

The Representation of Local and Global Cultures Contained in Ngapak T-Shirt Designs

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Abstract—Banyumas T-shirt is one creative industrial product in Banyumas Areas functioning not only as the cultural display but also as local nuance. In several designs, the local symbol designs are created in adjacent with the global cultural symbols which result in greatly interesting design. Thus, this research discusses the meanings of the localization and globalization relationship contained in Banyumas T-shirt designs. This is a qualitative research which data are collected by observing the production sites and selecting *Ngapak* T-shirt designs which have local and global nuances. Those designs are further analyzed using a semiotic approach proposed by Roland Barthes. The research results find that *Ngapak* T-shirt designs are actually the fighting processes against global cultures. The presence of global cultural icons contained in *Ngapak* T-shirt designs is intentionally created to show the winning of local cultures against the global cultures. It is intended to influence the costumers' perceptions to buy those Banyumas T-shirts.

Keywords—representation; local culture; design

I. INTRODUCTION

T-shirt has experienced transformations of meaning within the dynamics of contemporary cultures. T-shirt has become a product of popular cultures with its diverse meanings; starting as symbols of life style, social status and certain identity affiliation. T-shirt images and texts also get more various and show various contemporary socio-cultural realities. According to [1] t-shirt has become a symbolic mode to convey text transparently, based on experience, political movement, ideology, business, social relations, identity and even something which does not show the users' identity.

The studies on t-shirt have already been conducted before, including those researches conducted by [2] as well as [3]. Crane who sees fashion history in the European countries, states that t-shirts may replace the position of hats as the social status distinguishers. In this era, t-shirts may express the social identity in various ways, from political identity to life style. Meanwhile, [3] conclude that t-shirts may communicate the users' identity, experience, attitude, status and social relations, working place and the collectivity of certain community.

T-shirts may also produce certain realities. The study conducted by [4] for example, states that the word/logo

twisting style shown in Yogyakarta *Dagadu* t-shirt is the representation of local wisdom of Yogyakarta people who like to make jokes. The other study conducted by [5] on Yogyakarta *Dagadu* t-shirt concludes that as the product of popular cultures, *Dagadu* t-shirt has the function as an ideology instrument since *Dagadu* t-shirt texts may be interpreted by the costumers as the real concepts. Yogyakarta as the tourism, student, even words-twisting city is constructed through the representation in such a way to produce meanings as those created by *Dagadu*.

Next, the study conducted by [6] on Surabaya *Cakuk* t-shirt designs explains that any design and form of *Cakuk* t-shirt, they always represent the identity of Surabaya local cultures and people. Bangsawan divides *Cakuk* t-shirt into five based on its designs. First, the designs related to Surabaya as the city of heroes. Second, Surabaya as the culinary city. Third, Surabaya as the swearing (*misuh*) city. Fourth, Surabaya as *esek-esek* city (sex transactions since there is a localization for sexual activities located known as *Gang Dolly*). And fifth, Surabaya as *bonek* city (*Bonek which stands for Bondo Nekat [Having a Spirit Capital only]* is the supporters of Persebaya football team).

T-shirt has become widely popular throughout the world, including in Banyumas, Indonesia. In Banyumas Areas, there are many t-shirt producers creating various designs showing Banyumasan local cultures, such as philosophy of life, art and culture, language, people's character, tradition, etc. Banyumasan t-shirts frequently show the contemporary socio-cultural phenomena which become the trending topics in the society, for example, corruption issues, the dynamics of local politics, educational criticisms and etc.

The research conducted by [7], mention that up to the end of 2014, there are seventeen t-shirt producers in Banyumas areas which have been improving significantly since 2006 hallwith one t-shirt brand only, *Dablongan*. Banyumas T-shirt producers and brands that recently still exist are *Bhineka Ceria*, *Kidal Kolektif*, *Dablongan*, *Kreasi Inyong*, *Bengkong*, *Ngapak*, *Kuda Lumping*, *Orange Clothing*, *Konveksine Inyong*, *Maning*, *Bawor*, *Ice Box*, *Baloeng Gedhe*, *Youth Attack*, *Klinik Rebel*, *Cablaka* and *Domong*.

