

## READING ISLAMIC MESSAGES IN SEUDATI ACEH TRADITIONAL DANCE, USING SEMOTIC SYMBOLS

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**Abstrak:** Tari Seudati Inong adalah tarian suku Aceh, yang biasanya dilakukan untuk merayakan peristiwa penting dalam adat. Puisi dalam tari Seudati menggunakan bahasa Arab dan Gayo. Selain itu, tarian ini biasanya diperlihatkan untuk merayakan kelahiran Nabi Muhammad. Nama tarian "Seudati Inong" diperoleh dari salah satu ulama besar NAD. Seudati Inong dance atau sering disebut Seribu Tangan Tangan atau Tari Seribu Tangan adalah salah satu media untuk pencapaian pesan, yang disebut dakwah. Tarian ini mencerminkan pendidikan agama, tata krama, kepahlawanan, kekompakan dan juga kebersamaan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan bentuk dan makna simbol dari tari Seudati Inong. Bentuk tarian ini terlihat dari gerakan, pola lantai, pakaian dan miring. Kemudian untuk melihat makna simbol yang terkandung dalam Seudati Inong Dance dapat dilihat dari benda-benda material, tindakan dan ucapan. Basis teori adalah deskripsi teori sebagai dasar untuk melaksanakan penelitian. Teori dasar yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah bentuk semiotik, dari Roland Barthes.

**Key Word:** Aceh, seudati, dance, semiotik, kode

*Abstract:* Seudati Inong dance is an Acehnese tribal dance, which is usually performed to celebrate important events in adat. Poetry in Seudati dance uses Arabic and Gayo languages. In addition, this dance is usually shown to celebrate the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. The dance name "Seudati Inong" was obtained from one of Nangro Aceh Darussalam's great scholars.. Seudati Inong dance or often called the Thousand Hands Hands or Dance of Thousand Hands is one of the media for the achievement of messages, called da'wah. This dance reflects Religious education, manners, heroism, cohesiveness and also togetherness This reserach aims to describe the shape and meaning of symbols from Seudati Inong dance. The form of this dance is seen from the motions, floor patterns, clothing and sloping. Then to see the meaning of symbols contained in the Seudati Inong Dance can be seen from material objects, actions and sayings. Terror base is a description of the theory as a basis for carrying out research. The basic theory used in this research is semiotic form, from Roland Barthes.

*Key Word:* Aceh, seudati, dance, semiotic, code

## **INTRODUCTION**

All regions have their own cultural, custom and language characteristics. There is no same culture between one region and another. Although there are similar ones, they still have different specifications so that from this thing gave birth to a different civilization. According to Koentjaraningrat (1996), "the meaning of culture in everyday language is generally limited to everything that is beautiful, for example temples, dances, fine arts, sound art, literature, and philosophy. According to anthropology, culture is the whole system of ideas and feelings, actions, and human-produced work in social life, which is made hers by learning".

Aceh is one of area, which has culture and still feels thick in value. Cultural value in the form of communication verbal and nonverbal things that have long existed in people's lives are Aceh dances. . Aceh Province is inhabited by a variety of majority ethnic groups united in one religious bond, namely Islam. Trust and the belief held by the majority of the people of Aceh, it would be very influences people's daily lives, especially in arts. Besides that, Aceh is also an area in Indonesia that has dance art traditionally interesting and popular, this shows children's creativity nation in Aceh, even though it is far from the capital city and is one of the regions, which is directly adjacent to other countries. Islam has influence the life of cultural arts in Aceh and manifest as media communication of Islamic values. Acehnese art basically has a characteristic very real, namely Islam in it. This is due to the influence of Islam.

Therefore it can be ascertained, that almost all works of art traditional Aceh aims as a means of transforming deep Islamic values Acehnese people, both verbally and

nonverbally. According to Mutiara (2004), those Islamic values could be seen on, Likok Pulo, Rateb Meusekat, Seudati dance and so on. This traditional dance is the result of the aesthetic creativity of the community before. The existence of traditional dance that is propagating propaganda and communal is a representation of the socio-cultural values of a growing community and developing nowadays. The diversity of traditional Acehnese dance was born in ethnic community environment, which has characteristics as symbols the owner's community. This identity makes the wealth of art form traditions that they have.

