The Discourse of Sasak’s Art: From Tradition to Modernity

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This article discusses the discourse of art in Sasak, Lombok, in the context of Art Education. This research aims to examine the reality of painting styles in Lombok using Representation Theory in Cultural Studies. From this perspective, the research aim was to explore how the art of Sasak, Lombok is represented. Data was collected using library records and a discourse analysis was applied. There was not a singular art discourse for Lombok. The artistic tradition before the 2000s was dominated by a discussion of Traditional art. This corresponded with a nobility government in West Nusa Tenggara. Later between the year 2000 and 2010, specifically in the leadership period of Tuan Guru, Islam, discussions of Modernity were found to dominate written interpretations of art. The transition of leadership from the aristocracy to governance under the leadership of Tuan Guru correlated with the changing of Sasak’s art discourse from Tradition to Modernity.

Key words: Art discourse, Sasak, culture, modernity, regime.

Introduction

European scholars have influenced the production of knowledge regarding Lombok, constructing perceptions of Lombok in a traditional context. Historically, Lombok was part of Java (Kraan, 2009; Marrison, 1999; Van der Meij, 2011) with the origin of the Sasak people relating back to Java (Fauzan, 2013). Islam entered Lombok via the teachings of Mubalig from Java (Jamaludin, 2011, 2019). Popular Javanese music also influenced Sasak’s music – Cilokaq music (Harnish, 1995).

The relational discourse between Sasak and Bali is reinforced through the art of the Lingsar Festival. Harnish (1997) in particular shows that the ethnicities of Sasak and Bali are united by this festival.

Orientation of Sasak in relation to Java and Bali has influenced a certain construction of how the Sasak tradition is known. Two categories of Sasak, *wetu telu* and *wetu lima*, were described by European scholars (Ecklund, 1977; Krulfeld, 1966). *Boda* is another category that Anthropologist recorded in the Sasak society in the sixties and seventies. *Boda* refers specifically to those who lived in North Lombok, mainly in Mount Rinjani’s valley (Budiwanti, 2000; Kraan, 1981).

The construction of Sasak in relation to Islam occurred via a modern discourse with a shift in government. *Boda* and *wetu telu* were positioned against Islam given their tradition context. This was the result of traditional contexts being constructed in opposition to more modern discourses in Sasak, Lombok. This oppositionality has produced binaries between subjects such as a defining divide between nobility and Tuan Guru – one well embedded in Sasak’s culture. The traditional discourse has been successfully shifted with the production and reproduction of written knowledge about Sasak’s culture since the year 2000 when the government in Sasak, Lombok changed to Tuan Guru leadership. This shift meant there was also a change in knowledge construction and perception. As a regime of knowledge, the Tuan Guru government influenced a new discourse until 2018.

The Tuan Guru regime represented the Sasak – Lombok community as orthodox Islam initially. During the second period of this leadership, art education programs no longer constructed the Sasak in relation to Islamic Culture but instead developed a tradition-based arts education. The latter program discusses Islam as well as modernity and reveals a contradiction in the regime itself given on the other hand, the regime voices tradition.

This article looks beyond this contradiction within the Tuan Guru period of governance to the changing discourse of performance arts education in Lombok, in order to contribute to the ongoing sociological knowledge of art in Lombok. In particular this article examines the Tuan Guru regime and its influence on how Sasak people, especially ‘educated people’, are interpreting Lombok through artistic performances. In particular, this article notes the increasingly lively art discussion playing out in the academic world in Lombok at the time of writing. This article notes how art discourse in academic work appears to be more common, and potentially, a response to the phenomenon of the change in perception of the performing arts in Lombok in 2000-2018.
Methods

This article used representation theory from the perspective of cultural studies. The analysis method used was a dialogue model. Representation theory assumes that a subject, in this case Lombok, is a product of discursive construction. This approach also states that discourse is a representation system (Hall, 1997). Speech is defined as a group of statements which provides us with defined language to discuss a kind of specific knowledge or to discuss a topic (Hall, 1992; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). The concept of discourse is applied to this research’s data. This research’s data was obtained through a library search of academic writing on works of art in Lombok, both in the form of published theses and dissertations. Academic work is understood as a particular discourse. First, the discourse of each academic work was analysed. After finding the discussion thread of each work, it was then also related to a separate dialogue between works. This produced one overall discourse formation. With all the works analysed in one discourse formation, a knowledge regime is revealed and assumed to be effective at that particular time. In other words, it is assumed in this analysis that knowledge produced will become a regime of truth.

