



Bobung Mask Commodification in Cultural Industry Perspective

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Abstract

This research aims to study the development and value shift in Classic Panji Mask art in Bobung, Putat, Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta, Indonesia as a local culture. The massive development of the industry affects many aspects including culture. Culture as treasure and the nation's character builder as well as the virtuous value in it must be preserved to the next generation. This study uses qualitative approach while the methods of data collection are interviews, observations, and documentations. The study uses descriptive analysis with data collection, data presentation, data reduction, and conclusion. The study shows that there is a cultural value and meaning shift in the art of mask crafts in Bobung village as a result of cultural industry phenomenon. It is often linked with the mask art industry by applying capital value principles. In addition, the cultural industry phenomenon also results in culture being treated as a culture product. Despite philosophy values in classic masks are eroded by tourism development and global market interests, Bobung residents still try to preserve the classic masks.

Keywords: *Classic Panji Mask; Creation Mask; Commodification; Cultural Industry; Capital Value; Bobung; Gunungkidul*

Introduction

Panji Masks are one of cultural heritages in Gunungkidul. Better known as Bobung Mask, the industry is situated in Bobung village, Putat, Patuk, Gunungkidul. This Bobung Mask culture originated from a local tradition in the form of a mask dance as a manifest of the people's joy in Bobung village for their abundant crops and was usually held in a custom ceremony called *rasulan* or *nyadran*. In addition, the mask dance is usually performed in a *khitanan* ceremony, wedding ceremony and many more. The mask is one of properties used in a Panji Mask dance performance. In the beginning, classic masks can be thought as an absolute partner in custom mask dances. Masks with various characters can represent the appearance of dancers. The story delivered in every Panji Mask dance performance is a love story between Panji Asmarabangun dan Dewi Sekartaji.

The massive development of the industry affects every aspects including culture. As one of Indonesians' virtuous valued treasures, culture must be inherited to and preserved by every individuals. The Bobung Mask as one of ancestor's cultural heritages has great value in the realm of Indonesian culture. Jujun (2007: 262) explains that cultural values are souls of culture and become the basis of all forms of culture, apart from the cultural values, culture is manifested in the form of a living system which is human's activity that reflects cultural values in it. In addition to the physical form of culture, ideas and

cultural values become main objectives as to why the culture needs to be inherited so that its sustainability is maintained.

Technology has an important role in the preservation process of culture and distribution of the products of culture to wide audience. Television, radio, even internet, all contribute greatly to high public consumption of cultural industry products. The high consumption culture of Indonesians is the influence or impact of globalization and modernization. That case explains what is stated by Malinowski in Mulyana (2005: 21) about the power of culture that is considered higher and more active will affect the culture that is considered lower and more passive. If Malinowski's statement is interpreted into the development of culture in Indonesia, the position of traditional culture will be assumed lower and more passive. The local culture products are increasingly unknown in depth since they experience a shift of values and meanings. The value change of mask art production is the effect of the cultural change. In the past, masks were only used as face covering properties worn in dances or rituals. As for now, things have changed where the art of mask crafts has been developed into a potential industry with economic values. Industries are often linked to 'capital value' which is how to get as many profits as possible. Meanwhile, arts are related to aesthetics and human expressions as well as unrelated to the word 'commercialization'. This phenomenon is considered to cause culture to lose meanings and virtuous values, even tends to be treated as cultural products. The tendency of thinking towards the cultural products can be categorized as the logic of capitalism.

Literature Review

Adorno and Horkheimer (1991: 98) criticize about the previous phenomenon of culture presence which comes from industrial products instead of people's cultural expressions, yet they can grow massively in the society. The term commodification is a process where a capitalism logics' role becomes the main pillar in which objects, qualities, and signs are changed into commodities. Rosta (2013: 121) explains that commodification appears more towards values erosion that erase or fade philosophy values from the origin of the culture. Commodification can be said producing new products which is originated from a culture in the society and having a selling value. This is related to a topic and anthropological study results which often deals with tourism effects on cultural development as well as local community cultural products engineering that keeps up with the global market development.

