



Beyond the Rhetorical Function of Cinematic Metaphors in Indonesian Cultural Documentaries

Gerardus Majella Adhyanggono 

English Department, Faculty of Language and Arts,
Soegijapranata Catholic University, Semarang, 50234, Indonesia
adhy@unika.ac.id

Abstract. A metaphor can be part of the compelling elements that anchor a film's subject matter. The presence of a metaphor in a film, including that of a documentary, may further illustrate what the film projects. The significance of metaphor is due to its power to invoke a new way of seeing realities. This power of metaphor enables the reader and viewer to apprehend the discourse behind the language of the medium using metaphor. Three Indonesian cultural documentary films, *Bathik: Bebet lan Bobot Lakuning Urip*, *Nyadran à la Sorowajan*, and *Ksatria Kerajaan* uniquely exhibit the significance of their cinematic metaphors to provide further interpretation behind what the films on the surface show. This article identifies cinematic metaphors in the three cultural documentaries and examines their functions. The analysis also discusses what the films articulate cinematically and argumentatively and the extent to which the films' cinematic metaphors help constitute the articulation. In examining the documentaries, the approach uses Ricoerian hermeneutic reading to investigate the current issue of cinematic metaphors. Such a method is applied using three systematic steps. First, it is essential to understand the documentaries aesthetically and argumentatively. The second is to explain the cinematic metaphors identified in the films and their functions in the context of the film's arguments. The third is to reinterpret the films' arguments and explain possible alterations found. The result suggests that the cinematic metaphors identified help alter the documentaries' projection, moving beyond their rhetorical function.

Keywords: Cinematic metaphor, Indonesian cultural documentary film, rhetorical function

1 Introduction

Metaphors are often misunderstood or even equated as symbols, but they differ. Paul Ricoeur maintains that metaphor is not the expanded version of a symbol. While the meaning of a symbol is out of the free attribution to the object made as a symbol, the value of a metaphor resides in the referential qualities or resemblance attached to it. Yet, simultaneously, the referential attributes go beyond the references (Simms, 2016). Because of this similitude and dissimilitude, metaphor is commonly used in fictional works.

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Nevertheless, it does not mean that a documentary film may not present metaphors in interweaving facts to its viewers. Identifying metaphors in literary fiction is conducted by focusing on the language used in the transactions between meanings in lexis (words), semantic (sentence), and hermeneutic (discourse) levels, which cannot be independent of each other (Ricoeur, 2004). However, since film is not a literary work using language per se, such a method cannot be rigidly and blindly applied. Through its artistic composition, the film's image may demonstrate the incorporation of metaphors in a cinematic work. The creative composition here does not only mean how visual objects in a film image are technically framed but also how they imaginatively bring forth new meanings or fresh insights to the whole context of the film. The film's image is the medium's visual language where the cinematic metaphors' signification is articulated (Whittock, 1990).

Considering these all, three Indonesian cultural documentary films, *Bathik: Bebetlan Bobot Lakuning Urip* (Chrisna, 2008), *Nyadran à la Sorowajan* (Noor, 2002) and *Ksatria Kerajaan* (Darmawan & Nugroho, 2005), uniquely express their cinematic metaphors that go beyond the standard rhetorical and referential functions of a documentary film. It is the fundamental reason why these films were selected. Chrisna's film, *Bathik*, is an expository documentary complimenting the philosophical values of leadership on the Javanese *bathik* pattern called *Semen Rama*. *Bathik* is of a Javanese traditional clothe popular in Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries, such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Brunei. Noor's *Nyadran à la Sorowajan* is an expository documentary celebrating the villagers' interreligious gathering through their socio-cultural tradition of *nyadran* in Sorowajan. *Nyadran* is a Javanese-style ceremony to remember and respect the departed souls of family members, relatives, and ancestors. Darmawan and Nugroho's *Ksatria Kerajaan* is a portrait documentary representing a royal guard's ordinary, peaceful life at the Sultanate Palace of Yogyakarta. The shared feature of these films lies in the idea of what it means to be a Javanese.

Using these films as the sample, the writer further argues that cinematic metaphors, when present in a film, significantly help offer a new meaning or fresh insight to the audience of the whole meaning of the film. This proposition seems to be the case as the metaphors employed in the documentaries strongly indicate that the projection of being a Javanese can be manipulated with the help of these metaphors.

2 Review of Literature

In conveying their imagination and vision, literary and visual works need figurative expressions, one of which is metaphors. Therefore, metaphor becomes a strategy of discourse applied in the work bearing both the rhetorical power and reference to actualities. Thus, metaphor has a rhetorical function. Metaphors are closely related to imagination in theory and their manifestation in the works. (Ricoeur, 2004)

In cinema, metaphors generally refer to the images embodying conveyed meanings and their projected realities (Brown, 2012). This concept is known as a cinematic metaphor, "the presentation of one idea in terms of another, belonging to a different category, so that our understanding of the first idea is transformed, or so that from the fusion

of the two ideas a new one is created” (Whittock, 1990). There are ten types of cinematic metaphor: explicit comparison (epiphora), identity asserted, identity implied by substitution, juxtaposition (diaphor), metonymy (associated idea substituted), synecdoche (part replaces whole), objective correlative, distortion (hyperbole, caricature), rule disruption, and chiming (parallelism (Whittock, 1990).

