

## The Combination of Culture and Art in *Muludan* Mask Dance as a Strategy for Preserving Tradition

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### ABSTRACT

Festivals and celebrations are among many ways for a culture or tradition to be presented to society. *Muludan* Mask is a Surabaya culture where children often play with these masks when celebrating the Prophet's Birthday. But unfortunately, this culture is starting to be eroded by the times along with the development of the globalization era. Many efforts have been made by both the Surabaya government and communities in Surabaya to preserve the *Muludan* mask tradition. One of the efforts made by the Arbaya Dance Community in 2017 and 2018 was to celebrate the Prophet's birthday at Balai Pemuda Surabaya by dancing the *Muludan* Mask dance together. The qualitative method with interviews as a data collection method was applied. The interview was held on 21 October 2023 in Gedung Nasional Indonesia with Adelina Sulistyoningih and other dance mentors act as the interviewee. This article aims to determine the effectiveness and sustainability of the Arbaya Dance Community efforts to preserve the *Muludan* mask tradition. Furthermore, this article wants to show how art and culture are combined to preserve a tradition since tradition is one of the components composing a place identity. The results of this research show that the existence of the *Muludan* Mask tradition needs to be reaffirmed so that it doesn't fade completely from Surabaya society because it can affect the identity of Surabaya. This tradition's small number of cultural practitioners causes this article to have only one source from one community. This article serves as a reminder so that the tradition is preserved and noticed by the Surabaya people.

**Keywords:** *Muludan* Mask, Prophet's Birthday, Identity, Surabaya, Place Identity

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### 1. Introduction

In everyday life, celebrations and festivals are two things that have a strong correlation. From the etymological perspective, festival is a term taken from Latin which means festum, people's joy, and feria, a holiday from work days to honor God or deities. Apart from that, festivals can also be interpreted as cultural events enlivened by various performances and artistic exhibitions (Alessandro Falassi, 1987). It is common for festivals to be held to celebrate or commemorate special days. Some examples of festivals in Indonesia include festivals to celebrate harvests, festivals to worship gods, and festivals to celebrate the prophet's birthday.

As mentioned by Stoeltje (1992), festivals have various functions: (1) Providing opportunities for people to worship or as a means of performance, (2) As a form of conveying the identity of a group through offerings to ancestors, a place to perform abilities and talents that have high value, or express the cultural heritage of a group. Not only that, Widiyanto (2020) mentions four other functions of the festival; festivals as a means of building cultural communication; festivals have the function of introducing and developing modern art and culture to society; festivals can increase the economic potential of residents; and festivals can motivate people to take care of the natural environment.

As has been mentioned, festivals can also be said to be an opportunity to promote local wisdom from a particular region. In her article, Njatrijani (2018) describes local wisdom as a form of local community activity in dealing with problems surrounding their needs. Local wisdom is a real form of truth that is full of life values

and has become a tradition in a region. Local wisdom can be formed from the culture of the local community, as well as the geographical conditions of the area which is considered to have advantages.

The city of Surabaya is one of the big cities in Indonesia which is rich in its local wisdom. Quoted from the website *Pemerintah Kota Surabaya* (2015), Surabaya local wisdom includes *ludruk*, *manten pagon*, *remo* dance, *undukan doro*, *okol* wrestling, and the *Maulud* mask. These traditions act as a fundamental aspect in defining Surabaya since these are the things that make the city unique and interesting. On the other hand, the flow of city life in Surabaya makes the effects of modernization and globalization develop rapidly in Surabaya, making some traditions lose their place. Therefore, the Surabaya Government and all figures and cultural communities in Surabaya simultaneously want to develop and preserve that local wisdom.

Masquerade or mask-wearing festivals were present in various parts of the world. For instance, African masquerade rites and cultural events aim to preserve folklore and cohesion through dance, music, and masks, telling tales of past, present, and future lifestyles in Africa (Micah et al., 2022). In Indonesia especially Surabaya, *Muludan* Mask Dance is a valid example of the use of masquerade as a preservation effort. During its development, traditional culture in Surabaya was often demonstrated in festival performances. Like the celebration of the Prophet's birthday which was enlivened by the *Grebeg Maulud* festival in 2016. The festival displays a typical Surabaya culture that has now begun to be forgotten even by the native people of Surabaya – the *Muludan* mask tradition. *Muludan* masks are made of paper with unique and varied shapes such as tiger heads, crocodiles, and so on. This mask was often used and played with by children of Surabaya to enliven the Prophet's birthday celebration every year. Unfortunately, the tradition of wearing *Muludan* Masks has been eroded by the times, and even the craftsmen of these masks have declined drastically.

