**THE COMMODIFICATION OF *USING* CULTURES**

**AND HEGEMONIC POWER IN POST-REFORMATION BANYUWANGI**

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**ABSTRAK**

Artikel ini membahas dan mengkritisi inkorporasi dan komodifikasi identitas budaya Using yang dijalankan oleh rezim Abdullah Azwar Anas di Banyuwangi, Jawa Timur. Dengan menyandingkan teori identitas kultural dengan perspektif komodifikasi dan hegemoni di tengah-tengah era posmodern-neoliberal, artikel ini akan mendiskusikan usaha-usaha rezim untuk menginkorporasi, mengartikulasikan, dan mengkomodifikasi ekspresi kultural Using ke dalam beberapa program karnaval. Digerakkan oleh hasratnya untuk mempromosikan budaya Using secara gloal, Anas menciptakan banyak karnaval dan festival di bawah baner *Banyuwangi Festival*, seperti “Banyuwangi Ethno Carnival”, “Banyuwangi Beach Jazz Festival”, “Parade Gandrung Sewu”, dan beragam program lainnya. Secara ekonomis, Anas memimpikan karnaval-karnaval tersebut akan mendukung pertumbuhan ekonomi regional melalui aktivitas pariwisata yang melibatkan wisatawan domestik dan internasional. Secara politik, karnaval-karnaval itu akan mendukung usaha rezim untuk menegosiasikan kepentingan politik mereka untuk memproduksi konsensus. Sebagai catatan simpulan, kami akan mengkritisi karnaval-berbasis-identitas yang di dalamnya tujuan ekonomi-politik rezim tidak sesuai dengan permasalahan pengembangan budaya. Bagi para pelaku kultural di tingat bawah, seperti seniman rakyat, karnaval-karnaval itu tidak berarti apa-apa, karena rezim tidak mengeluarkan program strategis untuk memberdayakan dan melestarikan seni pertunjukan.

**Kata kunci:** identitas budaya Using, Festival Banyuwangi, pariwisata, komodifikasi, hegemoni

**Abstract**

This article aims to discuss and criticize the incorporation and commodification of *Using* cultural identity undergone by Abdullah Azwar Anas regime in Banyuwangi, East Java. By juxtaposing theory of cultural identity with commodification and hegemony perspective in the midst of postmodern-neoliberal times, this article will discuss critically the regime efforts to incorporate, articulate, and *commodify* Using cultural expressions into some carnival programs. Driven by his desire to promote Using cultures globally, since 2011 Anas has created many carnivals and festivals under banner *Banyuwangi Festival*, such as “Banyuwangi Ethno Carnival”*,* “Banyuwangi Beach Jazz Festival”*,* “Parade Gandrung Sewu”, and other various programs. Economically, Anas has dreamt the carnivals will support the regional economic growth through tourism activities involving domestic and international tourists. Politically, the carnivals can support the regime’s efforts to negotiate their political concern in order to produce consensus. As concluding remarks, we will criticize such identity-based-carnivals in which the regime’s ideal political-economic goals have not been appropriate with the problem of cultural development. For the cultural actors in the grassroots level, such as folk artists, the carnivals have meant nothing, because the regime hasn’t issued strategic programs for empowering and sustaining local performing arts.

**Keywords**: Using cultural identity, Banyuwangi Festival, tourism, commodification, hegemony

**Introduction**

In January 2016, the government of Banyuwangi, East Java, received “UNWTO Awards for Excellence and Innovation in Tourism” in *The Innovation of Public Policy and Governance* category. Of course, this achievement is not peculiar because since the first term of his authority, precisely in 2011, Abdullah Azwar Anas (hereafter AAA) has committed to the internationalization of Banyuwangi tourism destination to attract the coming of foreign tourists into this east frontier of Java through some spectacular events such as *Tour De Ijen, Banyuwangi Ethno Carnival* (BEC)*, Paju Gandrung Sewu* (PGS)*,* and *Banyuwangi Jazz Festival*. Under the tagline *Banyuwangi Festival,* since 2012 AAA and his apparatuses have created more carnival events; valorize some communal-agrarian rituals, incorporates traditional art performances, and international sport events. All those events have contributed to the leap of tourists taking vacation into some outstanding natural heritages and enjoying cultural activities in this regency. Slamet Kariyono, the secretary of the regency, claimed that during the last five year (2010 to 2015), there was the radical leap of tourists visiting Banyuwangi (Rachmawati, 2016). Domestic tourists increased 161 % from 651,500 people in 2010 to 1,701,230 people in 2015, while foreign tourists increased 210 % from 13,200 people in 2010 to 41,000 people in 2015.