With the thesis statement above, a Ricoeurian hermeneutic reading of the examined films comes to be soundly explanatory. The hermeneutic approach of a cinematic work itself needs to be understood as the following.

[...] the process of film interpretation and is engaged in the investigation of the problem of how different meanings of the same film may arise and coexist. Film hermeneutics [...] considers interpretations as inherently relative and contextualized. It does not pursue the construction of a grand theory because it is aware of the historicity of its (and any) perspective and of how film, [...], is exposed to an experience that can always reveal new interpretations and meanings (Baracco, 2017).

Adopting hermeneutics principles is therefore relevant to this general understanding of film hermeneutics.

The article focuses on the metaphoric meanings of some visual objects in the documentaries. The attempt requires interpreting the visual objects and the films themselves as texts. Such a perspective is a textual interpretation of a film, which works toward elucidating the film itself as an object (Baracco, 2017). On this basis, the Ricoeurian hermeneutics reading of the examined documentary films comes to be crucially helpful.

Ricoeurian hermeneutics of film is an interpretive reading of film based on Ricoeur’s philosophical thoughts on an object as a text. Thus, a film is also a text. With this, the scheme of Ricoeurian hermeneutic reading is represented by the relationship between an interpreter (the one doing the reading) and a text (the film). In terms of how such an interpretive method comes to practice, Ricoeur describes it through three-stage movement: understanding (the film), explaining (the film), and renewed understanding (of the film) (Baracco, 2017).

3 Method

To apply such a Ricoeurian hermeneutics reading in practice, the interpreter of the examined documentaries initially tried to immerse himself in the film world by understanding the documentaries’ forms and styles. In this first phase or understanding stage, the interpreter’s initial guess or expectation met the aesthetic and narrative elements of the film world. Here, the interpreter identified the significance of metaphors in the film world. In the explanatory stage, the interpreter analyzed the literal and the discourse meanings of the metaphors in the film. In this second phase, the interpreter moved from explanation to an in-depth understanding of the film world. In the third stage, the renewed knowledge, the interpreter brought forward his critical understanding to comprehend the film world from a new perspective. This new perspective was different

from the initial one in the first stage. Yet, simultaneously, the interpreter was fully aware that his renewed understanding is a possibility of many interpretations, which are subject to change contextually over time (Baracco, 2017).

Considering a film as a text and the topic of this article, the more urgent question now would be how to read the “metaphoricity” of film images connected to Javanese identity as the common characteristic of the examined documentaries. Therefore, to determine which visual objects are metaphoric and which are not, one must view whether or not they produce new meaning(s) in the context of the films. This identification enables one to perceive visual objects as live metaphors, not dead ones. The former refers to the metaphors that help provide new meaning, whereas the latter does not (Ricoeur, *Interpretation theory: Discourse and the surplus of meaning*, 1976). Treating an object as a metaphor means correlating its characteristics or qualities to resemble another being compared (Ricoeur, 2004).

Ricoeur and Trevor have accentuated their shared view that objects in the film images can be considered metaphors when they provide new meanings and imagination to the whole context of the work through which rhetoric takes part in constituting them. This article attests to whether the metaphors in the documentaries function as rhetorical ornaments or may function more than that. What “rhetorical ornaments” means here corresponds to how the objects considered metaphors propose a particular idea within its film image cinematic boundary. Otherwise, they are part of greater signification to the whole film context, transforming their representations to be more meaningful (Friedman, 2010). The rhetorical function of a metaphor begins when the linguistic and visual codes of a thing (word, object, item, action) end, which results in a signification or meaning-making process.

Nonetheless, whether or not they function more than as rhetorical ornaments depends on one’s meaning-making process in the whole context of the work and discourse produced (Ricoeur, 1976). Similarly, the interpretation of a film depends on the organization and development of the film rhetoric rather than the film grammar. And this is achieved through understanding its cinematic metaphors. Cinematic metaphors pave the way for the interpretation of film images. A film image acquires meaning over and above its designation because of its contextualisation with other film image (Whittock, 1990). This condition suggests that cinematic metaphor is subject to interpretations drawn from its designation and signification.

There are film images embodying metaphors in the documentaries examined. Therefore, the remaining task now is to identify them and attest to their metaphoricity, whether it is mere rhetorical ornament or implying imagination, as claimed by both Ricoeur and Trevor above. The results and discussion of this article comprise three sections, with the main points revolving around understanding the examined films, identifying the cinematic metaphors in some images, and disclosing their signification in the documentaries pertinent to being Javanese.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Understanding *Bathik: Bebet lan Bobot Lakuning Urip, Nyadran à la Sorowajan, and Ksatria Kerajaan*

4.1.1 *Bathik: Bebet lan Bobot Lakuning Urip*

Bathik: Bebet lan Bobot Lakuning Urip is an advocacy and expository documentary film released in Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia, in 2008. The documentary runs for about twenty minutes. The film is expressed in Indonesian language and a few scenes are in the Javanese language. The film video format uses a high-definition one or HDV. The film director is Maria Chrisna while Rafika Titi Ariyami becomes the film producer.