Muqodam (2014) in his writing mentioned that the *Muludan* Mask is a Surabaya tradition that has long existed in Surabaya. According to the website *Topeng Muludan* (2017), this tradition has been around since the 60s and the majority of cultural practitioners are children. *Muludan* masks are made from recycled paper waste and shaped into various mask shapes. When the anniversary of the prophet's birthday comes up, various kinds of *Muludan* masks sold by craftsmen around Surabaya can easily be found. These masks can be found in the Genteng market area, along Gubeng Besar Street Surabaya, and other markets. This tradition enriches the cultural aspect of Surabaya and also represents the joy and liveliness of Surabaya people when celebrating the Prophet's birthday. As Sachs (1933) stated cited from (Puthumana & Puthumana, 2021), visual and performing arts significantly impact our daily lives, with aesthetic perceptions significantly influencing cultural identity and way of life. Unfortunately, this tradition began to be forgotten by the younger generation of Surabaya. This is very unfortunate, said Heri Lentho, one of the cultural figures from Surabaya.

Various efforts to preserve the *Muludan* Mask tradition are carried out by several parties. One of the Surabaya cultural figures, Heri Lentho initiated the *Muludan* Mask Festival on Tunjungan Street in 2013. He tried to bring back the *Muludan* Mask culture to the surface of Surabaya society. The Surabaya government has also tried to revitalize this culture by holding a festival celebrating the Prophet's birthday. Unfortunately, this festival has not been active since 2016 (*Lestarikan Tradisi Dengan Tarian Topeng Muludan*, 2018). Therefore, one of the dance communities in Surabaya took the initiative to organize a simple celebration to enliven the Prophet's birthday and preserve the tradition of the *Maulud* Mask. The inventor of the *Muludan* Mask Dance is Adelina Sulistyoningsih, the founder of the Arbaya Dance Community. She and several other dance communities held a small celebration in the courtyard of Balai Pemuda Surabaya, dancing the *Muludan* Mask Dance together.

The *Muludan* Mask Dance is a contemporary dance created by Adelina as a form of preserving the *Muludan* Mask tradition. This dance has simple and easy-to-follow movements so children can easily practice it. This dance is also accompanied by a song with happy lyrics. The song is about joy and an invitation to celebrate and enliven the Prophet's birthday.

Fadhila (2018) in her research discusses the *Muludan* Mask tradition, which is starting to be abandoned by the local community. She conducted interviews with two surviving *Muludan* Mask craftsmen as well as an artist who took part in efforts to preserve this tradition. In her research, it was concluded that the Surabaya City Government has tried to preserve this tradition by holding a festival which is held every 4 months. Meanwhile, the artists and craftsmen collaborated with the Surabaya City Government to hold a workshop on making *Muludan* Masks at the Balai Pemuda Surabaya.

In line with Hadju (2018) in his research regarding the representation of the *Muludan* Mask tradition, he explained the results of his interviews with informants, where several of the research informants were the same as the informants from previous research. However, the main focus of his writing includes the *Grebeg Maulid* Festival held by the Surabaya City Government to celebrate the Prophet's birthday in Surabaya. The findings presented in his research stated that in essence, the *Muludan* Mask tradition held at festivals has various

meanings, not only the meaning of preserving traditions but also as an economic area for craftsmen as well as a tourism promotion event in Surabaya.

Surabaya, which is busy with the hustle and bustle of city life, needs to maintain and preserve its original traditions and culture so that it is not carried away by urban life which has many influences due to the era of globalization. This concerns the definition of the identity of the city of Surabaya, where this identity is composed of activities carried out by Surabaya residents. Therefore, the tradition of the *Muludan* mask requires special attention because its existence is starting to fade in Surabaya society. From the previous research that has been mentioned, it can be seen that the efforts made are no longer visible nowadays, therefore the author wants to study specifically the efforts that have been made and how these efforts continue.

