

The Meaning of *Macapat* Song as Reflected in Kuntowijoyo's Novels

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Abstract. *Macapat* is a genre of Javanese literature in the form of traditional songs or poetry. This research describes the meaning of *macapat* song as reflected in Kuntowijoyo's novels: *Mantra Pejinak Ular* and *Wasripin dan Satinah*. This research is supported by the data analysis method of aesthetic response theory developed by Wolfgang Iser. Iserian theory on 'repertoire' adapted in this study focuses on the process of interaction between texts and readers that results in literary response. The result of this research shows several findings: 1) the *macapat* songs reflected in those novels are the manifestation of the author's repertoire that becomes the basis of creating MPU and WdS; 2) Titles of *macapat* songs delineated in MPU and WdS are "Dhandhanggula", "Asmaradhana", and "Megatruh"; 3) The *macapat* songs in MPU and WdS tell the wisdom of human life such as human's love story (Asmaradhana), human's basic needs that cover food, residence, and clothes (Dhandhanggula), and human's death (Megatruh).

Keyword: *macapat*, asmaradhana, dhandhanggula, megatruh

1 Introduction

The emergence of Kuntowijoyo's works in the domain of Indonesian literature is considered important. His works are full of social portraits and thoughts. They are also thick in Javanese tradition and Islamic values that direct them to a specific position in Indonesian literary history. They can enrich literary advancement in Indonesia.

Kuntowijoyo's works have a peculiarity compared to others, such as the use of Javanese expression that shows his background as Javanese. The use of Javanese language is not only seen in dialogues and terminologies but also in traditional Javanese songs.

Kuntowijoyo's novels *Mantra Pejinak Ular* and *Wasripin dan Satinah* are influenced by the reality of Javanese culture, especially with the *macapat* songs. There are reasons behind the use of *macapat* songs delineated by Kuntowijoyo in his novels. Besides the aesthetic aspect, it also delivers the message to the readers.

The *macapat* songs exist, develop, and spread widely around Java, Bali, and Madura island. Therefore, it has many kinds of variations. The variation of *macapat* songs includes central Java (Yogyakarta and Surakarta), western Java (Sunda), eastern Java (Gresik, Banyuwangi, and Malang), and outside Java (Bali and Madura). Every variation of *macapat* song emerges with a different style and character [1]. Here, the *macapat* songs are usually used as the media for delivering positive suggestions [2].

A *macapat* song commonly contains wisdom or advice which is wisely delivered. There are a lot of valuable messages or lessons inside a song. In the past, this traditional song was used by

parents to educate their children in understanding the meaning of life. Through *macapat* songs, the religious and moral values of the ancestor can be easily accepted because they are taught aesthetically. Thus the *macapat* song can give enlightenment to those who appreciate it. Since its emergence in the XIV century until now, *macapat* still exists and develops, both literally and orally. Most Javanese people regularly use it as a medium of entertainment, aesthetics, education, traditional performance, correspondence, hum at work, misfortune repellent spell, Javanese traditional wedding reception, blessing ceremony, and human life cycle philosophy (human life story since natality until mortality) [3].

As a part of Javanese society, Kuntowijoyo has a set of repertoire related to Javanese culture, including *macapat*. His repertoire or storage of knowledge in the *macapat* song becomes the 'background' to reach the targeted 'foreground', which is the creation of two novels: 1. *Wasripin and Satinah*, and 2. *Mantra Pejinak Ular*.

Wasripin dan Satinah and *Mantra Pejinak Ular* are interesting to be studied with Wolfgang Iser's aesthetic response theory, especially related to the repertoire. This kind of study aims at understanding how far Kuntowijoyo can write his knowledge about *macapat* in the form of fiction.

Wasripin dan Satinah and *Mantra Pejinak Ular* (as the material objects) have been taken in some studies. One of them is "*Mitos dan Kontramitos dalam Novel Mantra Pejinak Ular Karya Kuntowijoyo*" [4]. The differences between this current study and Kasanova's study are its formal object and the theory used. Kasanova focuses on myths, while this study uses Wolfgang Iser's theory of aesthetic response and focuses on the meaning of *macapat* songs as the repertoire. Another study with the same material object is "*Prophet Khidir in Kuntowijoyo's Novel Wasripin dan Satinah*" [5]. Both studies use the same theory: Wolfgang Iser's aesthetic response. The difference is that the previous study discusses the prophet Khidir as a repertoire while this current study discusses the meaning of *macapat* song as a repertoire.

