



The Dynamics of Communication on the Identity Crisis of Malangan Mask Art in the Cultural Adaptation of Malang People

Radita Gora; Tarsani; Risqi Inayah Dwijayanti

Universitas Satya Negara Indonesia, Indonesia

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v7i10.2090>

Abstract

The bias of Malangan mask art is starting to fade. This mask art originating from Malang has lost its authenticity so that it is difficult to distinguish it from the same mask art from other regions. The social changes of the people of Kedungmonggo, as the center of the Malangan mask art, have an impact on the neglect of the authenticity of the local traditional culture. This condition ultimately invalidates the interpretation of the symbols of Malangan mask art and even threatens the sustainability of the Malangan mask art itself. This study aims to rediscover the true meaning of the characteristics of Malangan masks using semiotic and ethnographic approaches to trace the social life of the people of Kedungmonggo and to adapt Malangan mask art as a symbol of Malang traditional culture. The results show that the identity crisis of Malangan mask art occurs because of the lack of cultural literature, especially historical literature. Many stories are hidden from their true meaning as a form of story camouflage so that people believe in myths more than in histories. The life of the Kedungmonggo community is based on cultural symbols that have experienced a cultural crisis due to the flow of modern culture.

Keywords: *Malangan Mask Art; Communication Dynamics; Identity Crisis; Cultural Adaptation*

Introduction

The uniqueness of regional arts and culture is an identity that has been inherent for a long time in a homogeneous society that has one vision and mission to maintain ethnic racial entities. Art objects often attach to the identity of a region. For example, Malangan mask art, originating from Malang - East Java, has also become an inherent identity in the culture of the people of Malang. Malangan mask art, which is also known as Mbah Karimun mask art, has quite complex problems in maintaining its identity as part of the traditional culture of Malang people. The problems are related to several conflicts within the family of the heir to the Mbah Karimun mask art and the intention of the heir to sell the cultural heritage to other countries.

The characteristics of Javanese culture are often depicted in cultural artifacts, such as wayang which includes *wayangkulit*, *wayangkayu*, *wayang orang*, and *wayangtopeng*. Characterizing the Malangan mask art is based on the shape of the face mask. Each face on the mask has a different meaning that describes the characteristics of a particular character in a story. It is quite different from the

characterization in *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet) stories that are usually displayed in *wayang* cultural performances. Unfortunately, this characterization is increasingly unknown, especially by the younger generation who often ignores the meanings contained in the mask characters, along with the development of the era so that it creates a bias in meaning. The bias in meaning also raises a speculation which in turn raises a new bias in meaning.

The symbols contained in the masks are full of depictions of the characteristics of the community. In addition, the signs displayed also give a different impression from *wayang* (puppet) art in general. *Wayang* art aesthetics are diverse. When the *wayang* art is displayed in front of the public, it also raises a potential meaning of its own which is actually still biased today.

Speculation on the interpretation of meaning in *wayang topeng* (mask) art often raises identity bias and decreases cultural adaptation to local culture itself. This research is expected to be able to interpret the meaning correctly based on the characterization of Malangan masks and provide a complete picture of the meaning of Malangan masks that is correlated with the life of the surrounding community, especially in societies with special cultures.

The modern life of society raises dilemmas the artifacts of Malangan mask art. The younger generation tends to ignore the distinctive culture and cultural artifacts that exist around them which constitute the identity of their region. In the end, the prestige of Malangan mask art has decreased. On the one hand, there is an effort made by one of the heirs to eliminate Malangan mask art from part of Malang's cultural identity. The party wants ownership of the inheritance for business purposes or sells it. On the other hand, there are those who still want to maintain the idealism of traditional culture and keep trying to preserve it. So, the ownership of the inheritance rights is always contested.

The government pays less attention to the Malangan mask art and its heirs, especially Mbah Karimun's family. They have never received financial assistance or royalties from the use of the intellectual rights of the Karimun's Malangan mask art as part of the Malang mask cultural object, so that this Malangan mask art is threatened with extinction. In addition, the existence of this mask art is also not well known by the wider community so that its identity is threatened with being lost from the culture of traditional communities in East Java Province. The characterization of Malangan masks is also increasingly unclear, causing a bias in meaning. These problems make the management of Malangan mask art messy and unorganized. The existence of Malangan mask art, a cultural identity that is ideally preserved as part of a cultural heritage, is now a commodity to be traded. One of the heirs has made Malangan masks as a business. They make imitation masks from cheap raw materials and sell them at affordable prices or use them as souvenirs.

The rapid flow of globalization and the development of science, technology, and communication, sooner or later has influenced attitudes, ways of life, and human mindset, especially Javanese society. The natural impact of cultural contact is the emergence of cultural victims (Javanese), where one must accept, reject, and adapt. It seems that the term adaptation is more appropriate in dealing with cultural intersections. Preserving the traditional cultural values of the nation which are adapted to the progress of the times not only inherits, maintains and saves them, but also leads to the restructuring of Javanese culture. Without restructuring, it is feared that the Malangan mask art will easily disappear from the traditional society of Malang. Furthermore, other countries will easily claim the art as an effort to seize the traditional cultural identity.

The presence of modernity among the people of Malang city, including the introduction of culture from urban areas into villages, is one of the causes of the lack of development of traditional culture in society. Young people in Malang tend to choose to move to big cities, such as Surabaya or Jakarta, with the aim of continuing their education or looking for jobs.

