

**BARONG MEETING
AT PUCAK PADANG DAWA TEMPLE BATURITI TABANAN REGENCY:
IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF CULTURAL STUDIES**

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ABSTACT

This dissertation contains research findings on the Barong Meeting, a multidimensional cultural event performed at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, Baturiti Tabanan Regency. Such a meeting is attended by more than sixty various *barongs* and *rangdas* of various types coming from various areas in Central Bali, and is the biggest in Bali. The research on such a cultural phenomenon is intended to reveal holistically the existence of the Barong Meeting while the process of modernization is taking place in Bali nowadays.

Such a cultural phenomenon was investigated based on the problems formulated in several research questions. (1) How is the Barong Meeting performed at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, Baturiti, Tabanan Regency?; (2) what ideology is referred to by the Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, Baturiti, Tabanan Regency?; (3) What does the Barong Meeting mean viewed from the socio cultural system of the Balinese society?

By applying qualitative method and regarding the Barong Meeting as a multilayer entity, this study is intended to understand and analyze the ideology and meaning contained in the Barong Meeting, which is believed to have centralistic strength making the cultures from various areas of Central Bali meet. The problems were solved by applying some relevant theories such as the theory of power relationship, the theory of religions, the theory of esthetics, and the theory of semiotics.

Five important findings of this study are; *Firstly*, the Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple is a cultural event with religious, social and theatrical dimensions. *Secondly*, the Barong Meeting is an old religious ritual viewed from what is stated in *Purana* of the *Luhur Pucak Padang Dawa Temple*. Such a Barong Meeting is still carried out by the society members at Bangli Village. *Thirdly*, the Barong Meeting is a cultural event covering the areas of Central Bali such as Tabanan Regency, Negara Regency, Badung Regency, Gianyar Regency and Bangli Regency. *Fourthly*, the Barong Meeting is not an event which is habitually carried out but a ritual ceremony which is dynamically repeated by absorbing innovations which still refer to the philosophy and ethics of Hinduism, making it able to develop collective awareness respecting diversity featuring the era's life. *Fifthly*, the Barong Meeting is a religious event realizing concrete, real and direct actions based on Hinduism. Such a ritual ceremony densely containing artistic values emphasizes the dynamic relationship and integratedness of performance of arts and art performance in the cultural activities performed in Bali Hindu.

What can be concluded in this study shows that the Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, Baturiti, Tabanan Regency, serves as an inviting and attending procession covering the initial, the essence, and the end which is both centripetal and centrifugal. The ideology referred to is worshipping, power, and performance. The integration of these three basic ideas present ritual ceremony dimension, social activity, and art performance, making the Barong Meeting a multidimensional event. The Barong Meeting contains multilayer senses such as magic religious, socio unifier, politics of authority, economics and esthetics.

Key word: Cultural event, Barong Meeting, Pucak Padang Dawa Temple

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation investigates the Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, Baturiti, Tabanan in the perspective of cultural studies. Such a Barong Meeting involves *barongs* and *rangdas* which are related to each other and can be classified into four types of relationships. They are (1) the barongs which are made of the same types of wood; (2) the barongs which are made by the same *Sangging/Undagi* (artist); (3) the barongs which acquire magic power from holy places called *pasupati*; and (4) the barongs which are related to the temples where they are worshipped. The Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple almost covers the four types of relationship.

The meeting is continually done and is generally oriented towards and is based on the aspects of philosophy, ceremonies, and esthetics, and is enriched with the local genius culture, that is, the superiority of local culture as the worshippers of Siwa Pasupati. The society groups in Bali still believe that Pucak Padang Dawa Temple is able to unify the social differences and the diversity between Central Bali and South Bali by carrying out the Barong Meeting. Actually, the temple is believed by the Balinese society to be a holy

place where God in his manifestation as *Siva Pasupati* is worshipped. It is the holy place, where the Gods occupying the barongs emit energy to all aspects of life (Sudarsana, 2002:8-12 and Sudiksa, 2007:27-28).

