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economy (Heskett 2001). The current and future work by the author following this case study is to develop a framework for product innovation based on the preservation of cultural heritage. These artists are to be involved in the collaboration to use the latest digital techniques including generative and evolutionary design techniques combined with 3D printing. In the literature, there are researches in these area that can be usefully integrated to support such collaboration using generative design approaches, (Frazer 1995), (Soddu 2013), and emotional design approach (Norman 2013).

Based on this work, the author is formulating a computational framework that provide inference support to the three essential actions of “translation”, “transform” and “Transcending” in the process of culture inspired design and innovation. This will involve the development and implementation of a design tool, that encourage and help the artists and craftsmen/women in Shaanxi province to develop new products based on their knowledge and skills. In this way, their knowledge and skills will be represented in computational terms and digital forms that can be more easily understood and appreciated by the young generations especially the young design students. Combining semiotic and semantic analysis with AI based design techniques can provide powerful support to designers, artists, and craftsmen/women to bring their intangible culture heritage alive in the process of developing the creative cultural industry that provide economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits to the people in the region.

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(Lin 2014). A collaborative approach is needed in order to work with the artists and enlarge their influences in the design process of new products, while protecting their individual strength to achieve a sense of transcendence in culturally inspired design practice. Such a practice must create opportunities for others to join the collaborative efforts in order to achieve sustained economic values.

### 3.4 Implication for design education

Design education in China lacks serious consideration on how to evaluate this significant cultural force which grew from Chinese art roots with a large number with formal education in design. Quite often, traditional cultural heritage and the people who created this heritage for many generations are treated as sidelines of the formal design education. Fine quality of Chinese art works and the skills of handicraftsmen/women never found a place in class rooms of design schools even with some of the most distinguished art academies. The curriculums in these design institutions are overwhelmed with western theories and technologies in design research and practice, largely due to the fact that in the last 30 years, many design teachers went abroad to study for their degrees. When they came back to China, they turned to adopt modern ideas about design approaches without critical review of the contexts in which these ideas have been born. In this context, it is particularly difficult to consider the cultures of their own roots as an important factor in formulating their design education and practice strategies. Therefore, the author has tried to use this case study as basis for building up the arguments for design education at to issues. One is that the cultural wisdoms and art traditions do form an important part in forming new generations of designer in China who are aware of strength and limitations of their own design sources. Another is that the traditional knowledge embedded in vast cultural heritages and existed among a large number of artists, handicraftsmen/women can be utilized in modern designs for innovation embracing western design thinking and design technologies.

## 5. Conclusions

Geometric research can be learned through practice, and this is clear evidence that the aesthetics of curves and balancing can be demonstrated mostly only through the collaboration between hands and brain. Perhaps this can be understood that in the imaginative world of artists, the aesthetics can surpass Mathematics or even computers. Accuracy in geometry does not guarantee creativity and imagination. Over reliance on computers by the new generations is a danger of losing the creative power as well as the enjoyment that artistic creations bring to our lives through skillful hands. There is obvious a lack of such skills in modern design schools throughout China where foreign ideas and technologies are more desirable for the students and teachers (Li 2011).

For example, the work of Xiaomei Fan has great values for inspiring product design using new design technology, Figure 7 shows the transformation of her paper cut to a 3D design that used a shape grammar based generative design system Tang *et al* (2014).

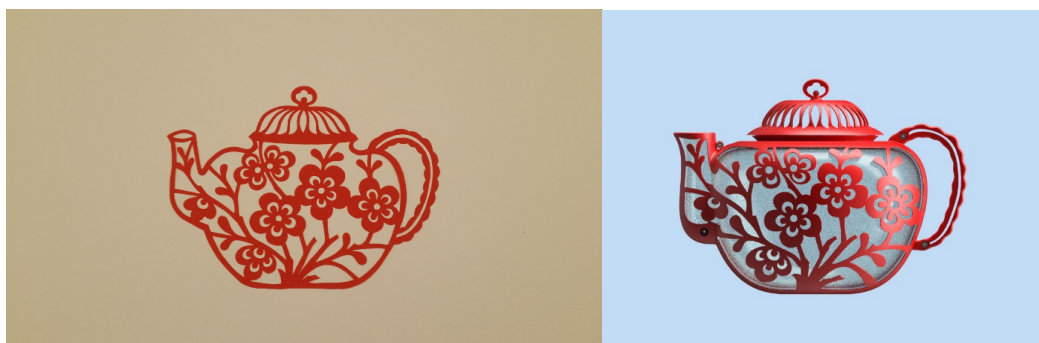


Figure 7: From a paper cut to a 3D product based on the work by Xiaomei FAN

This case study is intended to identify inspirations and ideas for product design innovation embracing new design technologies that can turn artistic imagination and aesthetic articulations into tangible products that help the creative industry in western China. In this paper, the author has highlighted the strength of those artists/craftsmen/women, who spend their life time to inherit and preservation cultural and artistic traditions. But they lack the understanding of design process and lack the knowledge and technology to turn their original art ideas into tangible products that can be more easily identifiable for the new generations. Their knowledge and skills have great values for design education. But in product design such knowledge and skills have yet to be fully utilized. In a way, their knowledge and skills are being lost as the society transforms itself into global

commercial products. In this way, more people get to know paper cuts and at the same time, the artists can have more economic values for their works. However, in order to meet the time constraints of mass production, some short cuts have to be made. Therefore, many new works have lost the glories and fine qualities of those works of previous generations. In this way, the spiritual investment of human beings in paper cuts has been reduced. When a type of paper cuts became popular in the market, the copied ones appear immediately everywhere. In this way, the paper cuts are losing their charm and values, because they are no longer being created through the original creations of hearts and hands.

As urbanization takes it might deeply into the countries, the villages where Xiaomei FAN used to live seems no longer to be the same with those people in the past. One of the most obvious evidences, according to Xiaomei Fan, is that that people in the villages no longer place paper cuts onto their windows for Chinese New Year, and they do not invite experts to cut flowers for them as they always did in the past.

Xiaomei FAN was taught entirely by her mother (Zhang Zhilan). But her mother died of poor health and hard working when she was at the peak of her creation. Xiaomei FAN was then only 15 years old. The early death of her mother put her through the most painful period of her life for 10 years. However, the arts of her mother also saved her and changed her fate, and brought her to where she is today. To keep her spirit alive in the paper cuts has since become one of the strongest motivations for Xiaomei FAN's work and life. She said:

The paper cuts took me out of deep valleys and mountains of rural life, to the lecture platform of colleges, and to the exhibition halls of foreign countries. To me, paper cuts are not just pieces of papers but flying dreams. They changed my life and brought hopes and dreams to my world. I started paper cutting as a way of surviving at first when I came to Xi'an at the age of 17 with a pair of scissors, but now I put a strong sense of gratefulness to our previous generations to everyday of my work and every piece of my paper cuts.

Xiaomei FAN was the only one of the artists in the group who participated in the exhibition in Hong Kong, who rejected the idea of having her own studio, in order to produce more work to bring profits. Although she is well established and is always on the list of artists of Shaanxi province who frequently represent the province in foreign exhibitions and visits, she still survives her living by teaching paper cuts for young students in a private middle school in Shenzhen. But she always keeps trying to improve the quality of her works.

The symbols for paper cuts are expressions of hopes for life and blessings for nature. Nowadays, when we are creating something, the first thing we might consider is "designing the thing". In my impression, however, the artists of my previous generations had no intention to design or change. All they did, in my view, was with the very true feelings of their hearts, to cut something that reflected their understanding of the beauty of nature. Design, for them means ultimately to achieve a happy feeling in their hearts and confirm their beliefs. In particular, design does not necessarily mean ever expanding the scope of the issue, but rather, it keeps the imagination in a confined focus in order to achieve high quality."

