Artistic Transformation of Malang Mask Puppet: From a Stage to another
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Abstract: Research examines the artistic transformation on the variant of presentation functions of Kedungmangga Village’s Mask Puppet. This variant has an implication to “the stage” where presentation takes a place, and by this reason, presentation area has always a symbolical meaning. Research type is qualitative involving structural functional perspective and A-G-I-L Theory. This research utilizes data of explanations, words and behaviors of the presenting artists. Interpretative analysis is used to understand social change experienced by Mask Puppet conserver societies in Kedungmangga Village, Pakisaji District, Malang Regency, and East Java. Result of research indicates that different event needs different arrangement of stage, such as: (a) Altar stage for gebyak suguh pondhen, (b) Genjot stage for gebyak tolok balak, (c) Latar stage for gebyak ngamen and tanggapan, and (d) No stage for gebyak festival and mass presentation. The implication of artistic transformation on each variant of Mask Puppet presentation is the change of symbols in social status previously possessed by kamituwo, dalang, and the chairs of Mask Puppet societies.

Keywords: Mask Puppet, performance art, stage.

INTRODUCTION
The development of performance art is influenced by conditions and situations of environment that evoke transformation process.

The origin and real inventor of Mask Puppet in Malang, East Java, remain unclear. Some speculations say that the birth of Mask Puppet comes from raket performance which has been once popular during the age of Majapahit Kingdom on XV century [1]. However, this performance cannot be linearly linked to Mask Puppet history. The oldest data from the book of Javansche Volkswerteningen (Javanese Folk Shows) written by Th. Pegeaud in 1938 have shown that in eastern part of Malang, rural dancers have performed a dance with “puppet attributes” [2]. Onghokham, in 1972, has written an article indicating that Mask Puppet has been performed in Malang since the old-day administration of Malang Regent, Raden Adipati Ario Soerio Adiningrat 1898-1934. At the time, there is a popularly known artist of Mask Puppet, named Candra or Reni who is the citizen of Palawijen Village [3]. Mask Puppet dancers are usually coordinated by village chief, and at the time, the chief is Saritruno [4]. Other data that supports the author’s belief include archeology artifacts and ancient Java literatures. However, this research does not intend to use these data to track down artistic transformation of Malang Mask Puppet.

As indicated by Th. Pigeaud and Onghokham, since XX century, Malang Mask Puppet has been widely recognized in Great Malang (now represented by Malang Regency, Malang City and also Batu). This finding is supported by the data reported by AM. Munardi (1979/80), Moch. Soleh Adi Pramono Final Paper, 1985, Hendrikus Supriyanto and Moch. Soleh Adi Pramono [3], and Robby Hidajat (the author of this article). Some conserver individuals of Malang Mask Puppet have been lived since the age of Reni. Of many societies conserving Malang Mask Puppet, one survivor is Mask Puppet Society in Kedungmangga Village, Pakisaji District. Mask Puppet presentation always includes 4 central characters, precisely Panji Asmarabangun, Dewi Sekartaji, Gunungarsi and Klana Sewardana [5].

Previous observation indicates that Mask Puppet in Kedungmangga Village has been functioned as a part of the ritual of Bersih Desa which is held at pandhen belik kurung. Mask Puppet can also be performed as entertainment during hajatan (wedding ceremony) and khitanan (circumcision) [6]. The author (Robby Hidajat) assumes that Mask Puppet as a ritual medium is potentially powerful to evoke artistic transformation of morality values contained within performance, whereas Mask Puppet as an entertainment is a method to fulfill the living necessities of performers. Morality values conditioned in custom rituals will support the balance of various different social systems [7]. It is also assumed that artistic potential of Malang Mask Puppet as a financial-
generating instrument is developed from the functioning of this potential on some rituals. However, the author realizes that Mask Puppet does not linearly come from the rituals. Artistic transformation has reinforced Mask Puppet by making it into a community habit. Deep investigation is, thus, needed to obtain deep understanding on this topic. It can be said that Mask Puppet’s presence in the rituals is an old habit, but it successfully maintains its existence in the modern age. Unfortunately, life necessity and social change have created a strong pressure to replace ritualism with profane function. Taking this background into account, research problems are formulated, respectively: (1) How is the development of the presentation function of Malang Mask Puppet?; and (2) What is the meaning of artistic transformation in relation with presentation stage of Malang Mask Puppet?

