

COMMODIFICATION OF CHARACTERS IN THE BALI AGUNG PERFORMING ARTS “THE LEGEND OF BALINESE GODDESSES”

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ABSTRACT

Bali Tourism has developed in recent decades. Its development is marked by increasing tourist arrivals, increasing tourist accommodations, attractions, and diverse tourist attractions. The development of tourism causes more and more performing arts that are commercial and profit oriented. One of the commercial performances is the art of touristic performances titled Bali Agung - The Legend of Balinese Goddesses that is a mythological story of Jayapangus marriage with Kang Cing Wei. This research uses qualitative method. The data were collected by observation techniques, interviews, and document studies. The analysis uses commodification theory.

The results of this study indicate that the art of Bali Agung performances is the result of commodification seen in the production, distribution, and consumption. In the production process there are modifications to three main characters, namely Jayapangus, Kang Cing Wei, and Dewi Danu from sacred to profane. In the process of the performing there are negotiable ideas between Balinese and Western artists.

Keywords: Jayapangus wedding myth and Kang Cing Wei, commodification, tourism

INTRODUCTION

Bali Tourism has developed in recent decades. Tourism began to enter Bali in the 1970s then developed more rapidly in the 1990s. The development is marked by an increase in the number of foreign tourists visiting as many as 4,927,937 and the number of domestic tourists visiting reached as many as 7,147,100 people in 2016.

The development of tourism resulted in a shift in the utilization of Balinese art and cultural traditions that were previously for traditional and religious ceremonies then developed into a tourist attraction. The Balinese use art and cultural traditions as a means of ritual and preserve their cultural values. The government makes it as a part of tourism, and the tourism industry makes it as a tourist attraction.

In its current development, Balinese art and traditions are used as a tourism commodity. The tourism industry, in this case the Bali Safari and Marine Park zoo utilize the art and traditions of Balinese culture as a commodity in the form of performing arts to fulfill the desire of tourists. Balinese art and traditions that are used as a tourism commodity are Jayapangus and Kang Cing Wei marriage myths.

This myth is used as the core of the art of tourism performances titled Bali Agung - The Legend of Balinese Goddesses, the story of the marriage of Jayapangus and Kang Cing Wei. But the marriage ended tragically. They were cursed by Dewi Danu into Barong Landung. Artists modified the three main characters in the Bali Agung show, they are Jayapangus, Kang Cing Wei, and Dewi Danu to provide aesthetic services in the show.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study examines the commodification process of Bali Agung touristic performances that is how the commodification process of the main character in the art of Bali Agung tourism performances is. The research location is at Bali Safari and Marine Park Zoo, Gianyar regency, Bali. Data collection is divided into four steps, namely interview, observation, documentation, and literature study. This study uses qualitative data types, primary and secondary data sources. Primary data sources are artists, producers, owners of Bali Safari and Marine Park, dancers, and audiences (tourists). While the secondary data source is the related data obtained from newspaper clippings or the internet.

The data collected in the study were analyzed by qualitative, descriptive, and interpretative. The presentation of the results of data analysis is done by narration, description of words, and phrases (Nawawi and Martini, 1992: 67). The results of data analysis are presented in a holistic-integrative manners so as to generate a conclusion about a problem based on various data and information. This research uses commodification theory to examine and analyze the process of modification of main characters of the Bali Agung show.

DISCUSSION

The development of tourism has an impact on the utilization of Balinese art and traditions. The community utilizes its cultural art and traditions as a means of ritual while the tourism industry uses Balinese art and traditions as a commodity. Balinese art and cultural traditions serve as tourism products to meet the needs of tourists. The resulting tourism products are part of the capitalist system in Bali tourism industry.

In a modern industrial society where we are today is a one-dimensional society. Its characteristic is all aspects of life are directed at one goal only, namely the continuity and improvement of existing systems, namely the system of capitalism. While Habermas (in Magnis-Suseno, 2005) calls it an advanced capitalism. Whatever the label, the basic principle remains the same, that is, people are free to do economic activities with the goal of getting profit as much as possible (Magnis-Suseno, 2005 and Atmaja, 2010: 135).

