The Madurese culture: term of “carok”

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Abstract. Carok culture is an interesting research subject due to some reasons, one of them is many societies in general consider the tradition of carok as a notorious act. The Carok phenomenon is actually a resolve to a dispute which against the law of Indonesia. The aim of the research is to describe how the tradition of Carok in Madura. In brief, the author assumes that society in general consider that the tradition of carok is an act of violence despite Madurese are deeply associated with Islam, many individuals still hold firm to this carok tradition and contradictory to the religious teaching. The word “carok” is derived from Madurese language ‘to fight with honor’. Usually, “Carok” is the last option for Madurese to solve a dispute. Carok happens many times in concerns of honor/dignity for Madurese (most of the time this happens due to infidelity or anything related to the family’s honor). The researcher concludes that carok is an institutional of violence, and based on history, Madurese have been practicing this tradition for centuries. Politics is one of many factors that encourage Madurese ethnic to do so, the government’s inability to protect its people from injustice and the lack of the authority to prevent violence before and after the colonial era contributes to such matter.

1. Introduction
The word "Madura" will surely remind us of the word "Carok". Carok is a fighting tradition that is caused for certain reasons related to pride is then followed between groups using weapons (usually sickle). There are no official rules in this fight because carok is an act that is considered negative and criminal as well as breaking the law. This is the way Madurese in maintaining their dignity and "getting out" of thorny problems that are essential such as when honor is trampled and defiled. [1] So, the word carok which is said to make the heart, feelings and soul sad, is very synonymous with the smell of violence, because what is in the shadow is the action of a fight using a sharp weapon in the form of a sickle, curved and very sharp at the edges. Carok is known to have a distinctive, unique culture, and, this cultural identity is considered as an individual and communal identity of the Madurese ethnicity in their behavior and life.

Maduran people adhere to Carok, Carok is a restoration of self-esteem when stepped on by others, which is related to property, the throne, land, and, woman. The point is for honor. In the phrase Madurese Lebbi Bagus Pote Tollang atembang Pote Mata. (Better to die, than live with shame). Therefore, researchers are interested in researching culture Carok in Madurese society. It is very interesting to study at least due to several things, including: first, that the tradition Carok has negative connotations and perspectives for the wider community. Carok means murder as an attempt.
to take revenge, however Carok has a different meaning for the Madurese community as it relates to the restoration of self-esteem. Based on the clash of meanings for Carok, it is interesting to be appointed as an article in this study. (Singgih, 2008).

Carok can be done in a ngonggai (challenging a one-on-one duel) or nyelep (stabbing an enemy from behind). In the early days of its appearance, carok was mostly done by means of ngonggai. Since the 1970s there has been a shift that carok is sometimes carried out by stealing. With the habit of practicing carok by stealth, ethics which means masculinity has shifted to being brutal and selfish. This phenomenon occurs in men who do not want to be called as women who only quarrel with their mouths. Men make their own motto that women have two mouths so they like to fight with words, while men have weapons so it is very naive and even losers if they don't fight with weapons. In a research conducted by Achmad Tuki, “carok” was a fight that used sickles, “carok” was a restoration of self-esteem when someone else trampled them. So, the Maduran spontaneous performed “carok” because for them, self-respect is something that cannot be at stake with anything. However, “carok” is only an alternative way to solve problems.

“Carok” phenomenon is one of the efforts to resolve disputes that conflict with state law in Indonesia. So, it’s no wonder that “carok” is symbolized by sickle violence as an understanding not only born as a mere of identification process, but there is a spirit that is built to exist through “carok” in Madura. “Carok” is used to articulate dignity and self-respect in life through courage and fight by using sharp weapons which are shown as the (connotation) of superiority of Maduranese community, which is strengthened by expressions of immunity, undressing, bastard, neglecting until now, even though now, violating the rules of religion and state (rekkest lost) the carok myth are still survive today.

