

**The Impact of Colonial Thinking Legacy on the Production of Knowledge about the Fine Arts in Southeast Asia**

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**Abstract**

The experience of art history in Southeast Asia is an unforgettable part of society. Through art before and after thought or art has existed. The arrival of foreigners to Southeast Asia enriched new philosophies for every place that had been influenced by colonial thought. Through the new philosophy, from a perspective, thinking, and doing something, especially in art, has undergone a significant change. This change is a fundamental part but the tradition is still maintained. The impact of change through the influence of colonial thought produces new knowledge in maintaining and preserving the arts, culture, and customs that exist in every country in Southeast Asia. It can be seen that to this day it is the main place for tourists who come to Southeast Asia. Postcolonialism questions and rediscovers modes of cultural perception, and ways of seeing and being seen. In anthropology, postcolonialism studies human relations in colonial countries and subaltern societies exploited by colonial rule. Postcolonialism describes, explains, and illustrates the ideology of neocolonialism by taking the humanities, history, and political science, philosophy and sociology, anthropology, and. So post-colonialism adds or brings a new identity to each country in Southeast Asia but still maintains and preserves traditional arts and culture.

**Keywords:** *History, Change, Postcolonialism, Knowledge, Fine Arts*

**Introduction**

Southeast Asia is a general term used during the Second World War. To describe the mainland region of Eastern Asia which consists of the Indochina peninsula and the many islands that include Indonesia and the Philippines (Hall, 1988). Thus, Southeast Asia is land and an archipelago in the southeast corner of the Eurasian continent. Although Southeast Asia is not have a political and cultural identity, its countries show similarities in artistic, social, and economic structures. In the stages of evolution, the history of this region shows the basic variations of art and culture. The history of Southeast Asia is influenced by external aspects: trade with foreign nations; India, China, Arabia, and then Europe. The pre-modern political and state system in Southeast Asia was heavily influenced by Indian cultures, such as the concept of the god-king and mandala. Another important thing from the influence of Indian culture is the entry of the Hindu-Buddhist religion, which is currently widely embraced by people in Thailand.

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According to Tjetjep that art is a means of communication to express, and convey messages, impressions, and human responses to environmental stimuli. Art is a symbol that is included in a set of symbols to express feelings or expressive symbols (Tjetjep, 2000). One of the iconic works of art that manifest in the lives of residents is ethnic music as part of performing music, which is a form of regional music. Traditional music is music that has lived in society for generations, is a characteristic of a particular area, and is maintained as a means of entertainment. According to Sedyawati, traditional music is music that is used as the embodiment of cultural values by tradition. Indirectly, traditional music can also be seen as a wealth of tradition and culture of a region (Sedyawati, 1992).

Many arts, socials and cultures were embedded before the colonial era in Southeast Asia, but some countries with foreign language influences made arts and culture, in particular, to be left behind. As in the case in Indonesia, before the arrival of the colonizers, each region cared for and had characters in their grammatical writing format.

The term Southeast Asia is a contemporary term used by the Anglo-American Armed Forces in 1941, which was based in Ceylon against Japanese troops during the World War. The United States writes this term as Southeast, while the British write it as South-East. But this term is just a means because it contains the meaning of a political entity territory on the mainland of Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, the Indonesian archipelago, the Philippines, the Malay Peninsula (Malaysia and Singapore), and a British protectorate area (Brunei Darussalam).

Southeast Asia, is the continent of Asia which is located in the southeast. The country consists of eleven countries, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Philippines, Timor Leste, Laos, Cambodia, Singapore, and Brunei Darussalam. These eleven countries have a unique artistic heritage and wealth from a cultural and cultural point of view. Even before colonialism, every country in Southeast Asia had its own philosophy and way of living according to the customs and traditions it adhered to. Before colonialism came, every country in Southeast Asia had its own kingdom in every region it controlled, for example, Indonesia, every region in the archipelago had a kingdom, and in Sumatra the Aceh tribe had a king Iskandar Muda, the Batak tribe had a king Sisingamangaraja. Other Asian countries are no exception, and to this day there are still countries that maintain their kingdoms, Thailand for example.

