

Functions of *Barongan* Performance Arts Exhibit at The *Sedekah Bumi* Ritual Ceremony

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Abstract—*Barongan* folk art performance is often exhibited in various events such as *ruwatan*, accompanying brides, and *sedekah bumi*. Ritual events are held at certain times, with a set time. Where as the *barongan* which is shown for the entertainment program does not require the calculation of time and place, the community is free to hold this *barongan* performance anywhere and everywhere. Various things related to the use of *barongan* arts are what encourage researchers to uncover the depth of the function of *barongan* art especially in earth charity program is usually for Blora district people generally often use Tayub performing arts as a means of ritual ceremonies. Then, what emerges is the question of what functions of a *barongan* performance art exhibit at the *sedekah bumi* ritual ceremony.

Keywords— *Barongan*, performance, arts, ceremony

I. INTRODUCTION

Barong folk art or better known as *Barongan* folk art is a typical folk art from Central Java. Among several regencies in Central Java, Blora regency is in the greatest quantities for this folk art existence. Barong art is one of the folk arts which popular for Blora people, especially for the villagers. Barong art portrays the characteristics of Blora society, for instance: spontaneity, kinship, simplicity, crude, gruff, solidarity, and bravery which stand on honesty [1].

Barongan in *barongan* art is a property made to resemble Singo Barong or big savage Lion as the king of the haunted woods. As for the Singo Barong character in the *Barongan* Story, it is also called Gembong Amijoyo which means a big tiger who hold the power.

Barongan folk art is conceptualized as group dance, imitating the strength of a Giant Lion. Singo Barong's role in the performance is being the dominant character of the storyline, besides that, there are some characters that cannot be removed from the story, and they are Bujangganong/Pujonggo Anom Joko Lodro/Gendruwo Pasukan berkuda/reog Noyontoko Untub. Not only the characters that can support the performance, but *Barongan* art performance is also equipped by some music instruments, those are: Kendang, Gedhuk, Bonang, Saron, Demung dan Kempul. Among the times by, there were several additions of modern instruments; they are drums, trumpets, big kendang, and keyboards. There are times when in some performances, often combined with campursari folk art.

Barongan art is based on Hikayat Panji, a story that started from an escorting by hussars for Raden Panji Asmarabangun/Pujonggo Anom dan Singo Barong.

Barongan art performance is often exhibited in various events such as *ruwatan*; exorcism ritual, escorting the bridegroom, also *sedekah bumi*. Generally, the ritual events are held on special occasions with a specific time, while *Barongan* art performance, which is performed for amusing the audience, does not require that specific place or time. The community is allowed to hold this performance anytime and anywhere [2].

Soedarsono asserts that dances on traditional culture have a social and religious function, it is based on the arrangement of dance in society from the sociological perspective. Dances that have a social function are dances for healing ceremony, worship, hunting, treatment, and so on. He also divides the function of dance into two, 1]. Primary Function, The primary function of dance as a performance can be seen if it is clear who enjoys it. The aim of art performance is to be enjoyed, not for other purposes. Soedarsono divides this function into three, they are: 1). As a ritual means, if the audience is visible; 2). Entertaining, if the audience is a person that involves inside the performance; 3). As an aesthetic presentation, if the performance must be presented to the audience. Secondary Function, Secondary function of the performing art is when the art performance is presented as not for entertaining the audience, but for other purposes, such as: strengthen the solidarity of a group of people, mass communication media, government programs, meditation, healing, and for stimulating productivity means [2].

Those various things related to the usefulness of *Barongan* art are what encourage researcher to reveal the real function of it, especially the function in *sedekah bumi* ritual. The researcher chose the *sedekah bumi* ritual because, in Blora District, they commonly use Tayub folk art performance as their main ritual. Then, the question that will arise in this paper is what it's the function of *barongan* arts at *sedekah bumi* ritual ceremony? And are there any differences between the function of *Barongan* folk art as an entertainment program and ritual ceremony?

Stand on the explanation in the introduction, then, there is a problem that deserves to be rose in this study. What is the function of *Barongan* folk art performance at *sedekah bumi* ceremony in Ledok Village, Sambong Sub-district, Blora District?. Research Purposes for knowing the function of *Barongan* folk art performance at *sedekah bumi* ceremony in Ledok Village, Sambong Sub-district, Blora Regency.

