

Spiritual Value: A Mythological Figure in Keraton Kanoman Cirebon

Ariesa Pandanwangi^a, Dewi Isma Aryani^b, Belinda Sukapura Dewi^c, Ismet Zaenal Effendi,
Wawan Suryana, Miky Endro Santoso, Leonardo^d and Beni Sasmito^e
Universitas Kristen Maranatha, Indonesia

Keywords: Acculturation, Hybridity, Mythological Figure, Paksi Naga Liman, Spirituality.

Abstract: Keraton Kanoman Cirebon has preserved a lot of priceless authentic cultural assets that are displayed in public area and Ruang Ndalem Keraton. One of the artefacts is a mythological figure called Paksi Naga Liman represents the great value of the teachings and wisdom which are respected and inherited by all the members of Keraton Kanoman Cirebon and its people. This mythological figure is chosen due to uniqueness and the fact that it can only be found in Keraton Kanoman. Besides, it represents an artwork having the hybridity of the acculturation of Islam, China, and Hindu (through the figures of the bird/ *paksi/ burok*, a dragon, and an elephant respectively). This research aims to describe (1) the visualization concept, (2) the spiritual value, and (3) the implementation on contemporary arts and designs. The research method used is descriptive qualitative and the data are collected through library research, historical review, observation, and interviews. The results show that the visual concept of Paksi Naga Liman is the expression of guide spirituality to human relationships horizontally (immanent) and vertically (transcendental) through space and time. The spiritual value is shown by the cultural wealth appreciation which continuously inspires contemporary arts and designs to this day.

1 INTRODUCTION

Keraton Kanoman Cirebon was a palace led by a sultan who is a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad Rasulullah. This explains why Keraton Kanoman Cirebon has strong Islamic nuances, both in the concept of life and buildings which are symbolically identical to the Prophet's teachings (Lestari, Salura, & Fauzy, 2021; Yoyon, 2018). This palace is a museum which collects heirloom objects of Cirebon ancestors, including Paksi Naga Liman carriage (Effendi, 2020).

Almost all the objects originating from and being kept in the palace have the values of art as well as the functional values of artefacts of art and culture. As artefacts, they are not separated from the

symbolical values of religion and magic (Yudoseputro, 2008). Therefore, it can be confirmed that Paksi Naga Liman, an artefact in Keraton Kanoman Cirebon, contains a symbolical value which is magical and has a religious background.

Paksi Naga Liman is a unique artwork, a historical inheritance that was made in the period of Keraton Kanoman in Cirebon (Effendi, 2020). The uniqueness lies in the figure and its philosophical meaning contained in an artwork made on a carriage at that time. Paksi Naga Liman is an artwork that uses a mythological animal to convey the life philosophy of the people of Cirebon at that time, which intends to inherit this teaching to the next generation in order to continuously give the spirit (Effendi, 2019). The figure of Paksi Naga Liman is

^a <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1214-1508>

^b <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0929-1716>

^c <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9428-1672>

^d <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9099-762X>

^e <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8597-9574>

the result of a cross culture that is adapted from three main animals, namely Paksi (bird), Naga (dragon), and Liman (elephant), which have two principal meanings. The first is the mutual respect towards different cultures or multiculturalism. Currently, this figure lives in Cirebon people's beliefs, which is Islam, represented by Paksi, Confucianism, represented by Dragon, and Hinduism, represented by Liman (Lange, 2019; Soekarba, 2018; Yang, 2005). This has been embedded in the society so that they have the attitudes of respecting and appreciating differences, which leads to living together in peace.

The second meaning which represents the Cirebon people's beliefs is that the universe consists of three parts; they are Paksi, living in the sky, symbolizing the Upper World (spiritual life, goodness); Liman, living on the land, symbolizing the Middle World (day to day, physical), and Dragon, living under the earth, symbolizing the Underworld (spiritual death, evilness) (Sofiyawati, 2017).