The people of Kedungmonggo, Pakisaji are still adopting ritual culture. They carry out the Javanese tradition of magical rituals which are held annually, such as performing ritual offerings to honor their ancestral spirits and holding certain rituals that involve masked dance performances in them. This kind of cultural event is used by the members of Mbah Karimun family to empower Malangan masks and introduce them to the wider community. However, this is contrary to what is done by Mbah Karimun's biological family. They use the masks as a commodity that brings benefits to others, which on the one hand is detrimental to the biological family. This is of course very opposite to the development of wayang culture. Meanwhile, the preservation of Malanga mask culture is hampered.

The Kedungmonggo people's belief in magical things and myths is depicted on the wayangtopeng (masked dance). Some of the local people still adhere to the Kejawen traditions as a community belief. In addition, Malangan masked dance is also involved in certain rituals as part of cultural attributes. Malangan masked dance is performed as folk entertainment at celebrations for the ancestors. Therefore, for the people of Kedungmonggo, Pakisaji, the masked dance is considered as a culture that has a close relationship with the Javanese element which is then preserved through ritual activities and made as part of the cultural artifacts of Malang.

However, currently there are indications that Malangan mask art is slowly losing its identity. Malangan mask art has started to lose its meaning and is often interpreted with different meanings. There is often speculation that biases the meaning of the Malangan masks. The people of Kedungmonggo, Pakisaji are starting to abandon local wisdom. There are socio-cultural changes in the Kedungmonggo, Pakisajicommunity. Identity and cultural adaptation are starting to fade in the cultural community of Malang, East Java. This is that becomes the urgency of this research.

Based on the cases and problems discussed earlier, the researchers are interested in examining the problem of identity crisis in Malangan mask art and observing and explaining the communication dynamics of the cultural community of Malang in response to the identity crisis as well as changes in the cultural adaptation of the community related to the Malangan mask art. This applied research is directed at the Ethno-Semiology of the cultural community in Kedungmonggo and Pakisaji, Malang in adapting the culture of *wayangtopeng* (masked dance). In addition, this study also interprets the meaning of the message in Malangan masked dance and tries to rediscover the cultural identity of Malangan mask arts in the lives of the people of Kedungmonggo, Pakisaji.

The traditional culture in Kedungmonggo, Pakisaji, Malang Regency is slowly being eroded by modern culture, especially for the younger generation. They are carried away by the flow of urban modernization so that the empowerment of Malangan mask art is hampered. In addition, the community also begins to not fully recognize the cultural objects of Malangan mask art. This is what causes speculative meaning bias in the depiction of the Malangan mask art.

The research questions include: What are the representations of the meaning contained in the depiction of the Malangan mask appearance? How can bias in meaning in the Malangan masks and changes in the cultural adaptation of society occur? How is the cultural life of the Kedungmonggo people in the cultural adaptation of Malangan mask art and socio-cultural changes occurring in it?

Theoretical Framework

The focus of this study is to examine the life of the cultural community of Kedungmonggo, Pakisaji, Malang Regency, the meaning of cultural symbols of the Malangan masks, the relationship between these cultural symbols and the social lives of the Kedungmonggo community. The context of this research is culture and society with a focus on the power of symbols. Therefore, based on the socio-cultural tradition, the researchers try to find out the identity crisis that occurs in the Kedungmonggo

community. Researchers use communication theory, namely Cultural Identity Theory and Cultural Adaptation Theory.

Socio-cultural traditions assume that socio-culture affects interactions. Various social arrangements influence and limit any conversation that results in such arrangements as shown in arrangement theory. The largest social institutions consist of interconnected conversations (Littlejohn, 2009). The theory used in this study is a relational theory of meaning which is based on the premise that the meaning of any symbol is a relationship between that symbol and other symbols. The affirmation of the relational theory of meaning describes a system of cultural meanings encoded in symbols. Language is the main symbol system that encodes cultural meanings in every society.

This research refers to the theoretical approach of cultural identity, from social identity to identity development, as well as adapting cultural symbols in people's lives. Identity communication theory is developed from research that investigates ethnic differences in communication and describes the nature of inter- and intra-ethnic communication. Identity theory is developed outside the line of research that investigates ethnic differences in communication and describes the nature of inter- and intra-ethnic communication.

Cultural Identity Theories

The existence of Malangan mask art in Malang, East Java is one of the mediums used for Javanese ritual activities and is commonly performed by the Kedungmonggo community, Pakisaji. This activity even extends to several areas such as Gondanglegi, Kepanjen, and Karangates. This then becomes one of the identities of the culture of the Malang people. This identity then becomes biased because of the strong current of modernization, so that people begin to lose their cultural identity and the decline in local wisdom. Likewise, the Malangan masks themselves also lose their true main meaning. This identity bias does not only occur in works of objects in the form of Malangan mask art, but also in the cultural identity of the Malang people. (Hecht, Michael J., Jennifer R. Warren, Eura Jung, and Janice L. Krieger in Gudykunst, William B, 2005)

In this study, researchers use cultural identity theory to trace the existence of cultural identity in cultural communities in Kedungmonggo, Pakisaji, Malang. Through the concepts and assumptions of this cultural identity theory, the researchers seek to investigate aspects of the identity of cultural communities and the problems in them.

