

Reading Signs in Culture: In Depth of the Javanese Cultural Heritage

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Javanese as one of the tribes in Indonesia has various types of symbols. Symbols that exist in the Javanese culture reflect a variety and type according to geographical location. In this study the author discusses the existing various symbols in the Javanese community as a repertoire of local wisdom of the communities. This article argues that conceptually, symbols represent the mind-set of Javanese society. This study is designed by a descriptive-qualitative method using the ethnographic approach, since the object examines the culture and traditions of Javanese society, which theoretically employs Semiotics theory in addition to using the analysis techniques developed by Spradley. Semiotic studies on cultural symbols of Javanese society are summarised in the habits, rituals and lifestyles of the society that reflect their main unit of the ritual context embodied within the religious teachings and ancestors, ethical values, and norms prevailing in society along with each implication. Signs are transmitted through cultural attributes to supporters and communities of Javanese traditions are oriented to be a role model for them from generation to generation so that life is more orderly and harmonious.

Key words: *Javanese, Culture, Rituals, Local Wisdom, Sign, Semiotics.*

Introduction

In everyday life, people may not be separated from signs and symbols. Either signs or symbols can be found in various traditional ceremonies organised by the Javanese community. In order to have a complete understanding of signs in culture, we need to realise how these signs operate scientifically in the semiotics study. A "sign" is understood as an embodied form in human cognition and meaning interpretable to humans (Wilson, 2002). Thought inclined towards "structurally awakened" was proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure. In contrast, Charles Sanders Peirce offers the limit of "sign" as "something that represents

something". Simply put, the "sign" is not a structure as de Saussure understands, *buta* cognitive process derived from something sensed by the five human's senses. Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce, Roland Barthes, Roman Jakobson, Charles Morris & Umberto Eco (Eco, 1979; Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993; Panuti & Zoest, 1996; Chandler, 2002) have agreed on a simple definition. Conceptually semiotics pertains to how signs represent objects, ideas, circumstances, situations, feelings and conditions outside the signs themselves. Littlejohn (2009: p. 53), identical to the concept of logic that focuses on the knowledge of the human thought process (Peirce, in Hurwitz, 1993: p. 4). The clearer understanding and purpose, to understand the phenomenon of sign as semiotics, refers to everything that can be seen or interpreted as a sign. As inspired by Umberto Eco in his book "A Theory of Semiotics" which shows that semiotics deals with everything that can be taken as a sign. Signs are anything that can be taken as a significant substitute for something else (1979: p. 7).

In principle, Semiotics theory aims to know the meanings reflected in a sign or interpret the meaning so it is known how communicators construct a message. The concept of meaning is inseparable from certain ideological perspectives or values as well as cultural concepts into the realm of community thought in which the symbols are created. Cultural codes that are one of the factors of constructing meaning in a symbol become an important aspect to know the construction of messages in the sign. This construct of meaning is established which then becomes the basis of ideological formation in a sign (Stomberg, 1985). As one of the polar studies of thought in cultural studies, semiotics understands how culture becomes the basis of thought of the formation of meaning in a sign. Semiotics studies the systems, rules, and conventions that allow them to produce meaning (Kriyantono, 2007: p. 261). Of course, through various symbols, man can reveal his identity, where and what he did not achieve. The mode of disclosure of these things is mediated by language, myth, art, religion and in other forms (Dilistone, 2002: p. 16). Java as one of the tribes in Indonesia has various types of symbols. Symbols that exist in the Javanese culture have a variety and type according to geographical location. In this case the author discusses the various symbols that exist in the Javanese community as a repertoire of the community's local wisdom. In this article, the author wants to argue that conceptually, the symbols represent the mind-set of Javanese society.