What interesting to discuss is that AAA has had political-economic awareness for capitalizing and exploiting the dominant ethnic cultures in Banyuwangi, *Using*. Indeed rituals and art performances for Banyuwanginese become the most significant marks of cultural identity through which they persistently construct and share common values for strengthening communal identity. For AAA, some Using cultures such as *gandrung* (a traditional companionship dance) and *seblang* (a fertility ritual) have enchanting and attractive appearances which can be incorporated and developed through tourism programs. During the New Order era, the regional government also incorporated Using identity as the strategy to establish a unique dominant culture as a regional icon which might support the existence of a national culture. However, AAA as a smart young regent who has got national and international experience has considered the New Order regime’s programs and their continuity in post-Reformation regimes before him as *out-of-date* mode because the programs couldn’t create spectacular events which could be promoted into national and international tourism packages. Even though, he has known that in the contemporary era, many national and international tourists want to find beautiful ethnic attraction with particular modification, besides the natural landscape.

Therefore, since 2011 he has decided to use *carnival* and *festival* mode as the aesthetic principle of Using *commodification*. By commodification, following Adorno and Horkeimer (1993), we mean a process of using cultural uniqueness as commodity driven by commercial formula focused on the massive and standard products. Further, the capitalist producers always mobilize the higher values of the products as the significant and useful entities for satisfying all human needs, including amusements, will to knowledge, education, and psychological escapism from the routine activities. Of course, in contemporary term, it is not only the capitalist faction who can practice the commodification principles. The state regimes with capitalistic orientation in running their development programs, particularly related to culture and tourism programs also can create commodified products by incorporating and exposing ethnic characteristics in popular patterns (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009). The commodification of ethnic cultures into industrial or tourism mechanism—not always taking massive cultural products as the model—intertwines with the popularity of postmodernity in the midst of metropolitan societies and the hegemony of neoliberalism in the contemporary political economy conducted by post-colonial countries. Such condition and political-economy system becomes important consideration, at least discursively, in talking about various carnivals and festivals in Banyuwangi, because AAA has been clever enough in incorporating Using identity as well as understanding its economic potency.

**Theoretical Framework and Methodology**

Many thinkers and practitioners of postmodernism consider contemporary era as the right and precise times to celebrate and empower various ethnic, traditional, and religious cultural expressions in the midst of radical changing in technology which enable the simulation, repetition, crossover, mixture, and revival of them in the very sophisticated narratives or programs (Lyotard, 1984: xxiv-xxv; Featherstone, 2007: 7; Hutcheon, 1989; Harper, 1994; Ashley, 1994; Malpas, 2005). The advance of such postmodern condition makes neoliberal capitalist producers very pleasant since they have new creative resources for producing entertaining and attractive industrial products. Indeed, neoliberalism in economic term idealizes the deregulation principle of the state for the public interest by which the market mechanism will take control and determine all economic, social, and cultural process, so all individuals will get the same chance in the competition for getting a better life (Turner, 2008: 115; Clarke, 2005: 50-51; Lapavitsas, 2005; Duménil & Lévy, 2005: 9; Palley, 2005: 20-24; Harvey, 2007: 64-87; England & Ward [eds], 2007; Howard & King, 2008: 219-220). However, in cultural logic, neoliberalism is ‘a sacred thesis’ to end the *unfinished job* of modernism, namely its rejection to traditionalism, such as irrational, magic and exotic discourses and practices. Therefore, adopting Jameson’s term of postmodernism as the condition of the late capitalism (Jameson, 1998), we see the celebration of traditional, religious, or ethnic cultures with more productive and economic sense as the bridging concept which juxtaposes the two ideological terms, postmodernism and neoliberalism. The very complicated past times of Asian and African people, for example, have been commodified into various Disney animations (Bryman, 1995: 100-112; Byrne & McQuillan, 1999). Even, sacred historical events, religious beliefs and teachings, and traditional rituals have been represented into various popular narratives (Einstein, 2008).