Identity is an abstract, complex, and dynamic concept. Therefore, identity is not easy to interpret. There are many descriptions provided by communication scientists. Gardiner and Kosmitzki, for example, see identity as a "self-definition" of a person as a separate and distinct individual, including behavior, beliefs and attitudes (Samovar, Porter and McDaniel, 2014). Cultural identity theory is knowledge about the communicative processes that individuals use to construct and negotiate their group identities and their relationships in certain contexts. (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009: 312).

Cultural identity theory is concerned with who constructs or produces cultural identities and the way these identities are communicated. There are two processes: avowal and ascription. Avowal is defined as a personal articulation of one's view of group identity, while ascription refers to how a person perceives others. The most common form of ascription is the stereotype of other groups. The construction of identity is part of a reaction to past ascription and part of the avowal dynamics of identity claims, and therefore both kinds of cultural identity are important (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).

Most of the Javanese people use Javanese language in their daily communication. The results of a survey conducted by Tempo magazine in the early 1990s show that 12% of Javanese use Indonesian as

their daily language, 18% use a mixture of Javanese and Indonesian, and the rest use Javanese only. (Endraswara, 2015). The Javanese language has different rules in the use of vocabulary and intonation based on the relationship between users. This linguistic aspect has a strong social influence on Javanese culture and makes Javanese people aware of their social status in society.

There are four layers of identity: personal, enactment, relationship, and communal. Identity is in a person, in communication, in a relationship, and / or in a group. The four layers of identity represent different aspects of an individual's identity. These layers sometimes match each other, but sometimes conflict with each other. However, these four layers cannot exist to form one another (Samovar, Porter and McDaniel, 2014).

Cultural Adaptation

Cultural adaptation is the basic process of communication which includes messenger, medium and recipient of messages, so that the encoding and decoding processes occur. This process is defined as the rate of change that occurs when an individual moves to a new environment. There is a process of sending messages by local residents in the new environment that can be understood by the new comer, or commonly called enculturation. Enculturation occurs at the time of socialization. The second is cross-cultural adaptation. Cross-cultural adaptation includes three main things. The First is acculturation. This process occurs when newcomers who have gone through the socialization process begin to interact with a culture that is new and strange to them. Over time, these newcomers begin to understand the new culture and choose the local cultural norms and values that they embrace.

However, previous cultural patterns also influence the adaptation process, (Gudykunts and Kim, 2003). The previous cultural patterns that influence this process are called deculturation which is the second part of the adaptation process. The changes in acculturation affect the psychological and social behavior of newcomers with new identities, norms and cultural values. This then triggers resistance to the new culture, so that the newcomers may isolate themselves from the local population. However, it needs to be understood that in the adaptation process, some will change and some will not change. The possibility of individuals to change the environment is very small because of the dominance of the local population's culture that controls daily survival which can force newcomers to adjust. The third is the most perfect stage of adaptation, namely assimilations (Gudykunts and Kim, 2003).

Cultural Identity Crisis

In essence, identity and identity crisis do not only appear in everyday conversations, but have also become objects of research by communication experts and social theorists. In general, they agree that an identity crisis has become a feature of contemporary or postmodern societies (Hoed in Herati&Pohan, 219).

The rapid flow of globalization and development of science, technology, and communication, sooner or later, has influenced people's attitudes, ways of life and mindsets. The natural impact of cultural contact is the emergence of cultural victims where one must accept, reject, or adapt. It seems that the term adaptation is more appropriate in dealing with cultural intersections. The preservation of the cultural values of the nation which is in harmony with the progress of the times not only inherits, maintains and saves the culture, but also leads to cultural restructuring. Without a restructuring that is in line with the spirit of the times, our younger generations are often seen as not being complacent (Endraswara, 2010). The judgement appears based on the negative attitudes and behaviors they exhibit in their daily life. In other words, they have contracted moral erosion or moral decline. According to Javanese society in general, people who behave badly (do not know ethics, manners) are often said to be *oranjawani* (Javanese language which means "not reflecting Javanese values") or *durungnjawani* (has not reflected

Javanese values). Others make judgments by saying *orangertibasa* (do not understand the language) or *ora ngerti unggah-ungguh* (do not understand courtesy).

Malang, one of the largest cities in East Java, has many young people who are starting to be eroded by modernization and cultural changes. This is related to cultural adaptation which is influenced by several cultural factors, such as acculturation, the fusion of two cultures, both traditional and modern, which go hand in hand, causing a transforming stream of social change. In addition, it is also related to acculturation, a transition to a new culture.

Semiotics

According to Barthes, semiotics is a tool used to find a way in this world, among humans and with humans. Semiotics is basically the study of how humans signify things. In this case, signifying can be associated with communicating. Signifying means that objects not only carry information, but also constitute a structured system of signs (Barthes, 2007).

Texts are produced in a social context. Texts are always influenced by and reproduce cultural values and myths from the context. As in the Malangan mask art which has a thick myth in society, the prevailing cultural myth determines what key denotations, codes, connotations and signs the text has, even though a text contradicts these values and publicly states its disagreement (Thwaites, Davis, and Mules, 2009).

Research Method

There are two qualitative approach methods used in this research: Ethnographic method and Semiotic method. The analysis used is also included in language analysis, where language observations can be used to talk about all the other symbols that are assumed. The meaning of any symbol is the relationship of that symbol to other symbols in a particular culture. The task of ethnography is to provide cultural symbols and to identify the coding rules that underlie them.

