

An Analytical Study of Butobirowo Dance as the Representative of Lencoh Village Community Ethno-ecology

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Abstract

This article is a domain analysis with a critical constructivism perspective through the representation of ethnoecological concentration (awareness) of the people of Lencoh Village, Sela District, Boyolali Regency, Central Java. This method used in this research is an ethnographic qualitative. In many studies, performing arts—including dance—are inseparable from the community. Not to mention the ButoBirowo Dance as the representation of the people in Lencoh Village who are mutually close to their environment, such as springs, mountains, rice fields as their habitats as well as their belief. That relation forming conscientization (awareness) of the people of Lencoh Village of the environment (ethnoecology) and their belief system. The conscientization is implied in ButoBirowo dance as a form of an effort to balance exploration and conservation to preserve the natural resources along with the combination of profane and sacred in dance rituals to repel reinforcements (tolakBala).

Keywords

Buto Birowo dance, performing arts, representation, conscientization, ethnoecology, ethnography, domain analytic, Lencoh Village, Boyolali Regency.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional dance is a communal product that has values that they hold, but in reality, values that people hold vary from one another, thus appreciating a traditional dance cannot be generally accepted, it must refer to the values adopted by the community that owns the culture (Maquet, 1971 and Royce, 1977). Dance as a part of art is a manifestation of cultural activities which are dependent. Dance is also a realm of aesthetic expression that has accompanied human life since the beginning of life, and at the same time, is an inseparable part of all of it. Cassirer (1987:45) stated that everything shows the unique sides of art. On this note, art has been a necessity of life throughout the history of human civilization, wherever humans are.

Every form and function of art is closely related to the supporting society where the art grew, lived, and evolving. The roles of art were decided according to the condition of the supporting society. Art also functions as a social phenomenon, a media for artists, observers, and audience to communicate, and also acts as a place to remind, deliver a message, and educate people. Art as a part of the ritual is an active religious behavior, which can also be observed, through reciting incantations, meditation, prayer, dance, special clothing, and scarification. The sacred nature of the rites and the tools used are influenced by the mental condition and emotional attitudes of the adherents. Especially, at the place where the rite was performed. Parson (in Roberston, 1985:56) said that for Durkheim, the religious right is the most important expression mechanism in manifesting essential sentiments for the institutional integration of society.

Durkheim (1964:36) deduced that religious phenomenon consists of two aspects: beliefs and rites. Belief is a conception of thoughts, while rites are the act. Belief as a manifestation of the conception of thoughts creates conscientization (awareness). Paulo Freire proposed the conscientization (awareness) concept in education that conscientization is a process where humans gained deeper awareness of the cultural reality around their life and the ability to change it. The conscientization of the people in Lencoh village is based on their intimacy with their nature and belief system. In other words, the conscientization of the people in Lencoh village is inevitable with ethnoecology, a communal belief in the natural habitat, as it associates human's local knowledge that influences how they use and utilize natural resources (Suryadarma, I.G.P., 2005).

ButoBirowo Dance has become the identity of the people in Lencoh. Its existence is inseparable from traditional dance mainstream. Traditional dance usually was born, lived, and evolved in the environment of remote places. It lives among the people has supporting community. Generally, it can be said that dance is an expression of spiritual experience through motions. By this, the expression means an art produced from movements, expressions or mimic, and behaviors. Geertz (1973:89) said that culture is a system about inherited conceptions symbolically, where humans can communicate, preserve, act, and expand their knowledge of life accordingly through this way. ButoBirowo dance, along with the series of the performance's ritual, is something inherited, which then become a part of Lencoh villagers' rites. They also aim to harmonize the belief systems sacred-profane as a protection of their social life (negative reinforcements). Then, the researcher will elaborate on the conscientization of ethnoecological representatives of the people in Lencoh Village through a domain analysis implied in ButoBirowo dance with constructivist critique method.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Domain Analysis: Sacred-Profane

In his main work, "The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life", Durkheim discussed cult which then categorized into two elements, sacred and profane. The sacred is the things which existence and characteristic are separated, and that separation differentiates between them and the profane beings (Durkheim, 1964:299).