The previous study that has a similar formal object – related to *macapat* song – is "*The Kinds and The Meaning of Tembang Macapat for Javanese People*" [6]. This study explains that *macapat* song has *gurugatra*, *gurulagu*, and *guruwilangan*. The result of the study shows the classification of *macapat* songs in several themes: kingdom, traditional dance, and love. The distinction between this current study and the previous one is located in its material object and study result. This study discusses the meaning of *macapat* songs (*asmaradhana*, *dandanggula*, and *megatruh*) related to love, basic human needs (clothes, foods, houses), and death, as reflected in Kuntowijoyo's novels. The previous studies can contribute to this particular study.

2 Theory and Method

Repertoire can also be called the "storage of knowledge". Repertoire cannot be detached from the existence of the aesthetic of reception. A theory developed by Iser pays attention to a concept called 'repertoire'. The repertoire is related to the reader's ability to give a response through the reception of literary effect from the literary text that they read. A reader is also a writer who will indirectly influence the fiction created. The repertoire consists of every domain recognized in the text. This domain can be in the form of references to previous works, social and historical norms, or the whole culture shown in the text.

The Iserian aesthetic response study lies on basic questions related to the process of textual interpretation from the communication between text and its reader [7], which is how and in what condition a text can be meaningful for its reader. These questions cover (1) the way or act of reading; (2) interaction between text and reader. The first one refers to how a text

directs a way of reading and how the reader's experience manages the act of reading. Concerning the interpretation, Iser emphasizes that a reader must react toward the text, not only passively receiving the author's narration in the text.

The method used in this research is the qualitative method. Qualitative research is research without involving numerical count [8]. Before the data are collected and analyzed to prove the hypothesis, the ontological standing of the research object must be decided. Therefore the material and formal object must be determined. The material object is the field of research, while the formal object is the angle taken to investigate the material object [9].

The material objects in this research are Kuntowijoyo's novels as follows: 1) *Wasripin dan Satinah* and 2) *Mantra Pejina Ular*. The formal object of this research is the repertoire in those novels. The repertoire in this research is related to the cultural norm. It is a culture that reflects Javanese culture, especially *macapat* songs.

The data are in the verbal description, so the analysis is conducted through reading, identification, classification, interpretation, and inference. This research bases the data analysis method on Wolfgang Iser's aesthetic response. Iserian theory on *repertoire* used in this study focuses on the interaction process between text and its reader that results in a response. The text can only give meaning through reading [7], so reading texts in Kuntowijoyo's novels is necessary to reveal the *repertoire*. Therefore, this research utilizes the reading method. A relevant reading method is the text criticism method.

3 Findings and Discussion

In the concept of repertoire, *macapat* song is one of the Javanese cultural 'backgrounds' that accompanies the whole texts in Kuntowijoyo's novel. It implies that Javanese culture is tightly related to Javanese society because culture is the product of social activity [10].

There are 11 *macapat* songs, namely Maskumambang, Mijil, Sinom, Kinanthi, Asmaradana, Gambuh, Dhandhanggula, Durma, Pangkur, Megatruh, and Pucung. The eleven *macapat* songs describe the journey of human life. Each type of *macapat* song has its philosophical meaning. *Macapat* is also known as *tembang* poetry because it is read by singing.

Maskumambang song is derived from the word "*kumambang*", which means floating. *Maskumambang* describes the human life journey starting from mother's womb (the embryo). *Mijil* song symbolizes a seed. *Mijil* is derived from the word 'wijil', which means coming. *Mijil* represents a phase when the baby born to the world (coming out from mother's womb). *Sinom* refers to the word "kanoman" which means young. In the Javanese philosophy, *Sinom* song describes humans starting to grow up. *Khinanti* refers to the word "kanthi" which means guiding. *Kinanthi* means guidance to a better life in the world and guidance to attitude and behavior based on social norms and traditions. *Asmaradana* means romance or love.

Gambuh is derived from the word "jumbuh/sarujuk" which means matching. Here, *Gambuh* depicts a couple of lovers meeting, continued by their holy marriage. *Dhandhanggula* refers to the words "dandang" and "gula", meaning something sweet. *Dhandhanggula* song describes a happy life.

Durma song represents sacrifice and dedication. It tells that life must have more benefits for others, not only seeking pleasure. *Durma* song contains grief nuance. *Pangkur* comes from the word "*mungkur*" which means avoiding. This song has a message to avoid the self from worldly desires, exist in the silent phase, contemplate, and get closer to God. *Megatruh* delineates the ending of human life's journey. *Pucung* song is the phase of coming back to God. It started with becoming *pocong* (corpse). However, another version explains that

pucong is “*kudhuping gegodhongan*” or leaf buds. This song tells something funny and riddles.

