

Prasi : A Balinese Traditional Art in Its Changes in the Globalization Era

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Abstract—*Prasi* as a traditional work of art has its specific characteristics by presenting the identity of Balinese cultural art. *Prasi* is a manuscript in a lontar leaf with wayang illustrations and sometimes is accompanied by a short text in Balinese character. *Prasi* is very unique and has a classical impression, since it is limited to the material and tools used, the technique used in making it and the shape of the wayang which is still traditional. As a traditional work of art, *prasi* is full with symbolical meanings expressed by the artist in accordance with the story presented. In the era of globalization *prasi* is undergoing changes following the growth of tourism in Bali. This article describes (1) the existence of *prasi* in Bali; (2) the traditional themes presented; and (3) changes in the technique of presenting *prasi* in the era of globalization. This article uses a phenomenological approach. Based on the result of the analysis the following are described (1) *prasi* is still preserved in the inheritance system from generation to generation; (2) the traditional themes presented, such as Ramayana and Mahabrata epics, *tantri*, *babad*, *usada* etc that can be used as the sources of knowledge. The scenes of the story are presented in each sheet of lontar leaf, in which in one sheet there are two scenes limited by tree pictures, so that to present a theme of a *prasi* story there are 8 to 12 sheets of lontar leaves ; (3) *prasi* in the era of globalization is undergoing changes only by presenting the character only such as Saraswati, Barong and Rangda, Garuda Wisnu Kencana, God Shiva, God Ganesha, dragon, etc. used to present tourism.

Keywords—*Prasi*, Traditional Balinese Visual Art, Globalization

I. INTRODUCTION

Art is an element of Balinese culture that contributes significantly to its community in meeting its physical and spiritual needs. Balinese community character development is largely determined by the participation of its people in creating their works of art. Balinese works of art have been able to produce the unique Balinese culture that has made progress, so that it can compete with great cultures of the world [1]. One of the works of art that have unique characteristics is *prasi* art.

Prasi is a work of traditional visual art that has a unique characteristic as Balinese cultural heritage art. *Prasi* is made from *lontar* leaves by using *wayang*

illustrative pictures that form visual realities from texts/literary works such as *kakawin*, *kidung* etc, written or drawn using a special knife called *pengrupak* [2]. *Prasi* is a traditional work that presents *wayang* illustrations, in which *wayang* illustrations presented follow norms or cultural rules that have got its *pakem*, and are created collectively and iteratively [3]. The production of *prasi* is done from generation to generation starting from preparing and processing raw materials, tools used, writing the story, sketching, etching a *lontar* leaf, writing until coloring

Prasi visually consists of a story text and illustrative pictures taking from the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata [4]. The character used in *prasi* Balinese character. The illustrative pictures presented are drawn using *wayang* traditional style that looks like Kamasan and Klungkung *wayang* styles. The making of *prasi* has been practiced from generation to generation by artists to pass the knowledge and skill to the next generation to support the increasingly strong Balinese traditional culture, so that *prasi* still forms the art capital of Balinese art. Mantra states that Balinese culture grows based on Hindu cultural norms [5]. *Prasi* also forms one of the works of the artists that used to form their dedication to the religious life and the community life in Bali.

The growth of global industry also has an effect on the changes in the social life of the community [6]. The *Prasi* artists as part of the community have undergone changes in creating *prasi*. *Prasi* has undergone commoditization, not only as the source of knowledge but also as the work of art that functions as souvenir [7]. *Prasi* that was initially made by always referring to the themes in literary works using the existing *pakem*, but now there have been many creations of art presented by *prasi* artists and consequently they have produced *prasi* works as decorative objects. *Prasi* has undergone diversification, in addition to presenting the themes of stories, it also presents one or two characters only. The *prasi* artists mostly create through their imaginations by using their cultural capital and transform it into economic capital to meet the global needs.

Based on the explanation above, this article discusses (1) the existence of *prasi* as a cultural heritage work of art that still survives up to this time; (2) themes of stories that are found in *prasi*; (3) changes in *prasi* presentation in the era of globalization.

II. METHOD

The study done reported in this article was a qualitative research using a phenomenological approach. This research begins by paying attention and analyzing the focus of the phenomenon that is to be studied, which looks at various subjective aspects of object behavior. Then, the researcher collected data in the form of how object meaning gives meaning to related phenomena. This data collection is done by conducting in-depth interviews with informants in the study, also by conducting direct observations about how the object of the study interpreted his experience to others.

