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Aesthetic Forms and Meanings in the Visual of Seblang Traditional Ceremony

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Abstract

Seblang is a traditional ceremony held once a year which is believed by the local citizens as the oldest ritual and the most powerful ritual for the Using tribe in Banyuwangi. It is a possessed dance performance carried out bypramenstrual girls in the village of Oleh Sari after the feast of Eid Mubarak and by post-manepouse old women in the village of Bakungan after the feast of Eid al-Adha. The aesthetic meaning of Seblang performance will be analyzed based on the forms and the meanings in it, because in the process of traditional ceremony, the villagers are in contact with the ancestral spirits and the spirit of companion with the aim of improving the welfare of society, keeping the land fertile and ensuring the success of the next harvest. This articleaims at describing the visual aesthetic forms and meanings reviewed on *ageman* used by dancers, drummers, *sinden* (singers), and handlers as well as from the properties and *uborampe* used in completing the process of traditional ceremony performed for the seven consecutive days. The results will cover an in-depth description about the aesthetic forms and meaningsin visual of Seblang ceremony in Banyuwangi.

Keywords: Seblang, Aesthetic, Visual

Abstrak

Seblang adalah upacara tradisional yang diadakan setahun sekali yang diyakini oleh warga setempat sebagai ritual tertua dan ritual paling kuat bagi suku Using di Banyuwangi. Ini adalah pertunjukan tarian kerasukan yang dilakukan oleh gadis-gadis pramuka di desa Oleh Sari setelah hari raya Idul Fitri dan oleh wanita-wanita tua pasca-manusi di desa Bakungan setelah hari raya Idul Adha. Makna estetika pertunjukan Seblang akan dianalisis berdasarkan bentuk dan makna di dalamnya, karena dalam proses upacara adat, warga desa bersentuhan dengan arwah leluhur dan arwah pendamping dengan tujuan meningkatkan kesejahteraan masyarakat. , menjaga tanah subur dan memastikan keberhasilan panen berikutnya. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan bentuk dan makna estetika visual yang ditinjau dari *ageman* yang digunakan oleh penari, penabuh genderang, *sinden* (penyanyi), dan penangan serta dari properti dan *uborampe* yang digunakan dalam menyelesaikan proses upacara tradisional yang dilakukan

selama tujuh hari berturut-turut. Hasilnya akan mencakup deskripsi mendalam tentang bentuk dan makna estetika dalam visual upacara Seblang di Banyuwangi.

Kata Kunci: Seblang, Aesthetic, Visual

INTRODUCTION

Seblang is a traditional ceremony which continues to be held to this day in the community of the Osing tribe in Banyuwangi regency. There are two types of Seblang in Banyuwangi based on where it is held; Seblang Olehsari held in the Olehsari village and Seblang Bakungan held in the Bakungan village. Both Seblang have the same goals but they have different performanceranging from their roles which include dancers, handlers, drummers, and *sinden* (the singers), the costumes, the venue, the “ ubo rampe”, and others. Seblang Bakungan is a traditional ceremony held in Bakungan village. The dancer is an elderly woman who has reached menopause and this activity is carried out for one day just before ‘ *surup*’ (sunset) until ‘ *rantak*’ or before the sun rises after Eid Adha. Singodimajan (from an interview, 2010) stated that Osing tribe strongly believes that it is a sacred time. Unlike Seblang Bakungan, Seblang Olesari is held inOlehsari village. The dancer is a girl who has not menstruated and this activity lasts half a day for seven consecutive days and is started before the afternoon until *surup*(sunset) and is carried out after EidFitr.

Seblang is the oldest art in Banyuwangi. Therefore, it needs to be preserved. So far, many have written various information about Seblang that include a show in general, the goverment’ s role to the ceremony, about its spells and religious values.

Thus, the researcher decided to write about the aesthetic forms and meanings of Seblang as a traditional ceremony which have never been discussed or written before. In this article, the author aims at describing the 3 formulation of the problem as follows: (1) What the roles of the performers in the Seblang traditional ceremony are; (2) Identify how the venue is designed and what equipments are used in the Seblang traditional ceremony; and (3) How the makeups and costumesare applied to the performers in the Seblang traditional ceremony.

