

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE BARIS MEMEDI DANCE IN THE TRADITIONAL VILLAGE OF JATILUWIH, TABANAN, BALI

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Abstract

Baris Memedi Dance is a sacred dance performed as part of the ritual infrastructure during the mass cremation ceremony (Ngaben Massal) in the Jatiluwih Traditional Village. The main issue addressed in this journal is the uniqueness exclusive to the Baris Memedi Dance. Therefore, the objective of this research is to explore and gain a deeper understanding of the uniqueness and distinctive characteristics found only in the Baris Memedi Dance in the Jatiluwih Traditional Village. The research type employed in this journal is qualitative research, with the data collection method being literature review. Based on the method used, the data revealed uniqueness in costume, makeup, and dance style. The distinctive feature of the Baris Memedi Dance is that it must be performed in an odd number, using costumes resembling dried leaves, dried banana leaves, or rice plant, creating the appearance of supernatural beings (Memedi). The dancers also use fabrics from graves, and their faces are painted with charcoal from graves to resemble Memedi (supernatural beings). The Baris Memedi dancers are adorned in a way that gives them a frightening appearance. Baris Memedi dancers can perform in a conscious state or semi-conscious state, but they remain in control.

Key Word : Uniqueness, Baris Memedi Dance

1. INTRODUCTION

The traditional village of Jatiluwih is an area located in the Tabanan regency of Bali. Jatiluwih is known for its natural beauty, traditional arts, and its culturally recognized heritage. One of the arts that has flourished in Jatiluwih is dance. According to (Kussudiardja, 2000), dance is the beauty of human body movements that are rhythmic and spirited. One of the dances that holds

sacred value and is exclusive to the traditional village of Jatiluwih is the Baris Memedi dance. As described by (Prawartana, 2020), the Baris Memedi dance is a sacred ritual performed during the Pitra Yadnya ceremony (Ngaben Massal) in the traditional village of Jatiluwih.

Researchers are interested in studying the Baris Memedi dance due to its uniqueness and distinctive characteristics compared to other

Baris dances. While typically, Baris dances depict warriors or knights in a battlefield, the Baris Memedi dance portrays a mystical being called "Memedi," believed to be a guide for the soul to the afterlife. Additionally, in terms of costume, the Baris Memedi dance employs a simple costume made of dried banana leaves (Keraras), setting it apart from other Baris dances.

In the journal research titled "Fungsi Tari Baris Memedi Bagi Masyarakat Desa Adat Jatiluwih Tabanan Bali" by Ni Kadek Juni Artini (Artini, 2020), it is explained that the Baris Memedi dance is considered one of Bali's traditional dances falling into the category of sacred and religious dances. Memedi is portrayed as a mischievous supernatural figure known for hiding things, appearing oddly with a poleng-toothed appearance, disheveled hair, and clothing. Furthermore, in the final thesis report entitled "Tari Baris Memedi Di Desa Adat Jatiluwih Tabanan Bali Sebuah Strategi Pelestarian Seni Tradisi" by Prof. Dr. I Wayan Dana, S.S.T., M.Hum. (Dana, 2021), it is described that the Baris

Memedi dance symbolizes a group of "supernatural spirits" residing in eerie places such as graveyards, cliffs, and large trees. This dance is performed by 7-15 male dancers wearing costumes made of leaves, tree branches, and dried banana leaves (keraras) collected from the local cemetery. From this research, it can be concluded that the Baris Memedi dance is a sacred performance representing the supernatural figure known as "Memedi" and possesses unique visual traits like the poleng-toothed appearance, disheveled hair, and clothing, making it distinct among the dances of the Jatiluwih traditional village. In previous studies, the discussion on the topic of Tari Baris Memedi was more focused on its function, meaning, and preservation or development. The methods employed were primarily observation and interviews. However, in this research titled "Uniqueness of Tari Baris Memedi in the Jatiluwih Traditional Village, Tabanan, Bali," the focus will shift towards the uniqueness and distinctive characteristics found only in Tari Baris Memedi. The research will solely utilize a Literature Review

method, drawing from credible sources. Therefore, this approach distinguishes this study from previous research.

Therefore, the goal of this research is to explore and delve deeper into the unique characteristics and distinctive features found in the Baris Memedi dance in the traditional village of Jatiluwih, as compared to Baris dances in other regions.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The type of research used in this journal is Qualitative research.. According to Denzin & Lincoln (1994) in Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif by (Albi Anggito dan Johan Setawan, 2018), qualitative research is a study that employs a naturalistic setting with the intent to interpret occurring phenomena, accomplished by involving various available methods. Erickson (1968) in Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif by (Albi Anggito dan Johan Setawan, 2018), states that qualitative research attempts to discover and narratively describe the activities carried out and the impact of these actions on their lives. Kirk & Miller (1986: 9) in

Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif by (Albi Anggito dan Johan Setawan, 2018), define qualitative research as a particular tradition in the social sciences fundamentally reliant on observing humans, both in their settings and terminologies, identifying things relevant to meaning in various circumstances of human diversity, actions, beliefs, and interests, focusing on the differences in the forms of things that create differing meanings. From the perspectives of various experts mentioned above, it can be concluded that qualitative research involves collecting data in a natural setting with the intention of interpreting occurring phenomena, where the researcher is the key instrument. Data sources are sampled purposively and using a snowball technique, data collection involves triangulation (combination), data analysis is inductive/qualitative, and the outcomes of qualitative research emphasize meaning rather than generalization (Albi Anggito dan Johan Setawan, 2018).

