

Study of Cultural Artifacts of the Sumedang Larang Kingdom in the Perspective of Symbol Theory

Susanne K. Langer

Sonson Nurusholih¹, Ilhamsyah²

{sonson@telkomuniversity.ac.id¹, ideamaniacs@telkomuniversity.ac.id²}

Telkom University¹, Telkom University²

Abstract. The Sumedang Larang Kingdom was one of the Sundanese kingdoms that once existed in West Java, and experienced a collapse in 1620 after the death of King Geusan Ulun, but the remains of historical objects, and royal heirlooms or artifacts that remain today still exist, and are stored in the Prince Geusan Ulun Museum. These heirlooms will be cleaned in September 2022 during the *'Ngumbah Pusaka'* ritual procession. So this research will analyze the meaning contained in these artifacts. This study used a qualitative descriptive analysis method, and to analyze it used Susanne K. Langer's symbol theory model. The results of the study found that the meaning, and philosophy contained in the artifacts from the Sumedang royal heritage were associated with Sundanese identity.

Keywords: *Ngumbah Pusaka, Sumedang Larang, Susanne K. Langer, Symbol*

1 Introduction

In commemoration of the birth of Prophet Muhammad SAW, on Tuesday, September 27, 2022, a traditional ritual event or "*Ngumbah Pusaka*" procession was held, which was held at Srimanganti Building, Prabu Geusan Ulun Museum complex (MPGU), Sumedang Regency. This activity is carried out at the beginning of each month of Maulud or Rabiul Awal, a routine ritual activity performed by the Sumedang Larang Palace. Some of the heirlooms or artifacts of the Sumedang Larang kingdom that were consecrated at the ritual event "*Jamasan*" or known as the traditional ritual of "*Ngumbah Pusaka*" include the Binokasih Crown, the Sword of Mastak belonging to Prabu Tadjimalela, the Dagger Dagger belonging to Prabu Gajah Agung, the Dagger Panunggul Naga belonging to Prabu Geusan Ulun, Badik Curuk Aul 1, and 2 owned by Embah Jaya Perkasa, Keris Naga Sasra 1 owned by Pangeran Panembahan, and Keris Naga Sasra 2 owned by Pangeran Kornel.

From the explanation of the traditional ceremony of washing heirlooms, the author is interested in raising the meaning of heirlooms in the "*Ngumbah Pusaka*" traditional ceremonial ritual as an object of research, considering that these heirlooms have symbolic meaning, and are proof of the legality of the existence of the Sumedang Larang Kingdom in the past. From the search results through journals, it was found that the traditional ritual "*Ngumbah Pusaka*" was researched by Tubagus with the title "*Fungsi Tradisi Ngumbah Pusaka Prabu Geusan Ulun Sumedang Larang*" [9]. Similar research has raised heirlooms, including research entitled "*Identifikasi Simbol-Simbol Heritage Keraton Kasepuhan*" by Agustina [1]. Research on traditional ceremonies conducted by Tubagus et al is to determine the structure, and function of the "*Ngumbah Pusaka*" ritual by using structural functionalism theory. The results of the study show that the "*Ngumbah Pusaka*" tradition turns out to have several functions including ritual functions, entertainment functions, communication functions, social functions, and religious functions. While the research conducted by Agustina et al was to identify the heritage symbols of the Keraton Kasepuhan by studying the meaning of phenomena through Husserl's phenomenological approach. The results of this study indicate that there is a typology of symbols that appear in the Keraton Kasepuhan, namely flora, fauna, geometric, and natural symbols. While the research that will be carried out by the author is not to raise the ritual activities of traditional ceremonies or the structure, and function of rituals, but to find out the symbolic meaning of these heirlooms with the concept of Sundanese cosmology, namely 'tritangtu', and compared with symbol theory from the west through the perspective of Susan K. Langer, and F.W. Dillistone. The heirlooms belonging to the palace that will be analyzed are the Crown of Binokasih, the Keris Naga Sastra, and the sword of Ki Mastak where these artifacts are the most valuable heirlooms.