There were many artists of paper cuts in northern Shaanxi province in the past. Almost every woman knew how to do paper cuts. They, however, never considered themselves as artists. Paper cutting was regarded by them as a common skill that was a part of their lives. For example, in my home village, paper cuts are called "Flower cutting". Flowers are the symbols of life in the hearts of the women who lived their entire lives in the countries in northern Shaanxi province. In their eyes, flowers also included all the birds and animals. Paper cutting is a tradition evolved to become their spiritual needs. For several thousands of years, the paper cuts in northern Shaanxi province were inherited in this way.

### *3.3 Inspirations for product design*

Every individual has a different understanding of beauty in their hearts. The artists of previous generations never mimic others in their creations, according to those who participated in the exhibition on Shaanxi Culture and Design Innovation. Their expressions of art work all come from their true feelings about themselves and nature. It would be enough only if they could just express their real feelings in their works, and all of them seem to have managed to develop characters of their own in the way they survive, while keeping their works in line with those which can be found in the heritage. One of the obvious lessons that has been learnt in this case study is that we as designers or design educators, need to understand them better, and we need to view them as successful stories instead of view them as the ones who might need the help with modern design thinking or new design technology.

As for the creative industry, one obvious challenge for many in the industry is how to produce new artefacts that have economic values but also inherit strong cultural meanings. There is no systematic way for achieving this

year in China Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing. In 2005 she obtained a patent of her own scissor design which was subsequently made into products in Taiwan. She has some 12,000 students worldwide. She represented the province to have her exhibitions or give lectures in many different countries, winning many prestigious awards for her works. In April, 2014, she was invited to give a lecture in the School of Design of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University on a Master of Design subject (SD5201: Collaborative Design and Technology).



Figure 6: Xin Ming HU's studio in Shaanxi province, PRC (2015)

Xiaomei FAN represents a new generation of artists emerged after the opening policy on economic reform started in the 80<sup>th</sup> of last century. She has transformed herself from a normal country girl in northern Shaanxi province into a world known paper cuts master. She has gone through a lengthy and most of the times painful hardship to establish herself as an individual in the highly competitive modern city of Xi'an. She immigrated to the city of Xi'an when she was only 17, with only her own hands and scissors. She has created a fairy tale of Chinese paper cuts with her convincing story of success, derived by a true passion for traditional Chinese arts and in particular for paper cuts. Her lines of paper cuts are magically matched with the rich and deep meanings of the design with graphics patterns that make huge impacts and lasting memories on the viewers. The accuracy of patterning and symmetry done by her hands can almost beat computers.

Her strong personality and characters of northern Shaanxi tradition are everywhere to be seen in her works that have become the best of Ansai paper cuts of our time. She has demonstrated through her creativity amid hardship and struggle, some of the best characters in Chinese culture, i.e., hard-working, deep study and research, distancing from the trend, i.e., independent thinking, maintaining authenticity, and protecting their uniqueness Kasabach *et al* (2011).

### *3.2 Meaning of cultural inheritance*

The stories of Xianmei FAN may reveal some of the reasons why the driving force for Chinese cultural tradition is in the countries, not in the classrooms of art and design schools in China. In an interview with Xiaomei FAN as part of this case study, she said: In my childhood memory, the best days in a year was the Chinese New Year. My mother was well known for her scissor hands for paper cuts in the county. She had many types of works. Every year when the Chinese New Year approached, many women in the village would come to her for some ideas in order for them to decorate their homes for the Chinese New Year with new paper cuts. My mother has a warm heart and never turned down anyone. A day before the Chinese New Year, the walls and windows of our home would be decorated with various beautiful pieces of paper cuts. Many girls in the village at the age of my elder sisters would come to visit our home. Every year, our home was always regarded the best decorated one by the people in the village. This made me very proud of my mother and her paper cuts, and motivated me to learn from her.

According to Xiaomei FAN, the enemies of Chinese paper cuts are the greediness in human. Amid a rapid wave of economic development, everyone is having a sense of economy and as a result, some paper cuts have become

### 3. From craftsmanship to design innovation

Many researchers in design went to the countries in search for inspiration or cultural roots in China (Wong 2013). Quite often, they “discovered” the talents of local artists or craftsmen /women and got to report their discoveries in journals or at conferences. More often, people with better educations believed that they could use their thinking or technologies to help those local artists or craftsmen/women to gain better benefits or status. This is not the case for the case study reported here. As pointed out by Kasabach (2011), authenticity in craftsmanship demonstrated by the artists or craftsmen/women is the essential value for any new products derived from traditional culture heritages or matters pieces of the past. In China’s design education system, there is a tendency to view the original works of artists or craftsmen/women only as a source of inspiration in design in a generic and general context. There is a lack of study that is intended to strengthen their works by integrating their knowledge with new design technologies (Xue 2015).



Figure 5: Xing ZHANG in his studio in Shaanxi Province, PRC (2012)

The author argues that this is somehow a misconception and an underestimate of the powers and the true values behind the works of a large number of artists or craftsmen/women in the county who developed their passion and skills of cultural works through their own life experiences. To compare their works with those who receive modern art and design educations from colleges or universities does not make much sense, because they inherited the knowledge and skills (quite often through family or local connections) from a cultural force that has been evolving generation by generation for over several thousands of years. Without learning from this invisible cultural force, many attempts of innovation in design by young people simply won’t work or will be short lived. Therefore, it is necessary to fully understand them and learn from them first, before any new ideas can be proposed to help them (if they needed help at all). In this section, the author takes a close look at the paper cut legend Xiaomei FAN and examines the process of her emergence as one of the best paper cuts artists of a young generation. Her works are shown in Figure 2.

#### 3.1 Emergence of a new generation of cultural force

Born in the village of Zhang Xinyao, Louping District of Ansai County in Northern Shaanxi Province, like many artists in the vast countries, she learnt paper cuts and drawing at a young age from her mother. In 1995 she left the northern Shaanxi and went to Xi’an to make a living there, by making paper cuts in a tourist establishment called the Qin Emperor’s Palace which is now out of business. She started a career in paper cuts from there.

On 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1998, she demonstrated paper cuts on the city wall of Xi’an for former US president Bill Clinton and his wife Hillary Clinton. She published a book titled “Xiaomei FAN – The stories of a paper cut girl from Ansai” by Hunan Fine Arts Publisher in 2001. In 2005, she published a book titled “Paper cutting skills and methods of Xiaimeimei FAN” also by Hunan Fine Arts Publisher [Fan 2001 and 2006]. In 2006, she studied for a

Haiyan WANG, taught directly by her father who is one of the most authoritative experts in China's shadow puppets world, has grown up to become an expert of her own generation. As shown in Figure 4, her work has reached the same quality with her father, Tianwen WANG, who is her father, has been many times been called upon by the central government to go to Beijing to repair the shadow puppet works collected by the Great Hall of People. Shadow puppet remains one of the greatest inventions by the Chinese and it still has a magic power to evoke strong emotion and sense of entertainments by the mixture of highly poetic and simplest choreographic design of light and shadow.

In the book published by Tianwen WANG (Wang 2013), readers can be overwhelmed by a show of magical work cut by hands with eyes that are so imaginative and almost childish. The sophisticated cut of lines and curves brought alive a world of master pieces. It must be said that with the most advanced computer technologies we have today, the powerful emotion and happiness evoked by these highly abstract but lively shadow puppet figures capable of playing with human voice and music to present a live show cannot easily be matched.

The tradition of painting faces on the so called horse bowls was started from Qin dynasty when horses were the most important military mighty of the first Chinese empire. Horse bowls were used to feed the horse and they became a symbol of victory and prosperity. The "faces" originated even earlier and it was related to the ceremonial festival of "Shehuo" in Chinese new-year, and it is a strong tradition that can be traced back 3000 years. The horse bowl painted by Xing Zhang, as shown in Figure 5, strikes a strong visual impact with its colourful expressions of ancient spirits and a near invisible smile that casts a deep wisdom through a face that is elevated to a much higher level of cognition. Xing ZHANG also studied horse bowl painting from his master. Now he has established his own studio which is also used as a horse bowl museum in the county of Chen Cang. He has a strong entrepreneur spirit and participated in the making of a documentary "The Masters of Faces". "The Masters of Faces" is a documentary made by the joint research centre on creative culture industries for western China between the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Xi'an Jiaotong University, which was premiered at the 2014 international conference on generative art in Rome's Biblioteca Angelica.