METHOD OF RESEARCH
Research uses qualitative approach with structural functional perspective. The emphasis is given upon the searching for change agents [8] whom their presence is observed with a schematic pattern of Personal Theory, called A-G-I-L [9]. This theory asserts that culture transformation is possible to occur at a certain ethnic community, which in this research, it is represented by Kedungmangga Village communities who still kept intact their intermittent latent as agrarian communities. This identity is preserved with several aims which among other are to intertwine social integration and to keep balance of various different work systems adopted in the agrarian communities. To maintain such arrangement, adaptive behaviors must be shown by Mask Puppet conservers either inside or outside Kedungmangga Village [10]. Data are compiled from key informants such as Suros (44 years old) and Tri Handoyo (37 years old) who are the still-active beneficiaries of Mask Puppet in Kedungmangga Village; Moch. Dahlan (56 years old) who works as Kamitua of Kedungmangga Village; Sumantri (62 years old) who composes some Malang-style gendings; and Moch. Soleh Adi Pramana (65 years old) known as dalang of Malang Mask Puppet [10]. Data collection technique involves deep interview and participative observation [11]. Snowball Model is done by collecting data from key informants and keeping this process continued with other informants until it reaches data saturation [12]. Data analysis utilizes an interpretation involving semiotic theory to read symbols emerging as meaningful artistic symptoms [13].

DATA EXPOSITION
The presentation of Jegdong Leather Puppet is considered as related transformationally with Mask Puppet in Malang, East Java because some features of both puppet arts are similar, including characters, gendings, and puppeting pattern. Previous studies support this fact by stating that Malang Mask Puppet has a development line closely correlated with Jegdong Leather Puppet. The difference is that the story told in Jegdong Leather Puppet is presenting repertoires of Mahabarata tales [14]. Such repertoires are still used until now because in old days, puppet master of Malang Leather Puppet are the strong inspirer of Hindu spiritualism [26].

In the other hand, Malang Mask Puppet presents the Story of Panji. The characters performed in Mask Puppet, or in the Story of Panji, resemble to the characters in Mahabarata tales. The scene of jejer at Jenggala Kingdom is very identical to its counterparts at Amarta Kingdom in Mahabarata tales. Prabu Lembu Amiluhur resembles to Yudhistira. His sons are also comparable to Mahabarata characters, such as Panji Asmabarangun comparable to Arjuna, Panji Banyak Sasi and Panji Banyak Wulan both comparable to Nakula and Sadewa, and Panji Kartolo inspired by Bima. This comparability is the evidence that characters in Malang Mask Puppet are the product of transformation from those in Leather Puppet.

Mask Puppet is a dance drama performance played by dancers who wear masks (Indonesian called it topeng). Dialog across characters is represented by dalang who also plays a role as story teller. Dancers’ costumes are same with characters’ appearance in Leather Puppet or Wayang Purwa. The characters wear jamang, sumping, kelat bahu, bracelet, sampur, badong (praba), cinde pant, and rapek and also pedangan. There is a transformation of cloth arrangement from Leather Puppet to Mask Puppet.

The presentation of Mask Puppet starts by gender giro (the opening music) involving few songs such as Krangean, Gondel, Loro-Loro and Sapujagad (Sumantri, interviewed on 14 April 2017), and followed by Beskalan Patih Dance. The characters of the story are presented in a sequence, beginning with Jejeran. Scene in Jejeran often involves a meeting session between King (possibly Javanese King or Sabrang King) and his warriors. Scene in Kaputren or Pertapa presents King’s daughter who suffers from trouble, usually being forced in marriage, or who experiences something restless which leads to her certain reaction. What she muse about is then discussed with her maid-servant, named Dawala or Ono-ini. Moreover, selingen scene is displaying characters of Bapang Jayasentika and Demang Mones who present comical, imitative and attractive moves. This scene is usually the opening show before Jejeran in Sabrang Kingdom whose the king is Klena Sewandana. Antagonist characters are often described as threatening and attacker to the existence of Java kings. But, in the end of story, the enemies are always fallen down. The character of mediator is Raden Gunungarsi, a son of King Daha. Raden Gunungarsi is depicted as the reincarnation of Raden Sambu [15].

Kedungmangga Village communities hold Mask Puppet during the ritual of bersih desa in the yard.

of **pundhen**. Presentation starts in early morning. Ritual participants are only male who go to **pundhen** bringing the offerings containing with rice and side dishes. Some carry the box containing costumes and masks to be used in Mask Puppet presentation. The preparation of **suguh** is initiated by kamitawa or dalang. **Suguh** is a ritual involving procedures such as burning incense, eating black sticky rice, spreading flowers, and putting offerings beneath old buckeye tree. After **suguh pundhen** is over, it is continued with kenduri, having a meal together. This procession is cheered with Mask Puppet presentation. Ritual participants then bring the remaining meal along with them as **berkat** (gift from God) when they manage to go home.