The data collection method used is the Literature Review method. According to Sarwono (2006) in Studi

Pustaka : Pengertian, Tujuan, Sumber dan Metode by (Azis, 2023), a Literature Review is the activity of studying various reference books and similar previous research findings that are useful in obtaining a theoretical basis regarding the issue under investigation. Nasir (2013) in Studi Pustaka : Pengertian, Tujuan, Sumber dan Metode by (Azis, 2023), explains that a Literature Review is a data collection technique that involves an analysis of books, literature, notes, and various reports related to the issue being addressed. From the perspectives of these experts, it can be concluded that the Literature Review method is an activity to gather relevant information on the topic or issue that is the subject of the research or narrative topic presented in scientific writing (Azis, 2023).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Baris Memedi Dance is one of the traditional Balinese dances that falls under the category of ceremonial or ritual dances. It is considered an ancient art form, said to be a legacy from the pre-Hindu culture that

remains original and is found in the daily social life of the mountain communities, specifically in the Jatiluwih Traditional Village. This dance is a sacred performance believed to be influenced by mystical whispers, presented by a dancer in a trance-like state due to the presence of a sacred spirit. It is performed during the *atiwa-tiwa* or mass cremation ceremony (*ngerit*) in the Jatiluwih Traditional Village, Penebel, Tabanan. The people of Jatiluwih believe that this dance serves the purpose of guiding the souls of the deceased towards nirvana. Baris Memedi dance is inspired by a mythical creature known as "Memedi". Memedi is believed to be mischievous and fond of hiding things. It is described as having a peculiar appearance, with poleng-patterned teeth, disheveled hair, and unkempt clothing. Memedi is said to reside in specific places such as cliffs, ravines, rivers, large trees, and bamboo groves (Artini, 2020).

A. Costume Uniqueness

The Baris Memedi dance is a very unique dance. It incorporates magical elements and uniqueness that distinguish it from other dances. The

distinctive feature of the Memedi Baris Dance is that it must be performed in an odd number, using costumes resembling dried leaves, dried banana leaves, or rice plant parts to resemble supernatural beings (Memedi), along with the use of fabrics from grav (Artini, 2020).

The costumes used in the Baris Memedi dance are very distinctive and specially designed to create a spooky and mystical appearance. The use of natural materials such as dried banana leaves (Keraras), andong leaves, and white gauze fabric gives unique characteristics to these costumes. Dried banana leaves (Keraras) are often used as the base layer of the costume. These leaves can be tied or attached to the dancer's body in a specific arrangement. The use of dried banana leaves provides a natural texture and appearance, creating a strong impression with the contrasting dry brown color. Andong leaves are used as decorations on the costume, placed around the head, shoulders, or other parts of the body. Andong leaves create an exotic impression and add a mystical aura to the dancer's appearance. Additionally, white gauze

fabric is used to cover parts of the dancer's body, such as the chest or waist (Kikomunal-Indonesia, 2020).

B. Makeup Uniqueness

Besides the distinctive costume, the facial appearance of Baris Memedi dancers is adorned in a striking manner to appear frightening and resembling the Memedi, a supernatural being in local beliefs. The facial makeup of the dancers includes the use of white paint covering the entire face, with a strong emphasis on the eyes and mouth. The eyes are often adorned with bold red or black colors, while the mouth is given a frightening effect. With this facial makeup, the dancers create a mysterious appearance, evoking an aura of supernatural beings involving the presence of spirits in this dance (Kikomunal-Indonesia, 2020).

Another opinion suggests that the dancers' faces are polished using charcoal from graves to resemble Memedi (supernatural beings). Baris Memedi dancers are adorned in such a way that their appearance becomes eerie. As this dance is considered sacred, during its performance, some

dancers may be possessed as part of the ceremony (Artini, 2020).

C. Dancing Uniqueness

The next uniqueness can be seen in the way Baris Memedi dance is performed. The Baris Memedi dancers can be in a conscious or semi-conscious state, but still remain in control. It all depends on each individual's condition. The duration of the dance is not predetermined because it will end when the *klakat*, which has been inscribed with symbols, is placed on the dancer's head by their leader. So, before the *klakat* is placed on their head, the dancers will continue to dance with free movements. Once the *klakat* is placed, they will stop dancing and return to the graves, and if there is anyone who is not yet conscious, a *segehan* will be offered at the grave. Another uniqueness occurs from the dancer's perspective; while dancing, they will feel that the ground they step on is not visibly flat but rather like a cliff. Moreover, those who observe it will feel as if everything is doubled (Desak, 2018).

