

Theatre of Mixed-Text: *Pembayun* (The Open Boundary)[∞]

Yudiaryani^Y

Opening

The object of this discussion is about the creative production of theatre mixed-text *Pembayun* performed by Yogyakarta Women Theater at the last September 2014. *Pembayun* is a play created by Hirwan Kuardhani, with the subtitled, “new Interpretation”. The theater of mixed-text, where some text from different cultural background are directly merged together, is a performance to establish how the artistic production drives to get beyond the historical model by way of a presentation history. The theater of mixed-text is considered as an integrating model of some conventional performances (traditional and modern movement). They keep the discussion within the scope of the mise en scène of theatre, how it develops becoming more contextual, and how the interpretation of dramatic texts and stage performances could be related with history, social and political aspects. (Figure)

The history of *Pembayun* is very familiar for people from Javanese traditional background, especially in Yogyakarta and Surakarta. The people recognize the story well as a conflict of Panembahan Senopati who is in charge in the 16th century Mataram and Ki Ageng Mangir who is a leader in a small but wealthy *Perdikan Mangir* near Mataram. As a matter of fact, the conflict comes out that Senopati wants Mangir admitting the authority of Mataram. Mangir would like the both governments live in peace side by side in equality.

Romance events between Mangir and Pembayun, Senopati's daughter, is an magnetism toward the conflict. The convincing story as Romeo and Juliet is produced with various mixed creative concept that well known in the production of performing art, such as the concept of the movement of *Bedhaya* and *Minikata*, the inner acting of realism, and the stylized setting on stage. The history from the olden Mataram has inspired the writing and the directing of theatre *Pembayun*. The play has been reinterpreted for presenting an ideology with the messages function to the spectator. To understand the essential relations of modernity with the past requires an examination of the operations of cultural ritualization. Through the concept of “open boundary”, which was an effort to make *Pembayun* to be in context. (Figure).

Synopsis and Interpretation of *Pembayun*

Senopati feels troubled since Mataram has not been successful to take control of *Perdikan Mangir*. Senopati works *tledek mbarang* strategies out for defeating Mangir with sending Adisara, his beloved wife along with his daughter Pembayun, to go to *Perdikan Mangir* disguise as a *tledek* dancer. *Perdikan Mangir* is a wealthy territory that puts forward the manners of a democratic life. Ki Ageng Mangir often hold the gathering with his people to discuss the problems. For love, Mangir married Pembayun. But an impersonate Pembayun as Madusari unsealed, and great dispute between Mangir and Pembayun. Nyi sepuh, Mangir's mother immediately set strategy along with Baru Klinthing when Mangir will bring

Pembayun back to Mataram. Mangir disguised as Baru Klinting, likewise otherwise. At the time Mangir bends over Senopati, and when Senopati will bump his head on a throne, occurring resistance from Baru Klinthing who disguised as Mangir. In the midst of fighting, after seeing Keris what Baru Klinthing brought, Senopati recognizes that Baru Klinthing as his other child born of a village girl, Ni Ayu Sunti. Integration of the Mataram and Mangir is in the hands of Baru Klinthing, that is the integration of the Merapi Mountain, as a guardian of the North, and the South Sea, as a guardian of the South. Pembayun decides to go along with Mangir, her husband. Senopati, on the one hand, has to give permission his daughter away. At the other hand, he put Baru Klinthing, his son, to meet his death. Pembayun will be in is the future, while Baru Klinthing is on the past side. (Figure)

Theatre *Pembayun* examines for the beginning the conflict history between Senopati and Mangir that Mangir was killed by Panembahan Senopati so as to take control of *Perdikan Mangir*. History is not the past, but rather the notes and recollections of memories of the past. If there are no records and memories of the past will not be history. Notes and recollections are the first source of writing history. History is also a process of pursuing a source culture that becoming a fact. In the hands of a historian, then, the fact becomes an extra meaning for the history itself. In the hands of artists, a fact becomes a unique story convincing through their relationship. This is where the interpretation of play going on. The history therefore has never inosen, as the meaning always connected with the context. Interpretation of history that namely philosophy of history often called also with “reference for work” that gives meaning to all human activities, in the past.

