

## *Festifal Malang Kembali VI* FOR CONSUMER SOCIETY

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### Introduction

**F***estifal Malang Kembali* or popularly known as *Malang Tempoe Doeloe* (old alphabet of Malang Tempo Dulu), shortened as MTD, is an annual event conducted by *Inggil Foundation* in cooperation with local government of Malang and the office of tourism of Malang. It is held on May each year since six years ago. The management of the festival and people of Malang are proud of this festival because it is unique and different from other festival in other cities. In most of its display the MTD always displays and explores the history of Malang and all of its heroism in the past. All of the elements in the festival are reconstructed to support the ideas of presenting the history. The elements of the festival consist of the stands that display the unique and antiques, cultural items, traditional food, clothing, and the stages with the art performance, and the workshop with the cultural activities. The open display outdoor also presents the cultural historical aspects.

The *Inggil Foundation* manager says that this festival is meant for the consumers who needs to learn the history in enjoyable ways. So, the learning the history can be done while having walk seeing many interesting cultural artefacts and art performance, and shopping some unique food and other things. This year, the festival of MTD was conducted on 19-22 May 2011, under the theme “Discovering Heritage”. *Inggil Foundation* and local government of Malang conducted the festival with the aim of character building through

historical education activities. The designer wants the people of Malang learn the history and culture through these festivals and learning the history in the most enjoyable ways.

The festival took place at Ijen street. The 2km street was changed into a long 500 stands and many reconstruction of building as well as simulation of the condition of old Malang. The 500 stands presented and displayed many unique and antiques, many kinds of traditional foods, traditional home wares, batik clothing, and other unique things rarely found in modern times. The reconstructed building can be found easily such as Benteng Malang 1767 completed with its accessories and tools that construct the meaning as a port. The simulated traditional transportation system of dokar, completed with the manager of the dokar that manage the system at the place called 'standplat'. People can ride the dokar to enjoy surrounding the festival. Many workshop took place with the agenda of workshop and performing traditional art. The stage performance also completed the festival with the scheduled art performance such as ludruk, ketoprak, wayang kulit, traditional song, etc. All of the elements are meant to build the atmosphere of old Malang.

## Meaning Construction in the Festival Context

The festival of MTD 2011 has the theme "Discovering Heritage", meaning exploring the heritage, any cultural forms existed in the past to be learned and preserved. To present this cultural heritage, it needs to present, reconstruct and make simulation of the cultural forms. From all of the display and activities the meaning is constructed. In the MTD festival there are several methods of display: (1) an open display. Around five hundreds of stands in the festival display many items (unique and antiques, traditional foods, traditional house wares, clothing/batik, etc); (2) reconstruction, such as "Benteng Malang 1767"; (3) simulation, some troops wearing colonial uniform, dress code for the visitors : traditional clothing kebaya or batik worn by the visitors, simulation of dokar (traditional means of transportation using cart pulled by horse) with its 'standplat', etc.; (4) workshop: workshop on stage performance (acting), workshop on kaligrafi, etc; (5) stage performance. For example the performance of traditional art such as ketoprak, ludruk, wayang kulit, keroncong, etc.

One of the most eye-catching in the MTD festival 2011 was the reconstruction of Benteng Malang 1767. The “Benteng Malang 1767” was built at the center of the festival area, among the 500 stands of many ‘small’ things. The port was becoming the ‘icon’ of the festival this year. The port was built from wood frame and Styrofoam. The cubic form of the fort is completed with some labels that tell the audience that it is a fort, Benteng Malang 1767: the written labels, some old canons inside of the fort that can be seen from outside of the fort, some guards at the door of the fort completed with the clothing and accessories of troops in the era of Dutch colonialism.

The guardians with the uniform and attributes of the soldier of colonial times ‘naturalizes’ the text, make the fort appear less as a construction of Benteng Malang 1767. The reconstruction of Benteng Malang 1767 with all of its ‘equipment’ (canons, written label written at each of its wall sides) tend to legitimate the designer (Inggil Foundation) that they have been there in Benteng Malang in 1767. This is completed with the documentary photos displayed inside the fort, that attract the visitors to pay ticket and standing in long queue to go inside the fort. Almost all of the visitors are aware of the building of “Benteng Malang 1767”. At night, the fort was decorated with the light of porch at each of the corner of the fort, building the atmosphere of oldies. Almost every young people coming to the festival documented themselves and the fort by taking photographs with the fort at the background. For the young, the constructed fort means something unique and very nice for their picture uploaded at Facebook.