So, talking about cultural identity in the context of neoliberalism is not merely talking about the shared communal values and practices. Indeed in a romantic-but-political perspective, the concept of identity idealizes the existence of core value—based on cultural and historical roots—shared and believed by the community’s members by which they can empower their sense of belonging, communalism, and solidarity as the three significant conditions for conducting collective agendas of strengthening position in the midst of dominant culture (Alcoff, Harmes-Garcia, Mohanty, & Moya, 2006; D’Cruz, 2008; Sawyer, 2006; Anagnostou, 2009; Gimenez, 2006; Nicholson, 2008). However, for the government apparatuses, playing *post-colonial exotic,* a paradigmatic framework concerning on the marketing of traditional, unique, and marginalized expressions in the global tourism and cultural industries (Huggan, 2001), is a strategic choice to get maximum advantages from various ethnic expression.

In this article we will use commodification as a starting concept for discussing how AAA and his apparatuses articulate and incorporate Using identity into their festival programs in which various cultural expression and values has been suppressed into very different-but-phenomenal patterns and forms. The commodification of Using cultures through carnival and festival mode, of course, has produced some spectacular events through which some economic and political goals negotiated. Drawing from our field researches in Banyuwangi since 2011 until 2016 focused on some contemporary issues such as cultural hybridity, the strategy of local artists in sustaining and empowering traditional performances, and identity politics, we will analyze some significant data related to (a) AAA’s paradigm in perceiving Using cultures in the midst of neoliberal times as the hegemonic political economy of post-Reformation Indonesia, (b) the carnival modes of *commodified* traditional rites and arts, and (c) the political and economic goals of Banyuwangi Festival. We analyzed the data using the above theoretical framework about commodification of cultural identity in the midst of postmodern-neoliberal times. Using such framework is very important because all cultural programs created by AAA regime in post-Reformation Banyuwangi are not merely serious attempts in celebrating Using identity, but, further, ther are creative ways in negotiating power. Finally, we will make concluding remarks on this festival with critical emphasized on its effects toward cultural actors in grassroots level.

**Banyuwangi Festival: *Flexible Transformation***

Although since the New Order regime Banyuwangi has been popular with its *gandrung*, agrarian rituals, and beautiful natural heritages, for getting national and international attention in media age which emphasizes on the visual attractiveness and celebration, this regency still needs making extraordinary cultural events which will make mainstream and online media carrying them into their news. The inclusion of cultural uniqueness into tourism programs has been common idea since the New Order regime. For AAA, what needs to be improved, once again, is the attractive capacity of the cultural events which will bring economic beneficiary. Here we quote his *opening speech* in an art event conducted by the Board of Culture and Tourism Banyuwangi, July 21, 2011.

‘...I do hope the related boards start working to put traditional arts close to tourism programs...In the future, our tourism sells not only the beauty of natural landscape, but also sells the richness of our traditional arts. So, we need to make an international network, we must attract global attention. Therefore, in October 22, 2011, we will conduct *Banyuwangi Ethno Carnival.* I intentionally invite the manager of *Jember Fashion Carnival* (JFC) to conceptualize our Ethno Carnival. As we know, before the holding of JFC, who knows Jember. Nowadays, JFC has a network with 180 photographers in the world. All hotels in Jember are full-booking during JFC. We really need this network to introduce the richness of our traditional arts and cultures globally.’ (*Our translation*)

From the speech, we identify some important thinking related to AAA’s paradigm in commodifying ethnic identity. Firstly, art and cultural richness are not merely discursive factors for empowering Using solidarity, but also having economic potency. The word ‘sell’ indicates AAA’s awareness for the economic potency of traditional expression. Secondly, the development of traditional cultures should be integrated in tourism; a repetition of discourse in the management of cultural tourism which has been so popular since the last period of the New Order regime, although, as we will discuss in the next session, AAA has had developed different model. Thirdly, creating new transformative patterns of traditional expressions with spectacular appearances is a *must*. Inviting the manager of JFC to create similar event, *Banyuwangi Ethno Carnival*, clarifies the necessity of realizing his concept. JFC is a outstanding international fashion carnival in Jember who has gained wide range publication, nationally and globally. Fourthly, the international networking is the very significant determinant factor through which Banyuwangi can promote its cultural potencies. Such thinking had led AAA to conceptualize many carnivals, festivals, and parades as appropriate programs which will place the name of Banyuwangi and its cultural richness in media news.

