

## Tracing the Traces of Roman Panji & Its Influence on Mask Art in Bobung, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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### Abstract

*This study aims to explore the history of the journey of the Panji story and find out its influence on mask art in Bobung, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a historical perspective. Data sourced from informants, places & events, and documents/archives collected using in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and content analysis techniques. The validity of the data was tested with the technique of reviewing informants and triangulation of data sources. Data were analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data reduction procedures, data display, and verification or drawing conclusions. The results of the study show that Roman Panji became the original hero of the archipelago, especially Java, which experienced a peak of popularity during the golden age of the Majapahit Kingdom, namely the middle of the VIII century. Panji became a novel that spread widely covering the archipelago to Southeast Asia. The end of the VIII century until the XV century Panji Mask became a popular show where King Hayam Wuruk was famous as a mask dancer and the main dancer in racket performances. Wayang Beber is a wayang art which in the show brings the story of Panji. Wayang Beber art is in Pacitan, East Java, but also in Karangmojo, Gunung Kidul Yogyakarta. Mbah Karso was the first mask master who was influenced by the Panji story and created the masks that still exist and thrive in Bobung, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta. In the current era, Panji Masks have been commodified into handicraft products with economic and tourism value.*

### Keywords

historical tracing; roman banners; masks in bobung



## I. Introduction

Folklore is a popular belief that is often called superstition. Ethnic folklore is the identity of an ethnic group in line with the opinion of Dundes (1965: 2) folklore is a collective culture, which is spread and passed down from generation to generation in different versions. Folklore is a reflection of the collective human self and habits, so by revealing folklore it is like searching for human identity. (Marsellaa, E and Putri, D. 2020)

Roman Panji is an original Javanese folk tale whose existence is much older than the story in the ancient shadow puppets. History says that before the epics Mahabharata and Ramayana entered the archipelago, our ancestors already had their own epics, namely the Panji story (Rahmawati, 2018: 35). This romance became the forerunner of the development

of art in Java and its surroundings. Panji became a popular novel at that time where its development and influence was very large in the creation of cultural arts in Java, Indonesia, and even Southeast Asia (Manuaba, et al., 2013: 54). The essence of Roman Panji revolves around the journey of a love story between two characters, namely Panji Asmarabangun and Dewi Sekartaji. This is in line with Nurcahyo's statement (2009: i) that the Panji story is a collection of stories during the Hindu-Buddhist period in Java which revolves around the love story of Panji Asmorobangun and Princess Candrakirana (Dewi Sekartaji) which is full of adventures until finally ruling in the Kadiri Kingdom.

Roman Panji in his journey has developed into various forms of folk art such as Wayang Beber, Wayang Topeng, Wayang Gedog, Cirebon Mask, Malat in Bali, even in Thailand in the form of a classical performance called Ino. The Panji story has a universal nature in the sense that it does not lead to a particular ethnicity, religion, area so that this pattern can easily spread to various regions of the archipelago (Manuaba, et al., 2013: 58). Roman Panji has even been recognized by UNESCO as an intangible world cultural heritage. The intrinsic and extrinsic elements in Roman Panji contain high philosophical values that are good as a guide to living life. Various works of art and culture which are the incarnation of Roman Panji into a medium of representation and expression of community art. This is in accordance with the statement of Martono, et al (2017: 125) that the mask is an expression of the art of society and its creation is a depiction of the typology of certain character traits.

Mask is one of the cultural arts which are a transformation of another form of Roman Panji. Panji stories are only in the form of abstracts that are passed down orally or in writing from one generation to another. Inheritance causes a process of transit and transition, so that what is inherited will be received and interpreted differently. Transit is a movement that transcends the boundaries of time and social and geographical space, while transition is a change in the meaning, value, and status of objects as a result of the transition process (Svasek, 2007: 4). The transit and transition process made Roman Panji transform into the Panji Mask art that developed in various regions, such as Malang, Cirebon, Bali, Yogyakarta, and others. The art of Topeng Panji in the area is still preserved, but its form and function have changed in such a way as to follow the dynamics of changing times.