Other efforts that might help the process of revitalizing the existence of the *Muludan* mask are highly recommended to be implemented. This article aims to discuss the efforts to preserve the *Muludan* Mask tradition carried out by the Arbaya Dance Community and how this tradition is very important to preserve because it is one of the components composing the identity of Surabaya. The small number of cultural practitioners in this tradition makes this article only have one source who comes from one community, namely the Arbaya Dance Community. It is hoped that this article can provide further information about the *Muludan* Mask and help this tradition become known again to the people of Surabaya.

## 2. Method

This research uses a qualitative method to explore the preservation effort for the *Muludan* Mask tradition and its continuation from the aforementioned effort. Meanwhile, the focus group discussion approach is used to gain an in-depth understanding of social problems regarding the importance of preserving the *Muludan* Mask tradition (O.Nyumba et al., 2018). The data are being collected from interviews with a member of the Arbaya Dance Community. Thus, the main data from this research is an interview transcript from the community member which is Adelina Sulistyoningsih who acts as the data source.

The data are collected using interviews (Gapur et al., 2018, p. 146; Hardiyanti et al., 2023, p. 10; Taulia et al., 2023, p. 269). The interview was held on 21 October 2023 in Gedung Nasional Indonesia, Babatan, Surabaya, which is the place where the community usually does their weekly practice. Adelina Sulistyoningsih and other dance mentors act as the source for the interview in this research. The researcher asks a few open questions to the interviewee. The model that was used in the interview is semi-structured, where the interview began with the researcher asking one root question which can lead to other questions as the interview progresses so that more in-depth information can be acquired (Alijoyo et al., n.d.). The interview lasted approximately 20 minutes.

After the data collection is completed, the author will investigate the *Muludan* Mask tradition and continue the discussion by explaining and analyzing the interview results. Quotes from the interview transcript will be presented in the results and discussion section. Theories regarding city identity will also be used to analyze the data results. After that, the author will explain how the results of the interview answer the research questions. Finally, the researcher will provide conclusions and opinions regarding efforts to preserve the *Muludan* Mask tradition organized by the Arbaya Dance Community.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1. *Muludan* Mask: A Tradition Eroded by Time

The art of masks has existed since the time of our ancestors and continues to be passed down to subsequent generations. At that time, masks and mask performances had the main function as a means of artistic expression and cultural rituals of the local community. However, over time, the meaning and function of this mask have shifted. Masks are no longer based on religious elements, there has been a shift in the shape, appearance, size, and function of masks. This is why mask-making is not only limited by traditional or classical form criteria, masks now have various forms that are developing and becoming a new form of creation (Martono et al., 2017).

Masks are a form of art that is often found in various cultures in Indonesia. One of the mask traditions in Surabaya is the *Muludan* Mask. According to the website Topeng *Muludan* (2017), this tradition has been around since the 60s and the majority of cultural practitioners are children. *Muludan* masks are made from recycled paper waste and shaped into various mask shapes. Recycled paper that has been glued together using glue and shaped to resemble an animal's head is then placed in the sun until dry. The duration of the drying process depends on the weather. This mask is used by children to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW or what is usually called the Maulid Nabi in Indonesian. The word *Muludan* itself comes from the word *maulid* which is pronounced using a Javanese accent. The shape of the *Muludan* Mask has developed as times change. While at the onset the shape of this mask was only inspired by the shape of an

animal's head, in the process of development, other shapes emerged, such as robot heads or film characters that are currently popular. Many people call the Girilaya and Dukuh Kupang district in Surabaya, East Java, "Mask Village" or "Kampung Topeng". However, it is a shame that *Muludan* mask sellers are no longer visible nowadays, even though in the past there were lots of mask craftsmen and sellers.

"When I was little *Muludan* was in the Genteng district, there was a bazaar that specifically sold masks and small swords. Yes, that used to be, now it doesn't exist..." (interview with Adelina Sulistyoningsih on 21st October 2023).

Various efforts have been made by various figures from the government, cultural figures, and other communities who want to maintain the existence of the *Muludan* Mask culture. One of the efforts that has been made is the *Muludan* Mask festival which is held by the Surabaya City Government to enliven the celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad SAW in Surabaya. The festival is held at certain points such as Bungkul Park and Surya Park Yard (Pemerintah Kota Surabaya, 2014, 2015). Not only that, based on the interview result with the founder of Arbaya Dance Community, Adelina Sulistyoningsih, the information obtained stated that there was also a workshop that invited Surabaya children to make *Muludan* Masks with Mrs. Kartining, one of the remaining mask craftsmen. This workshop was held for the first time in 2013 and received a positive response from Surabaya residents (Rida Fadhila, 2018).

