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Traditional Theater Mendu of West Kalimantan as A Medium for Public Education

Gunta Wirawan¹, Herman J. Waluyo², Sarwiji Suwandi³, Sahid Teguh Widodo⁴

¹ *Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta, STKIP Singkawang*
 e-mail: gwirawan91@gmail.com

² *Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta*
 e-Mail: hermanjwaluyo@staff.uns.co.id

³ *Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta*
 e-Mail: sarwijiswan@staff.uns.co.id

⁴ *Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta*
 e-Mail: sahidteguh Widodo@yahoo.com

Abstract. Traditional theater has various functions in society, a part from being an entertainment also as an education media, an explication, communication, social integration, aesthetic expression, and artistic expression. Even in the early days of its appearance, traditional theater mendu performances were precisely as a religious facilities. Therefore, it can be said that traditional performances are able to become archives for storing the noble values of local wisdom. This research aims to describe the function of the traditional theater mendu of West Kalimantan especially as an educational medium for the supporting community. This function could be in the form of scenes or dialogs during the show, either to the form of advices, religion advices, or inserted in jokes played by *Khadam (Adam)* and *Mak Miskin* from the common people. For the people of West Kalimantan, especially Mempawah district which is undergoing transition to modern society, the function of the performing arts should still be very dominant in influencing the community. Therefore, the traditional theater of mendu deserves to be maintained from the threat of extinction.

Keywords: traditional theater mendu; performance function; educational media

I. INTRODUCTION

Performing arts include various forms of art such as dance, theater and oral text presentations. Performances are actions of communication and communication events. As an act of communication, the show has a way of presentation, which is demonstrated, introduced, and built from its contextual environment. The audience is given the opportunity to understand and examine the expertise and achievements of the presenter. Cultural performances have a context that has characteristics: scheduled, bound to time and space, and planned. Performance events are events that are highly valued and have meaning in the situational context of the supporting community.

Traditional theater is the creativity of artists that born and developed in certain societies based on local ethnic culture, known and maintained to be shared as a legacy from ancestors. According to Achmad (2006: 4) traditional theater is theater in a particular ethnic society that follows the procedures, behavior, and ways of art following traditions, hereditary teachings from their ancestors in accordance with the culture of their environment. Traditional theater is sourced and rooted and has been felt as one's own and accepted by the community in its environment. Everything is received from inheritance which is transferred from the older generation to the younger generation. Performances are carried out on the basis of procedures and patterns that are followed in a direct fashion. This opinion was also stated by

Sari (2019: 49) that folklore is a part of a culture that grows and develops in the midst of society and is passed down orally as a common property. Oral literature is a reflection of the situation, conditions and manners of the supporting community.

The above opinion is reinforced by Nalan (2017: 4) who said that traditional theater or folk theater is a theater that has lived hereditary in each region, has a distinctive characteristic because of the mother tongue, dialect, narration, artistic that is in line with oral traditions and customs local community habits. Furthermore, Nalan said (2017: 28) that traditional theater was categorized as an ethnic theater that lived and developed hereditary in an area and was run by residents of the area. Thus, traditional arts, including traditional theater mendu, is a form of art that lives and is rooted in local communities that maintain and have the characteristics of a regional cultural tradition.

Traditional theater is based on folk literature that grows and develops in society. Traditional theater lives and is lived by people who are more homogeneous and have a high locality spirit. The community has an intense relationship, both in the creative process and in social relations. There is a spirit of kinship that is always trying to be grown. As Asmoro's opinion (2005: 367) which says that people's literature is literature that lives in the midst of the people. Such stories are passed down orally from one generation to a younger generation. In line with the opinion of Achmad (2006: 41) which says that folk theater is one of the oral literature that lives in society. Oral literature is the main foundation in traditional theater in Indonesia. Oral literature is what produces folk theater with a variety of types and types. Mendu traditional theater is a performance art that is part of oral literature. Thus, it can be said that oral literature also includes taking part in traditional theater, for example mendu.