Tourism according to Smith (1977) in Yekti Maunati (2006: 237) is divided into five categories namely ethnicity, culture, history, environment, and recreation. Tourism, especially culture, in Gunungkidul (one of the regencies located in Yogyakarta, Indonesia) grows along the demands of the global market development. Martono et. al (2017: 125-126) state that many antiques are sold to the collectors. This shows that cultural works with unique and exotic values still have their fans. The values of the works and history in them as well as the regional identity of the culture itself also become some of the motivators of tourism development. Those values seem to be the tourism charms to attract tourists from various regions.

In the globalization era, the cultural works are engineered to be art works that can be mass-produced so that it can fulfill economic, industrial, and tourism market needs as well as fulfill economic needs of the craftsmen themselves. The phenomenon that occurs to the functional change of this Bobung Mask crafting is clearly seen from time to time. The high interest of the global community in decoration needs using cultural works in the form of masks causes decorative masks production to increase. Regarding the crafting process of Classic Masks, there are several standards that prioritize qualities and sacredness. The crafting process of Classic Masks also need relatively long time because of the different details and characters. Compared to the crafting process of the decorative masks (creation), decorative masks tend to be mass-produced, prioritizing quantities above qualities. In brief, about complexity of the making of classic masks, the masks use a traditional coloring technique, which is "sungging". Sungging is a coloring technique with complicated patterns which is done neatly so that it

produces a neat and beautiful gradation color arrangement that creates uniqueness (Sutopo, 2019). This will obviously increase the production time which can be said less efficient as a requirement to keep up with the global market development.

The art of mask crafts is one of Indonesians' cultural heritages. A classic mask is basically a property in the mask dance performance. Soedarsono (1980: 5) explained that the function of masks in ancient times was as a representation of ancestors and as a complement to ceremonies in beliefs. This explanation is supported by Martono, et al. (2017: 127) who explained that traditional (classic) masks were originally used in worships, as symbols, as complements to ceremonies, as complements to theatre dance clothing, although nowadays they have developed both physically and functionally. Sumaryono (2021: 49) explains that the development or creation of a work is usually influenced and bound by socio-cultural situations and circumstances that happen in society. Masks can function as a fulfillment of ritual needs, artistic needs (dance and decoration), religion, health to children's games.

Methodology

This study examines the quick and massive development of the cultural industry phenomenon in the art of mask crafts in Bobung. Referring to the theory put forward by Rohidi (2021: 180) regarding aspects of data collection from human experience which is the work itself, the involvement of people in certain activities, and actions taken on certain events. Therefore, this research was carried out using a qualitative approach and data collection methods in the form of interviews with *empu* or masters as well as craftsmen figures of the Classic Panji Mask in Bobung, observations to the mask craft studio environment in Bobung, and documentations of various things needed. This study uses descriptive analysis with data collection, data presentation, data reduction and conclusions.

Result and Discussion

Overview of Panji Masks as A Part of Bobung Society's Culture

Panji mask in its form is often said to be a classic mask because it becomes a reference for crafting masks with new styles or creation masks. There are at least 10 to 15 mask characters that are played in each performance, these characters include Lembu Amiluhur, Brajanata, Asmarabangun, Gunungsari, Bancak, Doyok, Rogol Prajaya, Sembunglungu, Kelana, Rurapremuja, Sekartaji, the first and second Jenggala Soldiers, and the first and second giant.



Picture 1: Variety of Classic Mask Characters
(Source: Dilyan, 2022)

There are various versions of the popular Panji story in Indonesia, namely Serat Panji Jayakusuma, Panji Malatm Serat Wangbang Wideya and Serat Kuda Narawangsa. The versions of the Panji story appeared due to the subjective element of the authors, but it still does not reduce the virtuous value behind each version of the story. As one of the Indonesians' ancestral heritages, masks describe the nature, character, status and types of creatures (gods, kings, commoners, giants) so that these masks have an important role in every Panji story that is performed. It is known that there are many virtuous

values implied in Panji stories, such as, Panji masks have virtuous values in each of his stories. So the art of mask crafts as a part of the Panji story performance deserves to be preserved.