Although getting some rejections from the local artists and cultural experts, particularly on its bad impact for siphoning the budged of traditional arts development, the first Banyuwangi Ethno Carnival(hereafter BEC I) was successfully conducted and got nationally media coverage. Following the formulaic pattern of JFC, BEC, since the first to the following events, has transformed the exotics of Using cultures flexibly in carnival mode which visually can attract the viewers’ amazement. In the first BEC, for example, the colorful gandrung costumes were modified into luxurious and palatial fashions which were performed on the street catwalk. For accommodating the voices of the local artists and for preventing a further chaotic rejection, the committee also performed a parade of the real gandrung dancers with their original costumes accompanied by the live traditional music performance. Regional and national media broadcasted this event with their amazing narratives, visual photographs, and videos. In addition, the committee also made a contract with *Jawa Pos* through *Radar Banyuwangi* and *Jawa Timur TV* management to publish and broadcast the first BEC. So, it was normal when this event spent approximately 500,000,000 rupiahs.

The success of the first BEC inspired AAA and his team to produce more phenomenal events. Still in 2011, they made *Parade Gandrung Sewu* (The Parade of A Thousand Gandrung). Gandrung is interactive companionship dance which is performed lively involving female dancers and male fans with dynamic movements. In the 2000s, gandrung artists actually have had a problem of regeneration because the majority of young women in Banyuwangi have had no desire to become professional dancers. However, the related government apparatuses never exposed the fact before the execution date of the Parade because it would interfere the regent’s dream. For succeeding this event, the Committee practiced the New Order regime’s technique, *mobilizing* junior and senior high school students, both from the villages and city, to become the models who would dance some acts of gandrung performance for giving a massive musical dance appearance. Again and again, this spectacular event was very successful; thousands viewers came to Boom Beach to view the Parade—although most of them were parents, relatives, neighbors, friends, teachers, and, only a few of them were tourists, both domestic and foreign—and national media, both televisions and newspapers, covered it.

The flexible transformation of ethnic identity as the basis of commodification process in the midst of postmodern-neoliberal times is the hegemonic mechanism colored by the *celebration of cultural signifiers*. By this celebration of cultural signifiers we mean all attractions which perform superficial meanings through various—following Baudrillard (1995)—hyper-real simulacra refer to a particular cultural identity. In this term, all complicated philosophical, social, and political discourses of ethnic cultures need no to expose because the significant element is providing various and colorful visual pleasure for the viewers who longed for ethnic and traditional impression in the midst of their modern life. Further, all regeneration problems experienced by the local artists also are not crucial to tell because the viewers or the tourists only want to find out happiness, not finding out data. By the flexible transformation, such as in 2011 BEC until 2016 BEC, AAA has *invested* Using cultures with global meaning by borrowing outward appearance to be commodified into more deluxe fashion carnival.

For AAA, his apparatuses, and his creative team, BEC and the Parade have strategic function in promoting Using cultural heritages in the midst of the global speed culture; one of prominent reasons for continuing such programs until the recent time. For supporting our argument, here some conceptual frameworks behind the theme of BEC II (2012), *Re\_Barong,* which exposed *Barong Kemiren,* a sacred ritual performance in Kemiren, Using tourism village. *Reconstruction* means re-arranging the physical patterns without changing their original values. *Redefinition* means formulating and righting self-understanding. *Reproduction* means maintaining identity through self-multiplying. *Re-actualization* means re-actualizing self. *Revolution* means the acceleration of the arrangement, formulation, preservation, and self-actualization. For us, such frameworks are a pattern of *discursive normalization* toward the modification of Barong Kemiren by which the creative team—through some discourses of local empowerment such as “without changing original values” and “maintaining identity—convince the indigenous leaders the spectacular fashions for the carnival will not disturb its sublime philosophical meanings. However, the wholeness of the discursive normalcy is deconstructed by the creative team through some flexibility discourses such as ‘multiplying self’ and ‘rearrange the pattern’ and ‘the acceleration of arrangement, formulation, and self-actualization’. Why? Because such discourses have orientation towards the cultural production which still carries traditional or ethnic signifiers, but essentially it transforms their philosophical values into more global meanings with market goals. The construction-deconstruction formula has become “an archetype” for BEC since the first until 2016 BEC; Using cultures has always become the roots that are uprooted.

