

Barongan: Heritage of Traditions on the Java Coast and Their Symbolic Interactions

Riris Setyo Sundari
Universitas PGRI Semarang,
Semarang, 50125, Indonesia
ririssetyo@upgris.ac.id

Tjetjep Rohendi Rohidi
Universitas Negeri Semarang,
50229, Semarang

Hartono⁴
Universitas Negeri Semarang,
50229, Semarang

Suminto A. Sayuti
Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta,
55281, Yogyakarta

Abstract---Barongan is a traditional art from Central Java. Barongan that carries mythological animals, lives and develops in the Central Java region, including on the north coast. So, it's important to study about Barongan Performance. The objectives of this researchy are: (1) to analyze the process of Barongan Kusumojoyo Demak art performance, (2) to analyze symbolic interactions in Barongan Kusumojoyo Demak art performance. The research method used in this study is a qualitative research methodology. Data collection techniques used interview techniques, observation, and study documentation. The data analysis technique uses 3 steps of data analysis with functional structural theory. The data validity technique uses triangulation and extension of observation. The performance process in the Barongan Kusumojoyo Arts Demak Regency is in accordance with the purpose of the show. The process of the show that aims for entertainment from certain sponsors, has a different storyline with performances that aim for ritual ceremonies. Symbolic interactions in Barongan art performances appear through symbols in the form of words, objects, and actions. Symbolic interactions occur between players and spectators, players and people who have work, and between players. The novelty in this article is the performance proceess and symbolic interaction in Barongaen in Java Coast that did not exist before.

Keywords: *barongan, performance art, symbolic interactions*

I. INTRODUCTION

Barongan art is one of the arts owned by the community, include the coast of Java people. Barongan art becomes part of the lifestyle and beliefs of the Javanese coastal community. Barongan art lives side by side with the daily lives of its owner as entertainment and ritual. Soedarsono said that in broad outline, ritual performance art has specific characteristics, namely: (1) the most preferred place for performances, (2) the selection of days and the right time is needed; (3) required selected players; (4) a set of offerings is required; (5) objectives are more important than aesthetic appearance; (6) typical clothing is needed [1]. Barongan is a traditional art whose existence is often juxtaposed with rituals and sacredness. Barongan is a totem animal that lives and develops in the community. Soedarsono continued, that in Bali, totem animals or

mythological animals have various forms such as Sang Hyang Celeng, Barong Gajah, Barong Macan, Barong Asu, in Java these totem animal figures almost everything is called barongan. In Java, Barongan has various versions. The existing version is in accordance with public trust and creativity of artists. Barongan in Java as a legacy of totemism beliefs, there are those who still have sacred values, but many of them only have their form, without the sacred values that follow [1]. Barongan with the scope of the Central Java region, in its distribution is divided into two regions, namely inland and coastal areas. [2]

Barongan art which is discussed in this paper is Barongan Kusumojoyo Demak. Barongan art is included in one form of performance art. Speaking about the performing arts, Heriyawati said that the performance was an event that was shown to others that indicated the event, the audience, and the place where the event took place [3]. Barongan art is one form of traditional performing arts that still survive. Hausser said that art, including performance art, is strata culturally divided into four namely the art of the cultural elite (classical art), folk art (populist art), pop art (urban art), and mass art (entertainment industry). Folk art is mainly only copy of high art, and the values it creates seldom stand in a proper relationship to the loss of artistic quality which the prototype suffer in the process. Barongan is a performance art that is included in the category of folk art. Barongan lives and develops among the masses [4].

As a traditional art, there are symbolic interactions in each Barongan performance. Kusumastuti said that symbolic interaction theory is a theory that studies about interactions between individual humans through symbolic statements, because the essence of symbolic interaction lies in communication through meaningful symbols. [5] Soepraptono says that the idea of symbolic interactionism assumes that everything is virtual. All interactions between individuals involve an exchange of symbols. When individuals interact with others, the individual is constantly looking for "clues" about what type of behavior is appropriate in

that context and about how to interpret what is meant by others. [6]

The purpose of this research was to describe the performance process of Barongan Kusumojoyo as Java Coast Barongan. The second purpose was to find and describe symbolic interaction among Barongan performance.

II. METHOD

This research was a qualitative research. Qualitative approach was used considering the data that will be revealed in this study in the form of phenomena that occur in the field, and revealed using descriptive words according to Creswell's opinion that says "qualitative research present information in text or image form" [7]. Therefore, qualitative research is considered to be more suitable to uncover existing phenomena in more depth. The target of this research is the art of Barongan Kusumojoyo, Demak Regency.

