

The Dynamic of Betawi in Colors

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Warna bukan lagi merupakan masalah yang sederhana dalam berbagai konsep dan praktik seni dalam kehidupan manusia, terutama dalam dunia kesenian. Warna merupakan salah satu bagian sangat penting bagi para pekerja seni. Namun dalam kehidupan sehari-hari, penggunaan warna merupakan hal yang sangat biasa, jarang dicermati dan ditekuni secara mendalam. Hal ini disebabkan karena elemen desain ini lebih dicerna dan diproses oleh perasaan, bukan pemikiran, sehingga sering kali warna dianggap sesuatu yang tidak penting. Tanpa disadari warna banyak mewakili simbol etnis, kelompok, dan identitas daerah atau wilayah. Meskipun banyak digunakan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari secara praktis, warna memiliki sifat simbolis dan dekoratif di Indonesia, termasuk di Jakarta. Warna-warna ini menjadi salah satu karakteristik disetiap penampilan kesenian dan budaya di Jakarta (Betawi). Betawi memiliki kodifikasi warna yang unik, dimana mencerminkan karakteristik dan filosofi kehidupannya, namun dengan adanya urbanisasi besar-besaran di Jakarta, budaya Betawi mengalami perubahan termasuk kodifikasi warna. Penelitian warna ini untuk mencari tahu bagaimana masyarakat Betawi memberikan kodifikasi warna dan hubungannya dengan keadaan sosial budaya saat itu. Hasil penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberi wawasan tambahan terhadap warna Betawi pada khususnya, yang dapat digunakan untuk membangun atmosfir kebetawian dalam bidang desain interior, produk, dan lingkungan hidup

Color is no longer a small issue; it is one of the very important for artistic workers. In daily life, using color is very common and rarely to be observed or pursued deeply, because color as a one of the design element was more digested and processed by feeling, not of thought, so often considered something unimportant. Color is a lot and often used for aesthetic and communication. Without realizing it, color gives special identity to certain things in time, place, and situation of its own. Although widely used in daily life practically, color has symbolic and decorative characteristic in Indonesia, especially in Jakarta. These colors become characteristic in every performance of culture and art in Jakarta (Betawi). Betawi have a unique typical codification color that reflects the characteristic of Betawi's life, however by the presence of massive urbanization in Jakarta, then changed Betawi culture including codification of colors. This research find out how Betawi gives the typical color naming and its relationship with the social cultural circumstance of the moment. And the result also expected to introduction of Betawi color in particular, and also to build a Betawi atmosphere for purposing related to interior, products, and environment.

Key words: color naming, Betawi, culture

Colors generally are often used as an aesthetic additional and a communication medium. Colors are visual sign and natural language sign. Colors are unique because of their capacity to be a cultural unit in terms of Eco. Unwittingly, color gives a lot of special identification to particular things that explain time, place, and situation of its own. Different cultures have different terms for colors, and may also assign some color names to slightly different parts of the spectrum: for instance, the Chinese character (rendered as qīng in Mandarin and ao in Japanese) has a meaning that covers both blue and green. Color for some ethnic groups have a different sense, it can be caused by the environment and culture (Azizah, *Jurnal Dinamika Kebudayaan*, Vol. XI no.1, 2009:22). Language as an emblem of many colors associated with the natural surroundings and also influenced by the philosophy of their societies. Psychedelic art movement in the 1960s in the United States and United Kingdom, has a unique color combination, distinguish it to other art movements. It plays the role of bright colors such as neon color effects (fluorescent effects). These new colors express the revolution and change the incident in the world (Banindro, *Jurnal Nirmana*, No. 2, Juli 2007:69). Another case in using of color on the statue of ancient Egypt was given gold yellow, turquoise blue, and black as a symbol of dignity, prosperity, and authority (Darmaprawira, 2002:114-115).

Similar things can be found at Hindu Balinese ceremonial offering flowers. The color of flowers adapted to a symbol of cardinal directions and the presence of flowers. Red flower in south for Brahma as a symbol of the energetic or motion, black or purple flower in north for Whisnu as a symbol of filth of the body and soul, white flowers in east for Iswara as a symbol of purity, yellow flowers in west for Mahadewa as a symbol of the power of intuition, and in the middle for Shiwa as an its combination (Darmaprawira, 2002:156-158).