The ritual ceremonies, which are splendidly carried out in Bali and the establishment of various physical projects such as buildings and star hotels should have led the Balinese society to *mokshartham jagatithaya*. The fact is that they are getting more emotional and many serious fights among traditional villages and probably among families have taken place. This has made the societies get farther from being honest and straightforward in carrying out religious ceremonies, and less interested in carrying out religious rituals. Demand for materials, prestige, honor, fame and power has been responsible for such a situation.

To keep glorifying the spirit of carrying out religious ceremonies (*beryardnya*) and ritual values should be mused over, the religious teachings should be applied, and so should the attitude of life and the way of life. Carrying out the Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple is one of the ways in which such things can be realized. This is interesting to investigate. The reasons are that it is still unique and still constitutes one strong socio cultural

constellation in the Balinese society up to now. The Barong Meeting has been one of the ritual ceremonies functioning as the fortress for maintaining culture from globalization. The Barong Meeting carried out contains dimensions of art rituals and ritual arts, leading the community life to a state of well-being. What is contained is interesting to investigate and to reveal in this study.

MATERIAL AND DISCUSSION

The Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, Baturiti Village is a cultural event, which is based on three principle ideologies such as worshipping, power and performance. This is performed by employing various forms of offerings and rituals, involving sacred items, and reciting holy *mantras*. The Barong Meeting has been done as a worshipping ritual in order to get in spiritual touch with God. In the performance, the society members attending the Barong Meeting tend to exhibit or show prestige, attraction, and beauty of the *barongs* or *rangdas* they belong to. There has been a vertical or horizontal relationship of power between the families in charge of the temple and the local palace members. Such a power is used as a political power oriented toward humanity (Siswanta, 2006: 21-23). To support the worshipping activity during the Barong Meeting various art performances are performed starting from gamelan (traditional music) art, dancing performances, carving to artistic skill that are integrated in the ceremony. This has made Barong Meeting an art ritual, that is to say, a ritual ceremony which is full of art values, or an art ritual, that is to say, an art performance which is full of rituals.

Whether Barong Meeting is a ritual event or an art event can be explained by the

theory of rituals and performances offered by Richard Schechner, an American theatre expert. In his theory, Schechner (1976: 207) states that both rituals and theatres give priority to efficacy and entertainment respectively. However, both worshipping rituals and performances cannot be separated from power.

Based on this theory, Schechner states that ritual ceremonies give more priority to condition in which the doers get possessed by a spirit and or strength from outside. The onlookers believe in such strength and play a role. On the other hand, performances give more priority to amusement, in which the onlookers are generally aware; in other words, they function as another element and the target, and they watch and appreciate. If this theory is applied in the Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, it will be clear that all the ritual ceremonies, despite full of arts, are performed to produce efficacy. Although such an efficacy frequently appears, our physical eyes cannot view them. Behind the worshipping rituals and performances, without being recognized, there is an ideology of power. Productive power exists in every community level (Barker, 2005: 516). The community members involved are convinced that efficacy will immediately appear from the ritual ceremonies conducted for the Barong Meeting.

The problems to be solved in this study are: 1) How is the Barong Meeting conducted at Pucak Padang Dawa, Bangli Village, Baturiti District, Tabanan Regency; 2) What ideology is referred to by the implementation of the Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, Bangli Village, Baturiti District, Tabanan Regency; 3) What is the meaningfulness of the Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa

Temple, Bangli Village, Baturity District, Tabanan Regency?

The general objective of this study is to understand that the Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, Bangli Village, Baturity District, Tabanan Regency is a particular cultural event if viewed from art and cultural point of view. In addition, the other objective of this study is to understand the ideology which is referred to by or which is hidden behind why the Barong Meeting is carried out. It is understood as a centralistic power which can hegomonize the local worshippers' culture and various types of other barongs in Central/South Bali. It is also to understand the senses expressed by the symbols employed in the Barong Meeting at Padang Dawa Temple, Bangli Village, Baturity District, Tabanan Regency and its relationship with the barongs available at every village in Central and South Bali. The barongs available at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple functions as the centre of centralistic power where *pasupati* is gifted.