Talking about traditional dance, actually, it is a branch of art that focuses more on body movement. The power of dance lies in motion. Other parts such as costumes, makeup, lighting, music and stage planning are directed to support the movement of dance. Walking, running, jumping and moving body parts in certain situations are identified as dance. Of course not all human body movements are categorized as dance. The dance is contextual. Motion in dance is not arbitrary or aimless. Dance movements are rhythmic and of course meaningful. This rhythmic nature distinguishes dance movements from other movements.

In analyzing a dance, the researcher must also be able to analyze the vocabulary in the form of locomotion or drive and gesture or gestures. In verbal language there is a grammar that governs the use of words while in dance there are rules, namely one motion will be followed by the next motion. Semantically, verbal language is composed of the arrangement of words while in meaning dance is built based on a series of motion, like in Seudati dance. This is in line with the statement from Sedyawati and friends (1986), which states that a dance is a rhythmic

movement of the limbs, a combination of patterns in space, spontaneous movements that are influenced by strong emotions, a mixture of beautiful and rhythmic movements and trained movements are arranged in an orderly manner to express actions and feelings. Motion in dance is imaginative and creative motion generated through the process of interpretation of reality. Dance creators construct reality into imaginative motion into performing arts. That is, dance movements usually do not display everyday movements but he still refers to daily movements. The motion of people cooking tempeh is not displayed like cooking tempeh, but it can be displayed with symbolic motion which means that people cook tempe.

Entering Seudati dance, Seudati is a kind of art, which is in the form of dance art displayed by eight male dancers and one to two people *aneuk syeh*, act to be a singer. Unfortunately, Seudati dance development is currently considered less attractive though actually Seudati dance can be said to be an Acehese identity. In the past, Seudati dance appeared at certain events mainly on activities the preaching of Islamic teachings to the community, concerning the value of trust and worship to Allah SWT, ethics and morals and good values in society the teachings of Islam. However, in its development, Seudati dance is now starting *abandoned* young generation. There are not many Acehese young generation able and knowing Seudati, even very few of them knowing the messages of Islamic communication in the dance. Nowadays, Acehese have lack of generation that understands and is able to be a leader of Seudati dance team. Seudati dance is actually a result of science knowledge that is expressed in the form of verbal, whose "syair" was written in poetry, and it also contains non-

language verbal, means the dance movement. Then, the knowledge gained is conveyed to the public the layman. Submission of messages or communication processes that are in Seudati dance is a form of persuasive communication.

Based on the description above, it can be understood that Seudati dance is a form of verbal and non-verbal communication that is persuasive and includes traditional dance parts, where in the contents of the messages he conveyed full of meaning and many contained elements of delivery moral message. Therefore the researchers are interested, especially in investigating any messages Islamic communication contained in movement and poetry, called *syair* of Seudati. Based on the background of study of this research, the researchers could formulate the statements of problem to analyze Islamic message in Seudati Dance. The first question that would be analyzed, How are the messages of Islamic communication contained in poetry (verbal) Seudati dance, seen from the perspective of Roland's semiotics Barthes?. The second problem, that would be analyzed: How are the messages of Islamic non verbal communication contained in Seudati Aceh movements, explained in Roland Barthes semiotics theory?.

After all, this research would like to use Semiotic theory, comes up from Roland Barthes. The researchers uses this theory, because, terminologically, semiotics can be defined as the study of a wide array of objects, events, entire cultures as a sign. Basically, semiotic analysis is an attempt to feel something strange, something that needs further questioning when the researchers read a text. Basically, in this semiotic theory, the so-called signifier and signified are cultural products. The relationship between the two is arbitrary, and only based on conventions,

agreements, or regulations of the user's culture of the language system.