In this study, the Ethnographic method is used to examine the existence of cultural communities in Kedungmonggo, Pakisaji, the cultural life in Kedungmonggo, Pakisaji, and the cultural adaptation process adopted by the local community. The researchers use Roland Barthes' Semiotics model to examine the meaning of signs and symbols on Malang mask art.

In Barthes' semiology, denotation is the first level of significance system, while connotation is the second level. In this case, denotation is more associated with closed meaning. As a reaction against this oppressive denotation, Barthes tries to get rid of it and rejects it. For him, there are only connotations. The connotation is seen in the myth, and then the historical aspects of the myth emerge. The meaning occurs in two stages. The signs (signifier and signified) in the first stage converge so that they can form a signifier in the second stage. In the next stage, the unified signifier and signified can form new signs which are an extension of meaning. Barthes explains that the significance of the first stage is the relationship between Signifier (expression) and Signified (content) in a sign to external reality (Barthes, 2007).

Signifying the sign in the meaning of *wayangtopeng* (masked dance) is done by using semiotic data analysis mode related to the meaning of the signs and symbols in language. Agreement on a symbol, according to Barthes, does not exist by itself but there is a historical crossing that goes beyond and forms the symbol of the agreement.

In this study, the observation is carried out using participant observation, in which the researchers are involved in community activities, including the empowerment of Malang mask cultural art objects. Observations are made by researchers by staying in Kedungmonggo for a long period of time.

In-depth interviews, as primary data, are conducted with informants who have a direct relationship with the production of Malangan mask art, such as the heir and family of Mbah Karimun, the producer of Malangan mask art, community leaders or opinion leaders, the Heads of Kedungmonggo, Pakisaji Villages, and the people of Kedungmonggo, Pakisaji, Malang.

There are two approaches used in the data analysis technique: Roland Barthes' semiotic approach and ethnographic approach. These two analytical approaches are also supported by semiotic analysis to look for cultural symbols that exist in the Malangan masks and the meanings of cultural symbols as well as the relationship between the meaning of the symbol of mask culture and the life of the people in Kedungmonggo. The next method is a theme analysis to find the relationship between the domains and how the relationship between the domains is done through the reduction of qualitative data categories. The data reduction process is carried out by looking for themes from the results of the data transcripts and determining the chosen theme.

The basic stages of quantitative data analysis include data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This process continues throughout the study, even before the data is actually collected (Salim, 2015). This study uses technical data analysis with the term interactive model from Miles and Huberman.

Review and Discussion

Based on the results of the research and the interpretation of the Malangan mask artwork using the semiotic analysis model of Roland Barthes, the researchers find that the meaning of denotation as a whole is divided into two characters, protagonist and antagonist, which involve the face (physically), the attributes worn, the nature, and the meaning of character and philosophy in everyday life as manifestation of the life values of the Kedungmonggo community and as a sacred symbol for the cultural community in Kedungmonggo, Malang.

Overall, the denotative meaning of the Malangan mask art is depicted in a more monotonous color, such as the red color for the facial characters of Klana Sewandana and Bapang Jayasentika. This red color is an agreement for Malangan puppet mask craftsmen to depict the antagonistic character of the evil character in the story of the kingdom of Jenggala, Kadhiri. For the evil characters, the majority of mask craft artists agree on two colors for the masks, red and black. The red color depicts the appearance of a powerful evil character who has a position of a king, a noble figure who has a royal title or a Brahma title, or a knight who comes from the upper level of royal figures, such as the figures of Kalana Sewandana and Bapang Jayasentika who both have the status of the king's order from generation to generation.

The red color is one of the distinguishing colors that the bad guys do not always come from the lower classes. Evil figures can also come from the upper class, such as Klana Sewandana and Bapang Jayasentika, who are kings and have authority. Unlike the case with the evil jinn or ghost who in the story is said to be used as a slave by Klana Sewandana, giant figures are depicted with black faces or scary creatures, such as ghosts, jinn, and so on where people believe them to be astral beings or as characters of evil creatures.

There are fundamental differences between a jinn (ghost) character and a giant character. Jinn or ghost characters usually have a scary black face, horns, and long irregular hair. Javanese people usually refer to it as *Dedemit*. However, ghost of *Genduruwo* has a different face from *dedemit*. The giant

characters usually do not have horns or with more various facial variants compared to Ghost characters (astral beings). Giant creatures usually have faces with more characters. Even in some regions, the coloration on the faces of the giant creatures in *wayang* stories can be of various colors. In Javanese *wayang kulit* standard, giants are usually given red and black colors. But in a different area, the giant character is green or commonly referred to as the giant that gives fertility.

Each visual character has its own unique characteristics, but there is uniformity in the creation of a mask character between evil and good. This is based on an agreement between mask artists who want a distinctive feature of the mask art culture they develop. It also aims to make it easier to identify the appearance of a mask based on its facial characteristics. Each mask is made and developed based on a certain concept of art and not solely for an aesthetic work of art that distinguishes works of art from one another. Each mask work has its own depiction and meaning as a hidden meaning that describes the character of the mask in a thick philosophical view and characterizes human life in everyday life.

Likewise, the protagonist character in the Malangan mask art is depicted in various colors that are more eye-catching, such as the light green Panji Asmarabangun mask. The color is not very strong, but shows a more subtle appearance. The face does not show any scary characteristics. The mask of Dewi Ragil Kuning is solid yellow and looks bright. The mask of Dewi Sekartaji is pure white and a solid color. The coloring of each mask's face character is not based on the artist's pleasure, but there is an agreement on the standard of values adopted.

