

## The Form of Folk Theater in Mahesa Sri Kamulyan's Theater Performance

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**ABSTRACT :** *Mahesa Sri Kamulyan is a new theater creation inspired by the kebo-keboan traditional ceremony that developed in Alas Malang village, Singojuruh district Banyuwangi Regency, East Java. The creation of this theater departs from the story of mythology that developed as the myth of Dewi Sri. This theatre work was created to provide some information about the origin of the tradition of kebo-keboan that has long been performed by the local community. The concept used in the theater creation is populist theatre with reference to the related things of populist theatre namely: (1) Elevating the mythology of the surrounding community, (2) presented through dialogue, dance and song, (3) using spontaneous expressions, (3) using traditional music, (4) being relaxed, (5) being on an open stage. This work has been performed on August, 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020 in Alas Malang, Singojuruh, Banyuwangi, East Java. This performance also involving the local community as well as the cast.*

**KEYWORDS;** *Mahesa Sri Kamulyan, Kebo-keboan, folk theatre*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Folk traditional arts have two major functions in people's lives. The two major functions are functions as entertainment, and as a medium of offerings related to culture such as *ruwatan*, village cleanups, and community ritual events that still survive until nowadays (Soedarsono, 1998: 57).

Performing arts, which function as media rituals, not only focus on entertainment and aesthetic expression, but also more of a belief, considering that ritual arts also aim to achieve balance through the spiritual power displayed in these performances (Langer in Taum, 2004: 9).

Banyuwangi Regency, East Java, has a community that is closely related to agrarian and marine culture. This is because Banyuwangi has two potential natural resources, namely from agricultural products and marine products which are the livelihoods of most of the Banyuwangi people. These two things form cultural patterns, patterns of thought and thought for each of the supporting communities.

One form of community ritual performance that is currently still routinely held is the Kebo-keboan traditional ritual. The Kebo-keboan traditional ritual is an annual rite held by the people of Alas Malang Banyuwangi village as a means of requesting the return of Dewi Sri and Sadana who are considered to be gods of fertility and prosperity for the Alas community, Malang Singojuruh sub-district, Banyuwangi Regency. The Kebo-keboan ritual held by the local community to express gratitude to God Almighty for the abundance of the harvest is also a ritual to repel distress and all dangers (Gunawan, Interview, July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020).

In Alas Malang's community, the Kebo-keboan ritual is always carried out in the month of Sura (Muhharam), with various processions. First, by praying and eating together at all road junctions in the village of Alas Malang, second, by doing the *iderbumi*, which means circle he four cardinal directions in the Alas Malang area by a leader who is in charge of 30 humans who dress like buffaloes. Along the path, these buffalo wallow, roll in the mud to the accompaniment of typical Osing ethnic music, the third is followed by a ritual of sowing seeds by humans who dress like buffaloes, and the rice seeds that are sown are then fought over by the community.

The Osing community around Alas Malang has carried out this ritual since 300 years ago, as for the use of the buffalo symbol itself because the buffalo is a companion to agricultural life that is always needed (Sauni, Interview, July 20<sup>th</sup> 2020).

There has not been a clear reference to the origin that explain the Kebo-keboan tradition which has been running in the village of Alas Malang. Even Gunawan as the owner of the Kebo-keboan Cultural House and also Sauni as a traditional elder, as well as the historian of keboanism, also does not know exactly what is behind the Kebo-keboan ceremony so why use the buffalo as the main symbol of the ceremony.

Agrarian issues are considered interesting to be appointed as a theater work that uses the concept of folk theater. The creation of this new folk theater is based on a story that developed among the people of Alas Malang village, with the title "Mahesa Sri Kamulyan".

## II. DISCUSSION

The creation of a folk theater entitled "Mahesa Sri Kamulyan" departs from a thought about the origin of the birth of Dewi Sri Sadana, and her close relationship with buffaloes so that it has developed into a traditional ritual of folly. Although it is clear that the surrounding community does not know for sure about this, but for several ideas were found that could be the basis for the creation of the work "Mahesa Sri Kamulyan" which was held in the village of Alas Malang, Singojuruh, Banyuwangi Regency on August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

The rationale of this work is Layang Kanda Kelir (2007) which is a collection of puppet stories that compiled by Surwedi, states that Kebondanu is the son of the Dewi Sri and Dewa Wisnu. The goddess of nature herself is a land goddess who is close to fertility rites. From the puppet story written by Surwedi regarding the Kebondanu story, it eventually becomes the basis for the story of the birth of the Buffalo and its relationship to the land, as well as everything that grows from the ground as a representation of Dewi Pertiwi (her mother).

