

The Symbolic Meaning of Kuadai Dance Performance in the Society of Semende Lampung

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Abstrac

Kudai dance as a medium of collective expression of Semende society is identical with the women strength as the source of life. In the aspect of its performance, It contains social interaction through the symbols that is expressed through the aesthetics of the female body. The purpose of the article is to explain the symbolic meaning of Kuadai dance performance expressed by Semende society in Lampung. This research used qualitative method with interdisciplinary approach. The data collection used the technique of observation, interview, and documentation. The data validity was based on the credibility criteria with triangulation technique. The data analysis used the procedure of dance research by Gertrude Prokosch Kurath that is focused on dance analysis especially on symbol and meaning in Kuadai dance. The results showed that Kuadai dance is a form of tradition reality imitation which exists among Semende society as an agrarian society that out forward the tradition of tunggu tubang (the first daughter as a shelter and a manager of family's treasure. The personality of tunggu tubang that is full of patience, consistence, and responsibility is manifested through the Kuadai dance movements. The plate as property is a symbol of a respect as well as a representation of a woman that should be treated gently, carefully, lovingly, and with sacred. The dominant floor pattern symbolizes the Semende society that always respects the customs' regulation. The dance accompaniment with slow tempo symbolizes Semende society that is full of tranquility and togetherness.

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INTRODUCTION

The Semende society (JemeSemende) which inhabits parts of Lampung Province is part of the ethnic Malay migrants from South Sumatra. One of the cultural elements expressed by the community is the Kuadai dance. Kuadai Dance is a traditional dance as a representation of the daily activities of women in Semende. This dance is performed as a tribute to the great guest by using the plate as the main property. This dance prioritizes the inner strength that comes from within the body of female dancers. The Kuadai Dance contains static movements that unite the balance between hand and foot movement when using a plate as a property.

For Semende people, Kuadai dance is not only as a means of communication but also as a media of collective expression especially for women that are identical with the source of life and fertility. (interview with Karnate, 2018). Hartono (2016:36) also reveals that in essence dance serves as a medium of self expression that departs from ideas, experiences, circumstances and feelings. Some aspects of Kuadai dance performances such as motion, property, accompaniment, floor patterns and clothing symbolize the rhythm of Semende's women life.

Typical symbols of Kuadai dance are forms created by Semende society, with a variety of abstract nature, so that the community gives meaning in every form of symbol that he created. Interpretation of the meaning of Kuadai dance is a form of dance interpretation as a cultural product that is closely related to social life of society, this is because the dance is a representation of the ideology and habits that exist in the daily life of society. (Indrayuda, 2015). In line with the above statement Kuadai dance is seen as an integral part of human existence because, concerning one of the basic human needs of the symbol. (Pujiyanti, 2013).

Kuadai Dance as a result of a culture that is rich with meaning and value can be called as a symbol system. Related to that, Hadi (2005:22) views dance as a symbol system that is a mental representation of the subject and a means of

human conception of a message to be understood. By interpreting the symbol of a cultural phenomenon that is presented in the Kuadai dance, it will reveal the meaning behind the real and abstract phenomena. The meaning of symbols is the highest cultural values in a dance.

In order to reveal the Kuadai dance behind the symbols in this study, it was made an in-depth observation to find the meaning contained in the symbolic actions, and then will bring knowledge about the behavior of the symbol user community. Langer (2006:6) views symbols as signs with meaning from symbols and meanings. According to Langer, if symbols are revealed, the meaning will occur. Danesi (2010:38) also reveals that the meanings in symbolism are built through social agreements, or through channels of historical tradition.

As a disclosure of expression, Kuadai dance has its own features. Kuadai dance performance is an interpretation of the culture and traditions of agrarian society. The culture behind the use of dishes as property. Dishes developed into a media that has symbolic values, eventually created a dance performance known as the Kuadai dance (interview with Suryana, 2018).