This shows that the young people are more interested in their own interest, showing that they are involved in the important event, in front of the unique ‘fort’. Being involved in an important and popular event is meaningful for them, disregarding the history of the fort and other ‘historical things.’ So, the constructed fort does not make the young people closer to the history or something related to the history of the fort, instead it made them close to the unique and rarely found thing. They appreciated more on the creativity of the designer of the festival for presenting the fort there.

Mostly in a festival or exhibition, designers work with objects and contextualize them so that these assume a purposive roles, objects are selected as representative. However, in this MTD festival, the selection did not run as the

other 'formal' exhibition. The 500 stands did not have a strict rules on what they have to display. The committee of the festival just select the stands able to provide or display the 'old' or 'historical' things, without a clear definition of the 'historical' things. The stands with some antiques and unique things show many old stuff from the old times, not definitely sure that they are from colonial eras.

For example, the stands displaying old standing clock, old model of bicycles, old kitchen wares. Some of the stands sold old coins and paper, old books, antique clock, home decoration, old house ware, old kitchen ware made of pottery, stone, wood, and other material that is not common nowadays. In this case, the manager of the festival did not limit the things they could display. So, from the stuffs displayed in the stands, most of them interpret the historical things is the old things or the things that is rarely found anymore. They did not even mention the year or the era of the things was made or used.

Some of the stands sold wooden kitchen-ware as a souvenir instead of a functional kitchen ware. Why as souvenir? Many people nowadays cook with different stove and wares. They are not compatible anymore with the old kitchen ware such as pottery, bronze 'dandang' and others. So the souvenir functions as memorabilia, reminding of their older generation. The stand that sold old book attracted those interested to the old book disregard of the historical times. The similar happened to the stand of old coin or paper, that the visitors are those who like to collect old coin or paper.

The stands of traditional food did not represent people's consumption of a particular historical time. They interpreted that the food that is rarely found is the 'historical' or having 'cultural' meaning. Traditional food such as tiwul, lupis, klepon, arbanat, gula kacang, gulali, and other 'old' food is rarely found nowadays. Many snack sold in stores are produced by factories, not the home-made. It is rarely now to find out the home-made food / cookies or snack, even at the big ceremonies such as parties. Most of the food, cookies and other snack are factory-made. However, there is a trend that the traditional food now come up in many places (such as in many places in Jakarta) as a prestigious and more expensive food. Such food in 'prestigious' place is meant to fulfill people's longing for the old sweet time, as sweet as the food.

The traditional food displayed and sold in this festival can be said as a means for reducing the historical distance of the young people nowadays with

the older generation. They can enjoy the traditional food along with their memory of old grandmother or elder generation through enjoying the similar food that their grandma ever made or cooked. The stands of traditional food are one of the most favorite stands for young people.

However the stands that provided such things as clothing (batik, t-shirt), bags, shoes and other similar things did not represent the historical eras, because what they sold or displayed are the product that are available nowadays at other stores. Though it is not 'historical' or old stuff, the stands represented the 'atmosphere' of traditional when they provided 'batik'. Moreover, such stands are visited by much more visitors than other stands. They can buy clothing, bag, shoes and others product. These stands seems that the ones for meeting the trend of clothing and fashion with a bit 'traditional' touch. This fulfills the consumer's need. Some of the consumer happily bought clothing, t-shirt or other thing in this festival, especially the goods with the label of MTD festival. They did not just buy the t-shirt or fashion, they bought the label that gave the feeling of 'proud'.

As cultural expression and physical proof, many stuffs provided in this festival provided insights into cultural phenomena of which they are taken to be physical manifestation. The fort of Benteng Malang 1767, traditional food, antiques and unique, traditional transportation, etc are all giving insight of the old or historical times, without bothering the real history. The visitor is drawn into a new and different world in which unfamiliar objects might be made intelligible where the design reduced the distance between the visitor and the originating culture. The fort, for example, is just taken for granted as a fort, and for the young it is just a unique thing they need to take photograph on them. The purpose of the festival is primarily communicating the history through understanding and interpretation.

