

**EXPLORING THE CULTURAL VALUES OF
“SAEMAUL UNDONG” AND “GOTONG ROYONG”
AS THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ANTI-CORRUPTION CULTURE:
Socio-Economic Studies in East Asia and Southeast Asia**

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ABSTRACT

The traditions of Saemaul Undong and Gotong Royong are the cultures of South Korea and Indonesia which are considered providing added value to their local communities in restricting themselves from any corrupt behavior. Through discussions about the traditions of Saemaul Undong and Gotong Royong, this study aims to explore these two different cultures. This is intended to find the cultural values of local communities that have universal values. These values are then believed and used to deal with and prevent the corrupt behavior of the community. This study was conducted using qualitative method through comparative historical and literary approaches. From the literature review, it is found that pedagogy, cooperation, leadership, equality, and nationalism are values that support the community to have a noble attitude that is able to control someone to not commit corrupt actions. However, both South Korea and Indonesia must struggle to deal with the corrupt behavior that still occurs today.

1. INTRODUCTION

Corruption is still a complex problem in all countries. In both developed and developing countries, corruption is a behavior that is considered as an act that violates the applicable law. Asian countries, especially Southeast Asian countries are still struggling to control corrupt behavior committed by the community or government. Eradication of corruption is even increasingly difficult to achieve due to political interventions, especially in terms of determining what violations are included in corruption.

Judging from the phenomenon of corruption cases which leads to the level of difficulty in deciding a case, the government and the community need to re-increase the cultural values existing in society that can restore public

awareness to maintain anti-corruption attitudes. Mutual cooperation (better known in Indonesia as *Gotong royong*) is one type of Indonesian culture which is considered capable of making people aware of and adhere to values that can control individuals so as not to commit corrupt behavior.

Meanwhile, South Korea also has the same culture as *Gotong Royong* culture in Indonesia, which is often referred to as the *Saemaul Undong* culture. This culture is carried out by the people of South Korea, especially those in rural areas (Eom, 2011). The aim is to add value and minimize inter-regional economic disparities in the lives of South Koreans living in the rural areas.

Both *Gotong Royong* and *Saemaul Undong* are community cultures born in rural communities in the Asian region. Both also have positive values that can be used to control the community from negative attitudes and behaviors, including corrupt behavior. Therefore, this study was conducted with the aim of exploring the two different cultures. However, researcher believes that both cultures have values that can control the corrupt behavior through the local wisdom built in the communities.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Anti-Corruption Culture as a Form of Social Change

Corruption is an abuse of authority that has a detrimental affect on someone, institution, or country. Corruption is classified as a negative action. In fact, corruption is often committed consciously by someone and supported by an open opportunity to reach the intended goal (Yogi Prabowo, 2014). Perceptions of corruption can even damage people’s views, such as taxpayers who ultimately make them doubts in reporting their real income (Rosid et al., 2016)

Base on the law, corruption is obviously an illegal act. In the rules of upholding anti-corruption culture, the provision of anti-corruption culture always invites the public to avoid actions that can lead to acts of corruption. Therefore, an anti-corruption culture should always be socialized to all people in the various social structures so that the people can create social order and change within the community.

2.2. *Saemaul Undong* and *Gotong Royong*

Saemaul Undong and *Gotong Royong* are two different cultures, but both have almost the same meaning. *Saemaul Undong* is a government idea which later became a culture formed in South Korean society, especially the rural community (Eom, 2011; Douglass, 2013). Meanwhile, *Gotong Royong* is a community character built in Indonesian society which then also became part of the culture formed in society (Bowen, 1986; Aldian, 2011).

The common understanding of these two cultures is that both of them refer to collective traditions aimed at forming a harmonious community. Community involvement is a social capital that supports the harmony of society in carrying out cultural values (Lussier and Fish, 2012; Kim, 2015). Meanwhile, the difference between these two cultures lies in the ethnicity that builds both cultures. *Saemaul Undong* culture is built in a homogeneous community culture (monoculture), while *Gotong Royong* culture is built in a society that has a heterogeneous culture.

3. Research Methodoly

This study uses a qualitative methodology with a comparative historical approach from the *Saemaul Undong* and *Gotong Royong cultures*. Literature approach is also the method used to see the historical aspects of both cultures. In the historical approach, this method is used to see the values and achievements resulting from the application of the *Saemaul Undong* culture in South Korea. Likewise, this method is also used to see the values and

achievements resulting from the application of the *Gotong Royong* culture.

