TRANSFORMATION OF TRADITION OF BARONG NGELAWANG
IN TOURISM AREA OF UBUD, GIANYAR, BALI

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ABSTRACT

Globalization carries new values and touches all aspects of life, one of which is the tradition of barong ngelawang. This present study is intended to discuss the pattern of transformation, ideology and meaning of the tradition of barong ngelawang in the tourism area of Ubud, Gianyar, Bali. The study views the tradition of barong ngelawang as a text of which the context, why and how it is performed should be understood. The theory of social practice, the theory of ideology, and the theory of semiotics were used to analyze the data.

The descriptive and interpretative method was employed. The result of the study shows that the tradition of barong ngelawang in Ubud was transformed from being a scared performance into a secular performance, and from a secular performance into a sacred performance. The transformation also took place in the space dimension. The ideologies which led to the activity of barong ngelawang were the religious ideology and solidarity ideology. The secular activity of barong ngelawang was dominated by the ideology of creativity and the economic ideology. From the ideological context, the meanings which could be revealed from the activity of barong ngelawang were the religious meaning and artistic meaning. From the superstructure context, the meanings that could be revealed were the social stratification meaning, the job description meaning, and the educational meaning. From the infrastructure context, the meaning which could be revealed was the economic meaning.

Keywords: transformation, tradition of barong ngelawang, ideology, and socio-cultural

INTRODUCTION

The Balinese people are well known for their unique, religious and cultural traditions. One of the traditions which is still performed until now is the barong dance. It is performed around the village (ngelawang) on special days such as the feast days of Galungan and Kuningan to ward off misfortune. The word ngelawang in the expression barong ngelawang is derived from the base word ‘lawang’, meaning door. The prefix ‘nge’ means going to. Thus, the expression barong ngelawang means going from door to door, from house to house, and from village to village to perform the barong dance. The barong which is used in this activity is what is referred to as barong sungsungan,
meaning the barong which has already been purified through the process of purification (Covarrubias, 1972: 286). In this case, the barong dance is performed without expecting for any fee. Such an activity is locally referred to as ngayah (doing something without expecting for any payment). The barong dance is sincerely performed as a devotion to God. Those who are involved in it voluntarily sacrifice their energy and time for the sake of ngayah which functions as a rite performed with an expectation that people and the environment where they live will be safe and prosperous, and that no danger will happen to them.

Globalization carries new values which are referred to as capitalism, comodification, reproduction, and secularization which touch all aspects of life, meaning that every institution, including the religious institution, cannot avoid capitalism (Hoed, 2011: 127-128). One aspect which is affected is the tradition of barong ngelawang, that is, the barong dance which is performed from place to place by the Balinese people. The change in the tradition of barong ngelawang which is performed in the tourism area of Ubud, Gianyar, Bali is the focus of the present study. In this area the sacred barong dance has been performed every time the feast days of Galungan and Kuningan are celebrated. However, in its development the barong dance has also been performed by the children as an entertainment from which they can generate money.

It is expected that the result of the present study can enrich the scientific treasury related to ideologies and the struggle for the meaning which is perceived by people of the existence and development of the tradition of barong ngelawang in the tourism area of Ubud, Gianyar, Bali.

RESEARCH METHOD

This present study is a qualitative one. Three theories such as the theory of social practice, the theory of ideology, and the theory of semiotics were used to analyze the data as the answer to the questions formulated in the present study. The qualitative data, which were obtained from the library and the field, were used. The primary data in the form of documents and audio visual recording were obtained from the library. Apart from that, the secondary data were also used; they were obtained from books, journals, and research reports related to the object of the present study. The field data sources are classified as the primary data sources. In this case, the data were obtained through
direct observation and interview in which the interviewees were the informants who were knowledgeable of the activity of *barong ngelawang*.

The data were collected through observation, interview and documentary study. The data were classified based on their patterns, categories, themes and subject matters. They were analyzed using the descriptive-qualitative and interpretative techniques. The components which were included in the data analysis included data reduction, data categorization, and synthesis. As a whole, the result of data analysis was focused on to what extent they were relevant to the main problems of the study. In this way, conclusions, which serve as the result and finding of the study, could be drawn.

DISCUSSION

Ubud District is one of the seven districts in Gianyar Regency, Bali Province. It is made up of 7 villages and one sub district. Administratively, there are 32 traditional villages ‘desa pekraman’ and 80 traditional *banjars* (a *banjar* is a neighborhood under a traditional village) (BPS Kabupaten Gianyar, 2013). The accumulation of all the orders of the values applicable in an area or village can contribute to the characteristic of the area. Therefore, culturally, the people living in Ubud have their own cultural life pattern. In Ubud there are five types of *barong*; they are *barong ket*, *barong macan*, *barong bangkal*, *barong landung*, and *barong kedingkling*. They are all sacred *barongs* which are performed every time the feast days of Galungan and Kuningan are celebrated. They are performed from place to place ‘ngelawang’. Those living at Padangtegal Traditional Village, Ubud District, refer to the *barong* which is performed around the village every time when the feast days of Galungan and Kuningan are celebrated as *melancaran*. It is usually performed every Saturday *Kliwon Kuningan*. However, those living at Singakerta Traditional Village refer to such an activity as *lunga mececingak*, and those living at Mawang Traditional Village, Londtunduh, refer to it as *memenjor*; this is usually performed every Wednesday *Kliwon Dungulan*. Furthermore, the people living at Petulu Traditional Village refer to it as *ngelawang*. It is usually performed every Wednesday *Kliwon Dungulan* and every Saturday *Kliwon Kuningan*. In Ubud, such a *barong* dance is also performed in what is locally called *sasih kenem* (the sixth month of the Balinese calendar). It is also called *ngunya* and is intended to ward off epidemics.

