

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I.1 Background of the Study

Among the people of Kupang Sari, Ambarawa, a performing arts group named *Siswo Sari Utomo* is famous for its *Reog*. *Reog* in Ambarawa is traditional Javanese performing arts that combines arts and magical elements. Ambarawa *Reog* features dancers riding horses made of bamboo, and the moment of trance when the dancers are being possessed. In other places like in Batu Malang and Pajarisuk, Pringsewu, Lampung, performance similar to Ambarawa *Reog* is called *Kuda Lumping*. *Reog* is one of the most popular performance art that comes from Indonesia and it is still performed until now (Gunawan & Sulistyoningrum, 2016).

Kuda Lumping performance was a part of ritual worship before Islam developed around XV century (Soedarsono (1972) as cited by Dewi (2007). Soedarsono in his paper *Jawa dan Bali: Dua Pusat Perkembangan Drama Tari Tradisional di Indonesia* particularly discusses the function of the horse in *Kuda Lumping* performance. For him, the horse is to bridge between human and spirit. Dewi (2007) writes on her paper that horse metaphorically has the function of linking the relationship between humans and spirits. The horse used in this performance is not a real horse but a horse made of bamboo which is shaped and decorated to resemble a horse (Alfianita, 2014).

On *Kuda lumping* performance, Sari (2017) explains that for people of Pajarisuk, Lampung, *Kuda lumping* conveys heroism. It describes horsemen who use bamboo horse which is shaped and decorated to resemble heroic real horses. She mentions that *Kuda Lumping* performance includes *Kuda Lumping* dancers, the handler or shaman (as the head of the performances and controller), music performers, and audience. The dancer's properties consist of a set of traditional clothes, bamboo-horse, whips, and masks, while the Shaman's attribute consists of offerings such as flowers, drinks, perfume, and incense. In addition, the performance is accompanied by music consisting of *kendang*, *gong*, *slompret* and *kenong*. *Kendang* is a two-headed drum which is mostly used in Gamelan ensembles of Java. *Gong* is a musical percussion instrument in the form of flat circular metal and it is hit with a mallet to sound it. Meanwhile, *Slompret* or clarion looks similar to a trumpet. Most people usually find it difficult to differentiate between clarion and trumpet. *Kenong* is another musical instrument in Indonesian gamelan. It has the same size and looks the same with a gong, however, the placement of *kenong* is in a wooden box.

Sari (2017) later explains the sequence of *Kuda Lumping* performance. Firstly before *Kuda Lumping* performance begins; all performers are doing the rituals of burning the incense and offering “*sesajen*”. After that, *Kuda Lumping* performance starts. The dances follow this order: *wedhoan* dance, *celeng* dance, *barong* dance, and trance. The word ‘*wedhoan*’ was derived from the word ‘*wedhok*’ which means women. Thus, *wedhoan* dance is a kind of dance that is

usually played by women. Meanwhile, the word ‘*celeng*’ from *celeng* dance comes from Javanese word which means wild boar. According to Suwindra (2017), the dancers of *celeng* dance should possess wild character to resemble the wild boar itself. *Barong* dance is a traditional dance that comes from Bali, Indonesia. According to Dewi et al., (2016), *barong* dance is used to be a sacred and religious dance but nowadays *barong* dance has changed its functionality into entertainment and tourism purposes. Sari’s explanation about the sequence of *Kuda Lumping* performance is supported by an article, *Kuda Lumping Kesenian Tradisional dari Jawa Tengah* (2015). This article mentions that at the beginning of the show, the shamans usually do rituals like do the offerings and praying to keep the performers away from danger. The article briefly explains that in each performance, *Kuda Lumping* is usually divided into 3 parts. The first part is usually carried out by several female dancers, riding their bamboo horses dancing with gentle and dynamic movements. The second and third parts will be performed by several male dancers. In this section *Kuda lumping* dancers imitate some movements that describe the courage of the horsemen on the battlefield.

