

## Research article

# Creating Ceramic Art Using Indonesian Cultural Elements to Enrich Local Ceramic Craft Culture

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**Abstract.**

Ceramics have spread across various regions in Indonesia. These ceramic products are produced using various techniques and styles. However, not many ceramic producers use Indonesia's culture to inspire their products. The purpose of this research was to enrich Indonesia's ceramic variants. The research process involved: (1) local Indonesian culture was reviewed as the basis for ceramic creation; (2) ceramic artwork was created based on Indonesia's culture; (3) a range of techniques and shapes from certain Indonesian cultural elements were explored and applied; (4) visualizations of the shaping process were created in the campus studio in the Art and Design Department, Faculty of Literature, State University of Malang, using stoneware and earthenware materials processed by manual techniques and machines; the clay was collected from the Southern Malang region, and was mixed with quartz and kaolin; (5) the finishing process was carried out; and (6) the final creation was analyzed. It is expected that this research will add value in enriching Indonesia's culture, especially in ceramic art.

**Keywords:** artwork exhibition, ceramic art, creative

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## 1. Introduction

Ceramic craft products in Indonesia has been existed since pre-historic era. Product is used to fulfill daily need in agrarian life or farm-based life. In such era, people need ceramic artwork in form of vessel. This ceramic vessel is good to store farm products or processing results in pre-historic era [1]. This went to Indonesia's ceramic development in Hindu-Buddha era. In this era, ceramic is not only known as vessels, kitchenware and burial tools [2], but also used as animism-dynamism religious tool and facilities. It's proven by various ceramic products produced by crafter in Hindu-Buddha era, which consist of religious ceremony needs, whether as incense also other accessories, or water container and reliefs in temples [3].

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In early ceramic development in Indonesia, Hindu-Buddha era, ceramic has become important part in people daily life. It's shown by temples reliefs which shown people daily life using kendhi (water container) or kitchenware used as daily life, carved clearly in temple's reliefs, in this case, Borobudur temple reliefs.

Ceramic culture in the next era held continuously in Islamic era to colonial era. It can be seen by the rising of ceramic items which are not only from earthenware. There's new material type, glazed stoneware which is popular by "Delf ceramic" in Dutch colonial era. This type of ceramic is still used until now, as interior and exterior aesthetic elements. It can be proven by various ceramic product made by crafter and artists. Those ceramics are created by contemporary creative ideas with modern themes. Surely this ceramic development also followed by their processing technique, whether in material processing, or work in artwork shaping [4].

In this current era, along with tourism industry development, ceramic is not only used as interior aesthetic element, but also accessory element like tourism souvenir items traded in various tourism center. Surely all of these development didn't only count technical and shape aspect, but also function, which is interior aesthetic element function, accessory function, and other functions related with human practical needs. In various traditional ceramic craft centers, there are also several phenomenons. For example, Kasongan ceramic center, Plered ceramic center in Purwakarta, Dinoyo ceramic center in Malang, Mayong ceramic center in Jepara, glazed stoneware ceramic center in Probolinggo, earthenware ceramic center in Bali, and also earthenware and glazed stoneware center in Bali (Tanah Agung and others) [5].

Such development can also be seen in ceramic centers outside Java. For example, Penujak ceramic center and Masbagik ceramic center in Lombok, also other ceramic center outside Indonesia. Ceramic in their origins, for example countries like China, India, and others also shown similar development phase. Indonesia has various attractive local culture. However, ceramic products developed by crafter or artists didn't much dig Indonesia's culture as creation idea. It means, ceramic crafters are lack in extracting local culture potential as creation idea in producing a ceramic artwork [6]. It's really unfortunate since ceramic artwork needs further development with their origins characters. It can help to enrich Indonesia's culture, embodied in ceramic artwork. So when it published outside Indonesia, its culture will be recognized more and getting more popularity through ceramic artwork [7].

This research emphasize on the importance of creation or creative research aimed to extract local culture potential as creation idea for a product. When this characteristics are promoted outside Indonesia, this ceramic art will strengthen the image of Indonesia's

culture. In addition, this creation process shows that principles in ceramic making as researched really plays an important role. In this research, not all culture are selected as creation idea source, only the potential one as example to develop further Indonesia's local culture as ceramic creation idea [8]. The researcher chose "Reog Ponorogo" as representation of Indonesia's culture which has attractive character in developing ceramic artwork. Problems researched can be formulated as: How to formulate Indonesia's cultural concept as creation idea and how exploration and visualization process of ceramic artwork sourced from Indonesia's attractive culture also tried to find out about how the result of such process. Researcher also tried to do an artwork exhibition or product promotion from creation result to communities.