But unfortunately, the continuation of these preservation efforts can no longer be seen now. Adelina, the founder of the Arbaya Dance Community, said that the festival which used to be held every year by the Surabaya City Government had not been seen since 2016.

"...previously, she (Mbak Rini) was facilitated by the Tourism Department to open a workshop at Balai Pemuda. So anyone can learn how to make masks, now there aren't any..." (interview with Adelina Sulistyoningsih on 21st October 2023).

Therefore, Adelina took the initiative to hold a simple celebration that was attended by several other dance communities at the Balai Pemuda Surabaya in 2018 (*Lestarikan Tradisi Dengan Tarian Topeng Muludan*, 2018) This was confirmed again by the author during the interview where Adelina said that it was true that the festival had stopped operating and that the *Muludan* Mask-making workshop that used to be at the Balai Pemuda Surabaya was also no longer visible.

### 3.2. *Muludan* Mask Dance

The Arbaya Dance Community is a dance community founded by Adelina Sulistyoningsih, precisely in 2010. Based on the results of the interview, Adelina stated that the foundation of the Arbaya Dance Community started with her initiative to provide intensive training to her students from the Yayasan Kesenian Bina Tari Jawa Timur which she considered to have potential. Then, Adelina received an offer to carry out the training at the Balai Pemuda Surabaya. After a while, she returned the children to their original dance community, namely the Yayasan Kesenian Bina Tari Jawa Timur, and started setting up her dance community. Starting from just a few children, now her students have reached around two hundred people. There are three types of classes at Arbaya Dance Community: Ceria Class, Anak Class, and Remaja Class. Among the three classes, the Anak Class has the largest number of participants. Arbaya Dance Community is supported by the Department of Culture, Youth, Sports, and Tourism so it is a non-profit or unpaid dance community. Even though this community does not charge any fees, this does not mean that the community is flooded with children who want to register as Adelina's students. "The number of participants does not always increase, it is not constant, and sometimes it goes up or down," said Adelina during the interview. Her students who have graduated also help Adelina teach the children at the Arbaya Dance Community. Even though the location of the dance training was previously located at the Balai Pemuda Surabaya, the Arbaya Dance Community has recently moved to the Gedung Nasional Indonesia Surabaya. Adelina thinks that the reason her community was moved was due to the situation at the Balai Pemuda Surabaya is now increasingly crowded, so she is afraid that the community's activities will over-capacity the Balai Pemuda. Training activities from the Arbaya Dance Community begin at two in the afternoon.

"So, initially I was at the Bina Tari Jawa Timur Dance Community in Genteng Kali. Then I wanted to create a lab for quality children, those who had talents, I gathered them and trained them, and were offered a place at the Balai Pemuda at that time. Even though the distance between Budaya Park and Balai Pemuda is not far, since I just got a special place and time, I

took advantage of it. So there is no community yet. Then I brought those talented children to Balai Pemuda. As time went by, I returned those children that originally came from the Bina Tari Jawa Timur Dance Community, and then I opened a new one, starting with two children and then three children until now there are approximately 200 children. Now this is the third session of the class, there are not many children, meanwhile, the second session has the most participants. So we have three classes, the Ceria Class, the Anak Class, and the Remaja Class. Well, Arbaya Dance Community is a free community, sis, so we are supported by the Tourism Department. So at that time, when I was teaching in Balai Pemuda, I was asked, 'What community is this?', 'Not a community, this is just a lab for talented children from Bina Tari Jawa Timur Dance Community, which I gave them additional time for intensive training'. After the Tourism Department saw us, he asked 'Sis, why don't you just build a community? I will support the teacher', 'Well, I didn't ask for fees', 'Yeah, that's why I want to give you honorary payment'. In the end, I brought back those children and opened a free dance community, it went up and down, free of charge doesn't guarantee that I'll get many students, there are many factors. But ease comes from God, suddenly there were potential children, for example, STKW graduates, and SMKI graduates, who wanted to practice. Once they have mastered enough, I ask them to teach the others. Like these children (pointing to other members of the Arbaya Dance Community who were sitting around us) I don't give them a salary, She used to be a trainer here, but now she has moved to Solo, and when she comes back here she became like my own child, She also wants to establish her own dance community in there. So Arbaya is like that until now, thank God we have a lot of students. Maybe we are moved from Balai Pemuda because of its current situation, especially on Sunday nights, it's busy and crowded, and it has become an icon of Surabaya. If we also practice there, it'll get even busier, the parking lot won't fit, maybe because of that consideration, I'm thinking positively about why we have moved here (Gedung Nasional Indonesia), it hasn't been a year." (interview with Adelina Sulistyoningsih on 21st October 2023).

