

Aesthetics Migration of Sundanese Primordial Symbols in Bandung Subculture

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Abstract. Sundanese primordial symbols, although visually difficult to find, actually still inherent in the values of contemporary Sundanese life. Kujang is one of the symbols that has valuable variety of beautiful forms, and still survive until now. Kujang preservation also maintained by the Sundanese who consistently use it as a symbol for almost anything. The youth in Bandung underground music scene often use it as the band symbol or cover album artwork—the album *Rebirth of Jatisunda* of Jasad Band. The underground music scene is a subculture that gives birth to new values including aesthetic. The most interesting is the paradox within the album cover artwork that combines Western and Sundanese aesthetic concepts as one. This refers to Jacques Rancière's aesthetic migration as an attempt to cross the hierarchy without rejecting it but rather attempting to traverse these cultures. We will see 'political' and 'aesthetical' concepts breaking down an established and primordial aesthetical regime into a more contemporary. This qualitative research uses the theory of Rancière to see how important the 'political' and 'aesthetic' processes in the symbolic migration, especially the primordial aesthetic symbols that have the highest esteem in Sundanese society into the same yet more renew aesthetical discourse.

Keyword: Aesthetics, Sunda, Rancière

1 Introduction

Sundanese culture is very rich in symbolism. These symbolisms are an abstraction of the Sundanese people view of life from the past—a view of the religious of the Sundanese society to it's political. Some of the symbolism that can still be found is kujang and *maung/lodaya* (tiger). Besides kujang, other Sundanese symbolisms are *iket*, *karinding*, *leuit*, *pantun*, and so forth. But along with the global development in almost every aspect of our live, the cultural richness of Sunda is threatened to disappear. One of the causes is the growing influence of foreign (West) culture along with the development of information technology that is unstoppable again.

The city of Bandung, as one of the cultural centers of the Sundanese people through the city government and all elements of the related has long tried to maintain the cultural heritage. But the effort is not easy because the cultural orientation of society has undergone significant changes especially the city of Bandung ethnically no longer dominated by the Sundanese

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people—although culturally still dominated by Sundanese culture. Therefore, to preserve the cultural heritage of the above then another more contextual way should be looking for.

The change of the times is necessary and if we want to survive then there is no other way but to follow it. This would apply to preserve Sundanese culture above. Bandung city is known to have a diverse subculture and has an influence for the dynamics of the culture of the community. One of the most influential subcultures is the metal music scene (underground) and it is through them that the above symbols have been revived. For example is the brutal death metal band, Jasad of which in the album *Rebirth of Jatisunda* (2013) made *kasundaan* symbols as the main theme. One of them is the album cover that makes the *kujang* as the main symbol.

In addition to *kujang*, Jasad also displays other symbols of the other consistently in every national and international music event they fill. In the context of cultural revitalization, Jasad performs the process consciously. One aim is to revitalize Sundanese culture through its symbolism to a wider and younger audience. The impact is quite significant, since Jasad made *kasundaan* as the theme of work, younger generation Bandung, especially young people in the metal music scene (underground) have a better cultural awareness—although limited to artificial forms alone but often time there are also among those who seek cultural substance through Jasad.

Jasad articulates *kasundaan* in metal music. This articulation gave birth to the paradox symbols. Even often not worth it but through it Jasad managed to make young people literate to the culture of his ancestors. In the city of Bandung itself, the symbols of Sundanese culture actually have been much reconstructed into more contextual forms. This construct generates a relatively new ideology into existing art forms. In the process there is a kind of ideological migration and thus also aesthetic migration in it. In this research, we as researchers are trying to see how this aesthetic migration takes place in Sundanese symbols belonging primordially into the renewable forms.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Aesthetics

Aesthetics is the science of the beauty or often also referred to as the philosophy of beauty or art philosophy. Basically, aesthetics is a science that seeks to understand the beauty, precisely the beauty contained in these works of art—this beauty has its own values. Etymologically, aesthetics are derived from Greek, *aisthetikos*, which means less sensitivity, consciousness, and which is related to the ‘sensory perception’. The word *aistheikos* is also closely related to the word *aisthanomai* which means “I feel through the senses” or “I perceive” and the word *aistheikos* also can not be separated from the word *aesthesis* which means ‘sensation’.