Theatre *Pembayun* revealed that not Mangir who killed by Senopati yet Baru Klinthing, Senopati’s own son. In the minor aspects, story of *Pembayun* stands for the future. In the macro aspects, self-sacrifice of Baru Klinthing will be a symbol of the unification of “north” and “south” to keep always the Mataram in peace. It might be subjective interpretation of *Pembayun* because history has changed the meaning of being fiction. Historical events can be recorded and mixed for actual reasons. The history of conflict is changed direction to focus on the actual of human decision and this situation could be a source of creativity for people today. (Figure)

Theater Mixed-Text : The Open Boundary of Mise en Scène

The Performance of *Pembayun* applies collaboration of performative elements that supports forming a mise en scène that uniquely belongs to the group. Through the mise en scène, the performance would imagine a cultural model that would describe in as detailed a manner as possible the way in which the mise en scène presents and transmits the past or the foreign culture to the present public, and what operations come into play in this cultural transfer using performative elements as a theatrical means.

Peter Brook said that translating culture (an object inside untranslatable) is one the role of theatre. It means finding the gestures, atmosphere, the symbolic actions, which concretely enact a concept as abstract and untranslatable as “inner acting”.ⁱ According to Roland Barthe becoming the mise en scène a text can re-distribute language that emerge from the collaboration of performative elements. In turn every single text on it is an interteks. The text of the other present through

various levels with a form that is less known, as a text from the previous culture and the text which is around the local culture. So, the text should be read with another text as its background, namely hypogram and called as transformation text.² The theory of the text, said Barthes, is a theory of web. and this is then a theatrical language.

A textual performance of *Pembayun* is considered as a multikultural performance that displays a source culture and a culture foreign to us (from western culture i.e. the *Mini Kata*, or even from local culture itself i.e. the *Bedhaya*), also is presented in artists work. It is at the crossing of ways, of the cultures and of artistic practices that we can get the hybridizations of traditions. Multicultural work is suited to a description of the links between cultures. It produces proximity esthetic between the stage and the spectator. This means that the spectator is in a position observe the stage by following in parallel the direction of who was featured by an actor. Having a certain form of culture, and it is reconstructed together between actor and spectator, the spectator could keep a long with actors within “movement-in-mind”. (*Figure*)

Therefore, the open boundary on stage means to construct a *mise en scène* which makes the traditional forms of performance to be modernized, influenced by culture from the west and the east. The *mise en scène* do not exist in a vacuum, but is already mixed from several cultures, including the spectator culture that generates artistic modeling stage. There are three idioms from different cultures which are discussed below. They are the *Bedhaya Dance*, the *Mini Kata*, and the Gender Ideology.

The Spirit of Javanese Tradisional: Bedhaya Dance. The movement of *Bedhaya Dance* gives inspirations to ways of directing and acting for staging *Pembayun*. The dance is a Javanese classical dance that cannot be released to do with the Palace of considering in this dance place was born and developed. As a form of classical dance, *Bedhaya* has on crystallization aesthetically high level, already having a pattern as well as choreography standard.³ A dance that is included in a category has characteristics as classical dance undergone processing and used in which movement is conveyed through wonderfulness sensorial movement that has been arranged. In this category, developing movement deliberately for the sake of context will make happen an art has a beauty of its own capacity. Even the beauty of *Bedhaya* is established beyond its local boundaries. (*Figure*)

In the performance of *Pembayun*, the movement of *Bedhaya Dance* turns into a concept of directing. Ritualization of divine and human cosmos comes into being in a style of acting called *inner acting* in which self control and delicacy of movements in acting becomes entirely important. The *Bedhaya* is no longer sacred, but its spirit of ritualization is still kept on stage. The spectator has not watching the really *Bedhaya* while its movement inspires performers for creating a new movement. That is “as if *Bedhaya*”, a sense of *Bedhaya*, the *Bedhayan* Movement. The *Bedhayan* appears at the moment of birth as an accompaniment to *Pembayun*, and a symbol of romance Senopati with the Queen of Southsea, also a reflection of *Pembayun*’s responsibility to unify Mataram and Perdikan Mangir. The movements of *Bedhayan* runs into acting of the actors.

