

Conference Paper

Possession in Macapat Tulak Balak

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ORCID:Hartono: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-315-8302>**Abstract**

This paper used an ethnographic approach to examine the phenomenon of possession in the ritual of baby birth with the chanting of *macapat tulak balak*. This paper sought to describe the phenomenon of possession experienced by the singer of macapat tulak balak and to explain how society perceives the phenomenon that occurs. To analyze the problem of possession, phenomenological aspects, possession phenomena, metaphysical studies and ritual aspects were used. Edmund Husserl's phenomenology was used to describe the phenomenon of possession. The phenomenon of possession and unconsciousness was explored with the approach of Carl Gustav Jung's psychological theory. Aristotle's metaphysical studies were used to analyze the "being as being" and "the divine". In addition, Marret's theory of extraordinary powers and Otto's about human attitudes towards the occult were also examined. Ritual aspects were discussed through Van Gennep's theoretical approach to religious ceremonies. This research produced several formulas as follows: the phenomenon of possession of the chanting of *macapat tulak balak* is interpreted by the community as an event that actually happened. This phenomenon is caused by several factors, namely: who is chanting, the chanter's spiritual experience, who is possessed, and *macapat tulak balak*. In psychology, possession is called a dissociative trance or split personality, which is a change in consciousness characterized by a change in personal identity that has been existing with a new identity. Matters related to the occultation of the phenomenon of possession are included in the study of "the divine", meaning that no human ability can reach it.

Keywords: phenomenon, possession, *macapat tulak balak*, ritual

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1. Introduction

Possession in cultural phenomena can be viewed from the history of animism, where people still believe that spirits, including ancestral spirits, can still interact with the human realm. It is proven that there is still a culture of giving offerings and chanting incantations to ancestral spirits. The phenomenon of possession often occurs in community ritual ceremonies in this archipelago, especially in rural areas. Possession is believed to be an event of the entry of spirits, both evil spirits and good spirits into humans [1].

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Terms similar to possession in Javanese society include *kelenggahan*, *kerawuhan*, *kangslupan*, *klebonan*, *kepanjangan* and *kesurupan*.

Art as part of culture is present in human life through experience, namely through the senses. Art also deals with spirituality, both rationally and experientially. Art contains a spirituality that is captured by its supporters in the forms of analogy because “what does not exist” is difficult to formulate in “being” [2].

Traditional art as a reflection of culture is clear evidence of human creativity in shaping the identity of a nation’s personality. The special characteristics of traditional arts are the maintenance of strict rules in principle and the presence of vocabulary which is the formulation of the work [3]. [4] in one of his writings informs that a yoga technique for the benefit of Buddhist rites makes sounds that mimic golden chimes. The special voices that are sung are believed to have magical powers for a request and are believed to be able to convey the meaning to be conveyed.

As written by [5], music has the power to erode the immunity of the conscience from the grip of wild emotions. Whether we realize it or not, the voice expression “exists” in songs, dances, and the rhythm of body movements. Therefore, it has long been believed that this disembodied sound energy is capable of moving the human conscience.

Music is a means for humans to reach a sacred religious atmosphere and a means to reach a state of possession. The melody that is present through the hum of certain notes repeated over and over with sacred verses and various incantations becomes a kind of power base for interests.

The meaning of incantation is taken from the Sanskrit language, namely mantram, which has quite a broad meaning [6]. [7] states that by using a spell, a person’s wishes can be fulfilled. The incantation of sounds in the form of *tembang* can affect spirits or magical elements and will follow or obey the chanter’s words. Art as a social function is the effect of a customary belief or institution on the social solidarity of society which is then analogous to the structure of an organism [8].

Javanese art such as *macapatan* is the result of Javanese creativity, taste and initiative in life. *Macapat* as part of Javanese musical art is a musical building, which is expressed and lived through the means of expression in the form of Javanese poetry, which is tied to a poetry pattern sung based on pentatonic scales (*laras pelog* and *laras slendro*). There are 11 *macapat* song names, namely: *mijil*, *kinanthi*, *sinom*, *asmaradana*, *dhandhanggula*, *gambuh*, *durma*, *masumambang*, *pangkur*, *megatruh* and *pocung* [9].

