

Open Your Mask: Traditional Paradox of Mask Puppet of Malang, East Java, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Mask performance art in Indonesia is considerable and diverse, every area, race or ethnic community and metropolis community has expression in the form of mask. Every community defines the expressed "mask" itself over times. Basically, mask face closing mask wear it, aiming to respect the spirit of ancestors, including king. This research employed functional-structural approach. The mask is considered as an integral part of its dancer. Emotional bond hides an individual's self-identity in order not to be recognized by others. The character of mask worn was 'handsome' as the symbol of love, and "ugly" as the symbol of evil. The data was collected using in-depth interview, participatory observation, and document study. Techniques of analyzing used were interpretative and hermeneutic analyses.

Keywords: Mask, pennant, religion, symbol

INTRODUCTION

The change of original face form characteristic into the mask one is a very old typical human expression. Originally, it becomes a very practical experience, such as the hunting purpose creating camouflage to make the hunted animal can be approach easily without suspicion. Pigeaud (1938) called this manipulation technique 'samarang'. Such the old phenomenon can no longer be watched, despite magic factor in manipulating the original face into mask one. It is because not only the hunted animal-resembling mask is used. The mask is made magically with incantation.

Such the face manipulation pattern transforms into crimes, with the objective of making the original face not recognized by others. Such the perspective is in fact not completely true, because the thief or robber is basically not acquainted with the victim. It may be understood, if the thief or robber is worried to be remembered by those seeing them. If such the thinking is understood, every individual's face is typical and personal. God creates human being typically and personally, his/her face is only for him/her.

If the assumption is correct, the human being makes the mask aiming to hide the God's destiny. Human being tries to make his/her destiny the face to be played him/herself. Just like the thieves and robbers, they make new face that they only can recognize. Others will find the face not easily because the face the robber wears is likely worn once or twice, and then removed.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employed a qualitative method, that is, to explore the definition and the meaning of data description as the result of observation, interview and document study. The main instrument of collecting data was the author equipped by noting tool, audio and visual recorder. The informants of research were M. Soleh Adipramono, the Mask Puppet's heir in

Tulus Besar Village of Tumpang, Malang and Malang *karawitan* artist, Sumantri. The author's credibility and the data validity were examined using triangulation technique. The technique of analysis employed was interpretative one to look for the answer to the problem based on relational analogy: the statements arising were correlated to the phenomena from the result of observation, informant statement, and finding from informant's personal notes and document.

DATA RESULT

Mask's Panakawan

Clown's masks create humorous circumstance throughout amusing atmosphere. The spectator is brought by the clown mask face into cheerful circumstance. The clowns' original sad face is hidden tightly to in order that the spectators do not take the emphatic part of the fate. Clown mask is the face of foolish, smart, or stupid spectators, or the sorrow transferred to the performer. Such the phenomenon is different from the case suggested previously. The face of human being is generally formal, wise, or decorous. Becoming stupid, foolish, smart, or sorrowful is not their ideal. However, the spectators want to enjoy themselves in others' face. This interpretation is in line with *panakawan* in *wayang purwa*. A closer look at *panakawan* indicates that it has been used finely to generate the symbolization of sorrowful community's representation, different from the nobility's. Such the representation suggests two interrelated sides. *Panakawan* whose face is whitewashed like the mask does not represent really the community. But, the *panakawan*'s white face covers the (community) sorrow including the imitative pattern of ever smiling (Bagong), sad (Semar), smart (Gareng), or as if clever (Petruk) faces. The imitation of other various puppet types with its entire variant still apparently represent the role of people with its never clear social existence. At least, the recognition of *panakawan*'s existence as the part of humor scene is the role of people considered as *dagelan*. Because they cannot be considered as capable of communicating seriously, only '*batur*' (*embatin pitutur*) is taken into account.