Indonesia, which is rich in culture, has a variety of traditional dances in each region. Dance is a branch of art that uses body movements as a medium for expression. There are three types of dances: classical dance, folk dance, and modern contemporary dance. Classical dance is a dance that is based on *Keraton*. Folk dance is a dance that develops in rural areas. Meanwhile, modern contemporary dance is a dance that is created based on the consumption needs of city residents by following styles or trends that are currently popular (Kuswarsantyo, 2012). The *Muludan* Mask Dance is a modern contemporary dance created by Adelina Sulistyoningsih to enliven the *Muludan* Mask festival held by the Surabaya City Government. However, as mentioned in the previous sub-chapter, this festival has stopped since 2016. This made Adelina take the initiative to continue enlivening the celebration of the Prophet's birthday in Surabaya, even though it was only attended by several dance communities.

The *Muludan* Mask Dance was created to exhilarate the celebration of the Prophet's birthday and its movements can be easily followed by anyone. Therefore, Adelina deliberately made this dance movement simple and easy to perform. She emphasized again the importance of celebrating the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW with joy. Dancing and singing are one way to celebrate the Prophet's birthday in one's way. The mask used for this dance was previously made by Kartining, who is familiarly called Mbak Rini by Adelina. Mbak Rini offered to help create *Muludan* Masks so that when performing the *Muludan* Mask Dance the children could wear the masks. Apart from the easy movements and the use of the *Muludan* Mask during the dance, this dance is also accompanied by a song whose lyrics contain a message of invitation to celebrate the Prophet's birthday.

"In the past, I was trusted to handle the event and then I made the dance, that's the story. So I made the dance easy, basically for euphoria, to commemorate the Prophet's birthday, because births are usually commemorated by hiring like clowns for birthdays and so on, well this is at least one form of our gratitude by dancing and singing. But I also included lyrics that go... ..yooo... come on... come on, let's pray... Prophet Muhammad... that's how it indirectly also counts as reciting the Qur'an, but in our own way. The composer of this song is Mr. Subianto..." (interview with Adelina Sulistyoningsih on 21st October 2023).

From Adelina's statement, it can be understood that the *Muludan* Mask Dance has many benefits and purposes. Apart from its main purpose, namely brightening up the celebration of the Prophet's birthday, this

dance is also a form of reciting the Qur'an or praising the Prophet Muhammad SAW, as well as a means of maintaining the existence of the *Muludan* Mask tradition.

Adelina shared stories about her childhood, where at that time there was a bazaar that specifically sold *Muludan* Masks at Genteng Market. But unfortunately, this can no longer be found in the current era. Even the workshops that used to be held at the Balai Pemuda Surabaya mentored by Mbak Rini no longer exist. According to Adelina, preserving a tradition requires special attention because of its urgency, both in terms of symbolic and aesthetic value. She believes that all traditions are important and their existence must be maintained.

"I think it's very important. Nowadays, there isn't any tradition that is not considered important, what is considered not good? everything is good, everything has symbols. Yes, that was it, I was trying to discover that symbol, praising the Prophet doesn't always have to be through reciting Al-Qur'an, that's one way, doesn't it mean that we can also do this activity in our way, including that? Well, I saw that if I held it, not only the children would dance and move their bodies, but the mother, father, grandmother, and grandfather, if not, the neighbors would also ask... where are you going? Oh, I'm going to do the *Muludan* Mask Dance in Balai Pemuda, Oh... So that kind of thing exists huh... well, the *Maulud* month is a big event in my opinion so we have to celebrate it together, that's what should happen, now, if our own children's birthdays are coming up, the celebration is lively... now it's back to us, so we send prayers or blessings, basically everything is good, we have to preserve it, I think so." (interview with Adelina Sulistyoningsih on 21 October 2023).

By dancing the *Muludan* Mask Dance in celebrating the Prophet's birthday in Surabaya, Adelina hopes that the existence of wearing the *Muludan* Mask tradition can be maintained. At least the children who take part, their parents, and visitors who watch the dance event can know that there is a unique Surabaya tradition called the *Muludan* Mask. Meanwhile, the symbolization she intended in her statement can be linked to the concept of identity.