The concepts used in this study, in accordance with the title of the study, are: 1) Barong Meeting; 2) Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, Baturity District, Tabanan Regency, and 3) Perspective of cultural studies. In answering the problems stated above, some relevant theories are employed. They are: 1) Foucault's Theory of Power Relationship; 2) Sanderson's Theory of Religions; 3) Lyotard's Theory of Esthetics; 4) Theory of Semiotics given by Marco dMarinis and Palmer.

This study on the implementation of the Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple is planned to be a qualitative research with some different approaches. In this study, the Barong Meeting is viewed as a text that should be understood from its context, what belief is referred to, why and

how all those things are done. As expressed by the title of this study, it is conducted within the perspective of cultural studies, which in accordance with Parimartha (2005: 3) should be understood as the study of critics concerning human life that follows the surrounding cultural values.

The main data employed are qualitative data supported by quantitative data. The data sources of this study were the primary data derived from the implementation of the Barong Meeting at Pucak Pdang Dawa Temple, Baturiti District, Tabanan Regency. What is covered are: the ritual implementation, the *pemangkus* (those who are in charge of ceremonies at a temple); the *penyungsung* of the barong (those who are responsible for the maintenance and performance of the barongs) and those who payed attention to religious rituals at Pucak Padang Dawa Tempele. The secondary data were also employed to support the primary data. The secondary data were taken from research findings, journals and literature relevant to the title.

The informants were purposively selected, that is to say, the informants were chosen depending on the interests, the ability and objectives that were intended to achieve. The informants selected were those who were considered to know and understand deeply the matters related to the implementation of the Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, Baturiti District and Tabanan Regency. The instruments employed in this study were: interview guidance and tape-recorder. The data collection was done by: 1) Observation; 2) Interview; Library Research; and 4) Documentation Research. The data were analyzed employing the following techniques: 1) data interpretation; and 2)

qualitative correlation. The results are descriptively and qualitatively presented.

The implementation of the Barong Meeting, as a multidimensional cultural event with a multilayer sense, will be continually maintained and keep developing. Like a theatrical performance, the Barong Meeting employs different materials with a number of symbols and codes (deMarinis, 1993:1 -12). Although not exactly the same as what has been described previously, the Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, Baturity District, Tabanan Regency, keeps developing. The reason is that such an event has been able to unify and accommodate social diversity among the people who are responsible for the maintenance and performance of the Barong Meeting in Central/South Bali. Such an event has been able to be one of the fortresses for preventing the Balinese culture from being damaged by globalization, which has disturbed the life of the Balinese society. In this way, the spiritual greatness can be maintained. There are at least three theoretical implications contributed by the findings of this study to the development of knowledge. These implications highlight the view that the Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple is a multidimensional cultural event. The three implications are:

Firstly, there is a power relationship between Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, as the holy place where *pasupati* is gifted and the barongs available over Central/South Bali. There is no knowledge without power and vice versa. This is basically similar to the power relationship stated by (Foucauld in Atmaja, 2006: 131). In fact, power is available everywhere expressing plurality or diversity in power. The barongs acquiring *pasupati* from Pucak Padang Dawa Temple spread all over

Central/South Bali. It is recognized as a power which is religious-magic in nature. Plurality in culture is also recognized to be organized in every village where barongs are available with their people who are responsible for their maintenance and performances.

Secondly, it is undergone, felt and understood that human beings are bound to God who can give them physical and spiritual welfare. Every religion is believed by its followers to accept that they are bound to God through various ways of taught, especially the implementation of rituals (Dojosantoso, 1986: 2-3) and Sanderson, 1993: 553-555). In relation to this, Bellah also states that religious ritual practices have been conducted by primitive, old, pre-modern and modern religions (Bellah in ARdika: 24-28). The religious strength in the context of the implementation of the Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple has slightly shifted, that is to say, previously the ideology referred to was the ideology of worshipping as the basis of the ritual implementation. Now, apart from that, the ideology of power and performance is also referred to. However, the power expressed has something to do with the attitude of showing off that still exists in the corridor of the ethics and philosophy of Hinduism.