Every traditional message has a purpose and performs a certain function (Vansina, 2014: 157). Oral literature functions as a supporter of the development of spoken language, and as an expression of the nature of the mind and the attitudes and cultural values of the supporting community. Oral literature is also a culture that makes language as a medium and is closely tied to the advancement of the language of its supporters.

Traditional theater has various functions in society, a part from being an entertainment as well as media for education, information, communication, social integration, expression of aesthetic tastes, and artistic expression. Even in the early days of its emergence, traditional theater performances were precisely as a religious means. Therefore, it can be said that traditional performances are able to become archives for storing the noble values of local wisdom. This was revealed by Al-Ma'ruf (2014: 1) that in the life of the community, traditional theater is actually still needed by both the fans and artists of traditional theater workers. As an art genre, traditional theater is a strategic communication medium that has an entertaining, educative, and informative function. Valuable cultural values can be passed on to the younger generation through traditional theater, in addition to other

values relating to humanity, social, political, religious, and community development in general.

The performing arts of mendu contain local wisdom. According to Rais (2017: 3) naturally local wisdom is formed from the empirical experience of the owner's life. Local wisdom is a set of knowledge and practices that can be used to solve problems faced in a way that is good and right according to the community (Wardani, 2013: 315; Ahimsa, 2007: 17). Local wisdom is related to independent knowledge, namely knowledge or a wealth of knowledge and culture in a particular society, which is always developed from time to time and continues to experience development and change. Thus, local wisdom includes the treasures of knowledge derived from local knowledge, dynamic, lively and known by certain people (Haba, 2007: 328).

This research seeks to describe the function of mendu traditional theater which is the local wisdom of the people of West Kalimantan, especially its function as an educational medium for the people of Mempawah district who are experiencing a transition situation towards modern society.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a type of qualitative research with descriptive methods (Creswell (2014); Leavy (2017). Descriptive method is a method that expresses, represents, describes, elaborates, and explains the research object (Creswell, 2015: 59). The form of this research is Qualitative. Literature research is more appropriate to use qualitative research because literature is a form of creative work whose form is constantly changing and is not subject to interpretation. Kaufman (2005: 17) explains qualitative research involving studies that do not attempt to quantify the results through statistical summary or analysis Qualitative studies are typically involving interviews and observations without formal measurement. Data collection technique carried out in away by studying the text, namely literature study (Nazir, 1999: 111; Zed, 2008). The study was carried out by classifying the parts that were the object of research in this study.

The data collection tool is the researcher himself as a key instrument assisted by a recording paper that contains data to facilitate solving the main problems in this study. The steps of data collection are done through repeated reading on primary sources which are the object of research. Then record the parts and classify it. The classification is intended to separate the parts that are included as data to be analyzed, making it easier for researchers to relate it to the problems and objectives in this study. Data sources in this study are books, journals, writings, and documents. Data in the form of text that shows comprehensive information about the function of the West Kalimantan mendu especially for the supporting community.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The diversity of cultural styles in Indonesia, giving birth to diverse types of traditional theater and supported by local

ethnic culture, generally have regional characteristics. The traditional theater according to Achmad (2006: 7) can be divided into 3 types, namely (1) folk theater, which lives in the midst of community life, (2) palace theater, theater managed by the king and nobility at the time, (3) theater aristocrats (also called aristocratic comedies) that sprung up in the period of the theater transition in cities.

Nalan (2017: 28) says traditional theater or folk theater can be categorized into two, namely by speech theater and dramatic theater. This category was created to facilitate the process of further study and so as not to mix, which ones are spoken and which are dramatic. Broadly speaking, several theater names and their regional origin can be mentioned: *Didong* (Aceh), *Bakaba* (Minangkabau), *Warahan* (Lampung), *Bateba* (Bengkulu), *Capung* (Lombok), and others. Dramatic theater: *Makyong* (Riau), *Randai* (Minangkabau), *Dulmuluk* (Jambi), *Ketoprak*, *Ludruk* (Java), *Mamanda* (East Kalimantan), and others.

The form of traditional theater presentation is generally almost the same in every regions that are by telling, showing, and narrating by demonstration. Mendu is one of the dramatic theater types performed. The explanation of the three types of presentation is distinguished by Achmad (2006: 16-17) as follows.