In Javanese perspective, humor is close to *pasemon* (secret information) of misery or torment because it is used for the object of torture (the target of bullying). That the people are ugly, dirty, and faded is featured through the mask confirming the existence of sorrow. The people expressed like that are not angry. The Javanese *priyayi* represented through the puppet seems to enjoy the *panakawan*'s ridiculousness. The people's and *priyayi*'s opposition in Javanese art transforms the '*kawula-gusti* (creature-creator)' condition (Moedjanto, 1987). It is a phenomenon of unparallel condition paradox. The Javanese philosophy accommodates the thought for integration objective in which people is the largest part of social and economic mobility. The folk mask is put into the manifestation of *gusti-pangeran* (God). Semar is perceived as the *samar* (vague) characteristic of god, considered as '*dewa-katon*' or *bapa* or *rama*. Such the Javanese perspective is taken by the religion developer in Java as the means of dialoguing the role of '*Gusti* (God)' into spiritual to social domain. There was a Javanese spiritual domain dialogued intensively and deeply. '*Gusti*' is used as the mask carried in Hindu-Javanese thought, about *avatara* of gods; *ngejowentah* (manifesting) into human being (Rahardjo, 2002). This political objective is explained as *abiseka* degree in Mataram Kings reign; *saydin panata gama* (the leader organizing the religious life) (Herusatoto, 2001). Such the perception becomes clear when equated through keywords: *kawula-gusti* = *gusti-pangeran*. Such the Javanese political spiritual perspective explains the position of '*creature-creator* (*kawula-pangeran*)'. The mask was opened by Syekh Siti Jenar (Pareno, 2013) so that the Javanese Kings' existence was teased.

It was because '*pangeran* (King) is the mask of '*kawula* (people)'. Thus it was conceived that the king is only the mask the people wear. If this assumption is true, it is possible that the political myths of Javanese king basically were built on that thought. The justification of '*kawula-pangeran*' is possible to explain the existence of Jesus in Javanese cultural domain, '*Allah's son*' dualism (not conceived as Allah's child). Such the paradoxical word sequence is the attempt of synthesizing the perception equally difficult to found, because the existence was different. Exploring more deeply the essence of Javanese paradox, the myth of *sunans*, particularly Kalijaga sunan was known as the creator of mask in Java. The myth is the paradoxical symbol of existence integration. The perception above is found in *panakawan* character of Mask Puppet in Malang, Semar and Bagong are in opposition and complement Panji Asmarabangun all at once; so are Patrajaya and Raden Gunungsari.

Mask Vs Spirit

The myth of mask carried by Sunan Kalijaga in about the sixteenth century was the typical characteristic of dialoguing with Hindu-Javanese people's thought. With 'mask' approach, the Javanese people is expected to be able to re-identify their 'ancestors' (Sedyawati, 1993) from East Java, Panji Asmarabangun (Ino Kertapati). Re-identifying ancestors means questioning the essence of life revealed through the *sangkan parane dumadi* (life origin and objective) perception (Ali, 1986). Javanese people look for its answer through the way they perform art, one of which is Mask Puppet (Wayang Topeng) performance. If the artists want to find out the answer from *sangkan paran*, they should be able and dare to open the mask they wear. However, not all mask presentation opens the dancer's face cover having the performance completed. The face will be kept stored until it enters the *krombongan* (change room). The spirit of ancestor is symbolized with mask dancer named Madyautama. The mask dancer never shows off their original face before the audiences (open his/her mask). The audiences only guess who is performing the certain characters. Madyautama, an obedient Buddhist, explains: the existence of mask dancer on the stage is "*wenang dhelok gak wenang didhelok* (may see but may not be seen). It is the existence of spirit, essentially perceived through Javanese philosophy with term *tan kaya kinaya apa* (Danami, 2002). It means that essentially the spirit is like nothing, behind which the perspective refers to the man self. Paradoxically, essentially, Javanese human cannot describe what he/she is looked like. It is because its cultural characteristic is closed. After each performance, puppet or mask is always stored in a box (*kotak*). The box in which the puppet or mask is stores is called as the place in which the spirit (soul) lies down; *kotak ira kayu dendana, isinya sukma kalawan jiwa*. In addition, Lakon Panji (Panji story) also explains a variety of Panji Asmarabangun's disguise in looking for his wife, Candrakirana (Soedarsono, 1999). Having met his wife, they then went back home to Kahuripan (the capital of Jenggala). It is a simple and verbal explanation that everyone who has completed their duties in the world will go back into *ka-hurip-an* (go back home to life; life = spirit) Sumantri, interview on June 12, 2013).

