mass culture products by various types of audiences, 4. Study of media content analysis. Anthropological media studies essentially discuss the construction of cultural symbols in daily life that are exchanged by the mass media.

### **Representation**

Representation works through representational systems. This representational system consists of two important components, that is concept in mind and language. These two components are related. The concept of something we have in our mind make us know the meaning of it. However, meaning will not be communicated without language. As a

simple example, we understand the concept of 'glass' and know its meaning. We will not be able to explain the meaning of the 'glass' (for example, the things that use by people to drink), if we cannot express it in a language that can be understood by others.

Therefore, the most important thing in this representational system is the group that can produce and exchange meaning well, means that the group with a common background of knowledge so can create almost similar understanding. According to Stuart Hall, "Member of the same culture must share concepts, images, and ideas which enable them to think and feel about the world in roughly similar ways. They must share, broadly speaking, the same 'cultural codes'. In this sense, thinking and feeling are themselves 'system of representations'.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The method of production in making of this documentary film is the visual method. Visual culture refers to the conditions in which the visual has become part of the social life. In the book *Metode Penelitian Studi Media dan Kajian Budaya* page 128 by Rachmah Ida, explained that according to Gillian Rose (2001), modernity is centered on the visual aspect. Visual is the main thing in postmodernity, "postmodern is a visual culture" (Mirzoeff, 1998). The visual culture is concerned with the effort of the image to visualize the social differences. Rose (2001) explains that drawing is never just an illustration. Drawing is the place to construct and reveal social differences. The author of the visual culture is not only concerned with how the image looks, but how the images are viewed. What is important about the picture is not the picture itself, but rather how the image is viewed by a particular audience, who sees it in a certain way (Rose, 2001). The emphasis of the visual culture is on the interest of visual images in a wider culture. The concept in visual methodology that must be understood is representation, the meaning contained in the visual image can be seen implicitly or explicitly, consciously or unconsciously, perceived as truth or illusion, science or general logic; and these meanings are daily conversation, elaboration of rhetoric, art, opera film, or mosaic, and different groups in society interpret the image of the world in different ways (Ida, 2011, p. 85).

The visual culture is not only how the image appears, but how the image is viewed, what is important about the image, not the image itself, but how it is viewed by a particular audience who sees it in a certain way (Rose, 2001) emphasis visual images in a wider culture. According to Gillian Rose (2001), there are three visual research areas, namely Site of Self, Site of Production, and Site of Audience, in this film research the researcher acts as Site of Production, and Site of Audience.

## DISCUSSION

Kangean Islands is a group of islands which is the easternmost part of Madura Island, Java Sea. The archipelago consists of 60 islands, with an area of 487 km<sup>2</sup>. The largest islands are Kangean Islands (188 km<sup>2</sup>), Paliat Island, Sadulang Island and Sepanjang Island. The origins of the Kangean are a mixture of people from Madura, Sapudi-Raas (Podey), Chinese, Arabic, Banjar, Malay, Bawean, Javanese, Balinese, Bugis-Makassar, Bajo, and Mandar. The arrival of the Madurese, Sapudi-Raas on Kangean Islands is related to work, trade and marriage factors.



*Picture : livelihood activities of the Kangean islands (fishery and agriculture)*

The main livelihood activities of the Kangean islands are fishery and agriculture, agriculture is practiced on certain islands that have fertile land, because in some islands in Kangean the land is arid and less fertile, then the agriculture is limited to fulfill daily life. On the Paliat and Sadulang islands (the site of this research) the main livelihoods are fishermen, catching fish and planting seaweed and some farming. On the Sadulang and

Paliat islands, the fish that catch placed in a reservoir that contains of sea water and sent to elsewhere or fish collectors to sell. While for mothers there is no main job, the average mothers on Sadulang and Sapeken islands work as housewives, and some help to work to plant seaweed (Sadulang island) and make craft "*porosan*" (Paliat island). The livelihoods and economic results of the Kangean Islands (Paliat and Sadulang islands) from the viewpoint of the growth of the fishery, agriculture and craft production sectors indicate a slowdown. The local government lacks of the support to provide adequate facilities for economic progress and no special training for the community to improve their skills, so there is no progress in society and has consequence to the below average economic earnings.