Refer to Blanariu (2013) based on his research results revealed that the cultural system of conventions in dance can be interpreted when choreographic signs are encoded. These codes represent the "natural" spontaneity of movement and feeling in repeated expression systems. In line with Kusumastuti (2009) also reveals that the symbol has a form and content called meaning. Next, Ardin et al. (2017) in their research reveals that art grows and evolves as a result of the expression and creativity of its owner community.

With regard to the phenomenon, it can be assumed that in Kuadai dance there is a social interaction through symbols expressed through the aesthetics of the female body. Based on the empirical facts and the results of previous research and assumptions above, this research is trying to reveal in depth the symbolic meaning contained in the Kuadai dance

performance. Furthermore, this study aims to describe the symbolic meaning of Kuadai dance performances expressed by the Semende community of Lampung.

METHODS

The method used in this research is qualitative method with interdisciplinary approach. This research was conducted in Sekipi Village, Abung Tinggi district, North Lampung Regency, with the target being studied namely the symbolic meaning of Kuadai dance performance. Data collection was done by observation, interview, and documentation. Observations were used to observe directly Kuadai dance performances in Sekipi Village, the role of actors and dance teachers, the daily activities of the Semende community and the general overview of the research sites. Interviews were conducted with dancers, dance teachers, traditional leaders, art coordinators, and Semende community in Sekipi Village. Document study is done by collecting data in the form of photos & videos of Kuadai dance performances, writings or news about Kuadai dance, general overview of research location and research resource data. Data validity technique is based on credibility criterion with triangulation technique. Data analysis techniques used refers to the dance research procedure by Gertrude Prokosch Kurath which focuses on dance analysis especially on the symbols and meanings contained in Kuadai dance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Entry of Ethnic Semende to Lampung Area

Semende community (Jeme Semende) who inhabited parts of Lampung Province originally came from the Pasemah plateau, or more specifically in the Peraudipe (Perdipe) area of South Sumatra province (Suan et al. 2007). Semende broke away from the Pasemah group at the end of the 18th century before the 19th century. Exactly when the Dutch Colonial

entered conquering the area of Pasemah and Semende around the year 1864-1866. Since the arrival of the Dutch, then in 1867 Semende began to migrate towards the south to Lampung province and also Bengkulu. Semende Migration to Lampung Province through Beringin Island and Pulau Panggung Island to Rebang Kasui, Way Besi, Mutar Alam, Ulak Rengas, Ulu Semong, Sekampung, Talang Padang and Ketapang. According to Dutch records in 1930, the population of Semende ethnic settled in Lampung totaled 10,499 inhabitants (Madrie. 1992). The entry of Semende community to the various regions bring many traditions and art and culture one of them is Kuadai dance. Currently, Kuadai dance is developing in Lampung province such as Sekipi Lampung Utara, Jabung Lampung Timur and Pekon Muara Dua Ulubelu Tanggamus.

The Performance of Kuadai Dance

Kuadai Dance as a performance is a means of communication and expression of a Semende woman. As Jauzuli (2016) states that dance as a repertoire or a presentation of a performance that is the result of a creative process as a communication of valuable experience. Kuadai Dance is a single offerings dance performed by Semende women. This dance is shown as a form of respect and manifestation of public gratitude to the king or leader. At the beginning, Kuadai dance is a custom that was offered to the God with a special ritual. The performance held with ritual procession of 'bakar kemenyan' by providing seven-coloured flowers, five-plate white rice porridge, and special prayer to The Creator.

In the time of the Sriwijaya kingdom, Kuadai dance was no longer shown to be a means of ritual, but had turned the function as an offerings dance to the king. As an offerings dance, Kuadai dance was originally danced in the Kedai building which is located in Sriwijaya kingdom, so that Semende people closely call it as dancing in Kedai or Kuadai dance. The word Kuadai itself for the Semende community is synonymous with the word 'one', which is

reflected in the movement of the thumb as the main movement in Kuadai dance.