Figure 4: Shadow puppets by Haiyan WANG in the Hong Kong exhibition (2014)

Other works exhibited in this exhibition included the works of clay sculptures by Master Xin Ming HU and Xiaohong HU, who are relatives educated by Master Shen HU. The collective spirit of this country community manifested itself in many forms and media. Here they have managed to replace the term of "sculpture" with a collection of microcosmic players in the grand theatre of life that we can touch as well as feel. The strong emotional attachments they evoke cannot easily be replaced by other products. These works of figurative models come to our hands more easily. With such strong local characteristics in the form and colour, they have a high quality of universal beauty and likeness, as shown in Figure 6.

Xin Ming HU is the only artist in the group invited to participate in this exhibition, whose works have been adopted by major corporation business in Shanghai to represent their corporate identity. The works by Xing ZHANG, Xin Ming HU, Shen HU, are featured frequently in the designs of Chinese stamps, which is a nationwide recognition for their achievement in arts and design.



Figure 2: Paper cuts by Xiaomei FAN in the Hong Kong exhibition (2014)



Figure 3: layered paper cuts by Fangxia LIAN in the Hong Kong exhibition (2014)



“Heaven and People in One, Generation by Generation –Shaanxi Culture and Design Innovation”, the objective is to promote the development of Chinese culture and design education, by presenting spectacular showcases for the design industries, design education sectors and the art world in Hong Kong, where the values of such work have often been underestimated, due to historical, political and economic reasons.

The exhibition was the first of its kind in the new building of School of Design, the Jockey Club Innovation Tower, designed by Zaha Hadid (1950-2016). The traditional art work and folk crafts set comfortably with the modern and unconventional curves of Zaha architecture and blended a strong sense of evolution of universal beauty embedded within the traditional art and design work. The exhibits presented by the local masters have proved to be long lasting in items of their strong inheritance of aesthetics and meanings for life, art, nature and a spiritual world of their own.

In this exhibition, the scientists from Ars Mathematica (France) were also invited to showcase their latest development using 3D printing for art and design including the design of ancient Chinese artefacts through mathematic reasoning and 3D printing (Callet 2014), (Lavigne 2014). This was intended to create an interaction and dialogue between the local Chinese artists/craftsmen/women and those from the frontier of international research. This exhibition was a showcase following a detailed case study of the same people in the original positions where they worked and lived their lives through art and design practice. A scaled down version of this exhibition in Hong Kong was held in Rome’s Biblioteca Angelica as part of 2014 international conference on generative art.

## **2. The Driving Force of Creative Industry in Western China**

In order to tie the work of the masters together into the central theme of this exhibition, detailed analyses of each individual designer/artist/craftsmen/woman’s characters were carried out. There emerged a strong sense that they are the driving force for the creative and cultural industries which are still developing in China, and their works may soon become the main stream of design inspirations when the traditional cultural confidence among Chinese designers is awoken and increased. Each master is a highly skilled artist who has spent an entire lifetime dedicated to making a lasting contribution to the overall cultural expression of the entire people in north western China.

The spectacularly detailed and controlled paper cuts of by Xiaomei FAN embody a great deal of the peace of heart, highly imaginative design of patterns and the superb skills of hands that are only demonstrated through the works at master level. Her work displays a convincing combination of minds and hands that cannot be matched by computers or machines. At the core of this work, as shown in Figure 2, is a universal presence of the enduring human spirit that is demonstrated by the very Chinese way and beliefs. Philosophically, it presents the essence of Chinese culture in which the power represented by a paper cut of any animals is softened to include the happy elements of life, while remaining as a symbolism of strength to defend the family values.

Like Xiaomei FAN, Fangxia LIAN is also a master of paper cutting, who learnt and inherited the works of Shulan KU, who developed layered paper cuts to its peak with international acclaims. She demonstrated that the expression of the individual can be always dramatically different, even in the same form of paper cutting. Layered paper is the only way to inherit the essence of traditional paper cuts but at the same time to add colours to the work and give a much stronger 3D feeling to the impressions of audience, as shown in Figure 3. FangXia LIAN worked with Shulan KU for many years, and she established a community group in her own village, and even opened a shop to sell their art works. However, they lacked the support from the local government to run this kind of group in a sustainable way. As a result, they cannot make a living on this form of art even though it has reached a high standard of aesthetic sophistication only by the work of minds and hands.

## Deriving design and innovation strategies from cultural heritages for design research, practice and education

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### Abstract

Culture can be reflected in design with different symbolisms and representations, and it is one of the main sources for innovations in product design. In the countries or regions where culture resources and intangible heritages are rich, it is often necessary to identify strategies or develop methodologies for the preservation of such resources, and to translate, transform and transcend their values in a sustainable way that is consistent with the time in the evolving context of economic developments of our time. This paper presents a case study on culture based innovation in product design, based on an exhibition and the analysis of the folk art, handicrafts, and intangible culture heritages from Shaanxi province involving a group of local prominent artists. The motivation of this case study is to find out the strength of creative culture industries in western China, and to develop a framework supporting culture based product innovation, through which the knowledge of local artists or craftsmen/women can be integrated to form a collaborative design force. The results of this case study provides strategies and insights on how to build design tools and systems for supporting the emerging creative industry western China.

**Keywords:** Culture heritage, design innovation, crafts, paper cuts, sculpture.

### 1. Introduction

The creative cultural industries in China are enraging with a fast speed. This is becoming the driving force for a sustained development of Chinese economy and environments for the new century (Xu 2009). Shaanxi culture is the roots of Chinese culture, in which the folk arts and handicrafts are still growing after some 4000 years of evolution and development. The folk artists/craftsmen/designers in this province are strong and they convincingly demonstrated their great strength in innovation through the never ending creations. This never-ending generational cycle of creative energy evolves over time, and mirrors the collective human experiences of universe. As individual artists retrace, re-live and re-build upon centuries-old traditional themes, they contribute their own individual sense of wonder and joy to people beyond functional features of products. Over time, consistent hierarchies of order and a collective consensus about beauty form a frame of reference, to help to give individual lives perspective and meaning. The location of Shaanxi province on the map of China is shown in Figure 1, it is the starting point of ancient silk road:



Figure 1: Location map of Shhanxi Province in China

In this case study, a group of prominent artists and craftsmen/women from Shaanxi province was invited to an exhibition in May 2015 in Hong Kong, in order to demonstrate their strength and analyse their works for developing a research framework to enhance their collaborations and exchanges. In this exhibition, called

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progression art is stuck on the current dialectics system.

The condition of our tradition, both classic and folk, is called traditional art, and today, the tradition is time-framed. The frame deals with the required time to accomplish a round of cultural dialectics. Javanese music and dance were framed in an absolute monarchical system of power which uses dialectics along with the other systems. Meanwhile, our folk traditional art was framed in cultural dialectics in the past time in which traditional agricultural economic system and social system occurred. The position of both arts today is often vulnerable. This is so for after successfully proclaiming our independence and establishing a nation state, we made a determined effort to develop with modernity concept in our country. Order might change, as well as government, but our will is firm to create a modern condition based on model and our own idiom. In other words, we determine to throw a new cultural dialectics. It is a dialectics which opens a new opportunity for new system. It is, moreover, a new dialectics which is expected to achieve a new cultural synthesis from modernity (Dharsono, 2013:222).

