Keywords: Representation, Ronggeng, Indonesian film, Sang Penari.

Abstract: Ronggeng or Tayub is an art that has developed since long time in Indonesia. This art lives in Indonesian society as traditional performance which more flourishes in the villages. This show presents a woman both as a dancer and as a singer (sinden). Women as a ronggeng dancer in this art have always been viewed as erotic and sensual women. This fact shows that woman as a ronggeng has always been associated with a negative image. Over time, this negative image is not only presented in oral and written narrative, but also in modern art like films. Hence, this study tried to see how ronggeng image is represented in Indonesian films. This study used film titled Sang Penari (2011) adapted from Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk as a corpus to examine how the depiction of ronggeng is represented in a film beside in written or oral tradition. The method used in this research is descriptive analysis method, as a representation of Stuart Halls’ theory. This theory is used to see how the image of Ronggeng represented in this film. This study results indicates that Sang Penari film is still represented ronggeng with sensual and erotic image, yet negative image of ronggeng as a prostitute is no longer presented in this film; ronggeng is depicted as an art which represented the commonality (Wong cilik) which is receded then.

1 INTRODUCTION

Ronggeng is a popular art in Indonesian society. This is a traditional art in form of dances growing well in agrarian society. Ronggeng usually becomes a medium for farmers to hold a ritual of gratitude for the harvest gained. Time to time, this art is not only utilized for sacred rituals, but also develops to be a profane art (Spiller, 2010; Yulianeta, 2013).

Besides being well-known as ronggeng, this art is also called gandrung, lengger, taledhek, tandak, and so forth. Ronggeng Melayu is developing in Sumatra, Ronggeng Betawi is spreading in Jakarta, in Subang and Sumedang West Java people call it Bangreng. In Banyuwangi, Bali, and Lombok, its famous name is Gandrung. Lengger is another name for it in Purwokerto, Wonosobo, and Magelang. While the name taledhek, ledhek, joged, ronggeng, and tandak are used to call female dancers in a ronggeng show or tayub in several regions of Central Java and East Java, people in West Java call them sindhen or ronggeng. This art spreads almost in all regions of Java Island (Raffles, 1965).

There are, at least, several words referring to ronggeng word, one of them comes from Javanese language, which means tandak or female dancers accompanied by gamelan (Javanese traditional orchestra). Referring to the definition, women become the key of the art. In the Ensiklopedi Tari Indonesia Seri P-T (1986), ronggeng is classified into couple entertainment dances done by a woman and a man. On its shows, a female ronggeng dancer usually ask a male dancer by throwing her shawl to the man to go up to the stage and dance together with her. Once the dance is finished, the male dancer should give her money.

Since women become the core of the dance and men are the main party to enjoy it, the negative image of ronggeng dancers appears. As highlighted by Soeharto (1999) and Sooi-Beng (2005) that in a society, a ronggeng life is identical with prostitutes who frequently sell themselves to the men who desire them. Although not all people think the same, but people appraisal towards ronggeng particularly female dancers decreases.

It is an unavoidable thing that the negative image of ronggeng is possibly affected by the fact that most of ronggeng dancers possess plump bodies. To be a ronggeng dancer, a woman should have been dancing at the age of eight (usually called lengger)
(Geertz 1976; Koentjaraningrat, 1989). The requirements of changing a lengger into a ronggeng are frequently connected to a belief of indhang presence, a spirit possessing a ronggeng dancer. The myth of a ronggeng dancer perfect beauty after being possessed by indhang indicates how a ronggeng dancer image is, that they should not only be plump but also beautiful. This is the reason why the procession to be a ronggeng dancer is considered very sacred.

This image is then depicted in a variety of literary works either spoken or written, or visual (films). Pratista (2008) mention that films can be defined as a tool to convey various messages to people through a story medium. Films are not only visual media offering entertainment. More than it, films are media to transfer ideas to audiences. Films are described as mass communication media as well. Like literary works, films are expressed as cultural documents representing society culture per se.

One of the films concerning on ronggeng phenomenon is Sang Penari. The film adapted from a novel entitled Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk by Ahmad Tohari seems to be interesting for it re-appears a ronggeng representation which up until now is surrounded by negative image in our society, particularly Javanese. Therefore, the present research is intended to analyze how a ronggeng image is depicted in Sang Penari the film.

2 RESEARCH METHODS

The present research employed an analytical descriptive research method by focusing the analysis on textual analysis of Sang Penari the film. The representation theory from Stuart Hall was applied to read how the ronggeng image and dancers were presented in the film.

