



THE PUPPETEER'S BODY DISCIPLINARY POWER IN MALANG'S MASK PUPPET PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

The two focuses of this research include describing the formation of the puppeteers' episteme in Malang district and explaining the process of internalizing the experience and reasoning of the puppeteer who acts as a director as well as a person possessing high spiritual strength. Second, the body discipline power of the Malang masked puppeteer. This qualitative research used interview and observation data which were analyzed using Michel Foucault's post-structuralist theory approach. The results of the study performance that puppeteers of mask puppet performance in Malang district have a stronger disciplinary power orientation compared to other puppeteers. The power of knowledge of puppeteers is obtained through disciplining the body which is built from its existence socially and environmentally. The puppeteer of mask puppet performance has roles as a person who has spiritual power and as a director in organizing the mask puppet performance. The power of knowledge of the puppeteer produces the discourse of the puppeteer who has autonomy and power.

Keywords: *DISCIPLINARY POWER, BODY, PUPPETEER*

1. INTRODUCTION (TNR, 11 Bold)

This research discusses the body discipline of a puppeteer in Malang district. The puppeteer is the central force in the puppet performance as both a performer and a director. The puppeteer's task as a director is to arrange all the running of the performance so that it can be well received and appreciated by the audience. The puppeteer is an individual with multiple abilities, and is also a manager and a leader for his members (including singers and musicians) in a performance. Even in a society, a puppeteer has a higher and more important position than others. In ancient times, puppeteers were like priests who had prayers, spells, and biographies from their ancestors (Mulasno, 2013).

In the context of the Malang puppet performance, the puppeteer has two major roles by being a director in performances on stage and a person who has spiritual strength. The people in Malang district still believe that a puppeteer is a person who has spiritual 'kaweruh' (knowledge), as well as being an artist. The puppeteer, as the leader of the ritual, has the task of reciting prayers (or mantras) for rituals, the contents of which are requests for safety, abundance of blessings, and repelling danger. The tasks are the same as that being carried out by someone called *mandakat* during the Old Javanese era, which include reciting mantras and perfecting the sacrifice, breaking chicken eggs into *kulumpang* stone, and dripping the blood of slaughtered chickens. In addition, it also conveys the history of the fiefdom, by way of storytelling (old stories) and closing with a *sapatah* (curse). The *sapatah* (or curse) is similar to a moral message that it must be obeyed by all citizens, or disaster will befall those who violate it (Hidajat, Wayang Topeng Malang: Structural and Symbolic Performing Arts in Malang, East Java, 2011).

A puppeteer of mask puppet must have adequate knowledge and skills about processing, creating and producing a dance drama performance in which all actors or dancers wear masks. There are kinds of knowledge possessed by the puppeteers of the Malang mask puppet, such as *pocapan* (a spell), magic, dance moves, stories and music which must be fully mastered by the puppeteer knowing that he is the soul giver to the puppet or its human actors, apart from being a director in the performance, the puppeteer is also a person who have high spiritual abilities (often regarded as a shaman). Mastery of the knowledge and skills of a puppeteer cannot be separated

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from the formation of an obedient and useful body, as in Foucault's view, the term is called a disciplinary power.

In Foucault's view, the obedient body is a key concept for understanding power techniques. Power techniques aim at obedience, and it has the meaning of power that shapes individuals. The target of discipline is the body, the body becomes an instrument or medium. Discipline is not identical with a particular institution or apparatus, but it is a technology. The new technology of the body as an object of power is slowly taking shape in scattered and peripheral places. Foucault calls this technology the disciplinary power (Haryatmoko, 2016). The basic purpose of the disciplinary power is to produce humans/ individuals who can be treated as obedient bodies. This obedient body must also be a productive body. Discipline technology develops and becomes perfect in art workshops, art galleries and art institutions. In each of these places, there is only one goal, a parallel development in the use and compliance of individuals and society (Hardiyanta, 1997).