The market goals also have driven Banyuwangi government under AAA making many events to promote other cultural heritages, including Using *batik,* food, fruits, and coffee. Since 2013, there have been *Banyuwangi Batik Festival* (hereafter BBF) with its spectacular complementary event “Fashion on Pedestrian”which has performed hundreds photo models wearing glamour fashion from Using batik, *Culinary Festival* which has served thematic delicious food annually,and *Local Fruits Festival* which has presented various local fruits, although not all of them are original fruits such dragon fruit. The more phenomenal one, of course, has been *Festival Ngopi Sepuluh Ewu* (*Festival of Drinking Ten Thousands Coffee Cups*) in Kemiren Village.This event has become unique attraction because the visitors may enjoy drinking coffee in many glasses and cups gratis. The idea of this festival, actually, did not come from Kemiren inhabitants, but from one of rich entrepreneur who owns a large coffee plantation in the slope of Mount Ijen. He has provided coffee to be roasted byKemiren women. Therefore, to attach the sense of communalism, Kemiren inhabitants have said this festival as the connector of brotherhood and sisterhood among Using communities. Of course, we should give AAA a salute for promoting such local heritages and potencies through which the development of creative-small-scale and agrarian economy being possible, although still needs more assessments.

A special emphasis should be given to BBF and “Fashion on Pedestrian” as its complementary-but-enlivening event. Through these two events AAA regime has carried cultural meanings of batik into the formula of—borrowing Bella Dick’s term (2004)—*culture as display*. This formula aims to enable the access of Using cultural uniqueness, especially the exotic superficial meanings, which will satisfy the desire of viewers and attract “the camera lens” of journalists and photographers, not the depth of philosophical meanings. Using indigenous leaders may explain that *Gajah Oling* motif has mythical and sacred values, particularly in the past times when mothers were holding and protecting their babies with such motif slings from the interference of supernatural beings in twilight. Similarly, the indigenous leaders also give sublime meaning for *Kangkung Setingkes* motif; the togetherness of Using communities bound in one cultural identity although they live dispersed in different villages. Such philosophical meanings have been not enough to increase the selling of Using batik, so the regime has held BBF and “Fashion on Pedestrian” to promote it widely with the ultimate target for advancing the batik industries in Banyuwangi. The combination of batik’s philosophical meanings with the culture as display formula is the investment of AAA regime that posits Using identity not merely as the form of communal pride, but, further, as the crutch of identity industry in the midst of postmodern-neoliberal times.

The wide media coverage of BEC I, had led AAA and his team creating a national musical event, *Banyuwangi Jazz Festival* (hereafter BJF) in 2012 and since 2013 has been changed into *Banyuwangi Beach Jazz Festival* (hereafter BBJF). The concept behind this event is a musical dialogue between Using music and jazz, between the local and the global, through which the traditional and jazz musicians might share their skill each other, so they would get new knowledge for creating a newer composition. Music is a language and jazz is particularly chosen to tell Banyuwangi widely into Indonesia and the world. Why? Because jazz has unique characteristic in communicating with its audiences. So, by this event Banyuwangi with its new spirit can show up its uniqueness and allure. Ideally, jazz will be composed different by giving traditional touches; opened by gandrung dance, traditional music, etc. One of the specific missions of this performance is making Banyuwangi outstanding place and destination through widely publication of this event by mass media. In other words, jazz as the representation of the global is invited not merely as amusement, but, pragmatically, its musical uniqueness and large media coverage will carry the name of Banyuwangi in mass publications. Of course, the publications of BJZ will disseminate Banyuwangi and its potencies as a nice regency to visit. Unfortunately, in BJF 2012, the dialogue of traditional and modern musical arrangement was not accomplished. From all musical compositions, there were only two compositions in which Using songs accompanied by jazz musical instruments, not the collaboration of traditional musical instruments. The promised musical dialogue was no more than “a sweet and beautiful lip service” to, once again, attract the coming of viewers and journalists. Ideally, there must be an instrumental mixture through which the involved local musicians could make interactive communication with the invited national jazz musicians in order to produce some ethnic-jazz performances.

In the *Banyuwangi Beach Jazz Festival* (hereafter BBJF), started at 2013, AAA asked the event organizer to make a real musical collaboration between national jazz and local musicians. AAA wanted the collaboration in BBJF 2013 would be the significant signifier of *civilizations harmony*, a conceptual bridge to explore local genius through a musical dialogue approach. Up to now, BBJF has tried giving a space for local music for fusing with jazz rhythm. Of course, ideally, such fusion would engender an interesting musical experience, an unforgettable moment. We can criticize the epistemological base of such musical dialogue—a borrowing concept from a very popular slogan in the millennium century, a *dialogue among civilizations*—through BBJF. For the postcolonial societies, such as Banyuwanginese society, such perspective has been not something strange. Their encounters with Hinduism, Islam, and European civilizations had engendered many hybrid cultures, from culinary until local arts.