1. Spoken theater.

This type of theater is spoken. The shape is very simple, does not require complicated preparation and equipment. Enough is provided a place for someone to tell a story, usually on a mat or hall, then watched (heard) by people.

2. Played/performed theater.

The way to present this type of theater is to be played/performed. The actors play/demonstrate the story. Playground needs to be prepared, but it can be anywhere, for example the home yard, the field, the important thing is there is a 'playground' and enough space for the audience. Need to be prepared just equipment to support the story. After developing and getting the influence of the aristocratic theater, then began to be used 'stage' which is a place higher than the audience, by adding equipment.

3. Demonstrative theater.

This theater is presented in a manner told with a demonstration. Puppet is a theater of speech with a demonstration. The puppeteer told a story while playing a puppet. The role of the puppeteer as a narrator in a puppet show is crucial. In addition to storytelling skills, puppeteers are required to be skilled at playing their puppets. For a puppet show (shadow puppets and puppet show) required the preparation of the place and its completeness.

A. The Function of Traditional Theater in Society

According to Achmad (2006: 3) that traditional theater performances are generally carried out in the context of the needs of the community, related to ceremonial, celebration or other purposes. Traditional art is art that was passed down from generation to generation by the ancestors of the ethnic community groups in their environment, which has a standardized structure and is a standard that is always adopted by the relevant ethnic environmental artists.

In folk theater, the style of jokes is a game that is done in almost every show. The joke style called jokester (farce) is a style of comedy game that is often excessive, rough, and uses a lot of cuteness that prioritizes outward motion. Achmad (2006: 18) states that the portion of jokes in the people's theater is often excessive and always follows the wishes of the audience. In fact, the style of jokes is often reinforced by the humor in puns (pun). In the puppet there are figures *Semar*, *Gareng*, *Petruk*, and *Bagong*. In folk theater shows, there are always *Khadam*, *Bodor*, *Clown*, or *Comedian* figures. These figures become very important to bring the show to life. This is also an allure, especially in the theater of the people so that they remain popular with supporters.

Thus, the main function of theater is entertaining. Theater means producing events between humans, both those that have occurred and those designed, and the presentation is intended to entertain. At least this is what is meant when talking about theater, whether it is old or new theater (Dimiyati, 2010: 22). The function of the show is the function of religion, affirmation of social integration, educative to strengthen or complement the strength of one's personality, economics and entertainment that changes from time to time is the emphasis on certain functions and forms of statement, sometimes new functions appear that were previously unknown.

Formerly, the function of the performing arts was mentioned as summoning magical powers, picking up protective spirits to be present at the shrine, summoning spirits both to ward off evil spirits, warning the ancestors by imitating their courage or alacrity, complementing ceremonies in connection with commemorative levels. The level of one's life, the complement of the ceremony in connection with certain moments in the rotation of time, the embodiment of the urge to express mere beauty (Sedyawati, 2006: 53).

The same thing was said by Arybowo (2010: 31) when describing the function of the aristocratic theater that a performance of the aristocratic stage in Riau Lingga society in the past was a ritual activity. The ritual, in this case, is defined as an activity conducted according to the standards of society which develops a sense of togetherness while, at the same time, uniting a community. In Riau Lingga, this activity may take the shape of a traditional ceremony, a religious ceremony, a state ceremony, and a folk theater performance.

According to Achmad (2006: 103) that the main function of art which is actually a tool or media to express the embodiment of the turmoil of the soul of someone who wants to express themselves in the form of works of art, which is based on ethical and aesthetic values. Artwork in the form of dance, music, drama/theater, or others has the function of increasing the sensitivity of aesthetic sense and refining the soul to others who enjoy the work. In addition, traditional arts function for the needs of customs and religion, as well as entertainment. The details are as follows:

1. Traditional theater as a means of ceremony
2. Traditional theater as entertainment

3. Traditional theater as a means of education, communication, and social criticism

4. Traditional theater as a means of artistic expression

5. Traditional theater as a "living documentation tool".

Basically, almost all traditional performing arts have the same function. As said Arybowo (2010: 33) that similar to other forms of performing arts in Riau Lingga, Stage of the Nobles has many functions, among others: education including social politics education for people as the story concerns the traditions in a kingdom. It is also a means to protest against the injustice and moral decadence displayed by individuals in the government. Another important function, according to one informant, is that the Stage of the Nobility is a means to entertain the people. This is especially true if the people are, in real life, suffering from Boredom in which case the esthetics or beautiful imaginations of this make-believe world, reflected in the story of a just and wise king, can amuse them.

