

Folk Art as Social Practice and Harmonization: A Case of *Buto Birowo* Folk Art



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ABSTRACT: *Buto Birowo* is a form of performing art coming from rural area. The proponents tend to have homogeneous livelihood, education level, and social-economic status. As a performing art, it is a part of social practice undertaken by Lencoh people that accomodates the relation between modern, traditional, Islamic, and spiritual values. In *Buto Birowo* performance, the relation between actors and spectators occurs not only on the stage, but also in the activities related to the preparation of show, the collection of fund for purchasing costumes, the preparation of consumption for practicing activities, etc. *Buto Birowo* also implies the religious and cultural dialectic process occurring naturally and intensely within community, particularly in Javanese rural people. This research used a qualitative research method with constructive-critical approach. This methodis implemented to construct knowledge based on Lencoh people's thought in their participation in initiating the performing art. As a big cultural space, Lencoh Hamlet also consists of partial spaces encircled by agent activities and movements. In the context of *Buto Birowo* performing art, the agents move in the domains or spaces where the *Buto Birowo* performing art practice is created. The agents are holding a meeting to discuss the show, the practice to prepare the show is conducted in Art Association domain, while the *Buto Birowo* performing art show is held in Lencoh Hamlet domain publicly. The use of Boal's theory in this research is not *an sich* spectator involved on the stage or performance venue, but involved in the process of initiating performance and the social context underlying the text of *Buto Birowo* performance.

KEYWORDS: *Buto Birowo*, harmony, folk art.

INTRODUCTION

Buto Birowo is a form of performing art coming from the basin area of 2 (two) mounts all at once: Mount Merbabu and Mount Merapi, exactly Lencoh Hamlet, Lencoh Village, Selo Sub District, Boyolali Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. As a performing art, it is a part of social practice of Lencoh Hamlet people who accommodate the relation between modern, traditional, Islamic, and Javanese spiritual values. In *Buto Birowo* performance, the relation between actors and spectators occurs not only on the stage. But, it also occurs in daily life. The unity between performing and folk arts is viewed as *suar* or signifying the presence of dimensional reality, as the drama in daily activity of Lencoh people. The stage drama results from *lakon* or story carried in the performance, while daily drama results from the problems occurring in daily life of people such as the inabilities of paying due, of participating in mutual cooperation due to sickness, etc.

Buto Birowo also implies the presence of religious and cultural dialectic processes occurring naturally and intensely within society, particularly those occurring in Javanese villagers. This phenomenon has given rise to the very varying religious stance of Muslim communities. It starts from religion as something believed in (value system), understood (cognition system), and practiced (affection system).

This research used a qualitative research method with constructivist-critical approach. This qualitative research method is applied to build knowledge based on Lencoh Hamlet people's thought in their participation in initiating *Buto Birowo* performing art. The result of investigation is then analyzed critically borrowing Pierre Bourdieu's social praxis theory and Augusto Boal's theory about theatrical staging not leaving the space between actor and spectator. It should be underlined that the use of Boal's theory in this research is not *an sich* spectator involved on the stage or performance venue, but involved in the process of initiating performance from the beginning to the end behind the stage.

Lencoh village is well-known for having a variety of performing arts in the form of folk dance as the part of social cohesion of community, the majority members of which live as vegetable farmers. Vegetable farmers are different from paddy farmers in which vegetable farmers have more leisure time. Leisure time is then used for art and creating a variety of folk dance performing arts such as *Jaran Sari*, *Topeng Ireng*, *Soreng*, and *Buto Birowo dances*, and many other created dance.



Figure 1: Preparation of practice for the show.
(photographs are Mukhlas Alkaf's personal collection)

Social Practice as the Harmonization of Lencoh Villagers

Bourdieu's social practice theory was born because Bourdieu viewed that either objectivism or subjectivism is inadequate to study social reality occurring within society. To accommodate the solution from both of them, Bourdieu focused his attention on the practice considered as a dialectic relation between structure and agency. Social practice is neither determined objectively nor the product of free desire. In the dialectic process, objective structure and subjective definitions, and structure and agent are encountering. It is this encounter that Bourdieu called a practice. Bourdieu conceives practice as a product of dialectic dynamics between externality internalization and internality externalization. Externality is an objective structure beyond social behavior, while internality is something inherent to the social actor (Krisdinanto,2014).

To deal with subjectivist-objectivist dilemma (Giddens,1984), Bourdieu focused his attention on the practice he saw as the consequence of the dialectic relation between structure and agency. Practice is neither determined objectively nor the product of free desire. Reflecting on the interest in dialectics between by means of constructing social reality, Bourdieu labeled his orientation a constructivist structural concept, structuralist constructivism or genetic structuralism defined as An analysis on objective structure existing in different arenas, inseparable from genetic analysis in biological individual, from mental structure existing in certain borders constituting the product of social structure combination; also inseparable from this social structure analysis are social space and the group mastering it is the product of a historical struggle (in which the agents participate according to their own position in social space and according to the mental structure they use to conceive this space).