In the structure of Balinese society that the capitalist system is related to the life of tourism. The expansion of the capitalist economic system in Balinese society has broadly influenced the ideological superstructure element including the tourism sector. Balinese art and culture is processed in such a way that it becomes a tourism product that provides economic benefits for its people. As part of the Balinese community structure, Bali Safari and Marine Park zoo packs the Balinese art and cultural traditions of Jayapangus and Kang Cing Wei marriage myths into commodities as an exchange rate for the sake of profit.

The art of Bali Agung touristic performances is a touristic performing arts that is the result of a commodification of the marriage myths of Jayapangus and Kang Cing Wei. The commodity of Balinese art and culture is in accordance with the theory of Adorno (1991) that commodification not only refers to consumer goods but has propagated to the arts and culture in general.

Commodification is the process by which domains and social institutions whose concern not only produces commodities but how they are organized and conceptualized in terms of commodity production, distribution and consumption (Fairclough 1995: 207). The goods sold in the market hide the origin of the creation of the goods which must pass through the process of exploitation at its production level (Barker, 2014: 40).

Artists strive to provide aesthetic service to the audience in the production process. Artists commodify the three main characters in the art of Bali Agung performances, namely Jayapangus, Kang Cing Wei, and Dewi Danu to make the show more interesting.

The characters in Bali Agung Performances are: (1) Jayapangus (source: Jro Gede), the figure of a Balinese ruler who is charismatic, firm, being loved very much by the people. (2) Kang Cing Wei (source: Jro Luh), the daughter of a wealthy Chinese merchant. She has a spoiled, meek, selfish nature. She symbolizes the marriage of two cultures, namely Bali and China. (3) Dewi Danu (source: Dewi Danu) Goddess of Batur lake lord, seducer, sensual, firm, angry.

(Source: Constructed by Suardana, 2015).

In the modification of the main character, there is a process of collaboration and negotiation of ideas between Balinese artist Made Sidia and Western artist Peter J Wilson. The result of the modification of the three main characters of traditional figures into modern figures with international taste shows that the struggle for the meaning of the show is dominated by Western artists.

Made Sidia uses characters of Jayapangus from Balinese tradition and culture, namely Barong Landung. He believes that Jayapangus as the embodiment of Barong Landung. Sidia believes in a version of the myth developed by academia named I Made Bandem. Bandem mentioned that Jayapangus and Kang Cing Wei were condemned by Batari Batur to Barong Landung.

Character of Jayapangus in the Bali Agung show is based on inspiration from Barong Landung (male) called Jro Gede. He is a Balinese Aga with black skin, sharp fangs, and a grim-faced face. Made Sidia also uses spiritual instinct to determine the character of Jayapangus in the modern performance. Sidia come to pray (tangkil) to Pura Dalem Balingkang to get a revelation in presenting the character Jayapangus in the show. On the other hand, artist Peter J Wilson seeks to realize the character of Jayapangus from the modern side. He describes the character of Jayapangus using his imagination. Based on the collaboration of the spiritual side and modernity of these two artists then formed a strong character and inspiration to the character of Jayapangus, an authoritative king figure, who is charismatic, loved by the people, and has a glory.

Artist who plays the character of Jayapangus is Wayan Sira. He has the conviction that taksu (religious, supranatural inner power) of Jayapangus descended to him. The reason is, although he himself does not have a good dancing quality compared with others, he can play the character Jayapangus very well.

Character of Kang Cing Wei is a central figure in Jayapangus and Kang Cing Wei's marriage myths. The marriage of these two is believed to result in acculturation of Balinese-Chinese culture. Kang Cing Wei's character is inspired by Barong Landung (female), a white skin figure, narrow eyes as a Chinese princess called Jro Luh. Barong Landung (female) or Jro Luh become inspiration figure of Kang Cing Wei as a daughter who come from China.

According to Made Sidia, the character of Kang Cing Wei refers to the daughter of a wealthy Chinese merchant who is meek, spoiled, and selfish. Kang Cing Wei was inspired by Pura Ratu Ayu Subandar at Pura Dalem Balingkang. The temple building is located in the middle area (jaba tengah) of Pura Dalem Balingkang consisting of a natural stone which is in

the middle of it there is a split into two parts (like vagina) which becomes the symbol of a woman. This temple is filled with Chinese ornaments such as the engraving of Uang Kepeng, the dominant color of the glowing red, and the Chinese style (patra).