Bathik is a film that depicts *Asta Brata* behind *Semen Rama*, the name of a traditional Javanese garment motif from the Sunanate Palace of Surakarta in Central Java. *Asta Brata*, “The Eight Statesman’s Virtues” is a Javanese classical value of leadership of Hindu origin. It represents the eight divine characteristics of eight Hindu Gods: *Chandra*, *Brahma*, *Indra*, *Kuwera*, *Bayu*, *Baruna*, *Surya*, and *Yama* (Moertono, 2009; Endraswara S., 2013). *Asta* means “eight,” and *Brata* means “spiritual or mental ways.” Educated contemporary Javanese apprehend *Asta Brata* as the spiritual and mental guidance for someone intending to become a leader.

In the classical Javanese worldview, a leader must acquire and practice *Asta Brata*. Having a gentle quality as *Chandra* (the Moon God), a leader has to be soothing and forgiving. Showing a deterministic character like *Brahma* (the Fire and Creation God), a leader must be definitive, strong, and determined. Expressing a courageous feature as *Indra* (the Stars and War God), a leader ought to be brave. Displaying considerate and generous values like *Kuwera* (the Treasure God), a leader must be wise and benevolent. Demonstrating prudent and thoughtful qualities as *Bayu* (the Wind God), a leader must be cautious in judging things and pay attention to detailed matters. Conveying vast knowledge and patient virtues like *Baruna* (the Ocean God), a leader ought to be extensively knowledgeable, open-minded, forbearing, and composed. Showing a life-giving characteristic as *Surya* (the Sun God), a leader has to be inspirational for others and empower them to grow. Having a just characteristic as *Yama* (the Justice and the Underworld God), a leader is to be fair and honest. The classical or traditional Javanese worldview always perceives such an ideal leader with divine characteristics as being the source of power and blessing for the common people where their trust, respect, and love rest upon such a leader (Moertono, 2009; Bratasiswara, 2000). With this content as the film premise, the documentary’s message is evident in that *Semen Rama bathik* is worth studying and preserving.

Bathik does not present a particular social actor to give his or her perspective throughout the film. Yet, the film employs a reenactment method to present the film narrative. It shows a rural woman in a traditional Javanese outfit, *kebaya* in the opening and concluding scenes. Such a narration emphasizes the film’s subject matter, *Semen Rama*. Another technique used in the film is through the classic documentary’s narration and testimony. It demonstrates three male social actors conveying their testimonies on *Semen Rama*. The prominent narratorial technique employed in the documentary is a

voice-of-god commentary. The film is set in some locations in Surakarta or Solo, such as a periphery rural area by the city, the Sunanate Palace of Surakarta, the *Klewer* Market (*Pasar Klewer*), and the Kauman of Surakarta.

The film begins with an establishing shot of the beautiful landscape of Java's rural area with its morning sunshine, rice fields, and trees. Then, a farmer walking across rice fields comes into the scene. The film narrative starts with a reenactment scene depicting a simple rural life in Java. It presents an aged-woman in *kebaya* and washing *bathik* at a fountain near the rice fields. Next, she returns to her house where she dries the *bathik*. Afterward, the film shows *Klewer* Market, in Solo, capturing diverse trading activities on the outside and inside of the market. The film then depicts a traditional festivity at the Sunanate Palace of Surakarta. The following scene presents a series of testimony about the palace and its history as well as the development of *bathik* in Surakarta, particularly that of *Semen Rama* with its *Asta brata* in it. The film ends with the reenactment of a dramatized conversation among female artisans about *Semen Rama* and *Asta Brata* at a *bathik* workshop.

4.1.2 *Nyadran à la Sorowajan*

Unlike *Bathik*, *Nyadran à la Sorowajan* belongs to an expository documentary film. It was produced in 2002. The film duration lasts twenty-three minutes. Indonesian is the primary language of the film in combination with the Javanese language in some scenes. The cinematographer produces the film in a standard digital video format. Huda S. Noor is the film director with M. Jadul Maulana as the film producer.

Nyadran à la Sorowajan is a film portraying the villagers' tradition of *nyadran* in Sorowajan. *Nyadran* is an ancient Javanese tradition of venerating the departed souls of ancestors and family members by visiting their graves and sprinkling water and flowers on them (Mulder, 2005; Endraswara S. , 2013) . Sorowajan is a village near the city of Yogyakarta in Indonesia. The film's main idea is about *nyadran* tradition focusing on its interfaith gathering. Interestingly, filmmakers claim their documentary to be an ethnographic one. Certainly, such a claim does not necessarily refer to an ethnographic film of colonial times. In this old colonial frame, cultural aspects of the colonized were often regarded as inferior to the superior white cultures and yet mysterious and fascinating to watch (Kuhn, 2012). In contemporary redefinition, an ethnographic film is about the representation of a particular culture whether filmed from the first-person or third-person viewpoint (Matthews, 2011).

