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Sacred Mask Ritual in Malay Traditional Dance Drama

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Sacred Mask Ritual
Sembarani, Kijang Mas Uncana Muda, and Kera Sakri. The mask also represents a sacred character of the supernatural world that is the Dewa Betara (petala) guru. Besides that the mask also serves as the allegoric characters such as Uri as in Awang sejambul Lebat and Awang.

In order to build a character when using the mask in the performances, the person needs to go through ritual processes such as baca mentera (chanting mantras), mengasap (burning incence and immerse the mask in the smoke), menyelam (submerging), menurun (being possessed) and memanggil (to summon a spirit) by fulfilling all the conditional preparatory materials and special application techniques. During the performance, every player wearing the mask will transform into a character and begin playing the role with improvised dialogue and/or with specific spontaneous movements with humor elements. Usually the performances using sacred masks, are either based on certain stories, which are stories of the origins or are danced in a free form without stories.

The uniqueness of the sacred masks in the traditional dance drama rituals is not much of variation because it is an inheritance mask that needs to be kept and well maintained in order to preserved the beliefs of the ancestors, jin (genie) and saka vibrations that it feels when wearing it. In the ritual process for the ritual performances, most facial masks used are almost the same in terms of shapes and colors. The most important factor is the spiritual experience of mask wearers during the performance.

Keywords: ritual mask process, ancestral character, symbolic and allegory