

Symbolic Interpretation of Guest Welcome Songs in Timor Society

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ABSTRACT : When a symbol is presented, the symbol represents a picture of the meaning intended by the author. The author must understand and be able to feel the meaning in order to interpret a symbol. One of the symbolic interpretations in the arts in the Timorese community, especially Malacca, is the Elele song. The Elele song in ancient times functioned as a song to welcome heroes who returned from the battlefield. While today this song is performed to welcome respected guests, or at national holidays. This is interesting because each verse that is sung will be adjusted to the conditions or activities carried out. The scalpel used to examine the meaning of the symbolic interpretation of the Elele song is Semiotics and Ethnomusicology as an effort to find the meaning of each verse of the Elele song. The method used is a qualitative method to describe the results of the study. Based on the results of the study, the researcher found material objects in the form of poetry, rhymes, instruments and even dances. The poetry and rhymes by the traditional elders describe the appreciation of the guests who come. The accompanying instruments that support the Elele song are Raraun and Bereca. The Malacca community is familiar with the Elele song, and the community is reviving this art by passing it on to the next generation.

KEYWORDS - Symbolic interpretation, welcoming guests, elele singing

I. INTRODUCTION

Art is a reflection of civilization that continuously influences human life. Geertz (Rohidi, 2021) states that humans live side by side with symbols that have implicit meanings that are assimilated and form shared knowledge in society. Nadel (Subhan and Funck, 2019) argues that creative authors bring literary works to life through their interpretive thinking. The words in the lyrics are sometimes difficult to interpret because the author does not directly convey his ideas directly, but rather by using symbols. The symbols used make literary works come alive. A symbol is a form that can be read and has a certain meaning, for example rain can be considered a symbol because it symbolizes tears or sadness. Flowers are interpreted as a symbol of beauty because flowers depict the beauty of nature. This is in line with Rohidi's opinion (2021) which states that culture is used by humans as a symbolic system in society. When a symbol is presented, the symbol represents a picture of the meaning intended by the author. The author must understand and be able to feel the meaning in order to interpret a symbol.

Kaelan (Utari and Kadir, 2021) stated that interpretation is related to the objective re-expression of history and life. In other words, interpretation can be said to be a depiction of information according to a specific collection of symbols. The depiction carried out is in the form of re-expression of expressions in the form of values and aesthetics as a representation or identity that exists in a community group.

Malaka Regency is one of the regencies in East Nusa Tenggara Province. In Malaka Regency, there are many forms of traditional arts that can be found, such as the Akabeluk song (Jefri Soli Kabnani, Natonis and Sheldena, 2020). In addition to the Akabeluk song, there is another song, namely the Elele song. In ancient times, the Elele song was one of the songs to welcome heroes who returned from the battlefield. While today this song is performed to welcome respected guests, or at national holidays. The Elele song is sung by 3-4 men, one of whom acts as the soloist who will sing along with the poetry while the choir members will continue or repeat the lyrics of the soloist's song. Elele's singing is accompanied by traditional music called Bareka (a type of 3-stringed violin) and 2-3 "Raraun" (resembling a 4-stringed guitar). This song is sung melodiously. Previously, several studies related to culture in Malaka Regency have been conducted. The first study was conducted by Fouk, Konradus and Liliweri (2019) with the title The Meaning of Symbols in the Hamis Batar Tradition (Corn Gratitude) in the Tetun Tribe, Wehali Village, Central Malaka District, Malaka Regency. The results of the study showed that the equipment used in this tradition is a symbol that represents an offering of gratitude to Maromak (God). The second study was conducted by Kabnani, Natonis and Sheldena, (2020) with the title Ethnomusicological Study of Akabeluk Songs: Duality of Friendship Songs in the Past in Umalawain Village, Weliman District, Malaka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara.

The results of this study indicate that this song is used in two different atmospheres, namely an atmosphere of gratitude and sorrow. Meanwhile, the meaning contained in this song is a joke, a symbol of togetherness and also as an expression of someone's feelings. The third study, by Seran and Bere (2024) on Efforts to Inherit the Likurai Dance Tradition as a Form of Local Wisdom in Malaka Regency. The results obtained were that in ancient times, this dance was a dance performed to welcome heroes who returned from war by bringing the enemy's head as a symbol of victory. While today, the Likurai dance is evidence of the close unity of the Malaka Regency community which continues to be passed down to the younger generation, both in the form of dance and the values contained therein.