Mahesa Sri Kamulyan is a theater performance using the concept of folk theater. According to Nano Riantiaro (2011, 28) what is meant by folk theater is a theater performance that uses stories born from the people, such as history, fairy tales, mythology that developed in the surrounding community. Apart from the aspect of the story, it is also determined the course that can be through dialogue, dance and song. Folk theater places spontaneous expression as the basis for the performance, meaning that the script is not the only dead reference but is filled with a lot of improvisation and situational matters.

As for music that supports the performance, folk theater uses traditional musical instruments that develop in the area of origin of the theater as is the Mahesa Sri Kamulyan theater performance which uses traditional music as a medium for cultivating new vocabular music.

Folk theater is a casual performance and there is interaction between the performers and the audience. In the Mahesa Sri Kamulyan show, the audience is also a player who is placed as a performance actor, remembering the stories that are raised from the background of everyday life.

As a folk theater that has own characteristics and concept, here are the overview of some elements that show the characteristics of folk theater in this performance include:

1. Storyline: The plot is the presentation of the nets of the story, and has a causal relationship in it. In detail, Mahesa Sri Kamulyan's story line is as follows:
  - a. The first part is a scene of rice fields and agriculture, Pango buffalo feels strange because suddenly the buffalo being shepherded have a fight. This annoyed the farmers and asked what was going on. According to farmers, as a buffalo animal is very unpredictable, therefore it is very natural that buffalo can fight, but pangons have other beliefs, and state that buffalo are not arbitrary animals, because buffalo are descended from gods. The farmers who did not believe it then asked the pangon to explain the meaning of this statement.



Picture 1: Scenes of Buffalo Pangon  
(Source: Recording of Mahesa Sri Kamulyan Performance)

- b. Scene 2, is a Pangon scene telling stories in small dumplings with farmers. Pangon tells of the love of Dewa Wisnu and Dewi Pertiwi.



Picture 2. Pangon Scene Telling Stories (Source: Mahesa)  
(Source: Recording of Mahesa Sri Kamulyan Performance)

- c. Scene 3, is a story in heaven. Dewa Wisnu was making love with his wife, Dewi Pertiwi. In the end, Dewi Pertiwi gave birth to a baby, and Dewa Wisnu ordered Dewi Pertiwi to take care of the womb, because one day the baby to be born is the baby that humanity has been waiting for.



Picture 3. Scenes of Wisnu and Pertiwi. (Photo: Mahesa)  
(Source: Recording of Mahesa Sri Kamulyan Performance)

- d. Scene 4 is the scene of Prabu Kebondanu wanting to ask the Dewi Pertiwi. In the end, a war broke out between Dewa Wisnu and Prabu Kebondanu in heaven. This battle was won by Dewa Wisnu, marked by beheading Kebondanu, and planted in rice fields.



Picture 4. A war between Dewa Wisnu and Prabu Kebondanu  
(Source: Recording of Mahesa Sri Kamulyan Performance)

- e. Scene 5 is the scene of the birth of a baby who was conceived by Pertiwi. In this case the land is emblazoned with soil. The birth of a baby in the form of a buffalo carrying rice and cotton was greeted with great fanfare by the villagers



Picture 5. The scene of the buffalo birth.  
(Photo: Mahesa)

- f. Scene 6 is a scene of farmers planting rice seeds, previously assisted by buffalo in cultivating the land. After planting, the farmers process agriculture, such as fertilizing and caring for the rice seeds until they grow, then it ends with a harvest scene that was demonstrated by the dancers.



Figure 6.A farming scene  
(Photo: Mahesa)

- g. Scene 7, is a pangon explaining that this story is a description of the origins of the Kebokeboan tradition that has been preserved since now, and to celebrate a bountiful harvest, all members of the community are asked to express their gratitude to God and respect the Buffalo and Rice who have become the means of life from God.



Picture 7. Famous scene.  
(Photo: Mahesa)

- h. Scene 8, ends with a puppet show with the story of Dewi Sri Mulih.