RESEARCH METHOD

The author wants to study the culture of the Seblang traditional ceremony in Banyuwangi.. The focus of the study is on the efforts to identify, understand, and explain these problems qualitatively. According to Rohidi (2011: 47) art research is carried out through involvement in the field or in real life situations in depth. Based on the theoretical study and thinking framework presented, the method in this study uses a qualitative approach that is holistic, integrative, descriptive and qualitative analysis of a community cultural phenomenon. To present the results of the research, a thorough and in-depth involvement will be described using a descriptive-comparative methods. Descriptive method is used to make a description, a systematic one which is a factual and an accurate way to showthe facts, traits and relationships between phenomena that are investigated (Nazir, 2005: 54). While the research approach is phenomenological, which refers to subjective experiences of various kinds of subjects encountered

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Seblang performers (the dancers, *Panekeb* handlers and inviting handlers, make-up artists, *Pengrawit*, and *Sinden* or singers)

The body of the Seblang dancer is not merely an instrument or the main tool of expression in the dance performance, but the female body here is better understood as a representation of the value of sacredness. Her body is still virgin, or pure. In Seblang Bakungan, that sacred body is represented by a woman who has passed through the period of menopause. In contrast to Seblang Olehsari, the sacred body is from a girl's body which has not experienced menstruation. This purity of the female body is understood by the community as a body that is able to pass the line or distance between humans and *Sang Hyang* (or the God) (Heriyawati, 2016: 150). Seblang dancers must be a girl who has not experienced menstruation, or an elderly woman who has reached menopause. This is a condition of paradox in pre-modern art. Girls who have not menstruated are women who are not women, while menopausal women are women who are no longer women (no longer able to give birth) (Sumardjo, 2006: 100)

There are two handlers in the Seblang traditional ceremony, namely the 'inviting' handler (who is in charge of bringing the spirits of the ancestors who want to enter into the spirit of the red dancer) and the *panekeb* handler (in charge of accompanying dancers while dancing in a state of unconsciousness / trance) who controls the possessed dancer during the performance. The handler or shaman is assigned to bring in the spirits of the ancestors and accompany the dancers in charge of arranging and checking all the equipment at the venue, guarding various possibilities, especially the possibility of re-entering ancestral spirits to provide information related to Seblang traditional ceremonies.

The next is *omprok* make-up artist. In Heriyawati (2016), *omprok* is a crown worn by Seblang dancers. There are two types of crown; in Seblang Bakungan made from cloth and in Seblang Olehsari made of banana leaves and flowers. The role of *omprok* make-up artist cannot be done by an ordinary person because the abilities were owned by the previous descendants and their knowledge is equivalent to the shaman or handler. In Seblang Olehsari, the process of making the *omprok* was also done through a process of ceremonies (prayers and mantra/spells). The making of *omprok* is done every morning before each ceremony starts, even though it is not completely replaced, but from each day, some parts of *omprok* must be replaced, especially the damaged ones which have to be rearranged so that they are neat, beautiful, and fresh-looking. While in Seblang Bakungan, *omprok* is made of leather and cloth and it must be stored in a shaman's house.

Pengrawit or musicians in two types of Seblang have different number of personnels. Seblang Bakungan has 7 personnels including 2 *bonang* musical instruments, 3 *gambang*, 1 *gong*, and 1 *kendang*. While in Seblang Olehsari, the number of players is 5 which includes 1 *gong*, 1 drum, and 3 *balungan*. The position of the Seblang Bakungan drummer is on the right of the dancer studio, while the position of the Seblang Olehsari drummer is in the middle of the studio and the dancer dances around the drummers with a large white umbrella above them. There are 7 to 10 *sinden*/singers in Seblang Olehsari traditional ceremony

and they sing several songs together (as a choir). Meanwhile, in Seblang Bakungan, there are just 1 or 2 singers who will sing all the songs in turn. The following are 12 songs (or *gending*) accompanying Seblang Bakungan dancers. Whereas the songs for Seblang Olehsari based on Heriyawati (2016: 156) consist of 27 *gending*.