Bobung is a hamlet located in Putat Village, Patuk District, Gunung Kidul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta. The art of the Panji Mask has been passed down from generation to generation since several centuries ago. The Panji Bobung Mask is a performance art property. The Panji Mask serves as a face covering for dancers or dance drama actors. Before transforming into what it is today, the art of Topeng Panji in Bobung was originally a sacred performance that was only played at certain times. It is said that the mask maker is carried out by the mask master and during its manufacture it should not be seen by other people's eyes. Mask dancers must perform a special ritual and are not allowed to see the face of the mask to be worn. Dancers are considered as intermediaries of the spirits of the masks that are danced, so it can be said that beautiful dance moves are not from the skills of the dancers themselves. In the current era, the Panji Bobung Mask is no longer functional as it used to be, but its existence has been commodified into an economic and tourism commodity. The history of the development of mask art in Bobung from classical to modern times will be discussed in this paper.

History is synonymous with understanding the past, but its existence is very important to determine the future. The current generation has become a generation that tends to be consumptive as a result of the development of technology and information that makes everything easier. It actually makes the generation to be negligent of the nation's own cultural history. Not many generations today are still familiar with Roman Panji. Very few generations are aware of local cultural arts which contain elements of the Roman Panji. Many

of the younger generation now do not understand well the cultural heritage of the archipelago in the form of Panji stories and other incarnate traditional arts (Rahmawati, 2018: 35). The Panji mask, especially in Bobung Gunung Kidul, which is a form of transformation from Roman Panji, seems to have experienced the same fate. Nurwanti (2008: 7), argued that it was rare to perform the Panji mask, at most one to two performances a year. This is certainly a problem that will threaten the art and culture of our nation. There is a possibility that Panji art can be claimed by other nations while our generation does not understand its history. For this reason, there needs to be an effort to understand the history of Roman Panji and the art of Topeng Panji to the younger generation so that their existence can be preserved into the future.

One of the efforts above can be done through a study like the one in this paper. This study specifically aims for 2 (two) things, namely first, to explain the history of the spread of Roman Panji in the archipelago and second, to explain the history of the development of Panji Mask art in Bobung, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta to become a commodified art. This study is also useful for 2 (two) aspects, namely practically and theoretically. Practically, this study is useful as a reading resource that provides readers with insight and knowledge about the history of the spread of Roman Panji in the archipelago and its influence on the art of Topeng Panji in Bobung, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta as a case study. This paper is also useful for adding and expanding the knowledge base, especially in the field of art history. Theoretically, this study is useful for growing the reader's awareness of the importance of understanding the history of one's own culture, because the future cannot be separated from historical background. Theoretically, this study is also useful as a form of growth for the generation of love for the arts typical of the indigenous people who are noble and have high philosophy.

## II. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research method with a case study in Bobung, Putat Village, Patuk District, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta Special Region. This study uses a historical paradigm with primary sources namely informants and places & events, while secondary sources are documents or archives. The source of the informant as well as the subject of the study was selected using a purposive sampling technique, namely the craftsmen and conservationists of the Panji Mask art in Bobung. Purposive sampling is the selection of research subjects or informants based on certain considerations that have information related to research problems (Sutopo, 2006: 64). The source of places and events is more in places as well as events in the Panji Mask art in Bobung, both in person and online. Sources of documents or archives come from videos, photos, notes, and other relevant literature sources.

Data were collected using 3 (three) techniques, namely in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviewing is the most widely used interview technique in qualitative research which is conducted in an unstructured manner (Sutopo, 2006: 68). The interview aims to explore data sourced from mask craftsmen or conservationists about the history of the development of the Panji Mask art in Bobung. Observations were also made at the place where the Panji Mask was made and performed both online and offline. Observations were made to collect data on places and events of mask making and mask performances as well as other relevant matters. Document analysis was also carried out on videos, photos, notes, and other literature sources, both books, journals, and others related to the history of the spread of Roman Panji and the art of Panji Mask.

The validity of the data was tested by 2 (two) techniques, namely triangulation of sources and review of informants. Triangulation is based on a phenomenological mindset,

which means that to draw solid conclusions, it is necessary not only one point of view (Sutopo, 2006: 92). Triangulation of this study uses source triangulation, namely data from informants, places & events, and documents/archives are cross-checked to find conformity (valid). Informant review means that the processed data presentation is returned to the informant (key informant) to find out whether the written report is appropriate and approved by them (Sutopo, 2006: 99). If there is a dish that is less or not appropriate, the researcher can improve it according to the input from the informant.