This sacred concept relates closely to two things. The first, is the place. Religious life and profane life cannot exist in the same place. Temple and any other holy places are two of many examples. Secondly, is time. Religious life and profane life cannot exist at the same time. Religious life has its own sanctified day or time (Durkheim, 1964:308). On this note, a belief in something sacred demands to be treated special, both for space and time. At that specific time and place, various rites are executed to build connections between the mortal world and the spiritual world, between the profane and the sacred. The ceremony examples are birth, funeral, baptism, Ruwahan, and others. These rites have their reasoning in the sense of scientific rationality, have their own functions in the sense of waves of materialism and pragmatism. Anthropology sees this as an interesting dimension to be studied, understood, and the urgency has to be constructed in personal and social lives to maintain its identity.

Buto Birowo dance acts as a rite shifted from a traditional dance which was worldly (profane) into a sacred dance. This change was indicated with the obligatory performance of the dance in special moments like Rejeban. This obligation was dramatized with the discourse among the community that if this dance is not performed, there will be residents who trance, and then utter threats related as a punishment. The form of threats of reinforcements usually such as water shortages, crop failure, volcanic eruptions, or even an epidemic.

2.2 Ethnoecology Conscientization

According to Freire, a person can only thing in their conscious state, meanwhile consciousness is always oriented to the future. In the correlation to the world, the thinking process includes the attempts to find correlation of things which never realized before. Therefore, the relation between human and the world is inseparable, because practically reflection and action are always attached. The correlation between knowledge and reality happened dialectically. There are explicit connections between cultural action for freedom, and conscientization acts as the major project. Paulo Freire argued that conscientization is a dialectic process between action and reflection, which guided human to become the subject in life and critical consciousness as the freedom spirit by making humanism as the purpose.

Conscientization is closely correspond with the critical culture, which happen by opening the reality that caged humanity in their own world. This encourages humans, to break down their monotone reality by adapting towards a dynamic reality where they integrate themselves. In expanding their culture, humans adapt and interact which making shifted to the ecosystem. Those changes will be projected through natural phenomenon as well as in the society.

The relation between the society and the ecosystem will be discussed in ethnoecology studies. Ethnoecology is a study of the living society through ecology and harmonized life with nature and social life. Traditional society grew closely with their nearby natural habitat, both from merely observing and well-knowing the characteristic thus they know what and how to respond. Humans hold one big role in utilizing and preserving the nature (Ahimsa, 2007). That being said, the conscientization of Lencoh Village with their ecosystem is manifested through ButoBirowo Dance.

2.3 Traditional Dance as a Part of the Repressed Theatre

Soedarsono (1986:70) categorized Indonesian traditional dance into classical dance and folk dance. The classical dance is the product of the Kraton (the palace), meanwhile folk dance comes from ordinary people. Folk dance that originates from the people and local culture symbolizes happiness and joy. It can be a tradition, since it is their habit to share and celebrate happiness by gathering around and dance. The living folk dance that lives and revolves around people right now usually in a very modest form in every element of its performance. The modest here is in the sense of the motion, make up and wardrobe, and accompaniment and venue.

Folk dance grew along with the local theatre. As stated by Tri Mulyono (2019:5), local theatre is a “festival” where there are no boundaries between the performers and the audiences, and the people get to express themselves through stories. Generally, local theatre was born spontaneously in people’s life, lived and developed according to the locals’ development. Jakob Sumardjo (2004, p. 18) viewed the development of the theatre goes along with the changes in the society. The society changes or receives new cultural elements, hence the theater adapts to these changes. Each type of folk theater has its own performance requirements, is not autonomous, and is bound by a belief system. The artistic opportunities lie in their respective styles of play (Sumardjo, 2004, p. 16). Jakob Sumardjo (2004, p. 17) added that the function of folk theatre, including: (1) summoning supernatural powers; (2) picking up protective spirits to be present at the venue for the show; (3) summoning the good spirits to ward off evil spirits; (4) warning the ancestors by displaying their mightiness and heroism; (5) as a complementary ceremonies in connection with the commemoration of one's life levels; (6) as a complementary to the ceremonies for certain times in the cycle time. William R. Bascom (Sudikan, 2001, p. 109) also said that local theatre has four functioning values, and those are (a) as a form of entertainment; (b) as a form of attestation; (c) as a tool to children’s education; (d) as a coercion and supervision tool so that the norms of society will always be obeyed by their collective members.