Nyadran à la Sorowajan sets off by depicting the Sorowajan village with its multi-religious followers living harmoniously. Then, the villagers cleaning their ancestors' cemeteries come into the scene. It shows how they clean the graves together, and then individually pray for the departed souls of their relatives and ancestors. What follows is the scene of an interfaith gathering. It consecutively shows an introductory remark from the village head, the communal prayers led by various religious leaders respectively, the shared donation, and the feast. Then, a series of testimonies by some religious leaders and villagers are present on screen. They explain the *nyadran* tradition, its history, and transformation intersected with the Indonesian social and political shift from 1965 onward, from the Old Regime of President Sukarno to the New Regime of

President Suharto. The film ends with a scene of the interfaith gathering, the communal feast, and togetherness with an evaluative voice-over, questioning the “fate” of the tradition in the future. This method is unusual in a contemporary ethnographic film because Jay Ruby, an American visual anthropologist, considers that voice-over has been “*déclassé*” in an ethnographic film for so long. However, *Nyadran à la Sorowajan* still employs this narrating technique. Arranged in such a way, the documentary shows how the Javanese of Sorowajan have successfully maintained their religious tolerance, part of their Javanese identity individually and communally demonstrated in their interfaith gathering.

4.1.3 *Ksatria Kerajaan*

Ksatria Kerajaan is a mixed of expository and portrait documentary film produced in 2005. The running time of the film is twenty-one minutes in Indonesian language with English subtitles. The documentary is filmed in a standard digital video format. Agus Darmawan and Fajar Nugroho are the directors of the film with Shanty Harmayn as its producer. It demonstrates the modest life of the royal guards at the Sultanate Palace of Yogyakarta as the film’s theme. The main narrator is Pardi who is frequently present on screen, guiding the viewers on the film narrative through his testimony to the life of a royal guard and their belief in *ngalab berkah*. It is a folk belief to pursue the Sultan’s blessing to have a peaceful and meaningful life by serving him and the royal court. The film also adopts testimonies from other supporting social actors. Some locales used to be film sets, such as the Sultanate Palace of Yogyakarta, Pardi’s house, the residence of Prince Yudhaningrat, and the northern esplanade of the palace.

As mentioned above, the film narrative comprises the testimonies of Pardi and other actors. The film’s main idea revolves around the simplicity of Pardi’s life and his folk belief of *ngalab berkah*. Pardi believes that by serving the Sultan and his royal court his life and the life of his family will be peaceful and contented, irrespective of the meager stipend he receives from his servitude. The documentary argues that in the progressive and unprecedented post-modern era, some Javanese people still believe in such a folk belief. The belief proves to be “workable” to those people. Despite their meager income, the royal guards believe in it and express it through their loyalty, perseverance, and acceptance of their choice.

The documentary begins with establishing shots of some interiors of the Sultanate Palace, such as the relief, the palace wall, the royal gate, and the palace’s watch tower. Then, the film unfolds the historical involvement and support of the court in the struggle for Indonesia’s independence from 1945 to 1949. Next, the scene shows a series of testimonies from several people of the royal family and court retainers, conveying the belief of *ngalab berkah* among them, including those of the royal guards. Subsequently, the main figure of the film, Pardi appears on the screen. He explains why he and his family feel deeply grateful for being a royal guard, serving the Sultan as well as the royal families. This focuses on Pardi’s modest life and narration takes most of the scenes to the end of the film. It shows how he sincerely accepts a meager stipend from the court; how he still supports his family with his side job as a street vendor; and how he

overcomes any difficulties and shortages in life. The film ends with a scene demonstrating Pardi, going for his duty for a royal festivity with enthusiasm.

4.2 The Rhetorical and Hermeneutic Functions of the Cinematic Metaphors

The film metaphors of *Bathik: Bebet lan Bobot Lakuning Urip* are twilight and an artisans' discourse at a *bathik* workshop. Twilight is illustrated in the scene recounting the history of royal succession at Kasunanan Palace of Surakarta, from Pakubuwono IV to Pakubuwono V. The twilight scene is presented in scene 9.



Fig. 1. Twilight at Kasunanan Palace

It illustrates a gloomy situation at Kasunanan Palace, washed by the orange color of a cloudy twilight. This cinematic scene metaphorically illustrates the departure of Pakubuwono V as revealed in the voice-over accompanying the scene: “Unfortunately, Pakubuwono V’s reign was very short. Only three years after his coronation, he passed away due to a chronic condition” (Chrisna, 2008) scene 9. The bright daylight with blue sky turns into yellowish and orange twilight with fast-moving clouds. Then, the sun sets behind the cloudy afternoon sky, marking the day's end before nightfall. The combination of such a natural phenomenon and the palace provides the ambient decline of something.

Concerning the documentary theme, this ambient decline suggests that the metaphoric twilight rhetorically expresses anxiety over the ignorance of young people about their understanding of the philosophical values of *bathik* motifs from which they may learn. It is further echoed by Sugiyatno, a *bathik* expert, who testifies that people, especially youths, need or should know the meanings of *bathik* motifs. In particular, they should know the meaning of a *bathik* variant called *jarik*. *Jarik* is *bebet*; the philosophical meaning of *bebet* is much about descriptions of human life. He thinks this is one reason the Javanese are now experiencing cultural drawbacks. This situation is due to their indifference and lack of knowledge about the meanings of life, as represented in *bathik*. People do not know what they wear as they are reluctant to comprehend what they put on (Chrisna, 2008) scene 13.