According to Pravit, one of the values emphasized in Southeast Asian Identity is the similarity of traditions, customs, and beliefs as a cultural heritage that shows the identity of the Southeast Asian nation. However, many academics doubt the implementation of this ASEAN Identity.

The representation of the similarity of cultural roots promised in the ASEAN Identity is not visible, especially from the behavior patterns of Southeast Asian countries that firmly prioritize their culture as something unique and different from one another (Rojanaphruk, 2013). With the emergence of this phenomenon, the author argues that the legacy of colonialism contributed to the failure of the implementation of the ASEAN Identity in representing the history and cultural background of Southeast Asia as a collective identity.

The official document states that ASEAN Identity seeks to strengthen the ASEAN community through two values, namely constructed values and inherited values (37th ASEAN Summit, 2020). The constructed values are values adopted by ASEAN intentionally to achieve the goals of the ASEAN community itself, such as respecting freedom and democracy, complying with international law, and prioritizing ASEAN's centrality in conducting external relations. Meanwhile, the inherited values are cultural values from the ancestors and ancestors of the Southeast Asian nation, including traditions, customs, and local wisdom since the pre-historic era (37th ASEAN Summit, 2020).

Focusing on the implementation of inherited values in ASEAN Identity, ASEAN seeks to represent history, cultural diversity, and customs as the identity of the Southeast Asian nation. ASEAN in its official document defines the nation's ancestors as a mixed ethnic community in Southeast Asia (37th ASEAN Summit, 2020).

The ethnic community has two habits of life, namely settling in an area and migrating to survive. Ethnic communities that migrate eventually create a chain of interactions between groups, resulting in a process of acculturation of tribes and cultures that continues throughout history. The diversity of cultures left by the nation's ancestors ultimately produces cultural artifacts in the form of artistic traditions, rituals, ceremonies, to unique culinary arts as an identity for the people of Southeast Asia.

According to Clad, one of the legacies of colonialism that often escapes the attention of the public, especially in Southeast Asia, is an imaginary map that separates one nation from another, and based on the fictitious line on this map, one country is willing to go to war with another country, stealing its natural products. even denying the rights of the rural communities who have been part of them for a long time (Clad, 2011). Imagination maps reflect the different perspectives of each country and how they preserve their heritage after the colonial period.

The art of each region has its differences. Fine art in sculpture, for example, has a deep meaning from the study during the manufacturing process to when it is finished. Every country in Southeast Asia has left its history and heritage from its ancestors. But what made the difference

after the colonial period? What legacy is still embedded in the mindset of the successors of the ancestors' heritage in Southeast Asia?

### **Methods**

This study uses a qualitative approach. Bodgen and Taylor Andriawan et al define qualitative method as a research process that produces descriptive data in the form of human speech and observable behavior. Because the data collected is in the form of words, pictures, not numbers, whatever is collected is likely to be the key to what you are looking for. This qualitative research method is often referred to as the natural research method, namely research conducted on natural subject conditions, the researcher as the main tool, the data collection technique is taken associatively, the data produced is descriptive and this research emphasizes significance rather than generalization (Agustiningsih, 2018). In qualitative research, researchers do not look for facts and ethics, but look for facts that are being investigated and can lead to hypotheses that can be studied or developed in the future. The data collection technique used is documentary research. Qualitative research methods also provide empirical and meaningful insights by exploring and questioning several millennial generations with a research approach, selecting informants, data collection techniques (questionnaires/google form documents), validation tools, data analysis techniques, and conceptual frameworks. Through qualitative analysis of the different experiences of colonialism, the impact on the formation of different characters and perceptions of the problem of national identity of each country is reflected in the form of policies that are continuously observed.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **The Born of Arts Knowledge in Southeast Asia**

According to Ali Welianto, that fine art is one kind of art. Art is an expression of human feelings that have an element of beauty. Fine art is an art that is visible to the senses of sight. Where the form consists of visual elements in the form of points, lines, fields or spaces, shapes or forms, dark and light, and textures. Fine arts are sculpture and painting. Various fine arts exist in a series that aims purely aesthetic. Fine art is an art that fills the eye and evokes emotion through the expression of skill and imagination. Fine arts include the most ancient forms, such as painting and drawing. Even art that was born thanks to technological developments, such as sculpture, graphic art, photography, and installation art.