## 2. Method

This creation process is a form of ceramic art activity by determining creation method [9]. These creation steps are: (1) Selecting potential local culture. After that, processing phase from idea source, formulated into artwork creation concept. (2) Exploration process is a process to search possibilities which can be used to develop ceramic product, whether technique or shape exploration. Technique exploration process is preparing tools and material, whether material processing or tools for creation or artwork shaping process, by doing sketches or creating three dimensional model from clays or other materials to be shaped into three dimensional miniature. (3) Shaping process, is artwork embodiment process by creating artwork from material and shape exploration. Selected material will be used to embody an artwork with selected technique. This shaping technique is done with manual technique using Malang local clays material with plastical characteristic. (4) Firing process, in the end of activity, there's a firing process. (5) Creating souvenir ceramic and analyze ceramic product for tourism souvenir [10][11].

## 3. Data Explanation and Discussion

### 3.1. Creative Process to Dig Idea Source into Artwork Concept

Idea extraction process is a process to search/select potential idea source from local culture to be developed into ceramic artwork concept. This phase was done by selecting Indonesia's attractive culture, whether done by direct observation to cultural attraction, such as dance or other performing arts. This idea extraction is selected as activity to do

observation process to potential idea source to be selected, determined, and formulated into artwork basic ideas to be embodied into ceramic artwork [12].

In this phase, there's already potential idea source. It is "Reog Ponorogo" art attractive culture. The selection is based on attractive aspect appeared into the potential culture. When it's created into artwork, there will be unique artistic potential. That's why, in this idea source observation, researcher attended directly and felt things related with artistic elements from that form, by doing direct observation supported by documentation tools, such as camera or video [13]. Camera equipment will make easier in recording artistic moment, when the cultural attraction is documented and produced photographic image. Attractive culture with 'Dadak Merak' attribute as part of Reog Ponorogo, has artistic aspect in vertical shape, then special movement shape, which made researcher chose it as idea source. After observation, the idea source from field and media is processed. The idea then formulated into ceramic artwork creation concept [14].

### 3.2. Creation Concept Formulation

Creation concept formulation is determining artwork concept referred to artistic, functional, and technical aspects. From artistic aspect, local culture select Reog Ponorogo which has extraordinary artistic aspect, since there's 'Dadak Merak' shape as main form of 'Singo Barong'. This 'Dadak merak' shape has ornament element of peacock feathers. When this aspect re-created, it will make artwork shaping and ornament shaping easier since those ornament elements achievement from those aspects are large. In its middle part, 'Singo Barong' form shows the main characteristics of "Reog Ponorogo", which easily selected as creation, since it represents its special elements, an animal with human body. In "Reog Ponorogo" tradition, "Reog" dancer will attach "Singo Barong" in his head, then the dancers' hands will support "Dadak merak". This representation is determined by researcher to be created as ceramic artwork, which then represent a figure of "Singo Barong" dancer combined with "Dadak Merak" decoration to represent "Reog Ponorogo" art. In "Reog Ponorogo" tradition, a dancer support an extremely heavy "Singo Barong" head and "Dadak Merak" which is an exceptional sight. It describes attractive and dramatic aspect of "Reog Ponorogo" art to be embodied as ceramic artwork [15].

In artwork shape composition aspect, there's a dancer movement represented into ceramic artwork. Hand position in a supporting pose, with legs tried to step forward, dancing "Dadak Merak" and "Singo Barong" in their head. From artwork function aspect, it's an interior aesthetic element product. Interior aesthetic element product is explained

as product to decorate a room, whether hotel or household. It's possible since ceramic artwork processing has been deformed to make possible a figurative ceramic artwork with "Reog Ponorogo" theme [9].

### 3.3. Material Exploration and Artwork Shaping Process

Material exploration and artwork shaping is started by processing clays, then grinded using clay grinding machine. After clay processing, shaping process is done by pinching technique. Material processing which started with clay processing become important part since if clay processing is not suitable with standard, artwork shaping will get troubled. When it's already shaped as artwork, it can be damaged too. That's why in material processing, it's important to select and mix material. It's possible there's other elements mixed with clays, such as gravel and dirt which will disturb shaping process and firing process [16].