Kuda Lumping performance is not merely entertainment; it has other functions as well. Setyorini (2012) explains that *Kuda Lumping* in Batu-Malang has a function as a sacred ritual in the village cleansing ceremonies. Sacred ritual is usually thought of as a magical ritual during the art performances. In fact, this *Kuda Lumping* performance is believed as a way to protect and purify

the villages from any kind of disaster and danger. This ritual is usually done in Selo month, the eleventh month in the Javanese calendar, but every village has its own schedule to do the rituals. The shaman will clean the village from the evil spirits that are believed to danger the villagers. The ritual begins in the morning with a ceremony in the grave of the village founder. Then the ritual is followed by reading prayers to the ancestors and burning some incenses. After that an art performance is done at night by using the horse made of bamboo to attract and entertain the audience. The functions of *Kuda Lumping* that are bound together.

In *Kuda Lumping* or *Reog*, there is a part in the performance when the dancers will be possessed. According to Boddy (2015), spirit possession means the hold exerted over human beings by the external forces which can be the ancestors or ghosts from foreign origin. Thus, it can be said that possession is a term that refers to integration between spirit and matter when there is power beyond an individual's control. There are some studies that explain about possession and its ritual, however, there are not many researchers who write about possession in art performances. Sari might be one of them who wrote about possession but the research might not be very detailed. Sari did the research about the process of *Kuda Lumping* performance, its symbol, the meaning behind the *Kuda Lumping* performance, and also the functions of the symbols during the performance. Thus, the writer wants to know the requirements for the performers to get possessed and the dancers experience

(feel, see, do) during the possession. The writer feels curious about possession in the *Kuda lumping* performance when the rituals are held. In order to make the research more valid the writer will do an interview directly with the Shaman of Siswo Sari Utomo and *Kuda lumping* performers to collect information to support the research.

1.2 Field of the Study

The field of the study is literature especially in folk dance.

1.3 Scope of the Study

The researcher will limit the research into a possession of the *Reog* Dance of people in Ambarawa, Central Java.

1.4 Problem Formulation

In order to help the writer to analyze possession dance in Ambarawa *Reog* performance, the writer formulates the problems as follow:

1. What are the requirements for the performers to get possessed?
2. What and How the dancers experience (feel, see, do) during the possession?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the writer in this study of a particular topic are:

1. To describe the requirements for the performers to be able to get possessed.

2. To describe what and how the *Reog* performers experience (feel, see, do) during the possession.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Through this paper, the researcher wants to find out the requirements for the performers to get possessed and the dancer's experience (feel, see, do) during the possession. The researcher also hopes that through this research people are interested to know more about *Kuda Lumping* or *Reog* dance. This paper is expected to be a good material to help the readers to know more about possession during *Kuda Lumping* or *Reog* performance.

1.7 Definition of Term

There are some terms which are used in this study, as follows.

- a. Possession

Possession is the episodic experience of being controlled by another spirit or forces with the loss of someone's personal identity which often manifested in culture-specific, some stereotyped movements and behavior with or without associated trance state. (Preston, 2014)

- b. Spirit possession

Spirit possession commonly refers to the hold exerted over human beings by external forces or entities more powerful than the person which could be the ancestors and divinities and also ghost. (Boddy, 1994)

c. Folk Dance

Sims & Stephens (2011) write on their book *“Living Folklore: An Introduction to the Study of People and Their Traditions”* that folklore is not simply the historical behaviors of other cultures; folklore is alive, developing, and changing in our lifetimes. Folk dance in this research is an example of customary folklore since it contains behavior and rituals.

d. *Reog* or *Kuda lumping*

Kuda Lumping or *Reog* also known as *jaran kepeng* or *jathilan* is a traditional dance that uses woven bamboo which is "assembled" in such a way that it resembles a horse's shape. Another definition of *Reog* is *Kuda lumping* also called "*Jaran Kepang*" which a traditional Javanese dance is featuring a group of soldiers riding horses (Setyorini, 2012).

e. Shaman

Shaman is someone that provides healing, prophecy, communication with spirits, the recovery of lost souls, and protection against hostile spirits and other shamans (Winkelman, 2015).

f. Cultural Figure

Someone who is considered old, skilled, and being respected in the village (Taslim, 2019).

e. Musician

Someone who performing/practicing on an instrument (Randles, 2011).

