

LOCAL WISDOM VALUES IN DULMULUK ORAL TRADITION OF PALEMBANG: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

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Abstract

Dulmuluk is a traditional theater of South Sumatra Province which first emerged and was performed in Palembang. This oral tradition has been performed with distinctive music, *pantoum*, songs, and jokes that can entertain the audience. Dulmuluk show does not merely function to entertain, but to deliver moral values that can be benefited as this oral tradition is rich of philosophical values for the people of Palembang. Through an ethnographic study, this paper will reveal the values of wisdom in the oral tradition of Dulmuluk. From this study, the writer concluded that the structure of the performance of Dulmuluk contains local wisdom values that reflect the culture of Palembang society.

Keywords: Oral tradition, Dulmuluk, Palembang, ethnography.

1. Introduction

Indonesia is an archipelagic country and is known for its diversity, ethnicity, local languages and culture. This diversity is a characteristic that colors the lives of its people. With this variety, Indonesia becomes a unique country. Indonesia is famous its slogan *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* or 'Unity in Diversity' which means that although its people have different ethnic, language, and culture, yet they can still live in harmony.

Palembang is the capital of the South Sumatra Province. This city has two major areas which are separated by the Musi River but connected by the Ampera Bridge. Palembang is rich in its oral traditions. One of the well-known oral tradition and have long been owned by the people of Palembang is Dulmuluk oral tradition. Dulmuluk is a traditional theater that was born and developed in the community Palembang which is formed from a combination of various elements of the story, dance, song, rhyme, comedy, as well as music. Besides being as entertainment for Palembang people, Dulmuluk also contains local wisdom values as a reflection of the community. This is why Dulmuluk becomes important and should be preserved.

Based on the illustration above, studies on the values of local wisdom in Dulmuluk's oral tradition is very important. One of the similar studies on the values of local wisdom of

kinds of literature in South Sumatra was conducted by Ery and Ravico entitled *Local Wisdom Values in the Tradition of the Waragong War and the Ringgok-Ringgok of the South Sumatra Komerling Tribe* (Kurnianto, 2017). Another is Ravico and Mei's *Local Wisdom Values of Lubuk Linggau in the Folklore of "Bujang Ringworm"* (Ravico & Mei, 2016). However, these two studies focused more on describing the values of local wisdom in the literary work not the values of local wisdom in the show or the performance of the literary work.

The values of local wisdom in the structure of the form of theater performances *Dulmuluk* of Siti Zubaidah's story has never been studied by other researchers. For this reason, this paper will discuss the values of local wisdom in the structures of *Dulmuluk*'s theater performance in Palembang society i.e. pre-performance, performance, and post-performance as well as its benefits and functions to the people of Palembang.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Local Wisdom Values

The word 'value' come from Latin '*vale're*' which means 'useful', 'able to', or 'applicable'. Therefore, values are interpreted as something that is considered good, useful and true according to the beliefs of a person or group of people. Values will always be associated with kindness, virtue, and nobility and will be something that is appreciated, upheld and pursued by individuals until they reach a sense of satisfaction in becoming a real human being (Adisusilo, 2012, p. 56). In line with the opinion of Adisusilo, Sartini (2009, p. 30) states that values mean something that concerns both good and bad things. This statement reveals that value is not only related to something good but also related to bad things. For example, a person's actions and behavior can be assessed and measured from the good side and the bad side as well. Linda and Richard Eyre in (Adisusilo, 2012, p.57) stated that values are standards of actions and attitudes that define who we are, how we live and how we treat others. The values in the attitudes and the behavior can be assessed within the relationships with (1) God, (2) own self, (3) family, (4) the community and the nation, and (5) universe (Adisusilo: 2012, p.55, Edi Setyawati in Suparno).

Local Wisdom is a national identity formed from all regions in a country which reflect the characteristics of the people. Local wisdom spread in various regions throughout the country should be considered as one of the values and norms to overcome the various problems faced by the Indonesian people today and in the future. Fajarini (2014, p.123-124) interpreted Local Wisdom as a view of life and science and various life strategies that are reflected in the daily activities of local people in answering various problems in meeting their needs. It means that your wisdom will remain and live in the community if this local wisdom has useful values and can be used as a guideline for the community for the sake of creating a better society.