The data analysis technique used in this study is an interactive model analysis technique with data reduction procedures, data presentation, and verification or conclusions. The data that has been collected is of course large in number so that it is necessary to reduce or simplify by taking the important things and discarding the unnecessary. Data can be presented in the form of tables, pictures, descriptions, and others for easy reading, then conclusions can be drawn or verification.

### **III. Result and Discussion**

#### **3.1. Traces of the Spread of Roman Banners in the Archipelago**

Roman Panji became the legacy of the original ancestors of the Indonesian people who were very popular in their time. Panji has been known to the people of the archipelago and its surroundings long before wayang stories such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata entered. The essence of the Panji story is the romance between 2 (two) royal sons, namely Panji Asmarabangun and Dewi Sekartaji. According to Nurcahyo (2009: i) that the Panji story is a collection of stories during the Hindu-Buddhist period in Java which revolves around the love story of Panji Asmorobangun and Princess Candrakirana (Dewi Sekartaji) which is full of adventure until finally ruling in the Kadiri Kingdom. In the Ramayana and Mahabharata stories, there are clear and standard dynasties, namely Alengka & Ayodya (Ramayana) and Pandavas & Astina (Mahabarata). The Panji story also has a standard dynasty consisting of four kingdoms namely Jenggala, Kediri, Urawa, and Singasari which originally came from a dynasty called Resi Gayu in the Kahuripan Kingdom (Poerbatjaraka in Hermanu, 2012: 69). Several written sources state that there are many versions of the Panji story, both in terms of story order and the names of characters from each dynasty.

The center of the Roman Panji originally dates back to the Majapahit Kingdom, which spanned Southeast Asia. According to Budiyo (2018: 143) the territory of the Majapahit Kingdom includes Java, Madura, Bali, Lombok, Wanin, Seran and even reaches the Malay Peninsula, Thailand, Cambodia and its surroundings. Roman Panji has become a local cultural art that has gone global in its time and its existence has been transformed into various cultural arts. The spread of this novel from a historical perspective has various, different, and complex versions, but none of them are considered incorrect. Whether Panji is a romance that comes from folklore which was later adopted in the palace, or on the contrary, this romance comes from the palace which was later adopted as folk literature, all of that is still debated to this day.

There are at least 3 (three) versions of the history that underlies the Panji story that was widely developed at that time. According to Raser in Budiyo (2018: 143) that Roman Panji is related to the life history of King Airlangga of the Kahuripan Kingdom who at that time divided the kingdom's power into two namely Kediri and Jenggala. Another opinion from Poerbatjaraka in Hermanu (2012: 72) that King Kameswara who came from the Kingdom of Kediri became the prototype of the realization of the Panji. This is based on the fiber of marriage, namely Smaradahana was composed in the 12th century with the aim of honoring King Kameswara from the Kediri Kingdom and his consort named Kirana from the Jenggala



Kingdom. The third opinion comes from Berg in Budiyo (2018: 143) that the prototype of Panji is King Hayam Wuruk of the Kahuripan Kingdom. This is based on the Song of Sunda which states that King Hayam Wuruk is the prince of Kahuripan, in which the Panji story is a representation of the Majapahit Kingdom.

The Majapahit kingdom became a major kingdom in the archipelago at that time which was based on the desire of Patih Gajah Mada to unite the region through his palapa oath. The content of the palapa oath taken one year after being appointed Mahapatih of the Majapahit Kingdom is that Patih Gajah Mada will not eat palapa fruit before uniting the archipelago (Sumaryono, 2020: 53). The wide spread of the Panji story is historical evidence that the Majapahit Kingdom really existed and covered a wide area. This distribution is thought to be in line with political influence when Gajah Mada expanded into the Malay Peninsula to Southeast Asia. During the golden age of the Majapahit Kingdom, art developed rapidly based on the popular Panji story. The depiction of romance, odyssey, and adventure stories encouraged the development of poets and artists in various areas under Majapahit rule, which resulted in the emergence of different versions of the Panji story. According to Sumaryono (2020: 54) the main characters of the Panji story all have in common, namely Panji Asmarabangun and Dewi Sekartaji, the difference in versions lies in the twists and turns of events, romantic events, to other characters.