Methodology

The subjects in this study are ethnic Javanese communities supporting the ceremony, tradition and culture of Java and anyone who knows and understands the problems that become the focus of this research. The method of data collection in this study uses documentation and observation studies. This study uses an ethnographic approach, since the object of research in this study examines the culture and traditions of Javanese society; the relevant theory used is Semiotics theory with analysis techniques developed by Spradley

(1980). Some of the data analysis techniques used are: 1) ethnographic analysis that is, searching for parts of a culture and the relationships of the various parts with the whole. In this case the ceremonies practiced in the Javanese tradition did not stand alone and suddenly appeared, but are related to other cultures of Javanese society; 2) domain analysis, a technique for analysing the terms used by the Javanese community about the traditions applicable to the society; 3) component analysis, that is, a systematic search for various attributes (meaning components) connected to cultural symbols; and 4) analysis of cultural themes, the end of all analyses is to find a cultural theme in tradition that reflects certain symbols that are identical in Javanese culture. In this study, researchers used the interpretation theory framework. This theory is an active and inventive process. Interpretation theory generally realises that meaning can mean more than what is explained by the actor(s). Thus, interpretation is a creative act in expressing the possibility of drawing meaning.

Results and Discussion

The field research data generated from this qualitative research is in descriptive data form. This is necessary to seek out the results obtained in the study and used them as a comparison between the findings of the study with theories related to discussion of the study, then the obtained results followed the inductive data analysis. The purpose of this analysis is to compare the findings with the applied theoretical framework.

The Men of Java

In the study of culture Spardley (1997) puts forward, that all human behaviour is full of symbols and usages. Culture itself is the unity of ideas, symbols and values that underlie the work and the human behaviour. It is therefore, not excessive to say that it is so closely related that the culture with symbols created by humans can be called *homo symbolicum* (Aziz, 2004). In its traditions or actions, the Javanese always hold to two things: firstly, to their life view or religious and mystical philosophy of life; and secondly, to their life ethical attitude and upholding their morals or degrees of life. The Javanese worldview always connects everything with a spiritual, mystical and magical God, with respect to the spirits of their ancestors and the unseen forces by human senses, the symbols of unity, strength and nobility are as follows. 1). Symbols associated with the unity of their ancestral spirits such as: offerings, providing flowers, burning incense, providing water, salvation and pilgrimage. 2). Symbols associated with strength, such as: *nenepi*, equipped with *keris*, Javanese dagger, spear, talisman or *kendel sipat*. 3). Symbols related to nobleness, such as guidelines to main inner *Hasta-Sila*, *Asta-Brata*, and *Panca-Kreti* (Herususanto, 1983: p. 87). The people of Java, in living their lives, express their feelings and behaviours by relating them to symbolic things. The habits of the community are often expressed in the form of ceremonies. In the ceremony, the symbolic element plays a role. The use of symbols in the form of culture was

implemented with full awareness, understanding and high appreciation; and adhered to from generation to generation (Abdul, 2012: p. 29-30). In the Dictionary of Logic, the Liang Gie (Herususanto, 1983: p. 11) mentions that symbols are artificial marks that are not tangible words to represent or condense anything in any sense. Of course, the definition of the symbol provided by the Liang Gie is limited to logic, because in symbolic culture it can also be manifested into words.

Javanese Alphabet

Javanese cultural superiority is reflected in the concept of meaning inherited by the ancestors reflected in Javanese letters. Javanese alphabet *ha-na-ca-ra-ka-da-ta-sa-wa-la-pa-dha-ja-ya-nya-ma-ga-ba-tha-nga* is a series of letters that generally consists of a single syllable. Each line has its own meaning, either etymologically, sociologically, cosmologically, religiously or culturally. In this case, the author only briefly describes every meaning of the Javanese script.