Not only in religious life that colors have an important meaning but also in the world of fine arts. Puppet, characterizations, and masks are often painted white, red, and black color for something that express good and bad.

In modern century, using color on corporate identity, not only reflects of business character, vision,

and mission, but there is possibility linked to certain myths. For example HSBC bank logo must be red, it is connected to the belief of Chinese community about red color as a good luck color. Packaging color is done not only to describe the types of products (the quality of product in packaging), but also effect to consumer's appetite (especially for food and beverage packaging). The advertising of a cigarettes product used slogan "*bikin hidup makin hidup*" (make life more lively), by using the gradation process frame of black and white atmosphere that express flatness and passionless, then by the existence the product from one frame to others make the atmosphere become colored in slowly. This visualization can be described that colourful life is a cheerful and passion life. These above things prove that colors uses daily life as an element of symbolic, aesthetics, and communication.

Although widely uses in daily life practically, color in Indonesia used as a symbolic and decorative (Darmaprawira, 2002:103-104). In the past, using colors always considers its symbolic value, relations to supernatural, and connected to certain power which controlled the universe. It means that art and belief in old community are a unity (Darmaprawira, 2002:153-155). This can be defined that Indonesian community life is very close to nature, harness the power of nature nicely, and uses the experience life with environment in determining their culture.

Color is also a very important symbolic element in Jakarta's cultural life. For example in mourning ceremony, Jakarta people use yellow flag as a mourning symbol (Apriyani, <http://intisari-online.com/read/bendera-kuning-dan-kematian>). Beside yellow in context of mourning (yellow flag), *oren* (come from *jingga* means orange color) is also become an icon color of Jakarta. *Oren* color overwhelms Jakarta during a football game of Persija (Jakarta Indonesia Football Association). This color uses as an obliged attribute by supporter Persija known as The Jack Mania. While yellow relates to traditional idiom, then *oren* relates to contemporary idiom.

Betawi's colors have a typical codification that reflects to value of local community. On its development was discovered that the typical codification of Betawi colors have been changed and being

generalizing. This phenomenon pushed the writer to find out more about the development and changing of Betawi colors codification generally. The simplification processes certainly have been a special attention related to a psychiatric elements involvement in process of metaphor codification of colors. Is there a social symptom regarding the changes of Betawi's character related to that simplification? Is the simplification process a part of indifference Betawi to their environment or there other ideology behind the simplify of color coding?

Color research that focus on Indonesia culture is rare, especially Betawi's culture never has been done. It is probably due by Betawi known as a heterogeneous community and mingles into acculturation matters. Study Betawi's culture is being difficult because not easy to obtain accurate data and detail in form of writings or oral (literature or interview).

This research used qualitative methods by doing interview and documentation to get actual experience into Betawi life. System and social relation that build social, behavior, habits, psychological, object, and linguistic (entity) would be described. Uncovered structure that happen in Betawi culture (color codification)

The research put color as a main study, social studies as support to observe the situation and social cultural interaction as an effort to understanding the values and cultural symbol system at the time. Color is a visual communication medium that perceptible by society convention on symbol convention that had been. Culture background user influences context color. Cultural change is the dynamic that happens because of conflicts between different culture elements. The change of Betawi color codifications (extricated and transformed toward universal color codification) and Betawi color shade there are possibly triggered by science and technology development, also by the change of philosophy value, ethics, and culture social value that develop in Betawi society. The change can be seen on the form, function, and meaning that encourage interest of change need to be tracked.