In the Jatiluwih Traditional Village, the dancers are not prepared beforehand because in the ceremony, anyone can be chosen spontaneously to dance. Therefore, the costumes are not prepared in advance. When the prospective dancer is possessed, they are then dressed in dried *kraras* leaves or banana leaves. They dance with movements resembling *Memedi*, while swaying and chasing each other. The Baris Memedi dance is accompanied by the traditional music of *Gambelan Gong* and *Angklung*. The special accompanying music has magical qualities, causing those immersed in it to dance involuntarily. During possession, the dancer often attacks a fire and dances above it. The sequence of dancers is not considered complete if someone is still not conscious; in this case, an offering is made at the grave. After returning to the grave, the dancers bathe or purify themselves in the river. The purpose is to cleanse themselves, and then they return to the *setra* for "*Nebusin*". *Nebusin* means restoring the soul that was previously not integrated. The process continues with a purification ritual, and only then are the dancers

considered fully conscious. This dance is led by the Pemangku Setra of the Jatiluwih Traditional Village (Desak, 2018).

D. Performance Uniqueness

The Baris Memedi dance in the village of Jatiluwih, Tabanan, is believed to guide the spirits being honored during the ngaben ceremony towards heaven. The Baris Memedi dancers consist of nine people, a number that symbolizes the nine cardinal directions. Before the performance, the Baris Memedi dancers undergo a ritual called Mesiram at Beji, Pamuspan, and Pedeng cucu. The ritual continues with mamungkah at the traditional village cemetery. During the mamungkah, individuals who are spiritually called to dance will come to the cemetery. Some inherit the role of the dancer from their ancestors, while others may not have initially wanted to be part of the Baris Memedi dance. However, during the mamungkah ceremony, individuals may feel compelled to join the dance. Afterward, the performance extends from the cemetery to the front of the house where the ngaben

ceremony is taking place (Simabur, 2022).

The Baris Memedi dance in the village of Jatiluwih has been around for a long time. It is performed by approximately 9 adult male dancers, with one person serving as the Penamprat (leader). The dancers wear costumes made of dried leaves or wooden twigs obtained from the graveyard. They perform spontaneous movements without any prior routine rehearsals. Interestingly, these Baris Memedi dancers also adorn themselves at the local graveyard. During the performance, the Baris Memedi dance is staged along the road from the graveyard to the place where the deceased person is, accompanied by the sounds of the gong baleganjur. The number of dancers is not fixed, as it follows the tradition of "ngaturang ayah" (offering to ancestors), but usually, there are a minimum of 7 dancers, and sometimes even more than that (Post, 2018).



Photo by : (Kikomunal-Indonesia, 2020).

4. CLOSING

Conclusion

Baris Memedi Dance is one of the Balinese traditional dances classified under ceremonial or guardian dances. It is considered an ancient art form said to be a legacy of the pre-Hindu culture, retaining its originality. It is commonly found in the daily lives of the mountainous communities, particularly in the Jatiluwih Village. This dance is a sacred performance believed to be inspired by mystical whispers and is presented with the involvement of a dancer in a trance-like state, supposedly possessed by a sacred spirit.

The dance is performed during the *atiwa-tiwa* ceremony or mass

cremation (*ngerit*) in the Jatiluwih Adat Village, Penebel, Tabanan. What makes Baris Memedi Dance unique is that it must be performed in an odd number, and the dancers wear costumes made of dried leaves, dried banana leaves, or rice plant parts to resemble supernatural beings (*Memedi*). They also use fabrics from graves. The dancers' faces are painted with charcoal from the graves to resemble *Memedi* (supernatural beings), creating a frightening appearance.

Baris Memedi dancers can perform in a conscious state or semi-conscious, but always under control, depending on individual conditions. The duration of the dance is not predetermined; it concludes when the sacred inscribed *klakat* is placed on the dancer by their leader. If a dancer has not regained consciousness, an offering is presented at the grave. After returning to the grave, the dancers bathe or cleanse themselves in the river to purify, then return to the *setra* for "*Nebusin*" (ritual cleansing).

Suggestion

Based on the results of the research and discussion regarding the

uniqueness of the Memedi Baris dance. The Memedi Baris dance is a highly sacred dance but filled with uniqueness that distinguishes it from other dances. The Memedi Baris dance is a hereditary traditional dance that exists only in the traditional village of Jatiluwih, Tabanan, Bali. Therefore, the Memedi Baris dance in the Jatiluwih traditional village must be continuously preserved and developed to prevent the extinction of this dance. This dance also needs to be introduced to the general public so that this tradition can be known to many people and not be lost in the course of time.

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