Based on previous research related to culture in Malaka Regency, it can be seen that there has been no specific research on Elele songs and interesting things about the creation of song lyrics tend to change. Therefore, the author focuses this study on the symbolic interpretation of the Elele song in Angkaes Village, Malaka Regency.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical basis is used as a scalpel in building theories and ideas in the research to be studied. To answer this, researchers use two (2) theories, including the following:

Ethnomusicology Allan P. Merriam: Ethnomusicology is a field of science that describes the essential elements found in certain ethnic music, whether in the form of form, sound, musical characteristics and distinctive features possessed by a culture or music of a region. Ethnomusicology is a field science, whose object of study is the art of music as a physical, psychological, aesthetic, and cultural phenomenon. According to Merriam (Nettl, 2012) there are six main areas when studying music culture, namely instruments, lyrics in a song, typology and classification of regional or local music, the role and status of artists/musicians, the function of music in relation to other cultural aspects and finally music as a creative activity. Ethnomusicology as a science that studies the relationship between humans and culture in which there are physical and socio-cultural aspects such as community culture, how society applies culture both ethnically and traditionally. The areas of research on ethnomusicology according to Myres (Zed Mezstika, 2018) include original music, musical changes, music as a symbol, the universality of music, the function of music in society and comparison of musical systems.

Discussing ethnomusicology will be closely related to musicology and anthropology because ethnomusicology as the science of music in culture (Merriam, 1964). These three things cannot be separated and support each other. Ethnomusicology as a science is able to bring different definitions and is able to reflect the culture of existing communities, through music and its implementation in community life in a region. Because in the study of ethnomusicology refers to the relationship with aspects of human characteristics in music. Then the music is collected and analyzed as a characteristic of a cultural society. According to Allan. P. Merriam in his book *Anthropology of Music* explains that in conducting research on music and culture is able to show a comprehensive view of culture as an organism, while research on music as a culture implies that a cultured society takes cultural theory and then captures it in the music itself. The relationship between humans, music and culture has led researchers to explore the cultural side of society in interpreting music in their lives, especially for the people of Malacca, because in a musical society, especially in singing the Elele song, the people themselves are aware of the habits through social interpretations carried out in society, especially in interpreting the lyrics of the Elele song. Ethnomusicology theory helps researchers see music from every element such as melody, harmony, rhythm, lyrics, even the instruments used, rhythmic patterns, but does not eliminate the cultural influence of Elele singing from preparation to the musical process, the musical behavior of the Belu community and the behavior of the community in the arts.

Fredinand De Saussure's Semiotic Theory: Semiotics is the science that studies a sign. Signs can be a medium for people to communicate, through what is around them. When associated with music, communication symbols for people can be through songs in the form of lyrics/song verses, musical instruments and even rituals that involve musical art in them. However, people often have their own understanding of the meaning of a sign with various reasons behind it. Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) in (Ambarwati et al., 2019) explained semiotics in the *Course in General Linguistics* as a field of science that studies the role of signs as part of social life. Implicit in this definition is a relation, that if a sign is part of the applicable social life.

There is a sign system and there is a social system, both of which are interconnected with each other. In this case, Saussure wants to highlight social conventions which regulate the social use of signs, namely choosing the combination and use of signs in a certain way so that they have social meaning and value (Sobur, 2016). Central to

Saussure's theory is language. Language is a system of signs, and each sign is arranged into two parts, namely the signifier (signifier) and the signified (signified). A sign is a unity of a form of signifier with an idea or signified. In other words, markers are "meaningful sounds" or "meaningful squiggles". So, signifiers are the material aspects of language: what is said or heard and what is written or read. Meanwhile, a signified is a mental image, thought, or concept (Bertens, 2001:180, in Sobur, 2016)). If translated into this research, the marker or object of research is the Elele song that is heard and uses the regional language of Malacca. While the marker is a description of the song lyrics which are then interpreted and given meaning.