Representation is viewed as an accurate illustration of a reality. Hall (1997) defines representation as a critical practice in producing culture. The process is divided into two, which are ‘mental’ and ‘language’ representation. The ‘mental’ representation connects to abstract thing in mind while ‘language’ representation relates to a process of constructing meaning. The process is sensed as how a world is reconstructed socially to and by us in certain meaning.

Two key words in representation is to understand it as a language use for expressing or represent meaning to people. In connection to ronggeng image representation in Sang Penari the film, the analysis is focused on meaning of the second key word which is a language use to represent meaning to people.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Ronggeng Illustration in Sang Penari the Film

The ronggeng in Sang Penari the film was illustrated by figuring Surti and Srintil. Surti, played by Happy Salma, was only appeared in several scenes in the opening. Surti was narrated to pass away by a poisonous bongkrek tempeh tragedy which also killed some villagers of Dukuh Paruk. Through Surti, Srintil, the character played by Prisia Nasution, was then interested with ronggeng.

Little Srintil once watched a ronggeng show in Dukuh Paruk when the ronggeng danced was Surti. From her interest, Srintil became fond of dancing and singing. When she was five years old, she had shown the talent of dancing and singing. Moreover, Sakarya (Srintil’s grandfather), played by Landung Simatupang, assured that Srintil talent was not just a talent, but also possessed by indhang.

Growing to be a beautiful and plump girl, Srintil was pointed as the Dukuh Paruk ronggeng by the assistance of a ronggeng shaman named Kartaredja, played by Slamet Rahardjo, and his wife (Nyai Kartaredja), played by Dewi Irawan.

Being a ronggeng was Srintil’s dream since she was little. By being a ronggeng, she did not only pursue her dream. More than it, she could devote herself to Dukur Paruk and Eyang Sacamanggala, the ancestor believed by people to protect the village. Besides, she was able to regain her family dignity which was lost for several years due to the tragedy of poisonous bongkrek tempeh made by her parents (Santayib couple) that caused some villagers losing their lives.

3.2 Eroticism and Sensuality of Ronggeng

Sensuality refers to the word ‘sense’. This understanding refers to individuals’ sexual imagination meaning towards the object they see. This imagination comes from someone sensory towards someone else body which at the end emerging enjoyable experience. Jennifer L. Hillman in her book “Clinical perspective on elderly sexuality”, clarifies that the enjoyable experience will result on pleasure gotten from other people sexual activities that felt by his/her sense. Nevertheless, sensuality is not only obtained by involving other people as the object, but also through things, pictures, sounds that directly touch the sense (William, 2005; Satria, 2013).
While eroticism emphasizes on the aesthetic shape leading to sexual impulse. The impulse is a feeling appeared and stimulates someone to make a sexual activity. The aesthetic shape can be realized in visualization representing the impulse.

Within a ronggeng soul, body sensuality becomes a certain pride in attracting people to come and see her dance. Sensuality is emphasized by Javanese context that believes in the presence of indhang spirit. Its presence is trusted to be able to give more attraction power for a ronggeng dancer, which cannot be obtained by everybody but a ronggeng dancer.

The representation appeared in Sang Penari. The ronggeng of the film was described as a beautiful woman representing Dukuh Paruk women’s beauty, had a plump body and white skinned as seen on Figure 1. Beside the requirement of having a ronggeng aura or being possessed by ronggeng indhang, only good looking women could be ronggeng dancers.

![Figure 1: Srintil was crowned as a ronggeng.](image1)

Ronggeng is also believed to be depicting fertility and manliness. No wonder if many ladies in Dukuh Paruk competed to praise and give compliments to Srintil only to let their husband sleep with her. At this point, a ronggeng does not only benefit her body sensuality as a ronggeng, but also has been more on eroticism value as a ronggeng. This can be seen from Srintil’s performance which was complete with her ronggeng properties, such as a costume showing her sensuality side and her dance movements stimulating men sexual desire. Throwing a shawl to a man audience to dance with her and at the end sleep with her are categorized into actions to stimulate sexual desire.

![Figure 2: The men of Dukuh Paruk talked about Srintil becoming a ronggeng.](image2)

On the scene as shown in Figure 2, it was showed how the men were talking about ronggeng eroticism and sensuality which supposed to be possessed by Srintil as the ronggeng to be, as written in the following part.