Figure 8. A puppet show scene  
(Photo: Mahesa)

## 2. Staging Locations

The performance was held in the village of Alas Malang, located in the vicinity of Indra Gunawan's Kebo-keboan Cultural House. The Kebo-keboan cultural house besides having a large main hall (*pendhapa*), this place is also surrounded by rice fields which are used as places for performances. The stage used is an open stage, free of charge. The rice field embankment is the dominant stage used for the reason that this show tells the story of rice which is close to rural communities. The audience who came too, entered the arena of the show and there were some who played their roles conditionally.

## 3. Performance Time

The performance time is carried out in the morning, on August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020, by adjusting the hours when the farmers leave for the fields. Selection of time in the morning to adjust the atmosphere in the morning, where the farmers do all their activities. The duration of the performance is 45 minutes. The choice of 45 minutes duration considers various things, namely the factor so that the audience does not feel bored in enjoying the theater, from that time it also avoids ending the event too late, because it will disturb the activities of the local people.

## 4. Player Selection

The selection of figures is also a folk figure who is a daily traditional actor in the Alas Malang area. These figures include farmers, buffalo herders, Wisnu and Pertiwi, as well as puppeteers, buffaloes and the people. For certain figures such as farmers and the people, who are real indigenous people, traditional actors and farmers around the village of Alas Malang, as well as the figures who become the buffalo, are the demonstrations of every *keboan* carried out.

## 5. Themes

The theme raised in this performance is a populist and folk theme related to agricultural symbols, buffalo, rice and rice fields. Therefore, it is related to the title chosen, namely Mahesa Sri Kamulyan which can literally be interpreted as Buffalo, Rice, and Kemulyaan. The main theme of this show is to raise the story of buffalo and rice which have delivered agrarian communities in gaining glory, because they have become the main livelihoods of farmers.

## 6. Mandate

The values that will be conveyed in this performance are the mutual cooperation value and the ritual value. The value of mutual cooperation is a hereditary tradition that is owned by the nation of the archipelago (Indonesia) and is still widely shared by agrarian societies. Likewise, with the value of rituals, which cannot be separated from the traditions of the people with Osing and Javanese culture. Namely the expression of prayer symbolized through traditional ceremonies for survival and the spiritual needs of the community

## 7. Characterization

Characterization is a way of the director presents the characters in the story so that it is useful to see how the roles are positioned in the story. Characteristics include character, characterization, and how to place and describe them in the drama (Nurgiyantoro, 2009: 166).

In this work, there are three forms of characterization, namely antagonist, protagonist and tritagonist. The antagonist is an evil role that is considered not in accordance with the prevailing norms, in this case is King Kebondanu who wants to seize the wife of Dewi Pertiwi, even though in the end Kebondanu also becomes part of Pertiwi and Wisnu, namely becoming the second child of the god who is the Protagonist or like that The characterization of the tritagonist or intermediate character is found in the farmer and buffalo shepherd figure, this figure is in the middle because basically the role is not involved in the conflict between the two figures, but as a character who tells the story between Kebondanu and BataraWisnu who eventually became the forerunner of traditional rituals. stupidity

## 8. Background

the setting of the place or setting is everything that is related to space and time in the drama performance. In this play, there are several places settings that are used according to the plot, namely; fields, heaven, and *pendhapa* where Puppet performances are presented.

## III. CONCLUSION

Mahesa Sri Kamulyan is a long process of creating a popular theater that departs from the boredom tradition in the village of Alas Malang, SingojuruhBanyuwangi. After carrying out this process, there are several things that can be used as a conclusion, including: The people of Alas Malang Village strongly believe in the Kebo-keboan tradition which ends with the Sri Mulih puppet show as a prayer of gratitude and a request to God for a better life.

This method of creating works of art goes through several stages, namely, preparation, training and performance. The preparation stage includes finding sources about the mythology that develops in the community about Dewi Sri with everything that surrounds her, including the story of Kebondanu in the wayang story.

The training stage is divided into several work systems, namely the dance, theater and music divisions, which are coordinated by each person in charge.

The staging stage is carried out in the village of Alas Malang by using a rice field embankment, as a form of application of the form of folk theater that is built starting from stories, players, revealed media, and dialogue.

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