The word aesthetics itself chose to emphasize the experience of art as a means to know and understand it after previous observations through the five senses of a work of art, “what can be cognized through the higher faculty of mind, are the object of logic, the *aistheta* the theology of perception” [1]. Baumgarten's opinion was criticized by Hans-Georg Gadamer, a hermeneutic philosopher who said that as a science of aesthetics it should absorb universal truth and overcome subjectivity. Meanwhile, Louis O. Kasstoff states that aesthetics not only deal with beauty in artwork. So is Jarome Stolnitz who says that aesthetics are not only about the beautiful ones but also the ugly ones. John Hospers emphasizes more that aesthetics as a reflection of aesthetic objects or artwork, as well as making an analysis of the concepts used in the contemplation [2].

Aesthetics in art has a subtle communication dimension and therefore art can serve as a powerful propaganda medium. For example, one of the keys to Hitler's success in controlling Europe was to chlorise the Nazi symbols. Or, in Indonesia, Walisanga/Walisongo spread Islam is to use the cultural approach through art—wayang kulit. Some of these examples at least give us a fairly clear picture of the importance of aesthetics and art in our lives. Ever since the time of day, humanity and art are two interconnected things. Can you imagine how sorrow our life without art? Well, in this case, aesthetics then becomes the science of it. Science that helps us to understand and understand art more fully. But, Today, a work of art is not necessarily beautiful, and beautiful is not necessarily a work of art. Similarly, the aesthetic does not necessarily become a work of art and a work of art does not necessarily have to be always aesthetic [3]. As for its purpose, to summarize all the above explanations by studying aesthetics we can understand and even discover ourselves—as human beings through art.

2.2 Politic Aesthetics

Aesthetics are related to the class and to equality in a political context. Discourses about aesthetics and class migration are more important when aesthetic do not stop in the form of traditional art. Aesthetics are related to the consciousness of the subject—the subject of the creator. The subject can explain that aesthetic is important because creating class awareness. The term aesthetics migration by denotes a class crossing, which is becoming equivalent. According to Rancière, the radical class is not the class that desires to change the social hierarchy, but rather a class that is in a situation or position of ‘migration’, a class within the border region of those who have ideals that transcend their material boundaries.

What is aesthetics migration? Migration is kind of motion each subject to go beyond social and economic boundaries and the culture that places it in a certain position. From this view we get information that the experiment to change the situation, cannot be done through rejection because of the situation. The walls and social hierarchies can't be surpassed by the coercion of a culture, but must be by a cultural crossing. The practice of cultural activities by the working class to cross the social hierarchy. The important thing is that the question of the relationship between aesthetics and politics be raised at this level, the level of the sensible delimitation of what is common to the community, the forms of its visibility and of its organization [4].

The most crucial part of Rancière's *The Aesthetics Migration* is about the extent to which the ‘political’ and ‘the aesthetic’. The workers, for their part, did not set practice in contrast with utopia; they conferred upon the latter the characteristic of being ‘unreal’, of being a montage of words and images appropriate for recon figuring the territory of the visible, the thinkable, and the possible. The ‘fictions’ of art and politics are therefore heterotopias rather than utopias [4].

3 Methods

This study used qualitative methods. Qualitative research constantly adjusted to the reality on the field. So, we don't use the design that has been in strictly arranged and rigid so can't be changed again. One characteristic of qualitative research is to regard meaning as its concern and there have been many attempts to define qualitative research in the social sciences, and to determine whether or not it can or should be differentiated from something called quantitative research. However, there is no consensus on these questions, and we should not be surprised by this, because qualitative research—whatever it might be—

certainly is not a unified set of techniques or philosophies, and indeed has grown out of a wide range of intellectual and disciplinary traditions [5].

In qualitative research, the data are classified into (1) auditive data, (2) text, (3) audio visual data, (4) visual, (5) artifacts, and (6) social behavior. The text is classified into two subgroups, that is, the first is the text representing experience, which can be analyzed by identifying the elements of the text that are part of the culture and studying the relationship between the elements or the analysis of the text with the analysis of words or texts as sign system. In qualitative research that has been described above, the research data is divided into two, primary data and secondary data. Primary data in the study are data such as the 'kasundaan' symbol in the subculture in Bandung, while secondary data are photographs, books, and audio visual.

3.1 Result and Discussion

As one of the brutal death metal band patrons in Bandung, Jasad has an irrefutable reputation. Moreover, in 2015, Jasad performed at two prestigious metal music performances in Europe, namely Bloodstock Open Air (B-O-A) Heavy Metal Festival, in Catton Park, Derbyshire, England, and Obscene Extreme Festival Trutnov, Czech Republic. In Rancière's aesthetics migration a person who is not accounted for in a holistic cultural constellation can actually potentially alter the existing cultural order. For Rancière 'the political' is a kind of interruption in the distribution of sensibility networks in culture because the purpose of the 'political' is to change the hierarchy in an established order.