2.2 Oral Tradition

2.2.1 The concepts of oral tradition

Oral tradition contains cultural values or local wisdom in a community where this tradition exists (Irwanto, 2012, p.126). This statement means that all traditions belonging to a particular community certainly cannot be separated from the values of local wisdom where this tradition exists and develops. In line with Irwanto, Sibarani (2012, p.123) states that oral tradition is a traditional cultural activity of a society that is inherited from generation to generation through oral media from one generation to another in the form of verbal or nonverbal tradition.

Oral traditions of a particular community are not merely spoken in words, but also be confirmed through expressions, gestures, or symbols in order to strengthen the message so it can be easily understood. It can be concluded that oral tradition is a culture belonging to a particular community that contains local wisdom values which are inherited from generation to generation both verbally and nonverbally.

2.2.2 The characteristics of oral tradition

Oral traditions certainly have certain characteristics. Emzir and Rohman (2016, p.229) mentioned three types of characteristics of oral traditions. They are pure oral traditions which consist of (1) folk speech (2) saying; (3) questions, 2) Mixed oral traditions which consist of (1) traditional beliefs, folk games; (2) customs; (3) ceremony; (4) folk theater; (5) folk dance; and (6) folk parties. 3) Nonverbal tradition (Danandjaya, 2002, p.21). Based on the characteristics of the oral tradition, the theater of Dulmuluk in the Palembang community belongs to the oral tradition in the form of a mixture of verbal and non-verbal elements.

2.3 Dulmuluk Palembang

2.3.1 The history of Dulmuluk Palembang

Dulmuluk is a traditional theater developed in the city of Palembang. The word 'Dulmuluk' comes from "Abdoel Moeloek", which is the name of the main character in the story of *Syair* (poetry) which is entitled "The Glory of the Malay Kingdom". Formerly, when the people of Palembang wanted to watch the show that was originally Abdul Muluk poetry readings, they called it "DulMuluk". Over time, the term "DulMuluk" became popular as the reading of the poetry about the story of Abdul Muluk (Lintani, 2014, p.1).

This poem was published in 1847. In the 1854's, Wan Bakar, an Arab merchant from Palembang who frequently traveled to Malay kingdoms, read the poetry to the crowd Tangga Takat area in Palembang. Along with its development, Dulmuluk did not only tell about Sultan Abdul Muluk but also began to develop the story of Siti Zubaidah (Hanafiah, et al., 2006, p. 106).

2.3.2 The structure of Dulmuluk Theatre

The structure of the theatre is the arrangement or order of a theatre performance parts which are closely related and contribute meaning to the theatre, for examples are those in preparation such as stage, theme, fashion, makeup, characterization, music and so on (Dhony,2015, p. 113). The structure of Dulmuluk's performances is composed of elements ranging from the pre-performance beginning with ritual activities, the performances which consist of opening, story scenes, and closing. Dulmuluk oral tradition has two stories, namely Sultan Abdul Muluk and Siti Zubaidah.

3. Research Method

The method used in the study is the Spradley ethnographic method with observatory participant's technique which means that the researcher is directly involved in the community and becomes a participant observation as an observer, note-taker, and recorder in various activities. The goal is that the data obtained by researchers will be more accurate without engineering. This is based on ethnographic study main objective according to Bronislaw Malinowski i.e. "to understand the viewpoint of the indigenous people, their relationship with life, to get a hit of their world view". Therefore, an ethnographer does not only study the community but also becomes a disciple of a society (Spradley, 2007, p.4). In

conducting field work, the ethnographer works with informants to obtain data as a source of information (Spradley, 2007, p.39). The ethnographer will then draw conclusions from three sources, namely (1) from what people say, (2) from the way people act, and (3) from various artifacts that people use (Spradley, 2007, p.11).

The research was carried out in the city of Palembang. This is because Dulmuluk Theater was originated from Palembang. The data were collected by means of observation, interviews, and documentation. The data of this study are the description of local wisdom values in the structure of Dulmuluk theatre in Palembang society ranging from beginning with ritual activities (opening beremas), the performances which consist of story scenes of Siti Zubaidah, and closing (closing beremas).