Through such definition, Bourdieu attempts to integrate duality dimensions of actor (agent) and structure. Therefore, the approach is called genetic structuralism, the analysis on objective structure inseparable from the analysis on the origin of mental structure in biological individuals, some of which are the product of the integration of social structures and the analysis on the origin of social structure itself. Objective structure is something inseparable from agent's consciousness and desire that can direct and inhibit their practice and representation.

The heart of Bourdieu's agent and structure theory lies on the concepts of habitus and arena, and the dialectic relation between the two. While habitus is inside the actor's mind (still in his consciousness realm), arena is beyond the actor's mind (constructing the actor's mind). Essentially, Bourdieu's view is intended to bridge subjectivism and objectivism

In acting in their life, subject and agent, according to Bourdieu, are affected by structure or rule existing in the society. An individual's action does not occur freely due to his personal desire. As an agent, an individual is affected by habitus/accumulated disposition on the one hand and there is also an individual actively creating habitus/accumulated disposition. In each of activities, an individual is affected by his habitus/accumulated disposition. On the other hand, an individual also can create a habitus/accumulated disposition that can influence other individuals as well. Agent is created and creates habitus/accumulated disposition through capital/resource at stake in the domain. Therefore, capital/resource is an important component in a social practice process to an agent or an individual. Practice is a product of the relation between habitus/accumulated disposition and domain, involving capital and resource within it (Bourdieu, 1998).



Figure 2: Spectators' enthusiasm with watching the performance or show. (photographs are Mukhlas Alkaf's personal collection)

Considering the elaboration above, it can be seen that there are some important components in Bourdieu's social practice theory: habitus/accumulated disposition, capital/resource, and domain. Habitus/accumulated disposition is a system through the combination of objective structure and personal history, enduring and ever changing disposition functioning as the generative base to the objectively structured and integrated practices. Field (domain) in Bourdieu's concept is a sphere, arena, or domain constituting the space where actors and social agents are competing with each other for both material resource and symbolic power.

Capital/resource, according to Bourdieu, has a very broad definition as it involves economic/material, cultural, social, and symbolic capitals/resources used to seize and to maintain difference and domination (Bourdieu, 1998). Therefore, based on such formulation, an individual can serve as an agent to create a social practice later by involving habitus/accumulated disposition, capital/resource and domain closely interrelated.

A social practice can be implemented when all of those components are strong and strongly related. The relation between the three components is formulated in the equation below.

Habitus/accumulated disposition [H]xCapital/resource[M]+ domain=Practice

Pierre Bourdieu defines habitus/accumulated disposition as a condition related to the requirements of the existence or a class. The structures created, according to time disposition system, then also functions as the structures constituting a product of a habitus/accumulated disposition. Therefore, a habitus/accumulated disposition is a product of skill becoming a practical action then rendered into an apparently natural ability developing in a certain social environment. So, habitus/accumulated disposition is the driving source of action, thought (mind), and representation (Fatmawati, 2020).

Therefore, habitus/accumulated disposition can be called a character functioning importantly to distinguish a condition. Habitus/accumulated disposition in Latin is something unnatural. Habitus/accumulated disposition can be assumed to be a set of character acquired as the product of social conditions and thereby can derive from the same social conditions. Habitus/accumulated disposition is not a natural or physical product but a historical product created from social experience. It can be said as the product of long term dispositions. Habitus/accumulated disposition is created by intentional action and consciousness history using pedagogic tools. Each dimension of habitus/accumulated disposition is very difficult to change, but it can be changed through the process of making aware and the pedagogic endeavor (Bourdieu, 2017).

Buto Birowo Art: Sacred Ritual in Social Harmonization Practice in Lencoh Village

Sudar (43 year), the leader of art group, is an important figure in the sustainability of Buto Birowo dance performance in Lencoh Village. He is the example of how the accumulated disposition can be achieved. Sudar is the coordinator and the head of art group all at once in Lencoh Village and just like many Lencoh villagers, Sudar has had another profession, a seller (merchant), exactly the seller of cattle or *blantik sapi*. Sudar routinely goes to Purwokerto at least twice in a month carrying 3 cows using his own pick up and if the cow sales are busy, he can go to Purwokerto twice in a week. His preoccupation as a *blantik sapi* still leaves him enough leisure time to serve as the head of art to build and to perpetuate art in Lencoh community.