Such the thought can be likely perceived from the Sunans' role, particularly Sunan Kalijaga. Spirit in Islam religion is believed as an invisible thing. Muslim generally obligatorily believes something they cannot see. However, it is actually realized that to believe an invisible thing is difficult, particularly for lay people. The easy way to explain a vague thing is to use performing art, puppet or mask. This assumption is suggested, recalling that the Javanese *mubaligs* (Islam proselytizers) really realize that traditional performing art growing over centuries is the Javanese people's mindset. It can be seen from the mask living in Javanese people without definition as the dancer's face cover. The mask is perceived as *atapukan*. The synonym is *maraked* (inherent), *mandaked* (close/near) (Cahyono, 2010). Javanese people implement it to spiritual experience to be *cedhak tanpa senggolan, adoh*

tanpa wangenan (being close without touched, being far without any limit). Ancient Javanese language originated from the word *tapuk* meaning attached to or unified (but not unity). The unification of mask and its user is the symbolization of the essential integration of soul and body. Soul is the dancer that makes the mask alive, she/he hides inside. Something apparent inside human being is cover or conceived as *tapel*. *Tapel* is heretofore still used by Balinese to call mask (Bandem & Rembang, 1976). Such the term was adopted in Majapahit time. The use of term *taple* for mask performing art in Bali was because *tapel* is a cover (Supriyanto & Pramono, 1997).

Human body is considered as covering the soul (the place to hide or to disguise). Body is always integrated into soul, because someday the soul may go or move to another body. The use of term *taple* can be attributed with religion guiding Balinese life, that the soul is always related to incarnation law. It rotates like *cakrapanggilingan* (God Visnu's weapon in the form of sharp disk) (Herusatoto, 2001). In West Javanese people, particularly Cirebon people, although different from Balinese in the term of their religion guidelines, incarnation phenomenon is expressed very obviously in the performance of *Babakan Mask*. *Babakan Mask* dance is generally performed only by a single dancer, while the mask worn can change, from Panji, Pamindo, Rummyang, Patih, Tumenggung, Jinggoanom, and ended with Klana performance (Sumiati and Nalan, 1998). The spectators, of course, clearly assume that mask and dancer are really different. As if the dancer synchronizes his/her movement with the mask he/she is expressing. Javanese thought is different; the difference lies in the mask. The dance remains to be the same and cannot change, minimally changes unconsciously (such the difference is called *ndadi* or *karawuhan*).

Mask = Falseness

The mask is always attributed with the means of covering falseness, pretension, or of hiding something morally considered as bad. Such the thought is a common view of many ethnics and or nations throughout world. The mask performance presupposes the one making the counterfeit face of the performers. It is because basically the performers are not like this in daily life. The performers' body and soul is borrowed to feature the character that can deceive the audience. Thus, it is not surprising that there is someone sobbing when watching puppet performance. It suggests that the spectators can be brought into subconscious world and compelled to empathize with the deception and trick about the fate and sorrow of the featured character. Such the deception aimed to generate empathy. People laughing at or afraid of mask face basically receive its presence. Thus, the mask performance is a 'soul' performance. The presence of soul is fearful and enjoyable all at once.

In other words, the attempt of self-falsifying is called disguise (*samaran*). To detect something in order to find out what others do precisely, an individual should be in disguise. Thus, self-falsification makes the dancer sure that the spectator will really recognize non-actual performance. The narrators falsify many words from various puppet characters (Brandon, 2003). Similarly, the mask dance falsifies the dancer's identity with certain masks, either good or evil character. Self-disguising into good or evil character is basically not different. Because such the characters are stored inside the dancer, disguising into the good one is the attempt of hiding the evil one, and vice versa. Disguise aims to deceive spectators who always want to know the imaginary and vague representation of characters.