4. Results and Discussion

The structure of the Dulmuluk theatre consists of three parts, namely pre-performance, whilst performance, and post-performance. The followings are discussions of local wisdom values in the structure of the performance of Dulmuluk oral tradition in Palembang society (Data are in the form of Dulmuluk theatre recordings entitled Syair Siti Zubaidah performed by Karya Muda Daerah Musi Dua Palembang group on June 24, 2018, at Kertapati, Palembang, and interviews with Informants namely Mr. Jonhar Saat, Mr. Ibnu Rahman, Mr. Kiagus Wahab, Mr. Musa, and Randi).

4.1 Exploring Local Wisdom Values in the Ritual Process

The values of local wisdom in this ritual activity can be concluded as follows.

1. Religious values

This ritual activity is the activity of praying together. This symbolizes that everything done should always begin with a prayer i.e. asking God for salvation and to be hindered from undesirable things. This reflects that Palembang people still adhere to the values of religion and belief, that there is no force greater than Allah.

2. Trust values

When the ritual is performed there will be a burning process of incense. This is believed to summon the spirits of previous Dulmuluk performers. Besides praying, this ritual also intends to request permission from the late performers/ancestors of Dulmuluk and assistance to the performers for better performance. This illustrates that the people of Palembang still believe in superstitions.

During the show, there should be turmeric rice with grilled chicken. Previously, along with this kind of dish, there were also *opak* (a kind of crackers) and *lempeng* (a type of dessert wrapped in banana leaves). Both are in nine numbers. This symbolizes the numbers of *Wali Songo* (revered saints in Islam). Another thing in the ritual process is rice and turmeric. The mixture of rice and turmeric is believed and considered by the people of Palembang as a ward off misfortune. The mixture of rice and turmeric is eaten a little by all performers and the rest is spread over to the performers and spectators before and after the Dulmuluk is performed. Scattering this mixture symbolizes that all the evil ones will be kept away or thrown away.

3. Gratitude values

Turmeric rice with grilled chicken is considered a blessing for the people of Palembang. The gratitude is expressed by enjoying this kind of dish together. This reflects that Palembang people always ask for blessings from God. Everything that God gives should be thanked of.

4. Togetherness values

The ritual also contains the values of togetherness among the performers of Dulmuluk. This can be seen when the performers are a scramble for the grilled chicken. Some get bigger chickens or vice versa. However, that is not a problem. The performers always keep the togetherness so there will not be any conflicts among them. Negotiation for consensus is used for solving a dispute. This reflects that the people of Palembang practice negotiation for consensus to maintain and create togetherness.



Figure 1. The ritual.

4.2 Exploring the Values of Local Wisdom in Opening Beremas

After the pre-performance, the theatre proceeds to the scenes of the story. The performance begins with an opening *Beremas*. Beremas means preparing and packing. Beremas in the opening in the form of greetings to the host who holds a celebration and to the audience. This opening Beremas is also intended to tell the audience that the show will begin soon. In this part, the performers will come out on stage while singing and dancing. They sing the poems or *pantoum*, usually, the song is as the following.

*Tabiklah Encik tabiklah Tuan
Tabiklah kepada laki-laki dan perempuan
Kami bermain berkawan-kawan
Salah dan khilaf mohon dimaafkan
(Pak Jonhar's version in Syair Siti Zubaidah).*

*Satu, dua, tiga, dan empat
Anaklah tiung dapat menari
Wahai penonton segera cepat
Pentas Dulmuluk akan dimulai*

*Tabiklah Encik tabiklah Tuan
Tabik laki-laki dan perempuan
Kami bermain berkawan-kawan
Zubaidah Siti kami pentaskan
(kemudian diulang lagi oleh
pemain Dulmuluk yang lain)*

*1,2,3, dan empat...
Anaklah tiung pandai melompat
Para penonton segera cepat
Kalau terlambat tidak mendapat
tempat
(kemudian diulang lagi oleh
pemain Dulmuluk yang lain)*

*Apabila salah jika kemunculan kami Punya
permainan
Mohon dimaafkan*

*Tabiklah Encik tabiklah Tuan
Tabiklah kepada laki-laki dan perempuan
Kami bermain berkawan-kawan
Salah dan khilaf mohon dimaafkan*

*Kami hanya manusia biasa tidak luput dari
kata salah dan khilaf ataupun kejanggalan*

After the opening beremas, the performers saluted the audience once again by bowing and crossing their arms over their stomach. They all then return to the backstage waiting for their turn. Essentially, the opening beremas is more of greetings or a symbol that Dulmuluk will be performed soon and a tribute to the host and audience. However behind these symbols surely there are values to be conveyed. The local wisdom values in this opening Beremas are as follows.