Another physical difference between the protagonist and the antagonist character is the shape and color of the lips. In the protagonist character's mask, the shape of the lips is not shown too much, even tends to be covered by a mustache and beard. The lips of the antagonist characters usually tend to be black and covered with a thick mustache, while the lips of astral creatures, such as jinn or giants, tend to be red or black and have sharp fangs, for example the character of Batahara Kala. On the mask of the Bapang character, some use fangs and some don't, but the face of the mask has a long nose which is its characteristic.

The mustache and beard of the antagonist tends to be thick and cover the jaw. Klana Sewandana and Bapang Jayasentika both have thick mustaches, thick beards, and long, dense black hair. The protrusion of a thick mustache and thick beard in this Malangan mask story is a characteristic of an evil character. The mustache making on the Klana Sewandana mask is usually taken from coconut fiber which is then painted black. This is certainly different from male protagonists, such as Panji Asmara bangun, Raden Gunung Sari, and Yuyu Kangkang or Panji Dirga. These protagonists have small jaws or tapered cheek surfaces. In addition, the appearance of the protagonist's mask always shows a gentle smile, gloomy eyes, and thin eye circles. Unlike the case with antagonists who tend to show wide eyeballs such as bulging eyes and sharp and sinister gaze. Thus, it will be easier for ordinary people to recognize good and bad characters in the puppet mask of the Kadhiri Kingdom story.

Apart from the differences in the shape of the jaw, the shape of the mustache also determines the character. In the protagonist, the mustache tends to be thin and the lips tend to be thin and red which indicates the ideal physical face. The sad gaze of both male and female characters shows a good character or protagonist. The antagonist usually has flowers on his crown, has red lips, and has a jaw shape that is smaller than that of the protagonist. This makes it easier to identify the characters.

There are several similarities in the main characters of Malangan masks, such as the use of a crown that is equally visible on the head. The use of the crown indicates that both evil and good characters have positions in the kingdom or are considered to be the most prominent actors. However, for the antagonistic character, the crown surface does not contain flowers or plant elements.

In interpreting the mask with Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, the researchers interpret it in terms of connotation or the meaning behind the mask's character and mask symbolization. The meaning behind a mask's physical form starts from the color of the mask, physical forms such as the body's organs on the face, the shape of the crown, and the elements in the mask's pattern which have their own meanings.

In the meaning of the connotation as a whole, the characters of the protagonist and the antagonist are clearly visible. Antagonistic characters such as Klana Sewandana and Bapang Jayasentika have the meaning of the ugliness or badness of human nature. In addition, the red color is defined as anger and ambition for power. This is the main characteristic of the antagonist. Klana and Bapang are both considered evil rulers as adherents of a giant sect.

Based on the physical form, scary eyes and face are interpreted as figures that are firm, feared, crazy, and thirsty for power. This character is described as human vices that thirst for power and are willing to overthrow others for the power ambition they want to achieve. In addition, lying is a human trait, even though sometimes it is for a bad or a good cause. The bad traits depicted on the Malang mask include traits that are detrimental to other people, including spreading lies and slander to others. As an example is Klana Sewandana's ambition to dominate the Jenggala kingdom by slandering the people so that they are incited and it is easy for him to control them.

In a sense, the character of Bapang represents all the vices of humans. In the story, Bapang, as one of the Kings of Jenggala, likes to play with women. He made the women of the common people slaves to his lust and then just dumped them. In addition, Bapang had a desire to rule the Jenggala kingdom by dividing Jenggala. Finally, the group that founded the new Jenggala in the Kahuripan dynasty emerged.

The difference is not only in terms of appearance, but also in terms of the attributes of the crown worn. The figures of Klana Sewandana and Bapang Jayasentika both wear crowns decorated with gold. This differs from the crown worn by protagonists such as Panji Asmarabangun, Dewi Sekartaji, and Ragil Kuning who wear plant decorations or plant attributes on the crown. Although there are aesthetic differences between the two, these differences have different meanings and characteristics.

The antagonists, such as Klana and Bapang, wear crowns with gold-plated patterns. Gold is described as a material treasure which has the connotation of ambition to get worldly pleasures in a materialistic desire. In this mask puppet story, the characters of Bapang and Klana Sewandana are both crazy about wealth or crazy about worldly life. Bapang often ordered his soldiers unjustly to control the assets of the Kadhiri and Dhaha communities, including determining the value of large amounts of tribute. In addition, Bapang also carried out sadistic massacres while fighting. He wished to control the territory, including the Kahuripan Kingdom, and overthrew the power of Prabu Erlangga.

The protagonist characters, such as Panji Asmarabangun, Dewi Sekartaji, and Ragil Kuning, wear crowns decorated with plants. Plants are a symbol of fertility. The color on the mask of Panji Asmarabangun is green, which indicates fertility. The green color is a symbol of fertility that provides the element of life. A crown decorated with plants has the connotation of a symbol of life. Myths about plants, such as leaves and flowers, have meanings about birth, life, tranquility, and peace. This is depicted in the mask of the protagonist. This symbol is similar to the symbolization in the flower of the seven forms. Red Roses have the meaning of human birth into the world. White roses have a meaning of peace and prosperity. Kantil flowers have a meaning as a strong spiritual soul to achieve inner and outer success and loyalty. Jasmine flower means that in doing one's actions, one must always involve the heart and not be in a hurry. Kenanga flower means the next generation of ancestors. Tuberose flower has the meaning of harmony and tranquility. Gambir jasmine flower has the meaning of simplicity.

