

The Aesthetic Transformation of Traditional Ceramic Sculpture as the Empowerment of Desa Wisata Gerabah Sitiwinangun in Cirebon

Deni Yana¹, Gustiyan Rachmadi²

Institut Seni Budaya Indonesia (ISBI) Bandung

Abstract

Sitiwinangun is a ceramic village located in Cirebon. It has been proclaimed as a tourism village since 2018 by the Sultan of Cirebon. Since then, the visit to this village keeps increasing. Some of the traditional ceramic sculptures from this ceramic centre are statues of “Paksinagaliman”, “Singabarong”, “Macan Ali”, “Burok”, “Jatayu”, “Garuda Mungkur” and “Gajah Mungkur”. The study is an art-based research focusing on developing the traditional ceramic sculptures into modern ceramic products. The method applied is *ATUMICS* that is regarding *Artefact, Technic, Utility, Material, Icon, Concept, Shape*. The process is through some phases, they are identification, analysis, design development, design application, mock up creation and, product exhibition. The result produces ceramic sculptures into various forms and functions adjusted to the consumers’ needs.

Keywords: ceramic sculptures, traditional statues, Sitiwinangun tourism village, tradition

A. Introduction

Sitiwinangun village is the largest ceramic craft center in Cirebon Regency, located in Jamblang District. However, the number of Sitiwinangun ceramics artisans has been continuously decreasing. Based on the data from the village official in 2018, the number of Sitiwinangun ceramic crafters is only around 73 people, in which mostly are elderly. This condition is worrying since Sitiwinangun ceramic handicraft is a

cultural asset to accommodate the workforce and improve the economy of its people.



Fig. 1. Sitiwinangun Traditional Ceramic Statues
(Doc: Deni Yana, 2015)

Sitiwinangun ceramic handicraft center was proclaimed as a tourism village in 2018. Since then, the number of consumers and tourists visit the center keep increasing. This has a positive impact on the existence of Sitiwinangun's ceramics center to rise and develop. However, Kadmiya, the managing artisans of the center, cannot catch up the demands. Some of their ceramic products cannot meet the needs and aesthetic tastes of today's consumers. One of their characteristic products is in the form of traditional ceramic sculptures displaying Cirebon regional mythology such as Paksinagaliman statue.

The main problem of Sitiwinangun ceramic handicraft products, especially traditional ceramic sculptures is how to display the form, function and appearance of new Sitiwinangun ceramics. The products should still depict and bear strong local identity so that they will strengthen Sitiwinangun ceramics centers as a tourism village. The village wish to be able to improve the added value, community interest and appreciation to

the products. The development and diversification of traditional ceramic sculptures into innovative and modern ceramic products depicting the local identity which meet the consumers' needs become the target of the village. The research conducted in this village is as the effort of the researcher as the academician to help the village improving their ceramic products.

B. Methodology

The method used in this study is an aesthetic morphology and the ATUMICS method. Aesthetic morphological methods (Munro, 1970: 6) are methods for understanding shapes and styles as well as technical changes between sections in art. The study of forms starts from observing the entire composition of the objects. First regarding the elements, details, parts, material, images, ideas or other forming elements. Second, regarding the way of each element is connected and combined to form the structure of the product.

To form the structure of new products, the researcher applies ATUMICS method (Nugraha, 2012: 175). This is a method used in the effort to transform traditional artifacts into modern artifacts through the preparation, combination, integration or merging of elements. ATUMIC is an abbreviation of Artifact, Technique, Utility, Material, Icon, Concept, Shape. The stages of the implementation of its activities are as follows: identification, analysis, development of sketches/designs, design applications, creation of mock ups, exhibitions of works / products.

C. Result and Discussion

The phases of identification are conducted through survey and initial coordination with the artisan's center. This enables the researchers to discuss the issue of the Sitiwinangun ceramic myth statue, to analyze the

market potential and the type of Sitiwinangun ceramic myth sculpture to be developed. This type of ceramic myth sculpture is a reference in the process of developing sketches or designs at a later stage.



Fig. 2. Observation of the research team in Sitiwinangun village.
(Doc: Deni Yana, 2019)

The identification process through surveys and interviews shows the problems of the center that is the number of the sculpture artisans is very limited; there are only three senior craftsmen namely: Miskadna, Sunara and Asnami. Their successors were only five young artisans namely: Sija, Yandi, Misnadi and Kadmiya from among 73 crafters in the center. Visually and aesthetically, the statue of myth does not suit the tastes and needs of the current consumer community. Therefore, it needs to be adapted in the process of creation and innovation. The artisans skill of innovation is quite low since they only fixated on the types and shapes of existing sculptures. They have not yet found the right method in creating and innovating to create new types of mythical sculpture products.