4. Historical Perspectives of *Saemaul Undong* and *Gotong Royong*

The presence of the *Gotong Royong* and *Saemaul Undong* cultures adds to the literacy of people's understanding of mutual cooperation among existing community groups. Through a review of the historical perspectives of *Saemaul Undong* and *Gotong Royong* cultures, the values of collaboration in both cultures will be briefly discussed in the sub-section of this research discussion.

The first thing to be discussed is the *Gotong Royong* culture. Most scientists find it difficult to find out when the first *Gotong Royong* culture was conducted. However, this culture is believed to be carried out by the Indonesian people since humans entered a period of advanced civilization. Cultural differences in Indonesia are also the cause of time differences in the application of *Gotong Royong* culture in each region. However, the essence of the understanding of *Gotong Royong* itself is the same in one region and another. Therefore, the *Gotong Royong* culture emerged as social capital to unify cultural diversity owned by the Indonesian people. In its implementation, the *Gotong Royong* culture is not always realized through collaboration based on physical strength. Collaboration based on the unification of thoughts through deliberative forums as stated in the basic state of the Republic of Indonesia is also a concrete manifestation of the *Gotong Royong* culture.

In the process, the *Gotong Royong* culture invites people to have a tolerant attitude so that a difference can become a positive paradigm that is accepted by everyone in a pluralistic and multicultural community (Aldian, 2011). This is the positive paradigm in *Gotong Royong* that maintains togetherness so that development activities within the community can run well. The *Gotong Royong*

culture is even recognized as a representative of the country's culture that encourages inclusive society and is able to mobilize the workforce in the community, especially rural communities (Bowen, 1986), or mobilize the workforce within the organization to participate (Irawanto, 2015). Community involvement in rearranging or reconstructing their villages due to natural disasters like what happened in Yogyakarta a few years ago is an example that Indonesian society, through its *Gotong Royong* culture, is able to maintain the existence of cultural values and local wisdom (Kusumasari and Alam, 2012)

Some designations of the *Gotong Royong* culture in each region are one form of difference. In Aceh, the people are more familiar with the *Alang Tulung* culture (Sukiman, 2014). Meanwhile, the people of North Sumatra call it as *Siadapari* culture. In West Sumatra, it is better known as *Hoyak Tabuik* culture. While in Pekanbaru and Bangka Belitung, people call it *Batobo* and *Besaoh* cultures.

Saemaul Undong produced a creative and independent reform of the character of the people of South Korea with little help from the government, and indiscriminate against gender (Kim, 2015). The *Saemaul Undong* culture can encourage every society to achieve maximum results. Determination and hard work can finally bring South Korea into a country that can catch up with it all this time. South Korean culture is even able to improve business strategies through cultural exchanges conveyed from the relations of the interstate private sector (Heo and Kim, 2012). *Saemaul Undong* has similarity with the *Gotong Royong* culture applied by the Indonesian people. The similarity of the principles of the application of these two cultures does not have to place the two countries in a similar position because of the different intercultural implementation processes in the two countries.

Saemaul Undong is principally applied by the South Korean government in

several villages. The *Gotong Royong* culture is basically applied more in the villages and rural communities. However, it is possible that the *Gotong Royong* culture is also applied in the principle of cooperation carried out by urban communities. Community service is one example of the *Gotong Royong* culture that is still found in some communities in urban areas. Teamwork within community groups, both in formal institutions and in the general public, is also a form of cooperation as implemented in the *Gotong Royong* culture in rural areas.

Saemaul Undong and *Gotong Royong* are very helpful for the community in overcoming problems that need help between one individual and another. The success of inviting people to join in solving common problems through *Saemaul Undong* and *Gotong Royong* is the key to the success of the application of both cultures. The application of the *Saemaul Undong* culture even contributes positively to local village development, including choosing the right leader as part of the hope of creating an anti-corruption village community. In South Korea, the public will hold the government accountable if the government commits corruption. Those who are not harmed due to acts of corruption will also ask for government accountability due to acts of corruption committed by the government (Yap, 2016), because the perception of corruption by the government has led to a decrease in the effectiveness of valuation and trust in the South Korean government (Choi and Woo, 2015). Thus it can be said that the improvement and development of villages through *Saemaul Undong* or *Gotong Royong* will basically produce added value for the lives of the village people who still apply the spirit of moderate cooperation. An anti-corruption culture is one of the effects of learning the values of these two cultures.