Non-physical revitalization will be able to awaken energy in the past time. An enthusiasm of *cablaka* (transparency), exposure, simplicity, naturalness and egalitarian principles is the most important part of local culture which has to be discovered, developed and made in synergy with the spirit of modernity. The presence of energy from the past will be able to bring about local identity in the middle of contextual world. In order to translate the idea into reality, a study on the revitalization planning of tangible/intangible artworks is required. This study is in the middle of rapid globalization and multiculturalism (Dharsono, 2013:223).

On the other hand, various shapes of folk art and traditional cultures which become assets of the richness of Indonesian archipelago are threatened by the existence of the ever-developing cultural changes as a result of the global changes of technology and information. It is unavoidable that the increase in human resources which centers on local richness will turn to the mode of local folk art as an alternative work which aims at commodity art. Folk art as a cultural identity, an asset of local culture, and an asset of tourism culture is expected to improve percapita income and foreign exchange, and this will aim folk art to commodity art which refers to mass cultural art-popular art (Dharsono, 2013:220-221).

## 5. Conclusion

Culture, as a system of idea, is able to create reciprocal interaction between systems in the form of cultural precepts. The cultural precepts as an expression of culture are in accordance with society's perspectives and emphasize on spiritual peacefulness, harmony and balance, along with resignation and sincerity on everything that happens, while positioning individuals under society and society under the universe (cosmic relationship). Those who live in harmony with themselves, will live in harmony with the society and God, and therefore, will be able to live a life well. The precepts need to be revitalized as an effort to find their identity as an asset to compete in global world. In general, it can be concluded that:

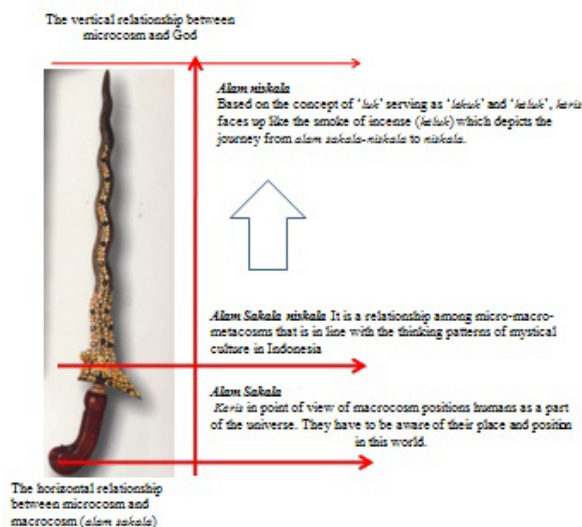
First: Revitalization of the values of Javanese cultural precepts serves as society's cultural expression. Society's perspectives emphasize on spiritual peacefulness, harmony, and balance, along with resignation and sincerity on everything that happens, while positioning individuals under society and society under the universe (cosmic relationship). Resignation and sincerity are on everything that happens, while positioning individuals under society and society under the universe (cosmic relationship). Those who live in harmony with themselves, will live in harmony with the society and God, and therefore, will be able to live a life well. The precepts need to be revitalized, particularly the values of Javanese cultural precepts which are implemented in the artworks of Indonesian archipelago (*Nusantara*). This revitalization of values is an effort to seek for identity as an asset to compete in a global arena.

Second: Cultural dialectics produces Javanese artifacts, and this is a cultural expression of society along with the underlying philosophy. *Nusantara* philosophy questions the essence of what exists behind the physical embodiment and the search of the most significant cause of: the meaning of life, *sangkan paraning dumadi*, and therefore the highest wisdom, which is the top of philosophy, is the knowledge on God, the absolute God and the relationship with human, which is later so-called 'mystical philosophy'. Cultural precepts which are reflected in traditional Javanese arts can create cultural identity and compete in global world. This means that in facing globalization, we have to be able to discover our identity as Indonesian people by exploring, examining and cultivating potentials of local culture plurality as capital to compete in a global arena. In other words, in order to deal with globalization, we have to learn about local for the more global we are, the more local we will be.

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Javanese people always burn incense in the system of micro-macrocosmic relationship).



Pic. 4. Javanese Keris

*Semedi* (meditation) is a philosophical reflection which is obtained from inner experiences instead of a rational reasoning. In altered or meditative state of consciousness, men procure experiential knowledge. This indicates that I, or the ego, copes with the ego consciousness, enters the conscious world, unites with the self and gain knowledge by looking at the essence of life. It shows the transcendental process and transcendence of ego consciousness or five senses to self consciousness and finally the achievement of spiritual consciousness of God or universe (cosmic consciousness). The series of processes become an experiential knowledge and are embodied in conceptual knowledge in mystical anthropology and epistemology (Dharsono, 2013:178).

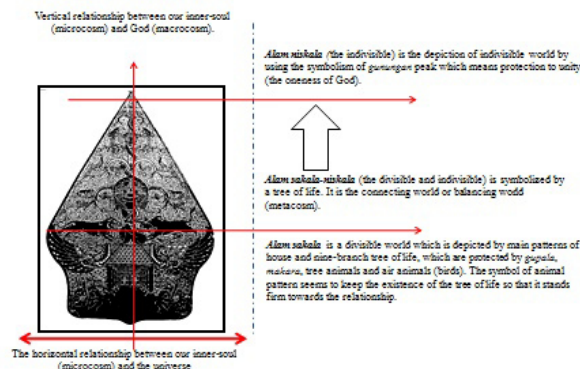
#### 4.3. Dialectics of Culture

A shift of cultural system is not a coincidence, but it is a process of moving system towards a new system, in accordance with cultural dynamics and other systems. Javanese traditional arts did not accidentally yield high arts (*adiluhung*), and Borobudur was not by chance as a historical monumental artwork. Traditional, classical batik art did not coincidentally appear as a product. They had taken a long time to deal with Javanese dialects and previous culture of power. Art as a system which plays important roles in shaping culture does not stand alone. It is a part of dialectics which moves to a cultural synthesis. Together with the other systems in society (power, economics, belief, education, and social systems), art is involved in a process which affects each other, bargaining, thesis and counter-thesis. At some point in time, a cultural synthesis is obtained and an established art (temporarily) is achieved. At that moment, an art establishment is also accomplished. At the same time, art is also considered a system (Khayam in Dharsono, 2013:220). This indicates that art is a system of culture, that is a part of cultural dialectics process, and the process lasts and depends on a system of power (culture in the context) at that time.

In an absolute monarchical power system in ancient Javanese kingdom, art served as a system which was determined by the current system of power. The system of selecting pattern and using the type of fabrics for the dress of king and high-rank, middle-rank, and lower-rank officials was determined by a system of power. In 18 century, the Susuhunan of Surakarta Palace declared a formal decision that *parang-parangan* and *jilimprangan* patterns were prohibited to be used by anybody except royal family. The Sultan of Yogyakarta further announced that *parang rusak* pattern was exclusively used for the sake of his necessities. This proved that art and power were two inter-connected things. Javanese art was considered high art after experiencing Javanese cultural dialectics between its systems which reached its peak in 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Absolute monarchical system of power of Mataram kingdom was a strong system which played important roles in determining the color and the shape of Javanese high culture. It was indeed not a coincidence when the 'highness' orientated in the system of soft-and-rogue value, as well as language, music, art of dancing, and political communication. All of them were packaged in the shape of high culture under the roof of absolute monarchical system of power. Jazz and blues were not coincidentally born in the south of the United States, in poor, dark and slum area of black people. Discriminative power and social systems of the whites towards black people triggered cultural dialectics like 'black music'. Cultural dialectics is not spared from the cultural system of power, regardless pros and cons. In other words, a system can emerge in an art of 'in the context' and it can appear due to dissatisfaction on the culture of power. The conservation of arising tradition or contemporary

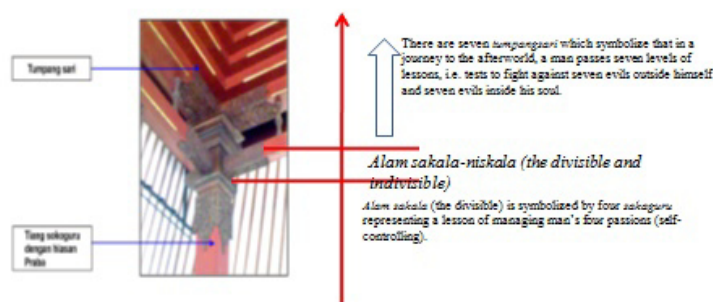
divisible/ *alam sakala*). The symbolism of animal patterns seems to protect the existence of tree of life to keep it stand firm within the relationship. The stem and branches of the tree of life in the *gunungan* consisting of a wood with nine branches epitomize nine Gods and nine levels of heaven. The symbolic meaning of stem and branches is related to the number of nine.