According to Boal, theater is not merely a media to enlighten, but to encourage people to do something. One of Boal’s concept is a forum theatre. Boal said that the Forum Theatre is a way to make use the theatre to understand more about life and give strength and confidence to the people in it to cope with the pressures it has (Boal in Bogart, Anna & Lindau, Tina, 2005, p.xxiv). Through the forum, Boal visited conflicted regions that damaged the nature, so he made a play from that concern with the hope that the audience in those areas will realize the problems that exist in their area by inviting the community to play directly in the theater performance. Boal’s advice is to perform a theater bringing the conflict as the plot which will also be played by the locals. The concept of Augusto Boal that sees theater as a form of enlighten critique and a part of the movement is then called ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’. This theatre concept could be a medium for people to understand and experience the problem they’re facing. For Boal, everyone is an actor, and actor should be able to provoke, influenced other, and those are the roles of an actor Boal meant.

3. RESEARCH METHOD: QUALITATIVE-ETHNOGRAPHY WITH CRITIQUE-CONSTRUCTIVISM PERSPECTIVE

The researcher used qualitative method where the research as a problem-solving procedure was done by describing the present situation or the research objective (individual, institution, society, etc.) according to the facts as is (Nawawi, 1998:31). Qualitative research is very effective in collecting specific information about culture, values, opinion, behavior, and social context in particular society. The plus point of qualitative research is its ability to serve complex textual description about a specific research objective. According to Kirk & Miller (in Moleong, 2002:3), this method is one of the traditions in social knowledge which fundamentally relies upon human’s observation.

This research also used ethnographic research strategies (Creswell, 2019). Ethnography is a study of behavior pattern, language, and act from a cultural group in the natural environment for a long period of time. In doing the research, researchers study the field by observing, asking questions, and participating in their activity, and checking the validity of people’s perceptions (Saville-Troike, 2003). The research data collection was done by observation and interview. Observation was done to examine the instruments that were used and the execution and by listening to what the villagers in Lencoh Village said. Therefore, the researcher was keen to delve into information through observation and participation in every activity by the villagers.

This research used the constructivism-critique perspective as well. This constructivist perspective study places the researcher equal and as in depth as possible as the subject to understand and construct the understanding of the subject. According to Patton (2002), constructivist researchers have to learn various constructed individual realities and the implication of it for their and other’s life. In constructivism, every individual has unique experiences. Critique constructivism is connected to the critical theories brought up by Mazhab Frankfurt who criticize or even challenged both the rigidity and the stiffness of knowledge which was formed by modernism. In the perspective of critical theory, a researcher should have the ability to explain absolute reality because they are a part of the reality itself. Other than that, a researcher then has to be able to

build discourse. All in all, a researcher has to be able to create an argument.

4. RESULTS

4.1 ButoBirowo Dance

ButoBirowo dance is a folk dance developed by the people in LencohSub-village, Lencoh Village, Selo District, Boyolali Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. It is being performed every month of Rajab (a Hijriyah month, often called Rejeban). To add, it is also carried out in specific events like village celebrations and the activities of a person's life turning points such as marriage, circumcision, and so on. Originally, this dance was created in the 1990s to entertain the villagers. But a few years later, this dance has become an obligatory performance on every month of Rajab whenever the village purifying (bersihdusun) ritual, rejeban, is executed. Since then, it is mandatory to have this dance in every rejeban.

