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Ketoprak Dor: Representation And Aesthetic Behavior Of The Javanese Deli

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Abstract

Ketoprak Dor is a folk theater art that was exist and developed in the Deli Javanese community in Sumatra Utara Province. This type of performance takes the basic form of the Ketoprak drama art in Jawa Tengah. However, it is different from the place of origin, Ketoprak Dor has its own peculiarities, especially from the aesthetics of stage performances. Based on this, the researcher examines Ketoprak Dor Sanggar Langen Setio Budi Lestari in Deliserdang Regency. The research method was ethnography with a qualitative approach and data collection consists of interviews, involved observation, and literature study. The use of theory in this research was the representation theory of Graeme Burton and the aesthetic behavior of Desmond Morris. The result which obtained that Ketoprak Dor is something of non-arbitrary and unconventional in the broad sense of Javanese culture. This art is a unique aesthetic expression and special from Sumatra Utara. Ketoprak Dor displays the historical meaning and cultural identity of the Deli Javanese community. This art is a form of popular cultural art which means empowering the subordinated Deli Javanese community to produce new cultural forms. Ketoprak Dor is a cultural text that generatively represents the existence and aesthetic behavior of the Javanese Deli community in Sumatera.

Keywords: Ketoprak Dor; Representation; Aesthetic Behavior

1. Introduction

Sumatera Utara Province administratively has a diversity of cultures, including artistic practices in it. This diversity is formed from socio-historical processes and cultural dynamics that occur. There is a process of mutual influence and change in it. Currently, the socio-cultural dynamics continue. One of the historical products of the socio-cultural dynamics is Ketoprak Dor.

Ketoprak Dor is a folk theater art developed by the Deli Javanese community in the Sumatra Utara region. This art is quite unique and belongs to the Deli Javanese community. The term of Deli Javanese is a reference to the descendants of migrant workers, or called contract coolie in that time, from the island of Java who were brought to work in the plantations of Sumatra Timur (now; Sumatra Utara) owned by private Europeans in the era of 19th century colonialism [1]

Basically, the performing art of Ketoprak Dor takes the form of Ketoprak art from Jawa (Jawa Tengah in particular). In Javanese, the art of ketoprak is often called kethoprak [2]. Ketoprak is a traditional drama that tells the great stories of the classical royal era as well as the legends that existed in Javanese society. Ketoprak is a classical art, namely art that developed and experienced sophistication in the palaces of Surakarta or Yogyakarta [3].

However, even though it is rooted in the Ketoprak tradition in Jawa Tengah, Ketoprak Dor has characteristics that make it unique and different from the area of origin. The uniqueness and difference include the aesthetic and sociological aspects of Ketoprak Dor. Aesthetic aspects include the structure and elements of performing arts including stage performances, while the philosophical hints at Ketoprak Dor which is present as popular culture. Ketoprak Dor performs a reversal of 'from the people (popular) back to the people (popular)' both in terms of aesthetics and performing arts (performance, stage, and audience).

This study chose the Langen Setio Budi Lestari studio, which is located at Hamlet VII, Sei Mencirim Village, Sunggal District, Deliserdang Regency as the research subject. This studio is one of the Ketoprak Dor studios that still survives until now.

2. Method of Research

The use of method in this research is ethnography. Ethnography is an empirical and theoretical approach that aims to obtain an in-depth description and analysis of culture based on intensive field research. The purpose of ethnographic research is to provide a holistic picture of research subjects with an emphasis on capturing the daily experiences of individuals by observing and interviewing them and other related people. Ethnography literally means "writing about a group of people". According to Creswell [4] "ethnographic design is a qualitative research procedure to describe and analyze various cultural groups that interpret patterns of behavior, beliefs and language that develop and are used by a community group over time". Judging from the origin of the word, the term ethnography comes from the words "ethno" (nation) and "graphy" (to describe), so ethnography aims to describe a culture as a whole, namely all aspects of culture, both material, such as cultural artifacts (tools, clothes, etc.) , buildings, and so on) and abstract ones, such as experiences, beliefs, norms and value systems of the group under study. Departing from these terms and explanations, it can be interpreted that ethnography is a method that explains, describes, identifies various characteristics of humans (nations) from things that are general to things that are special.