The protagonist is synonymous with good things. The decoration of flowers and plants on the crown has the connotation of peace, salvation and life. The Panji Asmarabangun figure symbolizes the physical and mental fertility of the individual, the fertility of the royal land, and the fertility in producing generation. Ancient people believed that the descendants of a king or a knight were very valuable, so that the birth of Lembu Petheng was seen as a descendant of the king and was respected.

In addition, the figure of Dewi Sekartaji is symbolized as purity of heart. However, in her historical story, Dewi Sekartaji also gave life to commoners when Galuh Candrakirana (Dewi Sekartaji) disguised herself as Klentink Kuning and also when she traveled carrying the precious rontal belonging to the Kadhiri Kingdom.

The myth about Dewi Sekartaji is also known by the people of Kediri. They believe in the myth that Dewi Sekartaji is a fertility carrier in the Kediri area. The place where Dewi Sekartaji once lived, rituals are often carried out. Offerings and prayers are offered at Dewi Sekartaji's grave. Dewi Sekartaji is used as a symbol of purity, tranquility, prosperity and peace.

Dewi Ragil kuning is also a symbol of kindness, a source of prosperity and human loyalty. This is in line with the mythical meaning of the characters of Panji Asmarabangun and Dewi Sekartaji. This myth is then believed to bring prosperity and a source of goodness to the people of Malang. Therefore, in the tourist area of Polowijen there is a statue of Dewi Ragil Kuning as a symbol of prosperity and kindness.

The myths that have developed in Malang society cannot be separated from the mask culture that has been preserved for hundreds of years from generation to generation, or from Mbah Karimun which was later adapted by local residents. These myths are a cultural symbol of a set of beliefs of the Kejawan people. The meaning of Malangan mask and the myths that develop cannot be separated from the history of Kediri Kingdom in Java.

Javanese people, including the people of Kedungmungo, Malang, also believe that the ancient kings (in the story of Jenggala Kingdom) used their supernatural powers to unite with nature or the Lord of nature. They are even able to side by side and interact with the *dedemite* beings (jinn). To increase supernatural powers and for the peace and prosperity of the kingdom, kings roamed their kingdoms and visited temples to connect with the gods and their predecessors who were buried there. Through their contacts with the ancestors, kings became holier and freer from death. Redemptive motives and a desire for freedom from death were the main themes of the temple carvings (Suseno, 1988).

In principle, the people of Kedungmungo, Malang still uphold the values of social ethics in accordance with Javanese principles. In addition, they also adhere to the Javanese principle of "*Negara mawatata, desomawacara*", which means that each place has its own ethics. These ethics relate to attitudes, behavior, language, and social ethics. Social ethics is usually in the form of suggestions and prohibitions to behave and do something. This social ethic is also taught by referring to Malangan mask characters. Bapang Jayasentika has bad ethics. He likes to criticize, make other people hurt, think other people are wrong, talk about others, and think that he is always right.

The meaning of social ethics in Javanese perspective is that humans should not speak dirty words and berate others because they will live unsteadily or get harmed by God's power. Social ethics is a teaching that humans should avoid actions called *mo-limo* or the five bad actions, such as using drugs, playing with women, drinking alcohol, gambling, and stealing (Endraswara, 2012).

The communication pattern built by the Kedungmungo community is a form of circular communication pattern in which residents create a conducive atmosphere of communication and preserve

the shared culture. This is not too dominated by certain religious beliefs because they strive for a balance in the degree of adherents to certain beliefs and do not impose the majority religion in Kedungmonggo.

This is related to the history of racial identity which is closely related to biological inheritance which produces the same characteristics which can be physically identified. The ethnicity or ethnic identity of the Javanese Kedungmonggo people comes from the heritage of history, traditions, values, similar behavior from the region, and the same language.

The cultural context in the Malangan mask art has a lot of camouflage in its story. In addition, the elements in the story that are covered are not in accordance with the actual story that appears in the community as a folklore, but rather a story that is packaged in children's fairy tale content to maintain the essence of the positive story. There are texts and contexts that are hidden from the original story and characters. In this case the researchers refer to *rontalserat* (written record) Panji Anggraeni and historical references such as Babad Tanah Jawi, The History of Java (2012) and other classical literary works.

There are some characters that are hidden. Based on the findings of this study, researchers find the character of RaraAnggraeni in the romantic story of the Kahuripan Kingdom during the Jenggala and Dhaha periods. The character of RaraAnggraeni is written clearly not only in the *seratPanji-Anggraeni*, but also in Babad Tanah Jawi (The History of Java), including the story of Rara Anggraeni and Galuh Candrakirana by DamarShashangka which confirms the existence of Rara Anggraeni in the story of the Kahuripan Kingdom.

Based on historical tracing and the developing story about Panji Asmarabangun, it can be concluded that Panji Asmarabangun himself not only loved GaluhCandrakirana, but also RaraAnggraeni as his true and first love. Meanwhile, in *sendratari* performances always depict the love story between PanjiAsmarabangun and Galuh Candrakirana, and ignore the figure of Rara Anggraeni. This is what is called an attempt to close historical facts.