The Instinctive Movement of Mini Kata: *Mini Kata* emerges through the process of training along with the workshop theater. *Mini Kata*, in addition to, produces a system of improvisation, and also creates technique of acting called “Instinctive Movements (IM)”. The IM technique is not structurized or without a structure. The nucleus of the IM comes through spontaneity in order responding to stimuli from the outside. It has been used to deliver images. With the IM, form of movement is more understandable in intuition rather than it is only logical, so that communication with the spectator becomes more free and spontaneous.⁴

Pembayun bring into play the *Mini Kata* throughout stage directing that is an effort to prepare the actor’s body as a tool for photographing condition of human life. People today is living in a discrimination condition. The people who rich getting richer the poor poorer. Public leaders preoccupied with enrich oneself. As the IM of *Mini Kata* is to be the concept of directing, then the performance could be situated as “the as if *Mini kata*”, the sense of *Mini kata.*, *rasa Mini kata*. We can not play the real *Mini Kata* as Rendra created before. We just perform the “as if *Mini kata*”. It happens into romantic scene Mangir-Pembayun, and as disguising Pembayun uncovered. Through technique as if *Mini kata*, a symbolic mise en scène of artistic seems estetik for the spectator. (Figure)

Pembayun has created a mise en scène through the Mini Kata as if *Bedhaya* and as if *Mini kata* that could the spectator in a position to evaluate the status of theatricality for the sake of their needs by following a route parallel to the actors performing the story. The power of mise en scène then lies in its ability to represent a culture theatrically with its norms, values, and beliefs all together that has an advantage and function for spectator. No commentary or analysis could do the same as mise en scène has done. Hense a very spesific use of mise en scène.

Pembayun: The Ideology and The Politics of Theatre

What ideologization is applied to the performance text? The performance of *Pembayun* as a performance text can only be understood intertextually when confronted with the ideological structure of period in time or a corpus of texts. It must be considered as well in relation to the social contex, i.e. other texts and discourses about reality produced by society.⁵ The performance which has mise en scène on it like *Pembayun* can be understood as a social practice, as an ideological mechanism that is capable as much as reflecting historical reality.

Janet wolff said that art is the product of society.⁶ These remarks would like to clarify that art can be seen as the situation and the product of history, and not as a form of talent genius of an artist. Some people, even a group and a social effects as well as ideology involved to produce work of art. The spectator has an active role in the completion of the end of a work of art. Then art never is immune from the political process and ideology in which the esthetic aspects and experience articulated.

The ideological nature of art, then, is mediated by the artistic level in two ways. That are through the material and social conditions of production of works of art, and through the existing artistic conventions in which they are constructed. A work of art may have ideology as its material, but it *works* that material. Ideology therefore closely relation to its sociocultural context. It can be seen that the person or some group who gained control of the material aspects will have an influence in

the structure of social. Those who manufactured the culture being a place where ideology will be invented.

In its development, ideology is no longer a mere idea, cultural values and beliefs, but also schools, colleges, theater performances, paintings, artifacts, etc. Ideology will develop and being touched. From here, it is known that art is part of the activity as well as ideological products.

Then how the art form, such as the performance of *Pembayun* could be given to an ideological products?

The performance of *Pembayun*, as the work of art, is the collective work. It is formed by those who come from different academic background. They are lecturers, students and artists most are women. The performers present to the interests of the group, that is, in artistic, in search of the form of a typically women theatrical production, and to communicate a message for empowering women in society. *Pembayun* is not a boundless and free creation, but controlled and tied to the tendency of the material and the values of its background. The performance is not there so much the art itself that is staged, but the political and sosial also.

The Gender Ideology of the *Pembayun*. The ideology of gender in *Pembayun* becomes an instrument for melting the mise en scène of the *as if Bedhaya* and *as if Mini Kata*. The art and ideology is like two faces in one coin. The art has an ideology, but also the art must be able to display the ideology. The ideological art is expected to meet the needs of material for the community with accommodate all kind of the idea, values, and believe of the people. Gender behavior is a behavior that can disappear structural and institutional discrimination. Yogyakarta Women Theatre with the production of *Pembayun* is expected capable to change political impact toward stage performing, that is to transform from interpretation to politically aesthetics. Almost 80 percent of the role has been given to women performer. Composition of actors on stage reflects the power of women, i.e. in acting of *Pembayun*, *Adisara*, *Nyai Sepuh*, and *Sekar Dadu*. Taking a role as the decision makers, women on stage play as a strategy maker, and willing to take the risk of the results of their decisions. (Figure)

