

The Transformation of Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk

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Abstract: Two main Things is analyzed in this study, The first is the view of the trilogy, when its exotication much symbolized by Srintil and Dukuh Paruk was viewed in complex, divine and yet paradoxal object. This analysis was coming from the study of the genre which flourished in Indonesian literary on 70's and 80's, also from the political sociological perspectives when rapid development triumphed the rational masculinity over irrational superstitious during 1980's New order era. The second is the view of the trilogy when it was filmed in 2011 entitled Sang Penari. To be a more suitable with audience, the exotication including the life of Ronggeng is made to be a more pop icon than its complexity. The study was using the the arguments of orientalism and using the illustration of mainstream pop culture audience in Indonesia after the reformation era in 1998. The broader objectives of the study, is to give a deeper understanding to many pop culture artifacts in Indonesia, in terms of formation, pattern and type of communication. This study is more in interpretive path comparing several books and writings.

Keywords: *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk Trilogy, Sang Penari, Exotication, Orientalism.*

BACKGROUND

Trilogy Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk was first published in 1982. It is one of the masterpiece from Ahmad Tohari, respectively, Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk (Paruk's Hamlet Dancer), Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari (A Falling Star at Dawn), Jentera Bianglala (Rainbow wheel). Background of these story was when Indonesia had its second biggest revolution after its independence in 1945. It is the tension between communist party and its rival peaked by killing of several Army general and then continued by massacre of communist

supporters in 1965. Dukuh Paruk is a small village in Banyumas where its people portrayed as traditional, irrational and uneducated. Srintil as the main character is a dancer which posited as a holy and gained a higher status because superstitious believe that only the choosen could be a ronggeng (dancer).

The second main character along with Srintil is Rasmus, a typical innocent small village young man, who eventually get a better fate. Rasmus was accidentally recruited by the Army and then become the survivor when the village was accused to be supporters of communist ideology.

After almost 30 years, in 2011 there was a movie entitled *Sang Penari* (The Dancer), directed by Iffa Isfansyah, born in 1979, tried to reinterpreted the book into a larger audience. The film had a successful critics proved by several award and listed to be the best foreign picture of Academy Award in 2012.

THE RONGGENG

Based on the interview between Tineke Hellwig and Tohari in 1994 (Cooper, 2004), the character of Ronggeng was “modelled” after an actual women. Ronggeng itself indeed is a part of Banyumas culture, which in a past had a long struggled with the higher form of art and culture as Banyumas is not a part of inner palace area of Kasunanan Surakarta, before the Indonesian Independence in 1945. One of the reason why a form of traditional art as Ronggeng was had to be struggle for its existence, is mentioned by the work of Budi Santoso in identity and post-colonialism in Indonesia.

As part of non-inner keraton region and even it settled in the outmost area of the Kingdom (mananagari) way apart from the ruler. It is believe that there were element of power played by ruling factions towards history of Javanese art and culture as a whole in the past. Quoting Richards Schechner, art history in Java tend to sinked on big narration called as normative expectation. This view exclude other forms of arts and culture which flourished besides the mainstream culture or in this case high culture as Keraton had. And then labeled those art as folk art, sometimes not representation of Javanese culture or even as included as non-art at all (Santoso, 2003). These alienation, seclusion was more strengthened with another political objectives created by Keraton elite and Colonial ruler in the past. Art and culture was often narrowed its creativity by only allowing told stories as in *Pakem* (standard) to avoided sensitive issue such a as politics, which irritating colonials (purwoko, 2016).

The culture was essentially an expression of the traditional hierarchical structure of feudal society distinct from a dichotomous grouping of a great culture (great tradition) and the common culture (traditions of folks). The great culture developed in the center of the kingdom (the palace or castle) supported by the nobility and the feudal elite. The characteristics of this culture were full of the symbolism, high, complex, well-educated, and the magnificent (*grandeur*) values. While the common culture was the meaning of the tradition taking place in a rural farming community, which was collective, anonymous, limited to a small community, and supported by the majority (purwoko, 2016).

