

# IDEOLOGY OF *MABARUNG* (COMPETITION) OF PERFORMING ART IN BULELENG REGENCY

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## ABSTRACT

*Mabarung* (competition) of performing art is a cultural heritage in North Bali and has highly contributed to the development of the Balinese art and culture. The tradition of *mabarung* of performing art which was created in Buleleng Regency constitutes the competitive arena of life in which every *pebarung* (the player who is involved) does his best to perform the best by optimally presenting the quality of his performance. Based on what was described above, it was necessary to reveal the tradition of *mabarung* of performing art in Buleleng Regency. The present study focused on the meaningfulness of the implied ideology of the *mabarung* of performing art in Buleleng Regency.

The result of the study showed that the cultural representation, which was actualized into the *mabarung* of performing art appeared from the ideas of the grass-root. The government interfered in the *mabarung* of performing art and a change took place; the *mabarung* of performing art which used to be freely performed was then performed as a festival/competition, causing the ideology it contained to change. The phenomenon of the *mabarung* of performing art reflected a self image; the players felt embarrassed if they lost 'majengah-jengahan', performed differently from others, and felt too proud of themselves 'ajum'. In relation to that, it could be identified that the cultural representation which created the tradition of *mabarung* of performing art in Buleleng Regency was inspired by the ideology of freedom and self existence.

Keywords: *mabarung*, performing art, ideology.

## INTRODUCTION

The *mabarung* of performing art is one of the cultural heritages in North Bali, which has highly contributed to the development of the Balinese arts and culture. The tradition of the *mabarung* of performing art, which was created in North Bali, constitutes a competitive arena of life of being embarrassed if those who are involved in it lose the competition 'majengah-jengahan'. Every player 'pembarung' does his best to perform the best by optimally representing the quality of their performance. The creation of the *mabarung* of performing art in Buleleng Regency was indicated by an art event in which two groups of *gong* players (*sekaa-gong*) competed. They did their best to perform new compositions, which were then referred to as *Mabarung Gong Kebyar* (MGK). Such an event took place in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (McPee, 1966: 328; Goris, t.th: 150, Simpen AB, 1979: 1).

*Mabarung* then grew rapidly as the hobby of the Buleleng community; as a result, it was able to form a cultural tradition as part of the ethnical identity of the North Bali community. The Regent of Buleleng Regency expressly stated that the tradition of *mabarung* in the life of cultural art (MGK) was one of specific characteristics of the culture in North Bali which should be placed as part of the cultural identity of (local genius) of Buleleng Regency. He mentioned this in his speech delivered in the opening ceremony of “Konferensi dan Festival Internasional Budaya Bali 2009” (International Conference and Festival of the Balinese Culture 2009).

With a highly competitive nuisance, every event of the *mabarung* of performing art was always evaluated to make progress. Therefore, such an event played a highly important and strategic role as it proved to be able to motivate the Buleleng community to be creative and innovative.

The growth and development of the tradition of *mabarung* of performing art in Buleleng Regency were inspired by the ideas coming from the grass-root community, meaning that the cultural representation which was actualized into the activity of the *mabarung* of performing art reflected an implied ideology in the mind of the Northern Bali community. The reason was that ideology is a system of belief and a system of values, which were represented in various media and social actions which were regarded as being reasonable to complete the achievement of such an objective. Ideology refers to everything which is already implanted in individuals while they are living, covers all practices of life, minor and great actions, common and scientific views, and the conversations about the weather and political climate of a country (Althusser, 2005: 39-42).

## RESEARCH METHOD

This present study focused on the meaningfulness of the ideological framework of the *mabarung* of performing art in Buleleng Regency. The data were collected through observation and in-depth interview to excavate the primary data and through library research to obtain the secondary data. The data were analyzed descriptively, qualitatively and interpretatively and the technique of data analysis, as proposed by Sudikan (2001: 105) was done following the stages as follows: open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

The theory used in the present study was the theory of ideology proposed by Louis Althusser. According to Althusser (2005), ideology is something which is profoundly unconscious and not recognized in-depth. According to him, ideology refers to everything which has been implanted in individuals during their lives. The rules which have become a belief are not recognized. From the hammock to the grave, man exists with ideology (Takwin in Althusser, 2005: xvi-xx).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The pattern of competition (*mabarung*) which was created through the *mabarung* (competition of *Gong Kebyar (MGK)* initiated the growth and development of the *mabarung* of performing art in Buleleng Regency. As an arena of an activity framed within the domain of the life of art, the problem of the *mabarung* of performing art touches the artistic and aesthetic world, meaning that the *mabarung* of performing art is within the arena of meaningfulness of the world of art, which involves the matters pertaining to how to perform and the nature of performing art. The panorama of performance is divided into two. First, the human behavior (performative behavior) referred to as the culture of performance. Second, cultural performance which covers performing art, sports, rituals, festivals, and the other forms of festivities (for further detail, see Murgiyanto, 1996: 155-167). In the context of what is discussed in the present study, art is under the second category. The *mabarung* of performing art as an expression of cultural art acts as a symbol of expression.

The *mabarung* of performing art, as what takes place at MGK, may certainly present new creations, especially the creations of *gambelan* orchestra *kakebyaran*. The creative artists will never feel satisfied if in the event of *mabarung* they do not present new creations. They always want to perform differently from what was performed before. In relation to that, Putu Sumiasa (77 years of age), the highly skilled player of *kendang* (small drum covered with leather) who were experienced in MGK, stated that “*Pokoknya setiap akan mabarung, pasti membuat genting yang baru supaya tidak ada yang menduga dan mampu membikin kejutan*” (Basically, every time he is involved in the event of *mabarung*, he certainly creates a new creation which cannot be expected by others and is able to make a surprise” (Interview held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2008).