### 3.3. The Urgency of Revitalizing the *Muludan* Mask Tradition as the Identity of Surabaya

Identity is an important component of a person's self. Questions about "who you are?" can be answered by the existence of an identity attached to the individual. As Lynch (1984) said, essentially identity is something that can differentiate one thing from another. This identity is what makes something unique and has its own characteristics so that it can be easily distinguished from something else. Identity can not only claim who a person is but in a larger context, can provide recognition at the city level and even the country itself.

Place Identity is an identity concept in the context of a place that contains the meaning of a combination of "who", "where", and "how" The environment of the residential area influences the lives of its residents (J. J. Fisher, 2006). Fisher's concept emphasizes the importance of a place for its residents. The human nature of wanting to feel included in a social group makes a sense of belonging a basic human need where this feeling is created from a sense of attachment and equality of fate found among residents, "intense familiarity will create a sense of place" (Kevin Lynch, 1984). This shows that human activities can create an identity that is based on the place where they live.

Surabaya, which is a city, also certainly has an identity where people who live in Surabaya can identify themselves as Surabaya people or *arek Suroboyo*. The question here is what concept of identity can be called a component that forms the uniqueness of the city of Surabaya. This is an important problem for the city of Surabaya where in this era of globalization many places are experiencing the process of uniformity or becoming homogeneous (Ernawati, 2014).

The mission of confronting uniformity could be resolved by preserving local culture which can maintain the identity of a region. Locality is the uniqueness that differentiates a city from others. For example, when celebrating the Prophet's birthday, if in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, there is a tradition called Sekaten, then Surabaya has the *Muludan* Mask tradition to liven up the birthday celebration. *Arek-arek Suroboyo* in the 60s often celebrated the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad by using *Muludan* Masks. But unfortunately, this tradition has disappeared from the lives of the people of Surabaya. Children used to be enthusiastic about celebrating the prophet's birthday by wearing *Maulud* Masks but this enthusiasm is imperceptible nowadays. This problem made Adelina, the founder of the Arbaya Dance Community, take the initiative to create the *Muludan* Mask Dance as an effort to revitalize the tradition of celebrating the prophet Muhammad's birthday using the *Maulud* Mask. She said that tradition is a very important thing, not only does it contain aesthetic value but also has symbols that contain meaning. In her Arbaya Dance Community, she also teaches her students various traditional dances. This made her not only preserving the *Muludan* Mask tradition but also

other traditional dances. From this, the author assumes that one of the symbols meant by Adelina is tradition as a symbol of the identity of a region. The *Maulud* mask here has a role as a symbol whose existence helps build the identity of the city of Surabaya. *Muludan* masks help define “what is” and “how” the city of Surabaya from a broader perspective. Not only that but also the cultural practitioners of the *Muludan* Mask culture can also proudly claim to be *arek Suroboyo*. Therefore, it can be seen that the preservation of the *Muludan* Mask tradition is very important to maintain the integrity of the identity of the city of Surabaya in this social homogenization era.

#### 4. Conclusion

The *Muludan* mask is a mask made from paper waste and is generally used by children to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Unfortunately, the tradition of using the *Muludan* Mask on the Prophet's Birthday has no longer been seen in recent years. This is what made Adelina, the founder of the Arbaya Dance Community, try to preserve this tradition by creating and holding a *Muludan* Mask Dance together on the Prophet's Birthday. Adelina also reiterated that traditions such as the *Muludan* Mask are very important to preserve not only in terms of aesthetics but also the meaning of the symbols contained in the tradition. The preservation of the *Muludan* Mask tradition is very important to maintain the integrity of the identity of the city of Surabaya in this social homogenization era and help define the city of Surabaya from a broader perspective.

Efforts to preserve this culture, which were once very visible, are now very rare and almost couldn't be found. One example of the efforts that have been made is the Maulid Festival and the *Maulud* Mask-making workshop organized by the Surabaya City Government. Therefore, this article aims to reaffirm the importance of the *Muludan* Mask tradition for Arek Suroboyo and the city of Surabaya itself. The author hopes that in the future the *Muludan* Mask can reemerge on the surface of the lives of the people of Surabaya.

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#### 6. Conflict of Interest

The authors whose names are listed immediately below certify that they have NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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