

Symbolic Meanings of the Sancaya Kusumawicitra Dance Costumes Designed by S. Ngaliman Tjondropangrawit

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to describe the Symbolic Meanings of the Sancaya Kusumawicitra Dance Costume. This article is part of the research that had been carried out, entitled “the development of interactive multimedia in learning the sancaya kusumawicitra dance based on the elaboration theory.” Sancaya Kusumawicitra dance is a form of male partner Surakartan style dance developed by S. Ngaliman Tjondropangrawit. The dance symbolically depicts a war between the evil characters of Sancaya and the good characters of Kusumawicitra. Another element that supports the Sancaya Kusumawicitra dance, besides the motion, accompaniment, cosmetology, and property is the costume. Costume is an important element to strengthen the role and character. It is because characteristics can also be seen from the colors of the costumes worn. The results of the analysis show that the costumes worn by Sancaya and Kusumawicitra figures have different colors. Sancaya wears the red costume and Kusumawicitra uses the green costume. Based on the Javanese culture, the red color has a symbolic meaning of hard temper and anger, while green has symbolic meanings of calm and peace.

Keywords: *symbolic meanings, costumes of Sancaya Kusumawicitra dance*

1. INTRODUCTION

Symbols are the smallest element of culture. A symbol has its own meaning for the community in which the symbol is used. In human life, symbols play a crucial role as humans express ideas, thoughts, and intention to others through symbols. One of the cultural elements which are inseparable from symbols is arts. Art exists in the society with all its conception and inherited values. Bearing that in mind, dance is one of art forms which is full of symbols.

For communities who engage in arts especially dance, knowing the symbolic meanings within dance elements is pivotal. To create a dance, someone must possess the ability to understand movements, music, makeup, floor patterns, and also costume elements. As one of the most crucial part in creating a dance, the artist must be able to interpret each symbol in the costumes worn by each dance role. The colors of the costumes can be served as the basis of dance themes.

The Sancaya Kusumawicitra Dance is a male partner dance of Surakarta Style. This dance is the work of S. Ngaliman Tjondropangrawit which symbolizes the battles among antagonist characters within Prabu Sancaya and the protagonist characters within Prabu Kusumawicitra [1]. There are several differences between Prabu Sancaya and Prabu Kusumawicitra characters. Some of the differences lie in the colors of the costumes of both characters. The

different colors represent the symbolic meanings of Prabu Sancaya and Prabu Kusumawicitra characters.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A meaning represents the significance and intention of a word [2]. The word symbolic comes from the Greek word *symbolos* which means signs or characteristics to inform others [3]. A symbol can also be an epitome [4]. Thus, symbols are physical representations of meanings, and meanings are the contents of the symbols.

The unity of symbols and meanings will create a form which bear certain purpose strengthened by values within the symbols. A symbolic meaning would mean incorporating meanings through symbols for a particular object. According to Herususanto, symbolic forms include three kinds of actions namely:

- 1) symbolic actions in religions;
- 2) symbolic actions in traditions;
- 3) symbolic actions in arts [5].

Symbolic actions in arts are presented in the forms of fine arts, literature, sound art, music, drama, and dance [6]. The symbols used for aesthetically expressing uniqueness and distinctions of characters or themes in a dance are movements and colors of dance costumes [7], and the colour of costumes are the visual aspects in dance costumes which are symbolic. Each color symbolizes each character in a dance performance.

Dance costumes are all the costumes and accessories worn in a performance [8]. A dance costume can comprise basic layer of costumes/foundation, footwear/shoes, the main costume, headdresses, and accessories. Harymawan suggests that the functions of dance costumes in a performance include:

- 1) Aiding the make the characters become alive. A dance costume show who the character is, the age, nationality, social status, personalities and psychological relationships among characters.
- 2) Distinguishing a role apart from other roles from a setting and background;
- 3) Aiding characters' movements, adding visual effects for movement, and adding beauty to the dance [9].

Accordingly, understanding costumes is central to artists.

3. METHOD

This study employs descriptive qualitative method to discuss the symbolic meaning of Sancaya Kusumawicitra dance costumes. The information for this study was obtained from in-depth interview with respondents and documentations. The interview was aimed at collecting data about Sancaya Kusumawicitra dance through face to face interview with the informants. The documentations included collecting documents in the forms of written accounts, books, and photos of Sancaya Kusumawicitra dance performances. The data obtained were then analysed by using the descriptive qualitative method. The results of the analysis were organized to describe the symbolic meanings of costumes worn by Prabu Sancaya and Prabu Kusumawicitra characters based on the colors of the costumes.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. *The History of Sancaya Kusumawicitra Dance*

The Sancaya Kusumawicitra dance is a male pair dance of Surakarta Style. Outside Surakarta, this dance also developed in Mangkunegaran Palace. The dance version from Mangkunegaran Palace was created during the reign of Mangkunegara IV. The difference lies in the dance style, in which the Mangkunegaran version uses moves pertaining to Mangkunegaran style, while the version from Surakarta Palace employs movements

specific to Surakarta style. The other version of the dance was also developed in 1973 by S. Ngaliman Tjondropangrawit, an artist from Surakarta. Despite the versions, all of these tell about a battle between Prabu Sancaya and Prabu Kusumawicitra from the kingdom of Pengging [10]. The appeal of this dance lies in the revenge of Prabu Sancaya to Prabu Kusumawicitra for the death of his uncle, and a romantic rivalry in which Prabu Sancaya wanted to wed Prabu Kusumawicitra's wife, Dewi Somo. The other factor contributing to this conflict is that Prabu Sancaya desired the death of all offsprings of Jayabaya, so that the later kings of Java were the descendants of Prabu Sancaya.