The segment of mythical statue of Sitiwinangun ceramic is very limited. The products attract only collectors and traditional pottery lovers whose numbers are very small so that the sales volume is very low with quite a long tempo. Developing types of mythical sculpture products with various forms and functions is an extraordinary potential because the market segment can be wider. The classic myth sculpture is maintained

while continuing to improve its quality in technical aspects of production and aesthetics so that it can have a higher selling value. Some types of ceramic myths in Sitiwinangun ceramic center are as follows: Paksinagaliman, Tiger Ali, Singabarong, Burok, Jatayu, Garuda Mungkur and Gajah Mungkur. In general, traditional mythical sculptures are in the classical style and tend to be decorative. In terms of traditional mythical form of dragon, Garuda and Elephant are in large size (length and width above 50 cm, weight more than 10 kg). The techniques are used in the process of formation with handbuilding techniques, decoration techniques nicks and paste without coloring (natural), and low temperature combustion (below 900°C).

1. Developing the Sketch / Designing

The phase of designing can be conducted after going through the analysis stage. The design process is based on the development of artifacts, techniques, functions / utilities, materials, icons, concepts and forms regarding with ATUMICS theory.



Fig. 3. Sketch / Design of Sitiwinangun myth ceramic sculpture
(Doc: Deni Yana, 2019)

2. Design Application

In the process of applying sketch or design, it takes quite a long time because it has to go through a process of discussion, socialization and execution. In the process of applications, it is not easy for artisans in Sitiwinangun ceramic craft center to make some changes to the objects they have been working on for years, especially on a different scale than usual. However, having their awareness for improving their product, they are very open to accept new creations and innovations. In other words, they need more time and difficulties to change even though they are no longer bound to the grip in accordance with the previous Sitiwinangun community's beliefs.



Fig. 4. Applying sketch/design in Sitiwinangun ceramic craft center
(Doc: Deni Yana, 2019)

Different from the ceramic artisans in the center who are good at their technical skillfull, academics who are in this case represented by the research team and their students are more insightful in the development of science and technology and their artistic sensitivity. Therefore, the work they produce can stimulate creativity and innovation.

3. Creating Model (*Mock Up*)

The process of creating the model (mock up) is not only done at Sitiwinangun ceramic handicraft center, but also at Plered ceramic craft center of Purwakarta Regency and Tierra Hejo Ceramic Studio in Parongpong, West Bandung Regency. This is done in order to seek enrichment in the product development process to be more varied both technically and aesthetically.

Sitiwinangun's ceramic craft center uses earthenware's low temperature clay raw material. To reduce shrinkage and to be more resistant to thermal shock, the clay is usually mixed with fine sand in the preparation process. Open firing and stove furnace techniques burn very fast with a tempo of about 1.5 hours, using wood straw, bamboo, wood and used tires as fuel. The maximum temperature that can be reached is only about 850 s.d. 900° C. Formation techniques are still using traditional techniques, namely paddle anvil using hand rotation and direct hand formation without using tools (handbuilding). Decoration techniques using nicks, sticks and filigree techniques, with Cirebon unique motifs such as *Mega Mendung*, are very prominent in Sitiwinangun besides traditional ceramic sculptures which embody the myths of Cirebon people such as Paksinagaliman, Macan Ali, Singa Barong, Buroq, Jatayu, Garuda Mungkur and Gajah Mungkur. The coloring technique uses natural soil dyes (Engobe) so that the burnt product is brick-colored doff / dull so that it is natural.

In the phase of making a model (mock up) of products with the theme of the mythical statue of Cirebon, the ceramic artisans at Sitiwinangun ceramics center use materials, forming techniques, decorations and combustion as they normally do everyday. The difference is that the statue they made smaller in size, namely the length, width and height of only

around 10 s.d. 30 cm and the shape is more dynamic, some have a use function other than ornamental and cute.



Fig. 5. Model (*Mock up*) created in Sitiwinangun.
(Doc: Deni Yana, 2019)

The final result in the process of creating *mock up* is the ceramic product in the theme of mythical Cirebon ceramic sculpture which can be seen as follows:



“Paksinagaliman”



“Paksinagaliman”



“Buroq”

Fig. 6. *Mock up* ceramic products of mythical Cirebon sculptures
created by Sitiwinangun artisans
(Doc: Deni Yana, 2019)

Plered is the largest ceramic craft center in West Java Province. Plered Ceramics have been very famous since long time ago. Its products are very diverse ranging from functional, ornamental and ceramic art objects. The clay used is a type of earthenware soil that is burned using a tub and bottle furnace with a duration of about 15 hours with firewood as fuel. Plered ceramics are optimum at 900 °C. Its formation, decoration and

combustion techniques are semi-modern. The most striking thing about Plered compared to other ceramics craft centers in Indonesia is the use of paint as a coloring and texture of ceramics that is already well known so that it has successfully entered the export market. Other ceramics centers including Kasongan often conduct comparative studies to Plered to study ceramic coloring techniques using paint. This is the main reason for choosing Plered as a mock-up for this research in order to get comparative materials in the product development process at the Sitiwinangun ceramic handicraft center.