The purpose of this study is to find out how the symbolic meaning of these heirlooms relates to the past existence of the Sumedang Larang kingdom. These findings can later become a reference in the development of similar research which of course can also be study material for academics, and practitioners.

2 Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative method with research stages including heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography. Heuristics is the process of finding, and gathering resources. This study focuses on the representation of artifacts from the heirlooms of the Sumedang Larang kingdom. The data were obtained from the results of visits to the Geusan Ulun Sumedang museum – in West Java, through interviews, and data in the museum's library. Data collection techniques by way of observation, and literature study. The next stage after heuristics is criticism, namely the stage to verify existing data. Criticism includes internal, and external criticism. Existing sources are verified because there are many versions developed in the community related to the history of origin, and the existence of several artifacts in the Geusan Ulun museum, historical truth will be taken in general. Next is the interpretation stage. Data that has been verified becomes a fact. These facts are then interpreted. The last is the stage of writing or historiography.

3 Result, And Discussion

The unity of a group with all its cultural values is expressed by using symbols. According to Dillistone, the symbol comes from the root verb *symbollein* in Greek meaning 'to match', the

two parts that are matched are called *symbola*. A symbol is originally an object, a sign, or a word, which is used to recognize each other, and with a meaning that has been understood [4]. While Susanne K. Langer emphasized several concepts, and terms commonly used in the field of communication. Providing standardization for the semiotic tradition in communication studies. According to Langer, symbolism underlies all human knowledge, and understanding [6]. According to Langer, all living animals are dominated by feelings but human feelings are mediated by conceptions, symbols, and language [6]. Animals respond to signs, but humans use more than simple signs by using symbols. A sign is closely related to the meaning of the actual incident, for example Clouds can signify rain, laughter can signify happiness, etc.

Humans use symbols that consist of a single word, but more often than not we use a combination of several words. The real meaning of language is found in discourse where we bind several words into sentences and paragraphs. Discourse states 'prepositions', namely some complex symbols that show a picture of something. Each symbol or set of symbols conveys a 'concept' i.e. a general idea, pattern, or shape. According to Langer, a concept is a shared meaning among several of communicators which is the denotation of a symbol. On the other hand, a personal image is a private conception. The history of symbols has two very different meanings, in religious thought, and practice, symbols are commonly regarded as emanations of Transcendent Reality [2]. In systems of logical, and scientific thought, the term symbol is usually used in the sense of an abstract sign. In modern terminology, every element of a sign system is often called a symbol. Thus one speaks of symbolic logic. In the proper sense, a symbol can be equated with an image (description), and refers to a sign that can be seen, and a reality that cannot be seen with the naked eye. Signs that can be seen, by nature, have a certain tendency to describe reality with things that can not be seen. The definition of symbols that Susanne meant was not symbols in the art such as iconography. So it's not a symbol that is based on convention or becomes a reference, but one that provides depth, and even directs the convention. According to Susanne's definition, a symbol is any means by which we can create abstractions [6]. Abstraction itself is the release of form from its content, namely the release of the same form from different contents so that a concept is formed.



Fig 1. Binokasih Crown

Source: <https://www.iheritage.id/>

One of the highest heirlooms among heirlooms from the Sumedang Larang Kingdom heritage is the Binokasih crown. This heirloom has symbolized a queen who has the character of leadership, wisdom, and wisdom. Policy and wisdom when put together become the harmony in the order of life of the Sundanese people. Harmony in carrying out life is a characteristic of the Sundanese people in the cosmology of love, love and care. The crown as a sign is an object but as a marker, the crown is a symbol of the existence of the Sumedang Larang

kingdom. The crown of Binokasih Sanghyang Pake is proof that symbolically becomes legal in the long history of handing over the power of the Pajajaran Kingdom to the Sumedang Larang Kingdom.



