

Transformation of Rituals and Movement of Mandar Sandeq Sailors Into the Creation of Theater Performance

M Irwan, Institute of the Arts Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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Abstract

The development of performing arts today, especially theater, has undergone a connection of events across time explored by artists. In the Indonesian context, the discourse on tradition and local cultural wisdom often becomes a primary subject on stage. The Mandar people, as an ethnic group on the western coast of Sulawesi, maintain an intimate relationship with the sea. This community uses small boats called Sandeq, capable of navigating the ocean solely by wind navigation and ancestral astronomical knowledge. They uphold the maritime ecosystem through rituals and mantras as expressions of respect for nature and its Creator. The creation method employed is descriptive qualitative, starting with research interviews with informants to uncover symbolic meanings and practices related to the sea. The research results indicate that this relationship can be effectively explored in theatrical performances through the interpretation and transformation of dialogue, gestures, and visual elements that reflect the identity of the Mandar sailors. This study also demonstrates that the integration of local elements not only enriches the narrative of the performance but also serves as a catalyst for collective awareness of the importance of maintaining balance between humanity and nature. This performance is expected to be an initial medium to showcase the universal discourse of the Mandar community with the sea and to encourage critical reflection on the current human-environment relationship through the lens of theatrical performance.

Keywords: Mandar, Theater, Arts

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Introduction

The performing arts, particularly theater, have long served as a mirror reflecting the social, cultural, and spiritual dynamics of various societies. In Indonesia, the evolution of theater has been shaped by the interweaving of indigenous traditions and external influences, resulting in a complex and rich cultural discourse. As the world rapidly changes, there is an increasing awareness of the need to preserve local traditions and cultural wisdom, which are often central themes in Indonesian theatrical productions. This focus on tradition is not merely an artistic choice but a response to the ongoing quest to retain cultural identity while addressing contemporary societal issues.

The Mandar people, an ethnic group residing on the western coast of Sulawesi, exemplify a community whose cultural practices are deeply intertwined with their natural environment. The Mandar's close relationship with the sea is a testament to their enduring maritime heritage, which has been passed down through generations. The Sandeq boat, a small but powerful vessel, is a symbol of this heritage. Renowned for its ability to navigate the open seas using only wind power and ancestral astronomical knowledge, the Sandeq boat represents not just a mode of transportation, but a connection to the spiritual and cultural life of the Mandar people.

In Mandar society, the sea is viewed as a sacred entity, a source of life that demands respect and reverence. This respect is expressed through a variety of rituals and mantras, which are integral to the Mandar's way of life. These practices are not merely ceremonial but are rooted in a profound understanding of the natural world and the need to maintain a harmonious relationship with it. The rituals associated with the sea, such as those performed before setting sail in a Sandeq, reflect the Mandar people's belief in the interconnectedness of humanity, nature, and the divine. These cultural practices also serve as a reminder of the importance of living in balance with the environment, a message that resonates strongly in today's context of environmental crisis.

In contemporary theater, there is a growing movement to explore and integrate local cultural elements as a means of enriching artistic expression and fostering cultural preservation. The incorporation of Mandar culture into theatrical performances offers a unique opportunity to showcase this rich maritime heritage while also addressing broader themes of human-environment relationships. By translating the symbolic meanings and practices associated with the Mandar's maritime traditions into the language of theater, performers can create a narrative that is both visually compelling and deeply meaningful.

The integration of local elements such as dialogue, movement, and visual symbols that reflect the seafaring life of the Mandar people not only enriches the narrative but also serves as a catalyst for raising collective awareness about the importance of environmental stewardship. This approach to theater-making underscores the potential of the arts to act as a medium for social reflection and change. By engaging with the cultural heritage of the Mandar people, theater practitioners can contribute to a broader discourse on sustainability and the need for a balanced relationship between humans and the natural world.

This study aims to explore the ways in which the maritime traditions of the Mandar people can be effectively interpreted and adapted into theatrical performances. Through qualitative descriptive methods, including interviews with cultural informants, this research seeks to uncover the symbolic meanings embedded in these traditions and how they can be translated

into a performative context. The findings of this study will demonstrate how the integration of local cultural elements into theater can create a rich, multi-layered narrative that not only entertains but also educates and inspires. Ultimately, this research contributes to the ongoing conversation about the role of the arts in promoting cultural preservation and environmental awareness.

Literature Review

1. Folklore

Etymologically, the term folklore originates from the English language, specifically the word *folklore*. This term is a compound word derived from two words: "folk" and "lore" (Danandjaja, 2002: 1). According to Dundes (as cited in Danandjaja, 2002: 1), "folk" refers to a group of people who share common physical, social, and cultural characteristics. Essentially, "folk" means a collective. Meanwhile, "lore" refers to a part of culture that is passed down orally. Jan Harold Brunvand (as cited in Danandjaja, 2002: 21) classifies folklore into three major categories based on its type: verbal folklore, partly verbal folklore, and non-verbal folklore.