And so Ronggeng in the past was never considered as a part of mainstream culture portrayed by Keraton (palace), its even categorized as a non form of art yet its only a traditional culture. Yet, This view was almost never mentioned in the book. Trilogy Ronggeng was quite romantized the character of Ronggeng into a different status.

The Trilogy in 80's

The Trilogy, which published in 80's was considered as a part as a movement of the era when rapid development occurred during Soeharto's country development ambitions. It is the era when there are paradox between local culture versus modernism value encourage by the program. From Cooper's taken from Michael Bodden's analysis, This novel is categorized as "Sastra Warna Lokal" or local color fiction which is commonly explored the paradox between modernism value as on this writing genre pictured as individualistic and secularization in religious life. This genre is also tried to draw attention through "exotic-ation" the ritual and local art, focusing on traditional life style which tends to be superstitious. This works is also tried to change the de-modernisation view towards ancient religiosity in the past. (Cooper, 2004).

The view of trilogy through the lense of masculinity and feminity

In the light of understanding the socio-political and cultural ambience and also the audience of trilogy's, One of the respectable work related to the book was written by Nancy I. Cooper entitled Tohari's Trilogy: Passages of Power and Time in Java, from the Journal of South East Studies, page 536 – 556 printed in 2005 by The National University of Singapore. To understand the trilogy, Nancy tried to linked between Srintil and Rasmus, as

main character as not only a feminine value versus masculinity value, which triumph by Rasmus as a symbol of masculinity but also expand the meaning.

Firstly, On Cooper's perspective, Srintil on Dukuh Paruk is a symbol of local values, and Rasmus is "National symbols of modernization". From this point of view, Cooper also thought that this analogy could explain the violence moment after 1965 in Indonesia. Rasmus as masculine-rational secular-modern symbols, is a representation of better conditions from New Order's modernity. Rasmus, who was a soldier and Srintil's boyfriend, was a man who is spiritually changed and to fix the moral degradation and economic disaster in Dukuh Paruk (Purwoko, 2016)

Secondly, still linked with Local colour fiction genre which emerged those days, the trilogy was also contradicted between villages as a traditional superstitious versus city as a more modern-rational value. One important notion from Cooper is that although this trilogy pictured the exotic and beauty of the village as an inferior state, the masculine value is not using western standards, yet the trilogy using the symbol from national culture. Rasmus, is a hero, a changed man, an Army, an Indonesian Army who gives the salvation toward the disastrous even during 1965 revolt.

And thirdly, following the work of Edward Said's Orientalism, In Cooper's view, what is happening with Dukuh Paruk is not a form of indigenisation or localisation, but Orientalism. "Paruk is seen as different in much the same way as a man often view woman. Paruk, through the use of Javanese stereotypes, has been feminised as the East has been orientalised by others" (Cooper, 2004).

Fourth, opposing the colonial idea that the great culture was developed in the center of the kingdom (the palace or castle) with the characteristics of this culture were full of the symbolism, high, complex, well-educated, and the magnificent (*grandeur*) values, Cooper opposing this idea with notion "In my view the great expressive and created talent, of Indonesia has always derived from the 'folk', only to be further developed and supported by the power and resources of the ruling centre." Cooper's continued that this beliefs is well recognized in modern era to pursuit the beauty of essential classic and a new form of art.

Fifth, taken from the arguments of Victor Turner's *The Anthropology of Performance* and Arjun's Appadurai, Cooper valued Ronggeng is a form of art whose the way it presents very differ from the way popular culture icon presenting. Srintil, as when she dance was sort of possessed by certain soul

is the center of cultural, spiritual value and So It is not only the sexualism valued by men watching her dancing or bukak *klambu after*, but also the value of humanity, fertility and prosperity. Ronggeng as a ritualistic performance did not understood by popular culture which tend to consuming the culture from the lens of exposing leisure time.