Sumaryono (2020: 54) mentions that there are at least 3 (three) different versions of the main story, both in the Central Java version, the Balinese version, and the Malay version. The Central Javanese version, namely the Panji Kuda Narawangsa story, tells the story of Dewi Sekartaji disguised as a man who acts as a puppeteer artist. Bali has a version of the Panji Wangbang Wid story which tells of Raden Mangkaradwaja's disguise (the Javanese version of Panji Asmarabangun/Inu Kertapati) as a painter and music artist named Wangbang Wideya Panji Wireswara.

The case is different with the Malay version that tells the Hikayat Panji Semirang, which is the process of disguising Dewi Candrakirana as a man who serves the Kingdom of Gegendang, then finally can meet her lover again named Raden Inu Kertapati. Thailand is also a region with different versions of Panji in the form of performing arts Dalang or Inao, taken from the name Inu Kertapati (SarDesai in Hermanu, 2012: 73).

### **3.2. The History of Panji Mask Art in Bobung, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta**

A mask is simply an imitation of the face of humans, animals, and other creatures that will later be used to cover a person's face. The mask comes from the Javanese language called tapuk, tapel, and atapukan, or tapelan which means mask dance (Haryono in Hermanu, 2012: 85). The essence of the use of masks is an act of disguise either in the context of a magical religion called a transitional object or in a performance that is categorized as transitional events (Emigh, 1996: 77). Disguise means that it aims to hide the identity of the mask wearer as well as express the type of character according to the mask worn. Mask dancers must perform a special ritual and are not allowed to see the face of the mask to be worn. Dancers are considered as intermediaries of the spirits of the masks that are danced, so it can be said that beautiful dance moves are not from the skills of the dancers themselves. It is said that the mask maker is carried out by the mask master and during its manufacture it should not be seen by other people's eyes. In addition, the process of inheritance can only be passed down to the generation of the mask master, meaning that outsiders are not allowed to study and make it.

Mask art is one of the cultural arts whose existence is related to the heyday of the Roman Panji era of the Majapahit Kingdom. Previously, masks have existed since prehistoric times in the form of imitations of the faces of totem creatures that functioned as ritual

ceremonies. Gold-plated masks have been found in Pasir Angin, West Java, which are thought to be prehistoric masks whose use was as a tool to cover the faces of the dead (Sedyawati in Hermanu, 2012: 86). The existence of the Panji Mask, especially in Central Java, is thought to have a connection with the emergence of the Panji story in the middle of the VIII century in the Singasari Kingdom. In the golden era of the Majapahit Kingdom, namely the end of the VIII century until the XV century, the Panji Mask became a phenomenal performance in which King Hayam Wuruk was famous as a mask dancer and the main dancer in racket performances (Hermanu, 2012: 86). Performances that have similarities with racket dance are gambuh art in Bali. It is suspected that the racket dance entered Bali but the name used until now is gambuh. The term gambuh bakkan is also known in Cirebon but its meaning has shrunk from the meaning in Bali, which is only to mention another name for takes (Soedarsono, 2010: 22). This shows that the Panji Mask has existed since several centuries ago, especially in the Java-Bali region and is still preserved.

The existence of Roman Panji in Bobung, Putat Village, Patuk, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta is thought to have spread through the art of wayang beber. According to Hermanu (2012: 11) the existence of wayang beber can still be seen in Pacitan, which belongs to the family of the late Dalang Sarnen with the story "Jaka Kembang Kuning". In addition to Pacitan, wayang beber is also still in the Hamlet of Titlean, Bejiharjo Village, Karangmojo District, Gunung Kidul which is still in the hands of its heirs to this day (Hermanu, 2012: 11). Bobung Hamlet and Batur Hamlet are geographically close to the existence of Wayang Beber in Karangmojo. This is the red thread of the entry of the Panji culture into the Bobung area. Mbah Karso, who came from Ngedura, Putat, Patuk, Gunung Kidul, became a master figure making Panji Masks in the past, which was influenced by the Panji story from Karangmojo (Hermanu, 2012: 12). Mbak Karso became an alusan mask maker in Ngedura Hamlet, Putat Village, Patuk, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta.

In the past, actually the mask maker was not only Mbak Karso but there was another master, namely Mbah Kasan. The mask master is also in the Kaligesing Hamlet, Putat Village, but it is said that the most famous one is Mbah Karso. It's a shame that none of the works of Mbah Karso's mask as the first master in this village are left. Mbah Wagio, a former head of Dusun Batur, is the next generation who is still actively making masks to tell the story of Panji. Her very old age makes Mbak Wagio not so able to make masks perfectly. Mbah Wagio is one of the teachers who teaches mask making in Putat Village with several of his students, namely Sujiman and Tukiran. They became the first batch of mask craftsmen in the 1970s because previously masks could only be made by descendants of masters. At this time the Panji Mask has undergone commodification where the mask is not only used for sacred dance purposes but is produced for economic purposes.



