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## **Religious Existence in the Socio-cultural Communication Context: A Case Study of Ganjuran Temple, Yogyakarta**

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### **Abstract**

This study attempts to describe the symbolic interpretations of Ganjuran temple, the sacred hearth shrine in the context of religious and social construction, with the case study on Ganjuran Church, a Catholic church, the sacred heart of Jesus, in Sumbermulyo village, Bambanglipuro, Bantul-Yogyakarta. Based on the qualitative, wherein the data collected through an in-depth interview for, utilizing the theory of religious symbol and communication including the sacred space by Livingston in the book of *Anatomy of Religion* as its analytical framework, the result showed that in the case of Ganjuran temple, the sacred hearth shrine in Catholic is the indication of religious existence in the context of social and cultural communication. The symbols of the temple as the sacred Catholic placed in four classifications among the identity aspect; the intersection of traditional prosperity, the image of cultural heritage, and also the space of pilgrimage are the discussions on how this place can be popular in the context of the public environment. Every kind of the interpretation regarding the symbol has a specific significance in the reality, in which, each of them is the sign of communication that denotes a certain issue based on the religious and social construction.

### **Keywords:**

Religion, Symbol, Sacred place

### **Introduction**

Every religion deals with a historical missionary that creates a certain image for its existence. There will be many kinds of clash and hybridity when it comes to the context of missionary event and the negotiation of

locality. One of those important issues is when the upcoming of religious missionary replaces the existence of locality in terms of cultural prosperity and the spiritual tradition. Yet, it becomes so importantly overviewed when there is no replacement of those things under the name of missionary interest. Even, the existence of religious missionary meets the local tradition in the form of appropriate negotiation and communication. This case fits to the context of Ganjuran Church, a Catholic church, namely a church of the sacred hearth of Jesus, which is located in Sumbermulyo village, Bambanglipuro, Bantul, Yogyakarta.

In this paper, the researcher takes an account of the symbolic issue of Ganjuran church. In particular, it will focus on the Catholic ancient inscription or commonly known as the Ganjuran temple in one part of Ganjuran location. This temple is considered as the sacred place or the shrine by Catholic people because it has a worth long lasting history of past image between the arrival of Catholic religion and the existence of Javanese local culture in terms of ritual or tradition, the face of the church building, and the spiritual interaction. Discussing about symbol in religious landscape and its relation to the sacredness, it plays a significant position in understanding the religious space where an idea of sacredness always manifests something extraordinary, distinctive, and even could lead to the holiness which makes a comparative sense to the profane (Cohen-Hattab & Kohn, 2017; Hukantaival & Bläuer, 2017; Livingston, 2009). Hence, the main point of the research in this paper is on a discussion about the symbolic interpretations of Ganjuran temple, the sacred hearth shrine, in the context of religious and social construction. Before discussing about symbolization, the general introduction of the establishment of Ganjuran Church and the temple in the historical overview is given. In this paper, the data are gotten from the short fieldwork of interview in Ganjuran church. For the framework of the analysis, the researcher utilizes the theory of religious symbol and communication including the

sacred space by Livingston in the book of *Anatomy of Religion*. Finally, it is expected to contribute such kind of discussion to the religious and cultural communication on symbolic discourse especially in the context of sacredness in Catholic shrine.

### **Ganjouran Church in a Historical Overview**

The establishment of Ganjouran church was tightly connected with the period of Dutch colonization. This church was built in 1924 according to the initiation of two Dutch people who are in sibling relationship, Joseph Smutzer and Julius Smutzer. They were not missionaries in this context. However, they were business men who managed sugar product named Gondang Lipuro in the company. Earlier, this business actually belonged to their parents that focused on business and capitalist standard in its development. When it was taken a charge by Joseph and Julius Smutzer, the idea of this company was not merely concerning with the capitalist stuff but they tended to take an account of social sense in the project of business. Smutzers in this case created another standpoint of the Dutch image which was in contrast with the common colonizer in the negative view. They could convince the local society, Javanese people especially in the location concerned, that they had a positive project in line with the business management; it is Catholic concept in spiritual interaction. (Aris Dwiyanto, 2014)