2. Methods
The approach that was used in this research was a qualitative approach by producing descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior. This approach was directed towards the setting and the individual in a holistic manner. So, in this case, it was not permissible to isolate individuals or organizations into variables or hypotheses, but it was necessary to see them as part of a whole. Methods of data collection were collected by interviews and explanations of Maduranese community leaders and documents about the cultural traditions of carok on the island of Madura. According to Lofland as quoted by Lexy. J. Moleong in his book, entitled “Qualitative Research Methodology”, he argues that the main data sources in qualitative research are words and actions, the rest is in the form of additional data such as documents and others. Sources of data in this study refer to the subjects or respondents of the Maduranese tribe in general, Maduranese people who practiced carok, and community leaders or figures. Data collection techniques were complete by using the method of observation, and interviews. This study conducted sampling with a multistage sampling system based on area/residence.

3. Result an Discussion

3.1. Culture Definition
A culture is coherence system. It is symbolized through words, things, behavior, myth, literatures, paintings, hymns, songs, and beliefs system which related deeply with the epistemologies concepts and its knowledge system. the epistemologies’ symbol system is a part of the social system which consist of stratification, lifestyle, socialization, religion, social mobility, the government’s organization and the entire social behavior. As such, material culture which manifested through buildings, tools, and arsenal are parts of the entire culture configuration. In addition in this matter are the correlations between the society’s historicity and ecology which significantly build a culture. Human weren’t born with culture, but culture is a heredity from generations to generations such as parents to children, teachers to students, and governments to people.
Based on a book entitled The Culture Theories by Mudji Sutrisno dan Hendar Putranto, there are several opinions from two notable anthropologists, Kroeber and Kluchohn, that fifty years ago, there was an attempt to mapping kebinekaan or the differences in the culture comprehension. They stated in their book that there are six essential comprehensions concerning the culture, they are:

3.1.1. Descriptive definition tends to see a culture as a total comprehension which ensembles the whole social life and indicates particular aspects that build a culture.

3.1.2. Historical definition tends to see a culture as a legacy from predecessors for generations.

3.1.3. Normative definitions have two forms, the first is a culture is a rule or ways of life which build the patterns and real behavior. Secondly, it emphasizes values more than behavior.

3.1.4. Psychological definition tends to see the role of culture as a solution to any problems which accommodate communication, learning, and fulfilling material and emotional need.

3.1.5. Structural definition refers to the correlation the aspects of culture and focus on facts that culture is a different abstraction from the real behavior.

3.1.6. Genetic definition sees the origin of the culture’s existence in terms of survival. This is a pure hereditary and transmitted from generations. A culture may survive if the society holds firm to its value, especially with the sacred one.

3.2. Cultural “Definition”

The comprehension or definition of “culture” derives from Sanskrit, buddhayah, which means plural from buddi, which means akal or intellectual. Culture is the product of intellectual. The word “budaya” or culture is the plural form of “budi” or act, it is the combination of act and intellectual. The final product of culture or “daya” and “budi” are creation, desire, and sense. The concept of culture is a requirement in conducting research to human’s behavior and human’s society. Unfortunately, there is no universal treaty for this concept, as a social scientist applying this research based on a symbolic behavior as a reference rather than consider behavior as a part of culture. As such, the definition of culture is the character depiction of a particular society, including tools, knowledge, and the patterns of behavior which learned and applied by successor instead of biological transmission. This definition emphasizes the totality of three complex symptoms sequence: tools and technique, human’s technology to adapt with the; the individual who behave based on society’s pattern, belief system, values and rules to maintain its inter-relationship among individuals and as well as with its natural environment. Culture is defined in various ways, based on James P. Spadley’s book entitled Marvin Harris’ ethnography Method, stated that the concept of culture is depicted in various behavior patterns which in related with particular a group of society, custom, or the society’s way of life. Culture is inseparable from the social life of society Indonesia has various cultures. The conclusion of culture is the whole human’s insight as a social creature, is an ability to comprehend and to interpret the environment, using experiences as a guide for their behavior. There are set of rules within the culture to control the interactions among its individuals.