හා නා ජා රා කා දා තා සා වා ලා
ha na ca ra ka da ta sa wa la
පා දා ජා යා න්‍යා මා ගා බා තා ආ
pa dha ja ya nya ma ga ba tha nga

Da-Ta-Sa-Wa-La symbolically defined as human life is a provision that has a time limit. All living things will experience death, not eternal, including humans. Therefore, man cannot stand or dodge from the will and the destiny of God. With all its advantages and disadvantages, man must always be willing to accept, implement the life purpose or the certainty of God's decisions to the human destiny. However, since no man knows what his fate is, he is obliged to do his best and to do his utmost to fulfil the good destiny of God and then surrender everything to the will of God. *Pa-Dha-Ja-Ya- Nya* means to unify the giver of life (*Khalik* - God) with the given life (*makhluk* - creature). This phrase can also mean the unification of words and deeds, in harmony with expressions and actions that make humans appreciated as honest and credible human beings. In the Javanese language, *Padha* means: the same, according to, to grow, to be compatible, to manifest itself, and to be reflected in deeds based on nobleness and virtue. With this kind of attitude, people undergo the principle inherited by the temperatures that will achieve victory *ke-jaya-* an. *Jaya* means winning in the real sense, not just looking for victory. *Ma-Ga-Ba-Tha-Nga* means *taqwa* 'piety', trying to do everything that God has commanded and to do everything possible to know what God forbids, the God who gives life and livelihood. Man must surrender-sumarah on the natural line, even though human beings are given the right to emulate, trying to overcome it. However, there is a line of God's unchangeable provisions: birth and death. Both cannot be avoided by any human, regardless of social status, rank, position or wealth (c.f. Dumadi, 2011: p. 19-20).

Wayang (Puppet Shadow)

The meaning of Wayang in various literatures is associated with the concept of shadows and images. The pre-historic period (before the Hindus), the Javanese ancestral life view was still very simple at the time. They were always overcome by the desire to know the ins and outs of all the problems that surrounded them. They believed that the dead spirits are considered still living in the surrounding area. The spirits of the dead are seen as strong protectors. That is, it can provide protection to the living people or their descendants. The presence of the deceased spirit is expected to provide assistance or blessing to the generations that came after them (Mulyono, 1979: p. 53-54). With this event the person feels assured of the continuation of good fortune, happiness and prosperity in the future. It is these expectations that drive people to produce Wayang, in which one can imagine or make the shadow of dead spirits. The image or painting of the form of the imagined spirits is not a realistic image of the ancestors but a dim or pseudo-shaped form. The image of the shadow is inspired by the shadows that are seen around it every day in the morning. The game to show the shadows was then a principle and became common to everyone connected with ancestral spirits (Mulyono, 1979: p. 54). Wayang describes humans, animals, and giants as strong, fine funny figures. Every puppet character has a variety of *wanda*. Wanda is a portrayal of character that expresses certain feelings and circumstances. Each character can have 4, 5 or even 12 *wanda* which each has different feelings and circumstances. This is seen from: the head, body, curve of the eyes and mouth, the distance between the eyes and the mouth, and the colours used. Wayang puppet performances are held in various family and social events to maintain welfare and safety, for example: five year old baby, circumcision, marriage and birthday. Also staged in traditional ceremonies in connection with religious *kebatinan*, such as *Ruwatan*, awakening and clean village (Sedyawati, 2002: p. 50-53).

Leadership Symbols in Javanese Society

In Javanese philosophy, a good leader is regarded as the incarnation of God. The issue of leadership in Javanese society has always been associated with ideal values oriented to the supernatural world. The chosen leader is the one who gets the *pulung/ndaru* or the revelation *keprabon* that alights within him so that he is able to become an intermediary of the world and the occult world, the divine world. Therefore, a good leader is someone who is able to translate the values of justice in the praxis of life, not just nonsense in front of the congregation or in front of the masses to campaign (Dumadi, 2011: p. 1-4; Magi, 1995). The signs for the ruling class that are not the people's choice are those who do not have the character of the true leader mentioned in Javanese philosophy as *Astabratha*. The concept of *Astabratha* requires fair dealing without any favour. In detail, this concept breaks down in eight (*asta*) characters:

- a) The character of the earth is a symbol of the generosity of a leader who always helps others, selflessly providing whatever is needed for the people living under their shade.
- b) Fire is a symbol of energy and power, not a material being. The spirit of fire that must be owned by the leader is in the form of ability or courage to burn or eliminate things that hamper the dynamics of life of nation and state.
- c) Water or *banyu* is a character that describes that the leader must always flow dynamic and has a low character *hatu, andhap asor* that's polite and not arrogant.
- d) The character of wind or air, the character that gives the people the right to live. That is, a leader notices prosperity for the community he leads.
- e) Surya or sun is a symbol that the leader must be able to be the light of life as well as be the energy giver to the life of society.
- f) Moon/*candra*. The moon has a reassuring tenderness, and then a wise leader always gives a sense of serenity and becomes a ray in the darkness.
- g) Star or *Kartika*. The idea of star is a symbol of a guide for travellers and fishermen in the middle of a vast ocean. Leaders must be able to be an orientation and role model as well as being able to explore the people's feelings.
- h) Sky or space. With this character leaders must have the breadth of hearts, feelings and thoughts in dealing with the various problems of the nation and state.

Tarub

Tarub literally means "buildings" which are specially built in and around the house of a person who has an obligation to hold a marriage event or *ngunduh* bride. Outwardly, *tarub* is an additional building or room for seats of invited guests and other necessities. Inwardly, *tarub* has a symbolic meaning. When making *tarub* there are special requirements and each requirement contains a religious meaning. This special requirement is called *srana* and *tarub* offerings with the main theme so that during the ceremony of *selametan* - salvation, to obtain God's grace, blessings and safety as well as welfare without any obstacles (Bratawidjaja, 1988: p. 115-116).

The basic means of *tarub* is called *tuwuhan*. The residing meaning was aimed to develop in all fields for the bride. *Tuwuhan* consists of:

- (a) A pair of fruitful banana trees, meaning that to mature later becomes a good leader for the family/environment/nation. Like a banana tree can grow and live anywhere, it is expected that both brides can live and adjust in any environment and succeed (fruitful).
- (b). A pair of Sugar Cane *Wulung*. Sugar Cane: *anteping kalbu*: unanimous determination. *Wulung*: smooth *matang* meaning: from the bride is expected that everything that has been thoughtfully done and carried out with a determination of a round, abstinence backward (*mulat sarira hangrasawani*).

(c). Two young ivory coconut trees, ivory coconut: coconut with a yellow skin. Meaning *kencengin piker* - tightening thought, willpower. The bride is expected to have a strong will to achieve the purpose of life.

(d). The leaves of *ringin maja* leaf, *koro* leaf, and *hong* leaf, *alang-alang* leaf and leaf of anything, meaning it is expected that the bride is like a banyan tree, become *pengayom* its environment, and so all can walk safely *sentosa* inward (*aja ana sekoro-koro kalis alangan sawiji apa*).

Punakawan

Puna or *Pana* in Javanese terminology means to understand, bright, clear, careful, understanding and clever, in observing the meaning of the nature behind the events of nature and events in human life; while *kawan* means *pamong* or friends. Thus, *Punakawan* fundamentally reflects a meaning that describes someone who becomes a friend, who has ability to observe, analyse and digest all phenomena and events of nature and events in human life (Kresna, 2012: p. 28). Javanese cultural treasures refer to *Punakawan* as “*tanggap ing sasmita, lan limpat pasang ing grahita*”. The term *Punakawan* is actually found in wayang. Wayang puppets who are known to have the nature of *punakawan* are Lurah Semar. In essence Semar is a demigod who is in charge of care taking *momong* the true knights. Ki Semar is a true teacher *sukma sejati*. The true teacher is the ultimate essence of the human body. What the true teacher says is God's will. The knights cared for by Semar will be fortunate as the country becomes prosperous, *gemah ripah*, cheap food clothing, serene, always avoiding calamity (Kresna, 2012: p. 29). Currently the term *punakawan* not only stays in the story puppet. *Punakawan* has become one of the symbols for the Javanese. *Punakawan* is a symbol of humility and the wisdom-bearer of Semar.