Apart from Feminity and masculinity dichotomy, In relation with political life and (pop) culture in Indonesia, (Heryanto, 2012) mentioned that during Soeharto's New Order era, there were two political dimension in consuming pop culture in those days. The first is faction who accept the ideology and the second the faction who resist the ideology. Meanwhile what so called the ideology is the mix between Kejawen (javanism), secularism, militerism and developent (rational moderism). And after the fall of New Order in 1998, this legacy is still continue, but not coordinated and rule as years before.

SRINTIL, THE SECOND BIRTH

It was said that the birth of The trilogy in 80's was inspired by the exotication but paradoxical with the development acceleration. When the trilogy became a movie in 2011, The world of literature and fiction in Indonesia was changed drastically. With the aid of internet, gossips, television and other media, This trilogy expand its audience into a more larger and mainstream popularity.

It many said that after the fall of Soeharto there were euphoria among Indonesian people in term of the freedom of expression. There were abundance of social activity community based, flourished along with the political parties. In other form, internet based community also become one the Indonesian element of information life in digital age.

The acceleration of economy marked with 50 percents of total population was indeed having minimum wage of 2-10 USD per day become the basis of middle class economic foundation. Side by side, Jakarta and other cities, not for a small cities such Purwokerto stacked with the rise of malls and shopping ruko and building. With most of the people having TV, and smartphones, the content was not far from food, fun and fashion, sensationalism, vulgar sometimes violence and sexual and of the central of those celebrity culture.

The rise of new celebrity culture in Indonesia was close to the view from conditions in the US when there were the proliferation of media and the loss

in confidence in established forms of leadership and authority that happened around the same time. Quoting Ellis (Cashmore, 2006), A peculiarity of celebrity culture is the shift of emphasis from achievement-based fame to media-driven renown.

The audience of 21st century

After the success of several adaptation, many other adapted books-turn into a movie form was mushroomed. Some of the movie adapted from novel, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* from Abidah El Khalieqi (2001), *Laskar Pelangi's* Andrea Hirata (2006), *Ayat Ayat Cinta*, *Ketika cinta bertasbih*, *5cm*, *Tenggelamnya Kapal VanderWick*, *Negeri 5 Menara*, *Nada Untuk Asa*, *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa*, *Habibie Ainun*, *Supernova*. Garin (2015) mentioned that as an adaptation form, Indonesian movie had a long relationship with books and novel. And in Indonesian case during 2005-2010 the popularity was promoted by the original soundtrack. The form is could be from novel into a movie or the movie into a novel.

This form was viewed positively by (Budiman, 2015). Budiman opposed that the declining of literary culture is probably not determined by the competition between literary and the audio visual cultural product. Yet, there was a synergy, between those two proved by book-turned-movie adaptation in Indonesia. And literary world is actually survived in the most difficult era when audio visual cultural product seemed dominating by the birth of innovational cultural format. Secondly, in relationship between literary and political and industrial power, literary product was seems well coordinated, quoting from Melani Budianta there was a cultural transaction, which blurred the line between literary and market it-self. But the effect was seriously analyzed, particularly when literary had to be compromised with the market orientation. Thirdly, Budiman wrote that after 15 years after reformation, literature seems to have a special place among the middle class society. Writing is a part of middle class and cosmopolite society, and it viewed as a need, and not as merely luxury.

But, in my point of view, The audience was seems vary, although culture of literary was not considered as the favourite among most of people, indeed there were emergence of several books with different genre since 1998. From the rise of women writer such as Ayu Utami, Dewi Lestari, Djenar Maesa Ayu, frequently wrote about sexual, and a taboo thought, into silat genre, chicklit and teenlit , Islamic background and so forth.