(Source: Documentation, 2019)

**Figure 1.** Mr. Sujiman and the Mask Dancers

The carving of a craftsman from Bobung who continues to develop his skills in making masks. Tukiran once studied with Mbak Asmo, an Abdi Keraton Yogyakarta which was later developed in Bobung and Batur into a business around 1979 with 30 workers. Sujiman is also not left behind, who continues to develop local art products of loro blonyo and alusan masks in Bobung, Putat Village. In the 1980s Sujiman had an industrial business making masks and wooden batik souvenirs which employed about 40 workers.

Until now, there are 2 (two) types of masks made by craftsmen in Bobung, namely classic masks and creative masks. The classic mask is the Panji Mask whose manufacture is still functioned as a mask dance performance art. Meanwhile, the creation mask is a mask that is the result of the development of the Panji Mask into a batik mask product and other products, both decorative and functional. According to data from Maryono, et al (2019: 90) the market share of Bobung mask craftsmen is 75% of the Yogyakarta area, 45% of areas outside Yogyakarta on the island of Java, and 25% of the market outside Java. Mask craft products in Bobung Village have also been marketed overseas. The results of the Bobung community's wooden batik mask industry have penetrated the export market to ASEAN member countries, namely Singapore and Malaysia as well as other countries such as America, Australia, Brazil, Belgium, Canada, India, Japan, and New Zealand (Pratiwi, et al. , 2013: 133).



The classical masks are still preserved by the Bobung community for the benefit of the performing arts of ballet. At certain events, the Topeng Panji ballet is still held with dancers from young people to adults in Bobung. The Panji Mask Dance is also held on special occasions based on tourist requests. The Bobung community is able to take advantage of the potential of regional cultural traditions to become a tourist attraction that is able to attract both local and international tourists. Bobung, Putat Village has been confirmed as a tourism village based on batik masks since 2005 (Aqmar and Widiyastuti, 2018: 6). Tourists come with various backgrounds, ranging from school students, university students, academics, researchers, to the general public. Many foreign tourists come to Bobung, where they travel as well as actively participate in making masks to dancing masks. They also learn about the characters, stories, to the history of the Roman Panji and its development into the art of the Panji Mask in Bobung.

## IV. Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that Roman Panji is an original and distinctive epic of the archipelago, especially Java. The Panji story has existed long before the wayang stories, namely the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, entered the archipelago. In the golden age of the Majapahin Kingdom, Roman Panji spread to various regions in the archipelago and even Southeast Asia. Roman Panji has received the attention of artists and poets in various regions which has resulted in the emergence of various versions of the Panji Story, but the essence is still the same. Panji stories have also been transformed into various local arts such as Wayang Beber, Wayang Topeng, Wayang Gedog, Cirebon masks, Malat in Bali, even in Thailand in the form of a classic performance called Ino. The mask art in Bobung, Putat Village, Patuk District, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta also tells the story of Panji. The existence of the Panji Mask in Bobung is thought to be due to the influence of the Wayang Beber art in Pacitan and Karangmojo, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta which was spread by Mbah Karso. At first the Panji Mask could only be made and passed on to the previous generation of masters, but over time the pattern of order was no longer valid. Currently, Panji Masks can be made by anyone and even successful entrepreneurs have emerged who use local art as industrial products. Panji masks have undergone a process of commodification into products of economic and tourism value. However, the Bobung community still maintains and preserves the classic Panji Mask as the authenticity of local culture. The Panji Mask Ballet is still performed at certain important events and is also held at the request of tourists.

As a suggestion, this study only focuses on the historical perspective of the spread of Roman Panji in the archipelago and its influence on the Mask art in Bobung, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta. Studies of perspectives and other disciplines need to be carried out so that the scientific treasures related to the Panji culture will be deeper. The historical study in this paper is also still in outline, so that in the future there needs to be a more detailed and more detailed study. Topeng Panji can be studied more focused and in-depth from the point of view of art, namely whether from the perspective of visual arts or performing arts. Because it is possible that the two branches of art will produce different results..

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