Thirdly, the Barong Meeting, as a cultural event, which is full of the attitude of showing off, cannot be separated from theatrical dimension (esthetics). Esthetics is understood to reveal beautiful, true and useful things and morality (Paramita, 200: 105-122 and Read, 2000: 2-5). In relation to this, Lyotard also states that esthetics does not only refer to what is seen and heard, but also to things which cannot be presented in a presentation, revitalizing the differences (Lyotard in Yulianto, 2005: 127-144). This

seems to be in line with the implementation of the Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, in which the esthetics is integrated in the worshipping ideology, power and performances expressed behind both the art rituals and ritual arts, making the participants of the Barong Meeting, who come from cultural areas in Central Bali and South Bali, hegomonized. Such awareness develops acknowledgment and celebrates social differences among the *penyungsong* (people who are responsible for the performance and maintenance of the Barongs).

NOVELTIES

The research novelties concerning the Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, Baturiti District, Tabanan Regency are: 1) Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, where the Barong Meeting is carried out, has a magic religious position functioning as the ritual center for Barong *pasupati*. The temple functions as the place where the Barong Meeting is carried out. It involves and influences the spirituality degree of the barongs in Bali through the centralistic, centripetal and decentralized centrifugal process. The implementation of the meeting strengthens the collective agricultural society's awareness in Bali which respects cultural diversity and has high solidarity among the *penyungsong* (the people who are responsible for the Barong maintenance and performance. 2) The Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple is an old Hindu religious ritual event. Based on the Purana of Luhur Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, such a meeting appeared during Shri Jaya Sakti's reign in Bali and was inherited by *Puri Gede Marga Tabanan* (a palace) and has been maintained up to now. Then after Indonesia was independent, the Barong Meeting was

continued by the government of Bangli Village, Baturiti District, Tabanan Regency and was carried out once in 210 days, that is, every Budha Kliwon Pahang based on the *dresta* (norm) and the calculation of Balinese calendar. While the ritual is performed at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, Bangli Village, Baturiti District and Tabanan Regency, various symbols in the form of ritual ceremonies are carried out. Such activities are integrated in the Barong Meeting. Such a Barong Meeting is the biggest Barong ritual procession in Bali involving between 50 and 60 Barongs and each barong is accompanied by 2 (two) rangdas. Such a Barong Meeting, which is multidimensional in nature, will be the object of the comparative study done by the researchers on Barong Meetings in Bali. It is hoped that this study will enrich the knowledge treasury in cultural studies. 3). Such a religious ritual event covers such a wide cultural area that it includes various areas and people who are responsible for the maintenance and performance of the barongs (*penyungsong*) in Central Bali and South Bali, making it the biggest ritual procession in Bali. The people who are involved in the implementation of the Barong Meeting make use of this opportunity to maintain vertical and horizontal communication. Vertical communication means the communication between the people and God and horizontal communication means the communication among the people and fellow beings in the universe. It appears that the *tapakan* Barong at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple synergies with the *tapakan* Barong at Natar Sari Apuan Temple and that at Pucak Kembar Pacung Temple, building a social relationship in the form of a gold triangle of the communities functioning as the center of the strength of *penyungsong tapakan*.

