

## Symbols of Cross Cultural Communication in Kasepuhan Palace Indonesia

Ulani YUNUS  
Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia  
uyunus@binus.edu

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to illustrate how art and culture in the Kasepuhan kasepuhan Cirebon is interpreted as intercultural communication at that time. The focus of this research are: How does Cross cultural communication events occur in the Kasepuhan Palace Cirebon, Indonesia in the 15th century? This focus is break down into two questions: 1).What are cultures that interact in the 15th century in Indonesia? 2) What are the symbols of art and culture that appear at the Kasepuhan palace. The research method here using methods of interpretive. The results showed that Indonesia in the 15th century has been interacting with the culture of India, China, Egypt and Europe. Interactions caused by trade, the spread of religion and politics. The symbols of art and culture can be seen from the architecture and ornamentation of the building palace dating from any countries with a symbol that implies such a hierarchy in government and the spirit of eternal life through the symbol of a lotus flower on building ornaments.

**Keywords:** Cirebon, Intercultural Communication, Kasepuhan Palace, Symbols.

### 1. Introduction

Kasepuhan Palace is located in the Kasepuhan Village, at sub district of Lemahwungkuk, Cirebon - Indonesia. This palace is the first Cirebon Sultanate, founded in the 15th century and is the administrative center of the Sultanate of Cirebon at the time. Kasepuhan Palace have historical value with evidence of various heirloom inside with an area of 10 hectares.

Objects of historic stored in this palace, including a stretcher-shaped creature with a bird's head but had a fish body. This object is translated as a symbol of leadership that has a philosophy: As high as high as the position of a leader in his position, he should be able to see and explore the circumstances and conditions of the people they lead.

Kasepuhan Palace at Cirebon has a variety of architectural ornament with the division of space according to the interests of activities, such as no front yard surrounded by red brick walls, there is a pavilion and reception and buildings to support the activities of the sultan and his family. Currently, Kasepuhan Palace has a complete museum, containing heirlooms and paintings of the royal collection. Among the heirlooms that are in the museum and became the object of research, there is the fact that many objects that was a gift from the other countries that show the occurrence of events and intercultural communication into messages that are exchanged between countries to strengthen the cooperation relations.

Palace which was founded in 1529 by Prince Arifin Mas II Mochammad was formerly named Pakungwati Palace. Pakungwati title comes from the name of Queen Dewi *binti* Pakungwati, Princess Cakrabuana married to Sunan Gunung Jati.

Given the many cultural events and communication interactions describe through traces heirloom that there Kasepuhan Palace, it is necessary to do in-depth research to uncover what cultural events are happening at the Kasepuhan Palace in the 15th century. Results of the study are intended to be instructional material how the interaction of the current generation and a symbol of cultural heritage can be a valuable art.

Thus the focus of research in this article are: How does cross cultural communication events that occurred at the Kasepuhan Palace at Cirebon, Indonesia in the 15th century this focus is broken down into two questions: 1).What are cultures that interact in the 15th century in Indonesia? 2) What are the symbols of art and culture that appear at the Kasepuhan Palace.

### 2. Literatur Review

Research related to the aesthetics of the cultural palace artifacts that have reached the peak of its formation process later called classical culture. Therefore 'frame' being used not merely form and

function, but the things that intersect with the value, meaning and significance. Researcher of cross cultural communication told that there are three contemporary approaches to studying intercultural communication (1) the social science approach, (2) the interpretive approach, and (3) the critical approach. Interpretive approaches emphasize using language to describe human behavior. Understanding interpretive approaches is important to understanding how news is reported, how information is transferred, and how most people make decisions. (Martin and Nakayama 2011). In this study, focus on the interpretive approach.

Culture and communication has limitations. Kasepuhan Palace as cultural heritage shared resource and a common good. Like other such goods it can be vulnerable to over-exploitation which can result in neglect, decay and, in some cases, oblivion. Therefore its need depth research about object on museum. Heritage has many dimensions: cultural, physical, human and social. Its value - both intrinsic and economic - is a function of these different dimensions and of the flow of associated services. (Commision 2014). In the last decades of the 20th century, the term "heritage" was characterized by expansion and semantic transfer, however all these terms are not able to cover the same semantic field., we approach to the international definition of heritage given by the directives that is not just limited to a particular national dimension. From a purely normative approach, one went to a less restrictive approach, one based on the capacity of the object to arouse certain values that led the society in question to consider it as heritage (Randall 2002). This method has also made it possible to recognize intangible cultural heritage, which was ignored for a long time, as heritage to be protected and safeguarded Kasepuhan Palace.