[10] stated that music as a symbol is related to the ideas and behavior of society. The sound of music is the result of human behavior which has a certain structure and may be a system, but it cannot stand alone or be separated from the supporting society.

2. Possession Phenomenon

Possession or anxiety experienced by a singer of macapat tulak balak is a phenomenal event. The word phenomenon comes from the Greek word *phainomenon*, from the word *phainesthai / phainomai / phainein* which means to show or show [11].

To discuss phenomenal things, a phenomenological approach method can be used. Phenomenology examines the underlying field with absolute worlds of experience. For [12], phenomenology is not only a philosophy but also a method. Phenomenology must also analyze and describe the way transcendental consciousness operates. Phenomenology considers objects to be related to consciousness. That consciousness is pure consciousness not empty consciousness. Pure consciousness has two aspects namely “being aware of” and “being known consciously”.

The central idea or idea of phenomenology lies in the inseparable relationship between humans and the world (being in the world / person in the world). As an intellectual product, phenomenology is oriented to study and explain situations, events, meanings and human experiences as they occur in everyday life. The goal is to describe the experience of human life as it is. The term possession describes the state of something that comes from the outside into and fills the inner space. There is an explanation of possession as follows: (1) the state of dissociation, (2) hysteria, (3) split personality.

Psychological studies of possession can be seen from two perspectives, namely psychoanalysis and transpersonal psychology. Jung in [13], explains the theory of conscious and unconscious life, and analyzes the unconscious as a part of human psychology. In addition to the conscious human mind, which influences human feelings, thoughts and actions, the unconscious arises when humans are in a world of dreams, myths, images and religious activities.

Jung stated that the unconscious has two layers, namely: (1) individual, (2) collective (collective unconsciousness). The personality element in Jung's psychoanalytic paradigm is heavily influenced by myth, mysticism, metaphysics and religious experience. Jung believed that this could provide a satisfying explanation for the spiritual nature of man.

Jung further gave several terms, namely: (1) consciousness (awareness), (2) personal unconsciousness (personal unconsciousness), (3) collective unconsciousness (collective unconsciousness). These three terms are in the realm of soul power (psyche) which is very broad and deep, and contains the roots of the four psychoanalytic functions, namely: sensation, intuition, thought and feeling.

The phenomenon of possession cannot be separated from the metaphysical aspect. The term metaphysics comes from the Greek *ta meta ta physica* which means after physical [11]. This term is the naming given by Andronikos to Aristotle's work which talks about things outside the human body. Metaphysics is then distinguished from ontology (perceived reality) by Wolff by limiting the scope of metaphysical studies, namely supra-sensory reality. According to Wolff (also Kant), metaphysics basically has three objects of study, namely: cosmology, psychology and theology [11].

The first philosophy (*prote philosophia*) developed by Aristotle actually has two objects of study, namely: (1) which "exists as being", and (2) which is "divine". The focus of the study of philosophy "being as what is" means the focus of the study of reality within itself, which is really real. This philosophy leads people to let go of understanding from concrete things, but to see them all in the general sense that they exist. The focus of metaphysical studies on the "divine" means the focus of study on the deepest realities that are beyond human sensory perception and become the absolute basis for all relative "things".

[11] quotes Russell's statement that metaphysics always tries to show real reality (really existing things), as opposed to what is merely appearance. The difference between ordinary people and philosophers is the awareness of a distinction between appearances (what things seems to be) and reality (what they are). Ordinary people do not question whether the appearance is the real reality or not, but only question its usefulness (utility), while the philosophers will question these differences.

Marret in [14] describes the extraordinary power (supernatural) called *mana*, which is emitted by spirits or gods, and can also be possessed by humans. During his life, humans are often amazed at supernatural things, which cannot be explained by reason. According to Otto in [14], all religious systems, beliefs and religions in the world are centered on a concept of the occult (*mysterium*) which is considered tremendous (*tremendum*) and sacred (*sacer*) by humans.

Worship is the implementation and recognition of humans for the greatness of God. Through worship, people want to communicate with their Lord to solve the various problems of life. The manner of worship depends on the religion, belief, conditions and circumstances.

