The Opportunity Space in Kinanti Sekar Rahina’s
Mitoni Dance: A Study of Sacrality Accyology in the Mitoni Ceremony

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Abstract—The mitoni dance by Kinanti Sekar Rahina develops from the mitoni procession. The mitoni is a part of the community’s belief in the Javanese traditional and culture. This dance is a self-reflection of the creator as an expression of gratitude and efforts to maintain the balance of the cosmos. This is a qualitative research and will be interpret using Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutic study. The data in this study were obtained from observation techniques, interviews, documentation, and combination (triangulation). The mitoni dance in a mitoni ceremony presents the noble values of human life. Mitoni dance has two possible interpretations of the opportunity space in the community when watching the mitoni procession and dance. First, the audience captures the mitoni dance as a crystallization of the mitoni procession by Kinanti Sekar Rahina. Second, the mitoni dance is part of the gratitude ceremony procession conducted by Kinanti Sekar Rahina.

Keywords—mitoni, mitoni dance, opportunity space.

I. INTRODUCTION

Java known as a region enriched with unique traditions remains existent until now. One tradition that still exists today is slametan. Slametan is a form of social activity in the form of traditional ceremonies. Slametan is derived from the word slamet in Javanese which means to be safe. The slametan ceremony has a purpose of finding safety, tranquility, and preservation of the cosmos. The slametan tradition is presented in several events including slametan for the tradition of human life’s cycle, the pilgrimage tradition, and nature [1].

Pregnancy is the first cycle of life; human life is present as a manifestation of God’s grace. Prawirohardjo in Wijayanti [2] defines pregnancy as a fertilization (a unification). Spermatozoa and ovum are followed by oxidation or implantation. In a Javanese culture, this event is a ceremony that epitomizes the presence of a prospective baby, known as a life cycle ceremony. In the life cycle ceremony, the slametan process is carried out. Slametan in the form of a pregnancy ceremony aims to eliminate disasters and to ask for safety so that prospective babies are born to the world safely [3]. This slametan ceremony is carried out in the first pregnancy. Until now, people believe that carrying out slametan ceremonies is important for women when they give birth to their first babies. The implementation of slametan is technically carried out by traditional healers or old people. The slametan ceremony is carried out in several stages, namely at the age of five months (nglimani), seven months (mitoni), and nine months (procotan).

Nglimani is a ceremony performed when the fetus is five months old. Nglimani in Javanese derived from the word five along with its prefix (ng-) and the suffix (-i) means to be completed into five pregnancy ceremonies [4]. The nglimani ceremony must be based on the existing customary rules. This ceremony coincides with a mother's birthday. A good time to carry out this ceremony is in the afternoon between 16.00-17.00 local time [3]. While the slametan ceremony is carried out when the content is seven months old, known as mitoni or tingkeban. When the womb age turns nine months, a procotan ceremony is held [1]. Of the three slametan ceremonies in the pregnancy, mitoni becomes popular among Javanese people.

Etymologically mitoni is derived from the word ‘pitu’ attached to the prefix (am-) and the suffix (-i) that means to point to the number seven. In the terminology, number seven for Javanese people has a very good and sacred meaning. The Javanese community also believes that seven is a perfect number that relates to the concept of seven days a week, seven layers of earth and sky, the belief in seven derivatives, and human perfection. In addition, number seven has seven phases trusted by Javanese people. Basically, concepts like this are often found in the daily lives of Javanese people.

According to a medical science, when reaching the age of seven months, the baby has become a perfect little human form. At this age, a mother can determine the sex of her prospective baby. Javanese people believe that the medical science supports a state in which the womb age of seven months means a prospective baby starts his/her life in the mother's womb. Therefore, the biggest slametan ceremony in the cycle of human life is commemorated in the form of a mitoni ceremony. The mitoni ceremony is a medium to pray for salvation, peace, and preservation of the cosmos. The slametan ceremony is also a form of pre-natal education carried out by the community as a symbolic form of familiarity in Javanese people’s life, nature, and so forth [5].

A tradition exists because something is considered and believed to bring forth good things to people. Just like a mitoni ceremony that certainly has noble values for the societies. These values are expressed in the mitoni dance by Kinanti Sekar Rahina. As a Javanese woman who adheres to traditions, customs and ancestral beliefs, Kinanti Sekar Rahina, a dance artist from Yogyakarta, attempts to present
a mitoni ceremony procession for her first pregnancy in a performance art package. Mitoni dance becomes part of a sacred sequence of the mitoni ceremony procession.