To recapture why there were so many genre and types of audiences emerge, as many other part of 21st century world, Indonesian audience was seems splitted into two faction. The first audience was become more globalized, with the character of more open in adopting the western culture promoted by the media. The second audience is more resistance, with the more eyes into the fundamental with traditional and Islamic point of view. But the reality was not that simple, The openness of political and everyday life communication backed by the internet and technology and also the rise of middle class consumer society, also formed a new kind of audience. Audience whose well informed and having enough education, most of them are born with secular education, demands for new excitement. This society seems put attention to the high culture symbols, and sometime distinctive traditional art but in the same time maintaining a distance.

This view become the basis logic of pop culture pattern of communication viewed in its artifacts in this study. Exotification as portrayed by the Ronggeng in the movie was indeed trying to fulfill the demands of those new generation. And so the arguments was more born three decades earlier, it is when Edward Said wrote about orientalism In 70's, using the sample which is available at the early of 20th century.

THE CRITICS

Sang Penari as the translation of the trilogy was praised by many critics particularly its picture selection of 1965 revolt. But above all, it is appear that the divinity, the complexity, the paradox was not fully portayed. Illustrated by Eric Sasono “ *Namun dalam soal mistisisme dan pemahaman terhadap cara berpikir ronggeng, film ini memilih tak menyentuhnya. Mistisme sebagai pendukung cara berpikir yang menghasilkan ronggeng dan budaya kecabulan yang mengiringinya diganti dengan persoalan pencarian identitas yang cenderung lebih dekat dengan persoalan manusia kelas menengah modern ketimbang menjalani panggilan alam semesta dan kehendak takdir. Pilihan yang tampaknya mencoba mendekatkan diri dengan persoalan penonton film Indonesia sekarang ini yang kebanyakan adalah pengunjung mal* ”(Heryanto, 2015)

In this movie, the life and exotification of Ronggeng seems to be an attribute of a more big story, which focusing on the pursuit of identity of its character. Roundly, the movie seems to be the fact of arguments mentioned previously, its when it had to be compromised with the market orientation.

In other words to fulfilled the demand of its customer, whose dominated by middle class customer society based. The situation was synonymous with the writing of (Rosenblatt. Naomi, 2009) illustrating the middle eastern belly dancers and mysterious Bedouins in *The Midway Plaisance at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago 1893* with the Quoting from (Rosenblatt. Naomi, 2009).

As the philosophical, complexity of Ronggeng was never deep discovered, The audience from Sang Penari was seems do not have an enough knowledge of the Ronggeng except in superficial level. This reality makes the mystics symbol, mystery and barbarism was a set of objects to indulge the excitement. This was also synonymous with the view of Americans towards the orient, or in this case middle-eastern, wrote in Rosenblatts "American capitalists exploited and encouraged popular assumptions about the Orient as a means of encouraging impulsive consumer spending, which served as a precursor to modern marketing methods. Even the film industry exploited the Orient, transforming it into a commodity available for widespread visual consumption" (Rosenblatt. Naomi, 2009).

In a more vivid arguments "*Film had the novel capacity to show audiences what they would otherwise not be able to see, including exotic lands, peoples, and events. "In its Orientalist mode, [Hollywood] was a site of representing the world abroad to US audiences."* 48 Films by directors such as Cecil B. DeMille (*The Sheik, The Ten Commandments*) and David Lean (*Lawrence of Arabia*) presented audiences with a Middle East heavily steeped in traditional Orientalist aesthetics. These films typified all of the Orientalist stereotypes about the Middle East: the lands and cultures were depicted as beautiful, mysterious, and sexually alluring, while the inhabitants were barbaric, savage, and tyrannical. De-Mille's grand epics, in particular, "continued to reinforce consumer values by representing history in Orientalist terms as a magnificent spectacle for visual appropriation. Such a representational strategy proved to be especially apt at a time when the United States emerged as a superpower... and as a model of consumer capitalism." (Rosenblatt. Naomi, 2009)