Gunungan

In the Javanese puppet universe there are known to be two kinds of mountains, that is, *gunungan gapuran* and *gunungan blumbangan*. Although both are used in the puppet, the form of mountains commonly known is the *gunungan gapuran* a more taper and slender mountain than *gunungan blumbangan*. *Gunungan* statue was originally created by the artist Kasunanan court on the orders of the glorious Sri Susuhunan Paku Buwana II in 1737 AD or 1659 according to the Javanese calendar. The distinctiveness of this typical *gunungan* is the image of the *gapura* - gate in it, as the background of the gate, more precisely what lies on the gate as there is a picture of a bull and a tiger on it. Both animals represent a confrontation between good and bad in the universe. In addition to the tiger and the bull, in the *gunungan* there are two giants armed with a mace and a shield flanking the gate on the left and right (Figure a and b). In Wayang, *gunungan* is termed as *kayon* derived from the word *kayun*. The word *kayun* (Arabic - *hayyun*) itself means life. This is in accordance with the function

of *gunungan* in the Javanese puppet universe. In Wayang, *gunungan* is used to open a certain play. Usually, if the Wayang or play has not been played, the *gunungan* is plugged in the middle of the layer *warna* and its position is slightly inclined to the right. Each play in the Wayang reflects the teachings of life wisdom. Thus, the *gunungan* also becomes the entrance into a teaching of wisdom. Because of that, it is hoped that Wayang is not just a spectacle that is simply performed and entertained, but everyone who watches it is expected to get a teaching about life, about wisdom, which is finally practiced in everyday life (Tim R., 2013: p. 9-10).



a) Puppet Shadow Show (*wayang kulit*)



b) *Gunungan*

Discussion

In terms of reading signs, reading in this category cannot be naively simplified as reading skills in language teaching. This is because when referring to teaching reading then reading means translating, “every reading is misreading, a map of misreading”, which can only be understood at the level of the hermeneutical framework (Palmer, 1969: p. 13-29), receptive (Iser, 1967) or constructionist (Hall, 1997: p. 6).

Symbols are something used by a group of people to indicate something else based on a collective agreement. Symbols include words (verbal messages), nonverbal behaviours and objects whose meaning is agreed upon (Mulyana, 2007: p. 27). Symbols can refer to circumstances that are intermediaries for understanding the objects (Harusatoto, 2008: p. 18). The realisation of a symbol is the union of two things into one. Related to symbols and symbolisation there are two kinds of opinions or thoughts. On the one hand there are those who see the symbol as something immanent, what means it is in the horizontal dimension. On the other hand there is a perspective which argues that symbol is a transcendent phenomenon, in which to be able to derive a meaning people will engage in a debate or discussion. Thus according to this view, the symbol is not only horizontal-immanent, but also transcendent; so that it is horizontal and vertical, the symbol is metaphysical as well (Daeng, 2000: p. 82).



Literally, semiotic of communication has been going on for quite a long time in the history of Javanese society, as the terms *othak-athik* - seeking and *gathuk*- matching, roughly sorting things out to fit, and are similar to Barthes' semiotic application to contemporary pop culture in the current time. This is of course before Saussure or Barthes applied the science of semiotics, the ancient Javanese community turned out to have practiced this method. There are two signs produced by humans in communicating, they are verbal and nonverbal signs. Verbal signs are signs that are used as a media of communication produced by the speech tool, including the writing form. Nonverbal signs are the signs produced through nonverbal communication. According to Ruesch & Kees (in Rivera, 2018), the nonverbal world is divided into three namely; sign language, motion language and object language. This is similarly to Javanese alphabet characters which consist of 20 syllables divided into 4 parts. Each part has real meaning implying four levels of the universe, all of which are not limited to human beings on this earth.

We might wish to understand how the relationship between culture and communication might reflect a reciprocal relationship. The first relationship shows that culture determines communication behaviour and the second, without communication, each culture can mean nothing communication process from which enable them to produce symbolic codes that are normally carried out by human beings in behavioural form. The symbolic behavioural form in human communication engages a lot of objects which have the nature of cultural significance. Cultural symbols in a number of societies reflect an important role in the process of interaction and communication between humans.