This certainly becomes something new in the mitoni ritual that has long existed. Some questions arise, for example, why should a mitoni ceremony exist? Why does mitoni dance present a slametan procession?

The rest of this paper is organized as follow: Section II describes the methodology of this research. Section III presents the obtained results and following by discussion. Finally Section V concludes this work.

II. METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative research using the Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutic study. Hermeneutics is defined as a process of understanding an unknown situation [6]. In this sense, hermeneutics is interpreted as a science of interpretation. Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics interprets and understands the text as a complete truth interpretation. Art becomes an object that can be explored in the context of philosophical hermeneutics. An aesthetic analysis and historicity become the focus of philosophical hermeneutic studies.

In this qualitative research, the research instrument is the researchers themselves. Researchers are key to the validity of data obtained in the field. The data in this study were collected by observing and seeing the facts in the field. Data were collected from various settings, ways and sources [8]. In this study the data were obtained by using observations, interviews, documentation and combination techniques (triangulation).

The interviews were conducted with the main informant, Kinanti Sekar Rahina as the choreographer of mitoni dance. Observations were made during the research, starting from the implementation of the process of Kinanti Sekar Rahina’s mitoni dance at Omah Petroek Karangkalaman Sleman where researchers undertook documentation observations and interviews.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the obtained result and following by discussion.

A. Tradition of Slametan Ceremony (Why Mitoni Is Available?)

The relationship between trust and human activities results in a tradition called ceremony. Birth, death, and marriage ceremonies are a form of ceremony that is trusted by the community as a form of respect, love, even fear of something unseen [3].

One form of ceremonies carried out and trusted by the Javanese community is commonly called slametan. Slametan is a myth of trust in the form of important societal activities to obtain safety, pleasure, and the balance of the cosmos. This term is known as a Javanese cosmology that strengthens a relationship between the universe and all its contents [5]. A cosmological balance is related to the balance between the microcosm and the macrocosm. Macrocosm is God, supernatural beings, or the upper world. The macrocosm includes a system of harmony and regularity of the universe as a whole along with its parts. Microcosm is a smaller scope such as human relations or the underworld. Microcosm is a system that exists in every individual.

Geertz emphasizes that slametan is an attempt to harmonize relations between Javanese and danyang (ancestral spirits) that control the village [1]. Slametan maintains the relationship among humans, God and supernatural beings. In the Nitisasatra literary work written by the poet Yasadipura, slametan is defined as a form of gratitude to the Almighty God for all the goodness and distress they receive [1].

The slametan tradition is usually carried out in the form of pilgrimage traditions, natural traditions, and traditions of the human life cycle. Slametan carried out in the tradition of human life is a form of ritual to glorify important events in Javanese life. These events include pregnancy, birth, supitan, droplets, wedding, and death referred to as the beginning of human life, so that it is necessary to maintain slametan as a form of prayers to ask for God’s mercy and ancestors’ guidance for goodness as a macrocosm.

In Javanese culture, a woman who is pregnant for her first baby must perform a series of slametan rituals consisting of slametan nglmami, mitoni slametan, and procotan slametan. Slametan nglmami is done when the fetus is five months old using five types of offerings such as jenang, rujak, sambal, tumpeng, and eggs.

Mitoni slametan is performed when the fetus turns seven months old. The mitoni slametan ceremony has some meanings, and one of them is a form of pre-natal education. Education for children in the Javanese community has started since the children were in their wombs. The education is carried out indirectly through the mother. Ban and recommendations during pregnancy are part of pre-natal education. During pregnancy a mother will do good things in the hope that her child has good qualities. In addition, a mother will avoid bad words, certain foods, killing animals and so forth, so that born babies are protected from bad things or bad behaviors [5]. Prospective babies were introduced early to keep the relationship between Javanese people, the environment, and their fellow human beings through existing traditional ceremonies [5].

The mitoni ceremony aims to uphold the values in societies, so that it can be realized as the role model and culture for the community. In the Javanese belief, a seven-month-old fetus is considered a process of pangriptane manungsa or the initial process of human life. Mitoni slametan is good to celebrate on Monday and Friday afternoon or night or this ceremony will be better if it is undertaken before the full moon (purnamasidhi).

The mitoni ceremony has a longer series of ceremonies than the nglmami. The mitoni ceremony is complemented by offerings of various types and shapes, such as food (sego and jenang), cengkir gadhing, tropong or looms, lotrok
wood, lawe yarn, sugar cane leaves, mori cloth, and cloth (jarik) in seven motifs [5]. These symbolic meaningful objects are used in the mitoni procession series. The ceremonial series consist of siraman that includes putting eggs in a cloth, changing clothes seven times, brojolan (a birth procession) by inserting a young ivory coconut depicted by a puppet of Bethara Kamajaya and Bethari Kamaratih, deciding the twine of coconut fiber, breaking the pan, and kendhurti [9].