The lyrics of a song are a person's expression in expressing their feelings. To be interesting, the creator/speaker will use language and meaning that is interesting to listen to. A similar thing was also said by Jan van Luxemburg (1989) in (Ambarwati et al., 2019) explaining that the definition of poetry texts does not only include types of literature but also expressions that are proverbial, moral messages, political-social slogans, even prayers and requests. In its function as a communication medium, poetry has signs that are told through song lyrics, especially in the song Elele. The effort to study the elele poem using this semiotic theory is able to provide meaning in terms of music, especially in terms of understanding a song poem, and helps researchers see from a different perspective how society itself is able to interpret songs and poems in everyday life in the Malacca community.

III. METHOD

This research that discusses the symbolic interpretation of the Elele song uses a qualitative descriptive research method, because this study discusses in depth the situation, condition or circumstances that occur naturally through a cultural process that is passed down from generation to generation which is described directly and not in the form of numbers except for song symbols (Ismayani in Kondoiyu, Sunarmi & Latuni, 2022: 1800). More precisely, research with a phenomenological approach to the phenomena that occur based on narratives in the form of Elele songs by the Angkaes community. Social phenomena resulting from the experience of the diversity of society, especially in various events, are a distinctive characteristic of the community. Through the distinctive characteristics of the collaboration of songs, playing musical instruments and dances that are combined into one presentation of the performance, it is easy for researchers to see symbolic interactions through the songs that are performed and how the messages are conveyed.

The research location is in Angkaes Village, Malaka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. The regency has a variety of singing cultures and the most unique one is the Angkaes community who have Elele songs as complete songs with accompanying musical instruments and dances. This community can also be found at any time and there are no sacred binding requirements but are dynamic. The data sources in this research are everything that is used to obtain information related to the problem being studied. Sugiyono (2018: 456) said that there are two types of data sources, namely Primary Data including data sources from Elele song lyrics that are directly given to researchers and Secondary Data containing data that can be obtained from the Angkaes community through intermediaries, including documentation and intermediaries. The data collection technique is carried out through three stages starting from participant observation, interviews with one of the founders or leaders of the community and documentation, while the data presentation technique is carried out from data reduction, data presentation and data verification through observation, and data triangulation is carried out while the researcher is in the field.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the Elele Song research in the Malacca community present an artistic experience that is interspersed with welcoming pantun and there are songs accompanied by traditional music. Elele Song uses Raraun and Bereca instruments. In addition to the song, there is a dance to welcome guests so that the art contains aspects of performance because it uses several artistic elements in it. The function of the Elele song used to be as a means of entertainment, the Malacca community considered that the Elele song could match young men and women. However, over time the Elele song became a symbol both as a secular and profane art. One of them is as a song to welcome guests. The existence of the Elele song in Malacca is rarely sung because the regeneration process of musicians has stopped and the difficulty of "competing" with modern music. The discussion of Elele singing in relation to ethnomusicology covers many things, including: material objects, musical forms (music and dance), symbolic meanings/interpretations that exist in the community related to Elele art, and the artists and performances that are presented.

Material Objects in Elele Chanting :

Pantun and Elele Song Lyrics; Elele songs use the local language of Malacca or usually called Tetun. Elele song lyrics are always adjusted to the event or celebration that will be held. The elele song that is sung is usually

prepared by a poetry guide, there are no specific criteria for someone to guide/sing an elele song. However, in the study, researchers analyzed trying to see the lyrics of elele that are general and have been sung often.

Musical Instruments in Elele Singing; the musical instruments used to accompany elele singing are bereca and raraun. Before using raraun and bereca, the community used woven gewang leaves as accompaniment, although not tuned, the rhythmic pattern played was able to build an atmosphere for the community to dance and sing elele art. The traditional musical instrument of the Malacca community used to accompany elele singing is Rarauna. Raraun is included in the Chordophone group (chordophone) which is a group of musical instruments that produce sound from the vibration of stretched strings or wires, for example a guitar. Raraun is similar to a guitar but only has 3-4 strings, but what is often found in Malacca is 3 strings. The raw material for making it comes from "dig (ai dig)" wood because according to the community, this raw material is able to make the raraun musical instrument last a long time and does not rot quickly.