Such the thought and perception is drawn in the attempt of understanding the essence of life that is actually (essentially) non-existent, always performed by human being in disguised form. The roles the dancer plays are the narrators' decision. Therefore, it is not the dancers who want to be good or evil, but human paradoxical characteristics that underlie the dancers in performing it sincerely. This social structure representation pattern was desirable in Javanese

Kingdom's glory time. Everyone might not look at directly the king; their faces should be hidden deeply by means of bowing. If they appeared before the King, the dancers' faces should be covered with thick make-up and painted resembling the puppet characters. If they did not do so, they would wear the mask covering entire face. Thus, they could not speak. There is narrator replacing the dancers' voice, meaning that human being may not speak before the king. Yateman, one of mask dancers from Pijiombo Hamlet, Wanasari, Malang, understands it. Every time he performs, he always says 'sebo'; *sebo* or *soan* means coming to see the king. The objective is to *ngabekti* (giving service). Thus, its social transformation can be found during Idulfitri holiday, every one *ngabekti* (is giving service) to parents, either alive or died. *Ngabekti* in Java should pass through *soan* trip called *mudik*, meaning coming home. Related to Panji story in Malang, Panji Asmarabangun *mudik* to Kahuripan along with Dewi Sekartaji. *Mudik* the Javanese people do is a social transformation of Javanese people's disguise. Javanese people since the National Revivalism era began to be driven into political domain in living within nation and state; they were no longer the part of king or sultan. Javanese people had found a way to release themselves by means of removing their masks, going to the cities with their modesty and plainness supporting the metropolitan life. Once a year in *fitri* (reborn) day they come home by wearing their new mask. It is the mask as the urban people bringing with them its social implication.

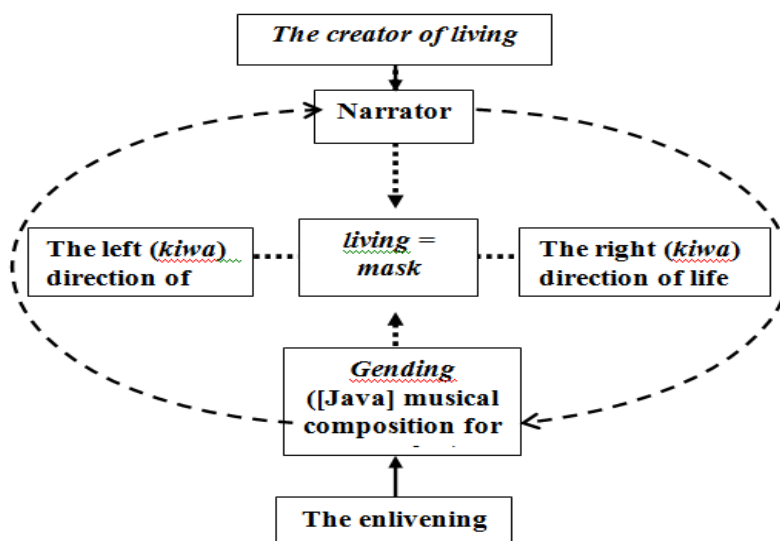
The disguise in a variety of Javanese performing art forms has diverse variants, not only evil or good character. For example, a variety of animal shapes likely brought in from tetemistic perception: cow, horse, monkey, elephant, lion, bird, goat, snake/dragon, fish or antelope. Such the choice has historical background that is even symbolic in nature. Self-disguising into animal is to hide the self into spiritual power of natural power. Self-disguising into animal is basically to enter the power of spirit mastering the life. Animal does not dominate the social domain in the reality of human life; they are present to dominate nature and to control the gods' power. Human being and animal is united as the complement of life, Visnu and *garuda*, Batara Guru and lembu Andini, snake and God Siwa (Hidajat, 2012). It is one package of characteristic unity that can control the human's and the animal's nature. Such the unity is implemented to Bima character having non-human wives: Dewi Arimbi (*gandarwa*), Dewi Nagagini, and Dewi Udangayu. Begawan Durna had horse as his wife. The animal mask in Javanese puppetry makes the spectators realize to provide social and emotional life spaces to animal. Thus, in the varied Javanese performing art, it suggests the presence of masks inherent to the dancer (human being) such as Reog Panaraga performance uniting Lion and Peacock. The Reog Panaraga performance phenomenon is spirituality power transformation of God Visnu, a variety of dragon forms in *Jaranan* performing art reflecting the spirituality of god Siwa, a variety of horse masks, either in horse picture, horse head mask, or specially-trained horse (*kuda renggong*, *jaran gombal*, or *jaran kencak*) is the spirituality of Dewi Wilutomo.