The implementation of mitoni ceremony procession in each region is different, as is the case in Tulungagung. The mitoni tradition in region is done inside and outside the house. In the house various kinds of dishes is provided such as sambung tuwah that means to strengthen a bond between a mother and a prospective baby, so that the baby can be born safely. Jemukan is a term in Javanese derived from a compound word meaning to find, a meeting between an egg cell and a sperm that becomes a fetus in the mother's womb. Next is the rice cake; expectations of values both physically and mentally. Jenang sengkala is part of the dish served in the mitoni ceremony procession. Jenang sengkala aims to avoid obstacles until a mother gives birth. Jenang procot is a must-have dish because it has a philosophy of ease in the delivery process. Meanwhile, dishes outside the home are more varied and varied [3].

The last stage in the pregnancy ceremony called procotan slametan is held when the fetus is nine months old. Procotan is derived from the word procot that means giving birth to a baby easily. In some Indonesia regions, procotan is guided by traditional healers. Shamans shouted the term 'rats' while running holding broom sticks like they were chasing mice. Mice are known as agile animals and easily escape from narrow and small places. Therefore, in the process of procotan ceremony, the shaman uses the term ‘rats’ with the hope that baby is born easily and smoothly [3].

The mitoni tradition is a legacy of ancestral belief in the existence of living things in a mother's womb that cannot be seen, but it can be felt. This tradition exists as a form of Javanese society's obedience to God. Obedience is expressed in a sacred ritual such as prayers and good wishes. Aside from being a form of obedience to God, a mitoni ceremony exists because of the community's compliance to maintain the balance of the cosmos. Javanese people consistently maintain the traditions that have lived and developed for centuries. The mitoni ceremony is the fruit of a belief that has hitherto been strong in Javanese people’s life.

B. Mitoni Dance

Purwatiningstih [10] mentions that dance is an art form that uses the body as an expression of soul through rhythmic and beautiful movements. The definition of this dance is in line with what BPH Suryodinginrat states that dance is 

“Ingkang kawastanan beksa inggih punika ebahing sadaya saranadung badan, kesarengan ungeling gangsa, katata pika tuh wiramaning gendhing, jumbuhing pasemon kalihan pikajenging jogged. This utterance means that dance is the motion of the whole body accompanied by the rhythm of music which is harmonized with the expression of the dance” [11].

Based on this understanding, Kinanti Sekar Rahina, the Yogyakarta-based dance artist expresses her soul for her first pregnancy in the form of a dance entitled mitoni dance. It is adopted from the Javanese cultural roots of the mitoni slametan ritual. This dance is a work that departs from the moment of pregnancy and is then visualized in the ritual of the mitoni slametan.

The mitoni dance was created in 2017 when Kinanti Sekar Rahina was being pregnant for her first child. Mitoni dance is packed as a show in the mitoni slametan ritual. Through this work, Kinanti Sekar Rahina wants to introduce how a mitoni procession is necessary for ordinary people who do not know its importance. In the process, the mitoni dance was performed by seven dancers. Each dancer wears a different color of dance costume as an illustration of the color of life. These colors include red, blue, green, purple, orange, black and yellow. These colors mean strength in the Javanese philosophy (an interview with Mbak Sekar, 9 January 2018 at 21.08 PM).

Besides the meaning of motion, a mitoni dance also conveys philosophical values of a ritual in the form of clothing or dance costumes. Each color is a depiction of the values of life that the dancer wants to convey through the mitoni dance.

Red is a symbol of energy, courage, and the power of desire; blue is a symbol of love, intelligence, tenderness, creativity, and self-strength; green shows success, endurance, balance, and friendship; purple is a picture of spiritual strength, knowledge, empathy and enlightenment; orange is a symbol of warmth, justice, joy and active; black symbolizes deep protection, strength, self-esteem and feeling; yellow shows strong memories, imagination, cooperation, happiness, loyalty, wisdom, and social energy.

In addition, dancers with different costumes depict the cloth-changing procession carried out by the mother who is pregnant in the mitoni slametan ritual (an interview with Ms. Sekar, January 9, 2018 at 9.08 PM).

In general, a mitoni dance is an expression of gratitude for the blessings of pregnancy given by God. This dance also illustrates how a mother’s prudence and sincerity might contribute to her future baby. The mitoni dance also contains prayers for mothers and babies to survive during the birth procession. In addition, Kinanti Sekar hopes that her child will have a smooth and good path in his or her life.