This study aims to provide an overview of the local wisdom of Aceh by using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis to find denotation meaning, connotation and inner myth. The interpretation obtained from the whole Aceh Seudati dance is that all humans on earth need communication in life, good in expressing his or her feelings, intentions and thoughts. All that is done through verbal and nonverbal communication, good in fighting for the sovereignty of the region or convey the messages of Islamic communication to society, because humans are social beings.

### **THEORITICAL REVIEW**

According to Ara (2012), Seudati is a word, taken in Arabic "Shahadaatun" which means "two confessions", or "my confession". For example the person who wants embraced Islam. This is required to say two Creed (two confession) namely recognizing that "There is no God but God and the Prophet Muhammad is His messenger. If we study further, we would know, that Seudati dance, in the beginning, was not a dance, but more is a "ritual rite" that is religious in nature carried out while sitting. But in subsequent developments experience the change that finally Seudati is played in the form of standing.

In accordance with those described above, this research uses semiology theory. It is a kind of theory, that discusses non-verbal communication. Regarding semiology, Barthes refers to the use of space as a specific expression of culture. Regarding Chronemics, Barthes argues that time norms are found in various cultures in different forms. According to M. Jazuli (2007), dance has an important meaning in humans' life, because it could

provide various benefits, such as entertainment and means of communication. Given that position, dance can live, grow, and develop, throughout the cultural development human beings. In other words, that development and change are occurs in dance is determined by the interests and needs of the community supporters. The proof is dance in shows on various events, relating to ceremonies, or in Indonesian called rituals, and parties celebrating important events for humans and society. Although, many people never know definitely, when people start dancing, but archaeological evidences have shown, on prehistoric caves, there are pictures, depicted people was dancing.

The way that many language experts use to discuss about the scope of meaning, is to distinguish denotative meaning from connotative meaning. In this research, the reseachres would use Roland Barthes' theory, called "order of signification". According to him in Birowo (2004), " The first order of signification yaitu denotasi, dan second orders of signification yaitu konotasi. Tatanan yang pertama mencakup penanda dan petanda yang berbentuk tanda. Tanda inilah yang disebut makna denotasi. first order of signification is denotation, and second orders of signification are connotations. The first order includes markers and markers in the form of signs. This sign is called meaning denotation". Based on that explanation, it can be told that, It is important to remember that signified is a product from certain cultures like the signifier (the physical aspect of the sign). See clearly that the words (signifiers) differ from language to one another. Nevertheless, this problems could make misunderstandings often occur that signifieds (concepts mental) is universal so translating is easy, because only related to replacing a word.

According to Barthes (1964), "Denotation is the level of signification that explains the relationship between signs and references to reality, which produce explicit meanings, direct, and sure. While the connotation is the level of signification explain the relationship between markers and markers, in which they operate meaning that is implicit and hidden". Based on that, So in Barthes's concept, connotative signs do not merely have meaning additional but also contains the two denotative signs, underliened its existence. Based on the quotation above, denotation is explained, that it does not have any contains additional meanings or feelings. The meaning is called meaning denotative. The denotative meaning has several other terms such as meaning ideational. Therefore, connotation is a word that contains additional meaning, as follows: feelings, or values besides the basic meanings in general. By looking trough to Barthes' theory, it can be said that denotation and connotation cannot be seen separately or standing alone. A sign that we see is definitely a denotation. The denotation meaning could refer to, what is visible in the picture or dance movements, in other words the image itself raise denotation. Denotation by itself will become a connotation. In the other hand, for the next connotation actually becomes a denotation, when the connotation already commonly used and understood as a rigid meaning.

In explaining any meaning, Barthes also used Myth theory. Myth in Barthes's explanation (1964), is the coding of meanings and values social (which is actually arbitrary or connotative) as something considered natural. Myth is how culture explains or understand some aspects of reality or natural phenomena. Myth is social class products that already have a dominance. In that book, he

mention the example of primitive myth, as follows: life and death, humans and gods, and so on.