This position as the head of art is the one forwarded by Sudar's father constituting the previous head of art. It is something common in Lencoh Villagers. Certain position or profession is indeed bequeathed and then inaugurated by local people because they view that the heir of a descendant tends to be competent. The position forwarded in this one descendant also occurs in the

Folk Art as Social Practice and Harmonization: A Case of Buto Birowo Folk Art

profession of *pawang* (diviner) in Lencoh Village. Wongso, the *pawang* who has stipulated *Buto Birowo* as the sacred dance that should be obligatorily performed in Rajab month designated his biological son, Suman (49 year), to be the next *pawang* succeeding him. - *Halini wislumrahnak nang Desa Lencoh Le* (This is a common thing in Lencoh Village, Son], said Mbah Wongso in his interview related to the inheritance of profession from the previous generation to the next.



Figure 3. Costumes of Buto Birowo.
(photographs are Mukhlas Alkaf's personal collection)

Buto Birowo performing art in Lencoh Hamlet is the manifestation of Lencoh community's movement later creating a social practice in Lencoh community as the manifestation of social harmony in daily life. The *Buto Birowo* dance performance represents the community movement in different activities to build the *Buto Birowo* dance performance. Social practice is a theory created by Pierre Bourdieu as the solution to objectivism and subjectivism that in reality cannot accommodate social condition.

Lencoh Hamlet is an area with community members still holding tightly the principles of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*). Therefore, the provision of capital/resource is inseparable from Lencoh people's participation. And so is the provision of capital/economic/material resource needed by *Rukun Santoso* Art Association. *Rukun Santoso* Art Association is the art association is created by Lencoh Village as an attempt of preserving art culture existing in Lencoh Village. The art developing in *Rukun Santoso* Art Association is not only limited to *Buto Birowo* dance, but also includes other performing arts such as *Tope Ireng* dance.

Most of Lencoh villagers engage in farming livelihood. The form of farming implemented is also varied from paddy to horticultural farming. It is this through the farming produces, the Lencoh villagers participate in providing economic/material capital/resource for the implementation of *Buto Birowo* performing art show. Lencoh people who have gotten income from selling their harvest product will usually set aside some of their income and donate it to the association's capital/resource. It is conducted by nearly all Lencoh villagers voluntarily so that the nominal value given is adjusted with the condition and the willingness of individual donors.

In the practicing process, the cultural capital/resource can be seen in individual dance artists. Public participation is also one of cultural capitals/resources the Lencoh people have to build the *Buto Birowo* Dance Performance. Local people usually participate in providing snack for those working for the smooth implementation of *Buto Birowo* performing art show.

The meeting, in addition to involving social capital/resource, also involves symbolic capital/resource. One of symbolic capitals/resources used in the meeting is the *pawang* direction. *Pawang* gives direction about the mandatory days for showing *Buto Birowo* performing art. The *pawang* said that the implementation of dance performance in *Rejeb* and *Sapar* months basically has a distinctive meaning so that the months symbolize the good days considered by the *pawang*. The *pawang*'s consideration is a symbolic instruction that there is a power beyond human power that can be the protective factor to Lencoh people.⁵¹

⁵¹Pawang has a skill of communicating with supernatural creature. The skill has been mastered from one generation to the next since his father, grand father and great grandfather were a *pawangi* in Lencoh Hamlet previously. This ability of curing *trance* is usually accompanied with the ability considered beyond human world.

Folk Art as Social Practice and Harmonization: A Case of Buto Birowo Folk Art

Then, around the show time, all economic/material, cultural, and social capitals/resources involved before are disposed to be symbolic capital/resource. The symbolic capital/resource can be manifested in *Buto Birowo* performing art. The personification of *Buto Birowo* performing art is conducted using costumes that symbolize the mountain ghost with the mask resembling buffalo. The buffalo symbol interprets the life of Lencoh people living in the slopes of Mount Merapi and Mount Merbabu, with farmer as their profession to earn living. Through the movements demonstrated by the performers of *Buto Birowo* performing art just like the farming activities, it can be seen clearly that *Buto Birowo* is a symbolic capital/resource being the media of collective ritual to Lencoh people.

Economic/material, social, and symbolic capitals/resources in the social practice of *Buto Birowo* performing art are basically those involved in each of different domains and habitus/accumulated disposition. Capital/resource will have no meaning if it stands by itself and does not engage in other components such as habitus/accumulated disposition. It can be formulated as follows:

Habitus/accumulated disposition [H]xCapital/resource[M]+ domain=Practice

Buto Birowo performing art in Lencoh Hamlet is the manifestation of Lencoh community's movement later creating a social practice in Lencoh community as the manifestation of social harmony in daily life. The *Buto Birowo* dance performance represents the community movement in different activities to build the *Buto Birowo* dance performance. Social practice is a theory created by Pierre Bourdieu as the solution to objectivism and subjectivism that in reality cannot accommodate social condition.