Research Contribution: (1) for the people of Ledok, this research can provide them insight into how to protect Barongan art performance in order to protect its existence through *sedekah bumi* ceremony, and (2) for the local Government Tourism Office, this research could give more information about the existence of *Barongan* folk art performance in Ledok as a means of *sedekah bumi* ceremony. So, this performance existence can be protected and preserved henceforth to become beautiful tourism and cultural asset in Blora District. 3]. The researcher hopes that this research can be used as a reference for further research, especially those that discuss the function of *Barongan* folk art performance in *sedekah bumi* ritual ceremony.

II. METHODOLOGY

The method used by the researcher with a qualitative method. Qualitative method is a research that resulting descriptive data in the form of written or oral words from the object of research [3]. The reason why researcher chose qualitative approach is it according to the problem and the purposes of the research that many uses analysis in the form of words, it stands on: social processes, assumptions that do not use hypothesis testing or depart from theory, *verstehen* (not generalization), not in the form of statistical data, inductive meaning, and research objectives in the form of subjects. The problems revealed are more comprehensive and profound, and emphasize the meaning and process of research. In reducing problems and by compiling the results of the study, the researcher uses an emic and ethical approach, because the researcher wants to unravel the problems and the result of research from the text and context of *Barongan* folk art on *sedekah bumi* ceremony. Therefore, the study of the community's perspective and analysis from the point of view of a researcher is important to be done in order to obtain optimal research.

This research was conducted at Ledok village, Sambong sub-district, Blora District, Central Java. This location is deliberately chosen because Ledok village is one of the villages which still has a faith that *Barongan* folk art is the ritual means of *sedekah bumi* and also believes that *Barongan* folk art has an important role in the ritual life of the people in the Ledok village.

Data source and object of this research consist of: (1) Informant, people who are competent or directly or indirectly involved in *Barongan* art performance in Ledok, such as: all residents of Ledok village, Government of Ledok, barong dancers, jathilan dancers, *pengrawit*, audience; (2) documents relating to this research, such as: photograph of *Barongan* performance, research location, residents involvement of this performance, etc.

The determination of objects in this study is based on the consideration that *barongan* dancers, jathilan dancers, and all of Ledok residents are ritualist of *Sedekah Bumi* who still believe the role of *barongan* and jathilan dancers as a ritual medium for *sedekah bumi* ceremony.

Techniques of collecting data: Interview, Interviewing is a method of collecting data by giving questions orally. A tool used in the interview is interview guideline or questionnaire [6]. This technique was conducted by the researcher in an open and structured manner so that the

interaction between the researcher and the informant does not seem rigid, but there is still a limitation of questions so as not to deviate from the focus of the research and the information could be more accurate. Interviews are conducted with several parties with issues that will be revealed in this study, among those are Residents of Ledok who still has a faith that *Barongan* folk art is the ritual means of *sedekah bumi*. The type of questionnaire leads to the function of *Barongan* art performance. The owner of *Barongan* folk art community, the questions are given for knowing the structure of this performance in *sedekah bumi* ceremony. The dancers, to reveal the readiness of the dancers for presenting this performance in *sedekah bumi* ceremony, including the readiness of choreography, costume, make-up, and some special ritual that must be done by each dancer. Music accompanist, inquiring about the readiness of the type of music also includes the form used as a *barongan* art accompaniment in *sedekah bumi* ceremony. Observation is observing or paying attention to individual behavior or time lapse without manipulation and controlling where the behavior will be displayed. [6] Observation was conducted by the researcher for knowing the preparation of the residents, artist (the leader, the music accompanist or called *pengrawit*, the dancers, also the audience of *sedekah bumi* ceremony. Then, the researcher observed the *barongan* performance for knowing the function of it in *sedekah bumi*. Documentation study on qualitative research is the complement of observation and interview techniques. This study is collecting the documents and data of research that are needed for solving the problem of this research. The documents are in the form of old notes relating to research, pictures, photographs, or video of the performance [6].

Data analysis in this research was carried out using a descriptive-qualitative analysis method that is the data collected is described. In details steps of data analysis in this research are as the following. Research preparation, comprising: (1) collecting data, and (2) organizing and classifying the data collected according to the characteristics and categories. This step is also a step for reducing data and presenting data. To avoid biased data, checking the validity of the data through four criteria, those are a degree of trust, transfer, dependency, and certainty.