Besides **suguh pundhen**, other ritual activity involving Mask Puppet is ritual of tolak balak. In this ritual, Mask Puppet is performed on emergency stage called genjot. The ritual of **tolak balak** is aimed to release someone from birth or behavior consequences considered as “inviting bad luck”. To avoid unluckiness, ritual of **tolak balak** is upheld. Other name of this ritual is rawatan but there is also **tolak balak nadhar** which is held when anyone promise to themselves to hold Mask Puppet if they can achieve what they want [16].

During leadership age of Karimun around 1950s, Mask Puppet is a going-around performance, and this activity is called ngeteng (ngamen). Mask Puppet is presented on **latar** (yard) by the house of the host or the village officer. Over times, Mask Puppet Society then develops into a commercial organization that can be hired as entertainment organizer for wedding events (**hajatan**) (Suroso, interviewed on 3 May 2016). Mask Puppet is performed on genjot (emergency stage) and the story presented is always about marriage, such as **Rabine Panji** (the marriage of Panji) or **Rabine Gunungarsi** (the marriage of Gunungarsi). In circumcision event (khitanan), the presented story can be **Panji Laras** or **Walangwati–Walangsumirang** (Tri Handaya, interviewed on 21 May 2016).

At the most recent development, Mask Puppet starts to abandon traditional custom ritual in the village. People still utilize Mask Puppet as a spiritual expression presented in the form of **arak-arakan**. In 2009, ritual of **arak-arakan** is arranged to accompany burial ceremony of Karimun [17]. In 2015, Mask Puppet is organized in the ritual of **suguh pandhen** on the grave of Reni. Mask-costumed characters are arranged in a march along the way from the house of Jaid (grandson of Reni) to the public cemetery of Palawijien Village [18].

Mask Puppet presentation for festivals and various contests is firstly initiated by A.M. Munardi and Sal Murgiyanto. Mask Puppet from Kedungmangga Village was performed in 1978 at **International Traditional Art Festival for Commemorating the 33th Independence Proclamation of Indonesia Republic** and also at the 45th Founding Day of Jakarta City [19].

Colossal presentation of Mask Puppet is used by governmental institutions to produce public impression that they care with the development of the local art. On 1 April 2016, Mass Dance entitled **Grebeg Sabrang Wetan** involving 1000 dancers was performed to celebrate 1002nd Founding Day of Malang City. The stage for dance presentation was set on football field at Stadium Gajayana Malang [20]. Other massive dance was also presented on the road, namely Tugu Road, in the front of Malang City Hall. In this event, Bapang Dance was performed by 100 elementary school students of Malang City on 2 May 2016 on the behalf of celebrating National Education Day.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Mask Puppet in Kedungmangga Village, Malang Regency, East Java, is a traditional custom ritual widely recognized in the cultural environment of agrarian communities. It has influenced spaces, actions, and ritual achievement of individuals or groups of people in Kedungmangga Village. According to Schechner [21], Mask Puppet presentation on **pundhen belik kurung** requires several processions such as joint meal (kenduri), offerings (sesaji), and Mask Puppet dance. These help the communities to represent themselves as farmer who can live in balance with nature, maintain social stability, and establish what they call **tata tengrem kartaraharja**. Stability can produce “safety” (**slamet**), and the pray for safety is known as dongo slamet. Safety can be achieved through spiritual behavior, such as **suguh pandhen belik kurung**. Indeed, **pundhen** is considered as a living place of **bedah kerawang** (the spirit of the pioneer of the village). **Pundhen** can also be the burial plot of village pioneer. Dhavamony explains that spiritual procession expects ancestral spirits or gods to come and give protection [22]. Mask Puppet presentation is one element of **suguh** processions but it is conditioned in such way that ancestral spirits will extend their blessing and social kindness Moch Dahlak, interviewed on 15 July 2016.

The function of Mask Puppet during **suguh** procession is to accommodate noble values that inspire life pattern of communities. One of these values is to disseminate “affection”. This “affection” is expressed through a romance (love), and it is usually characterized by Panji Asmarabangun, a main character in Mask Puppet story. The word “Panji” means a flag or umbul-umbul that symbolizes the standing of affection (Praman, interviewed on 5 May 2017). The wave of the flag signifies the upright of affection among the life beings. Transformation of this characteristic is represented by kamitawa or the elder of the village. In Mask Puppet, the elder is called with **demang** who will represent human existence, and this rank is played through some characters such as Demang Mones, Mundu, Semar, Bagong and Patrajaya.