Fig 2. Keris Naga Sasra
Source: <https://www.iheritage.id/>

Another heirloom that has another symbolic meaning is the Naga Sasra keris, one of the relics of Prince Kusumahdinata IX (Regent of Sumedang 1791-1828) or often called Prince Kornel, this keris became a silent witness to Prince Kornel's resistance to the invaders. The Naga Sasra keris was used by the prince when dealing with Governor-General Herman Willem Daendels who intended to build a road from Anyer to Panarukan which is famous in history in the Cadass Prince incident. The Naga Sasra keris was later seen as a symbol of the Sumedang people's resistance to Dutch colonialism.



Fig 3. Pedang Ki Mastak
Source: <https://www.iheritage.id/>

Furthermore, the heirloom that is analyzed is a special object in the form of a weapon. Unlike the kings on Java Island in general, where most of the kings on Java Island have weapons in the form of "keris", or even "kujang" for kings in the Sundanese order, but King Sumedang Larang named Prabu Tajimalela, his weapon is in the form of a sword. This sword is called the Ki Mastak sword, a sword whose distinctive design follows the example of swords from the Persian state. As one of the influential Sumedang Larang kings, Prabu Tajimalela has considered the main character behind the founding of the Sumedang Larang Kingdom so the Ki Mastak Sword has a meaning as a power or symbol of power for the existence of the Sumedang Larang Kingdom.

The results of the analysis of the heirlooms from the Sumedang Larang kingdom from the perspective of Sussane K. Langer show that these objects convey messages in the form of symbols which are representations of the Sundanese people, especially Sumedang where the Sumedang Larang kingdom once ruled [6]. Power here is abstract because, in terms of government, the Sumedang kingdom no longer has political power, its existence now is only a relic. His remains are stored and cared for at the Geusan Ulun Museum and his descendants

are active in the Prince Geusan Ulun Sumedang foundation. The existence of the Sumedang Larang kingdom is now only a symbol. These symbols appear in the form of heirlooms which are shown to the public every year, washed and cleaned through traditional ceremonial rituals witnessed by today's modern people. It is these heirlooms that appear in the form of a form where the form is a symbol shown as a sign of existence like what Susanne K. Langer thought that an object can be a sign of another symbolic representation. Langer's idea is also by the thoughts in the Sundanese "tritangtu" cosmology contained in the Binokasih Crown, the Naga Sasra Keris, and the Ki Mastak Sword. These objects have a systemic structure as a symbol and frame of mind for the Sundanese people, namely as a symbol of the "tritangtu" of the Sundanese people, as a basic philosophy of the old Sundanese way of thinking "dualistic unity", and also as a symbol of the culture of the "tritangtu" human society in the cultural system. primordial Indonesia.

4 Conclusion

The heirlooms of the Sumedang Larang kingdom that are sacred are the construction of the Sundanese society which they are full of symbolic meaning. From the remains of these heirlooms, a typical concept of symbols that can be arranged into the Sundanese aesthetic theory that is relevant to various Western aesthetic theories is also found. The equality, for example, can be seen from the symbolic meaning of the Binokasih crown heirlooms, the crown as a sign is an object but as a marker, the Binokasih crown is a symbol of the existence of the Sumedang Larang kingdom. While the Naga Sasra dagger, is like a general dagger that functions as a weapon, the Naga Sasra Dagger is a silent witness to Prince Kornel's resistance to the invaders. Thus the Naga Sasra dagger is seen as a marker of objects that become a symbol of the resistance of the people of Sumedang. Furthermore, the Pedang Ki Mastak owned by Prabu Tajimalela is considered to be the main figure behind the establishment of the Sumedang Larang Kingdom so the Pedang Ki Mastak has a meaning as a power or symbol of the existence of the Sumedang Larang Kingdom. These heirlooms can be concluded that the meaning and philosophy contained in the artifacts of the Sumedang Larang kingdom are linked to the existence of the identity of the Sumedang Larang kingdom which no longer exists but the legacy has become a symbol of the people of Sumedang Regency.

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