In the execution, Smutzers (Joseph and Julius) actualized the egalitarian concept in watching the working process of the employees. They did not distinguish the employees in the level of position. All of them were the business partners who had to be appreciated and honored the work and dedication to the company. Another important issue is that they did not only concern with the economic and educational aspect of the employees, but also the spiritual and religious stuff in the significant attention. Since Smutzer were Catholic, they applied a faith of Catholic

in training the employees in order to enhance their spiritual development. Therefore, the working activity in the daily moment manifested a process of learning the religious and spiritual landscape from the Catholic faith. The mission for spreading out the Catholic faith did not end in the employees' area. However, it extended toward the larger society in town. Since they were not a religious teacher in Catholic, they invited a catholic teacher from another town; Muntilan based in Magelang, to success the process of religious enhancement.

Furthermore, in undergoing the mission of spreading out the Catholic faith, Smutzers did not necessarily eliminate the prosperity of local tradition and religion. The very first step they did was understanding the people, the locality of Javanese culture, and the society in life interaction within tradition. As it was narrated, at that time, the cultural condition was still in the atmosphere and environment of Hinduism and Mataram kingdom. Therefore, Smutzers were going to introduce the Catholic faith by not replacing or even erasing what the Javanese people had contacted with before. This inspiration came from the Catholic faith, in which, to introduce Jesus toward the society, it could be in the concept of enculturation with the local prosperity, the Javanese. This concept was implemented in the image of Jesus in the form of statue. In the formation of the statue, it was created in the nuance of Javanese's sense based on some historical processes from the Roman Catholic standard. Another implementation can also be seen from the architect of the church building which resembles with the Kingdom of Yogyakarta, the Sultanate. Moreover, it can be seen from the religious ritual and tradition which are packaged in the Javanese nuance through some accessories and the equipment (Assis, 2017; Hoshikawa & Staudigl, 2017; McCann & Bechsgaard, 2017; van den Boogert, 2017). Those all are still going on until now and in consequence, they make Ganjuran church and all the stuff unique and distinct from others.

### **Ganjuran Church: the Sacred Heart Shrine**

The temple, what so-called the sacred heart shrine, is a kind of ancient inscription which was built by Joseph and Julius Smutzer as the dedication toward Jesus after the establishment of the church (Aris Dwiyanto, 2014). Culturally speaking, when European people come to a particular area, and they success in having their mission toward the objective intention, they will establish any kind of inheritance as a memory of the identity. In building this temple, Smutzers not only wanted to influence the local people nearby the Church or the Catholic people but also the others from outsiders to be a part of the benefits and usefulness.

This temple was established in 1927, three years after the establishment of the church. The building of this church is due to Smutzers' project of devotion to the goddess of Jesus. The formation of the temple was created based on the western inspiration by using the eastern mythology (Windaryawan, 2013). In accordance with the narrative, this temple could embrace the two lines of culture between the Catholic and the previous Javanese culture which are Hinduism and Islam. Thus, this kind of project and the existence of the temple could be one of the successful Catholic missionary in dealing with local religious tradition which has been existed before.

Furthermore, the philosophy of the temple according to Javanese computation was built in those three parts of altar (Windaryawan, 2013). The first bottom floor of it is called *borloka* which symbolizes a mundane. It was drawn in the concept of something which is not eternal and long lasting. It indicates that this part is the condition where people fulfill their impermanent stuff which tends to direct them to the nastiness, the world of sin. The second middle part is called *buarloka*, the world of sanctification which refers to the sense of Jesus, the angles, and the saviors. This part indicates a way to reach the goddess by leaving the mundane situation. It was drawn with the nine steps of stair as the footpace heading to the

following next part. The last part is *suarloka* which symbolizes the goddess space, the place where God and paradise exist. This is the top level where people and God could meet in the perfect condition. This level, especially the trinity picture, was drawn with the painting of old figure, pigeon, and monstrance. Indeed, every single formation in regard to the architect of the building was established in the decisive plan according to the Catholic appropriation of faith.