Kuadai dance is danced by women singly. Kuadai Dance has a structure of movement that is assembled into one unified whole. There are two structures of movement in the Kuadai dance performance that is adat sembah (put two hands face to face together in front of the chest) movement and dik'kak peccah with a series of sembah movement, sejurai, bai tangan, and jainjit. The movement of the thumb of the hand supporting the plate is the main movement that characterizes the Kuadai dance, and can be classified into a gesture that is the movement expressed through meaningful symbols (Arisyanto et al, 2017). This dance uses 14 plates as the main property. Two plates were used on both thumbs, and twelve other plates were placed in front of the dancers and used by stepping on them. Kuadai Dance duration is seven minutes, accompanied by rebana musical instrument with poetry chanting in Semende language. Kuadai Dance using Semende typical costume which a family with Palembang-Malay ethnic. Currently the Kuadai dance evolves as an entertainment show and is performed for welcoming guest



Picture 1. The Kuadai Dance Performance in Sekipi, Abung Tinggi District

The Symbolic Meaning of Kuadai Dance Performance

Kuadai dance through its sequences presents the meaning symbolically that is closely related to life concept of Semende society. Kusumastuti (2009) states that symbols have forms and contents called meanings. The presence of Kuadai dance as a system of symbol

is not separated from several aspects that can be seen in detail, such as, movement, property, accompaniment, stage, composition, floor pattern, make up and costume. (Hadi, 2005: 24). In line with Putri et al (2015) that object that is in a performance has a role to play characteristics, traits, and attributes especially owned by Semende society in their real life.

Kuadai dance is a form of traditional reality imitation that exists in Semende society. As agrarian society that put forward the tradition of tunggu tubang custom. First, it can be understood from the pattern of agricultural livelihood that put forward the fertility symbol, i.e., female figure. The culture of Semende places the plates as a representation of females that have to be treated gently, carefully, lovingly, and sacredly. Second, this dance occurred as a form of the imitation of the custom tunggu tubang tradition that visualizes a strength, patience, and family shelter that are owned by Semende women.

The collective creativity of Semende society has changed and improvised both of above reality that become performing art as symbol of respect that is full of beauty aspects. According to Ardin et al. (2017) that art grows and develops as a result from expression and creativity of society. Various customary or pamali restrictions imposed Semende community in an effort to maintain the originality of Kuadai dance. Pamali for Kuadai dancers if the plates he was carrying fell and broke. This is related to the intensity of the strength and the responsibilities of tunggu tubang in maintaining and protecting all his relatives.

The construction of matrilineal culture existing in Semende society gives an influence to the attitude and social behavior of Semende women. The Kuadai Dance which lives in the mountains community is more emphasis on the contents or context. This is reflected in the static movement, moving with a stable emovemental, full of caution and put forward the taste and strength that comes from within the hearts of Kuadai dancers.

Semende people are cultured and symbolic. They are free to act, think and make decisions. In a cultural system it can be found four sets of symbols that each has its own function for human beings concerned in their inter acts. The four symbols is presented by Bachtiar (in Fretisari, 2016) they are; (1) Constitutive symbols are formed as beliefs and are usually the essence of religion; (2) The cognitive symbols that make up science; (3) The symbols of moral judgment that make up the values and the rules; (4) Symbols of expressing feelings or expressive symbols. Devices of symbols present in the Kuadai dance will be discussed from the perspective of the dance performance aspect of the movement, property, floor pattern and accompaniment.

The Symbolic Meaning of Kuadai Dance Movement

The movements in Kuadai dance have meanings that are understood together in Semende society. Kuadai dance consists of various movements, such as the movements that has meaning or usually called meaningful (maknawi) movements, and the movements that only put forward aesthetic value that is called pure movements. (Tyas & Kuswarsantyo, 2018). The analysis of Kuadai dance is only focused on the meaningful movements only that contains symbols and meanings.

The structure pattern of Kuadai dance is divided into 2 parts, sembah adat and dik'kak peccah. Part of sembah adat begins with the two hands kneeling, continue with bale'k movement. The part of dik'kak peccah begins with sejurai movement, then continued with bai tangan movement, standing slowly from sitting position, then continued with jainjit movement.