1. Values of appreciation

These values are reflected in the greetings during the opening Beremas that before starting an activity people should give a salutation to the host and to the audience. This greeting is intended to pray for the host to always be healthy and prosperous. This reflects the Palembang people who respect others.

2. Values of humility

This value of humility is reflected in the gratitude of Dulmuluk performers to the host and to the audience. It can be seen from the way how the performers bow with crossed when giving a salutation. This attitude shows that people should not need to be arrogant. By showing a polite attitude and not showing an arrogant attitude towards others, people will feel happy toward us.



Figure 2. Beremas.

4.3 Exploring the Values of Local Wisdom in the Lyrics of Siti Zubaidah Story Scenes

Values of local wisdom which are reflected in the lyrics are summarized as follows.

1. Values of determination

The values of determination must be instilled in one's own self. With a strong belief, one can distinguish between the good and the bad. This story is about Abidin Syah who was a husband that really loved his wife, Siti Zubaidah. Although Siti Zubaidah was ousted by King Abidin Syah's parents), but with his determination, he still loved his wife. This reflects the values of a husband's determination in loving a wife.

2. Values of respect

The value of mutual respect among religious fellows must be instilled in every religious community. We must not discriminate one religion against another. People must live in harmony so that peace can be achieved in religious communities. This reflects the values of mutual respect among religious fellows.

3. Religious values

Religious values must be acknowledged by people. Religion is the guidance of every community. Without religion, people have no direction in life. Therefore, religion is important for all humans living on this earth. The religious values are reflected in the story i.e. Siti Zubaidah was so diligent in studying the Koran. Besides being religious, Siti Zubaidah also has good manners.

4. Values against arrogance

Every guilty person will surely get punishment and the right one will surely reap the rewards. The act of the King ousting Abidin Syah's wife, Siti Zubaidah since she was not dressed in luxury and since her father was only a teacher, was a mistake. In any religion, the distinction between rich and poor is a despicable act. God does not like arrogant humans and arrogant deeds will surely get wrath from Allah.

5. Values of humility

The values of humility are very noble. Humble people are those who are not arrogant. Even though she was ousted by the King and his wife, Siti Zubaidah never took revenge for all of these actions.

6. Values of trustworthiness

The values of trustworthiness are indispensable in establishing a relationship. If someone has the value of loyalty, then he/she has strong beliefs, strengths, and inner bonds. With loyalty, love will grow. Like the values of a wife's loyalty to her husband and husband to his wife. The story scenes illustrated how high the value of trustworthiness is.

4.4 Exploring the Local Wisdom Values in the Closing Beremas

Dulmuluk theatre is ended with a post-performance which is marked by a closing Beremas. Closing Beremas is not much different from the opening Beremas. Closing Beremas is the notification to the audience and the host that the performance is reaching its end. All performers and crew of Dulmuluk come out to the stage while singing songs and dancing. In the closing Beremas, the performers apologize for any mistakes during the performance. They also say farewell. This reflects that the people of Palembang always want to keep polite and respectful manners towards others.

5. Conclusions

Based on the results of research, observations, and interviews in the field, it turns out that Dulmuluk's oral tradition has local wisdom values. It turns out that there are a lot of wisdom values that can be explored in each of its elements. Good values in attitude and behavior towards God, own self, with family, and towards the community.

Local wisdom values are useful to control the relationships of people within the community. The implementation of the values of local wisdom functions to organize social life. It is important to use this kind of values. These values are passed on to address various problems. In line with this is the statement of Didipu and Salam (in Indrawati, 2016, p.182) that stated that local wisdom can reflect the old people's lives that can be imitated by the present community in the area and can be used as the basis for forming the character of the nation. This means that the values of local wisdom in an oral tradition can also be implemented in forming the character of a nation.

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