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The Story of Panji performed in Malang Mask Puppet has been rooted in Ancient Literature of Semaradahana, the tale of King Kameswara and Princess Srikrirana [23]. This tale describes the disappearance of Dewi Sekartaji, the fiancée of Panji Asmabarangun. They pass loyalty test and become the spouse because they are destined to be sak-jodo (mate) or garwa (sigrane nyawa; or soul mate). Their love is eternal but their confluence is assisted by Raden Gunungsari. The word gunung symbolizes man and is considered as the place where gods reside and where the kindess is revealed, while the word sari signifies the position of woman (Pramana, interviewed on 5 May 2017).

Mask Puppet presentation is unique in terms of place, time and story. Variances of Mask Puppet presentation and function on every stage are elaborated in the discussion of artistic transformation of the stage in such following.

Pundhen Altar

Mask Puppet presentation for ritual of suguh pundhen is aimed to extend sajen sih langgeng (eternal love). It is an expression of Kedungmanga Village communities to show their devotion to their ancestral spirit, also known as bedah kerawang or kaki dhanyak desa, named after Kyai Rasek (Suroso, interviewed on 3 May 2017). Ritual participants are entertained with Mask Puppet. The essence of the Story of Panji performed in many gebyak (presentations) is the accumulation of values that bind humans into their family (household) life. The development of certain community is initiated from family/household, and therefore, such initiator family is called batih (core family) [24]. Core family must exist to respect ancestral spirit, and this tradition has been practiced by Serun, the grandfather of Karimun. Once a year, in the day of Senen Legi in month of Selo (after the Great Day of Idul Fitr), Kedungmanga Village communities arrange ritual of bersih desa which also involves ritual of suguh pundhen. The procession of suguh pundhen represents the highest hierarchy in the spirituality of values that bind the morality of Kedungmanga Village communities. The confluence between ancestral spirit and community is made on pundhen altar. People gather on the open spot, usually beneath buckeye tree. It is located at quiet and peaceful banks of Metro River. This river is presumed as a transformation of a mythical river in tale of gods. River water is given label tirta amarta, or the water of life. In the Story of Dewa Ruci, Bima is a character who finds the water of life (Pramana, interviewed on 5 May 2017). The blessing given to the river (water) of live will allow communities to be gifted with eternal life. The ultimate expectation is tata tentram and kartaraharja, which in short, village communities will always expect to be blessed with a fertile soil. Fertile means the source of happiness and naturalness.

Genjot Stage

Tolak balak is a sacred ritual to expel disturbances of evil spirits. Ruwatan is held to save people from their bad luck, especially those who remain in sukerta category. Specific ritual is conducted to neutralize their fear against misfortune. During this procession, the affected people may declare nadhar, a ritual to set a promise as a debt which must be settled after they get what they want. They often hold Mask Puppet presentation on genjot stage made of woods constructed by families and neighbors. This stage must be strong enough to support 5 to 8 individuals, and this stage is trampled on by feet (diencot-encot) to ensure whether it is strong or not. Therefore, genjot as stage is signified as the higher position than ground. It is given a more respectful label, namely Punggung Sangga Buwana. This stage is used as a place to build a spiritual communication with ancestral spirits to convince them to give their blessing, or at least to expel threats from evil spirits (Pramana, interviewed on 5 May 2015). Protector spirit is always personified by “Dewa Wisnu” [25]. The characteristic of Dewa Wisnu as the keeper and guardian of universe is transformed into the character of dalang during the process of pangruwatan. Thus, a close relationship is found between dalang and Gunungsari character because both are presented to resolve problems. After resolving problems, Gunungsari goes back to hermitage at Gunung Ukit. Indeed, gunung means the residence of gods, whereas ukit is a method to shape Mask Puppet. It can be said that gods in the mountain are those determining the fate of humans, or those stipulating destiny. In ritual of tolak balak, the power of determination remains only in the hand of Ki Dalang Kondobuwana. The name Kondobuwana is originated from Kondo meaning the story and buwana referring to the universe. Ki Dalang, thus, is appointed to tell story about universe.

From Latar to Proscenium

Presentation stage (genjot) of Mask Puppet has experienced a transformation. In old days, ritual stage for suguh pundhen was arranged on altar, a spread-out area in front of pundhen belik kurung. It is a place where ancestral spirits and village communities meet. Altar is considered as sacred due to its simplicity and functionality as a place where people extend their pray or gratitude to gods. Gebyak ngamen is Mask Puppet presentation held in front of certain house, or precisely on a spot called latar. This spot must be lower than the shelter of house owner. Latar represents a simple place for the humble individuals expecting empathy from the rich to enliven their daily subsistence. By presenting themselves on latar, it means that they expect gifts and pities from the rich. In recent days, proscenium stage is constructed to be the place of Mask Puppet presentation and it is positioned in such way which covering (hiding) the owner of hajatan. Mask Puppet presentation is metaphorically replacing the position of the house (the family). Presentation is aimed to set up the appearance

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of characters. Mask Puppet characters are arranged in an order similar to that in Leather Puppet.