Sembah Adat Movement

Sembah adat movement is done by kneeling position, both hands are placed face to face in front of the chest with fingertips are facing up.

There are several symbols in sembah adat movement, such as; kneeling is a symbol of respect that has a purpose to be humble. The united hands symbolize as an activity that unites

the perspectives between heart and mind to focus in one point. A downward-looking view is a symbol of submissiveness.

Sembah adat movement has two meaning, first as a mark of respect to the king, the custom chairman, the elder and the audience who watched the performance. This is a form of mindset and habits of Semende society, especially women who highly appreciate the position of the leader and respect the elderly. Second, in the performance of Kuadai dance, the female dancer is singly identical with Tunggu Tubang which is positioned to honor, patronize guests and be allowed to express themselves on the stage of the performance. This has the meaning that women in Semende society have a big responsibility in protecting their families, acting as a foundation in the family and can bring together perceptions among family members. Semende woman in her life has a special position as Tunggu Tubang. He was granted freedom for the administration of family property and given the task to protect all family members. But her space is limited. All her actions must comply with the customary law of Tunggu Tubang and remain under the patronage of the family leader (payung jurai) as the brother of the mother who oversees the use of such property.



Picture 2. Sembah Adat Movement

Bale'k I Movement

Bale'k movement is a movement done in kneeling position with the two hands supporting the plates. The symbol of bale'k movement are first, there is a hands movement supporting the plates that are moved back and forth in front of the body. This movement is a symbol of harmony of life. Second, the rotating plates

movement facing each other is symbolized as the heavens and the earth must balance each other and remain guided by one unity.

The first symbol means that Semende society must have a harmonious and balance cosmos between feeling (spiritual) and attitude. It means not only the established existence but also the form of behavior (activity) or physical form that must also be developed. The second symbol shows the identity of Semende society who adhere strongly to the customs and culture of Semende under the protection of the Malay tribe. The Semende community is known as the nomadic tribe, but they retain and use the customary rules they have in the overseas lands.



Picture 3. *Bale'k* Movement

Sejurai Movement

Sejurai Movement is the movement of two thumbs supporting plates in front of the chest, then the plate is brought together to cause a *teng* sound.

Sejurai is a meeting between left and right side that becomes a unity. This movement means that in the customary regulation Semende people has a support to everything happened, both good and bad thing. The supportance is called *Bemeraje Anak Belai* custom. Madrie (1992) states that *Bemeraje Anak Belai* is the highest institution in Semende institutional system that is centered its family supportance to *Tunggu Tubang* and *Meraje*.

Semende community embraces a matrilineal kinship system with a *mayorat* inheritance system. The oldest daughter in Semende ethnic is the only sole heir in the implementation of inheritance called *Tunggu Tubang*. In doing her duties *Tunggu Tubang* is supervised by her uncle called *Meraje*.

It means more deeply that all family members from all areas will be back to the residence of *Tunggu Tubang* and *Merajelah* whom they choose as a big family supportance for all decisions of the good and the bad. In *Kuadai* dance the first daughter (*Tunggu Tubang*) is symbolized as a single figure that can fulfill all family's necessities, maintain the family's property when they are reassembled. While *Meraje* is responsible to lead the discussion (*besuare*), to guide and to supervise *anakbelai*, to give sanction, and to supervise heritage treasures of *Tunggu Tubang*.



Picture 4. *Sejurai* Movement

BaiTangan Movement

Bai tangan movement is a movement of two thumbs that supports the plates with the position of the hands beside the shoulders parallel. This movement is done in a standing position with eye view following the direction of the body. Arms are swung slowly in vertical position.

The *bai tangan* movement that swings statically visualize a female figure as a symbol of strength and fertility. This movement is a symbol Semende's women as *Tunggu Tubang*. The symbol of power is interpreted as a female figure in the Semende region who has a great responsibility to bear the burden of providing for his family's food; take care of the family's physical needs and maintain and preserve the family's property.