The explanation above reveals that Paksi Naga Liman is the result of acculturation that often becomes the source of ideas and inspiration for artists' and designers' works. It is this visual expression of the artists or designers that will be elaborated on in this research. In this case (Fikriyati & Suardana, 2020), it is revealed that Paksi Naga Liman carriage is a grand carriage owned by the Sultan of Kanoman. This carriage contains the teaching of '*HabluMinalAlam*', which is the unification of three animals living in different natures, namely air, sea, and land. The local government of Cirebon has not adopted Paksi Naga Liman in their curriculum as insights for school children. The method used is descriptive qualitative and the result of the research shows that each attribute of Paksi Naga Liman can be found in each part of the carriage.

Another research (Tresnadi & Sachari, 2015) states that Cirebon *batik* can be used as an idea in the game design as the visual content in Nitiki game. The descriptive qualitative method is considered suitable, and it is supported by some data about the *batik* decoration style. The data is then sorted and selected, and reconstructed. The finding claims that through Nitiki game, people can like *batik* very much. Nitiki game that is culture-based can be well received by the society at large.

In the previous studies, Paksi Naga Liman has not specifically unveiled the implementation of Paksi Naga Liman into creative works so that it

becomes an opportunity to analyse the artists' and designers' creation in the contemporary era.

2 METHODS (AND MATERIALS)

This research belongs to social and humanity research which will elaborate on the philosophical meaning and cultural roots of the palace in Cirebon, which will then be implemented into the fields of art and design. Thus, this research needs a situational data to understand various situations in the levels of particular individuals, groups, or society (Saddhono, Widodo, Al-Makmun, & Tozu, 2014). The method used in this research is qualitative with a cultural approach using cultural studies sourced from other sciences (Creswell, 2014; Sumartono, 2017; Yusuf, 2017). This is a cultural study uncovering ideas, concepts, and practices that discuss a certain topic, or the social condition in the society and give knowledge and behavior related to the present issue (Hall, 1977).

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Paksi Naga Liman Carriage: a Mythological Figure of a Cross-cultural Meeting

Indonesia has an important role in the discourse of "ModerateIslam" so that it is well known as a nation that historically has a tolerant attitude towards pluralism (Zakaria, 2020).

The strong influence of Islam makes the safety, trades, local wisdom, the stability of the Muslim community, as well as the tolerance driven by Muslim leaders help spur the intellectual collaboration so that it encourages scholars from various cultures, backgrounds, and beliefs to participate in each scientific activity (Deeb, 2014).

Keraton Kanoman Cirebon owns mythological objects, one of which is Paksi Naga Liman carriage which was made in 1350, while according to the Saka year which refers to the data on the gold carriage, it was made in 1428 AD (Fikriyati & Suardana, 2020; Sofiyawati, 2017). Each nation has their myths in their cultures, and so does Indonesia, a country that is very rich of mythologies in its culture. From Sabangto Merauke, we will find stories of mythological figures and classic stories that become the legends in the areas. Despite them being myths, there are a lot of people believing in

them. A lot of the stories even inspire artists and designers who give meanings and reinterpret it into an art creation that will be discussed in this research.

The word “myth” comes from “mite” (English) and “muthos” (Ancient Greek), which means a belief that becomes the life guidance in a community or an order in a society. A myth is also developed from traditional folklores that present supernatural things of the ancestors or heroism that is told in the primordial style through the primitive people’s perspectives (Cotterel & Storm, 2007; Nuning Damayanti, 2018).

The Paksi Naga Liman carriage is Prince Walangsungang Cakrabuana’s relic, and it was designed by Prince Losari (Sunan Gunung Djati’s grandson) (Lasmiyati, 2013). Almost all objects coming from and being kept in the palace show the artistic and functional values as an artwork. They are not separated from products of art and culture, and not separated from the religious and magical characteristics of the symbolical value (Agustina, Hindersah, & Asiyawati, 2017; Yudoseputro, 2008; Zainal Effendi, 2019), either. Thus, it can be confirmed that the artefacts in Keraton Kanoman Cirebon also have the symbolical values that are magical and have religious background.