### **The Symbols of the Shrine**

This discussion is the important part regarding to this paper. Thus, the researcher covers the analysis of several symbols that can be interpreted from the existence of the temple, the sacred heart shrine. By utilizing the theoretical framework of symbol by Livingston, the researcher discovers some symbols as the interpretation in response to Ganjuran temple as the sacred place of Catholic religion. In general point of view, regarding the symbolizations, the researcher argues that every single aspect in the account of the sacred hearth shrine, Ganjuran temple, is a case of construction based on the religious and social construction.

Analyzing about sacredness and also a symbolic aspect, in line with the case of this temple, according to Livingston's idea, connect to the concept of communication in religious landscape. Nobody has direct access to the space of holy and sacred stuff. Therefore it needs a medium through the symbolic interpretation as the way to communicate the object and the experience as the narrative either the moment of the past and the present (Livingston, 2009). Thus, finding out the interpretation of the temple, the sacred hearth shrine is the media for communication in terms of understanding the past through the image of today or getting on to the idea of particular identity in the sacred space concerned. In the analysis, the researcher clasifies four symbols as the interpretation which is explained as follows.

When it comes to the concept of symbol, it also gets in touch with the idea of sign (Livingston, 2009). According to Livingston, these two aspects aim to express the meaning. The meaning of the object being concerned: the first symbol is in response to the Ganjuran temple, the sacred hearth shrine; it represents the Catholic religious identity as a memory of the past. Obviously, identity is an important position in every single institution especially, in this case, which is in contact with the institution of religion. Based on the general overview, regarding the historical aspect of the establishment of Ganjuran church and also the existence of this shrine as the sacred place, it speaks clearly that this temple depicts the image of the narrative in the past. The narrative here refers to the landscape when the temple was built which was initiated by Julius and Joseph Smutzer as the dedication of their devotion to the deity. The meaning of this symbol expresses the idea of the Catholic identity as the icon to exhibit what had happened in the past to make such kind of reflection for the present day. Then, the reflection is also meant to be a sign of religious aspect to denote the identity itself (Brzezinski, Joyce, & Barber, 2017; Erdogan, 2017).

In line with the narration above, the concept of identity as a memory which is proposed by Abertus Bagus Laksana supports this symbolization (Bagus Laksana, n.d.). His analysis on this case also concerns with an identity. Laksana argues that this temple demonstrates an idea of Javano-Catholic Identity. There is a combination of two identities in terms of Javanese and Catholic which pictures out the memory of the past including the historical process of how these two different identities met in the particular condition in response to the upcoming the phase of globalization.

Henceforth, the second analysis is in regard to Ganjuran temple, the sacred heart shrine of Catholic. It symbolizes the intersection between two traditional properties. In this context, it responds to the previous description, in which, two traditions covering the Javanese and Catholic. The idea of intersection here underlines the aspect of tradition from each

institution which refers to Javanese and Catholic. Every single of it has some particular properties in its tradition as well as the ritual including the accessories and the equipment. But then, the two subjects, Javanese as well as Catholic, intersect in a single line becoming inclusive in the communication without neglecting what had been existed before from each subject. They unite in one tradition as the way of completing each other in regard to the prosperity.

The example of the symbol of the intersection between the two traditional properties is implemented clearly in one aspect of the building image. It is commonly known that the institution of Catholic is acknowledged as global and Javanese is local. According to the general overview of the temple in the previous discussion, the building of the temple is inspired by the western knowledge namely the Catholic and it uses the mythology of Javanese in the execution. The idea of architecture is also taken from the European style but the philosophy of every single relief of the temple uses the value of Javanese. In this context, there are two prosperities coming from Catholic and Javanese using the Hindu-Buddhist symbolism and architectures which meet in the spot of religious landscape in the need of spiritual orientation. Finally, beside the symbol of this intersection there also lays a concept of communication according to Livingston. The difference from the previous symbol is that this context focuses on the communication between two different institutions, Javanese and Catholic, that exhibit their own traditional prosperity to be united and combined becoming the ideal formation (Couzin, 2017; Oosterbaan, 2017).