Pic. 2. The *gunungan* of wayang kulit purwa

c. The *Pendapa*<sup>1</sup> of Javanese House

*Sakaguru* and *Tumpangsari* in the *Pendapa* of Javanese house depict *alam sakala* which are symbolized by four central pillars or *sakaguru* and epitomize guidance to manage four man's feelings. A Javanese perspective in keeping vertical and horizontal balance in Javanese culture is commonly known as *keblat papat lima pancer* (time dimension). It is known as the classification of four space dimensions, having a pattern of four points of compass with one central point. All of them appear together and imply the wholeness, the basic unity of differences towards control. In other words, a unity is constructed because of the presence of difference, and difference is the main power that has to be made as a balance, harmony of life through self-control. Seven levels or *tumpangsari* symbolize that in a journey to *alam niskala*, a man has to pass seven levels of lessons or tests to fight against seven evils outside himself and seven evils inside himself. The lesson describes a man's spiritual adventure to seek for the essence of meaning of life. In order to achieve a real perfection, he has to face seven levels of tests to reach the highest level of life, which is so-called *alam niskala* (the upper world in cultural precepts of *Tri-loka* or *Tri-buana*). Javanese people, realizing the merely apparent life in the world, find the real life (a real perfection of life). Hence, they need to find more victuals to enter the real world, and then, they have to cleanse their sins (Dharsono, 2007:128).



Pic. 3. *Tiang sakaguru dengan hiasan praba = Sakaguru* (central pillars) with *Praba* ornaments

d. Javanese *Keris*

*Keris*, an expression of Javanese culture, is well-known for the relationship among micro-macro-metacosms. The relationship needs to be continuously striven for in order to maintain the horizontal and vertical balance, i.e. horizontally keeping the self (microcosm) and the universe (macrocosm) in balance and vertically maintaining balance for the Oneness.

*Luk* can also be called '*lekuk*', but it can also mean '*keluk*'. '*Keluk*' in Javanese language is the smoke of incense blowing up. Thus, '*luk*' can mean '*lekuk*' which is inspired by the shape of *keluk* or the symbol of the smoke of incense. The smoke alone for Javanese people is the symbol of *semedi* (meditation). In all types of reflection, Javanese people meditate and this is epitomized with the smoke of incense (it does not mean that

<sup>1</sup> *Pendapa* is a large open pavilion-like veranda at the front of a big house where guests are entertained and wayang performances to celebrate family events are held

for those who regularly cultivate and preserve it. This implies that a leader should have a generous heart, likes giving to charity, and tries not to disappoint his people.

- 8). God Candra represents the characteristics of *candra* (moon) which lights up the darkness of the night. This denotes that a leader should be able to give motivation and lift people's spirit up when they are in trouble.

Society's perspectives on Javanese culture which serve as a philosophy or way of life have now been ignored. They were believed in the past, and rooted in Indonesian archipelago. Revitalizing the values of Javanese cultural precepts, therefore, is crucial to do to discover a national identity as Indonesian Javanese cultural identity. Past experiences should be learned to build the future. Hence, it is suggested to explore, examine, and cultivate potentials of local culture plurality as a capital to strive in a global arena.

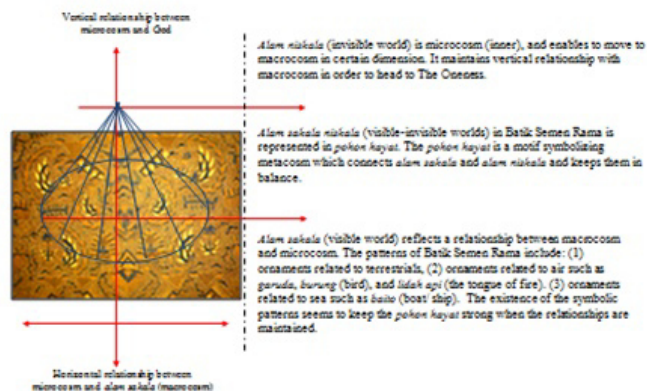
#### 4.2. Traditional Javanese Arts

Studies on traditional Javanese arts serve as attempts of revitalization of values of Javanese cultural precepts in discovering national identity as Indonesian Javanese cultural identity. The traditional Javanese arts are related to meanings, values, and symbols which are utilized as references by a group of society. In addition, it contributes to a symbol system, gives meanings, and serves as a model transmitted to symbolic codes. The traditional arts signify that the arts are produced from the society's cultural expressions in the forms of ideas and behaviors in the society. Javanese artifacts are the society's cultural expressions with their underlying philosophy. The study on such phenomenon seeks to understand Indonesian (particularly Javanese) aesthetics as a baseline to examine the traditional arts which have not had *Paugeran* (the believed paradigm) so long for its traditional artworks.

Indonesian (Javanese) aesthetics serve as a basis to examine traditional arts which include *Wigati* (significant) spiritual life. The spiritual life can be obtained through attempts to seek initial foundation, cogitation of what exist in physical forms, the deepest reasons of the existence—including a description of the meaning of human life, *Sangkan Paraning Dumadi* (the beginning and end of life), a relationship between human and nature as well as environment, and a relationship between human and God. All of the statements and resolutions obtained from questions and an exploratory are forms of devotion to God (*Dharma*—religion), which will later serve as a basic principle to act, behave, work, and create arts.

##### a. Batik Semen Ramawijaya

Batik Semen Ramawijaya is painted as if it is seen from the top and *pohon hayat* (the tree of life) seems to be surrounded by other motifs. Patterns of Batik Semen Ramawijaya are arranged with the combination of such motifs as *pohon hayat*, *garuda* (large mythical bird) on both left and right sides, a pair of *bangunan* (buildings) under the *pohon hayat*, and a pair of *binatang darat* (terrestrial animals) under the *bangunan*. Pertaining to the conception of *Tribuana/ Triloka* (three-dimensional space), *pohon hayat* represents a connector or middle space (*alam sakala-niskala*), and a stabilizer/ a connector between universe or lower space (*alam sakala*) and the Oneness (*alam niskala*). Batik Semen Ramawijaya conveys *hastabrata* teachings (pronounced 'astabrata')—teachings on virtues which reflect Javanese cultural expressions. Such perspectives contain a philosophy of a figure of a wise leader who gives a priority to *kepentingan jagad/ negara* (national interests) above *kautaman* (individual interests). The perspectives are manifested in the paintings of Batik Semen Ramawijaya using 8 or 9 primary motifs (8+1) (Dharsono, 2007: 153).