C. Axiology Study of Mitoni Dance in the Mitoni Ceremony

Axiology is a branch of philosophy that talks about the orientation or value of a life. Axiology as a branch of the philosophy of science questions how humans use their knowledge [12]. Axiology aims to achieve the nature and the benefits of knowledge. The axiology is derived from the Greek word axion which means 'value' and logos that means 'theory', in this sense the theory of values or examination of a thing [13].

Sunaryadi [13] states that points out that values cannot be separated from the conditions that surround them, such as
different spring sources and a mixture of bunches of things that are not good from mothers and prospective believed to guard them. In various perspectives, the mitoni slametan obedience, and belief in the power of God. Besides, the visualized through the young ivory coconut carved with the proceeds with pregnancy. After making the different spring sources symbolizes the expectant mother's beginning of new human life. In the tradition. The tradition contains very complex values of ethics (morality). For Javanese character.

Based on the axiology study, the mitoni slametan tradition contains very complex values of ethics (morality). The complexity in the mitoni slametan can be seen from the strong relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm. In relation to humans, the mitoni slametan is a form of self-satisfaction. The mitoni slametan is a means of obedience, and belief in the power of God. Besides, the mitoni slametan is a symbol of trust in ancestors who were believed to guard them. In various perspectives, the mitoni slametan tradition has a good effect on humans who believe it in Javanese cultural traditions and customs. For Javanese people this tradition is a life cycle ceremony expected to provide pre-natal education. Early on, prospective babies have been introduced to the tradition of the community. The closeness of the Javanese relationship with the surrounding environment, ancestors, and their neighbors has been introduced since the baby was in the womb.

In an aesthetic view, mitoni is a beauty of the Javanese tradition. The mitoni procession describes the initial process of new human life. In the mitoni slametan series might begin with the siraman procession. Siraman aims to keep things that are not good from mothers and prospective babies, the spray is done by using holy water from seven different spring sources and a mixture of bunches of flowers. Toya suci perwita or holy water from seven different spring sources symbolizes the expectant mother's pregnancy. After making the siraman, the ceremony proceeds with brojolan as a prayer request, so that the baby is born easily and smoothly. Brojolan birth symbols are visualized through the young ivory coconut carved with the puppet figures, Brhara Kamajaya and Bethari Kamarath. The philosophical value that arises is the hope for the born baby that he or she will be as beautiful and handsome as the character.

After finishing the brojolan ritual, the next step is to sideline or change the cloth (jarik) seven times. The fingerlings generally use Sidomukti, Truntum, Parang Kasuma, Sidoluhur, Semen Rama, Udan Liris, and Chicken Claws motifs. Each jarik has its own meaning, like Truntum which means sincere, eternal love; Sidoluhur means nobility; Sidomukti contains the meaning of prosperity symbolized by the nobility of mind, speech, and action to achieve its prosperity; Udan Liris has the meaning of fortitude and survival of life; Semen Rama is derived from the word semi which means the growth of plant parts; Parang Kasuma has the meaning that life must be based on the struggle to find happiness. The meaning of the cloth or jarik used in the nyamping ritual is a form of prayers and hope from parents for their children. In the nyamping procession, the thread turns as a symbol of breaking the bad things that hinder the birth of a baby. After that kendhuren is held, which means eating together as a symbol of gratitude for pregnancy and asking for prayers for the birth processes.

The long procession of mitoni slametan ritual has many Javanese philosophical meanings and values that are good for human life. The values of the mitoni slametan ritual are used as a basis for Kinanti Sekar Rahina in creating the mitoni dance.

Aesthetics and artwork are two inseparable things. When looking at artwork, people will judge the aesthetics of the work, just as when creating a work of art, one will consider the aesthetic values that are right for the work. Mitoni dance in the mitoni ceremony is a form of expression of happiness for the events and experiences of the first pregnancy for a woman. The mitoni dance describes how the mitoni procession takes place. The dance stylist wants to convey a message to the community that the mitoni procession is delivered through a dance. Thus, a mitoni dance is part of the mitoni ceremony created by Kinanti Sekar Rahina.