The first material processing is mixing stoneware clay from Batur – Southern Malang, mixed with quartz with 60% clay and 40% quartz. Both material are mixed after clays are watered evenly. Mixign is done in wet condition, by shoveling and stepping into the clays to make it flat. This stepping process are done back and forth until they mixed well. When the clays are already crushed, next process is grinding by using stirring machine. This material processing is needed to crush and mix both elements (clays and quartz) to make it homogeny and soft. This softening process is achieved through mixing by stirring machine consist of two cylinders to grind the material [17][16].

This process is done several times, five times at minimum to make sure material elements are mixed perfectly. Water usage also needed to avoid clays either too soft or hard. Too soft or hard will effect final result after firing. That's why along grinding, it's important to control clays humidity to optimize its elasticity as needed.

After mixing and grinding material process, the next process is shaping. This process embodied artwork from clays referred to design or shape concept determined, which is Indonesia's local culture, "Reog Ponorogo" as creation idea. Shaping is started by preparing pottery wheel as base to shape artwork. Shaping process is done by putting clays on the base of pottery wheel, then shaped using hand (fingers), sclupted to form artwork wall. After the wall is formed, added small twist following artwork shape plan [18]. This artwork shape is "Reog Ponorogo" dancer legs continued in dancer's abdomen, then followed by smoothing.

While waiting the water content on that shape, researcher smoothed other part to avoid it too mushy. After the process, it is continued with shaping body figure up to



**Figure 1:** Ceramic shaping process from Reog Ponorogo Culture Creation.

head. In this phase, detail, complexity, and anatomy aspects needed to be paid attention, especially in its “Reog Ponorogo” dancer face and figure. In this process, researcher also shape the ornaments and detail using twisting and attaching technique while waiting the artwork harder and its water content reduced. Twisting and attaching process is done by preparing clays twist to be accessories. These accessories will be shaped as hair, arms ornaments, chest ornaments, legs, and others.

After finishing body and legs, process continued with “Dadak Merak” shaping process [19]. This “Dadak Merak” shaping is done by creating a clay slab to be attached as “Dadak Merak” ornaments. This process is done in careful way, since if it’s done recklessly, below part will be cracked since it support a heavy load in its upper part. After “Dadak Merak” base is finished, the next process is detailing by creating ornament with stamp and scratch, the ornament is created to imitate feather shape of “Dadak Merak”. After this process is done, next step is drying process. It’s a process to vaporize water content in clayso it will be ready for firing process [20].

Ceramic firing process is done by reversed firing system stove with gas material. This firing process is important to produce a strong and artistic artwork. That’s why, this process need to pay attention technical characters of artwork, making sure that water content in artwork is really dried up. It should also be prepared to enter firing stove. In firing process, there’s also heating process, maturation, and also cooling process. Heating process is aimed to eliminate water content in fired ceramic. Maturation process turned it into mature artwork by firing it using 9000 to 10000 C temperatures. Cooling

process is end of activity, where researcher unloaded the artwork from stove and make sure it's totally secure [21].



**Figure 2:** Ceramic craft from Reog Ponorogo Culture as Creation Inspiration.

## 4. Conclusion

Creative activities are doing artwork process using Indonesia's attractive culture as idea source to produce ceramic artwork with artistic aspect. Creative activity is started by digging idea source, processing idea into concept (concept formulation), then continue with artwork exploration by creating a ceramic artwork sourced from Indonesia's attractive culture, which is Reog Ponorogo. There are various local culture, but in this research, researcher selected one local culture, which is Reog Ponorogo. It's based on value or shape in that local culture. Researcher considered when doing creation, it will be a ceramic artwork with artistic value and shape uniqueness. Not many ceramic artists or crafters turned into this creation. In the next process, researcher created Reog Ponorogo dance figurative ceramic shape. The process is done in manual technique, using direct pinching technique.

In direct hand shaping process, it needs to prepare plastical stoneware clays material which is processed by grinding machine. Grinded clay can be turned plastical and ready to shape using direct pinching technique. Shaping process also use pinching technique

which is not only using fingers, but also supported by grain tool to create ornament details. After artwork shaping, researcher stepped into drying and firing process. This is final phase of artwork creation to eliminate water content and strengthen the artwork by firing in ceramic stove. Firing process was done by reversed firing system stove, using gas material. After the process done, the researcher analyze and evaluate creation result.

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