3.2 Implication of the Concept of Paksi Naga Liman Art and Design

The analysis of this research focuses on the result of an artwork or design which is based on the concept of Paksi Naga Liman. The choice of the object to discuss fulfils the indicators that are determined and are in accordance with the purpose of the study. Below is the idea for the big companies in the United States.



Figure 1: American Chopper called Kebo Bule, inspired by the gold carriage of Sunan Gunung Jati (Retro Classic Cycles). Source: shorturl.at/aqEL9.

American Chopper is an innovative product adopting Paksi Naga Liman (Figure 1). The innovation which starts with the birth of new ideas is an action that gives new resources in the form of strength and ability to create arts. A product is the result of the production of an artwork or design, which will be offered to the society to gain appreciation, attention, or consumed to satisfy the user’s desire and need. A designer explores how he can respond to the concept of Paksi Naga Liman from Indonesia in the creation process, which is started from literature study, survey, and experiment so that he can succeed in integrating the installation of art technology. The big motorcycle’s designer seems to have been successful in responding to the characteristics of Paksi Naga Liman through the dialogue done by a designer on his study.

Another idea in art is a painting (Figure 2) made by Ismet Zainal Effendi, which is entitled “The Breed of Paksi Naga Liman”. The media used is oil on canvas of 110 cm x 120 cm and it was made in 2018.



Figure 2: The Breed of Paksi Naga Liman, Ismet Zainal Effendi, Oil on Canvas 110 x 120 cm, 2018. Source: Researcher Team. 2021.

This work presents the reproduction of the mythological figure Paksi Naga Liman with a stocky body and small wings. The condition of this kind of society keeps on existing all the time so that the population of materialistic people keeps increasing and developing and it dominates the life in this world. This is seen as worrisome. It is as if we are living in the dark and we only have the materialistic values, whereas the spiritual values are just treated as ornaments. In fact, since we are born, we have the potential to achieve all these.

Another work by the artist Ismet Zainal Effendi has the theme of “The Anti-Traditional Paksi Naga Liman”. The media used is Acrylic on Printed-Fabric of 110cm X 185 cm, and it was made in 2018.



Figure 3: The Anti-Traditional Paksi Naga Liman. Ismet Zainal Effendi. Acrylic on Printed-Fabric. 110 X 185 cm, 2018. Source: Researcher Team. 2021.

This work (Figure 3) presents Paksi Naga Liman which is made on *batik* cloth. This work presents a modern society that upholds tradition, the modern way of thinking that is later deconstructed by the traditionalism; the concept of traditional aesthetics that is then presented with modern aesthetics. This is a symbol of the condition of the society at present, who ignores the philosophies of the ancestors and who are against the modern ways of thinking visualized in the pattern of daily life.

Another work is the batik motif that visualizes Paksi Naga Liman carriage which is a gold carriage owned by Keraton Kanoman.



Figure 4: Paksi Naga Liman Motif. Source: Repro Researcher Team. 2021.

Paksi Naga Liman is a gold carriage which has a symbolic value with a religious background. Currently, the carriage is displayed in a museum as an heirloom. Yet, people do not feel they miss this figure because Paksi Naga Liman is duplicated in different media, including the *batik* media.

The figure of Paksi Naga Liman gold carriage is duplicated on *batik* cloth with no perspective. As can be seen in the *batik* painting, Paksi Naga Liman is drawn symmetrically like the *gunungan* (a Javanese word for “mountain”) that are drawn face to face. According to Jakob Sumardjoin *Estetika Paradoks*, the drawing of Paksi Naga Liman in *batik* uses the

composition of three colours, namely black, white, and yellow, which have meanings. Black refers to the colour of the north; white refers to the colour of the east, and yellow refers to the colour of the west, while red is the colour of the south (Sumarjo, 2014). These four colours are universal symbols of directions. In *batik cap* or printed *batik*, the colours used experience changes, for example the inclusion of dark blue and dark brown, which is not in accordance with the traditional colour of the body in Paksi Naga Liman, and the yellow colour for the back, stomach, and wings. The dark blue colour is used on the crown and the trunk holding an arrow. Besides the dark blue colour, dark brown and black lines are also used, which are used in the tail, umbrella, and carving, which all give a strong impression to Paksi Naga Liman figure.