The data were obtained through a literature review. After the data were collected, then the data analysis was conducted as a discourse analysis. The discourse analysis was used by relating discourse data to investigate whether in a formation it is discursive or not. The academic works of the Sasak people were used specifically. The conversation emerged out of published articles and other academic references. For example, an essay was considered appropriate discourse material. Any articles about Sasak’s art and books or art research on the subject were considered suitable data too.

Finding and Discussion


Trisnawati (2001) discussed the dance drama of Putri Mandalika. In particular, drama according to Trisnawati, combines the cultural values of Sasak, Hindu and Islam. Trisnawati (2016) highlights the tradition of gandrung Sasak influenced by the position of Islam five times. In the same year, in 2016, Trisnawati et al. (2016) offer a multicultural perspective for understanding the arts. Multicultural arts are perceived to be constructed in the context of tourism.

Murahim (2011a) focused on the theatre comedy Rudat. Firstly, Murahim (2011a) discusses the expression of Islamic values in that theatre. Secondly, the appearance of Islamic values is
described in the context of Melayu (2011b). Thirdly, Murahim analyses Rudat in the context of deconstructing the meaning. The existence of Rudat is on Jongos and Khadam, not on the King (2019). The actors who come and live in the Rudat community are more communicative than those who do not come from that community (Satrya, 2011). Murcahyanto & Satrya (2016) offer a post-structural perspective in relation to a show. This show, according to them, is well received by spectators because the centrality of the show is not on the script and director but on the actors themselves (Murcahyanto & Satrya HD, 2016).

Sasak’s art is brought into the broader context by Alaini (2015). Alaini puts Cepung tradition in the context of resistance against the colonialism of Bali. Meanwhile, Alfarisi (2016) puts Cepung in the context of traditional dramaturgy. Firstly, by articulating Cepung in the context of the postcolonial, and secondly by articulating the meaning of dramaturgic study.

Qodri (2018) describes a puppet show in the context of the identity reinforcement of Sasak nobleman. Wong menak is considered a perfect individual. If Qodri reinforces the identity of Wong menak in Sasak’s culture, Yudarta (2016) enhances the perceived position of Bali as supporting Sasak’s learning, mainly found in the tourism initiatives of Mataram City. Yudarta & Pasek (2017) academically legitimate the situation of Sasak’s kecimol music as key in the identity of Sasak. Yuniarni does the same. Yuniarni (2019) standardises the Amaq Abir dance through a study of structure and function. Muhimmah (2019) constructs the meaning of the Dara Ngindang dance (flying dove) in Sasak’s culture, like a dove. This academic study of Sasak – Lombok shows the attraction of Islam, modernity, and even postmodernism as in Murahim sees Rudat from the perspective of tradition, Islam, and postmodernism. Satrya (2011) tends to the last position when seeing Rudat in the context of communication ethnography. Alaini (2015) tends to the previous pole against the issue. Alfarisi, Qodri, Yuniarni, and Muhimmah tend to the first pole. Meanwhile, Yudarta (& Pasek) tend to the third pole. The construction of Sasak-Lombok art in the decade of 2010 onward has varied perspectives depending on the angle used.