Simply, the presence of various mask forms in animal shape is the self-manipulation of weak human. Animal, in power aspect, has superiority the human cannot emulate, but human can seize its spirit. Thus, in certain era, in Java such animal names were used as Kudosemirang, Keboanabrang, *gajahmada*, Hayamwuruk, Lembupetng, Maesojenar, and etc. Mask, embodiment including puppet representation, and animal names is the competition of spirituality by human beings in order to get divine power. The gods, in complementariness with animal, have not only spiritual power but awesome power.

DISCUSSION

The Mask Puppet in Malang – East Java suggests the presence of a phenomenon that the characters in Panji story can be divided into two: Javanese character called right (*tengen*)

character and Sabrang character called left (*kiwa*) one. The *tengen* character featured is Panji Asmarabangun and *kiwa* one is Klana Sewandana. Both of them are complementary in dualism nature, for example *awan-bengi* (day-night), *padang-peteng* (bright-dark), *bumi-langit* (earth-sky), and etc. Such the complementariness is called *urip* (living). *Urip* moving from the right to left is called *pradaksina*, and the one moving from left to the right is called *prasawya* (Sunarto, 2012). The complementariness of two Malang Mask dancer formations is called *ngendali*. It derives from the Javanese word *kendali*, meaning driving (controlling). *Ngendali* is the verb done by the cart coachman (Hidajat, 2013). A coachman's characteristic should be able to drive the running of the horse pulling the cart. Kresna is the coachman of Harjuna and Salya is the one of Karna. Both of them have same objective but different way of driving. Chattam Ar, an artist of Malang Mask Puppet, states that *urip* (living) is one, but driving many. For that reason, *living* may be going back to the soul or not dependent on how to drive *urip* (living). The schematic finding of *ngendali* is as follows.



Notes:

- Opposite (half circle) is called *ngendali*
- The line of related relationship
- The line of coordinative relationship

Figure 1. Mask symbolization living (Hidajat, 2013)

This figure suggests the terms conceived by the Mask Puppet artist in Malang. That the 'mask' is a spiritual phenomenon can be seen from the three aspects in life: *sing gawe urip* (the creator of living), symbolization of narrator, *sing nguripi* the symbolization of *gending*. The mask symbolizes *urip* (living). The vertical line denotes the spiritual relationship commonly conceived by the researcher of *Kaweruh Jawa* (Javanese Knowledge) as the *keratin telu* (king's kingdom) phenomenon. This existence of three power areas (ruling the life) is really manifested through the horizontal and vertical relationship in the form of *laku* (way) or in Mask Puppet is called *Klana*. Horizontally, there are two way of human relationship: to the left (*prasawiya*) occupied by Dewi Sekartaji (Kediri/Daha), and to the right (*pradaksina*) occupied by Panji Asmarabangun (Jenggala) (Hidajat, 2013).

Furthermore, regarding the meaning behind the mask, as mapped in the figure above, through vertical line, the human being behind the mask is encouraged by three powers of *kraton telu*: Intellectual, emotional and will. The perception on the *urip* scheme leads to living

constellation, called *gumelaring jagad alit* and *jaga gedhe* (the spread of small and large universe) in Javanese perspective. It can be depicted in the following table.