"Kiye sus tek omongi, dadi ronggeng kue ora gampang ( tertawa)"
"Iya sus, kalau cuma nari tayub si bisa aja, tapi kalau ronggeng kudu kena indhang, sama harus ada kaya kue-kaya kuene (merujuk pada aktivitas persetubuhan yang dilakukan oleh seorang ronggeng dengan lelaki yang membayarnya) (tertawa)"

Nonetheless, the ronggeng image as a prostitute is considered a bit vague in the film. Srintil was given a motive to frame her sensuality and eroticism in order to maintain ronggeng as a sacred people art. As a ronggeng, Srintil was fully aware that she belonged to people, collective belongings, who should prioritize communal needs. The priority included both giving a chance for a man who gave her an amount of money to sleep with her in the ceremony of bukak klambu and after she was crowned as the ronggeng.

Besides, there is an interesting illustration within the film adapted from this Tohari novel, namely the illustration that ronggeng comes into reality indicating an independent woman image who can free herself from men shadows. She was financially settled, meaning that she could fulfil her needs by herself from saweran (the money given by men after dancing) she got. Being the ronggeng was likely having a particular social class above the women of Dukuh Paruk in general.

However, being an independent ronggeng was collided with a reality that she did not get a life she desired. In front of people, as a dancer, entertainer, a
cult figure bringing the spirit of Dukuh Paruk, Srintil got a noble position. But deep in her heart, privately, she lost someone she loved. Being a ronggeng meant that she was close to sexuality issue so that a ronggeng was identical with a prostitute who could be approached by those who had got an amount of money. That was the reason why Rasus, Srintil’s loved one, left her though Srintil had asked him to marry her.

3.3 Ronggeng as the People Art

As the people art, the ronggeng presented in Sang Penari was admired by people of Dukuh Paruk. Even the absence of a ronggeng after Surti death in the tempeh tragedy, it was likely the demise of people lives in Dukuh Paruk. So when Sakarya discovered Srintil had potential to be a ronggeng, he then notified Ki Kertaredja that Dukuh Paruk would be alive again, as seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Little Srintil played a role as a ronggeng accompanied by her boy friends.

This was proved by people fast acceptance of Srintil as the ronggeng dancer, that for the villagers she was not only a dancer but also their ideal.

Ronggeng as the people art is also presented though the faith connecting with animism and dynamism in which this belief is close with people lives. In the film, it was showed that people of Dukuh Paruk were sub-urban people admiring ronggeng. A woman who could be a ronggeng was the one who got blessed by Ki Sacamanggala (the ancestor of Dukuh Paruk). Therefore, there were some particular ceremonies to hold before Srintil was decided to be a ronggeng. One of them was bukak klambu. At the first step, there was a scene in which the beautiful Srintil who had put on make-up like a ronggeng and ready to dance, should have failed dancing since she had not gotten a blessing from Ki Sacamanggala. The scene was realized by the absence of Ki Kertaredja as the ronggeng shaman in Dukuh Paruk. Besides the blessing from Ki Sacamanggala, indhang from the previous ronggeng was also crucial in determining whether a woman could be a ronggeng or not. This was proved by the presence of keris (Surti sacred property) symbolizing that someone had been totally blessed both by Ki Sacamanggala or the late ronggeng indhang.

The film Sang Penari then focused on the issue that ronggeng as people art had a close relation with PKI. At the end of the film, ronggeng became an illustration of how people, who were blind of ideological polemic of what happened in the state, were manipulated by a particular ideology which at the end completely destroyed them. Ronggeng then became a profane art which slowly but sure was left by people. Srintil who had been a cult figure as a realization of people belief towards a sacred thing, remained alone as a street dancer ronggeng.

4 CONCLUSIONS

From the discussion, it can be drawn a conclusion that a ronggeng has particular beauty and sacred values. The erotic and sensual image of a ronggeng can be a certain point which makes her accepted by people. The ronggeng cult figure as a symbol of fertility and manliness make people openly welcome the ronggeng, although the sensuality and eroticism of a ronggeng are frequently identical with negative image of morality. As an art, ronggeng is collective possession, thus a ronggeng dancer belongs to a society. At this level, a ronggeng dancer is the goddess praised by the belief that a ronggeng brings beneficence. However, at the individual level, a ronggeng dancer is still very close to immoral woman image who let her body be slept by everyone who can give her big amounts of money. In this film, ronggeng is also represented as culture of low level people which still close to animism and dynamism faith. It is an art which far away from open mindedness. For those reasons, the art is utilized for particular political benefits, manipulating the party intention for the sake of people. At the end, the ronggeng art in the film leaves its cult, and just become the profane art which time to time is then left behind.

REFERENCES