The reality on the ground shows that the number of puppeteers in Malang district is not large, even though the distribution of puppet masks in Malang district is scattered in several places, which affects the role of the puppeteer who has the quality of being a puppet director and has spiritual strength to be very limited. From the observations, there are only 4 puppeteers who have knowledge and skills as puppeteers of mask puppet performance. Those 4 puppeteers, who come from three different regions, are Ki Soleh (from Tumpang village), Mr. Kasan (from Precet village) and Mr. Kasnam and Mr. Poniran (from Kedungmonggo village). It shows that the role of a puppeteer is needed, because the puppeteer is the spirit of the puppet performance in Malang district. Of the four puppeteers who have multiple roles at the same time, Ki Soleh (the puppeteer from Tumpang village) is also the key informant in this study. The selection of Ki Soleh was based on his knowledge and skills as a puppeteer which were obtained through his self-discipline from artistic experience, both direct interactions built from his social and environmental existence. It then forms a comprehensive ability for Ki Soleh to be a puppeteer of Malang mask puppet performance.

This study observes the problem of puppeteer's body disciplinary power which results in the exercise of the disciplinary power of puppeteers in Malang district. The body disciplinary power referred to in this study is an attempt to control all aspects of an individual's body, which include behavior, intelligence, how to look, to how he becomes a more useful individual. Body disciplinary power is a technology of power employed to discipline the body and make it an obedient and useful body. Based on the case above, the problems can be formulated as follows: (1). the formation of the episteme of puppeteers, (2). the puppeteer's body disciplinary power for mask puppet performance in Malang.

2. IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

This research uses this qualitative method which is guided by a postmodern approach, with an emphasis on poststructuralist theory. Data sources are the words and actions taken from puppeteers of mask puppet performance (or '*dalang*' in Javanese) in Malang district which were explored through in-depth interviews and participant observation. The data sources were obtained from informants, including Ki Soleh Adi Pramono (67 years) a puppeteer from Tumpang, Kasan (72 years) a puppeteer from Precet village, Malang district, Handoyo (45 years) a dancer from Kedungmonggo, Pakisaji sub-district.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Formation of Puppeteer's Episteme

The episteme of the puppeteer is formed through the experience and reasoning of each individual in interpreting the process of mastering knowledge about the puppet performance. The belief in ancestral spirits in relation to the rituals that are always performed by the puppeteer of the mask has shaped each individual's own belief and strength in interpreting the puppet as a source of



strength in life, as both a puppeteer and as a person who has spiritual strength (like a shaman). One of them is the puppeteer's belief in village *dhanyang/ pundhen* (the spirits), that they are told to be respected and have stories of courage, prowess and strengths which are a source of inspiration and influence for the puppeteer in performing mask puppets. The tradition of mask puppets in ritual needs is present during '*bersih desa*' event (an event to clean a village from evil spirits) in *nyadran* activities in the village's *pundhen* (like a grave). The puppeteers believe that when performing a prayer in the village's *pundhen*, they always feel a magnetic power, that there is always a sound of the songs flowing to the inner rhythm and thoughts of the puppeteer as if he does not need energy and it feels light as he is enjoying the music quietly. The puppeteer gains magical powers when they light incense accompanied by a prayer in the chanting of magical songs that can move the bodies of the mask dancers according to the character of the mask puppet performed in the village's *pundhen*. There is an assumption that the spirits that inhabit the *pundhen* have united in every step, mysticism, the puppeteer's words in moving the masked puppet dancers.

Pundhen as a sacred and holy place for the puppeteers is believed to have magical powers in creating the inner thoughts and also each individual puppeteer's thoughts, mask puppet artist, and the surrounding community. The puppeteer's belief in *pundhen* has shaped his individual reasoning into an experience that is continuously carried out. With the experience of seeing, observing and performing rituals at the *pundhen* at any time, whether in the form of the ceremony of offering the *pundhen*, wearing masks before doing activities in a mask puppet performance is a means of uniting oneself with God Almighty. The performance of *pundhen* offering is carried out by puppeteers and artists in the Kedungmonggo and Pijiombo areas during '*bersih desa*' and when they are about to perform a mask puppet performance. This is done on the belief that by praying at the *pundhen* all activities for blessings and protection will be maintained for the village as well as the puppeteer and other members of the community. This was also conveyed by Poniran, who organizes routine performances called *gebyak* every *Legi* Monday in a series of Kedungmonggo mask puppet routine rituals, which gives strength and power to elders who have died. Gratitude and prayers are always made every month, and before the performance, masks are always performed at the *pundhen*, so that everyone is protected from danger and obstacles before and after the performance (in an interview on November 19, 2022). The similar thing is done by Soleh (a puppeteer of mask puppet in Tumpang village) in every mask puppet performance in village ritual activities, a *ruwatan* (a performance as an entertainment), and incense as an obligation to elevate the ancestral spirits who are *mbau rekso* (the keepers/ owners) of the mask puppet.