Sidia made efforts to represent the figure of Kang Cing Wei as a symbol of acculturation of two cultures, namely Bali and China. He depicts the character of Kang Cing Wei from Pura Ratu Subandar who describes the blend of Balinese and Chinese culture. Meanwhile, artist Peter J Wilson seeks to perform representations for Kang Cing Wei to perform with an international flavor. Kang Cing Wei's dress is decorated with yellow, gold, red, and headdresses in the form of a ring instead of traditional Balinese clothes but using. This is meant to reinforce the character that Kang Cing Wei is a symbol of Bali and China with international flavors.

In the production of Bali Agung show there are meaningful practices of representation, that is how the world is constructed and presented socially to and by us. According to Barker (2005: 12), cultural studies examine ways in which meanings are produced in multiple contexts. Cultural representations and meanings have material properties, they are embedded in sounds, writings, objects, images, books, magazines, and television programs. According to Stuart Hall, (1997), representation is one of the important practices that produce culture. Culture is a very broad concept and culture concerning 'sharing experience'.

The artist produces the figure of Kang Cing Wei as a symbol of Bali, China, and the West. The goal is to attract international audiences or travelers (tourists) from China and Europe. Viewers of Chinese tourists feel the connection or attachment to the figure of Kang Cing Wei and the Western tourists enjoy the show because it is packed with a high aesthetic so that it has an international flavor.

In the myth mentioned above, Dewi Danu is the ruler of Lake Batur. He is believed by Balinese people as one of the great goddess, beautiful, magical, and the source of fertility. When determining the character of Dewi Danu for the first show, it occurred pro and contra between the two directors (Peter J Wilson and Made Sidia) because they have different pictures about the character. Peter J Wilson describes Dewi Danu as a powerful goddess who has water strength, sexy, and sensual charm, a very beautiful goddess, sexy body, smooth skin, and seductive. While Made Sidia has a picture of Dewi Danu figure as a character that appears according to the character of the general tradition in Bali.

They also have different ideas about the costume that will be worn by Dewi Danu. Made Sidia wants Dewi Danu to wear traditional costume in the form of a bundle (crown) like a typical god clothes. While Peter J Wilson wants to show the costume of a modern dress of blue and white attached tightly to the body of Dewi Danu.

Dewi Danu is portrayed as a sexy, beautiful goddess, and sexual allure. The sexy body of Dewi Danu is wrapped in a tight blue and white dress. Her smile that broke and a gaze from her eyeballs able to melt the hearts of men. Dewi Danu's sexual fascination is manifested in way she shake her body while dancing and walking, graceful hand movements, and a charming smile. In fact, this shows that Peter J Wilson dominated ideas in the process of commodification.

Dewi Danu is described as having a beautiful body and possessing sensuality and giving rise to excitement for men. Her sexy body is portrayed to captivate the king whose wife is Kang Cing Wei. However character of Dewi Danu like that is displayed in this show gets protests from the audience and even from the cast. One of the actress who act as Dewi Danu Ni Ketut Suharti reject the figure of Dewi Danu as a sexy woman and teaser. According to Suharti, Dewi Danu is a revered goddess who should not be characterized as a beautiful tease woman who disturbs Jayapangus hermitage.

In the Bali Agung show, the commodification process towards the character of Dewi Danu is done in such a way that Dewi Danu becomes a profane figure. The goal is the show can be enjoyed (consumed) easily by the audience. Dewi Danu is believed by Balinese people as the ruler of Lake Batur and goddess of fertility for the land of Bali. But in the show she is depicted as a beautiful, sexy, seductive goddess, and seize another woman's husband. In this case there has been a deviation and decline in the value of the sacredness of Dewi Danu.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The art of Bali Agung tourism performances is the result of commodification of Jayapangus and Kang Cing Wei wedding myths. The commodification includes the production, distribution, and consumption processes. In the production process, it occurs commodification on the three main characters of the show from the sacred to the profane. Here, the commodification is an effort section to enrich the aesthetics of the show so as it can attract tourists to see it. The modern character causes the performance of Bali Agung to have a higher economic value so it can be sold at an expensive price to make a profit.

So artists are suggested to create tourism products not based on sacred art and cultural traditions of Bali. They had better not eliminate the authenticity and create a pseudo-art and culture. The tourism industry is not always concerned with pleasure for tourists. It eliminates the sacredness of Balinese art and traditions.

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