

THE HISTORY OF *KAWITAN* DANCE IN ARISTOCRACY PRIANGAN ERA

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengungkap perjalanan sejarah kemunculan tari Kawitan di masyarakat pada era bangsawan di Priangan. Tari Kawitan merupakan salah satu jenis tari Keurseus yang sangat digemari pengikutnya. Tari Kawitan biasanya dibawakan oleh penari yang memiliki kemampuan menari pada tingkat mahir karena memiliki kesulitan tertentu. Artinya, penari harus mampu memunculkan dinamika dalam 3 level ciri musik yang berbeda dan terkesan mampu memunculkan karakter yang berbeda. Tarian ini lahir karena para penari yang terampil ingin menampilkan tarian khusus yang mungkin tidak dapat dilakukan oleh penari pemula dengan baik. Permasalahan yang terungkap adalah bagaimana awal kehadiran tari kawitan dan bagaimana perkembangan tari Kawitan serta alasannya, namun Kawitan hanya bisa disajikan dengan baik oleh para penari yang sudah mahir. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode sejarah dengan tahapan heuristik, kritik, interpretasi dan historiografi.

Kata kunci: tari Kawitan, sejarah, aristokrasi, priangan.

Abstract

This research reveals the historical journey of the emergence of the Kawitan dance among the public in the aristocratic era in Priangan. Kawitan dance is one type of Keurseus dance which is very popular with the *congregation*. The Kawitan dance is usually presented by dancers who have the ability to dance at an advanced level because they have certain difficulties. That is, the dancer must be able to bring out the dynamics in 3 levels of different musical characteristics and seem to be able to bring out different characters. This dance was born because the skilled dancers wanted to come up with a special dance that novice dancers might not be able to dance properly. The problems that were revealed were how the early presence of the Kawitan dance in the tribe of the congregation and how the development of the Kawitan dance and why, but Kawitan can only be presented properly by advanced dancers. The method used for this study is the historical method with heuristic, criticism, interpretation and historiography stages.

Key words : *kawitan* dance, history, aristocracy, priangan.

INTRODUCTION

Kawitan dance is one of the Keurseus dance genres composed by R. Sambas Wirakusumah in 1920. The source of its creation is the dance *tayuban*. Keurseus comes from the Dutch language, namely which *cursus* means learning by using certain methods [11] (Ramlan, 2009: 49-50). It was emphasized by Ruslana who stated that "Keurseus dance was specifically created as a type of male dance, in principle it is a new manifestation of social dance or entertainment for the aristocrats called *Tayuban*" [10] (2008: 21). In the Kawitan Dance presentation, three human characters are revealed, namely smooth, lush, and dashing.

During the aristocratic era, Keurseus dance became an important part of the life of the *congregation*. Men, men and men, are obliged to dance and even become one of the requirements for becoming an official. This means that the position of dance in the life of society at that time is very important. From this phenomenon there are several problems to be raised, namely first, how is the process of the presence of the aristocratic middle kawitan dance? second, is there a form of embodiment of the character of the Priangan Aristocrat society in the elements of the Kawitan Dance? And how is the correlation between the creation of the Kawitan Dance and the Aristocrats as the supporting community? To find and uncover these events, the researchers used historical methods with a social science approach and used symbol theory that is relevant to the purpose of this study. In this study, to find a relationship between the presence of the Kawitan Dance with the characteristics of the Priangan Aristocrat society, so that textual and contextual studies are needed.

The method used in this research is the historical method. The stages are heuristic, namely tracing and collecting historical sources; then crit-

icism by selecting and verifying and testing the validity and accountability of historical sources; then interpretation by analyzing and interpreting the facts that have been found; and finally, historiography, which is retelling the events found in written form.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Dance at Era Aristocracy

Group aristocrat or in terms Sunda also known as *marvelous*, is one of the popular vocabulary for the people of Sunda, to appoint one of the layers of society based on law when it has a variety of privileges. Aristocrats were thought to have had a special, noble view of life. That is, the *takers* are those who have to be served by all their needs (by others) so that their life becomes comfortable [13] (Lubis, 1998: vii). Menak in Priangan, has something to do with Javanese culture, namely a group of local aristocracy consisting of the Regent, the Regent's subordinate and his relatives. The Bupatis in Priang were appointed and regarded as high ranking officials of the Mataram kingdom. The Sultan of Mataram divides the territory of Priangan into Regency Regencies, each headed by a Regent which in the traditional Javanese government system (Yogyakarta and Surakarta) means the position or designation for high ranking Palace officials. Thus the Regent in Priangan is the hand of the Mataram kingdom's power by imitating all the lifestyle of the ruler. Since that time and also in the later days everything was Mataram-style: the system of government, customs, symbols and ceremonies were inseparable parts of the positions and lifestyle of the regents in Priangan. As a local aristocrat, the Regent is the carrier of the Palace culture in their respective regions" [13] (Lubis, 1998: 28).