As a musical performance, since 2013 until 2015, BBJF were successful. Some outstanding jazz singers, such as Syaharani, Sandy Sundoro, Tompi, and Glenn Fredly participated in 2013 BBJF. Of course, their coming became interesting attractions on the stage and making hundreds visitors bought the expensive tickets—300,000 rupiahs for festival class, 500,000 rupiahs for VIP, and 1,000,000 rupiahs for VVIP—and watched this event. Media coverage, regionally and nationally, of BBJF annually confirmed the important position of this musical event in the midst of the booming of jazz performance in Indonesia. A uniqueness commonly exposed by media was the “short-time” collaboration between jazz musicians from Jakarta and local musicians, particularly for its musical sensation. Such coverage, of course, was appropriate with AAA’s idealization.

A uniqueness of BBJF was the inclusion of local musical tradition in jazz composition. The senior singer, Syaharani, for example, after singing her song, made collaboration with a traditional female artist to sing Banyuwangi song entitled *Pethetan*. Syaharani’s voice harmonized with Mbok Temu’s voice, accompanied by musical strain and traditional dancers with full color customs. A beautiful mystique atmosphere flowed and was very entertaining. This is Indonesian Jazz. (Randy, 2013)

In postcolonial term, following Bhabha (1994), such musical hybridity is not a strange case, but what should be criticized is the seriousness of AAA regime and the event organizer to support ‘a true musical dialogue which will produce a spectacular local-jazz performance’. In fact, reflected from 2013-2015 BBJF, the musical collaboration was pseudo collaboration, a side attraction of little importance, because the appearance of local music and singer was merely as a signifier of Using traditional culture on the jazz stage. In 2013, Mbok Temu and other local musicians only collaborated with Syaharini and her group in some songs, but they did not collaborated with Trio Lestari (Glenn Fredly, Sandhy Sondoro, and Tompi). It means that the attendance of Mbok Temu and her friends was merely a formal signifier which shows that the national and local musicians making collaboration for the sake of BBJF, not for developing and empowering local music in advance level. In other words, we view the musical dialogue guided by AAA and his apparatuses is only a label for attracting journalists and photographers.

However, we should consider the discursive position in the dialogue. Nandy (1998: 129) argues that the postcolonial subjects should give more careful attention in the contemporary civilizations dialogue, because there has been imbalance between the East and the West. All civilization and cultural dialogues have formed a new politics, because their formats has been standardized and incorporated into the structure of global mass culture in which the modern West has still become a determiner in such process. What has become popular in the developed countries would be hegemonic orientation in the developing countries. In the latter, there have been “translators” who are interpreting cleverly the global West cultures assumed giving beneficiary for local cultures, or, oppositely, interpreting local cultures for the sake of the modern one. It means the West has still become a discursive controller, so all dialogues, exactly, have not gave the local people and their cultures advantages. In other words, the dominant mode of dialogues has been unequal, because only giving the popular-version of the West’s self-definition in the global mass cultures. Of course, many national and regional leaders in Indonesia have not been aware of this hegemonic operation because most of them only consider the growth of financial income through tourism activities.

Following Nandy’s perpective, at least, there are two forms of global mass cultures as the reference of cultural-commodified-festivals in Banyuwangi. The first is fashion carnival and its derivative events such as BEJ, BBF, and Gandrung Parade, which mimic the similar event in global sphere. The second is jazz music which has gained global popularity and transformed its ideological resistance into more fluid musical performance. The celebratory character of the two global cultures generates the lessening of comprehensive understanding of local cultures. Some philosophical values which should be configured and negotiated in the carnivals and musical dialogues losing their significances because the artificial meanings produced through simulacra chain are more interesting.

**Not Merely Festival: *Negotiating Hegemonic Power***

AAA regime believes the two formulaic patterns will promote all potencies of Banyuwangi, including cultures, agrarian products, natural landscapes, crafts, mining, etc. It means, in Banyuwangi Festival, the goal is not the ideal-constructive one—empowering local actors through various attractions, but the ideal-pragmatic one, namely marketing in national and international networks many beautiful cultural expressions and natural destinations. Formally, those attempts have been successful in increasing the tourists’ visiting rate to Banyuwangi, since 2010 to 2015. According to AAA, creative and tourism industry became two important sectors which contributed to the radical enhancement of regional income, from 22 trillion rupiahs in 2010 to 40,8 trillion rupiahs in 2015; exceeding the target, 35 trillion rupiahs (Amelia, 2015). One of the direct contributions of tourism sectors toward the enhancement is foreign tourists’ shopping. During 2013, for example, the total amount of foreign tourists’ shopping was 31 billion rupiahs (Arifin, 2014). The operation of Santika Hotel—a national hotel network—in Banyuwangi in 2015 proved that this regency has great promising tourism potency. All those economic achievements made the Board enhancing the target of tourists’ visiting in 2016. Through various events in Banyuwangi Festival and natural destinations, the Tourism and Culture Board targets 50,000 foreign tourists and 2 millions domestic tourists (Ahmad Ibo, 2016).