Tabel 1. Color Names in Jakarta

Color Category	Color Name		
YELLOW	Lemon	Janur	Mentega
	Kunyit	Kepodang	Jagung
	Gading	Emas	Kecapi
	Langsat	Pisang	Pirang
	Telur		
ORANGE	Temaram / Lembayung	Oren	
	Salem		
RED	Dadu	Jambon	Mirah
	Darah	Sirop	Ranum
	Hati	Delima	Bara
	Bata	Gincu	Gulali
	Kesumba	Magenta	Mencilak
	Genteng	Lobi-Lobi	Marjan
	Rambut Jagung	Mawar	Tjampolai
	Jambu	Udang Rebus	Cabe
	Gohok	Rona	
PURPLE	Terong	Jamblang /Gohok	Gandaria
	Anggur	Manggis	Taro
	Nila	Janda	Kecubung
BLUE	Blao	Dongker	Pirus
	Laut	Langit	Enom
	Telang	Benhur	Lazuli
	Telor Asin	Safir	
	Toska	Blujin	
GREEN	Pupus	Giok Kumala /	Waru
	Suji	Pandan	Merak
	Loreng	Lumut	Terusi
	Betet	Keket	Royo
	Tai Kuda	Botol	Zaitun
	Cendol	Alpukat	Petai/Pete
	Rumput	Daun	Tentara
	Zambrud	Belarang	
BROWN	Sogan	Cokelat	Kayu
	Dodol	Aren / Gula Jawa	Tauco
	Kopi	Blantong	Salak
	Sawo	Terasi	Coklat

BLACK	Blorok	Legam
	Keling	Pekat
	Kelam	Jelaga
	Gosong	Kereng
	Gaok	
GRAY	Monyet	Megan
	Abu	Semen
WHITE	Melati	Telur
	Pias	Bengkuang
	Susu	Lobak
	Mutiara	Pualam
	Kapas	Kertas
	Biduri	Dangkal / Bening
	Bengkuang	

(Resource: Personal result of interview & literature)

RESULT & DISCUSSION

Almost in every element of life and culture, Betawi always uses bright color that combines in such way so give lively colors (colorful). Based on color theory Shigenobu Kobayashi on book *Colorist* said that combination of bright color is in a dynamic category that express lively, vibrant, active, energetic, etc (1998: 11, 14). The Betawi colors that look lively and cheerful seem to describe the joy, excitement, constancy and firmness of Betawi in facing the hardness of life in Jakarta as a capital city.

Jakarta as a melting pot city being a metropolis city, which a meeting place among tribes (such as: Sundanese, Javanese, Balinese, Minang, and Bugis) and nation (Arabic, China, India, Netherland, and Portugal), cultural, social, and politic (Gunawijaya, *Jurnal Betawi*, 2001:20-21). Result of acculturation formed a unique culture and very attractive known as Betawi culture. Betawi is an ethnic that rich in diversity of cultures and language. This diversity brings variety of perception, interpretation, and understanding of Betawi, both in terms of residents and cultural matters

Grouping of codification of Betawi colors started by listing the name of the colors which are common and often heard in Jakarta based on category of the

primary color (red, yellow, blue), secondary (orange, purple, green), and neutral colors (white, grey, black, and brown). Based on survey (literature and interview), there are 125 names of colors. Table 1. is color names in Jakarta based on category above.

Based on collection of Jakarta color's name that have been showed above, can be concluded that naming is much taken from objects's name around us. The most widely used objects are not same, depend on color category. On red color category, a lot used name of plants especially flowers and fruits. In category of blue and green, many names are taken from nature, such as name of oceans, rocks, forests, and plants. Yellow and orange category also takes its name from elements of plants, such as flowers, fruits, and food. In Jakarta, an orange color is not used too much, it is maybe because orange colors grouping into red category. Another thing in purple category, which is generally taking the name of plants as floral, fruits, and rocks. Brown category was many adopted from nature such as woods, nuts, and herbs. These colors naming of Jakarta is in general and heard often in daily life, but only some of data above, which is Betawi's, color names.

Saputra mentioned that names of Betawi color often heard in activities of culture, can be categorized base on primary, secondary, and neutral colors in additional: yellow, orange, red, purple, blue, green, black, gray, and white. Category of yellow is *kuning* (yellow), *kepodang* (bird's name), *gading* (ivory), *kunyit* (turmeric), and *telor* (egg). For orange category that better known as *salem* (light orange) in Betawi society consists of *salem* and *lembayung*. Lately *jingga* (orange) is known as an *oren* that comes from orange as a Jakarta color. *Dadu* (dice), *jambon*, *sirop* (syrup), *delima* (pomegranate), *gincu* (lipstick), *secang* (sappan wood), and blanton categorized into red. Green categories having names *pupus*, *tai kotok*, *tai kuda*, *toska* (tosca), and *lumut* (moss). Blao, telur asin (salted egg), and *gandaria* (fruit's name) belongs to blue category, while *terong* (eggplant), *manggis* (mangosteen), and *jamblang* (fruit's name) contained in purple category. Neutral colors name known *dangkal* (shallow) for white, then *megan* (bird's name) and *monyet* (monkey) for grey category, and *blorok* (chicken's kind), *gaok* (crow)