For formal education in Kangean islands (especially Paliat and Sadulang islands) it can be said that backward. There are several factors that cause such a lack of expertise from the island itself, educational facilities and infrastructure which is not adequate and low economic ability of parents which does not allow for participation in funding participation. School rarely provide books to their students, the learners do not have a single textbook, only the teacher has it, moreover there is not a single school library nor a public library in the Kangean islands (Paliat and Sadulang islands). For non-formal education in Paliat and Sadulang islands are to study the Al- Qur'an that is held every school, read Al-Qur'an for the Kangean people is very important thing because learning Al- Qur'an is the first thing and main for the Kangean society. Children are able to read Al-Qur'an first taught by the teacher (*guru mengaji*). The development of the child from being unable to be able to read Al-Qur'an becomes meaningful to the parents, as the expression of reciting the Al-Qur'an for the afterlife (*ngaji reya bende akherat*). Culturally people in the archipelago is a friendly and polite society, the level of care and mutual cooperation of fellow citizens is very high. Kangean islands have many cultures such as language: Sadulang and Paliat islands have different language, for sadulang island using Bajo language which is the language of people Sulawesi, while for Paliat island use Kangean language that resemble with Madura language. For art activities in the Kangean islands, (Paliat islands) is "*gendheng dumik*" and "*ludruk*" while for the children or adolescents play traditional games such as *geseng*, *lane*, *errem-erremen* and *lajengan*.



Traditional community activities, traditional games and cultural art were very thick at that time (in 2000s), The period in which the modern era has not yet entered the community in the Kangean islands. No information and media access (such as television and handphone) which can provide information to the society. Furthermore, as the development of information technology, with the presence of electronic media has reached the society of Kangean islands, bring a million information which is not known borderline, offering new information and ideas to the society. This presence certainly brings influence to the life of a particular social group. These influences include both the positive and negative influences, this is very closely related to the occurrence of social change, which change the system of values, norms, patterns behave, and social structures that exist in the society. The social change can be seen in terms of disruption of continuity between social units even though the situation is relatively small. These changes include structure, function, values, norms, institutions, and all aspects resulting from interactions between people, organizations or communities, including cultural change. Social change is divided into two forms as follows: 1) Change in the meaning of progress or profitable, 2) Changes in the sense of regression is that which brings a less favorable effect for society. If social change can move toward a progress, society will develop. Instead, social change can also cause people's lives to decline.



*Picture : Activities of Children (Traditional Game & Modern Game)*

The entry of information technology to the Kangean islands society should bring a good impact for the lives of villagers, the introduction of new ideas, and the emergence of new social values, to supplement or replace the old social values are some examples of social changes in aspects of life caused by the effects of information technology. Villagers are beginning to recognize cultures that come from outside the village, or even get to know the culture of the city. As noted above, new ideas for the planning of village infrastructure and infrastructure structure, so it can advance the village more modern and more efficient in the arrangement.

But, something that happen in the Kangean islands change in the meaning of regression has not been prepared in receiving the information technology. Modern they are meaningful with the changing cultural changes that they have, such as lifestyle, fashion style, hairstyles (which they imitate from watching television), other artistic and traditional activities began to shift, depletion the sense of kinship, increasing individualist attitudes, increased levels of competition, increasing consumptive lifestyle. In this case, the Kangean islands prefer to the pleasure (hedonism), Society want it all success, whereas on the other hand there are also limitations of economic revenues below the average, finally, come up a new culture of the Kangean society that is indebted with the consequence of paying twice the price. For adolescents, they more interested in western culture, the art and original traditions they had abandoned, for example, the traditional game of *gasing*, *lajeungan*, etc that replaced by PoU game, angry bird, etc. The culture of read Al-Quran and study after Maghrib has begun to be replaced by watch television. For the mothers, they began love shopping more than the ability that they have. The irony occurred in the Kangean islands society, between following the desires, and lifestyle with limited economic revenues below average.

## **CONCLUSION**

The research of documentary film has the meaning of modern life of Kangean islands. They try to follow and negotiate the culture and modern life that they see and watch. But, on the other hand they are less able to realize and accept the values of modern life, so that things begin to change the existing traditions, increasing individualist attitudes,

increasing levels of competition and increasing consumptive lifestyles. There are several factors that influence such as underdevelopment of education, low economic level and lack of local government for the society progress.

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