Traditional theater is an archive of noble values storage of local wisdom. Dimiyati (2010: 1) says that a theater performance is not born in a vacuum of value, but is the result of an intersection between theater artists and shared life that is lived and contemplated personally. Thus, the function of traditional theater is not only as entertainment for the community alone, but there are also values of education, social control, communication, expression of aesthetic feelings, artistic expression, moral and religious means.

In fact, according to Santosa (2010: 132) there is a belief that the artistic domain is able to affect people's behavior and to provide a sense of integrity among the members of a group. These topics demonstrate that arts in villages are not autonomous entities; people value arts as an integral domain with other social activities. In terms of aesthetics, Bin Hj. Abdullah (2017: 155) said that an aesthetic value of a performing art is a focussed, well planned and accredited visual effect through thorough artistic observation.

According to Segedin (2017: 3) that theater has many purposes in human culture, including entertaining, enlightening and informing an audience. Some forms of theater focus purely on the aesthetic and serve no other purpose than to entertain an audience through a story or event. In other cases, theater has served as a catalyst for social change.

The above opinion, reinforced by the statement Salvini (1971: 49) which says that ... as in many Asian countries, the performing arts in Indonesia are intimately identified with daily life in its individual and collective expression. At the origin of the dance, and of all dramatic expressions in Indonesia, are found the principal myths forming the weft of the distant past of mankind: the solar and lunar myths associated with the cyclical divisions and subdivisions of the Universe, the eternal conflict of the Good-Evil duality, and chiefly the worship of ancestors through which the link with the primordial enigma is recreated. Interlaced in a tightly woven network, they constitute the primitive Indonesian source from the art of the theater, in the beginning of a magical ceremony, came into being and branched out; its various branches remain closely related one to another.

Thus, the function of traditional theater is very complex because it is rooted in the life of the supporting community. The loss of one of the traditional theaters in a certain area indicates the loss of the functions that form noble values in the community.

B. The Function of the West Kalimantan Mendu Traditional Theater as Educational Media

The function of theater art is one form of mass communication, namely as a means of disseminating information about events in the environment, both outside and inside the community. Therefore, public awareness is needed about the importance of theater in social dynamics, which is not only a means of entertainment, but also as an educational medium. On the other hand, theater also grows with the sensitivity of reading the social conditions of people reading the signs of the times. This function is a form of local wisdom in the supporting community.

According to Jaeni, (2019: 1131-1132) local knowledge or commonly called local wisdom has existed in people's lives since ancient times starting from prehistory to the present. Theater performance communication has a pattern as a medium of communication of cultural education and its environment. The communication pattern of such theater performances basically has an interactive pattern with the environmental community who want to involve themselves by watching, appreciating, observing, interpreting, and criticizing.

When watching folk theater, including mendu, besides enjoying the stories and treats as a spectacle or entertainment, there is also something very important that can be taken from its. There is a mission, there is a message, and there is a religious advice in it. Both the advice that is already present in the standard story, as well as the message of interpolation both regarding issues of education, information, development, or social criticism. Certainly not delivered vulgarly, but entrusted in sentences or scenes of humor or jokes. Mendu is indeed not free from jokes and jokes, although there is no special round for that. And no less important, it also functions as an expression of the aesthetic sense of the owner's community (A. Halim, 2013: without page numbers). According to Taylor (2007: 10) that theater can change and improve the social order (theater can change and improve social order). Therefore, according to González (2011: 2) all functions as a nation building... Theater occupies a space in this construction of identity, a cultural discourse is not unaffected by political denunciation and protest.