The Tuan Guru regime has determined the construction of Sasak – Lombok art to now. The system of Tuan Guru has arguably influenced the techniques used by researchers. Hunter (2004) asserted that the identity of modern Sasak is Islam. If the existence of Islam and the strengthening position of Tuan Guru’s leadership are resulting reactions toward the authority of nobility, the regime of Tuan Guru has then revived Sasak and Islam in Lombok, specifically in the decade following the year 2000. In the year 2000, a riot in January assigned the identity of Islam in Lombok to Sasak’s people (Fadjri, 2015; Kingsley, 2011). The election of a governor in 2008 was won by Tuan Guru who successfully controlled the riots that occurred (Kingsley, 2011). The strengthening of the position of Tuan Guru as a leader in Lombok has lead to the enhancement of an Islamic identity of Sasak – Lombok. Also, in that year, Islam became the primary context for interpreting the arts. The second context has been tourism.
The resurrection of Tuan Guru in national politics in West Nusa Tenggara lead to the economization of Lombok (Satrya, 2018). There is a program to visit Lombok-Sumbawa that is a part of this discourse (Mubarok, 2009). Islam and modernity appear to be working together to replace more traditional contexts and identities. Yet, traditional discourse is not static in its weakening. Qodri, Yuniarni, and Muhimmah's writings are the product of that traditional discourse. Wahono (2019) suggests a festival is included within the context of traditional art. Festivals are the product of popular culture. In that context, classic literature is popularized through the celebration and Islam and popular culture have become the new face of Sasak – Lombok art. For example, the Students’ Modern Theatre Festival of West Nusa Tenggara is a new means to popularise traditional art. The Students’ Modern Theatre Festival is also an effort to introduce students to more modern ways of life in West Nusa Tenggara (Satrya, 2017). The aim has been successfully implemented. The number of students in the theatre community in West Nusa Tenggara has increased immensely. Sociologically, theatre dominates the art market in West Nusa Tenggara revealing the popularity of theatre in West Nusa Tenggara, which is aesthetically designed (Satrya, 2016, 2018).

University Discourse about art in Lombok

Modern discourses produce art communities that are based on rationality. The conversation then forms theatres like Teater Putih and other theatres of students in universities in Lombok. University is also part of that discourse. The art communities at Mataram University aspire to produce modern art. Mataram University, through Teater Putih, defend modern aesthetics (Satrya HD, 2017). Hamzanwadi University also produces the arts and so influences knowledge about the arts.

Hamzanwadi University highlights the traditional arts of Lombok through the journal (Tumumatra) Sendratasik and student final assignment policy. The adopted traditional skills by the university are Amak Abir, Tari Dara Ngindang, and Tari Petuk. The conventional art was constructed as a classic performing art (Fajrianti & Imtihan, 2018; Yuniarni, 2019; Zuhri & Markarma, M. Ridwan Yuliatin, 2018).

Mataram University, through the scientific work of its lecturers, constructs traditional and Islamic arts (Murahin 2011a and 2011b, and Qodri 2018). Rudat tradition theatre interprets theatre in the context of tradition and Islam (Murahim, 2011a, 2011b). Meanwhile, Qodri (2018) placed culture as something perfect. The West Nusa Tenggara Nahdlatul Ulama University has not yet placed itself at the traditional, Islamic, or modern pole. Other universities in Lombok, besides the three universities mentioned above, do not participate in or produce knowledge about the arts in Lombok.

The art discourse of Mataram University moves between two poles. First, it runs to the mast of tradition through the work of its lecturers. Second, it moves to the modern pole, through the
members of Teater Putih (A student Activity Unit), whereas Hamzanwadi University is operating consistently within the pole of tradition. The art discourse outside universities is more varied than the art discourse inside universities. Teater Semesta, which was chaired by Antosa Rakatesa, succeeded in playing *The earthquake* by B. Soelarto. Teater Cadik performed the play *P(r)ethidium in Terminum* and *Sembah Ulun* in a non-realistic style (Sulistyo, 2009, p. 4). Teater Embrio Mataram, chaired by Agus Wintarno, explores combining traditional and modern art (Safarudin, 2009, p. 11).