Data analysis was carried out through four stages; those are data reduction, data presentation, conclusions, and research verification what is done intertwine with the data collection process. The analysis model that is used in this paper is interactive analysis. That means, four analysis components, reducing the data, data presentation, conclusion, and verify the data are done simultaneously since collecting the data [6].

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Most residents of Ledok village, Sambong sub-district are farmer and breeder. The condition of the village, which is far from the crowd, makes the people fond of all kinds of art forms; one of them is *Barongan* folk art. There are two *barongan* groups that are developing in Ledok; Gembong Singo Amijoyo and Gembong Surojoyo. Their existences are supported by the residents' traditional habit which is

functioned *barongan* folk art as entertainment and ritual ceremony at a certain time.

A. History of the Emergence of Barongan Folk Art in Ledok village, Sambong sub-district, Blora District.

In Ledok, *Barongan* folk art is not yet who clear who brought and when it was brought here. However, people believe that this art is an ancestral heritage that has the purpose of remembering the history of the kingdom's existence around Blora district in the past. This history is also motivated by the existence of very dense woods in panji stories which are depicted in the scene when a very strong ling as singo barong. The depiction of those dense woods is a reflection of the natural assets of Blora's residents of its teak tree. These assets made them especially in Ledok rotten by farming, breeding, and gardening as their main livelihood. This asset is even known on the international scene. Besides being known for its teak tree, Blora is also known for its furniture and cepu blocks. All of this comes from natural wealth derived from the beautiful forest in Blora.

B. Sedekah Bumi Ritual Ceremony in Ledok village, Sambong sub-district, Blora District.

Natural asset from teak woods that grow excessively, many kept the mystery of life for its people. One side of that woods shows fertility of it, on the other side it reveals the mystery about its fertility. Ledok's soil condition was very suitable for planting hard woody trees, but not for rice and pulses. Limestone land in this village causes rice farmers and crops to find water reservoir. This is one of the causes of why Ledok's people held a ritual ceremony for fertility, security, and entertain as their traditional habits.

The ritual ceremony which is sacred to be held because the residents intend to achieve communication needs between the upper world and the underworld. Upper world is the creator, the Almighty God, and the underworld is the residents itself. The residents of Ledok also believe the existence of *danyang* and ancestral spirits that carry and keep for life.

C. The function of Barongan Folk Art Performance in Ritual Ceremony Sedekah Bumi

Soedarsono told that dance arrangement on society from a sociology perspective is dances on traditional culture have a social and religious function [2] [4] [5]. Like *Barongan* folk art in Ledok village, the performance is held on the basis of certain considerations by the community. There are times when art is shown to be watched only, without seeing other purposes. This makes *barongan* folk art to have entertainment or spectacle function, even this performance is shown on *sedekah bumi*. *Barongan* folk art performance which is shown on ritual ceremony *sedekah bumi* has dual functions. This dual function is located on a fragment of the ceremony parts; it is on the main and closing parts. On the main part of *sedekah bumi*, this performance serves as the repellent of evil spirits who try to get into the village or *tolak bala*, and as a tribute for ancestral spirits. The second function is for entertainment people. It appears on the closing part of the ceremony. Besides that, the gathering of various layers of society in a crowded place also supports solidarity among citizens who are not long-standing with each other because of their busy schedule.

The reality of that function is reinforced by the opinion of Soedarsono who divide the art of art performance into two: primary function and secondary function. The primary function also divided into three, those are: if the audience is visible; 2). Entertaining, if the audience is a person that involves inside the performance; 3). As an aesthetic presentation, if the performance must be presented to the audience. A secondary function of the performing art is when the art performance is presented as not for entertaining the audience, but for other purposes, such as: strengthen the solidarity of a group of people, mass communication media, government programs, meditation, healing, and for stimulating productivity means. [2] [4]

If observed, the *barongan* folk art exhibited in the *sedekah bumi* ritual ceremony has primary and secondary functions. The two functions appear in these following parts:

D. Primary Function As for Ritual Ceremony Means

Repellent demons, marked by the *slametan* ritual. *Slametan* here means to be safe, so this ritual is intended to mean that they are *slametan* or safe from the disturbance of evil spirits. In *slametan*, there are some properties as the media, including rice, side dishes, and various vegetables. The Medias are wrapped together with teak leaves. Those showed that the results of nature and reunited together with nature is the hope that nature can make the villagers of Ledok live well and prosperous. So, teak leaves, as the symbol of the wisdom of the universe in Blora, used as the wrapper. It shows that the residents hope that they could make peace with nature. Another wish from results of nature and reunited together with nature is the biggest strength that can resist from evil spirits that disturbing the balance of their environment, such as floods, landslides, plant pests, *pagebluk*, etc.