Kuntowijoyo’s novels (*MPU* dan *WdS*) contain three kinds of *macapat* songs to manifest Kuntowijoyo’s repertoire. Those three *macapat* songs will be explained as follow:

3.1 *Asmaradhana* Song

Etymologically, *Asmaradhana* song consists of two words, ‘*asmara*’ (love) and ‘*dahana*’ (fire), which means ‘fire of love’ or ‘affection’. This song tells the story of human life in the context of love sharing with their spouse. Besides, it also tells the love for nature and love for God. The existence of *Asmaradhana* song can be seen in *MPU* as follow:

Angsa Putih Bermain dalam Hujan

gerimis menetes netes dahan/memantul air kolam/hingar percik di permukaan/seraut sinar masih tergoyang/tersembunyi di pasir hitam/angsa putih-putih/mengibas ekor-ekornya/bergumpal bulu-bulunya/terjatuh basah atas gerimis/angsa putih putih/memandang ke dasar kolam/ikan kuning kuning/malu malu berenang [11]

White Swan Plays in the Rain

[drizzle dripping onto the branch/pond water bouncing/sound of splashes on the surface/ray of light still swayed/hidden in the dark sand/white swan/wagging her tails/her fur clumping/falling wet because of drizzle/white swan/looking at pond bottom/yellow fish/swim shyly] [11]

The above *macapat* song exposes the beauty of nature. It Presents objects that support life, such as drizzle, pond water, sunlight, and animals (white swan and fish). Some signs enable the reader to imagine a beautiful world and fertile land with many natural resources in that citation. Kuntowijoyo presents a song that reflects a feeling of life, blessing, and love for the universe. The nuance will be otherwise if the imagery of drizzle is replaced with a dark cloud and the sound of thunder; pond water with fish and the white swan is replaced with imagery of pond water with waste and a snake. Hence, the imagery depicted in the text can direct the reader to imagine a beautiful life through a song entitled *Asmaradhana* presented by Kuntowijoyo in his novel *Mantra Pejajak Ular*.

3.2 *Dhandhanggula* Song

The word *dhandhanggula* refers to the word ‘*dhangdhang*’ (wish), but there is another view that says it comes from the word ‘*gegadhangan*’ which means ‘dream’, ‘imagination’, or ‘hope’. The word ‘*gula*’ (sugar) describes sweetness, beauty, or happiness. Therefore, *Dhandhanggula* song means wishing for something sweet or hoping for something beautiful. A beautiful dream can be achieved commonly after a fight and sacrifice [12]. Text in Kuntowijoyo’s novel that indicates the existence of *Dhandanggula* song can be seen in the following citation:

“*Pada hari kelima, diadakan sepeasaran dengan mengundang macapatan dan gamelan sederhana...*

...Kemudian dengan suara serak, seseorang tua melagukan Dandanggula, peninggalan Sunan Kalijaga yang berisi doa keselamatan.

Anakidung rumekso ing wengi/teguh ayu luputo ing lara/kalisa bilai kabeh/jim setan datan purun/paneluhan tan ana wani/miwah panggawe ala/gunaning wong luput/agni atemahan tirta/maling adoh tan ana ngarah/mring mami tuju dudu pan sirna.

Ada nyanyian menjaga malam/aman sentosa tidak terkena penyakit/luput dari semua penderitaan/jin dan setan tidak mau mengganggu/santet tidak berani mendekat/dan semua perbuatan jahat/gunaguna dari orang salah/api menjadi air/pencuri jauh tidak menuju saya/maksud jahat akan musnah.”

[On the fifth day, *sepasaran* tradition is conducted by inviting *macapat* and *gamelan* performers...

...Then with hoarseness, an old man sang *Dhandanggula*, the heritage of *Sunan Kalijaga* that contains salvation prayer.

Anakidung rumekso ing wengi/teguh ayu luputo ing lara/kalisa bilai kabeh/jim setan datan purun/paneluhan tan ana wani/miwah panggawe ala/gunaning wong luput/agni atemahan tirta/maling adoh tan ana ngarah/mring mami tuju dudu pan sirna [11].

There's a song protecting the night/safe and peace without illness/protected from misery/jinn and satan unable to haunt/witchcraft unable to approach/and all evil acts/witchcraft from the misguided person/the fire becomes the water/the thief stays away and avoids me/malevolence shall perish.]