We acknowledge AAA has been very successful in realizing economic goal through his Banyuwangi Festival. He has shown his strategic capacity in managing local cultures as “the sold identity”. Ethnic identity, once again, is not merely communal characteristics and practices for empowering the spirit of solidarity among the members, but, further, in economic term, it is a big opportunity in the midst of global tourism market which focused on natural heritages and cultural attractions. In the context of marketing, of course, AAA has been succeeded in his efforts making breakthroughs of selling Banyuwangi’s potencies by using many carnivals, festivals, and parades to invite national and international tourists. Further, the media coverage of the events, economically, have made investors interested coming and investing in various sectors, from mining, agriculture, maritime, plantation, and manufactures industries.

That’s why in every press release and opening speech of some big events in Banyuwangi Festival, AAA has been always emphasized the successful achievements of his regime in making significant economic changes that have made him different with the previous regents. Here is the example of AAA’s opening speech in BEC, November 12, 2012.

‘Hopefully, Banyuwangi’s economic growth becomes better and better in the future... Mr. Minister, here, we should inform important information, although I has been informed repeatedly, not because we are proud, but we want people have a pride. Due to hard working of all people, the investment interest had changed; in 2010, Banyuwangi ranked 31, now, 2012 ranks 3 in East Java, after Gresik and Sidoarjo. The realization of our foreign investment is not in number 26 anymore, through many various policies, it now is in number 2 in East Java. Hopefully, this achievement will increase over the developing agro industries. In the near future, at the latest on February 2013, it will be build a coconut milk factory, the cooperation between Europe and China... December 12, after we competed with some regency, we will start a ground breaking of the development of the biggest and most modern sugar company in Indonesia in sub-district Glenmore. This company will need 12,000 native labors’.

Using “we”—and only once “I”—as the representation of the unity between governmental apparatuses with their people, AAA exposed such economic achievements in front of some outstanding public figures, such Surya Paloh, the owner of Media Group and mining investor. It is important for AAA to expose them because he wants to affirm the distinction of himself with the previous regents, such as Ratna Ayu Lestari and Samsul Hadi who could not make the similar achievements. Beside, AAA also tries promoting directly the primacy of Banyuwangi as the best place of investments that have attracted foreign and national investors. What must be criticized is AAA’s pride when his regime has succeeded in getting national and international investments, regardless some objections from the people in Wongsorejo industrial estate in the north of Banyuwangi and people in Tumpang Pitu, a gold mining site in Pesanggraan Sub-district. Mobilizing the growth of investments with the increasing employment and people’s welfare as the first pretext is one of neoliberal regime’s perspectives. Investments supported by profitable policies have been idealized as the prominent way to give many individuals a chance of competition using their skills and physical capacities. But, based on many experiences around the world, the majority of the native who commonly unskilled labors only has had lower level positions with minimum wages. In reality, only the minority elites—from the capitalist faction and bureaucracy—will get a higher financial advantage. So, by showing off his regime’s success as the result of collective struggle and pride, AAA actually is negotiating his significant political position as the regent who is able to bring his people into prosperity as well as covering the neoliberal values of his regime and masking the people’s resistances in Wonorejo and Tumpang Pitu.

Displaying commodified cultural products based on Using identity, in other words, is the suitable way to negotiate the regime’s hegemonic position—following Gramscian term (Gramsci, 1971; Hall, 1996; Boggs, 1984; Howson & Smith [eds], 2008)—in the midst of Banyuwanginese society. AAA has given Banyuwanginese society various entertaining carnivals, festivals, and parades, through which most of them have perceived the government having serious attempts in promoting as well as empowering their local potencies. Of course, many social, economic, health, industrial, and technological programs also have contributed to the popularity of AAA and have led most of Banyuwanginese people giving political agreement for his leadership. Nevertheless, the media coverage of Banyuwangi Festival has become ‘the first gate’ that has been elevating the popularity of AAA widely; regionally, nationally, and internationally. Once again, this popularity and the public acceptance of his leadership during 2010-2015 had become AAA’s political and cultural capital for winning the regent election at the end of 2015. Because of such capital, AAA and his partner from the previous period, Yusuf Widyatmoko became the winners of the election. In their inauguration as the regent and regent assistant in the second period on February 2016, AAA promised continuing their programs in the previous period, including health facilities, infrastructure development, education, and tourism because they will increase people’s prosperity (Saputa, 2016). And, as usual, Banyuwangi Festival still becomes the most attractive cultural event to promote tourism and other potencies. This principle, making more and more festivals and parades, since 2011 until now, has been believed as “incredible weapon” for making journalists and photographers coming.