In this rhetorical function, such a gloomy twilight resembles the anxiety above. The gloominess and the fading of daylight are similar to the indifference and ignorance of

young Javanese people about important lessons they can learn from understanding *bathik*. Given this interpretation, the twilight scene signals the anxiety issue brought to light in the film.

As for the artisans' conversation, the documentary shows a scene of a re-enacted social conversation among *bathik* artisans at a *bathik* workshop in the film's last scene. The scene captures five female artisans drawing *bathik* motifs on white fabric.



Fig. 2. Artisans' conversation on *Semen Rama* at a *bathik* workshop

As a prelude to the discussion, the camera focuses on a woman (A1) singing a Javanese song, “*Soyang-Soyang*.” Afterward, the five female artisans appear. The woman who previously sang (A1) starts the conversation by questioning another artisan, Mrs. Sriwijji (A2) as shown below.

A1: Mrs. Sriwijji, who are you making *bathik* for?

A2: Mr. Gunawan

A1: Oh, again?

A3: Hey, me too.

A1: How come?

A3: I was ordered to make seven pieces of *Semen Rama bathik* for Mr. Gunawan.

A1: Oh...that's why I heard he would run for a major or a governor.

A3: No way, I heard that he is running for president.

A1: Oh, is he? Mrs. Parmi (A4), do you know why he ordered *Semen Rama*?

A4: No...

A1: It is because *Semen Rama* illustrates King Rama Wijaya's advice to Gunawan Wibisana.

A3: Hey, it suits him then.

A1: It does indeed.

A5: Yes...

A1: King Rama... and then Gunawan for Mr. Gunawan, right?

A3: Right...

- A1: Mrs. Tarmi (A5), do you know what advice is described in *Semen Rama*?... It's about *Asta Brata*.
- A3: What is *Asta Brata*?
- A1: It's eight virtues for those wishing to be leaders. So, if Mr. Gunawan is going to run for a public leadership position, he must know *Asta Brata* first.
- A3: What does it say?
- A1: Huh, I fell asleep when listening to the *Wayang Kulit* performance on the radio.
- A3: I guess that it must be about good guidance for future leaders to exercise their power wisely so that they won't be unjust and oppressive to their people, and they'll be able to build the country more assertive and prosperous.
- (A1 starts singing "*Soyang-Soyang*" again) Hey, look, when we observe this *Semen Rama* motif, there are a lot of patterns here, such as animals, boats, and trees (Chrisna, 2008) scene 15.

Here, it is clear how the conversation regarding the philosophical values of *Semen Rama*, *Asta Brata*, is illustrated to have been a public discourse pertinent to politics. This scene is purported to show and justify two things. First is what Prince Puger, a member of the royal family and one of the social actors in the documentary, claims that Kasunan Palace of Surakarta permitted the public to reproduce *Semen Rama* beyond the palace wall (Chrisna, 2008) scene 13. Second, it suggests that *Asta Brata*, as a philosophical teaching, has been publicly known regardless of how it is delivered. Therefore, this artisans' conversation becomes the metaphor for the "democratization" of this court-centric leadership philosophy. In this respect, the metaphor serves a rhetorical function; it becomes the rhetoric ornament to support both the documentary theme and the justification above.

In *Nyadran à la Sorowajan*, two metaphors are worth examining: the train and the chicken boots. They are significant as they figuratively relate to the socio-cultural transformation experienced by the villagers of Sorowajan. The train, to begin with, is set at the beginning and the end of the documentary. Here, the train is illustrated as moving towards the camera at speed when it passes a railway crossing by the Sorowajan village (Noor, 2002) scene 1.



Fig.3. The train moving toward the camera

With the train's movement toward the camera, this illustration gives the impression that the film purports to invite viewers to the village and get to know the documentary's subject matter. Interestingly, the reversal direction occurs at the end of the film. This time, the train moves away from behind the camera, giving the impression that the train's speed is even higher than that at the beginning (Noor, 2002) scene 8.



Fig. 4. The train moving away from the camera

In this documentary, the train is categorized as an objective correlative metaphor. Objective correlative is a particular type of contextual metonymy in which a unique object becomes associated with a specific character or some event or situation about that character. This kind of metaphor is a means of condensation due to the object's aptness with the character, event, or situation experienced by the character (Whittock, 1990). It stands for rapid development and modernization that have to be encountered by the villagers, which have affected the transformation of their *nyadran* tradition. From this perspective, the train only functions as a rhetorical ornament to the film theme, social harmony in Sorowajan, for it merely illustrates modernization's rapid development and progress. The rapid growth and modernization faced by the villagers of Sorowajan are among the causal factors of the transformation of their ancestral homage tradition (*nyadran*).

Such an interpretation can be deduced from two pieces of evidence: the village head's testimony and the voice-over narrator. The village head, Bardiman, affirms the demographic composition of the villagers whose number of people working in farmland decreases due to urbanization and labor force demands in the nearby industrial areas. As to the voice-over narrator, it is explained that the villagers of Sorowajan have transformed their *nyadran* tradition. The voice-over explains that most villagers who used to be close and harmonious with nature by being farmers performed their *nyadran* tradition in a more Javanese way with their rites.