This form of feeling, according to Ki Soleh, is a core part of the belief/faith/religious ritual, which is an expression of supplication or gratitude to those who are respected or in power, which are directed solely to God Almighty. Therefore, in expressing gratitude, the ritual ceremony is carried out at a specific time and place. The expressions of gratitude that are carried out are complemented by various ritual tools that are sacred (in the unity of life) (in interview on November 23, 2022). The *Kejawen* tradition views human life as always closely linked to the cosmos of the universe. Thus, human life is a journey full of religious experiences. Traditional rituals are a form of culture carried out by the Javanese people. This is because Javanese people cannot be separated from a belief or belief and the aspects in it. Javanese people find it difficult to escape from the aspect of belief in certain things that have been going on for generations. This attitude is a form of community behavior towards ancestral heritage and is the dominant attitude in the life of Javanese society (Tashadi, 1990).

Unknowingly, the episteme of the puppeteers has been formed when they experience the process of experience and reasoning. Episteme that has been attached to a puppeteer has strengthened the recognition of a value and recognition of something from actual experience which is seen as a fact of truth from a puppeteer. Truth claims originating from a particular episteme are a series of standard rules from norms or values used in an era, which have been legitimized by authoritative power, meaning that the episteme always develops fragmentary, lasting and institutionalized from time to time (Idaman, 2019). An episteme that has been normalized will

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always be striven by the community to last forever in the puppeteer, so that an episteme that lasts will become a regime of discourse.

3.2 The Puppeteer's Body Disciplinary Power

The puppeteer of mask puppet performance is a director as well as a person who has high spiritual strength. A puppeteer who is qualified to play puppets does not simply present a puppet drama all night long if he does not have extensive knowledge and experience as a puppeteer. A masked puppeteer is the most dominant person who becomes the center of attention in a Malang's mask puppet performance and has a decisive role in the process of the development of mask puppet. Some people in Malang still believe in the puppeteer as a person who has spiritual *kaweruh* (knowledge) and as an artist. The puppeteer as the leader of the ritual has the task of reciting prayers and mantras that contain requests for safety, abundance of blessings, and repelling danger (Hidajat, Wayang Topeng Malang, 2008).

The puppeteer's work is based on centuries-old traditions and is always passed down orally, generally from a father to a son. In addition to the knowledge, other skills must also be mastered by them, such as skills to tell stories, play music, dance movements, magic tricks, performance techniques, and the occult knowledge involved in them. This knowledge of special prayers and mantras, and certain ways of behavior give the puppeteer strength to deal with important events in people's lives, such as drought and pests that threaten the harvest, one's misfortune and also success. A good example is Mr. Kasan (in an interview, December 2022), a puppeteer of mask puppet from Precet village, Tumpang sub-district, Malang. According to him, in carrying out spiritual activities, a puppeteer must be ready under any circumstances, requests due to someone's *nadhar* (a promise for fulfilled wishes), part of '*bersih desa*' event, as well as special requests in healing someone who is sick. Knowledge of the spell of a puppeteer has always been a strength for people who believe in the existence of puppeteers as shamans/ healers who have supernatural powers to remove calamities that befall them. As in Hidajat (The Performing Arts of *Wayang Topeng* in Malang, East Java: Artistic Change and Social Impact, 2018), the puppeteer of the mask puppet performance must have spiritual strength. The analogy of performing is like going to war, all the puppets are very dependent on the puppeteer. The smoothness of the stage and also safety is determined by the size of the puppeteer's strength. Puppeteers who do not have spiritual power can sometimes be harassed by people with higher 'knowledge' and power, apart from that they are also harassed by the spirits of the village *pundhen*. In Foucault's language, knowledge is everything or all things that have been collected and decided as truth by a group of people (Martono, 2014). While the truth of the puppeteer as a person with supernatural power is the product of power practices. The power of knowledge manifests itself in discourse which creates truth arbitrarily for its sake (puppeteer), thus knowledge creates reality (Wiradyana, 2018)

Ki Soleh, a puppeteer, (in an interview on December 23, 2022) said that becoming a puppeteer can be done, carried out, and pursued in several ways. Firstly, it is called a true puppeteer, that is, a puppeteer who has been passed down from generation to generation to become a puppeteer, his father/grandfather/great-grandfather is also a puppeteer, so that the knowledge that is given directly or indirectly already belongs to their children/grandchildren/grandchildren. Secondly, it is called the '*cantrik*' puppeteer, a puppeteer who is obtained through the method of enticement, a candidate for the puppeteer instructs the senior puppeteer. Both of these ways are followed by a candidate puppeteer through a learning process that is regulated by a senior puppeteer (it can be grandfather, parents or elderly puppeteer).