Many socio-cultural scientists themselves ignore aspects of historical facts that do not refer to ancient horizontal or classical references and make comparisons of historians' views. Researchers only see based on the study of the interpretive meaning on the surface. There is no journal that really traces the historical traces of the love story between Panji Asmarabangun and Rara Anggraeni, so the researchers and academics who wrote the story of Panji Asmarabangun are only stuck in folklore and do not attempt to trace history based on ancient horizontal record or classical literacy. They only refer to scientific reference books and semiotic philosophy, but do not pay attention to valid historical aspects.

Lack of public attention, especially among the younger generation, to historical context and content, makes local culture and traditions including the story of PanjiAsmarabangun easy to forget. They understand the story only from what the elders tell, and not on the basis of reference sources. Kawi language itself is no longer used because it is considered inappropriate for this era, even though this language is still adopted by parents or elderly social groups who are still in touch with their cultural traditions. However, the inheritance of the Kawi language itself to the younger generations is not going well because the use of Indonesian is a priority.

The formation of identity in Javanese society in Kedungmonggo is not always based on the moral values and character inherent in characterizations, but rather the rules, norms and values built on the sublime Javanese culture that has been inherent for years. The values contained in Malangan mask art are a message medium to convey kindness and moral education to Javanese people in Kedungmonggo. These values can be used as role models to return to the true Javanese philosophy conveyed through the scenario of the Panji Asmarabangun dance story, facial characterization, and folk tales that live in the people of Kedungmonggo, Malang.

The cultural adaptation of Malangan mask culture provides a basis for understanding a noble philosophy through historical stories. Myth has become a basic limitation on the formation of a person's character and attitude. But on the one hand, the myth that develops in the figure of Malangan masks has become a metaphysical myth.

The cultural adaptation of Malangan mask art is often connected with issues of superstition or mystical beliefs. For example, the Bapang mask is believed by the surrounding community to be a mask to resist disasters, especially if the mask is made from old trees and sacred tree species such as banyan trees or jackfruit trees that are given blessings or offerings by psychics. In addition, people use mask media as a means of protection and believe that masked dances are able to maintain harmony between mankind and their ancestors. This shows that the traditional people of Malang Regency are still attached to myths.

The myth that develops in the Malangan mask art gives the impression that the mask is always synonymous with mystical things and as a medium that connects humans and astral beings. In moral development, humans are also often associated with mystical things. Malangan mask is an art that has existed for many years and has been preserved to this day. The meaning of masked dance is often biased when analyzed superficially. It should be understood that by wearing a mask, the player not only hides his face, but also shows an expression that suits his mask that is different from himself. His face is covered, but his ability or artistic sense of image is revealed through his mask performance. In other words, the player hides himself physically, but reveals his inner expression.

Conclusion

Based on the results of research conducted by researchers related to problems in the Malangan mask culture, it can be concluded that the story on the Malangan masked dance as a whole tells about the Kahuripan Kingdom under the rule of King Amiluhur. The main characters such as Panji Asmarabangun, Dewi Sekartaji, and Ragil Kuning are protagonists who have various mask patterns in terms of color, physical form, and the crown pattern worn by the character on the mask. The physical appearance of the protagonist in all Malangan mask art has uniformity. Physically, they have a distinctive shape that is easy to understand. Meanwhile, the antagonists, like Klana Sewandana and Bapang Jayasentika, have the same color, red. The face with thick lips follows the color of the mask's appearance. In addition, the physical appearance that characterizes the antagonist is thick mustache and beard, while the protagonist does not have thick mustache and beard.

Based on the meaning of connotation, the Malangan mask is divided into meanings, namely the antagonist and the protagonist. The protagonist character of Panji Asmarabangun has the main meaning as a symbol of fertility. The green color on the face symbolizes fertility, which resembles the color of leaves or plants. The white color on the mask of Dewi Sekartaji symbolizes purity, gentle heart, and inner goodness. In addition, the bright yellow color in the mask of Dewi Ragil Kuning symbolizes kindness, and an active woman. This meaning appears as a form of agreement from mask artists. Based on the meaning, the antagonist has a uniform color which means brave but evil and has a violent character. What is depicted in the character of Bapang Jayasentika is not only a bad person, but also cunning.

Basically, there are many things that are hidden in the story of Panji Asmarabangun, such as the existence of Bapang who was actually the ruling king of old Janggala, including the figure of Rara Anggraeni who was hidden from the love story of Panji Asmarabangun. It was because Panji's love story with Rara Anggraeni was considered a disgrace for the kingdom, especially for the Janggala kingdom. Another hidden story is that there was a messenger from the kingdom of Daha to kill Rara Anggraeni so that she would not become a burden or barrier in the marriage between Panji Asmarabangun and Galuh Candrakirana.

The bias in meaning about the sanctity of Panji Asmarabangun which is told in almost all folk tales or fantasy stories for children is about Panji Asmarabangun's love affair with GaluhCandrakirana which is called true love or holy love. As if Panji Asmarabangun only loved GaluhCandrakirana, but in a hidden story, Panji Asmarabangun previously had four concubines, including Gandri. But when he met Rara Anggraeni, Panji then fell on his knees to love Rara Anggraeni even more until finally Panji got married secretly to RaraAnggraeni. The news of the marriage was finally heard by the Kingdom of Daha and Janggala so that Rara Anggraeni was then killed.