(*Penyungung* means the people who are responsible for the maintenance and performance of the barong and *tapakan* refers to the barong itself). Such a social relationship has been a means for unifying the people in Central and South Bali who similarly have the strength of Siva Pasupati. 4) The implementation of the Barong Meeting is always adjusted to changes of the era. It is clear that such a ritual is not only a repetition which is regularly done, no matter how big the ritual is. It can be small, medium and big. It is a religious ritual event that keeps growing dynamically by absorbing new things that are always based on the ethics and philosophy of Hinduism in Bali. 5). The Barong Meeting is a cultural phenomenon expressing concrete, real and direct realization of Hinduism. In this ritual the community members who are responsible for the maintenance and performance of the Barong) perform a number of symbols such as prayers, *puja mantra* (mantra recital), positions of the body, hands and feet, and music. Such symbols are supported by various types of offerings that highlight their forms as art performances and performance arts. 6). The villagers at Bangli Village, Baturity District and Tabanan Regency believe that the Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple has spiritual power coming from Siva Pasupati. Such a power is able to move and unify the social differences among the *penyungung* of the barongs from all over Central/South Bali. It is clear that this activity strengthens the dialogic meeting among the *penyungung* and also functions as a holy offering to the universe.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the *Purana* of Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, the Barong Meeting

is a worshipping ritual ceremony purifying the universe. Such a universe purification ceremony is integrated through the strength of the gold triangle: the three temples includes Pucak Padang Dawa Temple, Pucak Kembar Pacung Temple, and Natar Sari Apuan Temple. They all glorify the *tapakan* Barong Nawa Sanggha in the form of Barong Kedingkling describing the leaders at the Ramayana epos. The meeting procession includes three parts; initial procession, the essence, and the end or the closing. All the three parts contain the processions forwarding religious rituals such as centripetal movements which move to the center, and centrifugal movements which spread and get far from the center, that is, Pucak Padang Dawa Temple.

The main ideologies referred to the Barong Meeting include: worship ping idea, power and performances. The worshipping idea is expressed through the prayers, offerings and worshipping of the strength of Siva Pasupati. The idea of power is viewed from the power of the people who are in charge of the temple in mobilizing and organizing both formal and informal institutions in some areas of Central Bali and South Bali in order to centralize the implementation of the Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple. The idea of performances is realized by exhibiting or showing off the prestige, attraction, and beauty of the barongs and rangdas performed by the community members around Pucak Padang Dawa Temple to “show off” the strength of Siva Pasupati. The integration of the three ideologies has made the Barong meeting as an art ritual, that is, to say, an art ritual that is full of art values, or an art ritual with various art attractions related to Hinduism in Bali.

The Barong Meeting at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple has a multilayer

sense, that is to say, it has magic religious, social, political, esthetic, and economic sense. In the magic religious level, the Barong Meeting will still be the center of spiritual activities that highlights that Hindu Bali followers still believe in the strength of Siva Pasupati. In the social level, it is shown that the Barong Meeting will still always be an event in which social interaction takes place among the community members coming from various areas in Central/South Bali. At the same time, it will be able to strengthen high solidarity and to appreciate diversity celebrating differences. In the theatrical level, the Barong Meeting will be a colossal theatrical attraction. Nothing can compete with it in functioning as the fortress for maintaining the Balinese culture now and in the future. In the political level, the Barong Meeting integrates the power of traditional institutions such as *banjar*, *penyung sung* of the Barongs (*penyung sung* means a group of people who is responsible for the maintenance and performance of a barong), *pengemong pura* (a group of families who are responsible for the maintenance of a temple and the ceremonies conducted in it), and the power of the local government. In the economic level, the Barong Meeting can create a market that supports and makes what is needed available for the implementation of the rituals both performed as worshipping activities and as performances at various areas or centralized at Pucak Padang Dawa Temple.

The suggestions provided are as follows : 1) to the community which carries out the Barong Meeting it is suggested that they should avoid everything that can change the Barong Meeting into a riot that can degrade spiritual values of the meeting itself. It is also suggested that such an activity is continually carried out as a religious ritual event, making it function as a

means for realizing collective awareness, spirituality and unifying Hindu Bali followers that live in diversity. 2) to the government of Tabanan Regency and Bali Province, it is suggested that the people who are involved in performing this event should be morally and materially supported, considering that this ritual involves the communities in Central Bali and South Bali. This highlights that the maintenance of the temple is the responsibility of all Hindu Bali followers.

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