ButoBirowo dance is a product of a communal art of the villagers in Lencoh village as to present rough expression, vulgar and straight to the point. Essentially, this dance is represented as a form of resistance to something that is considered disturbing the balance, ambushed peace, and or had become the cause of misfortune in the village. Furthermore, the other purpose of ButoBirowo dance is to fight evil things that bothers the human lives. This is where danyangdusun is manifested. Danyangdusun is the belief of the ancestors, mythological creatures, in a form of a spirit who is also believed to be the village's guardian or even wider scope like mountain, forests, water springs, and other places that is believed as sacred places.

ButoBirowo dance is followed by 34 artists, 16 dancers, 2 persons who plays gamelan, 2 swarawatis, 3 makeup artist, 1 group leader, and the most important person is the elder as the spiritual guard (pawang). Pawang plays an important role, as they're the one who release the dances or the art team of ButoBirowo who got in trance. In trance in the players is a good omen, because it means that danyangdusun have given them the blessing to protect the hamlet community from the disturbance of evil spirits that cause misfortune. In other words, danyangdusun attended the ceremony, symbolizing the power to cast away evil spirits in the village through the dancers' bodies. But it has to be noted that the dance should be stopped when the evening is arriving because it's the time where evil spirits are out which potentially disturbs the purifying ritual.

4.2 Expression of ButoBirowo Dance Movements

ButoBirowo dance was originally a form of freedom for the people to express their daily life. The movements look like people working in a paddy field such as plowing and carrying the fertilizer, etc. conducted with gamelan and the dancer cheering. Other than that, ButoBirowo dance personified Buto, a giant in Javanese mythology. The characteristic of Buto has a high dignity. The dancers uses Buto-like face masks; half-human and half-animal. The face mask symbolizes power and sovereignty.

The dance's movement is an expression of a human soul that has a higher meaning of symbols that are expressed through dance. ButoBirowo dance is still being put into practice for rejeban and other public shows, like marriage, circumcision, or other traditional ceremonies. ButoBirowo is complementary to the village purifying ceremony, which is sacred, meanwhile, the dance performed in public shows is profane. Both occasions show different movements. The profane dance showed through new motions that go along with the development of arts innovation, meanwhile the sacred one shows simplicity and boldness. ButoBirowo dance usually is accompanied by Javanese gendingan, usually called laras slendro.

In ButoBirowo, the movements represent the cycle of life, from a baby that's still inside of a mother's womb, the shift to an adult, until the death. The movements are also giving values of a person's life. The movements are lembehan, lakuteli, peranganor jeblosan, and nacahambruk. Lembehan means the original of human's life is helplessness, then lakutelum means that human should take careful steps in their lives, perangan represents the adulting, where they developed a higher thinking process and seeking the truth, and the last one, nacahambruk is a movement where the dancers are hunching (andhap asor) which means preparation for death. There is also a gesture where the dancers are looking up, which can be interpreted as asking for salvation to the God.

4.3 ButoBirowo Dance and Village Purifying

ButoBirowo dance performed every Rajab month is a complementary village purifying ritual. Village purifying ritual is important for the villagers, usually done in a specific month according to the harvest time or other time that has been agreed (Endraswara, 2006). To this extent, every villages perform the ritual according to their own local beliefs, thus the agenda differs from one another. In Lencoh village, ButoBirowo dance has to be performed with various uborame, sesaji, and certain spells from the elders. Every elements of the ritual are led by the elders who also act as the pawang in the show. The villagers still believe that the relation with

the village's ancestors or what is called danyang is a relation that cannot be ignored. Hence, the village purifying is an attempt of maintaining relationship with the ancestors.