The figure of Paksi Naga Liman is drawn from the side so that the characteristic features are very clear and distinctive, illustrating a dragon, complete with the scales on its body. The elephant’s face and trunk are seen from the side (looking very distinctive); it holds the arrow that is aiming at something, so that the arrow is seen very clearly. The fangs are rotated so that they are seen from the side (looking distinctive). The eyes are seen from the front, while the face is seen from the side; therefore, this part is called multi visible. The wings on the left and right are rotated so that they can be seen from the top; the lines of the wing feathers look expanded as if they were flying.

The carriage wheels are different in size; the rear wheel is bigger than the front wheel, and it has a higher position. The wheels on the other side are moved so that they appear on the other side and look smaller, as if the wheels were moving. The different sizes of the wheels are not because of perspective, but because of movement, just like three Phoenixes flying to the left and right showing movements.

The umbrella with a holder which becomes part of the gold carriage is illustrated as transparent or can be seen through. On the top left of the umbrella there is a big Phoenix which is flying, with the body, face, and legs drawn from the side, but the tail is rotated so that it is facing up in order to show the beauty of the tail.

The way of drawing on Flat Time Space on *batik* is clearly visible and the use of typical looks, various looks, movement, top view, and transparency prove that traditional drawings are still used, despite being on printed *batik*.

The four works of art are interpretation of each artist or designer on the result of acculturation in the

past, specifically in Cirebon, Indonesia. As time goes by, the local wisdom, namely multiculturalism, is regarded to influence the interest of the global culture, artists or designers through Paksi Naga Liman that have produced the process of creating contemporary artworks and competitive designs, through the process of knowledge transfer and the exploration of brilliant ideas, so that the culture does not fade or even extinct. The implementation of traditional cultures that have been worldwide produces a global identity brought up by the traditional idioms. It is expected that the result will be able to promote culture and continuous preservation, and the recognition of professionals in the eyes of the world.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Paksi Naga Liman has given a lot of ideas in the creation process of artists and designers. The study has proven that Paksi Naga Liman is special as it sharpens the creativity of product creators in art and design. The multicultural values contained in Paksi Naga Liman carriage; those with spiritual values, with essence and characteristics, are collected, evaluated, processed, and proven to be implemented as elements in the creation. The findings in this research show that 1) the concept that is brought up deals with the multicultural Paksi Naga Liman, the historical local identity, the essence of the local wisdom, and acculturation, and they become the creative ideas in the process of the work creation, 2) there is a shift of religious values adjusted with the concept brought up by the artists, and adapted with the current situation and condition, as well as the purpose of creating the work itself, 3) the contemporary works of art and designs brought up as the response towards the local genius are artworks and designs with a global value that brings the wealth of Indonesian cultures. Besides, they have a strong message to be conveyed to the public in order that the creation can show the character concept, have innovation in the model, structure, as well as being artworks that have novelty in the process of visualization materials.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our sincere gratitude to Universitas Kristen Maranatha for funding this research, and also for the good cooperation of all the team.