Two researchers wrote that decisions related to integrated cultural and natural heritage are increasingly complex due to the multiple-use nature of goods and services provided by the environment, the difficulty in monetary evaluation of intangible heritage and the involvement of a large number of stakeholders. (Fujiwara 2013). This is can be make multiple perspectives are thus required to align social to promote sustainable solutions for heritage management.

### 3. Methodology

This paper uses interpretive research. Interpretive research does not put objectivity as the most important thing, but recognizes that in order to obtain in-depth understanding, the subjectivity of the actors had to be dug as deep as possible this allows for trade-offs between objectivity and depth of research findings. In this case, the events of culture and arts in the Kasepuhan Palace Cirebon translated by researchers through interpretative based oral statement at the palace tour guide, observation and literature supporting.

In qualitative research, the researcher's ability to understand the problem to be studied mainly literature references to various empirical phenomena that are relevant to what would be the subject of study was a focus. Although in reality qualitative research in the social phenomenon must be fixed in the light of the subject itself and not from the angle of research so that researchers do not lose objectivity (Purwasito 2003). So, there must be a comparison of previous studies in similar or the same object.

According to author, the data collected in the form of words, pictures and not numbers, it is described by the application of qualitative methods (Moleong 2006). Besides all that is collected is likely to be the key to what had been observed. The research report will contain excerpts to give an overview presentation of the report.

## 4. Discussion

### I. Culture that Interact in the 15th Century in Indonesia

#### a. Indonesia interact with India, China and Egypt

Kasepuhan palace occur in communication between the sultan (king) with the three countries. This is reflected off the train with three symbols representing their respective countries. The train named *Singa(Lion)Barong*. *Singa Barong* train is made by Panembahan Losari, grandson of Sunan Gunung Jati, the which made the animals on the *Singa Barong* in 1549. Engraving of train trunked elephant, symbolizing friendship Cirebon Sultanate with India, headed dragon as a symbol of friendship with China, and the wings and body Buroq symbolizess friendship with Egypt.

Why those countries has relationship with kasepuhan Palace at Cirebon (Indonesia)? In the 15th century the ports of Java Island (included Cirebon) have a role as a city of transit and distribution of essentials, namely as warehouses well as distributor of spices. The trade route in Southeast Asia is characterized by two major pathways, namely the path of China-Malacca and the Moluccas-Malacca lane (silk road). The "Silk Road" is also dubbed as the path of dialogue between East and West. According to historical records, Marco Polo from Italy just visited China on the Silk Road of the Sea. In his journey back to Italy by ship, he departed from Quanzhou, Fujian Province of Southeast China down the road. "Silk Road" linking China with major countries of ancient civilization and cultural resources in the world, and pushing forward economic exchange and cultural areas. Java, becoming a force to reckon with in the trade and shipping in the archipelago. Cirebon is also visited by merchants from the outside like Gujarat(India), China and Egypt.

Rossabi, a historian from the University of New York (Webster 2005) gives an overview, the fall of the Han dynasty in the early 3rd century is the cause of the decline of the trade "Silk Road". Nevertheless, the rise of the Tang Dynasty in the 7th century to revive the commercial world. As a fact, the Tang period can be witnessed one event in large numbers flow of merchandise across Asia. As a result there is an increase of intercultural relations which greatly influenced the Chinese civilization.

The word of Cirebon is from *Caruban* that it is meaning mixture. Cirebon is an area that is populated by a mixture of various tribes. According to Rossabi there is an area on the north coast of the island of Java is often called Muhara Jati. (Harjamukti 2015).The place is a port at the same time local fishermen settlements. Based on traditional sources, in the north Muharajati has been no such place as Surantaka. These areas constitute the territory of the Kingdom Galuh, and Ki Danusela or Gedeng Alang-Alang port board appointed Galuh MuharaJati.

Furthermore,the two sons of Pabu Siliwangi (King of Cirebon) named Walangsungsang and Rarasantang interested in Islam and learning from Sykeh Nurjati in MuharaJati. They were told out of the palace.After learn, the two brothers were ordered to go on pilgrimage. Completed the Hajj, Rarasantang settled in Mecca while her brother, Walangsungsang back to Muhara Jati.Rarasantang who settled in Mecca and then told to marry by magnifying the Kingdom of Egypt and has two sons, Syarif Hidayatullah and Sharif Nurullah.Syarif Hidayatullah then chose to return to the birthplace of his mother, Cirebon; while Sharif Nurullah stay in Egypt.

With the above story, intercultural communication occurs in Cirebon in 15th century isfor their trade, the spread of religion and marriage. Three countries are to be special because it is enshrined in the vehicle sultan as pride.