Every culture places language as a medium for expressing its principles of teaching, values and cultural wisdom regarding the life of the bearers. Language translates values, norms, human cognitive schemes, perceptions, attitudes and beliefs about the world of the bearers. Leading to these findings, both symbols and culture cannot be separated for these two distinguished things are interrelated. These symbols must be interpreted in a complete Javanese culture. Without efforts to understand the deep and sublime meanings behind these symbols, the existing traditions and ceremonies will only become a ceremonial activity or a mere art performance.

There are essentially four things underlying the knowledge of sign in the science of sign, or Semiotics namely: type of sign (icon and symbol); type of sign system (language, music or body movement); and the type of both texts and contexts or situations affecting the sign meaning (psychological, social, historical and cultural conditions) (Hoed, 2001). Each of these signs has meaning, and that meaning is produced from concepts in the mind of a giver of meaning through text. In culture the sign is represented in the form of cultural products, both in the tangible and intangible. The produced forms and meanings of sign, is therefore, socially conventional and has gone through a process of agreement. That is what Danesi &

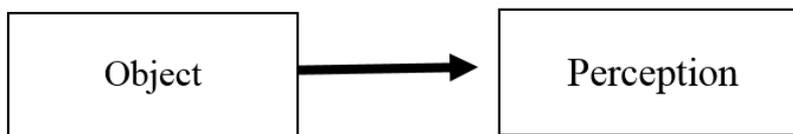
Peron (1999) thought about culture in semiotic understanding: that it is “interconnected system of daily living that is held together by the signifying order (signs, codes, texts)”.

The Javanese Perception towards Signs and the Relevant Theory

There are several theories that discuss people's perceptions, which in this case refers to the Javanese mind-set of their cultural environment concerning the signs, symbols and spatial found in the ritual environment and community trust; some relevant fundamental theories referring to the phenomena previously described above are Gestalt theories, Ecological perception of the environment Brunswik's model and Transactional theory of perception.

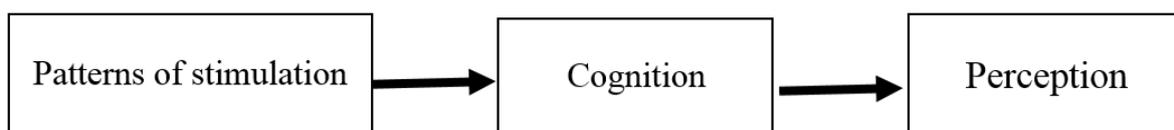
Gestalt's theory (Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Kohler & Kurt Koffka, Bell, 2001: p. 62) is influenced by architectural thinking and is based on the assumption that humans read the meaning of forms or melodies into perceptions beyond the number of individual sensations so that humans see objects (signs, symbols, spatial, etc.) as a unit and are unable to distinguish between parts. The weakness of this theory is that in terms of time and repeated observations, if one uses a longer period of time in recording objects, the longer it is observed that the more likely one sees parts and the more one is able to distinguish them, especially if the observations are repeated. Furthermore, the Gestalt theory can be understood as in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Process of Perception according to the Gestalt's Theory (Bell, 2001: 62)