There are various uborampe or sesajithat are being served as a complementary to the ritual. Other than that, some spells are cast to deliver purpose as well as the medium to communicate with the ancestors. This is an important prop for the village purifying and as a medium to communicate with the ancestors. ButoBirowo dance needs all those instruments as to run the ritual smoothly as well as welcoming the presence of the ancestor when entering the body of the dancers as their manifestation. The uborampeand sesaji are tumpeng, ingkungayam, kalapaduwegan, gedhang, buburputih, and buburmerah, kembangsetaman, rujak, pangadiran, completed with anglo to burn incense. Every things that are served have their own meaning. The meanings are implemented in each regions' beliefs, meanwhile the spells casted are using Javanese which are also a combination ofIslamic prayers. It is started with bismillah and continued with Javanese to convey the purpose, and closed with reading of the letter Al-Fatihah and the letter Al-Ikhlas which are the teachings of Islam.

From the data, it can be concluded that in the practice of ButoBirowo and village purifying is one of the methods for human to maintain the relationship between them and the Almighty, through God or other creatures, such like ancestors or danyang. Such practice is mostly exerted by mountain people who feels that they are living along with other creatures in the same place, in a considerably extreme nature in which unexpected things can happen, hence their relationship with their ancestor is highly important. They also have to cooperate with the ancestor to have their habitat safe, as a repel reinforcements (tolakbala) for misfortunate or calamity.

The protection to be harmonized with the nature is also a protection to the accessibility to natural resources. The spring in the village which often called tuk is specially guarded in many ways, one of it is by serving sesajiat certain times. Because, according to the people there, there are danyangwho look out the spring. For this reason, they have to respect the presence of other entity to preserve a good relationship between them. Such awareness is the starting point for the people to participate in nature conservation through ruwatan such like village purifying, to connect with the danyang by ButoBirowo.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 ButoBirowo Dance as an Ethnological Conscientization of the People in Lencoh Village

ButoBirowo as a repel reinforcement, in accord with the people's belief, which signifies the conscientization to the balance of the nation, the relation between humans and the other former subjects. This conscientization has become a cosmology or a local knowledge of the native people which also becomes their way of knowing (Beatty, 2004; Berkes, Colding, & Folke, 2000; Geertz, 1960; Nurish, 2019; Woodward, 1989). The example is where ButoBirowo that has to be performed in village purifying in the month of Rajab, which also called rejeban. ButoBirowo dance have become the complementary element in the ritual. That's to say it have become an art practice that diffused in social life, culture, religiosity-spiritualiy of someone as their belief system according to the local knowledge (Simatupang, 2013).

ButoBirowo dance associates with the Lencohvillager's belief aspects which then become the local knowledge and inseparable to the village purifying ritual. Although it was originally only a traditional art dance, but now it holds more important role inrejeban. There is a process of mystification here, that is present from the local belief system to maintain the balance between human, nature, and other creatures; which trait is a grand religious-spiritual experience (Durkheim, n.d.; Jr, 2019).In other words, things that used to be profane is then constructed into something sacred along with the need of the villagers to maintain balanced energy between living entities as to be protected from calamity.

The villagers in Lencoh believed that there will be disturbance given by the evil spirits; the villagers also believed in the relation with other subjects—spirits—in their daily life. Hence, regularly executing village purifying, cleansing oneself from bad things which can trigger someone's bad luck (Endraswara, 2006). The misfortune here not only mean as a sickness, but also crop failure, and also the lack of water—source of life (Freeman, 1992; Ramisch, Misiko, Ekise, & Mukalama, 2006). The villagers are mountainous field farmers who will be hit by deep sorrow if there are sick animals, drought, crop failure, and infectious diseases. They will also consider their relationship with nature and other entities, micro and macro-cosmosly, is unwell. Thereafter, sustaining relational balance is the most important thing for the villagers to grow harmonized to avoid misfortunes in an ethical manner that is right, responsible, and reciprocal (Maarif, 2019).

ButoBirowo dance is also used by the people to communicate with their ancestors to work together and to ask protection from the danyang. Put differently, the ritual process with the dance work effectively as to refuse reinforcements throughout this time for Lencoh villagers. It also can be said that ButoBirowo dance as a media to communicate is the perfect way to build affinity between entities. The people in Lencoh village are closely related to their ancestor and natural habitat. The nature has given them prosperity through food and farming, although there is exploitation here and there, but simultaneously the people are preserving it. All that to say, the harmony grows here.