#### b. Indonesia interact with Europe

We can see how the fusion of European elements such as cannons and statues of lions on the front page of the palace. Next, furniture and style glass table of France where guests sultan tears before facing, gates Balinese carving and wood carving French doors that reveal there are interaction with of Kasepuhan Palace.

Sultan adopting foreign cultural life in the palace. As one example is the style and architecture of the European model that fills the inside Kasepuhan Palace. Model and carvings in the hall of the sultan with the ministers made with the model are almost the same in the interior of the kingdom of France under the Bourbon dynasty, like the model of a chair, a table and a chandelier. With the style of the building and furniture as it showed an cross cultural communication between Cirebon and France in the 15th century in Indonesia.

To explore the relationship between Indonesia and France can be seen from the story at that time were written by spice advisor. They told that Portuguese traders reached the East by sailing south around Africa and across the Indian Ocean. Meanwhile, Holland had begun to prosper by supplying ships and crews to the Portuguese. By the end of the century their influence had expanded, and they entered the spice trade, overtaking Portuguese control. Holland conquered the city of Malacca. More Indonesian Islands fell under Dutch control, giving Holland unchallenged rights to the Asian spice trade. France was a major power in that time, but it did not play a large part in the developing trade because it did not invest in spice exploration. However, Frenchmen did help to break the Dutch hold on the market. They stole enough cloves, cinnamon, and un-limed nutmeg

from the Dutch to begin plantings on French-controlled islands in the Indian Ocean.

## II. The Symbols of The Art and Cultural in the Kasepuhan Palace Cirebon

Architecture and interior Kasepuhan Palace depicts symbols of art and culture associated with Europe, China, Arab and local culture that has been there before, namely Hindu and Javanese. Elements of culture are reflected in the building Kasepuhan Palace. Elements of art and culture of Europe looked at a Greek-style columns, Doric kind used in *Pancaniti* pavilion building. The buildings are located on the front right side. The pole is round or cylindrical and tapers at the bottom as well as top at the end. The pole-shaped ornate simple addition. The function as a decoration and construction support.

Other European-style architecture in the form of an arch doorway semicircular contained in *Lawang Sanga* building (nine doors). Each of the three sides has three arches that bundle building are located outside the palace complex. The influence of other European styles are pilasters on the walls of buildings, which makes the walls more interesting is not flat. European building style was also evident in the form of doors and windows in *Pringgondani* ward, width and height as well as the use of jalousie as air vents. At the top of the door there is a light / air inlet called *bovenlicht* (boven = above, licht = light). *Bovenlicht* the form of openwork with motifs of flora and fauna, but only one animal the object and its size was small. The main object in the form of red flowers placed in among the tangle of stems and green leaves are circular and swerving across the openwork surface. The style tendrils reminiscent of the Art Nouveau style that developed in Europe in the 18th century. Hindu-Javanese architecture that clearly stands out is building *Siti Hinggil* (*Siti* = ground, *hinggil* = high) located at the front part of the palace complex. *Siti Hinggil* is open building complex consisting of five buildings stage without walls. The entire building is made of brick construction as usual Hindu. Around the temple complex by a fence of bricks with pillars shaped tower called *Laras Temple*, as well as ornaments shaped geometric open work Octagonal along the fence body. The impression of Hindu style buildings look strong especially at the entrance to the complex, which is a gate of the same size or symmetry between the left and right sides as cleaved. So there was a call *Belah Temple*. *Siti Hinggil* is the result of a renovated Dutch expert in 1936. *Antara* wards and *Prabayasa* wards there is a staircase wall because the latter ward floor is high. Height such as symbols or hierarchy for a more noble or honorable because it is for the queen and the prince.

On the front pillars and rear stairway ornate lotus-shaped three-dimensional red. The lotus flower is believed to be a symbol of life and immortality, while the red emblem of the blood, the life, and the left and right walls is heavenly. On the court ward that flank the stairs, there is a relief decoration depicting flowers is red and in some section is highlighted in yellow as an attempt to forge a -flower volume. Flowers are arranged in groups in the middle and a few more spread throughout the field of relief.