for black category. Referring to the color's name of Betawi above, then it can be disclose that selection of nature objects (animals, plants) and artifacts surrounding community that used most. It means that Betawi life refers to reality around them. Nature and culture inspire Betawi's life.



Figure 1. Color names of Betawi
(Resource: Personal result of interview & literature)

Relating to the data above, some interesting things of color name of Betawi are: 1) *gandaria* color that in purple category of Jakarta colors, move into blue category in Betawi colors. It might because Betawi people see this color contains many elements of blue. 2) brown category is not in Betawi color grouping. Those colors are grouped into red category. Based on the data can be describe that Betawi has a simpler color grouping than universe (brown color fit into red category because brown is obtained from red and black combination). Cursory can be concluded that Betawi is a simple society, liquid and adaptable, thus do not matter something detail and formal. Abdul Chaer also wrote a similar opinion in his book entitled *Folklore Betawi: Culture and Life of Betawi* (2012: 5-8).

Color's names of Betawi are related to colors of fruit, organic objects, games, animals upon the real meaning, and subculture color. Curiosity of the writer is more concentrates on how Betawi were marked certain colors. This is surely not just happened, there must be related between experiences towards an object colors (natural and cultural) that became special attention of Betawi.

The effort to know and understanding the process of color naming in Betawi is incredibly interesting because through understanding of the metaphor, can be seen the way Betawi's thinking that utilization of color naming and metaphor process can be used to understand and interpret colors on Betawi, according to culture characteristic.

To understand color naming, need to know about the name itself. Osgood and Sebeok mention that the psychiatric elements such as: inner, thoughts, associations, and experience, cannot be ignored in the process of giving a name (MacLaury, 2007:3). Agree to Osgood and Sebeok understanding then in color naming context, one same color can be named differently because of psychiatric elements. In another hand, one color name of one object can be associated with different colors. Codification of Betawi color may probably derived from its association with sound, nature, and culture. There is an illustrated example to understand color name in this context. *Jamblang* color is one of color's names, which characterize Betawi color name.

Jamblang color is a color name that characterizes a typical of Betawi color name. Related to Osbood and Sebeok's idea, it explained that the *jamblang* color certainly associated to psychiatric element of Betawi. *Jamblang* tree is estimated thriving and its fruit used in Betawi neighbourhood at the time. Experience get in touch in sensory with *jamblang* fruit is a daily reality, such as enjoying the fruit of the tree directly, choked a seed of *jamblang*, playing congklak and ketepel by seed of *jamblang*, play game by selling cidar of *jamblang* and uses leaves as a payment, these are the Betawi's experiences in its activities with *jamblang*. These activities and experiences are Betawi culture in utilizing the natural, allowing the fruit become a part of Betawi life and a symbol of color visual. Some Betawi color names by using fruits, plants, and vegetables name (*suji, terong, gandaria, manggis, terong, jamblang, delima, lobi-lobi*), predictable the plants thrived in Betawi environment and used a lot by the community at that time.

Based on Osgood and Sebeok observation against psychiatric elements in color names, then the writer tried to visualize the metaphor process in a scheme follows.