Group also has *alife style* special which in-

cludes the giving of names and titles, standardization of residence, use of ethics and language style, clothing, eating, education, marriage, food habits, religion, ceremonies, and arts. The religious aspect is considered very important for the people *Menak*, because religion is believed to be something that brings people to goodness and truth. The religious system in the past is still very strong with the ceremonies or rituals, until the century regents in the Priangan region embraced Islam. The understanding of religion among *Menak* is highly prioritized in relation to his social strata in society. A *Priyayi* must be a good role model for other communities, so it is compulsory for the *Menak* people to study and deepen religion. Religious activities began to increase since the early 20th century.

The Birth of The Kawitan Dance

Year 1920 was the beginning of the development of Sundanese dance in the Priangan region, because in that year several dances with choreography were created that were structured with standard motion patterns. "In the development of Sundanese dance repertoire, Keurseus Dance has opened a new history at the beginning of the twentieth century, where the presentation is relatively very quiet among the middle class and the general public" [12] (Tarya 2016: 5). Previously, among the aristocrats and the Sundanese people, the more dominant was ritual and social dance which were spontaneous and improvisational in nature, while dance that was performance was lacking. In connection with this, in 1920 a descendant of Wedana Tanjungsari named R. Sambas Wirakusumah composed a dance that originated from the dance movements of *Tayuban* among the *men* known as *Ibing Keurseus*. This dance has been structured and has movement patterns standard, so that it meets the criteria to be used as learning material.

As explained by Moh Tarya in his book entitled "*Tari Gawil Naek Kering II Monggawa*", that the Keurseus dance has a certain arrangement in such a way as to make it easier for those who teach and be taught in exercises, and also how to teach it starting regularly [12] (2016: 6).

Keurseus dance or also known as *ibing Keurseus*, is a development of the *Tayub / Tayuban* dance which is a social dance among nobles. The meaning of Keurseus in the book *Keurseus Dance* by Lalan Ramlan is extracted from the research results of R. Oe. Yoesoef Tedjasoekmana, as follows: "The word Keurseus from Dutch *Cursus* (pronounced Keurseus), *Pemahaman* against term course that means learning how metode guided, systematic, and so forth, then became a term more familiar be another designation of dance *the new style Tayub*, namely becoming a keurseus [11] (2009: 49-50).

Ibing Tayub is the forerunner or the basis for the formation of the Keurseus Dance genre, therefore in the discussion of *ibing Keurseus* Of course, would be optimal if his investigation was started from the problems related to *Tayuban* in the past when this art reached a high level of popularity at that time. *Tayuban* is an artistic tradition that is usually practiced by the group *folk*, held in district pavilions in almost all areas of Priangan. Events are *Tayuban* held when there are important events or events, both state events or family events. *Tayuban* is a *kalagenan* /entertainment program, which existed after the formation of the district government in the Priangan area. The popularity of *tayuban* in Priangan began in the 18th century. As stated by Anis Sujana in his book, this written data on the popularity of *tayuban* in Priangan has emerged at the time of the 18th Regent of Sumedang, namely Pangeran Suria Kusumah Adinata (1836-1882) (Sujana, 2002: 9), and the peak

of popularity *tayuban* in Bandung Regency was during the Regent RAA Martanagara (1893-1918) followed by the Regent of RHAA Wiranatakusumah V (1920-1942).

Art is *Tayuban* so widespread and widespread throughout the cities and districts in Priangan, and often appears in celebratory parties such as: weddings, circumcisions, state activities, and so on. The development of *Tayuban* is inseparable from the role of the Cirebon Mask puppeteers, as evidenced by both those taking place in the district and outside the regency, inviting them to perform as well as to teach priyayi or to *conquer* at that time.

In 1903, R. Gandakusumah invited Puppeteer Topeng Wentar to the Tasikmalaya Hall to teach. R. Tjetje Somantri together with Asep Berlian and Abdul Syukur in the 1918s did the same thing. Similarly, R. Sambas Wirakusumah in Rancaekek held a Cirebon Mask dance exercise which lasted until the 1970s, RI Maman Suryaatmada, R. Nugraha Sudiredja, and Enoch Atmadibrata admitted that they had regularly invited Mask dancers of Wentar descent (Ami, Suji), and Dasih) for months to teach dance [11] (Ramlan, 2009: 23). Regarding with this, Edy Sedyawati noted that in the quarter 20th century, Juragan Rangga from Sumedang gathered several famous Cirebon Mask dancers to compose a dance which is an excerpt from several Cirebon Mask dance performers. Likewise, what was done by the descendant of Wedana Tanjungsari named R. Sambas Wirakusumah in 1920, namely arranging dances that were derived from the dance movements of the *Tayuban* among the *men* known as *Ibing Keurseus*. This dance has been structured and has movement patterns standard, so that it meets the criteria to be used as learning material.