According to Al-Ma'ruf, (2014: 8) in the context of national cultural development, the effort to develop a populist theater of tradition is an urgent step. Whereas, the re-actualization of traditional culture can be a medium to reduce the excesses or negative values of foreign cultures that can damage the joints of the nation's personality and morality. This means that traditional theater can play an entertaining 'performance' and at the same time become a 'guide' to the public that engages in multicultural nuances today. Al-Ma'ruf added (2014: 7). To make traditional

theater into a medium of multicultural education, it requires reactualization steps so that in the performance it can have a 'target' and appeal to the community. According to Taylor (2007: 10) the value of theater as an educational tool has always been a cornerstone of various theoretical.

The role of theatrical tradition in the process of socializing multicultural values is likely to be more meaningful as an element of synthesis. In Indonesian culture that tends to choose 'dialogue' rather than 'confrontation', which is the wisdom of the community, the role of traditional theater will be more meaningful in its ability to concoct these elements. Historical experience in the life of the Indonesian people shows that people prefer to choose 'the way of peace'. Or, to borrow the term *Kayam* our society always avoids 'hard clashes', and if a clash is forced then 'painless clashes' is chosen. In this way, the influence or other elements will be accepted as something 'new and fun'. This reality reinforces the role of traditional theater in the process of socializing multicultural values that have become a reality of human history through dialogue can raise the actual and contextual problems in society (Al-Ma'ruf, 2014: 10).

According to Jaeni (2019: 1133) theater as an educational communication medium (encompassing the process of manifestation and performance) can be understood as a circle of value relations, matching values, which are shared by communication participants consisting of actors and the arts public. The relation of these values is socio-cultural values in which there are values with everyday symbols such as education. Jaeni (2019: 1137) added that theater which educates in the perspective of art communication is theater produced by creators who seek to educate through their senses, feelings, intuitions, and intellectuals.

Mendu as a traditional theater still shows its function in society and also has ethical and aesthetic values. According to Ahmad (without publishing year: 83-84) the functions of mendu traditional theater include:

1. As an Educational tool

This is presented to the audience by the artists through the main theme of the story which always illustrates that evil is defeated by the goodness (ruthless king, giant/devil/evil genie is always defeated by heroes/justice).

2. As an Aesthetic expression tool

This mainly concerns of the performers. Frequently practicing playing mendu means practicing skills and sensitivity to the aesthetic values that exist in the art of mendu. The audience who likes mendu also increases its art appreciation.

3. As a Spectacle/entertainment

Mendu as one form of performance arts by itself as well as a mass communication media (social functions) and also a medium of entertainment/spectacle of the crowd. With fun watching mendu people forget the various problems of the complexity of life. They will laugh and be happy if the comedy characters show their prowess.

In addition, Juliastuti (2014: 41-42) added a function of mendu as a medium for delivering messages, for example development messages. Mendu's performance as a medium

of entertainment can also function as a medium for delivering development messages. In the 1980s the performance of mendu as entertainment that was watched by the public was inserted messages, vision and development mission, Family Planning (KB) program, even at the time of the election could contribute a lot as a medium for information, education, and delivery of development missions.

Mendu also has a social function for the community, namely activating the language fatigue function, activating communication between members of the community, sharing social news, and socializing social values to children. The function of mendu is to activate the fatigue function of the language because the language used in the performances of mendu is not a foreign language and is unknown to its people. However, using a language that is known by the community, namely the language owned and used by the community (Malay) so that the community feels bound by the theater of mendu because the theater of mendu is part of the community. Therefore, community members as part of the community will feel attached to the community, including the mendu.

The show activates the communication between citizens of the community when it is staged. The show is an opportunity for residents to meet and communicate with other residents or people who are rarely met, even almost never exchanged greetings because of their respective activities. The performance of the mendu opens up opportunities for members of the community who watch the group in a group to communicate with fellow citizens, even though without the show, the communication between residents is possible. However, communication between the community members that is intertwined when watching the performances is done in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere so that the boundaries between people and the community become closer and more familiar with each other. This can strengthen relations and care among community members. Therefore, among the people of society will tend to avoid hostility, mutual care, and help so as to create a safe, peaceful, and harmonious community life. In addition, there was a direct dialogue between the player and the audience. Mendu players invite the audience to engage in dialogue spontaneously in the mendu performance. This creates a friendly atmosphere between the players and the audience. The social function of the mendu show is to share social news, meaning that the show can be used as a medium to convey stories or events that are currently happening in the community.