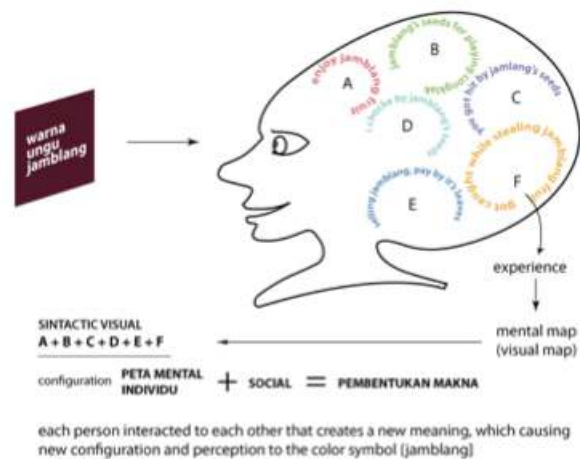


Figure 2. Individual phenomena of color symbols (Creation by Mita Purbasari)

Other than fruits, plants, and vegetables as a reference in the process of metaphors, there is another example of Betawi community (*subculture*). Name of *dadu* color taken from *dadu* (dice) that related to gambling closely. At the time of color name pointed, it was estimated that gambling spreaded rapidly in Betawi's life at that time. Formerly in many places of Betawi, people gambling with dice (*dadu*), cards, dominoes, roulette, and others in traditional night market, and night festivals. The term *dadu* may come from association with Portuguese word sound (*dado*), may also derived from part of subculture game activities (gambling habit using dice). This game was influenced form China. The habit of gambling, pitting the fate through game, can be seen from color names such as *megan, blantong, blorok*, and *manggis*, which the color name are come from animal fight (birds and chickens) and fruit that commonly used for gambling. The term of *gincu* used to described bright red (tends towards carmine), perhaps it comes from the habit of women using *gincu*, bright red lipstick. The women usually can be found in brothel or Chinese traditional casino.

Betawi people has tendency to keep animal (such as chicken, birds, and horse) for pitting against, ranching, or farming, caused a codification of green *tai kotok* and *tai kuda* (droppings of chicken and horse). These color codifications were made possible by many animal droppings around their neighborhood or the presence of other significant experience that caused the objects were made as

typical color codification Betawi (mutual agreement).

Some other color codifications described that the object has been used for long time ago dan running from generation to generation. Sirop color that comes from red-colored sweet drinks is almost always presented at home while have quests in regular days and the Islamic feast (*Idul Fitri* and *Adha* celebration). Besides of it tastes sweet and many people like it, sirop was presented as a symbol of respect to the guest, creating an atmosphere of friendliness and cheerfulness. Similarly with *blao*, a brand of clothing whitener that was famous at that time to make clothes look brilliant bluish white. Sometimes *blao* was also used as a medicine of parotitis disease. Among the Betawi Chinese, people traced certain characters in the area between molars bottom and the neck with *blao* to get the cold feeling.

Lembayung color was come from the color of the evening as the sunset, which the color goes to purpleish. Betawi believe that when the body was unwell (*sumuk*: Betawi terms means sick) should not go out at the evening come, because it can aggravate health. This belief was made possible by a change of the weather from hot (noon) to cold (afternoon / evening) can make the body weaker or the existence of superstitious tales at dusk (*magrib*). The belief against other powers also can be seen in black *gaok* color. The belief that *gaok* bird brings bad news (sign of the death) for those who visited. There is a possibility of Betawi codification color through metaphor not only in the context of relatedness of codifying color with nature (plants, fruits and animals) but also with the activity culture of Betawi society.

According to Saputra and Adam, activists in Betawi culture, stated that of the 34 typical Betawi colors, there were only red (*dadu*, *jambon*), green, blue, *jingga* (*oren*), yellow, black, and white are the colors that are always present (dominant) visually graced almost every art and culture of Betawi (traditional snacks, wedding ceremonies, textiles, circumcision, art performances, and dance). Colorful of Betawi looks festive and lively describe the joy, excitement, determination, dan firmness Betawi in facing the harshness of capital

city of the wheel of life (interview, Jakarta, May 22, 2013). In Betawi art and culture, the uses of these bright colors do not have the structure of definite color. There is no term of use certain colors on the certain place, time, or object. The combination of contrast colors (*tabrakan*: the term of Betawi means opposite) is the most appropriate word to describe the arrangement of Betawi colors.