The objects of this research are artists and *prasi* art results, which are examined from their existence to the present, the themes of stories that are often displayed by *prasi* artists, and the changes in the presentation of *prasi* that occurred in the globalization era. The data sources are primary and secondary data. Data collection is carried out through: observation, interview, and documentation. All data obtained in the field relates to its existence, the themes of the stories displayed by artists, and the types of *prasi* works in the global era. Data analysis used is qualitative data analysis.

The steps taken in this study refer to the steps of the study carried out by Miles and Huberman such as the process of sorting, presenting data, and drawing conclusions and verification [8]. Data reduction is the process of sorting, focusing attention on simplification, abstracting and transformation of data that emerges from field notes. Presentation of data is a collection of information arranged that gives the possibility of drawing conclusions or simplifying complex information into a unified simplified and selective form that is easy to understand. The last part of the data analysis is drawing conclusions and verification. Conclusions are only part of an activity of complete configuration. Verification can be done to seek justification and agreement, so that validity can be achieved. Presentation of the results of data analysis in this study qualitatively in the form of narrative, charts, tables, and photographic visuals. Presentation of the results of data analysis is carried out systematically and simply so that it is easily understood by the reader. Overall analyzed using descriptively qualitative.

III. DISCUSSION

A. The Existence of *Prasi* in Bali

Prasi as Balinese cultural heritage is still present up to this time. The making of *prasi* is still practiced in some villages such as in Bungkulan village in Buleleng regency, Sidemen village Tenganan Pegringsingan village in Karangasem regency. The *prasi* in the 3 (three) villages have existed for some generations. In the village of Bungkulan, Buleleng there is a *prasi* artist who is still active today, I Gusti Bagus Sudiasta, a retired employee of the Gedong Kertya Museum, Singaraja. Sudiasta was taught to paint *prasi* by his parents, I Gusti Ngurah Suarna. Furthermore, Sudiasta bequeathed his knowledge and skills to his two children, namely I Gusti Bagus

Kusuma Mahendra and Gusti Ayu Sri Widayani [9]. The ones that are found today have developed, in addition to presenting the traditional *pakem* there are also new creations. The survival of *prasi* has been due to the responsibility of the old artists for the generation that continues the tradition to pass their works of art from generation to generation in order to have a Balinese identity.

The *prasi* artists' perseverance is based on their earnest feeling and dedication to the teaching of Hinduism so that the work has *taksu*. The work *metaksu*, according to Dibia (2012) is the making of the work of art involves a deep mental involvement or has specific power that enables the artist to create a work with an excellent quality [10]. As people who believe in the concept of the ritual of the creation of work of art, creating *prasi* works of art can also be interpreted as a form of *yadnya* as what is stated by O'Dea [11].

The Provincial Government of Bali has a very large participation in efforts to preserve the existence of *prasi* in Bali. The Provincial Government of Bali always carries out a contest to make a *prasi* at every Bali Arts Festival. The participants who took part in the making of the *prasi* competition were students of junior high schools and high school students. The government also has the responsibility to maintain the traditional values that already exist in the community as ancestral heritage.

Every time there is a competition activity, young people are very enthusiastic to participate in these activities. Through the competition to make *prasi*, it can provide knowledge and skills for middle and high school students to maintain and instill the values of Balinese culture which has been a legacy of ancestors for decades. Moreover, currently the Governor of Bali has set the Nangun Sat Kerthi Loka Bali Vision to further strengthen community activities in promoting Bali.

B. Themes of stories in *Prasi*

The themes of the stories that are illustrated in *prasi* are about the stories of Ramayana and Mahabrata epics. Implicit in the text of the stories are *satua* (folktale), speech (guidance or advice), heroism, legend, *sasana* (rules), ethics that are taken from religious literature such as *kidung*, *kekawin*, *parwa*, *tantri*, *geguritan* and *folklore* [12]. Other themes are *Dampati Lelangon*, *Bhima Swarga*, *Pari Bhasa*, *Adi Parwa*, etc. *Prasi* collection can be found in Gedong Kirtya Liefrinck van der Tuuk, Singaraja [13]. Most of the *prasi* pictures illustrate the narration of wayang stories with Balinese special wayang characters. Their faces always smile in a three fourth position, wearing attributes as heroes, gods, priests or giants and animals. The forms of the characters are very similar to those that are found in Kamasan paintings [14].

The fragments of the wayang story illustrations are presented leaf by leaf (lontar sheets) interspersed with trees and other supporting objects. A lontar leaf has a measurement of 4 cm x 40 cm. To present one theme of a story one needs 8 to 12 lontar leaves. One leaf contains two scenes, and to differentiate one scene from another a tree is put in the border of the scenes. The pictures or illustrations in the *prasi* text has a special social function aspect. The illustration that complement the text, basically contains the teachings about the philosophy of life, local

traditions and customs, the teachings of good deeds (dharma) according to the beliefs of the people [14].