The stage of Seblang traditional ceremony and its equipments Seblang Bakungan

In performing Seblang Bakungan in Bakungan village, there are several rules or arrangements for the performance's stage. The Seblang performance's venue agreed upon by the traditional elders and the community is a dance studio prepared specifically for the Seblang dancers, the handler, the *panekeb* handler (dancer's controller), and the *sinden*/singers and musicians were on the right front of the separate dance studio with others, and on the left of the studio is for the invited guests. The studio is in the form of a stage with a *janur kuning* decoration (from the tops of coconut leaves), on its right and left corner of the roof, the harvested crops are hung like *polo kependem*, *polo gumantung*, fruits (tubers, fruits, vegetables, and nuts). Meanwhile, the offerings on the stage should be provided in complete because they are also used for completeness when the dancers play a number of scenes in the poem on certain dances. The offerings are mostly flowers because the flowers at certain poetry will be sold to the audience as a particular symbol. There are *kantil* flowers, plumeria flowers, and cananga flowers that are tied together and sold to the audience during the show. Besides flowers, there are also holy water, incense, dolls, whips, small statues, and various kinds of food (cakes). The foods are both raw and cooked such as various kinds of coffee tea, similar foods (like various kinds of porridge / *jenang*), some equipment *fornginang*, and banana, which all are a complete offerings. The studio is the central position of the dancer, as well as the place where the dancers have some rest, in a provided chair, used when they stop dancing during the pause of each song.

Seblang Olehsari

The stage of the ceremony or the venue for the Seblang performance has its own consideration. This is also according to the instructions of the spirit who enters through a trance (possession). The venue is around several houses located in the Olehsari village. This place is a circle (the stage is circular with a large white umbrella in the middle which covers the 5 gamelan musicians). Besides, there are *sinden* in the backstage and in front of them is a chair for having rest accompanied by *panekeb* handlers and inviting handlers. The dancers dance in the area forming a circle in an anticlockwise groove. Above the stage on the corners are the fruits and crops like bananas, coconuts, leaves, and vegetables. In addition, on the right and left outside the circle venue is the invited guests on, and in front of the stage is a large field for the community to watch Seblang traditional ceremony. In Seblang Olehsari, the dance is performed for 7 consecutive days. The dancer starts dancing from noon around 2 p.m. to sunset.

Makeup and Costumes for Seblang Performers

The costumes worn by Seblang Bakungan dancers are an *omprok* made of leather and its fringes are made of white *mori* cloth which is cut into long pieces resembling long hair, a long cloth patterned with Gajah Oling batik with a brownish red background and as the main motif, Gajah Oling is placed on the edge of the fabric (fringe motif) with brownish yellow. Gajah Oling batik motifs are worn as long cloths and scarves by *panekaphandlers*, *pengrawit* and *sinden* with Gajah Oling batik in black motif and white background, while for the handlers they wear *Udengor* headband with Gajah Oling batik motif in black and white.



Figure 1. The right figure is Seblang Olehsari and the left one is Seblang Bakungan

The costume worn by Seblang Olehsari dancers is almost the same as the dancer's costume in Seblang Bakungan. This *omprok* which is used as a head cover for Seblang Olehsari dancers is made of flowers that are arranged together with *janur* leaves (the leaves of a young coconut tree with a light yellowish green color) made as the fringe. The motif of Gajah Oling batik worn by Seblang Olehsari dancers has a white background in black motifs, and sometimes also has a green base with yellow and red motifs. It is the same with Seblang Bakungan, the *sinden* and handler also wear Gajah Oling batik motif. For the *sinden*, *pengrawit*, and *panekeb* handler, Gajah Oling with white background and black motif is worn as a long cloth and scarves. Meanwhile, for the 'inviting' handler, the Gajah Oling batik motif is worn as a headband or *udeng*. For the Seblang Olehsari dancer, there are two *panekep* handlers on the right and left, which is in contrast to the Seblang Bakungan consisting of only one *panekep* handler.

The make-up applied on the dancer's face is not too flashy/ bold. They only use powder, blush on, lipstick, and eyebrow pencils. The costumes worn are *kemben* (like a tank-top) with a belt wrapped around the chest to the waist. A shawl tied to the waist is also worn while dancing. In addition, dancers also wear a long cloth with Gajah Oling motif, white socks, and anklets. The costumes have been prepared in the makeup artists' house and specifically stored to be given spells/ mantra.

CONCLUSION

Seblang is the oldest and most sacred traditional ceremony in the Banyuwangi regency. There are two types of Seblang namely Seblang Bakungan and Seblang

Olehsari. Seblang performers (dancers, *panekeb* handlers and ‘inviting’ handler, make up artists, *pengrawit* or musicians, and *sinden*) have different tasks based on their respective roles. For the performance’s venue or stage, it is agreed upon by the traditional elders and the community that a dance studio is prepared to conduct the Seblang traditional ceremony. For the make-ups and costumes, Seblang’s make-up is applied modestly and the costumes worn *arekemben* with belts wrapped around the chest to the waist. A shawl tied to the waist is also worn while dancing. The long cloth with Gajah Oling batik motif and a pair of white socks are worn completed with anklets.

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