Saputra said that in determining the codifying color agreements of Betawi there are a few things to be aware of: the reality of Betawi life when determined the formation of color codification. Existing in possibility taken from the activity of the Betawinesse game activity, the word game, and also economic activity. For example codification *dadu* (dice) could be based on the activity of a gambling game, activity of word game, or an economical activity in terms of the fulfillment of the necessities of life. In fact Betawiness likes of the word game, it can be heard from rhymes during *lenong* performance and the way Betawi spoke (interview, Jakarta, May 22, 2013). Spontaneous, full of humour, comparing an object for another (simile), outspoken, no matter whether other people offended or not. Words *muke lu tembok* (your face looks like a wall), *pakean lu item-item kaya gaok* (your dress all black looks like the crow), *suare lu kaya kucing keinjek* (your voice sounds like a cat stepped) sounded ordinary daily.

Some Betawi traditional snacks such as put, *ku*, *cendil*, *ape*, *ongol-ongol*, *putu mayang*, *geplak wajik*, *pacar cina* and beverage such as *es doger*, *bir pletok*, *es selendang mayang*, *wedang ronde* are mostly using *dadu*, *jambon*, and green colors.



Figure 3. Betawi Tradisional Snacks (Resource: private documentation, <http://terinform.blogspot.com/2013/11/10-jajanan-tradisional-yang-hampir.html>)



Figure 4. Betawi Batik (Resource: private documentation, 2013) jajanan-tradisional-yang-hampir.html)

Betawi textile in the form of sarongs and traditional cloths (wedding gown, bridesmaid uniform, kebaya *abang none*, dancer clothes, *lenong* uniform, and musical accompaniment) always use combination of many bright colors (colorful) such as *dadu*, green, yellow, *jambon*, *oren*, blue, black, and white.

Likewise with decoration of Betawi art ceremony such as wedding ceremonies, circumcision, performing art, and dancing there are constantly present an *ondel-ondel* and *kembang kelape*. The combination of bright colors always use for both decoration. In general the color combinations of *dadu*, *jambon*, *oren*, yellow, blue, green, and white are on *kembang kelape*.



Figure 5. A festive color in Betawi Culture (Resource: private documentation, 2013)

At the moment, young Betawi less aware of the knowing, understanding, and using the Betawi's color codifications. Some color codifications shifted over according of the invasion of culture and technology outside. Shift over of codifying *jambon* become pink, *dadu* become red, *blao* became cobalt, *jambalang* and *manggis* become violet and purple, signifying that memories of Betawi was also lost. Then a question emerges whether colors codifying were lost because the newcomers who live, evolve, and grow in Jakarta, or due to loss of original objects that became a symbol of the color?

As has been said above, that from 34 of Betawi color codifications existing, only 8 dominant colors that present in each of the Betawiness arts and culture. Four of them are still using Betawi codification colors (*dadu*, *jambon*, *oren*, and yellow). The rest of any other colors using color codification that generally or universal namely, green, blue, black, and white. The shifting of color codification is not yet known uncertain whether is anything to do with the color changes on other elements Betawi culture or simply follow the times.

Finding Betawi color codifications that later in its development experienced reduction and simplification, not only describe the process of Betawi's culture acculturation (Jakarta) that is very big and powerful, but also signifies the blending and the loss old tradition that had formed from social life and cultural based on life at that time. As an example of the Betawi color codifications that taken from fruit names represented fertility and fortune of Betawi's soil of plants fruitful that were able to sustain the viability of the societies at the time.



Figure 6. Color scheme of Betawi culture (Source: create by Mita Purbasari)

CONCLUSION

Codification and combination of colors able to provide Betawi typical uniqueness that later become one of the community identity which describes the philosophy, character, behavior, patterns of life, norms, and culture. Color codifications are not only based on dimension of color vision, but also related to the experience society based on natural and cultural where they live. Betawi color codification related to natural objects such as animals, fruits, daily artifacts, objects, and state of nature (subculture). It can be interpreted that Betawi are very close to nature, utilizing the natural well, and uses the life experiences with environment in determining their culture.

Contrast colors combinations (*tabrakan*: Betawi term means opposite) are the most appropriate word to describe Betawi colors. The combination of many bright colors (colorful) reflects cheerfulness, firmness, and sureness of Betawi in the face of harshness of the capital city.

Simplification of some Betawi color codifications to be universal color codification signified by Betawi's receptive and dynamic of changes surroundings. However, Betawi was also capable to demonstrate firmness and assertiveness in acculturation aggression by using of bright color combination, it can be seen from the use of color in arts and culture.

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