However, their orientation now shifts to expressing it in a more contemporary religious format based on the significant religions assumed by the villagers. This shift is described in the inter-religious gathering (Noor, 2002) scene 8. These pieces of evidence imply that the rapid development and modernization through urbanization and industrialization have transformed their old tradition of *nyadran* (ancestral homage) into

the present-day inter-religious gathering. Therefore, it is sensible that the train becomes the metaphor to illustrate the rapid development and modernization in the documentary.

As to the chicken-boot metaphor, the documentary shows a figure wearing green paramilitary trousers with a black combat boot stamping on some chicken. The figure grabs a chicken's neck with one's right hand, making it helplessly strangled after it cries (Noor, 2002) scene 7.



Fig. 5. A black combat boot stamping on some chicken

The chicken boot is a metaphor for the authoritarian power exercised by the New Order regime, which brought about significant changes in aspects of life for many Indonesians, as recounted in the documentary. In this context, this metaphor operates as a rhetorical ornament to the central issue in this documentary, social harmony, as it only highlights the socio-historical cause of the ancestral homage transformation. The chicken-boot metaphor rhetorically signifies its value in contextualizing the socio-historical aspect contributing to the transformation of ancestor homage (*nyadran*). This metaphor does not provide further insights into why social harmony needs to be preserved and expressed. It is not part of the ontological explanation of social harmony wherein the Javanese values of respect and harmony are thematically communicated in the film. In other words, this metaphor is important and meaningful for its retrospective value in light of the transformation of the ancestral homage tradition.

Nonetheless, this metaphor is still essential to observe as it expresses the New Order policy in 1967 obliging Indonesian citizens to assume one of the five religions officially acknowledged by the state, namely Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The attribution of the chicken boot to the abusive power of the New Order regime (1967 – 1998) exercised upon the Indonesian people is strongly indicated, considering the New Order's militaristic style and spirit of governance (Vatikiotis, 2003). (Wieringa, 2003) Therefore, the employment of the chicken boots in the documentary metaphorically fits to justify the representation of the New Order (the boot) and the people of Indonesia (chicken).

As previously mentioned, the theme of *Ksatria Kerajaan* is the mythic-cultural attitude of an ordinary royal guard expressing a *ngalab berkah* belief. It is believed that serving the palace and the Sultan (the King) as an *abdi dalem* (the King's servant) is a

blessing for Pardi and his family. In this documentary, two objects embody their metaphoricality: rain and public clocks. Here, rain has a double function. Rain is a rhetorical ornament in the first function since it metaphorically refers to the belief.



Fig. 6. Raindrops on the roof

Rain brings freshness and wetness to the air and earth, cleansing and purifying living things. As a result, human beings, animals, and plants may grow and survive. These qualities are then figuratively embedded in the documentary, illustrating the King's blessing, which is seen as having the characteristics of rain: cooling, purifying, and life-giving that one can obtain.

Such interpretation arises when considering the documentary sequence, which portrays the rain scene at the end of scene seven and the transition of scene eight. Before the rain scene, the documentary shows Pardi, in voice-over, claiming that the court gave him a set of uniforms, a hat, a Javanese headband (*iket*), and a belt. What he bought with his own money were only socks and shoes. He thinks that he feels very different whenever he puts on the uniform. Pardi feels very comfortable and peaceful (Darmawan & Nugroho, 2005) scene 7. Then, the rain scene appears, illustrating several shots at different spots in close-up shots: one's roof, the earth, and the Sultanate's front palatial square. Following the rain scene come scenes that illustrate the contrasting facts of the financial reward of the King's servants (Darmawan & Nugroho, 2005) scene 8 and the belief in *ngalab berkah* (Darmawan & Nugroho, 2005) scene 9. In such an order, linking the rain scene to what precedes and succeeds is contextual. Thus, rain is the metaphor for the King's servants' feeling of being rejuvenated and comfortable over their service to their King, the Sultan of Yogyakarta.

As to the second function, with the understanding of rain as a king's blessing showering upon his subjects, it hermeneutically invokes an idea related to the traditional assumption of the extraordinariness of a Javanese king. Such an assumption asserts that a Javanese king is the center of cosmic power. In Javanese agricultural society, a King is analogous to "a water gate" of a massive dam. He can block a river, control floods from the river's upper course, and regulate water to irrigate the lower terrains. With this imagination, the traditional Javanese perceive the King as "the only" constant source of fertility, prosperity, and peace for the surrounding areas (Suseno, 1996). The King's

benevolence to the aquatic association – rain and watergate – is rendered by the fundamental significance of water for the lives of all living things. Hence, from the hermeneutic understanding, the rain scene similarly implies this acknowledgment of the King's benevolence, source of fertility, prosperity, and peace.

As for the public clock metaphor, the documentary shows shots wherein two unidentical public clocks appear. The first is a clock by the Sultanate's northern palatial square, and the second is in the city center of Yogyakarta, Malioboro Street.



Fig. 7. Northern Palatial Square public clock



Fig. 8. City Centre public clock

These two clocks are not constructed as those of clock towers commonly established in European cities, but they function similarly as a time informer and reminder. The first clock is embellished with the royal emblem on top of it, whereas the second is more austere.