## RESEARCH METHOD

Every scientific writing always requires complete data and objective, and have certain methods and methods according to discussion. The method used in this study is descriptive - qualitative. According to Jalaudin Rahmat (2005), "The descriptive method is to describe variables by variables, one by one. This study did not look for or explain relationships, not test hypothesis or make predictions. "

The data source in this research were obtained from two data sources: primary data sources and data sources that are secondary. The primary data source is a 50-minute 50-second "Seudati Aceh" dance video file, taken from You Tube. Meanwhile, secondary data is data supporters obtained through related books and literature closely relates of this research. In processing the data there are several stages until later, all data will be processed. Meanwhile, the stages include editing or checking data. The purpose of the process is to examine or re-examine the data that has been collected to be researched. After that, the researchers make codings of data that has been taken. For instace, the authors make a narrower simpler scope. In this case, the researchers would show the Seudati dance which conveyed through movements regarding advice, religion, education and others. Then there is simplification of data and steps last is to encode data.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Dance movements are produced by a creative process that involves the existence of human beings. So that dance cannot only be understood through the body movements

on stage. Body movements are only born. There is an inner force that drives the human body. So that invisible inner movements also need to be considered to understand dance, because there is an energy behind a movement.

In researching Seudati dance, every movements could have praised the name of Aceh and Indonesia to the world international by getting the award as the best performance along with Saman dance from Blangkejren Gayo Lues District. About its origin still requires special research. According to research experts history and information of elders, the growth of Seudati dance together the entry of Islam into Aceh. This dance media is used by proponents of Islam, called Da 'i in the development of Islam in Aceh. Before naming it as Seudati, this dance is named Ratoh, which means telling everything that concerns aspects of community life, for example: story sad, happy, advice and uplifting. For information, at first this dance was only an ordinary folk game called Pok Ane. Seeing the great interest of the Acehnese people in this art, the Shaykh was inserted with poetry that contained Praise to Allah SWT.

Proponents of Islam (the da '3fi) mostly come from Arabia, then directly the language or term used in the dissemination religion is emphasized in Arabic terms. Therefore at the same time the media. This ratoh is influenced



by Arabic terms. When viewed from the root, he said from Isim Masdar. Masdar, there are three letters, namely syahat, as long as he says syahadataini, syahadataini means two sentences of creed in Islam, because that the Seudati dance could invite people, who watch the dance to enter into Islam by first saying two sentences of creed or syahadatain which later with the Aceh accent was pronounced to be Seudati. Then in another name Seudati is meusamman, than changed into Saman dance, consisted eight people.

Entering denotation meaning in traditional Acehnese Seudati dance, according to Supriyanto, dance means rhythmic gestures which are carried out at certain times and places for social purposes, expressing feelings, intentions and thoughts. Traditional is the attitude and way of thinking and acting always adhere to the norms and customs that exist in generations. According to the picture below, it can be explain that, The meaning of the denotation in the picture is all Seudati dancers seen arranging a line to start the dance by closing hands to front and body rather bent to greet the sign begins event. As for the aneuk syahi sitting to the left of the dancers.

While the myth asserts that it has become a tradition throughout tribes, that exist in this world that when meeting one person with the other person will provide a communication sign code as a form expressing their respect and joy because they can meet or face to face. The sign code itself can be in the form of speech, gesture or a combination of both. This sign code is also considered a culture. For example like in Japan or Korea, when someone meets someone else, he or she will pay tribute or greetings by bowing.

Seudati dance is usually displayed not using musical instruments, but uses the voices of the dancers and their applause which is

usually combined with hitting the chest and their groin as synchronization and throwing the body in various directions. Seudati Inong dance also has symbols that have meaning, that will be conveyed to the audience. These symbols can be seen through human motion, namely motion, material objects, namely floor patterns and clothing, speech which is the accompaniment that carries the arian. a. Motion: *salvation* (greeting) means mutual respect, *ketrep jaroe* (finger picking) means cheerfulness, *nyap* (swings), slowly doing work, meaningful and orderly meaningful steps, *rheng* (body) means consideration in life, *coolness* (head) meaning *dhikr*, *nyet / keutheet* (support) means that life must have a foundation, *dhiet* (shrugging the shoulders) means joy and cohesiveness, and *geudham ghaki* (foot pounding) means that humans must always trust Allah SWT. In addition, the floor pattern: horizontal line floor pattern means there is no difference between humans, the circle floor pattern means deliberation, the floor pattern, means robustness in religion.