5. Cultural Values of *Saemaul Undong* and *Gotong Royong* Cultures as Guidelines for Enforcing Anti-Corruption Culture

Saemaul Undong culture and the *Gotong Royong* culture are the cultures that give birth to noble values in South Korean and Indonesian societies. The *Saemaul Undong* culture itself has succeeded in bringing South Korea into a developed country. The quantity and quality of the economic output produced is a measure in seeing the success of development in South Korea. Concrete manifestations of development with a well structured city and territory management system are also indicators of the success of the South Korean community in applying the values implied in the *Saemaul Undong* culture. South Korea's economic development will not be achieved without the support of the country's human resource development structure. With better human resource management capabilities, the realization of the development will automatically also increase. The construction of educational facilities and changes in the quality of education are the determining factors for the improvement of human resources in South Korea. With education, the development of R & D (Research and Development) also experiences a significant increase. Thus, education directly and indirectly has become the basis for the application of character-based society through the values carried in the *Saemaul Undong* culture as a whole. In other words, education has changed the attitude and mentality of the South Korean people to improve the condition of their economic life.

On the other hand, Indonesian people who have a *Gotong Royong* culture are also able to absorb the values implied in the *Gotong Royong* culture. Togetherness and cooperation are the main values that can be taken from the *Gotong Royong* culture. Unlike *Saemaul Undong* culture that was formed artificially through the ideas conveyed by the South Korean government, the *Gotong Royong* culture was

born from a combination of naturally formed Indonesian culture and habit. However, the cultural values of *Gotong Royong* also have similarities with the values implied in the *Saemaul Undong* culture. Some values that can be used as community guidelines through the implementation of these two cultures include:

- (1) Pedagogy. Pedagogy is a very clear value that can be taken from the implementation of these two cultures. With pedagogy, people can distinguish between constructive attitudes and destructive attitudes.
- (2) Cooperation to build together. In this value, cooperation is the highest value to achieve a common goal. In this value, the *Saemaul Undong* culture is even built through branding “diligence, self-help, and cooperation.” With this value, South Korean villagers are able to live independently, diligently, and cooperatively.
- (3) Supporting leadership. Leadership values encourage people to maintain the spirit they have. The leadership aspect can also be a capital in forming a strong, obedient, caring, and competitive society
- (4) Equality in positioning gender. The value of equity is the principle to put anyone on the same occasion. Gender differences do not cause discrimination against the assessment process on things that are considered to have corruptive elements.
- (5) Nationalism is built through dedication to keep in mind the previous origin. In particular, this value guides the people of South Korea to not forget their origin where poverty and agriculture are aspects of life that have given birth to this country into a developed country. Therefore, the term “farmers are the foundation of the nation” is the foundation of South Korean society to continue to respect and control themselves so as not to fall into their previous place of origin. While for the people of Indonesia, the value of nationalism has been formed

since the time of pre-independence as a form of spirit of togetherness that was indirectly born from the *Gotong Royong* culture in Indonesian traditional society.

Some of the values implied in the *Saemaul Undong* culture as well as the *Gotong Royong* culture are basically norms that restrict society from being able to control themselves from actions that can violate social norms. An anti-corruption culture is one of the norms that are always guarded by the people of South Korea and the people of Indonesia so that the common goal of building a just and prosperous society through the establishment of the value of equality can be achieved. Likewise, the value of education (pedagogy) which is guided through collective learning through the value of cooperation in the *Gotong Royong* culture and *Saemaul Undong* culture becomes an effective way that is used to provide a better and systematic understanding of society.

However, corrupt behavior is still an obstacle to date even though the values of *Saemaul Undong* culture and the values of *Gotong Royong* culture are able to increase the confidence of most of the people of Indonesia and South Korea to maintain compliance not to commit corrupt behavior. Failure in choosing a leader is one of the factors why corruption acts still occur (Yogi Prabowo, 2016). Failure to choose a leader, opportunity, and injustice in law enforcement are also crucial causative factors why several parties still commit corruption.

Table 1 shows the transparency index of the two countries regarding the community’s assessment of the level of corruption. From the table, the South Korean and Indonesian transparency indices show an improvement in score for 22 years since 1995 to 2016. The public perspectives of the two countries have experienced changes, where the level of corruption in both countries was considered to have experienced positive changes, that is, changes that indicate that the performance of

government in both countries has experienced an increase in overcoming the problems of corruption.

The rank and score of the people’s perspectives on the level of corruption in South Korea are better than the rank and score of the people’s perspective on the level of corruption in Indonesia. In 1995, the transparency index gave an assessment of 4.3 for South Korea. This value differs greatly from the index given to Indonesia in the same year where the transparency index only gives a value of 1.9. However, Indonesia has made many improvements. The value of Indonesia’s transparency index in 2016 experience an increase reaching 3.7. Similarly, South Korea also experienced an increase where the value achieved in 2016 was 5.3. This value decreased from the value obtained in 2015, or 5.6. The decrease in this value was assumed to be a reactive attitude of South Korea towards the biggest corruption case scandal involving the number one person in South Korea that occurred in 2016.