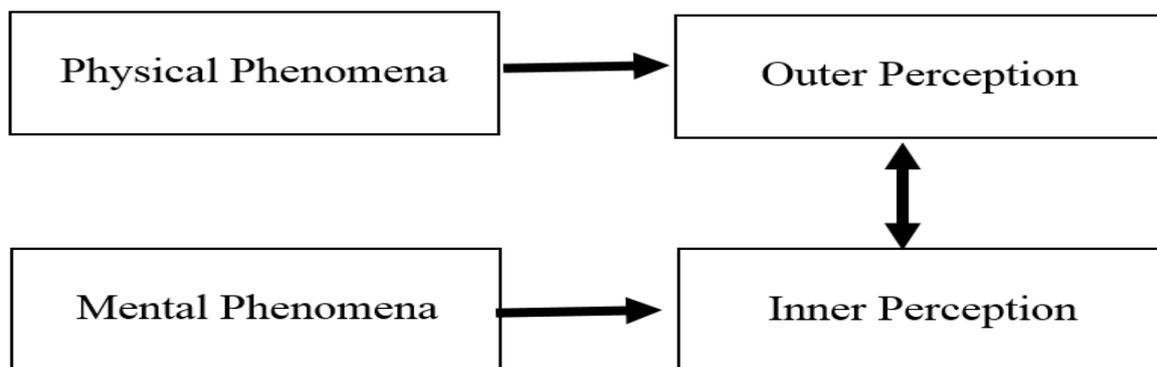
The Ecological perception theory proposed by Gibson (Bell, 2001: p. 65) emphasises the need for a comprehensive and directed perception approach so that stimulation patterns (in this case can be signs, symbols or other) give the perceiver (the person who feels it, sees it) information as soon as possible about an environment including the character of an object or place through little effort or cognitive activity, as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: The Process of Perception Occurrence according to the Ecological Perception Theory (Bell.2001: p. 65)



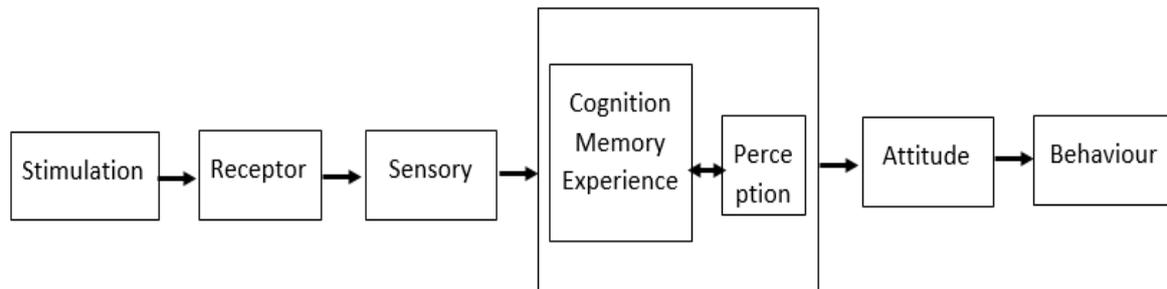
Brentano (Holl, 1991: p. 42) divides human perception into two namely: outer perception and inner perception. Physical phenomena use human outer perception when mental phenomena involve human inner perception. This mental phenomenon is real and intentional. Empirically maybe humans are satisfied by a structure such as the original physical spatial entity but intellectually and spiritually humans need an understanding of the motivation behind them. The duality of intentions and phenomena is like the interplay between objectivity and subjectivity or simply between thoughts and feelings. The challenge of reading signs in culture in this aspect is to stimulate both inner and outer perceptions to enhance phenomenal experience when expressing meaning simultaneously and building this duality in response to site characteristics and the environment. Hierarchically, the process of perception occurrence according to Brentano is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: The Process of Perception Occurrence according to Brentano's model (Holl.1991: p. 42)



Brunswik's Lens Model by Egon Brunswik (Bell, 2001: p. 63) argues that environmental stimuli are focused through our perceptual efforts. This effort is influenced by setting attributes or background attributes possessed by the observer then recording distal cues or signals that can be captured remotely and then sorting out the objective characteristics of the environment and existing differences. This is known as proximal cues or signals that can closely captured in acclimating perceptions (ecological validity). These signals are then consecutively combined and processed so that there is cue utilisation or use of signals by individuals in making perceptual decisions on existing preferences or choices, the process takes place and returns to the beginning, so after there is acceptance, the information will be the background attributes of the objects they see in the future etc.

Figure 4: The schema of Perception Occurrence Process



The process of the occurrence of perceptions according to Transactional theory is described as in Figure 4. In general the above theories use different terms of naming in explaining the process of perception, but if understood further, it will be found that the meanings are similar; the basic difference lies in the details from the stages of perception. The last theory is a combination of aforementioned theories, it can be concluded that the process of occurrence or formation of perceptions can be seen in the scheme in Figure 4.