This Seudati dance, usually played by eight Acehnese women, is a form of representation of fighters in fighting the Portuguese and Dutch colonies with burning courage. Where from every movement there is no accompaniment from musical instruments but there is only body music and verse accompaniment. The Seudati dance uses some elements of motion which are the basic elements in the Saman dance: Clap your hands and pat the chest. The movements and poems were also the delivery of communication in the jihad because of Allah, when fighting against the infidel invaders who wanted to seize the territory of Aceh and their intention to broadcast Christianity in the midst of the people of Aceh. All of that also cannot be separated from the Islamic messages conveyed

to the people because Seudati is an art in the spread of Islam in the archipelago including Aceh. Actually, until now, in the present context, religious rituals that are religious are still used as a medium to convey messages of da'wah through performances.

As the matter of fact, in researching Seudati Inong dance, it is not only the movements that can be researched, but also the clothes. There is a meaning to be conveyed in Seudati's clothes used, why do Seudati dancers wear white clothes, even there are also those who use black yellow gold combination clothing on the part neck, using a sarong and a bow on the head, and a *rencong* tucked in waist. Because clothing is not only as a dancer's body wrap, but clothes also communicate about dancers who use clothing. From clothing, it becomes a form of character and create a cultural identity in the dance concerned. Indeed, each clothing has meaning in accordance with Islamic sharia by using loose clothing to avoid visible curves and to wear the hijab as a head covering. Accompaniment: verses that convey meaningful dance praise to Allah SWT and the Prophet Muhammad and offer advice. From these clothes symbolizes the spirit of heroic Acehnese people in the past, including Acehnese women. In researching the clothes of Seudati Inong dancers, the myth asserts that, heroes are people, who struggled to uphold their opinions, for a glory of the wider community, and for their beliefs. A hero is sacrificing in such a way, with perseverance, sacrificing thoughts, time, energy, wealth, or even sacrifice his life for the establishment of the ideology, called the right as *Haq*.

It can be also seen that the dancer's clothes above, dominated by black. By looking at this, it can be explained that black *wahra* is a firm, solid, and strong color. In accordance

with the Seudati dance which always aroused the enthusiasm of the Acehnese youth to rise up to uphold the teachings of Islam and rise against colonialism. Similarly, yellow means giving the impression of joy, light, bright, shining, and firmness, and white reflects a clean impression, which is to strengthen Islamic identity and also communicate to the general public that the clothes they use portray heroic or valiant warriors. In addition, Seudati dancers also use belts. The myth in the fabric of a belt is to tie it firmly so that what is tied is not separated. Likewise, the belt cloth used in the Aceh Seudati dancer is to tie the songket clothe so the clothes will not be released later. Besides that, this belt can also be used as a *rencong* tie tucked into the waist of the dancers, which is where the tied *rencong* is not released and falls on the feet of the dancers, when they are moving and stomping their legs. In addition when the dancers is in sitting position and body movements, hand movements are very dominant in Saman dance - functioning as both motion and music. There is movemetns, called cloak that is both hands coincide and in the same direction.

From the discussion above, it can be said that; myth is not only in the form of messages delivered in verbal form (verbal or written words), but also in various other forms or a mixture of verbal and nonverbal forms. All those things is similar with Okke Zimar (2008), who explains that "myth is a communication system that carries messages that are not determined by the material. Myth is a value, a speech that is more determined by its purpose than its form". Based on that explanation, the theory of myth is useful so that we can know the meanings stored in a text, including the clothes used by Seudati Inong dancers. By seeing the clothes dancers, it could also told that the clothes also have

the meaning that; women deserve to be called heroes in Islam are people who struggle to uphold Islamic law. In the Seudati Aceh dance both in terms of movement and poetry contain messages of Islamic communication including the practice that can make perfect faith, such as saying greetings (*Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakaatuuh*) which is spoken at the beginning of dance. Basically, the greeting is obligatory, to be spoken to anyone he meets, both known and unknown. Greetings are also the sunnah of the Prophet and a noble condition if we shake hands.