Table 1. Explanation about *gumelaring jagad alit* and *jagad gedhe* (Hidajat (2013))

<i>Nature</i>	<i>Life</i>	<i>Keraton telu</i>	<i>Mask Puppet</i>	<i>Character</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
Upper nature or head-to- neck part	<i>The creator of living</i> is Brahma	The mind lies in the brain	Narrator	Panji Asmarabangun	The mind works incessantly. It attempts to look for new ways in dealing with everything. The mind should be controlled, because it is the disaster source. It is the source of <i>titah</i> (command) to be living.
Middle nature or shoulder-to- hip part	<i>Urip</i> (living) is Siwa the Master	The feeling lies in the heart	Mask	Dewi Sekartaji (Candrakirana)	The feeling is fine, even it is never known when it comes and goes. It is He who knows <i>sangkan paran</i> Human will may also be infinite. It leads human being to a never-satisfied condition continuously. For that reason, the will should be restricted.
Lower nature or genitals-to- below part	<i>The enlivening</i> is Visnu	The will lies in genitals.	<i>Gendhing</i>	Kelana Sewandana	

Observing the *jagad alit* (big universe) and *gedhe* (large universe) aspects from Java cosmology, it has been found out the symbolization of ‘mask’, the analogy of living (*urip*) *diwengku* (supported) by emotional movement as the powerful strength called *daya* (power). The symbol found in Malang Mask Puppet is in the form of mask binding ‘cord’ on the dancers’ head. *Cord* to bind the mask consists of three: right-left and middle or upper. It symbolizes the attempts the human being takes to wander (*mengelana* or *berkelana*) forever, to go as he will to look for or to pursuit the satisfaction, although it is the law of living (*kasunyatane urip*); if it does not move, it means that it is not alive.

The three-branch mask binding cord is pressed with *age* cord by two strong connections between the mask’s and the dancer’s chins; thus, the mask the dancers wear becomes very strong. As such, the dancers of Malang Mask Puppet cannot voice (speak by themselves) (Henri & Soleh, 1997). The voice is articulated by the narrator. It means that *urip* (living) must be driven by the narrator. Therefore, the narrator of Mask Puppet is always self-reminded *wayang padha karo dalange* (fellow human being), *waspadakno suwara kalawan rupa* (pay attention to the mask’s voice and face), *lek ga bisa mbedakna, topeng gak bisa ngelakonana* (if it cannot differentiate, the mask cannot perform the story (Soleh, interview on June 12, 2013).

CONCLUSION

The mask in a variety of forms is put onto the human being’s pretension (falseness) form. In the perception on Malang Mask Puppet as the folk performing art believed by the stakeholders as the guidance and the spectacle all at once. It is dualistic phenomenon of paradoxical life, the united contradiction, or called *setangkap* (two but one) in local term. It is line with the perception on two sides of coin that cannot be apart each other. Panji Asmarabangun (love revivalism) and Dewi Candrakirana (full moon) are the natural

phenomena that can activate the living creature's sexual power in the world to do regeneration process. The symbol of love and moon is the eternity cycle that should run continuously, so that everyone should wander (*lelana* or *berkelana*). *Lelana ing laladan sepi* (wandering in a silent way) is the evident sign of god moon's journey. The moon myth is considered as the oldest one, replaced with fertility one later. Candrakirana story as the origin of Javanese people believes in the *selapan* (36-days)-age life. Malang people recognizes the respecting ritual cycle once in 36 days called *suguh*, commonly held in *jumat legi* eve. The people come to the ancestors' grave to pray and to sow flower. They even sometime prepare *sajen* (ritual offerings) made from rice flour called *apem*, meaning remitting (forgiving) (deriving from Javanese people). This sign of respecting the spirit or ancestor can also be found in Indian or Greek culture in the form of bread without yeast (Suwardono, interview on October 20, 2013).

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