Different eras in art history have had their principles for defining beauty. History In the book *Indonesian Fine Arts in Historical Perspectives* (2017) by Purwo that the history of art provides

an overview of the stages or stages of the creation of visual works past and present. Of course, it's not just a matter of the form created. But also the background or expectations of the art-creating community at that time. The study of the history of art shows that the art of a nation cannot develop without external influences. Its development always shows a growth from the beginning then grows.

Finally reached the peak point on terms of classical art. So it can be said that the history of art is a record of the occurrence of two or three-dimensional visual creations from time to time in a periodized manner. The following is a section on fine arts: Decorative arts are creations in fine arts that aim to add to the value of beauty. Sthe sculptureis an art that is limited by three-dimensional size and has a size that shows the thickness and content. Art of building As the result of art created by humans as a place of refuge and residence. Fine art in Indonesia began to exist in prehistoric times or around 2,000 BC. The ancestors of the Indonesian people lived in these prehistoric times.

### **Southeast Asia's Before and Post-Colonial Art Heritage**

According to Loomba, the word post-colonial comes from the words 'pos' and 'colonial', while the word colonial comes from the Roman colonial which means agricultural land or settlement. colonialism, a non-capitalist economic restructuring to encourage colonial capitalism (II, 2007) According to Ratna, postcolonial studies are relatively new, tand here are many opinions about postcolonial theory, so it is quite difficult to determine with certainty twwhether he postcolonial theory was born (Ratna, 2008). Then the postcolonial notion was first put forward by Frantz Fanon in his book entitled *Black Skin, White Masks and The Wretched of The Earth* (New York, 1967). Fanon is a psychiatrist who developed a careful analysis of the psychological and sociological impact of colonization (II, 2007)

His book on postcolonial reflects several important aspects, namely: postcolonial theory is considered capable of uncovering hidden problems contained behind the reality that has occurred, with the following considerations. First, definitively, postcolonialism pays attention to analyzing the colonial era. Postcolonialism fits perfectly with the problems being faced by the newly independent Asian nation for about half a century. So, there are still many problems that need to be solved, even fresh in the minds of the people of Southeast Asia. Second, postcolonialism is closely related to nationalism, while we ore facing various problems related to the life of the nation and homeland. The theory of postcolonialism is considered to be able to provide an understanding of each individual so that he always puts the interests of the nation above the group, the interests of the group above personal interests. Third, as a new theory and

variant of post-structuralism, postcolonialism fights for a small narrative, gathering strength from below and learning from the past to move towards the future. Fourth, postcolonialism raises awareness that colonialism is not merely physical, but psychological. Fifth, postcolonialism is not merely a theory but an awareness of its own, that there is still a lot of great work to be done, such as fighting imperialism, orientalism, racism, and various other forms of hegemony, both material and spiritual, both from foreign nations and their people (II, 2007).

If we talk about postcolonial heritage, it is very influential on the character and trauma after the experience of living together with the influence of foreigners. Even some places become an unforgettable part. In nostalgia or experiences during the colonial period, many things were hidden and then reappeared through wall paintings as a form of personal or group expression. From a painting with an in-depth study, it can be seen a comparison of before and post-colonial art. So it can be said from this experience that much emphasis has changed, both from the way of thinking and the idea of every behavior after *post-* colonial or Southeast Asian modernism.