3. The result of Research

The term Ketoprak is a combination of the words 'tok' and 'prak', namely the naming that comes from the sound (onomatopoea) of Javanese musical instruments kentongan and keprak. This ketoprak art comes from the Jawa Tengah area. The art of ketoprak originated from a folk game which was later adopted into a typical palace art. From the notes of Jakob Sumardjo [5], the embryo of this folk theater began to emerge in 1887. It was started by the village people's playing by beating the lesung (rice pounder) rhythmically under the full moon (gejog). From this village folk game, Raden Tumenggung Wreksodiningrat developed it by adding musical instruments such as drums, flying, flutes, kecerak and ontowecono. This drama art was first staged in 1909 and began to take standard form as ketoprak in 1924.

This ketoprak art was brought by contract workers from Jawa to Sumatra Timur. The arrival of contract workers from areas out of Sumatra Timur is in line with the entry of foreign capital in the plantation industry sector. The need for the availability of a large number of workers makes investors feel the need to bring in them from outside the region. These workers originally worked on temporary contracts. Although later, due to various reasons, these workers eventually settled down to breed in the concession areas of the Dutch plantations.

The emergence of Ketoprak Dor stems from the simple desire of contract coolies/contract workers, namely to entertain themselves and unwind from their daily work on plantations [6]. In the overseas lands of Sumatra Timur, the art of Ketoprak Dor liberated itself from the traditional grip of palace arts and returned to original form, namely folk theatre. It is a folk theater in which there are elements of drama, music, songs/songs, dance, clothing, and player-audience interactions wrapped in jokes.

The interaction between the performers (from the stage) and the audience is one of the characteristics of popular cultural performing arts that distinguishes it from classical palace performing arts. In addition, Ketoprak Dor is also working on local folklore into his performances. In terms of stage dialogue, the Ketoprak Dor players also use dialects or idioms typical of local ethnicities, such as the accent of Malay, Karo and Toba Batak recently.

3.1. Structure and Element of Ketoprak Dor Performance

Ketoprak Dor is often performed at Deli Javanese weddings. Sanggar Langen Setio Budi Lestari was invited by the bride's family to enliven the wedding ceremony. For one performance, the studio which is now led by Mr. Jumadi (65 years old), the average fee is set at five million rupiah for one performance. The Ketoprak Dor performances are usually held at night until the early hours of the morning. Starting from 21.00 till the end. The total duration of the performance is approximately five hours.

According to Mr. Jumadi, the reason for the performance at night is so as not to disturb the main event of the wedding party as well as so that the children are asleep. This is because some of the dialogues and humor on stage are not suitable for consumption by children. The number of personnel who participated in the performance was 10 (ten) people consisting of 7 (seven) men and 3 (three) women. These personnel are divided into 7 (seven) actors/actresses and 3 (three) music players. Alternately, they take turns being actors/actresses as well as music players.

3.1.1. The Performance Round

From the field observations of the Ketoprak Dor staging of the Langen Setio Budi Lestari studio at a wedding ceremony held on February 26, 2022 in Glugur Rimbun village, Pancur Batu District, Deliserdang Regency, it was found that Ketoprak Dor was divided into five rounds and one intermeso. The story that is staged tells the story of a kingdom where the prince (the main protagonist) must isolate himself outside the kingdom due to being slandered by his own brother's wife.

In each turn of the round, always marked the sound of music. In addition, it is also marked by raising and lowering the width of the stage cloth. The first round, introducing the cast of characters by going up to the stage one by one. These actors introduce themselves by singing and dancing. In this first act, a picture of a safe, peaceful and peaceful kingdom situation is also introduced. The second half, the beginning of the conflict begins. Gradually the intensity of the conflict increases with the depiction of the main protagonist being slandered by the antagonist. The third act, the conflict reaches its peak, the main character must go into exile outside the palace. In this round, the antagonist wins. He also played a dominant role in the palace. In the midst of his exile, the main character continues to wander and mature.