Pic. 1. Batik Semen Ramawijaya

##### b. The *Gunungan* of *Wayang Kulit Purwa* (*Purwa* Shadow Puppet)

The *gunungan* of *wayang kulit purwa* (*purwa* shadow puppet) is realized in the upper part of *gunungan* from the peak through the upper part of *genukan* (abstract of *niskala* world). It is so-called *gunungan* because the shape resembles 'mountain', and in general, it is like a triangle. The main patterns are house and nine-branch tree of life which are protected by *gupala*, *makara*, land animals, tree animals, and air animals (birds) (the

the direction of south indicating the existence of *Nafsu Amarah* (fierce)—a desire which is characterized by insolence, jealousy, anger, etc, sourced from bile, and appears from ears, like a heart with red shine. Wind is denoted by the color yellow with the direction of west showing *Nafsu Supiah* (lust)—a desire which brings about longing, evokes passion, pleasure, etc, is sourced from spleens, and appears from eyes, like a heart with yellow shine. Water is represented by the color white with the direction of east, characterized by *Muthmainah* (honesty), kindness, ignorance of the limitation of capabilities, is sourced from bone, and appears from noses, like a heart with white shine (Simuh1988:340). The center of the Earth located in the middle is symbolized by the color green which is *Kama* (character) demonstrating a subject of human inner desires. Those five characters exist in an individual's self. It is up to us to maintain the balance, or the self-control (see Kartosoejono, 1950: 14-23; Subagyo, 1981:98-100).

Humans will be able to achieve *Kesampurnan Jati* (a real perfection), provided that they enable to control their desires. They will, therefore, have *hati yang waskita* (an alert mind and mindfulness), and gain glory based on *Sangkan Paran* (God's will) (Hadiwijono, 1974:25). The Javanese cosmogony signifies that the four human's desires are embedded within one's self (microcosm), and therefore the described symbols will be meaningful if humans are able to control themselves. In Javanese religious system, such attitude as self-control is known as *Nur-Rasa*—the basic of will (*Nur*) to evoke *Cipta Rasa* (self-will) and *Cipta Karsa* (culture) (see Kartosoejono 1950:14-23, Subagyo, 1981:98-100, Soedarmono, 1990:7, Dharsono, 1990: 34-35).

b. Society's perspectives related to sacred number of 9 or 8+1 (Hastagina teachings)

Javanese perspectives on Hastagina teachings and the color symbolism have the same basis as Javanese cosmogony symbolism *Keblat Papat Kelima Pancer*, which includes primary colors. The colors are adjusted to such main cardinal points as east, south, west, and north, as well as other cardinal points like southeast, southwest, northwest, and northeast. Between the primary colors are eight mixed colors which obtain new characters as a combination of two primary characters—black, red, yellow, white, blue, green, violet, pink. The colors in a spectrum appear as a result of white/ bright color spectrum. For this reason, *Pancer* (the central part) is colorless (empty). Javanese perspectives consider 'empty' as a symbol of *Sahyang Tunggal*; in Hindu theology, it is called *Sahyang Agung*, the Almighty Ruler. Gods representing every cardinal point include those created by *Sahyang Agung/Tunggal*, given authority to serve as the highest laws of each cardinal point and as symbols of *Nur-Rasa* (God's light emission), such as *Agni* (God of Fire), *Bayu* (God of Wind), etc. The emptiness of the central part symbolizes the absoluteness of God. The worship begins by exploring each cardinal point (from the east to the south) before stopping at the center. Javanese tradition is associated with *Hari Pasaran* (the five-day week in Javanese calendar with the following days: *Legi* (east), *Paing* (south), *Pon* (west), *Wage* (north), and *Kliwon* (center) (Dharsono, 1990:125-126).

c. Javanese perspectives related to sacred number of 9 or 8+1 (Hastabrata teachings)

In the narration of *Ramayana Kakawin*, when Vibhishana was about to rule Lanka, he felt sorrowful because of thinking about his sibling's miserable destiny. Then Rama told him not to cry since Rahwana had died as a hero. He also talked about how a ruler should behave and act. In relation to the narration, Hastabrata is defined as eight good deeds; *Brata* literally means deed/ act, as in *Tapabrata* (an act of meditating). The eight Gods representing the *Hastabrata* (the eight good deeds) cover (Dharsono, 2007:123-125):

- 1). God Indra represents characteristics of *angkasa*—space (sky). A sky has unlimited power to accommodate whatever comes to it. This implies that a ruler should have inner spaciousness and strong self-control to be able to patiently accommodate diverse people's opinions.
- 2). God Surya represents characteristics of *matahari* (a sun). A sun is the source of life which allows all living things to grow. This means that a leader should encourage and grow people's potentials to develop the country by providing physical and psychological preparation to create works.
- 3). God Anila/ Bayu (the God of Wind) has the characteristics of *maruta* (wind). Wind always exists in all of the locations—among others are uplands, lowland, urban areas, and countryside. This implies that a leader should be close to his people and consider that they have the same dignity and therefore he can soon find out their conditions and intentions.
- 4). God Kuwera represents the characteristics of *kartika* (star). A star has its own place in the sky, and is used to find certain direction. This means that a leader should be a model for his people, should not hesitate to implement the agreed decisions, and should not be easily detracted by misguiding parties.
- 5). God Baruna symbolizes the characteristics of *samudra* (sea/ water). A sea, whether it is wide or not, has flat surface, as well as cool and fresh atmosphere. This means that a leader should be aware that all of the people are equal, in this respect they all have the same dignity and therefore he should be fair, wise, and affectionate towards his people.
- 6). God Agni/ Brama represents the characteristics of *dahana* (fire). A fire enables to burn and destroy things which come into contact with it. This signifies that a leader should be authoritative and bold in law and righteousness enforcements.
- 7). God Yama symbolizes the characteristics of *bumi*—the Earth (soil). The Earth provides natural resources



energy/ power (centering of life) (1972:85).

#### 4. Discussion

##### 4.1. Revitalization of Values of Javanese Cultural Precepts

Cultural precepts as society's cultural expressions involve society's perspectives which emphasize on inner peace, harmony and balance, along with an attitude of *Narima* (a Javanese expression of one's acceptance of his fate) by placing individuals under society and the society under the universe (cosmic relationship). Those who can live in harmony with themselves will also be able to live in harmony with societies and God, as well as to live life well. The precepts require revitalization of values, particularly those of Javanese cultural precepts which are manifested in Indonesian artworks. The revitalization serves as an attempt to find its identity which will be a capital to strive in a global arena.

Javanese perspectives and the development of cultural system are inseparable. Culture continually (*ajeg*) grows—such growth is described in Javanese expression *Alon-Alon Waton Kelakon* (slow but sure). The development is in accordance with Javanese way of life which points up the inner peace. This gives an overview of the society's perspectives which refer to a harmony of inseparable relationships among individuals, environment (societies), universe, and God. Javanese societies apply *Paugeran* as a system which is based on both written and unwritten (customary laws) cultural precepts. Life in the world, as well as in a society, has been mapped and written in such regulations as Javanese ethics which aim at regulating interindividual behavior, customary laws which function to create harmonious relationship among societies, regulations for worship which deal with formal relationship with God, and moral rules which are associated with such attitudes as *Narima* (accepting according to prevailing regulations), patience, *Waspada-Eling* (introspection), *Andap Asor* (humility), and *Prasaja* (simplicity) and which control personal forces and emotions (Mulder, 1984: 13). Mulder's argument provides connotation on the society's way of life to control themselves in a cultural bond, between an individual and society (interhuman) including a harmonious relationship with society (as well as nature), and to regulate worship practices (including obedience to God—*Sikap Manembah*). The relationship harmony in Javanese philosophy is termed vertical-horizontal relationships between *Jagad Besar* (macrocosm) dan *Jagad Kecil* (microcosm). The philosophy denotes the relationship between living system and the aforementioned cosmoses. The argument also implies that the highest wisdom, the peak of the philosophy, is knowledge on God, the Absolute Truth. The relationship between God and humans is the core of mystical philosophy.