The bias in meaning that occurs in Malangan mask culture can be seen from three sides. The first is that the bias in meaning is due to the multi-interpretation of the cultural meaning of the Malangan mask which is only based on a folk tale and children's fantasy stories, and not on historical tracing. This was later understood briefly by the young people from Kedungmonggo. The second is that the identity of the Malangan mask culture itself has not been established as a specific identity for the culture and the story of the Malangan puppet. Meanwhile, the puppet mask culture also exists in several cities such as Cirebon and Central Java.

The mask puppet culture existing in several provinces that is adopted by several regions as part of the Nusantara culture tells the same story, namely Panji Asmarabangun. Even abroad, the mask puppet stories in Thailand also adopt the Panji Asmarabangun story. However, the Malangan mask culture as a cultural identity of Malang is still less prominent in maintaining the identity of the PanjiAsmarabangun story as a historical story of the kingdom in East Java.

Most young people in Kedungmonggo, Malang think that the Panji Asmarabangun story is only a myth. This meaning bias arises because of a conflict that occurs within the family of the heir to the Malangan mask art. Apart from not being able to perform optimally in demonstrating the meaning of the Malangan mask, the heir family also does not understand technology, including an understanding of the strategy to promote the mask craft.

The cultural adaptation of the Kedungmonggo community has begun to weaken due to massive social changes caused by several factors, one of which is the modernization factor in urban communities which affects the habits and norms of the younger generation of Kedungmonggo, Malang. The challenges ahead will be even harder. The Malangan mask art must compete not only with fellow mask arts from other regions, but also with the modernization of urban community life adapted by people moving to urban areas.

In adapting the Malangan mask culture, the people of Kedungmonggo emphasize that the symbols on Malangan masks are considered norms and morals of the Kejawen community and Javanese society that have been fostered and adopted over the years. The essence of norms and morals is the characterization of wayang masks, such as perspective views in the symbolism of *wayangpurwa* or other *wayang* that represent wisdom and moral values in humans, especially Javanese society.

The characterization of the Malangan mask figures refers to the manifestation of human nature and character that is depicted in real terms. The representation of the meaning of the Malangan mask is basically the emphasis of norms on humans by paying attention to the human nature and morals, as in the protagonist.

In Javanese ethics, there is a stereotype that says that Javanese are essentially looking for harmony. So, the highest value in Javanese life is harmony, in the sense that society is in a state of harmony and peace. Everyone has an appropriate position and cares for each other so that it is impossible for conflict or chaos to occur.

In brief, it can be said that Javanese society puts forward two basic demands to its members. The first is that everyone must be recognized and respected according to his position. The second is that everyone must be willing to bring himself to be in harmony with the other. Harmony means that all members of society must be calm and remove elements that can cause conflict and unrest. This view is based on the opinion that all relationships in society are arranged hierarchically.

References

- Barthes, Roland. 2007. *Petualangan Semiologi*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Endraswara, Suwardi., Prof. Dr. 2015. *Etnologi Jawa. Penelitian, Perbandingan, dan Pemaknaan Budaya*. Jakarta: Center for Academic Publishing Service (Caps).
- Hecht, Michael J., Jennifer R. Warren, Eura Jung, and Janice L. Krieger dalam Gudykunst, William B. 2005. *Theorizing About Intercultural Communication*. New York: Sage Publications.
- Hoed, Benny (2011) dalam Riris K. Toha. 2016. *Krisis Budaya?*. Oasis Guru Besar Fakultas Ilmu Pengetahuan Budaya UI. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor.
- Judee K. Burgoon and Amy S. Ebesu Husbarddalam Gudykunst, William B. 2005. *Theorizing About Intercultural Communication*. New York: Sage Publications.
- Kim, Y.Y., 2008. *Becoming intercultural personhood: Globalization and a way of being (spesialisue)*. *Internasional journal of Intercultural Relation*, 32, 359-368.
- Littlejohn, Stephen W. & Karen A. Foss. 2009. *Encyclopedia of Communication Theories*. New York: Sage Publications.
- Magetsari (2011) dalam Riris K. Toha. 2016. *Krisis Budaya?*. Oasis Guru Besar Fakultas Ilmu Pengetahuan Budaya UI. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor.
- Raffles, Thomas Stamford. 2014. *The History of Java*. Yogyakarta: Narasi.
- Ricklefs, M.C. 2013. *Mengislamkan Jawa. Sejarah Islamisasi di Jawad dan Penentangnyadari 1930 sampaisekarang*. Jakarta: Serambi.
- Rusmana, Dadan. 2014. *Filsafat Semiotika. Paradigma, teori, dan metode interpretasi dan adarisemiotika structural hinggakosntruksi praktis*. Bandung: Penerbit Pustaka Setia.
- Salim, Agus. 2015. *Teori dan Paradigma*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Samovar, Larry A., Richard E. Porter & Edwin R. McDaniel. *Komunikasi Lintas Budaya (Communication Between Cultures)*, Edisi 7. Jakarta: Penerbit Salemba Humanika & Cengage Learning, Singapore.
- Suseno, Franz Magnis. 1991. *Wayangan Panggilan Manusia*. Jakarta: PT. Gramedia Pustaka.
- Zoetmulder, P.J. 2000. *Manunggaling Kawula Gusti. Pantheisme dan Monisme Dalam Sastra Suluk Jawa*.

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).