The fourth round, conflict resolution. Slowly the situation turned upside down, the slander that was inflicted on the main protagonist began to reveal the truth. The prince was finally accepted back into the palace and all the slander that had been inflicted on him was erased. The antagonist also apologizes and admits his mistake. The fifth round, things returned to normal as usual. The life of the palace and kingdom is safe, peaceful and serene as before the conflict occurred. Apart from these five rounds, there was one intermeso between the third and fourth rounds. The scenes and storytelling in this intermeso are not directly connected to the main story.



Fig. 1. A wide black-red cloth marking the turn of the round

In the intermeso section, two actors and actresses even stepped off the stage to join the audience to sing and dance. The audience was involved in this show, they were invited to sing and dance together. In addition, there is also a guessing game that sometimes looks pornographic, so that it invites laughter from the audience. Typical and style of performance that interacts directly with the audience like this is typical of folk culture or popular culture. This indicates the closeness of the art to the masses as the owner of the culture. Pop culture is meant here as a differentiator with high culture which generally regulates the exclusive distance between the stage and the audience.



Fig. 2. Jokes in the intermeso session

3.1.2. Costume

In terms of costumes, Ketoprak Dor players wear different costumes from the costumes usually worn by Ketoprak players in Jawa Tengah. The players of Ketoprak Dor wear colorful costumes. In addition, there is also no special head covering that distinguishes between characters who act as kings, nobles and ordinary people. There are no special markers that image a certain social hierarchy. From Tutiek Sugiarti's research [7], it was found that the use of colorful costumes was influenced by local Malay culture which in fact also came from stambul comedy from the Middle East. The use of this costume is clearly different from the costumes of Ketoprak players in Jawa Tengah which characterizes a social hierarchical structure, for example between the clothes of kings and nobles with palace employees, ordinary soldiers and the common people. The color of the costumes in the Ketoprak

performance also has certain symbolic meanings, such as black as a symbol of wisdom and white as a symbol of purity [2].



Fig. 3. Colorful costumes and the cast of Ketoprak Dor

3.1.3. Dialogue

The dialogue of the Ketoprak Dor players is dominant in Jawa ngoko, which is the language level that is in the lower position. The use of this language usually reflects the social stratum level of a person or group of Javanese people. Ngoko Javanese language is usually used by those who are in the lower social strata or the common people. The use of the Javanese ngoko language in the Ketoprak Dor dialogue is different from Ketoprak.

The choice of words used by a king to subordinates member is certainly different from the language used by subordinate's member when talking to the king. This level of language is still applied in the Ketoprak performance, meanwhile, in the Ketoprak Dor stage act this level does not apply at all. Apart from speaking Javanese ngoko, occasionally the players of Ketoprak Dor also insert idioms from the daily language of Malay, Karo and Toba Batak. Usually, these local idioms appear during funny or joke scenes.

3.1.4. Music

In addition to accompanying songs the music in the Ketoprak Dor performance also serves as background music for a scene, building a dramatic atmosphere for the stage storytelling, differentiating/separating between one scene and the next, as well as sound effects for scenes on stage. Therefore, an actor or actress Ketoprak Dor is not only good at acting but also good at singing and dancing [8]. In addition to playing the typical Javanese sampak gending repertoire, they also played melodies of other songs such as patam-patam (Karo/Malay), Mbiring Manggis (Karo), and Jamila (Batak Toba).

Ketoprak Dor has its own characteristics from the musical instruments used to accompany the performance. This musical instrument also distinguishes it specifically from the Ketoprak of Jawa Tengah.