The appearance of a clock is illustrated not only once but twice in this film. In addition, the clock illustrations are sequenced within two critical scenes. Both delineate the cultural significance of the Sultanate Palace of Yogyakarta. Therefore, this representation of public clocks does not merely express the actual time transitions and implies meanings behind them regardless of their appearance and time reference differences. Like the rain metaphor, these public clocks also serve a double function. Concerning the documentary theme, they become rhetorical ornaments for underlining the message that for many people of Yogyakarta, their devotion to the Sultan, the palace, and its rich cultures and traditions is expected to be enduring, as exemplified by Pardi and his fellow royal guards.

Such a kind of public loyalty to their King culturally mirrors the idea of the personality cult of a Javanese king based on the extraordinary qualities he embodies, such as his charisma and mythical/supernatural experience (Moerton, 2009; Cut, 2009; Woodward, 2011). This loyalty to the King is expected to be as enduring, regular, constant, and stable as clockwork. In this context, the public clocks metaphor hermeneutically functions to support the idea of constancy and stability. Traditional Javanese worldview essentially underscores constancy and stability. It views that with these two aspects, the functional and hierarchical-based Javanese traditional social structure can be implemented as reflected in the *wayang* world. Ultimately, order and harmony (equilibrium) are maintained in private and communal lives (Mulder, 1983; Suseno, 1996).

4.3 The Renewed Reading of the Documentaries

On the surface, *Bathik* initially echoes the profound philosophical value of *Asta Brata* in *Semen Rama bathik*. Therefore, *Bathik's* tone expresses a glorification of past values, which are archaic and somewhat apologetic. Nevertheless, the film articulates the spirit of the Indonesian government to elevate *bathik* in the list of the world's intangible heritage as proven in the first decade after the political reform in 1998 (IC-UNESCO, 2009). In so doing, *Bathik* cinematographically uses stock footage of old photographs, old paintings, collections of books, and museum artifacts through which *Semen Rama* is situated and framed. With this framing, it is understandable why the documentary expresses the centrality of *Asta Brata* in *Semen Rama bathik*.

In *Bathik*, *Semen Rama* is the most recurrent object in the documentary, making it the film's leitmotif, and, without doubt, *Semen Rama* is the symbolic representation of *Asta Brata*. So, the *bathik*, the clothes, is the artifact (Fantini, 1997) that becomes the symbol of *Asta Brata* in the film. Such a symbol shows that being a Javanese leader based on Javanese classical values (*Asta Brata*) is not trivial and requires arduous prerequisites, as explained in the previous section. This representation is the initial imagined projection the film expresses. Yet, as the film unfolds, such a representation gradually disappears, and *Bathik* also shows two other shots that help alter the initial representation. These shots significantly play their metaphoric role in the documentary. As explained in the previous section, they are the twilight and the artisans' conversation.

When the twilight and the artisans' conversation shots appear, they are rhetorically pertinent to the film's symbol (*Semen Rama*), in which the initial meaning is articulated. This meaning concerns the idea that being a Javanese leader is always extraordinary and noble and bears magnanimous responsibility (*Asta Brata*). Yet, the twilight and the artisans' conversation hermeneutically provide different interpretations of such a symbol. It articulates a projection that such a symbolic meaning is slowly diminishing. The gloomy and cloudy twilight at the Sunanate Palace and the artisan's conversation at the *bathik* workshop hermeneutically articulate that no one, especially the youths, is no longer concerned with *Asta Brata* when they run for a public leadership position. Thus, their meaning does not end at what they visually represent but moves beyond.

Such a reading arises for Paul Ricoeur, who maintains that the meaning beyond what appears mostly attracts a hermeneutic reading through interpretation. When the surface speaks of something, the "secondary," the "surplus signification," or the "multiple

meanings” are achieved via interpretation. This process is gained after deciphering the “semantic dimension” of what is stated on the surface (Ricoeur, 1976).

The shift from the first representation to the second is metaphorically intermediated by the twilight and the artisans’ conversation. Thus, the film no longer shows the centrality of *Asta Brata* in the past but imparts the contemporary “amnesia” of the modern generation. The present generation has nearly forgotten *Asta Brata* as a guiding ethical principle for a leader, as later indicated by some social actors’ testimonies. *Bathik* externalizes a strong quality of essentialism. The images of *bathik*, the Sunanate court, some rituals, festivities, and the social actors’ testimonies emphasize the importance of returning to Javanese identity and *Asta Brata*. This motive is achieved through comprehending the meaning of *Asta Brata*.

Unlike *Bathik*, in *Nyadran à la Sorowajan*, the interfaith gathering becomes the leit-motif and symbol of religious tolerance and harmony in Sorowajan. It is the sociofact that becomes the symbol in the film. This representation initially shows that the Javanese love living in balance and being pleasant and tolerant. In other words, the image of a respectful and harmonious society is demonstrated. However, as the film develops, the projection slowly diminishes. *Nyadran à la Sorowajan* also demonstrates two rhetorical and hermeneutic images enriching such a peace-loving and harmonious society. They are the images of the train and chicken-stamping boot, as explained in the previous section.