According to Barthes, 'myth' is a second order semiological language. This means that it does not work on the basis of an arbitrary, unmotivated relationship between the signifier and signified. With 'myth' there is always some form of 'motivation' namely purpose, intent or rationale underlying its use. So myth naturalizes speech, transmuting what is essentially cultural, historical, constructed and motivated into something which it materializes as natural (transhistorical, innocent, and factual). Myth's duplicity is therefore

located in its ability to naturalize and make innocent what is profoundly motivated.

In the MTD festival context, the designer, purifies all of their motivation through the purpose stated in any occasion, that the festival is aimed to raise awareness among the young people and all of people of Malang and surrounding, on the history, emphasized as 'discovering heritage.' The designer, having the symbolic power, construct and persuade through the involvement of all participants of the display, and visitors although it is ambiguous, which heritage need to be discovered and preserved. So the ambiguous motivation is covered perfectly through the myth of the statement of 'learning history' through fun shopping activities, or through the mantra of 'discovering heritage'.

## The Politics of Festival

The festival takes roles in the production of social knowledge. Surely, the MTD festival is a historical, social and political events. The MTD at this year 2011 brought the ideas of discovering heritage, meaning the exploration of heritage that existed in the history and aimed to be learned by young generation now. The question is which heritage is highlighted? Seen from Foucault theory, we can find the relationship between power and spectacle. There were two biggest artifacts displayed: the reconstruction of fort Benteng Malang 1767 and the big banner of the historical events in Malang that says a lot about the military events and colonial administration at that time.

Discussing fort Malang 1767 is talking about the great spectacle of Dutch colonial periods. The fort shows that the Dutch colonial is in power and supported by the history that put the colonial as the producer of the knowledge and power. Inside the Benteng, visitors were given many photographs and visuals of the history when the Dutch colonial firstly came to Malang and established the power. The fort tells much about the power of colonial in the colonial era.

Observing the fort further, we will find out a power asymmetry displayed between the colonizer and colonized, that the colonizer is represented with the big powerful fort that is 'eye-catching' completed with canons and guards. Many visitors interested in joining the 'benteng' tour inside, even they have to

pay a ticket. The long queue showed the people's enthusiasm in seeing the fort. On the other hand, the colonized is represented with their daily life that is traditional 'things' displayed in many stands and it is not reconstructed and represented as the power. So, we can find out in this festival, who have the power and who is the powerless. The history is the colonial military Dutch history. The contested parties is clearly exhibited. This derives from the unequal relationship between Dutch colonial power and the colonized people. Seeing such description, so, what kind of heritage need to be discovered? This is ambiguous then.

On the other side, the 500 stands displayed many things aimed at giving the ideas of traditional heritage owned by local people. The stands along 2 km at Ijen streets built the kampong atmosphere of old time Malang. There is a very interesting insight when we scrutinize the stands and exhibition presented in the festival. There are two different stands contested in covert manner. The first, the stands that present people's daily life are represented by the stands of many kinds of traditional food, unique and antiques, traditional public transportation, traditional tools and home wares, clothing, batik and souvenirs, stage performance for traditional music, art and theater.

On the other hand, the life of the colonial can be represented in the exhibition of old, antique cars that definitely owned by the rich or colonials. There is an 'exhibition; of antique cars, that is surely for exhibition, not for sale, because such cars must have been very expensive. The cars are only owned by the antique collector, not for its function as a means of transportation but as a status symbol, a pride. Some visitors are mostly interested in this antique cars because they got a good spot for photographs. They pose in front of the cars, and feel happy, though not owned the car at least they can document their 'closeness' to the antique cars. This is completely contrasted to the 'dokar' standplat. This traditional means of transportation is really functioned as a means of transportation in the festival.

The visitors can get on the dokar by paying 10.000 rupiah each person and strolling on the dokar around the Ijen street, where the stands and festival took place. The 'standplat' is like a station, a place for coordinating the dokars and where the passanger get on/off. The dokar drivers were happy because they got many passangers in the festival and this does not happen in their daily

life, because the dokar is getting fewer and fewer passenger and they are rarely found in the city.