This research used observation, interview, and document study to collect the data. Observation technique is used to observe the performance process and phenomena that occur in the field during the research. Interview techniques are used to gather information from the needed informants. While the document study is used to collect documents from the field that are related to research.

The data validity technique used in this research is source triangulation and technique triangulation. In addition, the extension of observation was also used to validate the data in this study. While the data analysis techniques used in this study are data reduction, data presentation, and making conclusions [8]

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Barongan art is one of the local wisdoms owned by Javanese people. Barongan art, is one type of performance art that lives and develops in several regions of Java. Barongan art is spread throughout the Java region and is divided into two types, namely coastal Barongan and inland Barongan. Barongan is a traditional art whose existence is often juxtaposed with rituals and sacredness. Barongan is a totem animal that lives and develops in society [1]. Barongan lives and develops together with the daily life of the owner community. Barongan art exists and appears in every step of human life from ruwatan, circumcision, to marriage. Barongan art emerged as a symbol of gratitude and hope for life's achievement.

Barongan Performance

Barongan is an art that is still alive and always exists in every step of life in the community of Demak Regency. The word "barongan" refers to a complement (mask along with its accessories) made

to resemble the Lion Barong (a large and very fierce lion) as the ruler of a haunted forest [9]. Barongan in its performance is accompanied by using several musical instruments such as saron, demung, kendhang, and slompret. However, in its development, added several diatonic musical instruments such as keyboards and drums. Even in some performances, it is added dangdut and campursari music that is being favored by the community.

Barongan art in its development, experienced a shift in function from what had originally only functioned for ritual, but now it is also shifting towards entertainment. It also includes Barongan art in the Demak Regency community, functioning as an entertainment and ritual art. As a ritual art, Barongan appears in every ceremony related to life such as ruwatan, circumcision, marriage, haul, or nadzar or promise. Barongan art exists and acts as a ritual art in every ceremony performed. Soedarsono said that in broad outline, ritual performance art has specific characteristics, namely: a) the chosen venue is needed, b) the selection of the right days and times is needed; c) required selected players; d) a set of offerings is needed; e) goals are more important than aesthetic appearance; f) typical clothing is needed [1]. Barongan performances that aim for rituals in the ceremonies performed, have a different storyline than Barongan performances for entertainment purposes. Barongan performances aimed at rituals depend on the needs and requests of people who have work. In the function of ritual, the art that is raised is usually analogous to a movement, sound, or certain actions as expressions or symbols to communicate. Not surprisingly, the shape is still very simple, both in terms of accompaniment (music), clothing (costumes) as well as makeup, motion and the use of decoration as a performance setting [10].

The Sequence of Barongan Performance

Barongan performances aimed at rituals, starting with the Barongan procession, and continued with a series of Barongan performance programs consisting of:

- a. Jathilan
- b. Barongan
- c. Songs
- d. Comedy
- e. Attractions

Barongan that is entertainment, usually displayed on major holidays both religious holidays and national holidays such as independence day, or for launching a product. The storyline and form of the show displayed at the Barongan show that aims for entertainment depends on the request of the invited sponsor. Some shows do not use a procession, directly to the core performances. Some other shows ask not to use some attractions, and only show light attractions. However, the presence

of the handler both for ritual and entertainment performances is still needed, for the sake of the smooth performance performed, especially the attractions.

Symbolic Interaction in Barongan Art

Barongan art is a cultural product that has a variety of symbols in the performance process. In every Barongan performance, there are symbolic interactions that occur. Symbolic interaction is all things that are interconnected with the formation of meaning of an object or symbol, both inanimate objects and living objects, through the communication process both as verbal messages and non-verbal behavior, and the ultimate goal is to interpret symbols (objects) based on mutual agreement that applies in certain regions or community groups [11]. Symbols are social objects in interactions that are used as representatives and communication that are determined by the people who use them. These people give meaning, create and change objects in interactions [12]

Symbols that appear in Barongan art are physical objects, words, and actions used in communicating with the audience, people who have work, or communicate among fellow players. The symbols in the Barongan show were raised as a form of communication to convey the message to the recipient of the message. Communication that is built by interpreting existing symbols is meant by symbolic interaction. The hallmark of symbolic interaction whose essence is communication or exchange of symbols given meaning lies in understanding the meaning given to the actions of others through the use of symbols, interpretations, and ultimately each individual will try to understand each other's intentions and actions to reach agreement together.