The train and chicken-stamping boot shots rhetorically correspond to the documentary’s symbol (the interreligious gathering), wherein the first image is represented. This representation concerns the Javanese, who are peace-loving, pleasant, and tolerant of religious differences. The visual image demonstrates the *nyadran* tradition in its spiritual dimension (Mulder, 1983). It is an expression of venerating the departed as a form of communication. However, the train and chicken-stamping boot shots also hermeneutically offer an alternative reading from the symbol. The reading discloses another representation that the Javanese society is creative and resilient when an external power constrains them. Hence, beyond the visuals of the two shots, a new interpretative understanding of the Javanese is constituted.

These multiple meanings are achieved because the film cinematically indicates them and narratively suggests them. Contextually, harmony (*rukun*) and respect (*hormat*) are two fundamental principles in Javanese societies (Mulder, 1983). Harmony in Javanese society is apprehended as a condition wherein stability, composure, and freedom from harm or danger prevail (Mulder, 1983). However, such a situation does not emerge from efforts to create a social balance but to maintain the already existing social equilibrium. In the traditional Javanese worldview view, social stability is imagined having already been present. Consequently, the Javanese are strongly encouraged not to disturb social harmony (Suseno, 1996). Thus, the Javanese must preserve this imagined equilibrium as an individual and a member of society. Therefore, in *Nyadran à la Sorowajan*, the interfaith gathering symbolizes the initial image of the peace-loving and tolerant Javanese.

Such an initial image is metaphorically enriched by an implied view that the Javanese express their creativity and resilience when cornered and oppressed by the authoritarian New Order Regime as the documentary rolls on with the chicken-stamping booth

and the train shots. The regime apparatus ironically imbued itself with the Javanese mindset, as President Suharto of the New Order Regime exemplified at the apex of the power seen as a “Javanese King” (Pemberton, 1994).

Unlike the previous two documentaries, *Ksatria Kerajaan*'s leitmotif and symbolic representation lie in the royal guards' belief in *ngalab berkah*. Thus, the mentifact (Fantini and Fantini) of the film through the figures of the royal guards (*ksatria kerajaan*) become the symbol. As most of the film's scenes show, such a belief renders the royal guards loyal to the King and the palace. With such an image of the royal guards, *Ksatria Kerajaan* initially shows the image of the Javanese, who are ascriptive to their tie with the King via their belief in *ngalab berkah*. As the film unfolds, it demonstrates the royal guards' perseverance in undertaking their lives by doing their side jobs to support them. Pardi's side job as a *dawet* – a traditional Javanese beverage – street vendor illustrates his perseverance in life. Two objects in the film rhetorically and hermeneutically enhance these images, being ascriptive to the King and perseverant to live. They are the rain and the two public clocks.

The rain and two public clocks shots rhetorically support the film's symbol, the royal guards' belief in *ngalab berkah*. This symbol expresses the royal guards' ascription to their King, the Sultan of Yogyakarta. This articulation brings the first image of the trustworthy and dependable Javanese. However, the rain and two public clock shots hermeneutically convey another image. The Javanese are, to a certain degree, realistic and perseverant. The meanings of the two shots do not solely end in the visuals of the falling water as rain nor the two clocks as a time informer and reminder. They provide further reading to understand this realistic and perseverant image contextually.

5 Conclusion

From the three documentaries examined, some points need underlining and reiterating concerning their cinematic metaphors. First, their metaphorical qualities reside in employing and illustrating various visual objects. These all include the twilight and the artisans' conversation shots in *Bathik: Bebet lan Bobot Lakuning Urip*, the train and chicken-stamping boot shots in *Nyadran à la Sorowajan*, the rain and public clocks shots in *Ksatria Kerajaan*.

Second, these cinematic metaphors primarily serve a double function, both rhetorical and hermeneutic functions. The rhetorical function primarily further confirms the film's symbolism. Yet, the hermeneutic function provides new ways of understanding what it means to be a Javanese contextual to the documentary's subject. *Bathik: Bebet lan Bobot Lakuning Urip* initially shows an image of the Javanese who recognize and glorify *Asta Brata* as the moral guiding principles. Yet, what follows in the film articulates an image of the Javanese who neglect *Asta Brata*. It is a paradoxical representation of *Bathik*. *Nyadran à la Sorowajan* first demonstrates an image of the Javanese, who are respectful and harmonious, irrespective of their religious differences. In addition, this documentary provides another image of the Javanese, who are creative and resilient when an external power intends to disrupt the fundamental principles of their social life, respect, and harmony. This second image of this documentary does not contradict the

first one. Instead, it enriches the initial one. *Ksatria Kerajaan*, in the beginning, shows an image of the Javanese who are socio-culturally dependable to their Sultan of Yogyakarta, irrespective of any material gains resulting from such a bond. However, the film also conveys an image of the Javanese who are realistic and perseverant in living by financially supporting themselves without being dependent on the meager stipend they received from the Sultanate Palace. The second image of the Javanese in this film adds to the first one.

The cinematic metaphors' rhetorical and hermeneutic functions enable the audience to interpret the actualities recorded in the films and the films' arguments. As a result, the audience, in their ways, may interweave and interpret them contextually. Therefore, within this understanding, cinematic metaphors become pivotal in the examined documentaries and provide more meanings hermeneutically beyond their rhetorical function.

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