Javanese perspectives on the upper and lower parts of the universe are often integrated with those on the middle part of the universe which is known as *Dwitunggal* ('monistic dualism') (Schoerer in Subagyo, 1981:118). This principle is in accordance with such Javanese terms as *Loro-Loroning Hatunggal* (freely, 'unity in duality'), *Rwa Bhineda* (the two adverse supernatural forces standing on different sides), *kiwo Tengen* (which literally means left and right), and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (unity in diversity) (Subagyo 1981:118). In Javanese perspectives, the principle of combining two things into one is called syncretism. I Kuntara Wiryamartana regards the Javanese cosmic perspectives as micro-macro-metacosms. The former refers to human, the middle includes the universe, while the latter covers *Alam Niskala* (the indivisible), *Alam Sakala-Niskala* (the divisible and indivisible), and *Alam Sakala* (the divisible) (Sumardjo, n.d.: 176).

Metacosm is associated with a concept of *Mandala*. *Mandala* is, by definition, a circle which represents perfection, flawlessness, wholeness, completeness, and cosmic fullness which is essential and central in nature—the invisible energy which exists in a square with four gates containing a circle (representing essence in existence). The circular figure symbolizes the cosmos, the regularity and order of the universe, perfect harmony existing in the four sections from which the original chaotic unity is broken down. The perfect exist in imperfect world, the light in the dark world, the supreme in the relative world, the orderly in the chaotic world, the male in the female world, and the indivisible in the divisible world. *Mandala* is described as a totality of components of dualities of the existence. The upper world is integrated with the lower through the middle (Sumardjo, 2003:87).

a. Society's perspectives related to sacred number of 5 (4+1)

A Javanese perspective in maintaining both vertical and horizontal balances is known as *Keblat Papat Kelima Pancer* (the four cardinal points with the inclusion of one's self), 'temporal world', or the categorization of four spatial dimensions with the four cardinal points and a center. Togetherness or wholeness is considered as a basic unit of contention towards a control. This implies that a unity occurs due to differences and the differences serve as a basis of a force attempted to make a balance and life harmony through self-control. In Javanese perspectives, the principle of combining two things into one is called syncretism, *Dwitunggal* (H. Schoerer), *Loro-Loroning Hatunggal*, *Rwa Bhineda*, *Kiwo Tengen*, and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Subagyo 1981:118).

A Javanese perspective on a time system in cosmic dimensions defines inseparable relationship between individuals and universe. The perspective is known as *Keblat Papat Kelima Pancer*. In Javanese cosmogony, the Earth (soil) is symbolized by the color black with the direction of north indicating *Nafsu Lauwamah*—a desire which includes greed and leads to such feelings as thirst, drowsiness, hunger, etc. It is located in abdomens and sourced from mouths, like a heart with black shine (Simuh, 1988:340). Fire is represented by the color red with

philosophical reflection. *Dewa Ruci* story contains the reflection of the search for the true knowledge. It is not obtained through rational reasoning, but rather through inner experience by meditating. In altered/ meditative states of consciousness, humans obtain experiential knowledge. The knowledge is written in the allusive story of Bima's journey in looking for the pure water of *Perwitasari*. The journey tells that Bima climbed a mountain, entered to the deep ocean, and met Dewa Ruci, and entered into his body; finally, he found an ivory-made puppet containing *Wirid* in the true knowledge. All of these depict that the ego copes with ego consciousness, enters the unconsciousness, unites with the Self and obtains knowledge by viewing the nature of life as a puppet. The process reflects transcendental and transcendence process from the ego consciousness or the senses to the self consciousness, and finally it reaches awareness of God through cosmic consciousness. All of the processes become experiential knowledge and are written in the conceptual knowledge in the anthropology and mystical epistemology. The aesthetics established through the literary works emphasizes on the combination of the beauty of literature in vocal compositions and values of good deeds. The precepts depict human inner experience in search of the essence of human life. In achieving the true perfection, humans have to cope with seven levels of test to the highest level of life called the *niskala* (the indivisible/upper world in the cultural precept of *Triloka/Tribuana*). Javanese society is aware that living in the world is apparent, and accordingly they look for the true life. Therefore, when they still live in the world, they need a preparation to get into the real life; that is why humans should externally and internally purify themselves (2007: 128).

The cultural precepts contained in western philosophy are fragmentary. Western philosophy differs from mystical philosophy. Western philosophy uses logics to talk about life, while mystical philosophy relates to the search of life journey to achieve *Kasampurnan* (the perfection). In Javanese language, philosophy means *Ngudi Kasampurnaan* (trying to find the true perfection). Meanwhile, Greek philosophy perceives it as *Ngudi Kawicaksanan* (trying to acquire cleverness). The two aforementioned philosophies provide information that a series of aesthetic forms of Indonesia archipelago (Java) is implemented through symbols which emerge from the search through universe approach. Therefore, it is not surprising that the traditional society attempted to be close to God by making themselves close to the universe. Thus, a relationship between an individual (microcosm) and the universe and environment (macrocosm), and a relationship between an individual and God (metacosm) (2007: 130) exist.

Abdullah Ciptoprawiro (1987) in his book entitled *Filsafat Jawa* proposes that microcosmic, macrocosmic, and metacosmic relationships are related to the concept of *Tribuana* and *Triloka* in *Arjunawiwaha* written by *empu* Kanwa (11th century) in King Erlangga era, which is a form of *Kakawin*, a story contained lyrics in the form of drama for shadow puppet show. Cogitations of metaphysical philosophy involve:

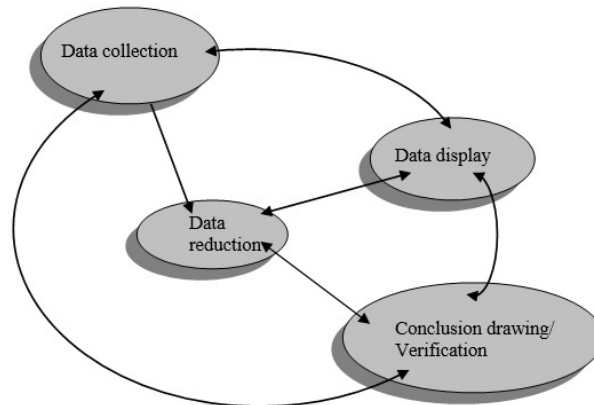
- a). The cogitation of metaphysics—a cogitation of a 'being' concept personified by God Shiva (Siwa). The God is described as *Sarining Paramatatwa* (the essence of the highest truth/ the indivisible—*Niskala*), *Hana Tanhana* (the existence and non-existence), *Sang Sangkanparaning Sarat* (the 'where from' and 'where to'—origin and destiny) of the universe, and *Sakala-Niskala* (physical and spiritual forms). The relationship between humans and Shiva is conveyed in *Wahya Dhyatmika Sembahaning Hulun* which is associated with exoteric/ esoteric relationships with the God.
- b) The cogitation of ethics which is found in a dialogue between Harjuna and Batara Indra. Ethics are not merely about theoretical reflections, but rather good deeds to achieve the perfection by implementing *Dharma Ksatria* (the obligations of a warrior). If the obligations are continuously fulfilled well (*Makaputusa Sang Hyang Kalepasan*), the warrior will achieve *Kamuksan* (liberation) (2000: 34-35).

Clifford Geertz (1973), in his book entitled "Interpretation of Culture", postulates that Javanese perspectives in seeing, understanding, and behaving are source culture oriented. The Javanese cultural process which is in line with the social dynamics refers to the concept of source culture, which is called *Sangkan Paraning Dumadi* (remembering the origin and destination of life) (1981: X-XII). Birth and existence are due to the relationship between humans and God through such processes as being born, living, and earning a living which occur owing to causes and effects. Geertz associates the problems with some terms in Javanese religion focusing on the main principle are called *Sangkan Paraning Dumadi*. The concept is known as *Nunggak Semi* in Javanese culture.