The process of symbolic interaction that occurs in the Barongan show appears on the symbols that appear in the show. Symbols are social objects in an interaction that are used as representatives and communication that are determined by the people who use them and provide a meaning, create and change the object in the interaction. [13]

The interactions in the Barongan performance are as follows:

a. Interactions between players and audience

The interaction between the players and the audience is seen during the procession, namely through musical instruments, properties, and costumes used. Symbolic interactions also occur through the offerings used, ranging from market's jadah, flower water, incense, and kendhi water. Spectators interpret various kinds of symbols that exist in accordance with the experience they have each. The public can interpret the art of jathilan because of the factor of constantly watching the jathilan performance [14]

b. Interactions between players and the ones who host the party

Interaction between players and those who host the party appears in the ruwatan procession for ruwatan needs, also the prayer process that depends on the needs of those who host the party. All kinds of symbols that appear in the show have meaning as a hope so that the interests of people who host the party can run smoothly, and expectations are achieved.

c. Interactions between fellow players

Interaction between players appears in several ways. The first interaction appears from the costume worn which gives meaning to each character and character being played. Interaction also appears in the words used in communicating between players.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The conclusion that can be drawn from this paper is there are sequence in Barongan Performance, that are: Jathilan; Barongan, Songs, Comedy, and Attractions. In the Barongan Performance also there are symbolic interaction, are: Interactions between players and audience; Interactions between players and the ones who host the party, and Interactions between fellow players.

This research would not have been carried out without the help and permission of several parties. For that reason, the authors would like to thank the UPGRIIS Chancellor for allowing the author to further study. Thank you to LPDP for providing scholarships to writers, thanks to the Rector of Unnes for granting permission to the author to study at the Unnes campus. Furthermore, thank you also to the team of promoters who always guide and encourage. Thank you to the art group Barongan Kusumojoyo who is willing to be bothered by the writers, and thanks to all those who cannot be mentioned one by one by writer.

REFERENCES

- [1] Soedarsono: *Seni Pertunjukan Indonesia di Era Globalisasi*. Gajah Mada University Press. pp. 126 (2010).
- [2] T. Seni, B. Di, and K. Tegal, "Catharsis : Journal of Arts Education EKSPRESI SIMBOLIK BUDAYA MASYARAKAT PESISIRAN," vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 150–159, 2016.
- [3] Heriyawati, Yanti. *Seni Pertunjukan dan Ritual*. Penerbit Ombak. 2016.
- [4] Hauser, Arnold. *Sociology of Art*. University of Chicago Press. 1982
- [5] E. Kusumastuti, "Ekspresi Estetis dan Makna Simbolis Kesenian Laesan," *J. Harmon.*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 1–9, 2009.

- [6] Soepraptono, Riyadi. Interaksionisme Simbolik. Averoes Press. 2002.
- [7] Creswell, John W: *Research Design Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Sage Pulication. pp. 159 (1994).
- [8] Sumaryanto, F, Totok: *Pendekatan Kualitatif dan Kuantitatif dalam Penelitian Pendidikan Seni*. Universitas Negeri Semarang. pp. 106-107 (2007).
- [9] E. Guntaris, "DIALEKTIKA RITUAL DAN HIBURAN DALAM KESENIAN BARONGAN DI KABUPATEN BLORA JAWA TENGAH." [1] T. Seni, B. Di, and K. Tegal, "Catharsis : Journal of Arts Education EKSPRESI SIMBOLIK BUDAYA MASYARAKAT PESISIRAN," vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 150–159, 2016.
- [10] L. Andri, "NUSA, Vol. 12. No. 2 Mei 2017 Laura Andri, Kesenian Barongan Kabupaten Pati dalam Pergeseran Budaya," vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 90–99, 2017.
- [11] N. S. S. Siregar, "Kajian tentang Interaksionisme Simbolik," J. Ilmu Sos. Isipol UMA, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 100–110, 2016.
- [12] D. Ahmadi, "Interaksi Simbolik: Suatu Pengantar," Mediat. J. Komun., vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 301–316, 2008.
- [13] R. Wanulu, "Makna Interaksi Simbolik Pada Proses Upacara Adat Cupe dan Sampua Suku Buton di Samarinda," vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 265–279, 2016.
- [14] R. K. Noor Haliemah, "Interaksi simbolis masyarakat dalam memaknai kesenian Jathilan," J. ASPIKOM, vol. 2 Nomor 3, no. Juli 2017, pp. 494–507, 2017.