Accordingly, conscientization aspect which also called the people's cosmologic is important to be preserved, protected, and practiced. Because when they missed the ritual—village purifying until ButoBirowo—, there will be something unwanted happened. They believed when ButoBirowo is performed, it can be a repel reinforcements of bad things; it balances the relation with the ancestors, danyangdusun. This harmonization is born along with the purpose, to preserve the nature and maintaining the balanced relationship with every entity in the same place, which is Lencoh village.

5.2 The Sacredness of ButoBirowo as an Intersubjective Relation

The living belief of Lencoh village on a macro-cosmos scale about the relation between other subjects aside from humans can impact the emersion of misfortune. Other than that, the environmental damage is inevitable if the villagers do not continuously protect their environment by carrying out village purifying rituals. Purifying rituals require symbolical instruments as it is a Javanese ritual. One of which is by using ButoBirowo as a media between the people and the danyang to communicate. From here, we can see the effort of the locals in the process of mystification by shifting their profane traditional dance into an instrument to a sacred ritual. This dance is then become sacred because of the "message" from danyang. According to the elders, danyangdusun likes ButoBirowo, hence it has to be performed as a part of the ritual. Therefore, something that used to be profane becomes sacred as a part of maintaining relation between entities.

The elaboration of the folk dance emphasizes on the preserved local customary, not only to fulfill some needs, but also to achieve social, economic, and political functions. The social functions shown in ButoBirowo dance indicates the position of the people in Lencoh village, Selo district, Boyolali regency, to be well known by wider people. The economic role of ButoBirowo is related to the emerging economic activity on every performance, both on the ritual and the performance. From a tourism perspective, the villagers, whether they realized it or not, hoped that ButoBirowo become one of their attractions so more people will come thus will provide additional income for them.

In another hand, seen from the distance between Lencoh village and the downtown, ButoBirowo becomes the communication expression as well as a reinforcement of noble art that was made from the palace. This to be said, the folk dance that is stereotyped with vulgar motions and spontaneously demands to be differentiated with classical dance that is refined and high-mannered. Inevitably, the moves in ButoBirowo are similar to the 'Theatre of the Oppressed' grown by Augusto Boal, who said that theatre is a media to free the people from structural and cultural oppression according to the spatial and time reality, wherever they are. Everyone is an artist, and everywhere is a stage to express the communal issue; learn to observe the communal problem; fight for it together as to liberate ourselves from being oppressed, along with being dominated over established cultures.

6. CONCLUSIONS

ButoBirowo dance is not only a show by common people merely to fulfill the needs of an entertainment. This dance completes the village purifying ritual, rejeban, on which it has to be performed. There is a consequence that must be borne by the people if they do the opposite. Uborampe, sesaji, and some spells are presented on every show. The dance is one of the conscientization of the people which has become their way of knowing in the agenda of preserving nature. In the practice, ButoBirowo holds the value of connecting relation between human and their nature. The harmonization process between them that is executed macro-

cosmosly is called the sacred ethno-ecological knowledge. This dance also represents religious-spiritual expression of the people that exceeds beyond profane entertainment. People in Lencoh village have the ability to balance their nature through their folk dance that they developed themselves.

This research about ButoBirowo used domain analysis, the alliance of sacredness and profanity as a manifestation of the balanced living for every entity. Thus, there is a valuable message in the phenomena: when the locals explore their nature for agriculture necessities, yet it goes along with conserving the nature, the village purifying through ButoBirowo dance which has the purpose to repel bad luck and keeping the balance, this refers to the belief system that is manifested through the folk dance that has similarity to the Theatre of the Oppressed.

The research is recommended to see further about traditional art that can become an environmental conservation arena to the extent of maintaining the balance of world' balance, micro and macro-cosmos. It is suggested a wider scope of the research all across Indonesia to see the richness of the belief systems that became the way of knowing to down to a worldview for several people. This can be a scientific contribution and cognitive architecture of Indonesian local knowledge.

Conflicts of interest:

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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