Tolak Bala, or rejecting the catastrophe. The symbol of refusal is visualized through ritual offerings named *sesaji*. Various ritual offerings are used by the society, they are *pisang setangkep*—paired banana, *kembang telon*—three-color flower: red rose, jasmine, and ylang-ylang or cantilever, *pasung* and *bugis*—traditional street food, 2 Javanese chicken eggs, and other fruits that are the income of local residents. There are also some people who also slip the rice strands and a bundle of corn. All the ritual offerings are neatly arranged and identical to a pair. A pair in this statement implies that in the world were created in pairs. Ledok villagers' belief about this pair is a super strength that can chase the obstacles away.

E. A Tribute for Ancestral Spirits

The tribute for ancestral spirits is symbolized by *sesaji* and *atur suguhan* in the form of the *barongan* folk art performance. *Barongan* performance in *sedekah bumi* in Ledok village serves as a means of expressing gratitude, then the villagers present their original art of Blora in rituals. The main story of *Barongan* folk art is also believed by the villagers as the sympathetic magical vigor that can build up the villagers and the ancestral enthusiasm in running the next life.

F. Gratitude to The Creator of This Universe, The Almighty God.

Sesaj, *slametan*, and *barongan* folk art performance as the form for expressing gratitude from the villagers in every single thing that has been given; both in the form of abundant sustenance, health, and well-being. Therefore, people are competing for serving or providing a lot and all the best *sesaji*, for showing that gratitude. *Barongan* is also best presented. The best selection is seen in the choice of place, time, dancer, as well as dance performance that considers aesthetic value.

G. As Entertainment

Barongan as entertainment function is often interpreted as an action that comes out of the ethical code of performing arts. Different from *Barongan* Ledok, although it is functioned as an art of entertainment, still in the context of serving in rituals, so that the aesthetic value in entertainment is still maintained. The packaging of entertainment and ritual that distinguishes is the impression that the performers raise through their free release fatigue by bending themselves into the *barongan* dance performance. Songs that do not appear in rituals are sung in entertainment programs, such as dangdut songs and campursari—original Indonesian music genre.

H. Secondary Function

1. Strengthen the Solidarity

Barongan art performance involvement in ritual ceremony *sedekah bumi* in Ledok could attract the attention of local people to enjoy and immediately directly involve them in a performance. Various groups crowded in the arena, including toddlers and the elderly. The atmosphere of togetherness is very visible in this event. People are gathering together in togetherness. Solidarity among the villagers is made in a warm feeling.

2. Mass Communication Media

The gathering of people in the same place encourages them to be curious about something outside themselves. Information that they got is from the light conversation in the crowd. Communication among the villagers is formed because there are similar meeting and interests in this ritual ceremony. Good communication would create a good friendship too.

IV. CONCLUSION

Barongan folk art performance at *sedekah bumi* ceremony in Ledok Village, Sambong Sub-district, Blora Regency is held annually, on the *selo* month of Javanese calendar. This performance serves as ritual means in *sedekah bumi*. Then, the function of *barongan* art is for media of ritual ceremony. It functions for repelling demons, *tolak bala*, and tribute for ancestral spirits. These functions are called a primary function. Its secondary function as for entertainment means. In the entertainment function, occur other functions such as: strengthen the solidarity of a group of people, communication media among the villagers.

Before the ritual is declared complete, the audiences are holding an emotional decline marked by entertainment performance. *Barongan* art as entertainment means is shown after the ritual for the sake of the completing ceremony. Commonly, the music that accompanies *barongan* performance also becomes slower, such as dolanan songs, campursari, and also dangdut. The finale of the ritual is marked by praying, showing the gratitude to The Almighty God.

This ritual ceremony *sedekah bumi* must be preserved. Because of this preservation, *Barongan* folk art performance as a means of supporting the ceremony is also sustainable. With the gathering of people in the same place, this ceremony would also trigger strong solidarity among the villagers.

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