The following interpretation, about this Ganjuran temple, the scared hearth shrine, represents the image of cultural heritage. In this context, the temple is not merely the ancient inscription from Catholic missionary, but it is also acknowledged as the heritage in cultural landscape. According to the oral narration, Azis explained in historical overview, when the temple had been totally established, Smutzer invited the Monsieur Van

Velsen in February 11, 1930 to officially announce the building of the temple and also the attendance of King of Yogyakarta, the Sultan of Hamengkubuwono, authenticate it as one of the cultural heritage in Yogyakarta (Aris Dwiyanto, 2014). The agenda of this ceremony also becomes a big event of Catholic mass, a public worship, participated by a lot of religious people, which demonstrates the moment of resignation of Javanese land to the sacred hearth of Jesus in Catholic faith. This narration could be the indication of acknowledgement from several sides of authority including the Catholic figures, the Kingdom's member, and the Javanese society. The acknowledgment refers to the existence of the temple which is considered as the cultural prosperity in the heritage spot in the context of interpreting the symbolization.

Furthermore, the last classification of this discussion is the temple; the sacred hearth shrine symbolizes the space of religious pilgrimage. By the time, this temple is no longer becoming the place for such heritage and prosperity in Catholic Ganjuran Church, but it extends to be the place of pilgrimage. The interesting aspect is that this pilgrimage space is not only recognized and visited by the Catholic adherents but also commonly other religious people from Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and other religious affiliation (Website., 2014). Another evidence, by the 1990s, this temple had been largely visited by the non-Catholic pilgrims and mostly the Javanese Muslim (Bagus Laksana, n.d.). This context demonstrates an issue of the shrine's popularity. Ganjuran church and the temple can attract many people from other regions and religions to come over and visit this location for different purposes, such as tourism, academic observation and religious pilgrimage for instances.

In additional perspective, this symbol, the space of pilgrimage, could relate to the sign and symbolic communication between the temple as the objective discourse and the context of outsiders in terms of spiritual influences and the greatness of religion. Another saying, this interpretation communicates the religious and social aspect in the case of interacting

and interconnecting the existence of religion, culture and society which is implemented through the event of pilgrimage.

Considering that brief analysis, regarding the four classifications of the symbol of the Ganjuran temple, the sacred hearth shrine, the interpretations above could encounter another worldview of the existence of temple in the context of academic, cultural, and religious discourse. Every single symbol of the temple captures a particular interpretation in line with the sign and symbolic communication between the objects namely the temple and any kind of aspects surround it including the exhibition of identity in front of the public sphere, the intersection of the traditional prosperities from both sides, the image of cultural heritage in the larger context of national environment, and the space of pilgrimage.

## **Conclusion**

To some extent, the case of Ganjuran temple, the sacred hearth shrine in Catholic, is the indication of religious existence in the context of social and cultural communication. The presence of Dutch colonization creates another standpoint of the awareness of spiritual enhancement toward the colonized side in the positive orientation. Even though Joseph and Julius Smutzer's initial project in the colonial phase is not about Catholic missionary in fact it is about the business project, they could make such kind of integration between the spirituality and material stuff. The important aspect is when they emphasize at the devotion to the deity in managing the business and how finally they could attract the local society as the employees to convert and take an account of learning spirituality from the Catholic faith. They indeed could introduce a Catholic faith in the face of locality not from the Western style of precepts.

The symbols of the temple as the sacred Catholic placed in three classifications among the identity aspect, the intersection of traditional prosperity, the image of cultural heritage, and also the space of pilgrimage

are the discussions on how this place can be popular in the context of public environment. Every kind of the interpretation regarding to the symbol has a specific significance in the reality, in which, each of them is the sign of communication that denotes a certain issue based on the religious and social construction. It is importantly contributive in the sense of understanding the spot of the shrine from the image of the larger society, the religious believers and followers from different affiliations. Another important thing is about the use of local identity in making the global one, in this case, by utilizing and recognizing the local aspect, the Javanese, in taking an account of religious proselytizing, the Catholic faith. It can be the mark point which leads to the dynamic interaction in the positive sense. In brief, a process of understanding the symbolic communication of sacred space in another context of religion plays a significant position in doing such kind of reflection.

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