Mask Puppet presentation represents the host in welcoming the guests. Good presentation keeps guests happy and comfort. The story told in hajatan event is usually about rabi (marriage) and also representing the confirmation of marriage and the pray of expectancy. Bride and groom are prayed to be gifted with smooth life and affection until death separates them. Such expectancy reflects kapesien (life certainty). Characters who represent this expectancy are punakawan and emban. They are characters destined to meet other humans, and their language of communication symbolizes the feeling of rejoice. Therefore, they always have skills of comedian and entertainer.

Mask Puppet presentation for hajatan put characters on proscenium stage. Performance for personal event, including hajatan, seems eliminate the powerful rank of kamituwa, dalang, and chair of Mask Puppet Society. The power now remains in the hand of hajatan owner because the owner has a right to hire their favorite Mask Puppet group. A presentation theme of rabi (marriage) is only a habitual, and this habit is enforced due to the lack of understanding among event owners about another themes. The selection of story and Mask Puppet group is based on popularity. For instance, Mask Puppet group led by Kangsen from Jabung Village is one popular group which is often called to celebrate community events, including hajatan, in Malang regions.

Abolishing the stage

Mask Puppet is usually presented with players standing on the stage prepared with esthetic quality. The magnificent stage allows audiences to give a clear appreciation to the event, especially when Mask Puppet is presented for ritual of telok balak. Audiences are expected to be the witness because they can see the course of the story. In the next development, stage is then abolished because communities attempt to comprehend the performance world at the closer range. Those who have an experience as dancer or who perform as dancer can express themselves in obvious way, like dancing in the crowd. They want to be closer with audiences and give audiences a more satisfying moment. Complete costume worn by Mask Puppet dancers during the escort of the deceased Karimum into his burial plot is not only a real event, but also imaginary. Dancers are not only a spectacle, but also a self-expression to show the characteristic of real figures. Dance is performed on the street and can be seen obviously by many eyes. Therefore, the procession to accompany Karimum burial ceremony is a phenomenon that abolishes or excludes the existence of stage. This phenomenon is a presentation where performance art and audiences are met in natural way. The distance between spectacle and audiences diminishes. Colossal presentation of Mask Puppet is usually held on open field or wide land with great number of dancers. The usual stage is considered as not enough to accommodate certain individuals who have interest on power. During the age of kingdoms, some leaders assert what so called “titah” or absolute order. The presence of Mask Puppet dancers in great number (mass) on wide open field (or football field in current days) is aimed to express the glorification and dominancy of the respectful master of the city. The abolishment of stage as presentation site symbolizes several exclusions. The position of Kamituwa is excluded because the presentation is not associated with traditional custom. The chair of Mask Puppet group is excluded because the presentation does not correlate with rights and duties of membership. Dalang is excluded because the presentation does not arrange characters in chronological order. Story or lakan is excluded because the presentation only shows the image of characters in choreographic way.

CONCLUSION

The stage for Mask Puppet presentation in Kedungmangga Village is a case of artistic-symbolic transformation. It represents a meaningful artistic motive that audiences (communities) try to understand. Ground (tanah) is viewed as a sacred place because it is considered as the center (pancer). Mask Puppet formation is always centered on king or main character in the heart of story. If Mask Puppet is played for profane event, it is then only presented for attraction and exhibition of strength, power, and also personal identity to be shown off to others. Artistic transformation in Mask Puppet presentation stage has developed and also influenced social institution of the community. Certain people are ruling the stage, such as Kamituwa in gebyak suguh pundhen, Dalang in rirawatan and telok balak, Chair of Mask Puppet group in gebyak ngamen and tanggapan, and choreographer or director in gebyak festival and Mask Puppet mass presentation.

Presentation stage (genjot) is viewed as a sacred place because it facilitates performer to connect with gods (sacred spirits) in favor of blessing. Sacred presentation is usually led by dalang, who is considered as liberator or rescuer of humans from danger. Stage is said as profane if it is used with intentions of economic profit, power-seeking, self-exhibition, and searching for the admirable position. Less surprisingly, the existence of kamituwa, dalang, and chair of Mask Puppet group is gradually excluded in Mask Puppet presentation. Indeed, this presentation itself is the mask (topeng) worn to hide the evil face of the masters and to disguise them with more obvious ethnical face.

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