According to away the emphasis of modernism is on a way of thinking, an idea, and not material things. Historically it is related to the long history of the development of Western culture and civilization which began when Western Europe entered the Renaissance Age at the beginning of the 14th century until the 15th century. At that time, it seemed as if there was a revolt of the mind against the domination of the old values inherited from the Catholic church and the kingdom which were deemed no longer worthy of being maintained. There is a new enthusiasm to explore the knowledge that has been developed by their ancestors long ago during the ancient Greek civilization. The point is that after the Renaissance, the world entered the modern phase. Writers, scientists, painters, sculptors, philosophers, and some clergy alike are rolling the globe which is called the modern style person (Awuy, 1995).

Harrison said that modernization is defined as a series of technological development processes and scientific knowledge that causes the world to change from its previous state. Modernization refers to the growth of machinery and industrial development pioneered by European civilization. Modernity is a social and cultural condition caused by changes due to foreign influences. Modernity focuses on human experience, be it personal experience (inner experience) or 'social experience' in the form of awareness of changes and adaptations they make to those changes. The condition of modernity is an aspect of the experience that is represented by the values of modernism (Harrison & Wood, 1993).

So from the view of several previous researchers that the heritage in Southeast Asia is so rich in traditions and customs. Although the influence of colonialism in the Asian continent, especially Southeast Asia, had an impact on the local community, some of the heritage of art remains in the hearts of its people. Iforthe example in Indonesia, there is Borobudur, Prambanan. In Thailand ,there are many temples that are still preserved. In Cambodia ,there are so many temples resembling temples in other places such as Borobudur.

According to Lee Sherman, such as in southern Vietnam, for example, the development of the Champa kingdom (before the country was inhabited by the Vietnamese from the north). Champa has a strong Hindu-Buddhist artistic tradition, as does neighboring Cambodia. Although in general the Champa civilization was more Shiva Hindu, some relics indicate that Mahayana Buddhism also had a place in this country, such as the discovery of the head statue of Awalokiteswara in the Champa style. Many Champa statues are characterized by rich adornments. The Kingdom of Champa was eventually occupied and colonized by Vietnam in 1471, and completely collapsed in 1720, while the Cham people remain a significant minority in several Southeast Asian countries (Sherman, 2003).



Figure 1. The child Buddha emerges from within the lotus flower bud. Red and gold plated wood, Trần-Hồ dynasty, 14th and 15th century Vietnam.



Figure 2. Mandalay style Buddha statue

Sherman adds that between the 1st century and the 8th century, several kingdoms competing for influence in this area (especially the Funan Kingdom in Cambodia and the Mon Kingdom in Burma) contributed to artistic characteristics, usually influenced by the Gupta style. Combined with the pervasive Hindu style, Buddhist images, worship tablets, and Sanskrit speaking inscriptions are found in this area.

From the 9th to the 13th centuries, Southeast Asia developed a powerful empire that became very active in the creation of Buddhist art and architecture. The Srivijaya Empire in the south and the Khmer Empire in the north competed for influence and glory, both adhered to Mahayana Buddhism, and expressed their artistic power in the embodiment of the rich Bodhisattva pantheon. Srivijaya-style Buddhist art was influenced by Sailendra art from Java, developed in the 9th century in Central Java, then spread to Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula to Southern Thailand (Sherman, 2003).