Culture is a part of society’s work which where they are exist, such as the “carok” culture that occurs in Maduranean tribe in Indonesia. The meaning of “carok” is still being debated by Maduranean scientists and cultural observers. However, the author agrees more with the understanding that expressed by an anthropologist, A. Latif Wiyata who explains that “carok” is an act or an attempt to kill someone by using a sharp weapon (generally sickle) committed by men against other men who have been deemed to have harassed their pride. Especially in matters directly related to infidelity (disturbance to the wife), defamation (disturbance of honor), and finally murder (acts of revenge for the death of a close relative).
3.4. The History of “Carok” Culture

It started with The Dutch’s colonialism era, when Dutch held power throughout Nusantara. The Colony gave an authority to every regency or regent like the rest of the annexed at the time. The violence during colonialism is an evidence of contribution to build the character of Madurese in some around 1700 when VOC arrived and ultimately ruled the island. Initially, Madura was a part of the Mataram’s kingdom, but Madurese rebelled the rule of the kingdom and set a movement of separation from the Mataram’s kingdom but with the help from VOC, things were under control and the rebellion stopped. The history of Carok is similar with the history of Clurit (sickle). The history of carok is synonymously with Madurese’ legendary figure called Sakera. Sakera and Carok are in a package. It started with a fight between Sakera
and Brodin, Markasan and Carik Rembang who were the VOC’s spy. Carik is the village’s secretary. The inception of celurit or sickle in Madura island has always been connected and believed made by Sakera in 18th century. VOC then promote Sakera as a mandor tebu or sugarcane foreman in Bangil, Pasuruan. Sakera was an honest foreman, deeply religious, and liked by many labors. People would immediately identify Sakera because he always carried huge “are’ or celurit’ or sickle. One day, VOC needed new more lands and VOC bought the land with deceitful ways. VOC bought the land very cheap by terrorizing the land owner. VOC sent Carik Rembang to do the vicious plan by luring Carik Rembang with wealth and fortune. Carik Rembang who had power at that time, used violence to labors and natives in order to acquire the lands for VOC. Sakera noticed that Carik Rembang was not pro to the people instead of a VOC supporter and tried to stop Carik Rembang’s attempt and succeeded eventually. Carik Rembang reported this to VOC and ignited VOC’s anger and ultimately VOC sent a tough guy named Markasan to kill Sakera. During breaktime, Markasan went into rampage and challenged Sakera to fight, labors told Sakera about this, Sakera was mad. VOC declared that Sakera was a fugitive.

In short, VOC met Aziz, who was Sakera’s comrade, VOC asked information from Aziz about Sakera’s weaknesses. VOC lured Aziz with fortune in Bangil. Aziz entraped Sakera by inviting him to come for tayuban because Sakera was fond of tayuban (some sort of dancing women). Sakera was defeated and captivated during tayuban and eventually hung in Pasuruan. Seconds before his death, Sakera yelled “Guperman korang ajar, ja’ nga-bunga, bendar sengko’mate, settong sakera epate’e, saebu Sakera tombu pol” Guperman Kurang ajar, jangan bersenang-senang, saya memang mati, satu Sakera dibunuuh, akan muncul seribu Sakera lagi. Which means “bastard Guperman, don’t be happy, I am dead now, one Sakera is killed, there wil be thousands more to come”. Sakera’s deathwish encouraged low-class Madurese to fight against VOC by using celurit or sickle as a symbolization of Sakera but at that time they did not realize that VOC had provoked them to fight against Blater Family, who was an accomplice to VOC. The death of Sakera was not a key of freedom for VOC to expand its authority but this was a disaster because Madurese had the mentality of Sakera and VOC did not touch Madura Island since then. The story of Sakera was then stereotyped by VOC toward Madurese. In Huub De Jonge’s book entitled Garam Kekerasan dan Aduan Sapi Esai-esai Tentang Orang madura dan Kebudayaan Madura (the salt of violence and cow-race, essays of Madurese and its culture) that the theme about a group of society is always about the appearance or in the nutshell. During colonialism, Madurese were depicted differently compared to Javanese or Sundanese, Madurese were depicted harsher, stronger, higher-tempered, more muscular, and braver with physical appearance in height of 160-170cm or smaller but not bigger than its neighbor islands.