3.1.4.1. Gendang Jidor

This gendang jidor is a musical instrument that was originally used as a substitute for gong instruments in Javanese gamelan ensembles (interview with Mr. Triwahjuono, December 13, 2020). This Jidor drum is included in the membranophone-two head barrel drum classification, which is a barrel-shaped musical instrument which is covered with a membrane (skin) on both sides as a sound-producing source. The imitation of the sound of 'dor' from this musical instrument inspired the addition of the word 'dor' after the word 'Ketoprak'. That is, this instrument is what makes Ketoprak Dor unique for the performing arts. From an ensemble perspective, like a gong

in a Javanese gamelan ensemble, this gendang jidor serves as a marker for the count of one cycle of playing a musical melody.



Fig. 4. Gendang Jidor

3.1.4.2. Keprak

Keprak belongs to idiophone percussion music, which is a musical instrument whose sound comes from the material of the instrument itself. Keprak is made of bamboo and perforated on one side. The keprak position is attached to the gendang jidor so that only one person can play these two instruments. The imitation of the sound of keprak is "prak" so that when played together with jidor, the sound produced is "prak-dor". As explained by Mr. Triwahjuono, this imitation of the sound of "prak-dor" became the forerunner of the name Ketoprak Dor.



Fig. 5. Keprak

3.1.4.3. Kendang/Javanese Drum

From the many adjustments to the Ketoprak Dor musical instrument, kendang or the Javanese drum is still maintained as one of the traditional Javanese musical instruments. In terms of size, this Javanese drum includes ciblon or medium-sized drums. This drum is classified as a membranophone because the sound source comes from a membrane (skin) that is installed on both sides. In terms of shape, this drum is classified as a cylindrical double headed drum, namely a cylindrical drum with two sides covered with a membrane (skin).

During the Ketoprak Dor performance, this drum is played almost continuously. Rhythmically, the sound of drums follows or seems to answer the dialogue of the players on stage. From Mr. Jumadi's narrative, the Javanese drum serves to build the atmosphere of the scenes on the stage. In addition, in the musical ensemble of Ketoprak Dor, the sound of this Javanese drum rhythmically continues to accompany the strains of the musical melody.



Fig. 6. Kendang/Javanese Drum

3.1.4.4. Drum Set

The Ketoprak Dor performance also uses a drum set as part of the musical ensemble to accompany the show. However, not all drum sets are used in performances. From field observations, the drum set used is 1 snare drum, 1 floor tom, 1 hi-hat, and two cymbals. According to Jumadi, the use of drum sets in the Ketoprak Dor show aims to create a boisterous and lively atmosphere. The distinctive sound that appears when hi-hat and cymbals are hit gives a different atmosphere. He added that musical instruments made of metal materials need to be presented as compensation for the absence of gamelan.

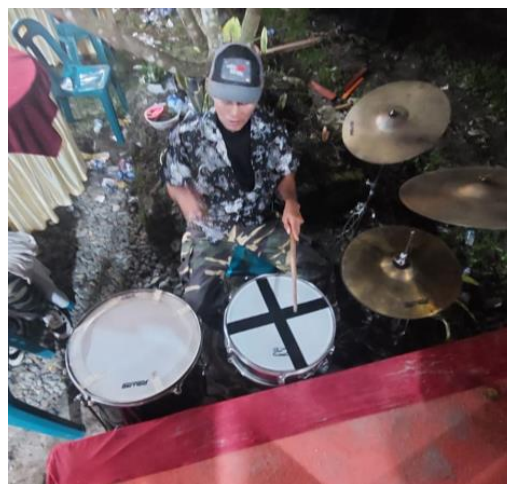


Fig. 7. Drum Set

3.1.4.5. Keyboard (Kibod)

From Mr. Jumadi's explanation, before using the keyboard (kibod), the Ketoprak Dor group used a harmonium instrument as a melody carrier. However, for practical reasons the harmonium was later replaced with a keyboard (kibod). In addition to practical reasons, the use of a keyboard (kibod) is also carried out due to the limited availability of harmoniums as well as the limited ability of substitute music players if the main player is unable to perform.