Banyumasan t-shirt texts are interesting to analyze. Some examples of *Dablongan* Banyumasan t-shirt texts are "*Rika*

tah meneng bae nglombo, apa maning ngomong" (instead of your words, your silence is already a lie), "*Burit kantor, didelah nang pedaringan jelas kesenangan*" (a mouse wouldn't be happier when taken to and put in 'a barn'), "*ora Ngapak, dupak*" (speak *Ngapak*, or kicked), and etc. those texts may be understood as the cultural expressions and the critical attitudes of Banyumas people in facing the social-cultural phenomena taking in their surroundings. Those texts show Banyumasan cultural elements, that is, Banyumasan language known as *Ngapak* [8];[9] and people's character considered as *cablaka* (frankly) [10].

There are some other t-shirt designs which combine the local with the global cultures. One of them is *Ngapak* t-shirt which product designs frequently show global culture icons, such as logos of Starbucks café, popular comic characters (Superman, Batman, Monster, and etc.), global food icons, such as Mc-D, and Film Company, such as, Warner Bross, and etc. The combination of those local and global elements, at a glance, looks like a common creativity attempts of a layout person or a designer, but when we look closer, there are various hidden meanings behind the designs. Thus, this study is intended to reveal how and what are the meanings behind *Ngapak* t-shirt designs which simultaneously show the local and global elements.

II. METHODOLOGY

The research data are textual data, either in writing forms or images found in *Ngapak* t-shirts. *Ngapak* T-Shirt is one of local languages in Indonesia which became as a brand of T-Shirt product in Banyumas, province of Central Java. The data collection technique is conducted through observation and documentation. The observation is conducted by visiting the outlets of Banyumasan *Ngapak* t-shirts to observe, select, and determine some Banyumasan *Ngapak* t-shirt designs to analyze. The data are then analyzed using textual analysis, namely semiotics. It is used to figure out the meanings which are explicitly or implicitly conveyed within various Banyumasan *Ngapak* t-shirt designs. Rolland Barthes' Semiotics known as connotative semiotics is employed

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Mendoan T-shirt Design



Fig. 1. Mendoan T-shirt design
Source: A Researcher Documentation

The t-shirt design text above is dominated by typography which imitates the logo of American fast-food restaurant, Mc Donald, which is widely known in Indonesia as McD. The most noticeable part is the symbol of letter "M" with its yellow color and big size added with the text "mendoans" in the middle of the letter "M". Beneath the letter "M", there is also an expression in Banyumasan language written in black, saying "*inyong seneng kiye*" (in English means I'm Lovin It).

In the first semiotic level, the text design of McD logo above is twisted. The letter "M" which is the logo and is identical with the various products of McD, such as burger, sausages, French fries, and etc, the acronym is then twisted into "mendoans". Meanwhile, the verbal text of McD's tagline, "I'm lovin it" is twisted into "*inyong seneng kiye*".

In the second semiotic level, the logo of letter "M" in yellow and the text Mendoans are related each other as Mendoan is the acronym of the letter "M". The letter "M" itself is a symbol of a franchise restaurant that the design of letter "M" or *mendoan* connotatively means that *mendoan* may or is able to become international food and franchise product, such as McDonald. Just like a franchise restaurant, *Mendoan* has the similar character which is easily to find elsewhere throughout the world.

McD franchise product also has a connotation with various food product sold in franchise companies, such as fried chicken, hamburger, sausages, French fries, and etc. The design above which makes "*mendoan*" as the main product which connotatively means that although nowadays there are a lot of western food products, Banyumas people never forget *mendoan* as their traditional food. Mendoan has become Banyumas typical food and Identity.

The phrase "*inyong seneng kiye*" or "I'm lovin it" connotatively means a definite choice of Banyumas people in considering mendoan as their food after making a comparison with the other food. This phrase also indicates that *mendoan* is also related to *wong Ngapak* culture as it was born and existed in *panginyongan* earth (Banyumas). Thus, the design above also means an invitation for anyone to preserve *mendoan* as one of the Indonesia traditional foods in order to stand with various International food products that *mendoan* may become popular throughout the world.

The design above is simultaneously the representation of Banyumas people who love their own food products. This is the ideological fragment of nationalism belonging to Banyumas people.