Table 1. South Korea and Indonesia Corruption Perception Indices

Year	South Korea		Indonesia	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
1995	27	4.3	41	1.9
1996	27	5	45	2.7
1997	34	4.3	46	2.7
1998	43	4.2	80	2
1999	52	3.8	97	1.7
2000	48	4	86	1.7
2001	43	4.2	88	1.9
2002	43	4.5	96	1.9
2003	52	4.3	122	1.9
2004	47	4.5	137	2
2005	42	5	140	2.2
2006	42	5.1	134	2.4
2007	43	5.1	144	2.3
2008	40	5.6	130	2.6

2009	39	5.5	114	2.8
2010	39	5.4	110	2.8
2011	43	5.4	100	3
2012	45	5.6	121	3.2
2013	46	5.5	115	3.2
2014	43	5.5	107	3.4
2015	37	5.6	88	3.6
2016	52 ²²	5.3	90	3.7

Source: transparency.org

Another aspect of lack of implementation of the cultural values of Gotong Royong is the welfare problem. With the application of the value of cooperation, the welfare as the results of development should belong to the community. However, the gap is still quite large in Indonesia and becomes a social problem that needs to be resolved. This condition is basically not much different from that experienced by the people of South Korea. However, the gap in South Korea is much smaller than the gap that occurs in Indonesia. Table 2 describes the coefficient index for both countries. Gini coefficient index is one of the macroeconomic indicators used to see the level of economic inequality in society. In the table, the average economic gap index of South Korea from 1997 to 2016 was 0.2. Meanwhile, the average economic gap index of Indonesia in the same period was 0.36. The difference in the Gini coefficient index of the two countries, if it is analyzed more closely, has a linear relationship with the transparency index.

Tabel 2. Gini Coefficient Index of South Korea and Indonesia

Year	Gini Coefficient		Year	Gini Coefficient	
	South Korea	Indonesia		South Korea	Indonesia
1997	0.257	-	2007	0.312	0.376
1998	0.285	-	2008	0.314	0.368
1999	0.288	0.308	2009	0.314	0.367 ¹
2000	0.266	-	2010	0.310	0.378 ¹
2001	0.277	-	2011	0.311	0.388 ²
2002	0.279	0.341	2012	0.307	0.413 ²
2003	0.270	-	2013	0.302	0.406 ²
2004	0.277	-	2014	0.302	0.414 ²
2005	0.281	0.355	2015	0.295	0.402 ²
2006	0.306	-	2016	0.304	0.394 ²

Source: Data of the Bank of Korea (BOK) and Statistics Indonesia (BPS)
 Note: ⁽¹⁾ Data for semester 1, ⁽²⁾ Data for semester 2

Corruption is a crucial problem that requires certainty in law enforcement as a solution. However, the political situation often leads to polemics which ultimately make it difficult for all parties to resolve the corruption problems. Even so, the socio-cultural approach is considered to be an alternative that can educate the public to control their intention to not take corruptive actions. In addition, the synergy of the role of government, society and the private sector is also considered to be able to reduce corruption because economic conditions have given the best hope for the community (Lukito, 2015). Good governance in the government financial system is also a supporting factor to reduce corrupt bureaucracy (Umar, 2011) Therefore, learning the cultural value of *Gotong Royong* can be one solution to the problem of corruption through a socio-cultural approach obtained through local wisdom values owned by the local community. Unfortunately, since the reform began, the context of learning social culture as a way to raise the values of local wisdom has experienced a significant degradation.

In society, the values politeness, obedience, and respect begin to experience

a reduction. In fact, the *Gotong Royong* culture also begins to diminish in its implementation. The government, especially the local government, must begin to make breakthroughs that can revive the strength of regional communities in building better regions. Intensive communication involving the innovative use of varied media channels is one way to streamline community empowerment. Effective communication is also one of the ways taken by the South Korean government when the Saemaul Undong culture is applied in the village community. This method is used to provide an attraction that can change the condition of psychology and mindset of the local community (Do et.al, 2016).

6. Conclusion

Saemaul Undong culture and Gotong Royong culture have several values, such as the values of pedagogy, cooperation, leadership, equity, and nationalism. These values provide a basis for people in both countries to develop their respective territories. These values also have taught people to be able to control themselves from corrupt behavior. However, these values have not fully been able to control

the corrupt behavior even though the index of public trust in the government in eradicating corruption has begun to increase gradually in both countries.

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