Flower emblem of honesty. As *Kanigaran* as we know, the contents of *mangosteen* can be guessed through the petals are found on the outer skin. If the petals of five, the contents of the fruit of five as well. Then on top of the flower arrangement there are two *Gendumong* birds (parrot) white placed on the left and on the right is symmetries. As we know, the parrot is a bird that can speak like humans. The wall besides ornate bas-placed in the middle-also the entire surface of the walls are ornamented patch of Dutch porcelain small one 10 x 10 cm blue (blue delft) and red brown. At the bottom, on the surface of the floor General ward to ward *Prabayasa* floor are geometrically shaped ornament meanders big sized. On the middle part by a patch of blue Chinese porcelain plate. Painting on the plate depict Chinese painting techniques stratified. In fact, perspective of attachment ceramics and porcelain were also found on the entire wall of the ward including door located on the side of the ward building. However, the pattern was different, which is placed at an angle of 45 degrees and spread within a certain distance on the entire surface of the wall or pillar.

Chinese influence is also seen in the *Kuncung* building ornaments resembling a gate with ornaments *Wadasan* (rock) at the bottom as a symbol of strength and *Mega Mendung* (rainclouds) at the top. The second ornament is a symbol of the type of world up and down. In the middle of the building there is a gate curved pillars supported a European style, show the tendency of architectural styles are diverse and complex. Function as a decoration and construction support.

Sort mast on top of the building there is also the *Jinem Pangrawit*, *Jinem Arum* located beside the main building as well as the *Gajah Nguling* ward. Even, pole contained in *Jinem Pangrawit* composed of two types, namely a round and octagonal. Each adorned with vertical convex around her and ornate pedestal and the whole surface of the body of head. At round columns adorned small convex around the entire body. Its base the form of a square shape, but quite beautiful headdress, in the form of a triple-decker disc with fringes jagged convex.

Subsequently, at the *Gajah Nguling* building, which is sort of an open corridor that connects the ward *Jinem Pangrawit* with *Pringgondani* wards, there are six pole pieces shaped like rounded poles that are in the wards *Jinem Pangrawit*. Interestingly, the whole pole is used to support the roof construction of wood Javanese architectural style.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that culture that interact in the 15th century in Indonesia are India, China and Egypt and Europe (France, Holland Portuguese). The cause of such interaction is due to trade, marriage and politics. They interaction base on the interests of each others. Their influence had expanded, and they entered the spice trade. It can be happened because in the 15th century the ports of Java Island (included Cirebon) have a role as a city of transit and distribution of essentials, namely as warehouses well as distributor of spices. The symbols of the art in the Kasepuhan Palace Cirebon contains ornaments in the shape of the building with symbols interpreted by researchers. Symbols of art and culture at Kasepuhan Palace associated with Europe, China, Arab and local culture that has been there before, namely Hindu and Javanese. There are height place such as symbols or hierarchy for a more noble or honorable person. The lotus flower is believed to be a symbol of life and immortality, while the red emblem of the blood, the life, and the left and right walls is heavenly. Flower emblem of honesty. The symbols of art and culture can be seen from the architecture and ornamentation of the building palace dating from any countries with a symbol that implies such a hierarchy in government and the spirit of eternal life through the symbol of a lotus flower on building ornaments.

### Works Cited

- Advice, Spice. [http://www.spiceadvice.com/history/15th\\_century.html](http://www.spiceadvice.com/history/15th_century.html). *The history of spice*. February 06, 2016. [http://www.spiceadvice.com/history/15th\\_century.html](http://www.spiceadvice.com/history/15th_century.html). The history of spice. (accessed March 07, 2016).
- Commision, European. *Communication from The Commission to THE Europeun Parliamen*. Brussel, July 22, 2014.
- Fujiwara, Daniel. *Museum and Happiness, The Value of Participating in Museums and The Art*. England: Art Councils, 2013.
- Harjamukti, interview by Ulani Yunus. *The meaning of symbols in Kasepuhan Palace* (Maret 17, 2015).
- Martin, Judith N, and TK Nakayama. *Experiencing intercultural communication: An introduction*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011.
- Moleong, Lexy. *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Rosdakarya, 2006.
- Purwasito, Andrik. *Komunikasi Multikultural. Cetakan Ke-1*. Surakarta: Citra Aditya Bhakti, 2003.
- Randall, Mason. "Assessing Values in Conservation Planning." *The Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles*, 2002: 5-20.
- Webster, Merriam. *Encarta Webster's College Dictionary: 2nd Edition*. Bloombury: Webster's College, 2005.

### Author's profiles

Ulani Yunus (University of Padjadjaran, Bandung-Indonesia) lectures at communication department and conduct Research Interest Group Cross Cultural Communication, Bina Nusantara University Jakarta, Indonesia. She conducts research in the fields of cultural communication and public relations, and theorizes on cultural communication by documenting the interplay of culture, structure and agency in local and global contexts. She uses post-positivistic and interpretive methods to study communication phenomena in cultural contexts.