REFERENCES

- Agustina, I. H., Hindersah, H., & Asiyawati, Y. (2017). Identifikasi Simbol-Simbol Heritage Keraton Kasepuhan. *Ethos (Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengabdian)*, 5(2), 167. <https://doi.org/10.29313/ethos.v5i2.2346>
- Cotterel, A., & Storm, R. (2007). The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Mythology. In *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Mythology*.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Penelitian Kualitatif dan Desain Riset* (3rd ed.; S. Z. Qudsy, ed.). Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Deeb, G. M. A. E. (2014). Inventing a Myth: The Medieval Islamic Civilization through Western Perspectives. *International Journal of Language and Literature*, 2(4), 139–177. <https://doi.org/10.15640/ijll.v2n4a9>
- Effendi, I. Z. (2019). Multikulturalisme Imaji Mitos Paksi Naga Liman Pada Seni Rupa Kontemporer. *Journal Of Contemporary Indonesian Art*, V(1), 1–12.
- Effendi, I. Z. (2020). The Symbolic Values Of Mythical Images at Keraton Kasepuhan Cirebon. *Proceeding International Conference 2020: Reposition of The Art and Cultural Heritage After Pandemic Era*, (65), 109–120. Bandung: ISBI.
- Fikriyati, I., & Suardana, I. W. (2020). Paksi Naga Liman Carriage A Multicultural Symbol of Caruban Nagari: Enculturation of Nusantara Arts in Cultural Arts Education. *Conference: 3rd International Conference on Arts and Arts Education (ICAEE 2019)*, 444(Icaee 2019), 208–212. Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200703.042>
- Hall, S. (1977). *Culture, the media and the ideological effect*. London: Arnold.
- Lange, G. (2019). Cobra deities and divine cobras: The ambiguous animality of Nāgas. *Religions*, 10(8). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10080454>
- Lasmiyati. (2013). Keraton Kanoman di Cirebon (Sejarah dan Perkembangannya). *Patanjala : Jurnal Penelitian Sejarah Dan Budaya*, 5(1), 128. <https://doi.org/10.30959/patanjala.v5i1.184>
- Lestari, N. Y., Salura, P., & Fauzy, B. (2021). The basic concept of Baluwarti Cirebon Palace Study case of Kasepuhan , Kanoman , and Kacirebon Palace. *ARTEKS-Jurnal Teknik Arsitektur*, 6(1), 93–104. <https://doi.org/10.30822/arteks.v6i1.626>
- Nuning Damayanti. (2018). Narasi Mitos dan Legenda Indonesia Dalam Ekspresi Batik Tamarin. In *Monochrome Press*.
- Saddhono, K., Widodo, S. T., Al-Makmun, M. T., & Tozu, M. (2014). The study of philosophical meaning of Batik and Kimono motifs to foster collaborative creative industry. *Asian Social Science*, 10(9), 51–61. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v10n9p52>
- Soekarba, S. R. (2018). The Idea of Pluralism in Indonesian Society: A Case Study of Cirebon City as a Cultural Melting Pot. *Journal of Strategic and Global Studies*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.7454/jsgs.v1i1.1004>

- Sofiyawati, N. (2017). Kajian Gaya Hias Singabarong Dan Paksi Naga Liman Dalam Estetika Hibriditas Kereta Kesultanan Cirebon. *Jurnal Sositologi*, 16(3), 303–324. <https://doi.org/10.5614/sostek.itbj.2017.16.3.6>
- Sumarjo, J. (2014). *Estetika Paradoks*. Bandung: Kelir.
- Sumartono. (2017). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif: Seni Rupa*. Jakarta: Universitas Trisakti.
- Tresnadi, C., & Sachari, A. (2015). Identification of Values of Ornaments in Indonesian Batik in Visual Content of Nitiki Game. *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 4(8), 25–39. <https://doi.org/10.18533/journal.v4i8.797>
- Yang, H. (2005). The history and legal position of Confucianism in post-independence Indonesia. *Marburg Journal of Religion*, 10(1), 1–8.
- Yoyon, Y. (2018). Gerakan Islam Kebangsaan Mbah Muqayyim; Kajian Historis Relasi Keraton Kanoman Dan Pesantren Buntet Cirebon. *Mozaik Islam Nusantara*, 4(1), 59–80.
- Yudoseputro, W. (2008). *Jejak-jejak Tradisi bahasa Rupa Indonesia lama* (I, Juli 20). Jakarta: Yayasan Visual Indonesia.
- Yusuf, M. (2017). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan penelitian gabungan (1st ed.)*. ((1st ed.)). Jakarta: Kencana.
- Zakaria, F. (2020). Review of Nur Amali Ibrahim, Improvisational Islam: Indonesian Youth in a Time of Possibility. *Contemporary Islam*, 14(1), 95–98. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-019-00440-z>