2. United Ngapak Design

The t-shirts texts in figure 2 use more images than writing. The most noticeable images are several circle layers which center contains Banyumas map silhouette, equipped with "UN" letters writing and Bawor silhouette on top. On the right and left side of the circle, there is a certain flower/leave stalk linking each other on its stalk part. The whole image is in golden yellow color. "United *Ngapak*" is then written under the image and its acronym, "UN" located in the center of the circle next to Banyumas map. Another verbal text is written

under United *Ngapak*, saying “*ora Ngapak ora kepenak*” (without *Ngapak* speaking, it really doesn’t feel good).



Fig. 2. United *Ngapak*

Source: A Researcher's Documentation

In the first level of semiotics, the figures and texts above may be interpreted as a twisted symbol of United Nations which is associated to *Ngapak* areas. The globe map contained in UN logo is replaced with the map of Banyumas areas. Then, UN which stands for United Nations becomes United *Ngapak* in order to produce a twisting expression.

In the second semiotic level, the markers connotatively mean the existence of Banyumasan cultures. The capital letters of “UN” which stand for the acronym of United *Ngapak* is the bond of visual texts in the forms of a map picture which connotatively means that the map contained in the text above is the map of *Ngapak* areas. The word “united” then connotatively means that *Ngapak* areas consist of a unitary area just like the United Nations organization which members consists of various countries. The members of United *Ngapak* are areas claimed as *Ngapak*’s, such as Banyumas, Cilacap, Purbalingga, Kebumen, and Banjarnegara whose people speak *Ngapak* as their distinguishing characters.

The various markers above also mean that United *Ngapak* areas share the same culture. It is shown by Bawor silhouette on top of the map. As the symbol of wong *Ngapak*’s character, the position of Bawor on top of the picture of a map provides connotative meaning that Bawor is the “umbrella” for *Ngapak*’s people. It means that Bawor with its diverse characteristics should be the guidance for people’s behaviors, especially for Bawor’s good characters to maintain *Ngapak* areas to develop more.

The other visual markers are two stalks of olive tree and the circular layers which may be similarly interpreted just like UN Organization that the unitary areas of *tlatah Ngapak* may lead its members with more prosperous life. Olive tree is related to prosperous life, while the circular layers are related to targets to achieve. Thus, *Ngapak* people should have certain targets to reach for the sake of their more prosperous life.

The verbal expression “*ora Ngapak ora kepenak*” (in English: without speaking the language, it feels not good) connotatively shows that the “unitary language” of “united *Ngapak*” communities is *Ngapak* that among *Ngapak* people, they should speak *Ngapak*. *Ngapak* language has become a distinguishing character of *Ngapak* people with the other

cultures. Thus, if *Ngapak* people do not speak *Ngapak* language, there will be no pleasant atmosphere.

In general, all designs above are the representations of familial spirit among *Ngapak* people. This familial spirit may be considered as the ideological fragment of togetherness and harmonious attitudes belonging to *Ngapak* people with their *cablaka* (frankly) character just like *Bawor*. One binding *Ngapak* people is togetherness in their unitary language, that is, *Ngapak*.

3. Super *Ngapak* Design



Fig. 3. Super *Ngapak* Design

Source: A Researcher's Documentation

The design above uses a cartoon style. The firstly-seen visual text is a pentagon with the letter S known as the logo of an American superhero, Superman. However, the logo of Superman is added with *blangkon* (Javanese traditional hat) picture located on top of the logo. Meanwhile, beneath the logo, there are two men standing side by side. They wear Javanese traditional outfits equipped with *blangkon* and traditional slippers. On top of “S” logo, there is a big written text saying “Super *Ngapak*”. Meanwhile, beneath the logo, there is a verbal written text saying “Story from Banyumas”.

In the first semiotic level, the design above connotatively means that there are two men wearing Javanese traditional outfits standing in front a big logo of Superman wearing *blangkon*. On top of the logo, there is a text saying “Super *Ngapak*”, while beneath the logo, there is a verbal written text saying “Story from Banyumas”.

In the second semiotic level, there are some readable connotative meanings. First, two men who are wearing Javanese traditional outfits provide a connotative meaning of traditionalism. Meanwhile, the logo of letter “S” provides a connotative meaning that it is a product of popular cultures, that is, an American superhero called Superman. Thus, the design above simply means that the threat of popular cultures/modernity against the traditionalism of Javanese culture is relatively harmful.