In its development, a change has taken place, that is, the *barong ngelawang* which is performed as a sacred performance from place to place when the feast days of
Galungan and Kuningan are celebrated, has also been performed by groups of children. However, the *barong* they perform is the *replica*, which is not sacred any longer. It is performed as an entertainment from which they can generate money. Such an activity of *ngelawang* started from the children’s play instinct. Then it has featured the celebration of the feast days of Galungan and Kuningan in Bali in general and in Ubud in particular. Groups of people carry the *barong* completed with the gamelan instruments from place to place in the village and even from village to village. It is performed in front of the houses with dwellers. After the performance is finished, the dwellers give them fees as the reward.

The activity of *barong ngelawang* in Ubud has been transformed from being sacred into being secular. Every time the feast days of Galungan and Kuningan are celebrated, the *barong* dance is performed around the village. Now the *barong* dance has also been performed by the children as an entertainment. In addition, the *barong* dance has also been transformed from being propane to being sacred. The activity of *barong ngelawang* which is performed by groups of people every time the feast days of Galungan and Kuningan are celebrated will possibly change from being propane into being sacred. Apart from being transformed from being propane into being sacred and vice versa, the pattern of transformation cannot be separated from the space dimension. The *barong* dance used to be performed as a sacred activity from village to village with a much wider scope. However, nowadays it is only performed in one traditional village. Organizational matters have possibly been responsible for this, or it has been possible that each traditional village has one *barong*. It appears that more and more groups of children have been involved in this activity and that its space dimension has been getting wider. What they intend to offer is amusement from which they expect to earn money. Therefore, they need more space in which they can perform this activity.

The tradition of *barong ngelawang*, as part of the cultured life in Ubud represents a system of values and belief which has been strongly implanted. It is expected that such a system of values can give the understanding of the ideological scope why the tradition of *barong ngelawang* grows and develops in Ubud area. The system of cultural values-based ideology can inspire the idea to develop individual and collective awareness which can cause the forms of life behavior to be constructed in the human mind. Such forms of life behavior can be in the forms of objects and local culture. The tradition of *barong ngelawang* is implicitly dominated by different ideological
backgrounds. If the activity of *barong ngelawang* is sacred, then the strong ideologies which will dominate it are the religious ideology and the ideology of solidarity. If the activity of *barong ngelawang* is secular, then the strong ideologies which will dominate it are the ideology of activity and the economic ideology. The rationality of the *barong* dance which is performed for sacred objectives is the rationality of values, while the rationality of the *barong* dance which is performed by children is the objective-based rationality.

The tradition of *barong ngelawang* which is performed to express the artistic and cultural life implies a meaning of socio-cultural life which is based on the ideology implanted in the system of cultural values of the group of people who own it. The era in which it is performed requires it to change and grow, causing the meaning it contains to shift automatically in order to suit what is motivated by the era. Meaning is closely related to the system of values which is good and meaningful to life. A value is the faith and deep feeling which is owned by the society’s members and frequently determines what they do and how they behave. The value and symbol-related complexity of the socio-cultural life contains the cultural patterns and individual personalities which are dependent on one another in a cultural environment and during a certain period of time. The conception of a value can be explicitly and implicitly revealed and can show the characteristic of an individual or a group of individuals as to what is desired. This affects the process of selection and the final outcome of an activity.

The transformation which has taken place in the tradition of *barong ngelawang* in Ubud area is a cultural phenomenon which is viewed as a system of sign which should be defined by the people living in Ubud. The values which can be revealed from the socio-cultural activity actualized in the tradition of *barong ngelawang*, as far as the ideological context is concerned, are religious and artistic values. From the superstructural context, the activity of *barong ngelawang* contains the socio-stratification meaning, the job description meaning, and the educational meaning. From the infrastructural context, it contains the economic value.

**CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

The tradition of *barong ngelawang* performed in Ubud was transformed from being sacred into being secular, and from being propane into being sacred. Apart from that, the transformation also took place in the space dimension. The ideologies which led
to the activity of *barang ngelawang* were the religious ideology and the solidarity ideology. The secular *barang ngelawang* was dominated by the ideology of creativity and the economic ideology. The values which could be revealed in relation to the meaning given to the socio-cultural activity actualized in the tradition of *barang ngelawang* in Ubud, as far as the ideological context is concerned, are the religious and artistic values. From the superstructural context, it contained the social stratification meaning, the job description meaning, and the educational meaning, and from the infrastructure context, it contained the economic meaning.

Considering that the tradition of *barang ngelawang* is a sacred activity which has been inherited from the ancestors, it is hoped that the Balinese people in general and those living in Ubud in particular should not change and ignore it. It is highly expected that the artistic and cultural values which serve as the people’s self identity should be conserved and developed as an attempt to prevent the impact of the developing globalized culture.

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