Generally, the presentation of Sancaya Kusumawicitra dance includes Maju Gending (opening moves), Beksan Inti (core dance), dan Perangan (the battle dance). Maju gending (opening moves) is started when dancers are entering the stage from the right and the left sides. Beksan Inti (core dance) comprise core dancing components. The last part of the dance is the battle, after which the dancers are coming out to the right and left sides of the stage.

4.2. *The Symbolic Meaning of Sancaya Kusumawicitra Dance*

Dance costumes include all the costumes and accessories worn during the performance [8]. The colors of the costumes and setting in the performance must be taken into account as the setting gives the background for the costumes. The colors of the dance costumes are the symbols to distinguish one part from another. Harymawan further proposes categorization of colors based on emotions:

- 1) Red conveys bravery; and anger
- 2) Blue represents patience and obedience;
- 3) Purple suggests desire and insatiableness;
- 4) Green indicates freshness and peace;
- 5) White signifies purity and holiness [11].

Based on the colors, the costumes worn in Sancaya Kusumawicitra include red and green. Sedyawati explains that in Malay culture, yellow represents nobility, and in Javanese it means stubbornness and anger, while green conveys calm and peace [7].

S. Ngaliman Tjondropangrawit is a traditional dance master from Surakarta and in his creation of Sancaya Kusumawicitra dance, he definitely conveys meaning for his work. Besides expressing meanings through movement, he also conveys meaning visually using the costumes. Each part of the costume has meaning which can be interpreted from the color, shape, and ornaments. In the dance, all the costume elements are similar except for the colors of the costumes worn by the characters, red for Prabu Sancaya and green for Prabu Kusumawicitra

The color of the costume worn by Prabu Sancaya, red, indicates anger, while the color of Kusumawicitra's costumes is green which represents peace. The following are the details of the clothing elements worn by the characters:

- 1) *Teropong*, a headdress which relates to Kingship is worn by roles portraying kings which suggests a king's majesty.
- 2) *Sumping*. Earrings-ornaments worn on the ears of the performers.
- 3) *Udal-udalan*. A wig worn by the characters which drapes on the back.
- 4) *Srempang*. A long scarf worn by the shoulders to drape on the front part of the body to the floor which also functions to support an arrow holder.
- 5) *Endhong*. An arrow holder which is put at the back of the body.
- 6) *Nyenyep*. The arrows which are used to defeat enemies.
- 7) *Gendewa*. A bow to defeat enemies.
- 8) Velvet shorts as part of the costume
- 9) *Rapek*. A layer of cloth put on top of the shorts following the style used by the main character in a folklore of Panji.
- 10) *Sabuk cinde*. A belt to ensure the velvet shorts and the outer layer of cloth fit properly so that the costume looks neat and beautiful.
- 11) *Epek timang*. An ornament out on the hip of the dancer.
- 12) *Uncal*. The shield used by the warrior
- 13) *Sampur gendala giri*. A cloth worn for Surakarta style
- 14) *Kalung lurus*. A necklace worn by a warrior to look commanding
- 15) *Kelat bahu*. Accessories worn on the upper arms
- 16) *Keris ladrang*. A blade used by warriors in Javanese traditional dances
- 17) Bracelets
- 18) *Binggel*. Foot bracelets

The following pictures present the detail of the costumes worn by Prabu Sancaya and Prabu Kusumawicitra characters.



Figure 1 Prabu Kusumawicitra Costume



Figure 2 Prabu Sancaya Costume

The pictures show that the costumes for both characters are similar in shape, design, and motifs as those characters are kings. The most prominent feature is the headdress worn for kings. However, there is one distinction between the two, that is the colors of the costumes. The costume worn by Prabu Sancaya represents antagonist character and anger, while the costume worn by Prabu Kusumawicitra is green which symbolizes protagonist character and good. The Sancaya Kusumawicitra dance symbolizes both good and evil. In the era where technology advances, the range of colors also develops. An art form, especially dance, includes colors as its integral part. Therefore, while movements are the main parts of a dance, there is also another important element which is the colors of the costumes.

5. CONCLUSION

Sancaya Kusumawicitra dance is a male pair dance of Surakarta style choreographed by S. Ngaliman Tjondropangrawit, an artist from Surakarta in 1973. This dance recounts the battle between Prabu Sancaya and Prabu Kusumawicitra characters from the kingdom of Pengging. The costumes worn by the characters are similar in shape, design, and motifs. The only difference is in the colors of the costumes. Red which represents evil and anger is worn by Prabu Sancaya, while green which represent peace is worn by Prabu Kusumawicitra.

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