The response of the spectator is no longer produced by male sexual requires that women are sexual objects. The artistic like the design of costumes, lighthing, and setting no longer designed to show women as objects of male desire. Women become the subject of the dramatic events. The aesthetic stage for women is the basis of the language of the gender. For that reason, the production of *Pembayun*, indeed, used to show partiality is on the subject of women "political position". (Figure)

The Politics of the *Pembayun*. If ideology makes the art of a bunch of ideas by a system that gives direction and purpose to undertake ongoing human life, then the implementation of the ideology of the art requires particular politics. The style of democratization shown by Mangir presents political engagement of the *Pembayun* toward the political state of the Mataram. This needs to actually analyze how the relationship between political and theatrical in the *Pembayun*, on the contrary should also the relationship could be examined how a theatrical put the performance in political site in the daily life. The art and politics were the only method to communicate their own political messages to spectator. Creating an art

thus in any form, whether on purpose or not, is political. That means that creating the *Pembayun* shows the creators are engaged in politics.

The *Pembayun* is labelled as a politic of gender as its has been involved with gender political theme. That is the woman political empowerment through *Pembayun*'s decision when she has to go for her husband or for her father. As a modern and independent woman finally she has followed her heart to go for her husband. In this case, indeed, the art deliberately produced to articulate a political changes in policy. Another example happens in the connection between the Mangir and the political state situation appears in the relationship between the leaders and the people. *Perdikan Mangir* is a symbol of democratic government, wealthy, and the people live in prosperity. The *Pembayun* is a creation for representing how state government should stand for his people. (Figure)

Closing

Teater *Pembayun* is a manifestation of cultural ritualization among Java and Western culture through the as if *Bedhayan* movement, and the as if *Mini Kata*. Through the concept of "the as if", the created movements have become more free and filled of imagination, so that new movement was capable of having whether politically or aesthetically meaning. Teater *Pembayun* communicates a message through the ideology of gender, that is the ideology of emancipation, freedom, and transformation.

The open boundary is the concept towards describing a configuration of stage which serves some text deliberately mixed and communicates political and socially messages to spectator. Producing stage theatricality with various mixed creative concept that well known in the production of performing art, such as the concept of reinterpretation of text dramatic *Pembayun*, the exploration movement of the as-if *Bedhayan* and the as if *Minikata*, the inner acting of realism, and the stylized setting on stage.

The history from the olden Mataram inspired the writing and the directing of *Pembayun* with reinterpreting the history. To understand the essential relations of modernity (story of *Pembayun*) with the past (history of *Pembayun*) requires an examination of the operations of cultural ritualization. The open boundary on stage means to construct a new and collaboration *mise en scène* which makes the traditional forms of performance to be modernized. The *mise en scène* of *Pembayun* is mixed from several cultures, including the spectator culture that generates artistic modeling stage. Reconciliation between the *Pembayun* and the spectator, and the spectators are also reconciled with each other, in so far as the *Pembayun* succeeded in making stage and spectators distribute a common experience about discrimination and domination happen in society.

Teater mixed text is an open boundary for creating a modern stage performing, for presenting the future of the past. Having the new definition of staging, theatre *Pembayun* is an effort to design the art through a form that is more contextual and promising. (Figure)

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^r Teaching Staff of Theater Departement at ISI Yogyakarta. Lecturer, Dramaturg, Director, and text book dan play translator

ⁱ Patrice Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, London and New York: Routledge, 1992, 201.

² Michael Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry*, Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978, 11, 23.

³R.M, Soedarsono, *Seni Pertunjukan Indonesia di Era Globalisasi*, Jakarta: Depdikbud, 1997, 2.

⁴Goenawan Mohamad, "Tentang Bip-Bop", dalam Edi Haryono, ed. *Rendra dan Teater Modern Indonesia. Kajian Memahami Rendra Melalui Tulisan Kritikus Seni*, Yogyakarta: Kepel Press, 2000, 51—52.

⁵ Patrice Pavis 1992, 35.

⁶ Janet Wolff, *The Sosial Production of Art*, New York: St Martin's Press, 1981, 142.