How effectively film representing otherness was illustrated by Elena di Giovanni on analyzing Disney movie during 1991 - 2000. Based on the character such as *Beauty and The Beast* (17th century France), *Aladdin* (middle east), *Pocahontas* (hispanola), *Tarzan* (Africa), *Mulan* (china), which "points to the two different sets of cultural references which appear in all of

them and, more significantly, hints at the peculiar nature of the cultural representations which these audiovisual texts contain. As a matter of fact, all the major animated features released by Disney between 1991 and 2000 are similarly centered upon the depiction of cultures which are distant in terms of space and/or time from the American culture, the narrating self whose presence always appears behind the representations of the Other (Di Giovanni, 2007). Film in this view was designed to be distant with American culture, so there's description of ours (we as American Culture) whose to be different from them (oriental or character stereotyped in Disney's movie).

In Cooper's work what is happening with Dukuh Paruk is indeed a form of Orientalism. But in a sense that Paruk as a traditional-irrational view versus modernity-rational's New Order principle. And thus, Ronggeng was seen as different in much the same way as a man often view woman..” Paruk, through the use of Javanese stereotypes, has been feminised as the East has been orientalized by others”. But in Sang Penari, the transformation of audience makes the ronggeng is not being orientalized by rational – masculin symbols but by the character of the audience whose representation of urban middle class society and market power representation. In other words, to defined and stereotyped the other could be the path of narrating self, or in Disney's, “We”, as an American and in Sang Penari, “We” posit as an urban middle class people.

Orientalism perspectives was considered initially wrote by Edward Said (Said, 1979), and many communication scholar put this as a part of postcolonialism thinking. In Littlejohn's theories of Human Communication's *“orientalism the member of non western cultured positioned as the “subject” of the study; that ultimately becomes the subject of “learned” field in the academy. Then “others” become something to learn about, and thus they turn into objects”*¹. But the logic of postcolonialism Said was determined so then western world rule again or at least the world legitimized western world's power and structure over the otherness. Considerably, The notable work of further orientalism, was also coming from Ziauddin Sardar². As Di Elena mentioned in Reflection of The Other and Self portrayed in Disney's *“A first, practical example can be found in the depiction of the Medieval French culture which comes up in The Hunchback of Notre Dame. As Sardar (1999: 77) points out in his analysis of the filmic representations of otherness, “in modern times it is conventional to see the Medieval era as far removed from the world of contemporary secular and scientific*

thought". Therefore, the representation of a Medieval setting perfectly serves the purpose of reinforcing the supremacy of the narrating, ultramodern and more civilized culture" (Di Elena, 2007).

CONCLUSION

Referencing between two era, first is when the trilogy introduced in 80's and second when the tyriology became a movie in 2011, there were several changes in terms of illustration of the content of the character on Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk. When the first Trilogy printed in 80's, it was considered as a part as a movement of the era when rapid development occurred during Soeharto's country development ambitions. It is the era when there are paradox between local culture versus modernism value encourage by the program. From Cooper's taken from Michael Bodden's analysis, This novel is catogarized as " Sastra Warna Lokal" or local colour fiction which is commonly explored the paradox between modernism value as on this writing genre pictured as individualistic and secularization in religious life. This genre is also tried to drawed attention through "exotic-ation" the ritual and local art, focusing on traditional life style which tends to be superstitious. This works is also tried to change the de-modernisation view towards ancient religiosity in the past (Cooper, 2004).

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First, the situation was synonymous with the conditions of middle-eastern belly dancers and mysterious Bedouins in The Midway Plaisance during the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago 1897. As the philosophical, complexity of Ronggeng was never deep discovered, The audience from Sang Penari was seems do not have an enough knowledge of the Ronggeng except in superficial level. This reality makes the mystics symbol, mystery and barbarism was a set of objects to indulge the excitement. As the film industry in US exploited the Orient, transforming it into a commodity available for widespread visual consumption

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