Commodification of Bobung Mask Craft Industry

The development of tourism in Gunungkidul began in the 2000s with the opening of various tourist attractions that offer interesting and beautiful rides and sights. Various studies on changes in cultural values that take place in the society have indeed been in the spotlight in recent years. Various attributes and even culture's meanings are transformed into commodities that have a selling value. This raises the question of whether the development of tourism becomes one of threats to the integrity of traditional culture. Wood (1993) says that traditional culture is adaptive and resistant to development. A traditional culture will survive when the society have a sense of pride in their cultural works. As an example, the Balinese and their culture, as stated by Piscard, Kahn (1995) that Balinese culture is preserved as a result of the growth of tourism and the adaptive strength of the community. It can be said that the existence of a community shows pride in the local culture in Bali. The emergence and development of wooden craft and mask workshops is also a testament to the community's pride in the mask culture in their area.

The history of culture in the Special Region of Yogyakarta was initially an undirect result of the Gayanti Agreement in 1755, so that the culture of Mataram region in the cultural dimension was divided into two, namely the Yogyakarta and Surakarta styles which experienced development in their respective cultural characteristics. Then, in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta under the reign of the first king Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwana I, artistic and cultural performances such as dance performances, wayang and others began to be held. These Yogyakarta's performances style is known as gagrag Mataram.

Along with the era development, it was marked by the development of science and technology as well as society's social. Topeng Panji has experienced a change of form, purpose and meaning which is defined as meeting the needs in the tourism sector along with the growth of tourism in Gunungkidul.



Picture 2: The Manifestation of the Bobung Batik Mask - Creation Mask
(Source: Dilyan, 2022)

Batik masks are categorized into the type of creation masks. Batik masks are one of innovation results done by mask craftsmen in Bobung. The appearance looks the same as the Classic Panji Mask. The difference between these two masks is in the coloring. In the Classic Panji Masks, the coloring technique uses a brush and combined with the *sunggingan* technique and still refers to the grips that exist on the mask characters in the Panji story. While in the creation masks, the coloring technique uses a batik technique which is made through the process of waxing (in the batik process) and then dipped into batik dyes.

Although it seems like there are certain (batik) motifs on the masks, the values contained in these motifs are not carried away other than only as mask decorations. The mask crafting was revealed in an interview with Sardi (2021), the owner of Vinda Batik Craft, that it was easier to make batik masks (creations) than (classic) Panji character masks and it was considered more profitable based on the sales results.



Figure 3 and 4 : Creation Mask (left) and Classic Mask (right)

(Source: Dilyan, 2022)

The complexity, quality and production time's length of these classic masks make their selling points high. Introducing cheaper alternative products with different quality standards, creation masks becomes decorative masks products that are mass-produced that almost all of the characters are made the same. The coloring technique does not use *sungging anymore*, instead, it uses the batik technique with dyes. It is not that it does not have aesthetic value, but the existence of a creation mask is considered to reduce the original meaning of the Mask Artwork. The crafting of creation masks is based on the market demand and tastes, not the expressions of the artists.

Based on the previous explanation regarding the process of crafting the two masks, the interest and the socioeconomic class of the costumers as tourism targets are also considerations as to why the production of creation masks is more and more developed than classic masks. The phenomenon of the changing in customers' interest itself is because the price of creation mask is more affordable for all kinds of people. If we take a look again at the production of creation masks that uses only the basic forms of classic masks, production materials are easy to obtain at low prices, can be mass-produced, and craftsmen do not need to look at the grips of the form of masks like in the art of classic mask crafts.

Conclusion

The art of mask crafts is one manifestation of Indonesians' cultural artifacts that have noble meanings and values in them, so their existence needs to be inherited and preserved. Panji Masks are included in the types of classic masks. The phenomenon of the cultural industry in the art of mask crafts in Bobung, Putat, Gunungkidul resulted in the commodification of culture. The commodification of culture is much deeper in driving mask craftsmen towards a product marketing economy with various underlying factors such as customers' interest in masks, the function of masks for customers, and appropriate prices for each class of potential customers, all of which affect the materials and production processes. The commodification that occurs in the art of mask crafts in Bobung cannot be avoided when the craftsmen are collided with the necessities of life. It is just that a re-understanding is needed for craftsmen and the younger generation about the importance of preserving local culture because culture has good meaning and noble values for character education for the nation's next generation.

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