Fig. 8. Keyboard or Kibod

4. Discussion

From the results of the field research above, it can be stated that the existence of Ketoprak Dor in Sumatra Utara is a form of historical and cultural representation of the Deli Javanese community. Representation concerns the practice of making meaning [9]. Representation is not only about appearance on the surface, but also about the meanings associated with the constructed appearance. Yasraf Amir Piliang [10] explains that representation is the act of presenting or presenting something through something other than oneself, usually in the form of a sign or symbol.

The stories, costumes, language, and musical elements presented by Ketoprak Dor in his performances represent that the Deli Javanese community has absorbed local elements without losing the genealogy of Javanese culture. Through Ketoprak Dor, the Deli Javanese community absorbs local cultural idioms and processes them as new art forms. The long history of living in the area of Sumatra Timur (now; Sumatra Utara) certainly affects the sociological and cultural aspects. The dynamics of this process of mutual influence have an impact on the aesthetic expression of the Deli Javanese community which is manifested through Ketoprak Dor.

Gombrich [11] states that art as a representation has non-arbitrary aspects or non-conventional meanings. He added that art is a metaphorical language because objects in art can be used to show things that go beyond the object. From this opinion, it can be said that Ketoprak Dor has a non-arbitrary aspect or non-conventional meaning. Ketoprak in Jawa Tengah is something arbitrary or conventional because Jawa Tengah is considered the center of Javanese culture. Meanwhile, at the same time, Ketoprak Dor was present outside the cultural center. Ketoprak Dor exists and becomes something unique and specific in its existence outside its original area. Ketoprak Dor and the various elements of art in it show things beyond themselves, namely: the history of migrant workers, the colonial era, identity, adaptation, and the existence and sustainability of culture.

The adaptation of the story, costumes, language, and musical elements embodied by Ketoprak Dor is an adaptive form of art behavior. This is as emphasized by Desmond Morris [12], namely that humans naturally have aesthetic

behavior. That is, in the midst of various socio-historical conditions of migrant workers from Java in the Dutch colonial era plantations, as humans they have artistic behavior. These migrant workers need to express aesthetic behavior. To fulfill these aesthetic needs, these migrant workers present the performing arts of ketoprak. However, due to the existing limitations, the performing art of ketoprak comes in a new form of expression, namely Ketoprak Dor. Ketoprak Dor is what is generatively still inherited and exists until now.

The performing art of Ketoprak Dor is an expression of popular culture. The creation of pop culture can challenge the dominant understanding of the world and be empowering for those who are subordinate [13]. Ketoprak Dor is an expression beyond the dominant understanding of the high culture of Jawa Tengah ketoprak. The colonial era migrant workers were those who were marginalized (subordinate) culturally, economically, socially and politically at that time. This marginalization actually encourages them to produce a new art form, namely Ketoprak Dor. Although its cultural capital is the aesthetics of Ketoprak from Jawa Tengah as its origin, Ketoprak Dor is here to articulate the socio-cultural reality and aesthetic passion of the migrant workers.

5. Conclusion

Ketoprak Dor is a typical art of the Deli Javanese community in Sumatra Utara Province. The production process of Ketoprak Dor adapts to historical conditions and the local cultural environment. These adjustments can be found in the Ketoprak Dor performances, including the story, costumes, language, music and stage acts performed. This art also distinguishes itself from the Jawa Tengah ketoprak from which it originated. This difference is due to historical factors and aesthetic behavior that surrounds the Javanese Deli community.

Ketoprak Dor is something that is non-arbitrary and unconventional in the broad sense of Javanese culture. This art is an aesthetic expression that is unique and unique to Sumatra Utara. Ketoprak Dor displays the historical meaning and cultural identity of the Deli Javanese community. This art is a form of popular cultural art which means empowering the subordinated Deli Javanese community to produce new cultural forms. Ketoprak Dor is a cultural text that generatively represents the existence and aesthetic behavior of the Deli Javanese community in Sumatra.

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