Women are identified with the source of life and fertility that gave birth to the next generation. *Tunggu Tubang* prepares the next generation by introducing Semende cultural

values, and teaching the roles that will be expected to be run by the successor. This very fundamental role makes Semende women having a strong personality, full of responsibility, full of patience and caution in acting. It is also the reason for women to be respected and treated with affection, because the Semende society sees women have more body intelligence compared with men. Besides, Semende's women have another side behind her beauty and calmness, with her gentle figure of women harboring her inner power when she behaves.



Picture 5. BaiTangan Movement

Jainjit Movement

Jainjit Movement is the second movement that the tiptoes stepping the plates (jinjit). This movement is done by stepping between one plate to another. The position of the body is perpendicular, the eyes are pointing forward and the position of the sole of the foot rests on the toes.

Jainjit movement is done by stepping from one plate to another plate this symbolizes the Semende community as a nomadic or nomads. In ancient times Semende people had a habit of living to move for farming for about 10 years or if it was perceived agricultural land is not fertile anymore (Interview with Suandi 2018). Semende people usually open agricultural land close to the river. The movement of jainjit in Semende society has a meaning of life balance and accuracy in making decisions. This migrant habit demands Jeme Semende to be able to adapt and socialize well in their environment. Jeme Semende is required to maintain a balance between the rights and obligations in life in order to remain on the good and the truth.



Picture 6. Jainjit Movement

Symbolic Meaning of Dance Property

The performance of Kuadai dance that uses plates as *dance property* is revealed by (Jazuli, 2016: 62) that plates as *dance property* in Kuadai dance is used by moving the both hands and by stepping them. Kuadai dance uses plates as the main property. There are 14 (fourteen) plates used in this dance. Two small plates were used on both thumbs, and twelve large plates were placed in front of the dancers and used by stepping on them.

Plates become a symbol of the livelihood of the Semende community as farmers. Semende society lives mountainous areas with livelihoods as rice and coffee farmers. The cultural background and tradition of agrarian society make the plate as a medium of expression. Kuadai dance performance as an entertainment dance symbolizes the plate as a media of respect by the peasant community to the king or leader. Plates symbolize food as a basic necessity close to the source of life, in which case women have a womb as a source of life. Semende culture places plates as representations of women who should be upheld, treated with gentle, careful, loving and sacred. This is visualized in the hand movements that exist in the Kuadai dance. Plates for Semende women especially the first daughter (*Tunggu Tubang*) is a symbol of the great responsibility to be able to provide and serve food for his family. *Tunggu Tubang* is obliged to sustain and protect all members of her family; meet family needs; maintain and take care of family property; retain and utilize the proceeds from the land in which she cultivates;

and must be able to be fair to maintain the integrity and honor of her family (jurai).



Picture 7. Property of Kuadai Dance

Symbolic Meaning of Floor Pattern

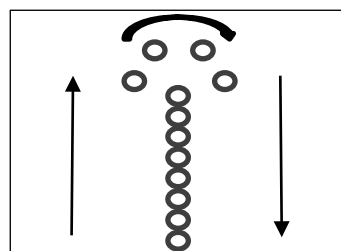
The plates as the main property in the Kuadai dance are arranged to form a vertical and circular pattern. As this floor pattern forms the spatial aspects, the aesthetic element comes alive Hadi, 2007:33). In Kuadai dance eight plates are arranged vertically, and four plates are arranged in a semicircle. Dancers will step up to form a vertical pattern, spin on a circular pattern and then back again on a vertical pattern.

This floor pattern in the Semende community is a symbol of the background of an agrarian society that has shelter and livelihoods around mountain slopes and hills. The circular pattern is a symbol of the mountains, while the straight line pattern is a symbol of the road or the location of a residence that is located around the slopes.

The symbols are interpreted from the perspective of Semende culture as an agrarian society that has the concept that humans must submit or be in harmony with nature. In order to maintain harmony of life, humans are required to maintain a balance with nature. The interaction between human and nature will work well if there is a balance between them. This is in line with Semende's conception as an indigenous community that is still wise in the management of natural resources.