Jasad was born in a metal music scheme (subculture) and thus are hierarchically marginalized because they fundamentally separate themselves from people who cannot accept them. However, by articulating the delay symbol in *the Rebirth of Jatisunda* album, Jasad moves or migrates from one social status (subculture) to mainstream culture because in its development people outside the metal music scene also know the body. This is what Rancière refers to as migration of social status (e.g. from labor to bourgeoisie) to other social status and destroying the walls and social hierarchies within the sensibility or culture regime.

Jasad was born in the suburb of Bandung, precisely at Ujung Berung. In the beginning, like most metal musicians in Bandung, playing bands is just a hobby or a satisfying desire alone. Never mind in their minds to become agents of cultural change. However, on the way, Jasad actually moves across the cultural establishment in the city of Bandung, which has only been controlled by certain circles—such as the (nobility) and academics or artists-academics. By carrying the delay as a substance in the band's play, Jasad has broken through the long established aesthetic regime.

In our process of looking at the ambivalent aesthetic migration of Rancière between 'the political' to 'the aesthetic'. The personnel of Jasad is nobody in the cultural constellation in Bandung. They are only metal musicians, but it is at this point that the subject becomes real because, as they are, they are capable of giving birth to the opposing culture that continues to proceed—not stagnant. Later in practice, Jasad through his vocalist, Man Jasad who is not from among the aristocracy in Bandung is able to deepen and even spread the vastness to a wider audience—an achievement that even the elders of Sundanese culture are unable to do. This means that Man Jasad can be called a revolutionary for doing so outside his 'class'.

The Jasad revolutionary is not due to its political stance but rather to the inevitable cultural activity and at the same time its aesthetic activity surpasses its social standing in established aesthetic regimes. Today, Jasad and Man Jasad are even regarded as contemporary Sundanese cultural and cultural artifacts. Nevertheless, politically, Jasad does not alter any political order-nonetheless; Jasad will be regarded as a metal band that is not taken into account significantly. But in Rancière's view his aesthetic activity has penetrated the long established aesthetic order built by the Sundanese cultural elites. This is what Rancière refers to as a

'migrant'—The body moves from a social class that is considered low to a social class that is considered to be noble.

On the other hand, the revolutionary aspect of *Jasad* lies not in himself as the subject but in his works. The aesthetic aspect is able to cross the boundaries and the social wall. The body is a subculture aesthetic but is presented and present with the symbols of the delay in such a way as to be accessible and lived by various classes at once—especially the younger generation. In other words, *Jasad* is called a revolutionary because he gives a chance of 'migration', he removes the wall including erasing the existence of his own band. The corpus destroys the entire representational hierarchy so by that they reinforce the subculture as a no-frills community of legitimacy, a community formed solely by the random circulation of a band. At this point all art that in such a way appears and succeeds in destroying this representational regime has a simultaneous similarity to the political purpose of equality. In this equality is 'aesthetic' and 'political'.

4 Conclusion

The existence of primordial symbols in contemporary society, is not much determined by mainstream institutions such as political institutions that are very ambitious towards its political purpose of changing the established hierarchy. For Rancière 'the political' is a kind of interruption in the distribution of sensibility networks in culture because the purpose of the 'political' is to change the hierarchy in an established order.

Subcultural schemes that are hierarchically marginalized, in which they fundamentally separate themselves from those who can not receive them, are able to articulate and amplify their entities through primordial symbols. Primordial symbols philosophical value in subculture entity moves or migrates from one social status (subculture) to mainstream culture. In subculture entities Primordial symbol values use the soul and even the ideology of the body to development its entity.

The use of Sundanese primordial symbols (*kujang*) and its philosophical values that serve as an aesthetic expression of Metal Band *Jasad* has actually exceeded the need for aesthetic expression and cultural activity, but migrated beyond its social standing in an established aesthetic regime. The destruction of the whole hierarchy of representation, reinforcing the subculture as a community of no-frills legitimacy, a community formed solely by the random circulation of the aesthetic movement (*Jasad Band*). At this point the destruction of the representation of the regime, has simultaneous similarities with political objectives. It can be concluded that there is equality of aesthetic motion in the subculture entity with the political movement as understood by Rancière [4].

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