A history of violence in Madura Island is also explained by Latief Wiyata. He concluded there are two major reasons as the sources of violence in Madura at that time. Firstly, it was because the government did not care to Madurese and secondly is the consequence of the first one. At that stage Madurese did not trust government and resolve any conflicts or issues by their own way of vigilante and violence and ignoring any rules or regulation, the only to resolve this is through carok.

3.5. The Purpose of Carok
Carok is a revenge rite to those who disrespect of Madurese, particularly with pride, wife, and anything else that make male Madurese feel malo or shame and tada’ ajina (insulted). Carok is violence arena. The casualty of carok are not buried in the public cemetery but are buried in the house yard. The bloody clothes are stored as attribute of such traumatic experience and as
symbol for revenge for the dead. The target of revenge carok or counter attack is the winner of the previous carok but the closest relatives (taretan dalem) of the winner are also the target of the revenge. Usually the strongest or the richest are the target, so they would not dare or incapable in doing counter attack. The undisputed and unstoppable carok is usually have to do with women, either it wife or daughters. It means when wife or daughters are disturbed carok is likely will happen. Latief Wiyata quoted Zawawi Imron words “I marry a woman legally and witnessed by a marriage official as well as the invitees, I marry my woman based on religion’s command, whoever has any intention to my wife, means violate and insulted my religion and break my pride as if stepping on my head” the pride of the wife is manifested to the pride of the husband because the wife is bantalla pate or backrest for the dead. Generally carok is an act to murder someone but with its unique way. For those who are confident enough and posses some sort of martial art will take carok nonggai or duel face to face and one on one duel, pure gentlemen. Nowadays many carok perpetrators choose nyelep (stab the opponent’s back) for some reasons. The first reason is the perpetrator assumes that the opponent has more capacity, so he perceives that to kill his opponent is very difficult. The second reason is that the opponent might be unaware that he is going to be killed. Using nyelep is more effective to kill the opponent.

4. Conclusion
“Carok” culture that emerged during the Dutch rule is still exist until today. “Carok” that was explained on another page above is an act to kill someone who is deemed to have hurt his self-respect so that in turn he will commit that action, “carok”. The term of “carok” inherently in Maduranan society is believed to be a solution of problems that cannot be resolved peacefully, such as cases of infidelity, because women are placed in the eyes of Maduranan men in a special position. Doing harrassment to someone’s wife is the most serious harassment for the husband because his pride is considered to have been trampled on. In addition of Islamic law that the act of adultery is a grave sin and the death penalty must be accepted by the bullies. Not only that, this act is called destroying the social order because it gives shame to the family. The cases like this depend on how the husband knows about his wife’s disturbance. If he knows that only the wife is being bullied because he knows that other people or the neighbors justify the actions of the man who disturbs his wife, then only the bullies are killed. The impact that “carok” culture has on outsiders sees this culture as a rite of revenge against other people, which then reinforces the stereotypes about Maduranese. So that the outsiders feel reluctant and do not have the desire to speak, even though they are in the same environment as Maduranese who are overseas outsiders in their words and behavior are very careful.

“Carok” does sound terrible to outsiders as well as to Maduranese. However, there are values that contained in “carok” culture which we can take, namely: first, we are advised to be careful in what we say and act because other people might feel offended. Second, making someone to think twice before disturbing someone else’s household, because the risk is exist. Third, people will prioritize courtesy and manners when dealing with other people because basically Maduranese will be very polite when talking or acting to other people, as is often expressed by “oreng laenatti taretan, taretan tatti oreng” (other people who are not family are considered as a family, on the other hand his own siblings are not considered as a family). This expression reflects that in the life of Maduranese, the value of politeness is very important. If Maduranese is respected and is not hurt, he will be more polite and will consider other people as part of his brother.

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