The principle of balance is also associated with the emergence of various traditions such as tradition of salvation (selamatan) or customary tradition. The tradition of salvation is usually done on the events of birth, marriage, death and

other events, while customary tradition is usually carried out communally in the community for generations. In the agrarian Semende society, tradition that is held communally is not far from the livelihood of agriculture, especially with regard to harvest. One such tradition is the Kuadai dance performance which was originally a traditional dance dedicated to God using a special ritual.



Picture 8. The Form of Floor Pattern in Kuadai Dance

Symbolic Meaning of Dance Accompaniment

The presence of music accompaniment in Kuadai dance is to create atmosphere as well as to stress the change of movement patterns. The Kuadai Dance is accompanied by a rebana instrument accompanied by a lyric chant in Semende language with a duration of seven minutes. Kuadai dance accompaniment has slow tempo, the movements performed by the dancers are also in tune with the tempo and music accompaniment. Semende people use rebana musical instruments to accompany the Kuadai dance on certain taps.

Dundai is the symbol of a wooing word. It tells a man who eyes or wants a woman who in this case is identified as a very special diamond. But when the diamond is not successful found, the man felt sad and very embarrassed. Various ways are done to get the diamond, the one way is by calling and worshiping the Gods using smoke of incense. Dundai in the Kuadai dance performance has the meaning of a hope addressed to a woman, which in this case is visualized on the figure of a very special Kuadai female dancer.



Picture 8. The Accompanist of Kuadai Dance

Property of Symbol in Kuadai Dance

Aspects of Kuadai dance performances in context raise something that is in the realm of symbols. It is interpreted from the form of (text) that exists in Kuadai dance. After analyzed from the elements of the performance, it is got some meanings on Kuadai dance based on a set of symbol as follows.

First, constructive symbols are formed as worship and honor. It is seen from the movement of sembah adat that exists in Kuadai dance as a medium of connection for the life of Semende people. The Semende community upholds the noble value and tradition of honoring kings, traditional leaders and elders. They believe that Islam teaches to honor leaders and elders who teach many values of life to their generation.

Secondly, the symbols that make up the science of Kuadai dance are in movement, poetry, floor patterns, and music. The four parts contained in the knowledge are distributed to the community. The movements contained in Kuadai dance teach the Semende women to have strong, responsible, patient and cautious personality in action. Poems are sung in Kuadai dance accompanied by the music of tambourine contains the message as one of the non verbal communication tool in society. The music of the tambourines awakens the spirit and the care of the community to continue to preserve the culture and traditions, especially the Kuadai dance. The floor pattern formed in the Kuadai dance teaches the kinship relationship between one another that should not be interrupted in its lineage or scope.

Third, the symbols of moral judgment that make up the values and the rules. The symbols that make up the moral judgment on the Kuadai dance are seen in the choreography section of this dance. It can be seen from the movements of sembah adat, Bale'k, sejurai, BaiTangan and Jainjit. The variety of movements teach us to respect each other, uphold the continuity of custom and culture of Semende, maintain the balance of life with mutual care and love for family and neighbor, have patience and persistence in maintaining the custom of tunggu tubang. Semende's life teaches to obey the rules and customs of tunggu tubang and seganti setungguan.

Fourth, the symbol of expressing feelings or expressive symbols seen in the dancers of Kuadai which is a single female figure. Kuadai dance is an expression of Semende women through movements. The symbolic expression reflected in the Kuadai dance movement can be found in the cultural view of Semende. As a society that embraces matrilineal descent, women are placed in special positions. Their space is limited and only deal with family problems. The Kuadai Dance is an expression of Semende women who visualize the privileges given to Semende's women but the space is limited.

CONCLUSION

The performance of Kuadai dance is an expression of Semende's women or tunggu tubang on the stage. The symbols in this dance are represented the custom and culture as well as the way of life of Semende's women. The personality of a tunggu tubang that is patient, responsible is realized in the movements, properties, floor patterns, and Kuadai dance accompaniment.

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