Ibing Keurseus is a dance genre that con-

sists of various types of dances. Several types of male dances that are included in the Keurseus dance genre include; dance *Lenyepan*, dance *Gawil*, dance *Kawitan*, *Gunung Sari* dance *Kastawa*, *Kering 2 Monggawa*, and *Kering 3 Ngalanga / Totopengan*. As emphasized by Iyus Rusliana in the book *Creation Dance Sunda* states that "Dance Keurseus specifically created as a kind of dance son, in principle, is the embodiment of new social dance or entertainment nobility (*kalangenan menak*) called *tayuban*" [11] (2008: 21).

One of the dances in the Keurseus dance genre includes the Kawitan dance. Kawitan dance was composed by R. Sambas Wirakusumah in the 1920s. This dance depicts a *marvelous*, or nobles authoritative, charismatic, and virtuous noble, character dance, *lenyep*, *ladak*, and *monggawa lungguh*" [1] (1999:42). The public in general knows Keurseus Dance, especially the Kawitan Dance, only as a performance dance in the form seen today, without knowing its background, how it was formed; as well as the symbols contained in the dance. For this reason, the community and the world of education need a means that can fulfill the knowledge of the dance. This research will answer how the elements of motion that exist in the Kawitan Dance, is there a correlation between the form and character of the Priangan aristocratic society as a manifestation in it.

An art object has no meaning if it has not been communicated to the audience. When the dance as an art form *dipertunjukkan* an order to re-established a communication, will appear various interpretations. Aesthetic communication arises based on the subjectivity of the audience's aesthetic experience of the dance they see. If someone already knows the background of the dance, their imagination will appear based on the events behind them.

A creator creates a work with a purpose. The

task of a creator is to translate the content into choreography as well as the supporting elements of other works of art. A dancer is tasked with communicating the dance he is performing so that an aesthetic sense will be manifested to the audience which is intertwined during the show. Aesthetic communication in a performing art will reveal a subjective perception and interpretation that is free but still directly related to the experience and aesthetic understanding of the artwork.

Establishment Dance Dance Keurseus especially Kawitan is the result of creativity R. Sambas Wirakusumah abackground *marvelous* or belonged to Aristocracy. The choreography arrangement in the dance originates from the dance movements found in the Cirebon and Mask Dance *Tayuban* which are popular among the *folk*, so it is possible that the Kawitan Dance embodies the character of the Sundanese Aristocrat society.

To read the concept of thinking about this symbol, it is necessary to understand in advance about the Aristocrats in relation to R. Sambas Wirakusumah, namely the composer of the Kawitan Dance who is a member of the Aristocrats who his role as *supports animals symbollicium*, as well as as a guardian of the conservative values of his class. The aristocrat group has *life style* a special which includes the giving of names and titles, standardization of residence, the use of ethics and language styles, ways of dressing, eating, education, marriage, eating habits, religion, ceremonies, and arts. The religious aspect is considered very important for the people *Menak*, because religion is believed to be something that brings people to goodness and truth. The religious system in the past was still very thick with ceremonies or rituals, until in the 19th century the Regent of the Regent in the Priangan region embraced Islam. The understanding of religion among *Menak* is highly prioritized

in relation to his social strata in society. A Priyayi must be a good role model for other communities, so it is compulsory for the *Menak* people to study and deepen religion. Religious activities began to increase since the beginning of the 20th century.

A person who has a view of life will usually apply his view of life in a lifestyle. Likewise, what the Sundanese aristocrats said was *appealing* to create a view of life into their behavior, one of which was artistic behavior. So do not be surprised if in the form of artistic expression there is a manifestation of his view of life. Likewise what happened in the process of forming the Kawitan Dance. Conservative values that tend to be contextual are poured into more innovative manifestation media as a form or representation of the conservative values of aristocrats by R. Sambas Wirakusumah.

CONCLUSION

From this explanation there is an Ariadne thread that connects the symbols in the Kawitan dance and the Sundanese Aristocrat culture (Priangan). The correlation between the creation of the Kawitan dance and the Aristocrats Priangan is a *keurseus dance* placed as a text which is a view of aesthetic and ethical forms, from the context, namely the people who *perceive* Priangan as the people of its inhabitants. Culture and values contained in the aristocrats are conservative manifestations, while Kawitan Dance is an innovative manifestation.

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