The learning process is quite long and through several processes, the prospective *cantrik* learns about music, dance, how to play *keprak*, where he can also learn production, sometimes just as a *gamelan* (set of musical instruments) carrier and arranges puppets (dancers/characters). The *cantrik* system, the method of taking training takes a long time, the goal is for the prospective puppeteer to mature in attitude and behavior, mentality, and artistic skills. The long road to becoming a puppeteer made his whole life devoted to following the instructions of the senior



puppeteers. Conditions and situations during *cantrik* training period, a puppeteer does not only study the technical aspects of art. A senior puppeteer places the position of 'junior puppeteer' as an adopted child or family member. Therefore, the socialization process as a citizen continues. Ki Soleh, when he was "riddled" by the senior puppeteer, Ki Tirtowinoto (Ki Soleh's grandfather) had taught how a puppeteer should act and behave in society. In seeking knowledge, Soleh must practice asceticism or by fasting "*mutih*" for one month to be able to develop inner strength to become a puppeteer. When a student receives a number of mantras he or she must observe abstinence in all matters (*sesirik*), eat nothing but dry rice without side dishes (*mutih*), do not go anywhere to remain in prayer (*panyuwun*) and concentrate on the sacred (*cipta hening*). This is also carried out by the Cirebon puppeteer, where being a puppeteer not only fasts physically, but also on the mental level. The simplest *tirakat* (resisting lust) is *sedawu*, which is fasting and not eating anything which is limited to ten o'clock and is done every day, for 7 (seven) days without even sleeping, and the ritual is called *mati geni* (Nurasih, 2014). Foucault's view is that the practice of disciplining the body (for the prospective puppeteer) can be carried out by controlling knowledge/discourse embodied in the rules given by the senior puppeteer (Ki Tirtowinoto). This control is unnoticed by individuals (Ki Soleh). The more individuals feel free, the more they are included in the control of power discourse (Eriyanto, 2001). Quoted from the view (Setyobudi, 2012) that the body is a real manifestation of the movement of the disciplinary power of knowledge.

In time, a puppeteer teacher, Ki Tirtowinoto, decided to open up some of the knowledge he possessed to his students. This knowledge can be in the form of spell words which, if recited before the performance starts, the puppeteer will surely succeed in captivating the audience's attention, or it is a spell to drive away evil influences. The teacher's power in imparting magical knowledge to his students is a play that the puppeteer inherits from his father or grandfather when it is performed and they believe it will bring good influence. Control or isolation of the body (junior puppeteer), produced by knowledge to conquer. Political knowledge and control over the body (junior puppeteer) is a cross between power relations, knowledge that is localized in the body to form a body that is obedient and can be subdued, utilized, transformed, repaired and its usability can be increased.

In the above observations, it can be concluded that Ki Soleh's knowledge as the puppeteer of mask puppet is currently a source of power by treating people or society as subjects and controlling them with his knowledge. The domination of power over knowledge is the result of a learning process with various long-standing experiences both in the social environment of his existence and in society, making Ki Soleh and other puppeteers become capable puppeteers both as directors and people who have spiritual strength. In Foucault's language it can be said as "technology of power" (political technology of the body) namely the conquest of the body, mind, will, impulses from individuals that give birth to humans as objects of knowledge as a truth that forms new personalities (Foucault, 1997).

4. CONCLUSION

The disciplinary power of a puppeteer is not the implementation of will on coercion that comes from other people, but the disciplinary power is the implementation of one's own will on the basis of experience and reasoning processes. Through discipline, the body is trained to become a skilled body, but it is also constantly tested and corrected so that the skill, dexterity and readiness of a puppeteer becomes a mechanism that simply works within the body itself. With the disciplinary power, a puppeteer can increase the skill, strength, and efficiency of the body, but also control and place the body into a submissive relationship and be useful for the puppeteer himself and the society.

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