The other interesting spot in the festival is the fact that the life of the colonial is also represented by the restaurant “Oen” that opened its outlet in this festival. This restaurant has been very popular among the Dutch people since its firstly open in 1930s until now, so that any Dutch – usually old people-tourist visiting this city, they must have visited this restaurant. So, the restaurant is closely associated with Dutch people. This old restaurant sold the ‘authentic’ ice cream and many other cookies and food of the colonial Dutch taste.

Seen from the place, the restaurant did not take place at the stands as the other traditional food stand. The restaurant opened its mini restaurant in this festival, so that it kept its ‘authentic’ attributes as ‘colonial’ class restaurant. This is extremely different from the other stands of traditional food that are similar to food stalls available at any street accessible by common people. All of other traditional foods stay in stands provided by the committee along the street.

## What Does it Mean for Consumer

Thousands of visitors came to the MTD festival everyday during the 4 days. Young people living in Malang and surrounding, family groups, or foreign tourists flocked in the festival. Mostly they came more than once, and they came in groups (with family or friends). What is presented in the Festival Malang Tempo Doeloe attracted them to come and build expectation of enjoying the old traditional atmosphere and things. Traditional foods, transportation, antique cars, old and unique home wares, and other antique things is getting more and more rarely found out nowadays. In this modern time, we can find out that modernism refers to the cultural experience of modernity. The cultural experience of modernity leads people leave behind any traditional food, means of transportation, tools etc.

For most of the visitors, especially young people, this event is entertaining. They can enjoy many rare things and experience. Enjoying old atmosphere in fun with friends, taking photographs on antique or unique objects, and many of them as consumers really enjoy the shopping activities while strolling around



with friends and not necessarily spend too much money. Financially, the government was happy with the money circulation in this four-day festival. To meet with the target the government encouraged the stands to ‘meet the consumers’ satisfaction’. The stands provided with stuffs that the consumers like most.

However, according the consumer theory, people as consumer will pursue his own happiness without the slightest hesitation and consumer prefer objects which provide him with the maximum satisfaction. However, as a system, needs are also radically different from pleasure and satisfaction. They are produced as elements of a system and not as a relation between an individual and an object. So in this festival, consumer’s needs and satisfaction are built from elements of a system. The whole system of the festival determined the people’s consumption. Though the traditional food is a bit more expensive than in other traditional market, for examples, this did not mean anything for the customer when they got other element in the festival that support their satisfaction.

The MTD festival is associated with the old historical and cultural things and experience. This mental image has been attached along the festival from year to year. This image is very productive because thousands people expected this event in May every year. Though the enjoyment of the festival is mostly on the aspect of entertaining and shopping, the committee still kept the ideas of having historical teaching through the festival. Seen from the festival of 2011, this idea of discovering heritage manifested in the creative and productive process such as the reconstruction of fort Benteng Malang 1767, and other simulation and reconstruction. The producers thought that young people can learn the history while enjoying the fun activities including shopping during the festival. In the fact, most of young people came to the festival for enjoying the fun things, entertaining and discovering if there is anything new or different from their expectation, if there is a surprise.

The reconstruction of the fort Benteng Malang 1767 was successful as a surprise, that is different from the last year festival. However, learning history is mostly neglected by the visitors of the festivals. There are many reasons for this. The first is, the mental process that is needed in learning history seemed to be difficult to do in such crowded festival. What people can quickly absorb is the appearance or physical performance. The fort is successful

with its physical presence but it did not mean a lot for the visitors for learning history. The physical presence of the fort is meaningful for the young people only for taking photographs, posing with friends in cheerful atmosphere of festival.

The other things that made the festival's aims is ambiguous to meet is the presence of the contested representation of the people's and the colonial's. As explained in the politics of the festivals, it clearly contested both people's and colonial's cultural heritages and forms. Maybe such things are felt by many visitors and this lead to question, which heritage that need to be discovered and preserved? The people's culture or the colonial's culture? Maybe such ambiguous things are not noticed by most people visiting the festival, and this leads to another question, did people really learn history or cultural heritage? Or people just have fun times once a year while the government claimed that it educated the people? Both of the questions point out that the aim of the festival should be manifested in critical ways so that the cultural heritage or any other aims will be understood in clear ways instead of manipulative ways.



**Picture 1:** "Benteng Malang 1767" : take photo with the guard.



**Picture 2:** Dokar Standplaats at the MTD VI 2011



**Picture 3:** Pose in front of the antique cars

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