The mitoni dance was created as a means of expressing gratitude to God Almighty. Some good values in the mitoni dance performances include (1) Divine values, expressions of gratitude as manifestations of divine values, a sense of belief in God and a form of obedience to God; (2) The value of humanity that consists of ethical values, moral values, and norms. In the mitoni dance the value appears in a series of movements, in a broad outline of mitoni dance describing the process of beginning a new life for humans. This dance is a manifestation of Javanese norms, customs and traditions in welcoming the presence of the first child; (3) Value of life, including courage and sacrifice. Mitoni dance is a picture of a new life process for humans, the process of prospective babies struggling in the womb, the struggle and courage of prospective mothers during pregnancy. The sacrifice of the prospective mother is portrayed through the movement of mitoni dance, as well as the struggle and courage of the prospective baby to start life as a human; (4) Value of enjoyment, in the mitoni dance the happiness of the prospective mother in enjoying pregnancy that becomes part of expressions of happiness. This dance is not just entertainmen, but also a guide for those who want to better understand mitoni.

D. Opportunity Space in the Mitoni Dance

Opportunity space is the power of expressing the human mind in interpreting something, in this case, a work of art. The concept of space and time in the creation of works of art can bring the space of possibilities to the audience’s interpretation. Understanding of space and time depends on the context of the conversation. Space and time are relative,
where space is the relationship between objects measured in a particular way. If measurements are carried out in different ways, eating will produce different results, as well as time. When the audience watches the mitoni dance in a different space, he or she will produce different interpretations. Conversely, if the audience watches the mitoni dance at the same time when the dance is held, the perception of mitoni dance in the time dimension will be different.

The interpretation of artwork will create a variety of interpretations. Hermeneutics becomes one of the knives to dissect the interpretation of the meaning of a text. At the end of the 20th century, Paul Ricoeur renewed the discussion of hermeneutics. In essence, hermeneutics is understood as a theoretical theory of interpretation or reflection on interpretation activities. An interpretation becomes something good if it is able to deliver messages to its interpreter to understand philosophy more deeply. The interpretation in question is a way of interpreting the text in a wider aspect such as text books, symbols, and myths to understand the reality behind the existence of a text.

Opportunity space is present as a distance of thinking between humans and work. In this case, the work of mitoni dance does not allow viewers to interpret dance not as a dance but as part of a ritual. This is seen from the series of mitoni slametan ceremonies which are held from the beginning to the end; the audience interprets dance as part of the ritual due to the invisible form of a series of mitoni slametan ceremonies which are expressed in the form of mitoni dance by Kinanti Sekar Rahina. However, for some viewers it is very possible to assume that this dance is a complete depiction of the mitoni slametan ceremony procession as viewed from the presentation of the dance performed by Kinanti Sekar Rahina and other dancers. How is the series of mitoni processions outlined in the cultivation of this dance work? The procession is clearly visible in every dance movement performed.

These two possibilities naturally occur in the perception and interpretation of the audience. Opportunity space owned by the audiences leads to an interpretation of an artwork that they watch.

IV. CONCLUSION

Mitoni is a result of Javanese culture that has remained alive until today. Trust in the ancestral heritage means keeping the mitoni alive through Javanese traditions in Javanese societies. As a form of culture, many good values can be found in the mitoni ceremony as a series of gratitude to celebrate the gestational age of the seventh month. Mitoni slametan is used as a means of expressing gratitude for the grace of God, the expression of happiness, and the responsibility to maintain the balance of the cosmos.

This tradition of mitoni dance seeks to visualize a series of mitoni processions in the packaging of performing arts, so that the people who do not understand mitoni realize a long process of traditional rituals possessed by Javanese ancestors. In the mitoni dance, there are good values for life including the value of divinity, the value of life, the value of humanity, and the value of enjoyment. The dance stylist tries to convey such values through a simple but meaningful series of movements.

Mitoni dance in the mitoni ceremony tries to revive the forgotten arts, traditions, and customs. This work includes the sacred work, because it is apart from being a performance of the mitoni dance, and it becomes a procession of the mitoni ceremony for the first pregnancy. As a whole, mitoni dance in this mitoni ceremony is a form of gratitude for the blessings of the Almighty God and love of Javanese traditions. The effort to maintain the local wisdom of the Javanese community is also the mission of Kinanti Sekar Rahina as the choreographer of mitoni dance.

In a dance work, there is a difference in interpretation is a natural thing. This difference is due to the difference in the opportunity space within individuals in interpreting an artwork that they see and observe. In the mitoni dance, people can learn the likelihood of interpretations about the opportunity space in the community. The first possibility is that the audience can grasp that mitoni dance is a crystallization of the mitoni procession performed by Kinanti Sekar Rahina. However, it does not rule out the possibility that the audience will see this dance only as part of the mitoni slametan ceremony procession conducted by Kinanti Sekar Rahina.

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