Figure 1. *Traditional musical instrument of the Malacca Community "Raraun"*

Raraun has 3 or 4 strings, in research the community uses *Raraun* with 3 strings, each of which has a basic tone, string 1 = Gb, string 2 = D and string 3 = D (the difference of 1 octave is on the 2nd and 3rd strings). *Raraun* cannot be tuned again because the tone tuner is only done when the musical instrument is made, it is fixed and cannot be rotated. The way to play *raraun* is by scratching it with the characteristics of the Timor community. The two same basic tones (for example like D) are called the parent (inan) and the remaining middle child (oan) and small child (alin). In addition to *raraun*, *bereca* is one of the accompanying instruments for elele singing. The Malacca community calls it *bereca/viol/violin*. *Bereca* when viewed looks like a violin. The way to play it is also by rubbing it. The bow/bow for rubbing used to use a horse's tail but because there were no horses so they only used strings, but what researchers found was that the bow/bow used strings that were arranged as much as possible to be made into a bow. The number of strings on the *bereca* is four and the *bereca* has been passed down from generation to generation for approximately 100 years. The Malacca community admits that since the Timor region was colonized by the Dutch, the influence of the *bereca* musical instrument has existed and become one of the traditional music of the Malacca community. conclusion section must be included and should indicate clearly the advantages, limitations, and possible applications of the paper. Although a conclusion may review the main points of the paper, do not replicate the abstract as the conclusion. A conclusion might elaborate on the importance of the work or suggest applications and extensions.



Figure 2. *Musical Instruments Accompanying Elele singing "Bereca/Viol/Violin"*

Dance in the Elele Song; the elele dance is danced along with the elele song. This dance is usually danced by Malacca women and men. The dance has a floor pattern forming rows and the movements that are danced tend to be lilting but agile. The dancers in the elele song wear traditional Malacca clothing.



Figure 3. *Dance in Elele Song*

The elele song is the identity of the Malacca community because it is an art that is still used by the community for entertainment events, welcoming guests and is often used in sacred church activities. The lyrics of the song are sung in general, the lyrics are adjusted to the needs, and according to the source.

Lyrics in the Elele Song as a Message; The elele lyrics contain their own message. The message of the elele song describes the appreciation of the community for the guests who come. It begins with chanting pantun, then continues with singing the elele song. The lyrics convey the message that the community represented by the team of musicians and singers has received guests. The Malacca community sings elele with a little "koa" or another term for shouting, meaning as a warning or something important, it can inform local residents that there is something important and people will attend the event.

Elele Singing Accompanying Instruments; One of the functions of traditional music is as entertainment and dance accompaniment. The function of raraun and bereca musical instruments for the Malacca community was also as entertainment in the past. In the past, people only danced accompanied by musical instruments at traditional events or parties, but for reasons of entertainment, several young men and women met and found their soul mates. This musical instrument played a role as an entertainer for people in ancient times to relieve fatigue when gardening or working, they would use the healing moment by gathering and then dancing and singing accompanied by the musical instrument.

Elele Performing Arts are an Important Part of Malacca Society; The artists in elele singing are those who have experience in this art. The Malacca community, which in several villages still adheres to a matrilineal system, in fact women take over in several systems, especially in the arts. One of them is in likurai, in the gong beating event. Similarly, elele which is a performing art that contains elements of art such as dance, music and drama (initial pantun) provides space not only for matrilineal but also patrilineal. All groups are involved in it so that this elele singing has a positive effect not only for the community but also for everyone who watches the performance.

V. CONCLUSION

The identity of the Malacca community is the Elele song because it has become an art that is still used by the community for entertainment events, welcoming guests and is often used in sacred church activities. The song lyrics are sung in general, the lyrics are adjusted to the needs, and use the Malacca regional language or woven language with accompanying musical instruments. Symbolically, the Elele lyrics contain messages describing the community's appreciation for guests who come. Pantun, musical accompaniment and dancers also give meaning to welcoming guests depending on the purpose of their arrival.

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