In addition, in this Seudati dance, there are poems in the form of messages of other Islamic communications, in this Seudati also conveyed by man this cannot be separated from sins, then ask forgiveness from Allah. This Seudati dance, like implying a code, that humans should pray with a sincere heart and full of solemn. In this case, prayer is a manifestation of the love of a servant to Allah Swt, as well as recognition of His needs and help. The prayer means to make a direct request to Allah, means begging forgiveness of sin and not only that, prayer also implores directly to Allah Khalik to be given goodness, blessings, ease, health and road get out of trouble and others. In ancient times, Seudati was also known as a war dance, so the Acehnese fighters arranged a strategy when the invaders wanted to fight. For this reason, in this dance, it contains a symbol of enthusiasm and never gives up. Spirit is the embodiment of a willingness to sacrifice and never give up. The thing that indicates that Acehnese are identically, is very strong and mighty, they are not afraid of anything in a precarious situation during the Dutch colonial era, they dare to advance in the battlefield, they dare to fight people who violate Islamic law and they are brave in completing all the



existing cases in Aceh, as exemplified by the Prophet in broadcasting and upholding Islam.

## CONCLUSION

From the description and discussion that have been described in the previous chapters, then in this closing chapter, some conclusions are expressed. In every appearance, aside from drawing great attention, it also attracted the audience of dance art. Seudati dance is one of the dances that is quite unique, because it only shows the clapping and other movements, such as body movements, head and body position.

The first conclusion that can be raised is that; in Seudati Aceh dance using Roland Barthes semiotic analysis that humans need communication in life in expressing feelings, intentions and thoughts both verbal and nonverbal communication in the struggle for regional sovereignty as well as conveying messages of Islamic communication to society, because humans are social beings. Secondly, in this Seudati structure, each dancer cannot do any motion. The reason is, because the Seudati dance prioritizes cohesiveness. Then with the existence of this Seudati arrangement the dancers can also know their respective positions and can play by following the leader's movements which are often referred to *syeh*. In researching the Seudati dance movement, accompanied by Acehenese poetry contained other messages of Islamic communication that explained the deliberation. Islam views deliberation as something that is very important for human life, not only in the life of the nation and state but in household life and so forth, which is also contained in the Holy Qur'an.

Based on the results of research conducted, Seudati dance also has symbolic meaning. Movement in the body of Seudati

inong dance departs from elements of togetherness, cohesiveness, and lifts from dances in Aceh such as Ratep Meuseukat dance, Likok Pulo, Rapai Geleng, Ratoh Duk, Ratoh Dong, and others. Seudati Inong dance generally confirms that motion, floor patterns, clothing and accompaniment of Seudati Inong dance are movements that have meaning or purpose to convey to the audience. Based on the results of the research that has been done, it can be concluded several things. From this research, it can be proved that Sedudati dance is one of the media for achieving messages, called da'wah. This dance reflects education, religion, courtesy, heroism, cohesiveness and togetherness, could be seen in several ways.

The first thing is that the Inong Seudati Dance has forms that consist of external and spiritual forms. By using a semiotic study of a dance movement, it will make the audience know how to examine a sign in the work of art. The main principle of semiotic studies is to study the style of motion, clothing and poetry contained in a dance ball. To be able to analyze a work of art, it must be reviewed how the process of creation to give birth to the work system. Moreover, semiotic connects the system of work with a system outside the work, including the system of cultural life of the entire community. The last thing is that semiotics considers what is made by the choreographer to be able to play an important role in fostering a work of art. Fourth, seeing that each type of dance has its own value.

As a suggestion, every work of art has a very valuable value for human life. For this reason, humans must be able to appreciate every work of the artists, because every form of art, which is used by artists has a special understanding and special features, and is very meaningful, both for artists and society.

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