Nevertheless, the position of *blangkon* on top of Superman logo in the design above try to convey the message that global culture may not defeat the cultures of wong *Ngapak*. *Blangkon* marker is located on top of logo “S” to indicate that *Ngapak* culture should remain exist and may not lose against the global culture. One of the ways to make

Ngapak culture may not be defeated by the global culture is by preserving and presenting the symbols of *Ngapak* cultures.

The other meaning may be obtained when we relate those two items worn by different users. The logo of Superman is usually located on the users' chest, while blangkon is on the users' head. Those connotatively mean that although the soul has been westernized but the head or mind should remain local. In other words, (we should) act globally but think locally.

The written text "Story from Banyumas" asserts that *super Ngapak* consists of people who always love the local cultures more than the global cultures. Those people usually appear in the story from Banyumas people or *wong Ngapak*. So, *super Ngapak* people are Banyumas people.

The design above is the representative of *Ngapak* people's spirit fighting against the hegemony of western cultures. The spirit in fighting against the western cultures and loving the local cultures is an ideological fragment of nationalism. Thus, the design above indirectly marks that *wong Ngapak* are nationalists.

4. Wong Banyumas Design



Fig. 4. Wong Banyumas Design
Source: *Ngapak Collection*

The design above is fairly simple. The text is in the form of a shield image with blue letters of "W" and "B" and decorated with the silhouette of two Bawors standing back to back. On top of the shield image, there is a written text saying "Wong Banyumas". Meanwhile, on the left side of the shield image, there is a verbal written text "*ora Ngapak ora kepenak*".

In the first semiotic level, the design above is the twisting symbol of Warner Bross logo, a well known film company in the United States. This company produces hundreds or even thousands films in Hollywood movie industries. WB logo which stands for Warner Bross has been twisted into Wong Banyumas which means Banyumas people.

In the second semiotic level, some visual and textual markers on the design above provide various meanings. "WB" logo is related to a visual written text "Wong Banyumasan" that this logo may be connotatively interpreted as the declaration upon the existence of Banyumas people. Bawor silhouette is a coded iconic sign to explain Wong Banyumas whose characters are similar to Bawor's. While Bawor's

position on top of "W" and "B" letters is the message that Bawor's characters, especially the good ones should become guidance for Banyumas people to think and act.

In addition, "WB" logo which is located and becomes a part of the shield also provide the markers of concepts to defend or to find shelter. Shield itself has the connotative meaning as equipment to defend or find shelter from the enemy's attacks in the war. Thus, "WB" logo in the shield means that *wong Banyumas* are defending or finding shelter from certain "attacks". If we go back to the origin of logo as the twisting symbol of Warner Bross, the aforementioned "attacks" may be interpreted as those related to the western cultures invading the Indonesian people's souls through Hollywood films produced by Warner Bross.

The verbal text "*ora Ngapak ora kepenak*" on sides of the shield means that the cultural identity which is always attached on Banyumas people is *Ngapak* language. The verbal text may be connotatively interpreted as the declaration for Banyumas people that *Ngapak* is the best language to create a pleasant atmosphere (*kepenak*), while the other languages are unable to do so. *Ngapak* is considered as a respectful language that should be used and preserved by Banyumas people. Thus, the verbal text may be interpreted as Banyumas people's love to glorify *Ngapak* language as their culture identity.

Simultaneously, the design above is not merely a twisting symbol of Warner Bross logo but considered as a message from Banyumas people to "show off" their existence. The intended Wong Banyumas are those who have the characters similar to Bawor which uphold their *Ngapak* language and culture. The attitude which upholds the language and culture is considered as the ideological fragment of love upon their homeland or nationalism owned by Banyumas people. It also means that there are some Banyumas people who are considered less nationalist because they do not want to use *Ngapak* language which may create the unpleasant atmosphere (*ora kepenak*).

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the explanations above, it can be concluded that the real meaning of Banyumas *Ngapak* T-shirt designs is actually the winning of local cultures although those designs still include the symbols of global cultures. McD symbol in Mendoan design is even shown to show Banyumas people's nationalism who love their own food products. The design of United *Ngapak* also adopts the UN logo as the representation of solidarity of *Ngapak* culture community in Banyumas areas. Superman as one popular superhero character is situated in such a way to show that even Superman should respect the local cultures of *Ngapak* areas. Last but not least, Warner Bross logo is twisted in such a way to show that Wong Banyumas is also popular in the world with its Bawor character.

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