Jose and Miriam Arguelles (1972) in their book entitled *Mandala* suggest that the implicit precepts of Javanese philosophy explain the relationship among microcosm, macrocosm, and metacosm in accordance with the thinking patterns of Indonesian mystical culture. Perspectives on macrocosm set humans as a part of the universe. Humans should be aware of their place and position in this universe. The perspectives on micro, macro, and metacosms are called *Tribuana/Triloka* precepts, involving: (1) *Alam Niskala* (the indivisible), (2) *Alam Sakala-Niskala* (the divisible and indivisible), and (3) *Alam Sakala* (the three-faced godhead of *Trimurti*). Humans are able to move to the three aforementioned metacosm through *Sakala-Niskala* and *Niskala*. In society's perspectives on the relationship between microcosm and macrocosm, the concept of *Mandala* (a political concept) forms balance, harmony, and unity; in addition, each of them centrally gives energy/ power (centering of life). The ritual manifestation of the concept is interaction concept, which then forms cosmic unity and balance (centering). The concept forms balance, harmony, and unity; in addition, each of them centrally gives

in the summary of data reduction and conclusion. The model used in analyzing qualitative data was cycle diagram, in which the researcher frequently moves and explores the object during the ongoing process (Rohidi 1992:19-20).

Diagram 1. The Interactive Analysis of Qualitative Data  
(Rohidi 1992:19-20).



The results of the aforementioned interactive analysis were then examined using hermeneutic interpretative process of analysis. Hermeneutics leads to the interpretation of meaningful expression and is conducted intentionally by human. It deals with conducting interpretation of individual or communal interpretation towards one self's situations. Every single event or work has meanings obtained from the interpretation of the actors or creators. Their works, the results of the aforementioned interpretation, are then read by readers or observers and understood with interpretation. In hermeneutic analysis, researchers interpret the work as if they were re-created with new meanings according to a culture theory which is used (Sutopo, 1996: 29). Hermeneutics focuses on such questions as how the works are expressed to what are expressed. Therefore, hermeneutics is formulated as the art of understanding based on cultural interpretation—as a text. Interpretation is affirmed as differing the hidden meanings of the visible meanings. Hermeneutics functions to identify the nature of text, the world of text, or the facts provided into language by a text, instead of by the creators (Poesprodjo, 1991:117-118).

### 3. Literature Review

Although there are various definitions of culture, there is an effort to re-formulate the concept of culture. Culture involves a whole pattern of behaviors and how to behave, both explicitly and implicitly, acquired and transmitted through symbols. The symbol will form typical things and characteristics of a group of human, including the manifestation as objects or materials.

Simuh (1988) in his book entitled *Mistik Islam Kejawaen Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita, Suatu Studi terhadap Wirit Hidayat Jati* postulates that the prominent characteristic of Javanese culture is that it is full of symbols or signs. This is due to the fact that Javanese people did not get used to use abstract thinking. All ideas were expressed through concrete symbols, and therefore everything could be an enigma since symbols could be doubly interpreted. The meanings of ornamental elements are generic in nature pertaining to cultural values; *wayang* has the same roots, among *Gagrag* (*wayang* from Banyumas), from time to time; high-qualified Javanese cultures are then preserved in Javanese tradition (1988:131). The aforementioned assumption connotes that tradition of a society can be changed, but the high-qualified values should be preserved.

Koentjaraningrat (1985) in his book entitled *Javanese Culture*, proposes that culture is the cumulative system of human ideas, behaviors, and works in public life. Referring to an anthropology expert, the manifestations of culture are (1) ideas, (2) activities, and (3) artifacts. The aforementioned manifestations are systems that are closely interrelated. In this case, the most abstract system (idea) seems to be on the top to set up more concrete social system activities while the social system activities result in material culture (artifacts). On the other way round, the concrete systems under it give energy to it (Rohaedi 1986:83). The assumption depicts that Javanese culture is a reciprocal interaction among systems in the form of the culture, including the relationship among ideas, activities, and artifacts from the works produced by the society (1980:193-195).

According to Dharsono Sony Kartika (2007) in his book entitled *Estetika*, the story of *Dewa Ruci* written by Yasadipura I (1729-1801) is a literary work (lyrical form) in the form of *macapat* (Javanese traditional poem) prosody, which tells about the popularity of Bima in looking for the pure water of *perwitasari* (water of life) and in obtaining the *wirid* (repeated prayers) in the true knowledge. Cultural precepts serve as guidelines of the search for the true knowledge, and it is embedded in Javanese society in the form of

# The Revitalization of Values of Cultural Precepts in Traditional Javanese Arts

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## Abstract

The perspective of the study focuses on the discovery of national identity as a capital for competing in a global arena. Revitalization of values of cultural precepts to discover the national identity is an attempt to find out the Indonesian Javanese cultural identity. The present study aims at (1) finding out the cultural precepts manifested in traditional Javanese arts and (2) explaining that Javanese artifacts are the society's cultural expressions with their underlying philosophy. To achieve its objectives, methods or research procedures of a qualitative research using cultural approach, which refers to the Javanese precepts in accordance with Javanese philosophy, are required. The approach employed in this research emphasizes on data interpretation and case particularity. The study indicates that, firstly, the revitalization of the values of Javanese precepts includes the society's cultural expressions. The precepts involve society's perspectives which emphasize on inner peace, harmony and balance, along with an attitude of *Narima* (a Javanese expression of one's acceptance of his fate) by placing individuals under society and the society under the universe (cosmic relationship). Those who can live in harmony with themselves will also be able to live in harmony with societies and God, as well as to live life well. Secondly, the cultural precepts manifested in traditional Javanese arts enable to establish the national identity to compete in the global arena. In other words, to cope with the globalization, individuals should be able to find out their own identity as Indonesian humans by exploring, examining, and cultivating potentials of local culture plurality as a capital to strive in the global arena.

**Keywords:** cultural precepts, traditional arts, national identity, coping with globalization

## 1. Introduction

Revitalization of values of Javanese cultural precepts aims at finding out the national identity as Indonesian Javanese cultural identity. In coping with globalization, people should be able to learn from past experiences to build the future by exploring, examining, and cultivating potentials of local culture plurality as a capital to strive in a global arena. It means that to cope with globalization, we have to conduct local study. More global perspectives should lead to more local studies which are conducted. It is not a coincidence that traditional Javanese arts result in *Adiluhung* (high-qualified) arts. Borobudur as a historical monument, traditional art of *Batik*, the *Bedhaya* dance, *Wayang Purwa* (shadow puppet), and other arts did not appear coincidentally, but rather they had taken a long time to deal with Javanese dialects and previous culture of power. Javanese artifacts are the society's cultural expressions with underlying philosophy.

The present study aims at (1) finding out cultural precepts manifested in traditional Javanese arts and (2) explaining that Javanese artifacts are included as the society's cultural expressions with underlying philosophy. To achieve its objectives, methods or research procedures of a qualitative research using cultural approach, which refers to the Javanese precepts in accordance with Javanese philosophy, are required. The approach employed in this research emphasizes on data interpretation and case particularity (Denzin 1980:100).

## 2. Research Method

Data were collected using in-depth interview. The technique was employed for it is flexible and open; it does not need any strict and formal structures and can be conducted repeatedly to the same informant. More focused questions can be given, and therefore the collected information will be more detailed and deeper. The aforementioned structures are important to ensure that the obtained information is deep enough. The flexibility of this method can be used to explore the informants' honesty in providing the real information, particularly the one related to their feelings, attitudes, and views on traditional artifacts. The technique was conducted to all selected informants or information sources (criterion-based selection) by taking the applied theoretical concepts into account. Purposive sampling was applied: informants or information sources were selected under criterion-based selection (the information sources are those who are considered reliable). Nevertheless, other informants and information sources providing more accurate information on the problems were also taken. The selection technique of the informants and information sources was developed by considering the need and steadiness in data collection.

A review related to the analysis in this study emphasized more on the interactive model of qualitative data analysis using Javanese culture approach. Interactive analysis was conducted to analyze qualitative data of empirical data collection to obtain the accurate results from sorting which involves classifying and indentifying. This model was chosen since it enables to give more descriptions which can filter suggestions and explanations

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