The *slametan* ceremony is a form of ceremony related to belief which is marked by a special character, which generates great respect in the sense that it is a sacred experience. The birth event for the Javanese people is believed to be an important event which must be complemented by several salvation ceremonies. Gennep in [14] states that ritual ceremonies in human life are related to separation, merge and aggregation.

Religious humans try to fill their life time with various kinds of activities towards perfection and towards a more meaningful life. In line with this [4] states that in the rite, man performs holy acts to overcome his human condition, he goes out of chronological time and enters into initial sacred time. Almost all religious rituals tend to be a symptom of the expression “art” which in its development is a level of expression of a work of art. One of them is the ritual of the birth of a baby that uses the “art” of this *macapat tulak balak* song.

3. Macapat Tulak Balak: Incantation in Song Form

Macapat art is a traditional art that has long been known to almost all levels of Javanese society. Javanese people use several *macapat* texts, one of which is *macapat tulak balak* in *macapatan* activities. *Macapat tulak balak* is believed to be one of the supreme and high-value arts, and is beneficial for the lives of the people who support it. The term *tulak balak* according to [15] means to reject and return (evil forces). Until now, the art of *macapat* is still alive and well in Javanese society. In general, the public understands the contents of the text contained in the *macapat* verses as a form of *pitutur* (teaching) that deserves attention and exemplary. Its absorption is carried out, one of which is in social ritual ceremonies, whether carried out in groups such as village rituals, or through individual celebrations such as baby *selapanan*, weddings, and so on.

By some Javanese people, *macapat tulak balak* is believed to be an incantation to ward off evil forces that interfere with human life. Through the chanting of this song in the ritual of the baby’s birth, with the help of a “medium”, it is believed to be able to bring transcendent power to the welfare of the baby, the baby’s family and the surrounding community.

The phenomenon of reluctance in this ritual is caused by several factors, including:

1. Chanter Factor

A *macapat tulak balak* chanter at ritual ceremonies is someone who has advantages in the mystical world (shaman) and is able to say prayers with *tembang*. In its distinctive form, shamanism appears in special ceremonies associated with spirits, possession, ecstasy evoked by dances, sounds, incantations, verbal utterances, supernatural powers, and so on [16].

2. The Spiritual Experience Factor

Experiences of spiritual practice such as *tirakat* and fasting also serve as a basis for judging whether or not a person can be considered a “smart” person who can be asked for help.

3. Possession Factor

The supernatural figure who engages (possesses) the chanter's body is believed to be the holy spirit sent by God. In Aristotle's metaphysical theory, this phenomenon is included in the study of metaphysics "which is divinely unreachable, cannot be described in words". According to Marret, the magic power in this incantation is classified as an extraordinary power and is difficult for human reason to accept.

4. The Song *Macapat Tulak Balak* factor

Macapat tulak balak is interpreted by its supporters as a mantram that has special powers. When sung with intention, the song, which is actually a series of prayers, is capable of presenting divine power.

In Jung's analogy, possession (aversion) is an event that the person experiencing it is not aware of. Jung in [13] discusses psyche, which is all psychic events, both conscious and unconscious. So the human soul consists of two realms, namely the conscious (consciousness) and the unconscious (unconscious).

The two realms of the soul are not only complementary but are compensatory in relation to each other. The second function is about adjustment, namely: (1) conscious nature: adjustment to the outside world, and (2) unconscious nature: adjustment to the inner world. The boundary between these two realms is not fixed, meaning that it can change.

The reluctance experienced by the singer in the ritual of the birth of a baby is classified as a type of possessed by a split personality, in which the singer appears as a different figure. This phenomenon in psychology is known as trans possession dissociative, which is a change in consciousness characterized by a change in personal identity that has been existing with a new identity.

4. Conclusion

Based on the description above, it can be concluded as follows:

1. The phenomenon of reluctance in the ritual of the birth of a baby with the chanting of macapat tulak balak is interpreted as an event of entering the 'holy spirit' messenger of God into the body of the singer.
2. The phenomenon of restlessness experienced by supernatural practitioners is caused by the following factors: a. the singer, b. spiritual experience, c. possessed, and d. macapat tulak balak.

3. The reluctance experienced by the chanter is called trans possession dissociative or split personality, which is a change in consciousness characterized by a change in personal identity that has been existing with a new identity.

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