The discourse was compared through the play *Satu Lawan Satu* (SatryaHD, 2011). The interpretation of Safarudin (2009), *Satu Lawan Satu* as a play was constructed in the aesthetics of modern theatre. The Kamar Mataram, chaired by Saepullah Sapturi, moves towards a more contextual theatre. If we look at the manuscripts of the plays that have been staged by the Teater Embrio and Teater Kamar, they are products of a modern discourse. Teater Embrio once performed *Malam Jahannam*, *Petang di Taman*, *Kebebasan Abadi*, *Insomnia*, *Dukun Palsu*, *Satu Lawan Satu*, *Akal-Akalan Cupak*, *Mahkamah*, and *Prita Istri Kita*. Most of the manuscripts are worked on in a realist style. Teater Kamar moves from realist theater to absurd theater. However, in the last two years, 2005-2006, Teater Kamar focused on traditional content mainly by raising the script of *Hikayat Gadjah Duduk* and *Ngulati Wangsa*. The first comes as social criticism, while the second returns to tradition by bringing up Lombok’s Jati Suara story. Such Teater Kamar tendencies are part of the way they survive. As is the trend of the Embrio Teater to choose to elevate tradition. The emergence of traditional content in the manuscripts staged by Teater Embrio and Teater Kamar is arguably due to the strong position of culture in government politics in West Nusa Tenggara, mainly when the Nobles lead the Head of Taman Budaya. The artists’ tendencies as represented by the Teater Kamar and Teater Embrio are a result of the effect of the theater environment in Indonesia. Modern Indonesian theatre is synonymous with two playwrights Rendra and Arifin C Noer. Both playwrights internalize elements of tradition into the modern consciousness (Timmerman, 2017). Riantiarno's modern Indonesian theatre is popular for its musical and caricature features (Timmerman, 2017).

Even though modern discourse dominates art production in Lombok, traditional discourse will also persist if it is marginalised. The art of *memaos* or often called ‘reading palm leaf’, and Sasak puppets are losing favour in the community. The MAOS program held by the West Nusa Tenggara Museum in 2014 found that there was no audience if students were not required to watch. Sasak puppet show in 2009, there is almost no discount if some artists do not appreciate the program of Culture Park. However, on the contrary, modern theatre with traditional content has succeeded in performing in urban communities. Those who follow the preferences of the market (often young people) such as The University of Mataram fill a theatre with spectators.

In the context of tourism, traditional arts are in a unique position. Their existence must be adjusted to the situation. If the artwork is presented to foreign guests then the duration must be tailored to the interests of guests and the government. The concept of art, needs, and context of
its use performs the concept of art from a modern perspective. Art in relation to tourism is no longer a ritual as it was initially in the life of the community. Rather, art is an item that has a sale value determined by market needs. Art as understood by artists presents another way to understand the problem, and art is present to find solutions (Sulistyo, 2016, p. 18). In that context, artists are present and involved. The concept of presence and involvement is an Arts concept in the modern view. Artists are involved in the problem, which provides them with an experience. Contemporary art offers the idea that being involved and experiencing the act of creating is the aim. Thus art in Lombok is a product of a modern discourse. A traditional arts discourse in Lombok is not without resistance. The West Nusa Tenggara State Museum held a temporary exhibition titled Islam in the Civilization of the West Nusa Tenggara Community on May 14-30, 2011. The presentation emphasized the Islamization of Lombok by Java (Fathurrahman, 2011, p. 5). Islam, in the context of this festival, is Islam in the Aristocratic sense.

Conclusion

In this article, the Sasak-Lombok discourse is discussed in relation to Islam and the modern discourse. Understanding the construction of the Sasak – Lombok community seniors, this conversation witnesses the shifting position of Sasak traditional art. Hamzanwadi University & Mataram University, together with other groups in the community including senior groups, are holding arts programs that are the product of multiple influences. the product of the two lectures and the mixing of the two conversations. Tuan Guru, as governing leader, arguably control production and the course of the performing arts through education grants and research funds. Thus the aesthetic direction chosen is determined by this current regime of independence. In the case of Lombok, the Tuan Guru government determines the course (education and research) of the performing arts and the performing arts of discourse. As a system, it creates its own opposition, and so a contradiction is occurring. Tuan Guru’s university (Hamzanwadi University) discusses traditional practice through the arts education curriculum.

This article is offered as material thought to the future design and direction of the Arts Education policy in Lombok, especially for East Lombok and the City of Mataram, whose position is very significant in the development of Art in Lombok. This article can also be used as a reflection in Lombok for the Ministry of Education at the government and local government level in Lombok. Art research in Lombok and Indonesia have to date generally ignored the sociology of art knowledge. Art and education research in Lombok and Indonesia little examined to date. Their role is taken for granted, despite the content and direction of research and education in Indonesia resulting from the construction and influence of a dominant governing regime in a certain period.
REFERENCES


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