According to tradition, Buddhist teachings reached Sri Lanka in the 3rd century AD, spread by Buddhist preachers under the guidance of Thera Mahinda, son of Emperor Ashoka of the Maurya dynasty. Prior to the spread of Buddhism, Sri Lankans lived in superstitious animist teachings. The assimilation and transfer of faith from these pre-Buddhist beliefs was slow. In order to gain a firm footing, Buddhism in Sri Lanka had to absorb various beliefs in gods, spirits or supernatural beings. The very early monastery complex was built by Devānampiyatissa and dedicated to Thera Mahinda. The Mahāvihāra Monastery became the center of orthodox Theravada doctrine, and its preeminent position remained undefeated until the construction of the Abhayagiri Vihāra around 89 BC by *Vaṭṭagāmaṇī*. Abhayagiri Vihāra became the center of Mahayana reform doctrine. The rivalry between the monks Mahāvihāra and Abhayagiri led to further division and the establishment of the Jetavanarama near Mahāvihāra. A common feature of Sinhalese Buddhism is the division into three main classes of *nikāyas*, named after the three main monastic complexes at Anurādhapura; namely the Mahāvihāra, Abhayagiri, and Jetavanārāma schools. This is the result of the disciplinary deviations (*vinaya*) and doctrinal conflicts of these three schools. Sri Lanka is renowned for its stonework of Buddha statues and bronze casts.

Myanmar (Burma) is naturally heavily influenced by the eastern part of the Indian territory. The Mon people of southern Burma are said to have embraced Buddhism around 200 BC under the spread of the religion by King Ashoka of India, before the split between Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhism. Early Buddhist temples found such as the Beikthano temple in central Myanmar, which date between the 1st and 5th centuries. The Buddhist art of the Mons was particularly influenced by Indian art from the Gupta and post-Gupta periods, and the style and



nature that spread widely in Southeast Asia following the expansion of the Mon Empire between the 5th and 8th centuries. Later, thousands of Buddhist temples were built in Bagan, the capital of Burma, between the 11th and 13th centuries, and about 2,000 of them are still standing. Several beautiful sculptural masterpieces of the Buddha remain from that period.

In Thailand for example From the 1st century to the 7th century, Buddhist art in Thailand was first influenced by direct contact with Indian traders and the expansion of the Mon empire, leading to the creation of Hindu and Buddhist art inspired by the Gupta tradition, with various monumental statues. From the 9th century on, the various currents of late Thai art became heavily influenced by Khmer art in the north and Srivijaya art in the south , both Mahayana. Until the end of that period, Buddhist art was characterized by a clear flexibility in expression, and the subject matter characteristic of the Mahayana pantheon figures across several works of Bodhisattva statues .



Figure 3. Phra Atchana Wat Si Chum, Sukhothai Province, Thailand



Figure 4. The lowest relief of the Borobudur temple

As usual in Indonesia Southeast Asia, Indonesia is influenced by Indian culture since the first century AD. The oldest Buddhist erected in Indonesia is probably a brick stupa at Batujaya in Karawang regency, West Java, dating to the 4th century AD. The temple was built of red brick covered with lepa or plaster. The islands of Sumatra and Java were the territories of the Srivijaya empire (8th to 13th centuries AD), which later grew into a maritime power that dominated the islands and peninsulas of Southeast Asia. Srivijaya adhered to Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism, under the patronage of the Sailendra dynasty. Srivijaya spread Buddhist

art to the Southeast Asian peninsula. Some examples of Mahayana Buddha statues in the form of bodhisattva statues from this period are found in Southeast Asia.

### Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that postcolonial theory is a theory that studies the condition of the outcome. Post-colonial conditions related to the 18th century to the 19th century have been able to change the perspective of the artists to love their art more by preserving the art. This theory pays attention to that called art and indigenous culture which is the cultural identity of the colonial power which was influenced by the thoughts of the colonials themselves. Relates to the representation of race, ethnicity and the formation of the nation-state. For this reason, post-colonial studies aim to re-evaluate the history of art in Southeast Asia, especially through antropology sequences and thought, such as science from the perspective of every country in Southeast Asia. Indigenous knowledge from other cultures through empirical and historical studies bring a lot opportunities for the country itself. Developing contemporary discourses on the nature, style and scope of science has a major impact on every country in Southeast Asia. New visions in developing scientific policies is recognized more and more artistic practices among society are increasingly seen with post-colonial influences in Southeast Asia. Therefore, the influences of postcolonial in Southeast Asia has brought and enriched places where there are many heritages to be developed.

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