Fig. 7. Examples of mock up the making process in Plered.
(Doc: Deni Yana, 2019)

The results of the model making process (mock up) at Plered ceramic craft center with the same design and clay turned out to produce different products. Both the shape and color decoration are very different, although they still show their original identity. The colors applied are bright colors according to the exuberant theme in 2019/2020 Trend Forecasting. The few models (mock ups) made at Plered ceramic craft center can be seen in the following figure:



Fig. 8. *Mock up* of ceramic of Cirebon mythical sculptures created by Plered artisans (Doc: Deni Yana, 2019)

Tierra Hejo ceramics studio is one of the modern ceramic studios in Bandung area. Its products are in the form of souvenirs in a variety of ceramic materials. The clay used is stoneware clay with a fuel temperature of 1250 °C. The combustion process is using a gas furnace with LPG fuel. The colors used are Engobe and glaze. In order to pursue the quantity of the product, the technique used is a cast casting (slip casting) using a mold made from Gypsum. In making the model (mock up) this research used Sitiwinangun Earthenware clay mixed with Kaolin in a ratio of 1: 1 and burned at temperatures 1200°C. The resulting ceramic product is a high temperature ceramic with engobe dyes and dark colored glaze. The forms are more expressive with anatomy that is not so detailed but memorable and cute. The products can be seen as follows:



Fig. 10. *Mock up* of ceramic of Cirebon mythical sculptures in Tierra Hejo Ceramic Studio. (Doc: Deni Yana, 2019)

Based on the creation of model (*mock up*) in the three location in this research, it can be seen the difference in the following table.

NO	LOKASI TEMA	SITIWINGUN					PLERED					TIERRA HEJO					KET					
		A	T	U	M	I	C	S	A	T	U	M	I	C	S	A		T	U	M	I	C
1.	Paksinagaliman	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	
2.	Macan Ali	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	
3.	Singa Barong	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	
4.	Buroq	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	
5.	Jatayu	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	
6.	Garuda Mungkur	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	
7.	Gajah Mungkur	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	

Note : Red = old/no difference

Green = new / changes

Table 1. the comparison of the resulting product in Sitiwinangun, Plered and Tierra Hejo.

D. Conclusion

The decline in interest and appreciation of the consumer community for Sitiwinangun ceramic myth sculpture products is due to several problems. Among other things are the small number of mythical sculpture crafters so that they are less competitive, the lacking enthusiasm in creating and innovating, and they have not yet found the right method for developing the products.

The efforts conducted in this research in overcoming problems through the ATUMICS method are developing products based on the mythical statue of Cirebon (Paksinagaliman, Tiger Ali, Singabarong, Burok, Jatayu Statue, Garuda Mungkur and Gajah Mungkur). The development covers the effects of developing artifacts, techniques, functions, materials, materials, icons, concepts, and shapes. The development that can be done in Sitiwinangun ceramic handicraft center can only be done on the aspects of the form, function and concept of the

product, while artifacts, techniques, materials, and icons still remain. This happens because Sitiwinangun ceramic artisans still have the characteristics of traditional society. They are worried to change so that the products produced so far tend to be monotonous and boring even though the local identity is very strong. The potential of Sitiwinangun ceramic myth sculpture is huge when it is developed into a variety of new products. The new creations can make consumers become more diverse from collectors who can buy mythical sculpture at high prices to visitors to the Sitiwinangun Ceramic Center as a Tourism Village at an affordable price in the form of functional objects, ornamental objects, and souvenirs.

The location of the product development in this research is not only conducted in Sitiwinangun ceramic handicraft center but also in Plered ceramic handicraft center and Tierra Hejo Ceramic Studio. As a center of ceramic crafts, Plered has been very established and has advantages in the aspect of paint coloring and product diversification for local and foreign markets. Therefore, Plered products are more diverse in both functional, decorative and ceramic art objects.

In this study, the same design, technique and material as Sitiwinangun turned out to produce different products in Plered. The resulting product is more dynamically in shape and more colorful with bright paint colors according to the exuberant theme in Trend Forcating 2019/2020. While the research product developed in Tierra Hejo Ceramic Studio is trying to develop the Cirebon myth sculpture with formation techniques for mass products, glaze coloring and combustion at higher temperatures even though the basic material comes from Sitiwinangun clay. The result turns out that Sitiwinangun ceramics can be burned at a high temperature (1200°C) with the composition of Sitiwinangun clay

mixed with Kaolin in a ratio of 1:1. Formation using a cast molding technique (Slip Casting) and coloring using Engobe and glaze.

Based on the research activity, it can be concluded that ceramic crafts can be developed in aspects of quality, shape, function and coloring. Eventhough the material, techniques, and icons remain they can still become products that can compete with their strong local identity. Specifically, for the Sitiwinangun ceramic handicraft center, all the research products that have been completed in Plered ceramic craft center and in Tierra Hejo Ceramic Studio may be strengthened for developing the center as a tourist destination. In the future, it can be seen that the visitors of Sitiwinangun ceramic center will be very heterogeneous both in the aesthetic tastes and needs. Therefore, the products offered must be more varied, unique and have a local uniqueness as the identity of Sitiwinangun as a tourism village.

Acknowledgment

This research can be completed based on the research funding of DIPA ISBI Bandung 2019. My gratitude for ISBI Bandung and LPPM ISBI Bandung for all supports. Last but not least also my thanks for alls participants in this research.

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