Based on that citation, the character in the text represents the life of Javanese society. Kuntowijoyo schematizes it by depicting Javanese people who recognize five days of "*sepasaran*": *pahing*, *pon*, *wage*, *kliwon*, and *legi*. *Sepasaran* is important for Javanese society since the prediction from *pasaran* day is still related to destiny. *Javanese use pasaran day* to determine '*weton*' for deciding wedding day, spouse, celebration, etc [5].

For the Javanese people, songs can be a means of reflection on life. Usually, people will choose *Macapat* songs to hum, one of which is called *Kidung Rumekso ing Wengi*. *Rumekso ing Wengi* is a song that contains the values of prayer or mantra. The song *Rumekso Ing Wengi* is called the "Mantra Wedha" because it contains mantras to ask for God's protection which is believed by the Javanese people.

The song *Rumekso ing Wengi* was created by *Sunan Kalijaga* with the aim of proselytizing media in Java. In addition, this song is used to ask for protection from evil, especially crimes that occur at night. Many people think that when *Rumekso ing Wengi* is sung with confidence, this song can produce supernatural powers. However, the unseen here is not related to spirits (devils) but is unseen because it can bring humans closer to God.

Rumeksa Ing Wengi's song has supernatural powers because it contains the teachings of faith and morals. *Akidah* is a wholehearted belief which naturally brings good character [14]. *Nafsiyah & Ansori* says there is a correlation between the song of *Rumekso ing Wengi* and the *Mu'awwidhatain*, namely, the Song of *Rumekso ing Wengi* teaches supplications from the dangers warned of in the letter *Mu'awwidhatain* which includes: (1) protection from all crimes general (al-Falaq: 2), and (2) protection from evil in particular: the evil of the night (al-Falaq: 3), human evil (al-Falaq: 4 and 5) and the evil of the jinn and devils (al-Nas : 4-5) [15].

Besides, *Dhandanggula* song is also presented by Kuntowijoyo in a novel entitled *Wasripin dan Satinah*. It can be seen in the following quotation:

“Satinah menyanyi. Paman bermain kecapi... “saya akan menyanyikan Dandanggula Tanah Merindukan Hujan, nyanyian yang saya gubah sendiri ini ditujukan untuk seseorang. Mulai, ya?”.

Aduh Gusti, tan jawah jawah puniki/lemah-lemah selak padha bengkah/Grimis we mendah senenge

(Aduh Tuhan, hujan tidak datang/tanah-tanah sudah tidak tahan/ gerimis saja betapa senang)”

[Satinah sang. Uncle played the lyre...“I’ll sing *Dandanggula* “The Soil Yearns The Rain”, the song I’ve arranged myself for someone. Shall I start?”.

Aduh Gusti, tan jawah jawah puniki/lemah-lemah selak padha bengkah/Grimis we mendah senenge

(Oh Lord, the rain doesn’t come/the soil can’t wait/the drizzle is good enough) [16]

The effect of reading *Dhandanggula* in Kuntowijoyo’s *Wasripin dan Satinah* and *Mantra Pejajak Ular* represents a wish to God for the coming of rain. Rain is crucial for irrigation for Javanese people who live in the village as farmers. The agricultural product cannot be maximized without rain. Hence, *Dhandanggula* song is also used both as people’s entertainment and as prayer or hope for the rain.

Satinah character in *Wasripin dan Satinah* novel sings *dhandhanggula* song created for Wasripin. The citation describes Satinah singing that song accompanied by a lyre played by her uncle. It implies Satinah’s hope for the coming of the rain to fertile the soil and to give maximum harvest, but specifically, that song is sung for Wasripin as the form of Satinah’s hope as a woman who yearns for her lover, Wasripin. Satinah hopes Wasripin will immediately come as the coming of rain to complete her life.

3.3 *Megatruh* Song

The word *megatruh* originally comes from the word ‘*megat*’ (separate) and ‘*ruh*’ (soul), so *megatruh* means the separation of the soul from the human body. The *Megatruh* song describes a moment when human experiences or faces death. *Megatruh* song contains advice for people to prepare for the eternal afterlife. This song is commonly used to depict regrets, grief, or sadness [12]. The existence of this song in Kuntowijoyo’s novel can be seen in this quotation:

“Dengan tembang megatruh, diceritakan perjalanan Jaka Tingkir alias Mas Kerebet dari padepokan Banyubiru ke Demak lewat Bengawan Solo. Pada Abad ke-16 Bengawan Solo pasti masih banyak buayanya.