The thing which needs to be emphasized is that in the event of the *mabarung* of performing art (MGK), the opportunity of freedom is provided to the artists when they

express their ability artistically and non-artistically. Competitiveness encourages the artists to perform the best; they do their best to be highly popular. Such tricks show self image, as can be observed from the fact that they will feel embarrassed if they lose 'mejengah-jengahan', the fact that they perform differently from others, and that the fact that they are proud of themselves 'ajum'.

The phenomenon of *mabarung* should be treated as a cultural text in order to reveal the ideology leading to the creation of the *mabarung* of performing art in Buleleng Regency, meaning that the phenomenon of *mabarung* of performing art is based on the ability to interpret a social phenomenon of life through cultural approach, for example, by paying attention to the value, symbol and inter dependence among the cultural patterns of individual personality.

Socially and historically, it could be revealed that the growth and development of the tradition of performing art (MGK) in Buleleng Regency was directly related to the political situation in which Buleleng used to be the administrative center of the Dutch colonial government. It could be understood that the political pressure made by the colonial government strongly motivated the Buleleng community to dream of freedom. Apart from that, Buleleng had undergone the mobilization of socio-cultural life characterizing the openness of its citizens to acquire freedom. This was revealed by the Bali History (1980) in which it was stated that the Buleleng kingdom, as one of the kingdoms in Bali, was the first kingdom which intended to separate from the center of the power of the kings in Bali which was located in Klungkung. (Team Penyusun Naskah dan Pengadaan Buku Sejarah Bali, 1980" 68-85).

The existence of the *mabarung* of performing art in Buleleng had led to a discourse of the "Den Bukit" community (North Bali). In this relation, Balyson (1934) stated that the Buleleng people suffered from what is referred to "Caprise Bulelengais", the community which was getting bored quickly. They always wanted something new and strange. Balyson stated "*tiap-tiap waktoe selaloe berlainan, lekas bersalin kemaoean*" (the Balinese people said: "*djani kene njanan keto, toesing enteg, tjeliak-tjelioek, ngelionang bikas*" dsb. ["now they want this, later they want that, they always want something different, they change they wish quickly]. "*Publiek di negero Boeleveleng agak bersifat capricious; oleh karena karangan ini mengenai hal muziek, penoelis sebutkan djenis penjakit ini "caprise boelevelengais, meaning caprice, dari, ataoe kepoenjaan negeri Boeleveleng sebagai sindirian*" (Balyson, 1934: 191).

This was interpreted as a discourse of the values of freedom, which were reflected when Balyson insulted the changeable characteristic of the Buleleng people, *jani kene nyanan keto* (now they want this, and then they want that), *tusing enteg* (they always change their mind), *celiak-celiuk* (turn here and there), *ngeliungan bikas* (behaving strangely). The cultural observers in Buleleng Regency and its artists had the same discourse of the characteristic of the Buleleng people; they were proud of themselves. Such a predicate was always attached to the Buleleng artists in the event of *mabarung*, as stated by I Made Toja (81 years of age) and I Made Teken (60 years of age) as follows: “*kalau tidak punya rasa ajum, tidak akan bisa membangun atau menghidupkan kegiatan (keseniana) gong, apalagi akan digunakan untuk mabarung*”. [If not being proud of oneself, one cannot make the art of *gong* survive, especially when one takes part in the event of *mabarung*. “*Kalau tampil sebagai peserta mabarung, harus habis-habisan menunjukkan suatu kebanggaan diri atau ajum*” (If taking part in the event of *mabarung*, one should do his best to show such pride of oneself termed as *ajum* in Balinese)” (The interview was conducted on 25 July 2010 and 17 October 2008).

The innovative-creative activities which led to the *kebyar* art, which was then actualized in the activity of the *mabarung* of performing art (Gong Kebyar) could be interpreted as an expression which was used to express the values of “rebellion” for freedom, meaning that the ideological framework of the tradition of the *mabarung* of performing art in Buleleng Regency could not be separated from the attitude of the Buleleng people who intended to show their existence through the activity of cultural activity with the image of freedom as the reference.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The cultural representation of the *mabarung* of performing art in Buleleng could be identified as a self image, as could be observed from the behaviors of being embarrassed if getting lost ‘*mejengah-jengahan*’, performing differently, and showing self pride. The ideology of the creation of the cultural tradition of the event of the *mabarung* of performing art in Buleleng Regency was the ideology of freedom and self existence. The ideology of freedom showed the opportunity the artists had to be free in representing themselves artistically and non-artistically. Such an ideology of self existence referred to the creativity represented into the behaviors of feeling embarrassed if getting lost, performing differently, and showing self pride.

Several suggestions are recommended to continue this present study. *First*, the government should pay more serious attention to the policy which regulates the existence of cultural art. *Second*, the Buleleng community should motivate the creativity of Gong Kebyar Buleleng by doing what can be done to maintain the image of *kebyar* which has characterized the cultural art in North Bali. If a great idea such as a great system of competition appeared in the past, which then developed into the tradition of *mabarung*, from the result of the present study it is expected that a format of competition of art will appear as the format which is dynamic and adaptive to the current existence of the Balinese cultural art.

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