Further, what interesting to discuss is the smart capacity of the regime in facing criticisms from local artists as the mark of its hegemonic power. In the first BEC, for example, many artists decided resisting against and rejecting it. They argued this event wasting money and spending the budget of traditional arts. Event some artists threatened the regime; they would make a riot by mobilizing cultural actors from villages. Well, in reality, this was nonsense, because they, finally, joined the first BEC as the musicians, so there were no more stories about resistance and rejection. When we asked one of them, he diplomatically answered, “We can do nothing, because our leader commands us joining this BEC”. According to our short investigation, they drastically changed because a bureaucrat from the Cultural and Tourism Board asked one of reputable senior artist to persuade them in order to join BEC. Similarly, in the 2013 BEC with *Re\_Barong* theme, some local artists and Using cultural experts protested against pink as one of the custom color, because it would discord the original and sacred color of Kemiren Barong. The creative team agreed negating pink from the choice and, further, giving the protesters an honorable position, as the jurors. These two cases show how AAA and his regime are able to include and articulate the deviant voices that potentially will disturb the cultural programs and disrupt all economic and political goals. Therefore, since 2013 until 2016, there has been no challenges, resistances, and rejections from local artists and cultural experts toward Banyuwangi Festival. Instead some local actors in Banyuwangi, following the popularity of this festival and as the way to get a little economic benefit from the massive coming of tourists, have renewed and modified the dying ancient rituals. In more innovative sense, some indigenous leaders in Kemiren have made cultural tourism packages for domestic and international guests, including gandrung performance, eating traditional food together, and the exploration of farming field. So, besides giving AAA hegemonic position in political sense, Banyuwangi Festival also has changed the local actors’ perspective in conceiving traditional cultures and communal identity, not merely as the solidarity markers in the midst of global uniformity, but also as the commodified cultural attractions which are idealized bringing prosperity for the villagers.

**Conclusion**

Celebrating identity in postmodern and neoliberal times is not something strange because many countries have been capitalizing and valorizing their ethnic identities through creative and tourism industries. However, we should give the critical question on Banyuwangi Festival: do the various programs touch the real problems experienced by local actors in the grassroots? Indeed, AAA as the regent has gotten some awards for his achievements, including in innovative marketing and tourism, but they do not guarantee the implementation of cultural empowerments. The mobilization and commodification of Using identity, indeed, tend to obscure the elites’ interests because the community’s members will be buoyed by communal prides through some cultural events, as if the government has given them serious attention. In fact, many local art groups must have hard workings and struggles for negotiating Using cultures at the recent time in which metropolitan cultural taste becomes so popular. In the ultra normative argument, the local artists have been considered as ‘heroes’ who have struggled for disseminating Banyuwanginese cultural characteristics, but the government has not made constructive developing programs. Indeed the regime had given some groups financial incentive, but only the groups that have access to the bureaucracy getting it. Of course, this condition only has raised vertical tension among the local artists.

Ironically, the government has not given any chance for folk artists and their art performances, such as *angklung* (musical instrument made from bamboo performed with a dynamic rhythm), *gandrung*, and *hadrah kuntulan* (small drums made from cowhide mixed with gamelan in performance), through particular moments. Indeed AAA has made gandrung parade, but it has not given contribution for the development and empowerment of this folk art in the midst of radical social change. Taking folk arts merely as raw material to be commodified into palatial fashions does not mean making serious effort for evolving them and giving the artists sustainable cultural benefit. Instead the governmental regime with neoliberal orientation intentionally makes various parades and festivals merely for valorizing artificial meaning of the local art performance and rituals. Of course, once again, political and economic goal are the dominant desire behind ethnic identity celebration through commodification of local cultures, particularly for negotiating hegemonic position. So, talking ethnic identity in the midst of postmodern-neoliberal paradigm in tourism and economic activities will raise the greater problems for the local actors, particularly the regeneration of local performing arts, if the government apparatuses have no precise policy in empowering it.

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