The engagement of people (community) in providing social capital/resource is found not only in the meeting process. But around the show time, the participation of Lencoh people in *Buto Birowo* performing art show also has the changing role. Before the show, staging arena with tent, equipment, and stage are required. In such condition, Lencoh people serve to help prepare the location of stage for the *Buto Birowo* performing art show. This process of helping prepare *Buto Birowo* performing art has engaged social capital/resource to equip the social practice of helping each other in preparing the *Buto Birowo* dance performance.



Figure 4: A variety of *sesaji* (offerings) for *Buto Birowo* performance.
(photographs are Mukhlas Alkaf's personal collection)

The artists of performing art and the *Buto Birowo* dancers always prepare the show by ensuring that all aspects have been conditioned well. One of aspects prepared well is the Dance itself. Before the show, the dance artists will practice routinely to practice the compactness of all dancers. The compactness is desirable to make the show run smoothly. During practicing process, it can be seen that there is cultural capital/resource within it. The dancers beautify their dancing movement together in the *Buto Birowo* performing art approved.

CONCLUSION

Lencoh Hamlet located between the slopes of Mount Merapi and Mount Merbabu is a cultural space composed of a combination of various habitus and accumulated disposition existing within it. modern, traditional, Islamic, and spiritual cultural Javanese spaces are the basic components composing the cultural space of Lencoh Village. Each of the cultural spaces is played by an agent playing its own role. The roles of modern, traditional, Islamic, and spiritual Javanese cultural spaces are closely interrelated and then result

The supernatural power helps him master communication with other supernatural creatures. Therefore, the relation with other subject (other entities such as supernatural creature, *danyang*[a spirit protecting a place]) that is reciprocal, ethical, and responsible in nature is desirable for the collective safety.

Folk Art as Social Practice and Harmonization: A Case of Buto Birowo Folk Art

information. The formation is symbolically manifested into *Buto Birowo* performing art.

As a big cultural space, Lencoh Hamlet also consists of partial spaces encircled by agent activities and movements in Lencoh Hamlet. In the context of Buto Birowo performing art, the agents move in the domains or spaces where the *Buto Birowo* performing art practice is created. The agents are holding a meeting to discuss the show, the practice to prepare the show is conducted in *Rukun Santoso* Art Association domain, while the *Buto Birowo* performing art show is held in Lencoh Hamlet domain publicly. In addition to representing the people of Lencoh Hamlet, the *Buto Birowo* performing art is also a media for the people to express their gratitude. Most of people in Lencoh Hamlet working as farmers express their gratitude through a ritual in the form of performing art. *Buto Birowo* as a performing art is particularly the farmers' and generally the Lencoh people's expression of gratitude to *danyang* (a spirit protecting an area) that protects Lencoh region. The farmers also express their gratitude to God through religious prayer in the ritual of *Buto Birowo* performing art. Therefore, it can be seen that a series of *Buto Birowo* performing art contains the elements of prayer and gratitude to God and to *danyang* all at once that believed to be able to protect Lencoh Hamlet from disaster. The statement above indicates that *Buto Birowo* performing art does not appear by itself, despite its existence inseparable from the people's activities. Nevertheless, the social activities or practices mentioned by Bourdieu are the product of intense habitus/accumulated disposition in the existence of capital/resource (HxM). Therefore, the accumulated disposition (H) is followed with capital/resource (M) and the capital/resource consists of economic, social, cultural, and symbolic ones as aforementioned. All of them are inherent to the existence of this dance, actor, and spectator, because *Buto Birowo* performing art is the Lencoh people's imagination about cultural space they live in that is protected by a supernatural power or *danyang*, and avoided from natural disaster and drought with the dry water source. It is the imagination of *danyang* protection that is represented by Lencoh people and thereby results in *Buto Birowo* performing art as a social practice. Therefore, *Buto Birowo* serves as a social practice and a social harmonization attempt all at once, in this dissertation narration, borrowing Bourdieu's formulation of (HxM)+R=P, function to be a medium to represent that Lencoh village is protected by a supernatural power. The dance performed in the performing art is not merely the movement of hands and foot as well as mask and costume, but it also contains sacred element that represents the supernatural power that protects the village. Therefore, this dance involves all aspects of community both on and beyond the state. Thus, *Buto Birowo* performing art, viewed from Bourdieu's theory, is merely a consequence or a product functioned by Lencoh people. It is not enough to narrate *Buto Birowo*, as there are some other aspects in this performing art. Social harmony grows affected not only by individual's attitude, but also by attitude between communities affiliated with certain social setting. For example, in Lencoh Hamlet, people want to unite and to cooperate in various sectors for the sake of holding an event together. It includes the cooperation and *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) in preparing the folk art performance. It, of course becomes the community's power in binding the mutual interest to get the good outcome (result).

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