Fig.1 A scene from Ramayana
(Source: I Nyoman Sila)

The picture above shows the theme of the Ramayana story. *Prasi* artists in presenting the story usually show scenes that are considered important that can represent the story. Then arrange a few scenes based on the order in which the story begins. The *prasi* artist must be able to master the theme of the story from the literary book that features the main characters in the story. In presenting the scene, the artists of *prasi* strongly consider the aesthetic elements, so that the appearance of the image becomes interesting.



Fig.2. A scene from Mahabrata
(Source: www.google.com)

The theme of the story in the picture above is taken from the Mahabharata story. From this story, the *prasi* artists only performed a part of the story, which was at the time of the Bharatayuda war in Kurusetra. Although it cannot show the overall story scene, the presentation can show the theme of the story displayed, and the audience can understand the part of the story. On the palm leaf sheets each shows two scenes that are bounded by trees and a rope for stringing palm leaf sheets.

C. The Presentation of Prasi in the Era of Globalization

The *prasi* in the era of globalization has undergone changes, both in presentation and themes of stories presented by the artists. The *prasi* works that have been created by the artists have changed. They do not always follow the traditional *pakem* that have been passed by the previous generations. The changes have occurred due to the effect of internal and external factors. Internally, the artists want to develop their creativity by presenting the visual objects in *prasi* that are different following the development of their imaginations. Externally, there is a need to present *prasi* that can meet the global need of people from other countries in this global era to Bali who want to collect *prasi* work of art. The *prasi* artists have tried to present characters as objects of the art who have been very famous like Barong and Rangda, and Garuda Wisnu Kencana, Saraswati, etc. [15]. The presentation of pictures are not done leaf by leaf but some leaves are put side by side and on them are drawn one or two pictures.



Fig. 3 Garuda Wisnu Kencana
(Source: www.google.com)

The picture above shows a picture of Garuda Wisnu Kencana. When associated with Hindu religious beliefs that Garuda is a vehicle for Lord Vishnu. For artists, the above images are only used as souvenir items or decorative objects that have aesthetic values.



Fig. 4 Barong and Rangda
(Source: www.google.com)

The picture above shows two figures namely Barong and Rangda. Barong and Rangda in Bali as a symbol of virtue and sleaze. Barong and Rangda become the art of commodification, and are often staged as an entertainment art for tourists who come to Bali. The image display is very different when compared to the *prasi* which presents the themes of the story. It is very clear here to only show two figures. The presentation is by arranging several palm leaves into one sheet and then filling the object for aesthetic purposes.



Fig. 5 Dewi Saraswati
(Source: www.google.com)

Goddess Saraswati became a very interesting object displayed on *prasi*, because artists can display the beauty and beauty of a woman. In the Hindu religious belief, Goddess Saraswati symbolizes the Goddess of Science and has several attributes, such as guitar, genitri, and cakontontra, with a standing position on a lotus, beside the right and left side there are swans and peacocks symbolizing beauty.

In the era of globalization, traditional practices are still preserved by artisans in Bali because they have local wisdom values that must be preserved so that traditional culture is maintained. Besides that, there was a development of a *prasi* image which only presented certain characters without being based on the theme of the stories arranged in sheets of Lontar leaves. Preservation of *prasi* art can also be used to introduce the culture of the archipelago, especially Balinese culture to tourists. Making *prasi* in the era of globalization is still widely made by artisans in Bali that are used to meet the needs of tourism in the form of souvenirs.

IV. CONCLUSION

Prasi is a wayang illustration of Balinese community etched on lontar leaves. As a literary work, the form of *prasi* is not very different from other works of literature. *Prasi* as a work of traditional visual art has undergone changes in the era of globalization 1) the existence of *prasi* is still preserved well by artists and it is even passed to the next generation, so that it is still preserved; 2) the themes presented in *prasi* are taken from the stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata, in each fragment, the story is presented leaf by leaf (*lontar* leaf) in the shape of small *wayangs* into a special and unique work of art. To show the story, artists make arrangements for the composition of the story to make it more interesting and 3) in terms of changes in *prasi* in the era of globalization, the *prasi* artists present characters without a story that are presented in a combination of some *lontar* leaves. Images shown, such as Garuda Wisnu Kencana, Barong and Rangda, and Dewi Sraswati.

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