Sigra milir/sang gethek sinanga bajul/kawan dasa kang jageni/ing ngarsa miwah ing pungkur /tinepi ing kanan kering/sang gethek lampahnya alon.

(segera hanyut rakit didukung buaya/empat puluh buaya yang menjaga/ di muka dan dibelakang/di tepi kanan dan kiri/rakit berjalan perlahan lahan)” [11]

[*Megatruh* song tells the journey of Jaka Tingkir a.k.a Mas Kerebet, from *padepokan Banyubiru* to Demak via Bengawan Solo. In the 16th century Bengawan Solo was full of crocodiles.

Sigra milir/sang gethek sinanga bajul/kawan dasa kang jageni/ing ngarsa miwah ing pungkur /tinepi ing kanan kering/sang gethek lampahnya alon.

(the raft drifting off driven by crocodiles/forty crocodiles protecting /in the front and at the back/the right and the left sides/the raft slowly flowing”]

With his repertoire, Kuntowijoyo can present the lyric of *Megatruh* song “*Sigra Milir*” mixed with Javanese folklore, *Jaka Tingkir*. Kuntowijoyo tells the story of Jaka Tingkir’s journey crossing over Bengawan Solo river, the habitat of dozens of crocodiles, by riding the raft. Before Jaka Tingkir left for Demak, Ki Buyut Banyubiru gave him the amulet of *Timang Kiai Bajul Giling*. His journey to Demak was made by raft. When he wanted to cross over *Srengenge* river, Jaka Tingkir found trouble because of a flock of crocodiles. The danger threatened when those crocodiles were blocking and circling the raft, then trying to attack. Because of the power of his amulet, those wild crocodiles suddenly weakened and subjugated by Jaka Tingkir. In the end, those forty crocodiles became the guardian during Jaka Tingkir’s journey crossing over the river. The crocodiles swam in the right and left sides, in the front and back of the raft.

The journey of Jaka Tingkir described in *Megatruh* song tells a journey with an urgent situation (potentially separating the soul from the body). According to the citation taken from *Mantra Pejina Ular*, the lyric of *Megatruh* song describes a terrible situation. Such a situation is presented through the symbol of crocodiles, a river, and a drifted raft. The crocodiles refer to the allusion to life’s problems, the river symbolizes life’s journey, and the raft delineates how human runs their life with all the potential problems inherent in it. The human being can be strong and survive, or otherwise be failed, frustrated, and misguided.

The story of Jaka Tingkir and *Megatruh* song entitled *Sigra Milir* is still recognized by Javanese society until now. Moreover, lately, a myth in *Megatruh* song entitled *Sigro Milir* related to the appearance of the crocodile in Bengawan Solo river. The myth tells that *Sigro milir* is forbidden to be sung by someone around the area of Bengawan Solo river, or even when crossing the river. It is believed that this particular song can invite the crocodile to come closer. By half of Javanese society, *Sigro Milir* is known as the medium of communication with the crocodile.

This text represents the condition of human alert toward danger or misfortune that can happen to a human so that they can prepare for every possibility. All texts exposed by Kuntowijoyo intend to show that human life will never be detached from life’s problems, either light or heavy. Human beings must be ready to face life’s problems and believe there is a silver lining in every cloud.

The *macapat* song delineated by Kuntowijoyo in his novels *Wasripin dan Satinah* and *Mantra Pejina Ular* – Asmaradana, Dhandhanggula, and *Megatruh* – can give such an aesthetic effect to the novel. The appearance of *macapat* in the novel seems natural because Kuntowijoyo has sufficient knowledge about *macapat* songs. It is integrated within the fiction text by portraying characters inside the story. The *macapat* songs presented by Kuntowijoyo have situational coherence in the atmosphere, and every story event is constructed in *Wasripin dan Satinah* and *Mantra Pejina Ular*. This condition is related to Kuntowijoyo’s background as

Javanese who was born and grew up in Java and as a grandson of a grandfather who loved to sing the *macapat* song. This knowledge is later called the extratextual knowledge that ‘colours’ the texts of *Wasripin dan Satinah* and *Mantra Pejinak Ular* novels.

4 Conclusion

The *macapat* songs presented in the texts of *Mantra Pejinak Ular* (MPU) and *Wasripin dan Satinah* (WdS) manifest Kuntowijoyo’s repertoire related to Javanese social and cultural norms manifested in the traditional songs both as entertainment and also education medium. The kind of *macapat* songs presented in MPU and WdS are *Asmaradhana* (love story), *Dhandhanggula* (wish and dreams), *Megatruh* (mortality).

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