The tradition environment is full of potential symbolic meanings for those who see it. Recognition of these meanings, consciously or unconsciously contributes to the feelings of these people about the environment and culture, especially about themselves. However not only that factor, the identification of symbolic meanings in cultural environments such as *tarub*, *wayang* or puppets, and the alphabet system for example, is an important way to achieve ownership of a group of people or somewhere (Cooper, Rapoport, Rykwert Lang , 1987: p. 203).

Differences in the categorisation of meanings on cultural objects and perceptions covering them have long been introduced by Gibson (1950) and Hershberger (1974). They all suggested that some environmental meanings (in this case referred to as cultural objects) as a necessity by using potential instruments and other necessities to use emotional quality, where an observer or user can read it. According to Gibson (Lang, 1987: p. 204), there is something rather confusing about the nature of symbolic meaning when compared to other levels of meaning. The term image, sign or symbol is often used in exchange. Here, image is an imitation, reproduction or a comparison of something. For example the image of the St. Peter church is an image of St. Peter and nothing more, if the image of the church means Rome or the holy Catholic Church means that the image was a symbol.

A symbol is the result of a cognition process; which means an object gets a connotation (additional understanding) beyond its usefulness. Object in this sense can be an environment, person or an artefact material. This meaning is based on whether an observer is connected to the object (Kepes, 1966). Apart from this, this meaning may be the result of psychological

association; a social convention may even be a coincidence (Burchard & Brown, 1966). A sign is the result of a convention or medium to show something more literally when compared to an abstract sense.

The process of stimulus and response (reaction) in Figure 4 generally explains why there is confusion related to interpreting cultural symbols, especially those in Javanese society, for example: some of the same variables in the *tarub* on the structure of Javanese people may differ in meaning to the community in other places; let's say, the Minang tribe community in Sumatra in the frame of Indonesianness. In a homogeneous society, there is a possibility of general agreement about the symbolism of specific building styles or specific decorations. When experience and values are different it will cause differences in meaning caused by the same pattern, therefore, design theory requires this recognition because symbolic meaning helps a number of people convey the purpose and it is important for them in a number of ways, including buildings and space as a medium to convey intent. The same thing was emphasised by Lang (1987: p. 205) that human beings are symbol mongers, which means humans are sellers/merchant of symbols. One way people communicate with each other is through symbols, i.e., symbolic meaning of furniture, building layout, style and landscape design, as a nonverbal mechanism that people use to communicate messages about themselves, their background, their social status and worldviews (Beinart 1975; Rapoport 1982).

Conclusion

Each culture has its own characteristics, so to the Javanese people and its culture. Javanese culture with all its uniqueness has a very deep meaning. The meaning can be known through gestures, signs and symbols. Semiotic studies of the cultural symbols of Javanese society are summarised in the habits, rituals and lifestyles of society that reflect the main unit of the ritual context embodied through religious teachings and ancestral messages, ethical values, and norms prevailing in society along with the implications. Signs are transmitted through cultural attributes to communities of Javanese traditions are oriented to be a role model for them from generations to generation so that life is more orderly and harmonious. Both symbols and culture cannot be separated, since these two distinguished things are interrelated with each other. Theoretically, the process of both stimulus and response (reaction) in an attempt the reading signs in culture generally explains why there is confusion related to interpreting cultural symbols, especially those in Javanese society, for example: some of the same variables in the *tarub* on the structure of Javanese people may differ in meaning to the community in other places; let's say, the Minang tribe community in Sumatra in the frame of Indonesianness. In a homogeneous society, there is a possibility of general agreement about the symbolism of specific building styles or specific decorations. When experience and values are different it will cause differences in meaning caused by the same pattern, therefore,



design theory requires this recognition because symbolic meaning helps a number of people convey the purpose and it is important for them in a number of ways, including buildings and space as a medium to convey intent. This would finally argue that the existing symbols must be interpreted in a complete Javanese culture.

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