In addition, the show can also be used as a medium for delivering development messages. The last social function, which is a show, helps socialize social values to children. Performing mendu is not just for entertaining, but it is an educational medium for children. They are the young generation who will continue the nation's development, so they are expected to have noble souls and character because the future of this nation and country will depend on them. Therefore, after watching the performance, they are expected to know the noble values, uphold them, and apply them in

real life. In the end the children are transformed into Indonesian people who have a noble soul and character.

The strength of mendu also lies in his dialogues which are always inserted with advice and moral education. Interwoven story presents the values of crime and goodness, with the good story that always wins at the end of the story. Thus, mendu also functions as a means of education, in addition to its entertainment function (Pelusari, 2014: 214). Judging from the structure of material disclosure, in accordance with the presence of familiarity and communicative elements with the audience, it can be used as a medium for conveying messages of development, education, and other benefits that are adjusted to the material presented (Ahmad, without publication year: 85).

Local wisdom regarding the value of education in the mendu also exists in the value of mutual cooperation. According to Sobuwati (2011: 13) the value of mutual cooperation found in the traditional theater mendu reflected from the performers and show organizers who are members of a theater team (studio). In order for the show to run smoothly each team member must be able to work well together so as to produce a good job as well. If they work together in a compact and harmonious manner, then the performances they present for the audience and then mendu theater's fans will be more liked and entertained.

In addition there is the value of sportsmanship in the mendu's show. The value of sportivity can be shown in the relieved attitude of each player. In every performance there must be a main role that has a harder task, there is also a supporting role so that he is less known by the audience. In the past, the role of king and crown prince was coveted by the players. This is where the relieved attitude is needed, if the director has determined the role of the players.

Mendu as a community education media can be applied when the show is going on both in the storyline, scenes, and dialogue between players. One of Mendu's uniqueness is that there is no boundary between the players and the audience, so that there is often a two-way dialogue between the audience and the players, especially those played by *Khadam (Adam)* or *Mak Miskin*. In dialogue that is full of jokes, messages of noble value are inserted. Likewise with advice, on that occasion, the king could have told his people (as if the audience were the people) so as not to litter, maintain order, obey traffic rules, not burn the forest, due to drug use, due to promiscuity and other advice. All noble messages that are educational in nature are related to the present context. Thus, according to Sobuwati (2011: 14) messages that are reflected through traditional theater performances mendu include educating people to have a disciplined attitude, have a sense of responsibility that is based on a sense of solidarity, togetherness and family that is realized in mutual cooperation.

This is the reason why mendu must be maintained from extinction. The existence of oral traditions is inseparable from the noble values contained therein. Therefore, according to Wirawan (2018: 101) it can be said that it supports a cultural treasure as one of West Kalimantan's Malay identities, and Mempawah in particular. This is

because (1) it has existed in West Kalimantan for hundreds of years ago, (2) has become a treasure owned by his speaking community, (3) has a literary function (4) has kept the assets of local customs and values (5) has been recognized as Indonesia's intangible cultural heritage by the 2004 Ministry of Education and Culture.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The traditional theater of Mendu, West Kalimantan, contains noble values that can be used as an educational medium for the supporting community. In addition to being served fresh and light entertainment, the audience can also absorb moral messages that are good for social life. The advice delivered without hurting people's feelings is conveyed through humor and the fabric of stories that are always happy ending, evil must be defeated by goodness. The king's advice addressed to the audience (who is positioned as the people) is also felt effective because this characteristic is always conveyed in each performance.

The function of mendu as a community education media is the most appropriate reason why mendu needs to be preserved. Mendu as a typical art of West Kalimantan experienced a situation of concern because it was almost extinct. The function of the Mendu apart from being an educational media is as a means of information, communication, social integration, expression of aesthetic feelings, and artistic expression. Thus, the traditional theater of Mendu is able to become an archive of noble values of local wisdom.

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