2. Verbal Folklore

Verbal folklore consists of folklore that is purely oral in form. The genres of folklore that fall into this major category include: (a) folk speech, such as dialects, nicknames, traditional titles, and noble ranks; (b) traditional expressions, such as proverbs, sayings, and maxims; (c) traditional questions, such as riddles; (d) folk poetry, such as pantun, gurindam, and syair; and (e) folk songs (Danandjaja, 2002: 21-22).

3. Myth

A myth (as described by Wadiji, 2011) is a term derived from the Greek word "muthos," which literally means a story or something that is told. In a broader sense, it can mean a statement. Additionally, the term "myth" is also associated with "mythology" in English, which refers to the study of myths or the content of myths. Mythology or myth comprises a collection of traditional stories usually passed down from one generation to another within a certain ethnic group. Barthes, a semiologist, states that mythological narratives are created for communication and have a process of signification that makes them comprehensible to the mind (1972). In this context, myths cannot be regarded as mere objects, concepts, or stagnant ideas but as modes of signification or new ways of thinking. This implies that in-depth study of the content or messages, as well as comparative analysis, is essential to stimulate specific thoughts or knowledge. Furthermore, myths can also be used to stimulate the development of creative thinking. Culture, as an abstraction of human experience, is dynamic and tends to evolve in line with the development of its supporting community. Therefore, myths that reflect culture also tend to convey transformative messages. These transformative messages can be embedded within a single myth or manifested in new versions of the same myth.

4. Tradition

In the anthropological dictionary (Siregar, 1985), tradition is synonymous with customs, which refer to the magico-religious practices of an indigenous community's life, encompassing cultural values, norms, laws, and regulations that are interconnected and

subsequently form a stable system or rule encompassing all cultural system concepts for governing social actions. In the sociological dictionary (Soekanto, 1993), tradition is defined as customs and beliefs that can be preserved in a society from generation to generation. Meanwhile, Stompzka (2007: 69) argues that tradition is the continuity of material objects and ideas originating from the past that still exist today and have not been destroyed or damaged. Tradition can be interpreted as a true legacy or an inheritance from the past. However, traditions that occur repeatedly are neither accidental nor intentional. More specifically, traditions can give birth to culture.

5. Oral Tradition

Oral tradition is one type of cultural heritage in a community, where the process of inheritance is done orally. According to Budhisantoso (1981: 64), oral tradition is a source of culture, such as the ability to behave and social skills in accordance with the values, norms, and beliefs that prevail in the community that supports it.

According to Pudentia (Sibarani, 2014: 32-35), oral tradition encompasses everything related to literature, language, history, biography, and various types of knowledge and other arts that are conveyed orally. Therefore, oral tradition does not only include folklore, riddles, proverbs, folk songs, mythology, and legends, as is commonly assumed, but also relates to the cognitive systems in culture, such as legal history and medicine.

Theory

1. Drama Structure

Etymologically, the word "structure" comes from the Latin word *structura*, which means form or building. Structure refers to the mechanism of interrelationships between one element and another. These relationships are not solely positive, such as harmony, suitability, and agreement, but also include negative elements, such as conflict and opposition. Essentially, structural analysis functions as a tool to uncover hidden elements within a literary work (Ratna, 2004:91). In this context, Kernodle (as cited in Dewojati, 2010) divides the elements that create the structure of drama into three: plot, character, and theme.

2. Plot

Dewojati (2010:167) explains that Aristotle's idea of plot was later developed by Kernodle. He divides the development of the plot into several parts: exposition, point of attack, inciting force, complication, build, minor climax, let down, anticipation, foreboding, great suspense, major crisis, major climax, conclusion, and denouement.

3. Character

Character not only refers to the identification of a figure through age, physical appearance, attire, tempo/rhythm of the character's performance but also the inner attitude of the character. For example, it can be used to identify whether the character is a doubter, humorous, cheerful, melancholy, wise, or someone who tends to be playful (Kernodle as cited in Dewojati, 2010:170).

4. Theme

Theme is the next important element in a literary work because it represents the central idea encompassing all the issues within the story. Kernodle (as cited in Dewojati, 2010:173) also reveals that the theme can be implicitly derived from the characters, setting, and the richness of nonverbal texture that can be observed on stage.

5. Drama Texture

Texture in drama performance is created by sound, language imagination, strong stage mood, props/stage materials, story content, color, movement, setting, and costumes. The texture expressed in drama includes dialogue, mood, and spectacle. The texture in dialogue can be found in the haupttext (main text), while mood and spectacle are usually found in the nebentext (subtext).

6. Dialogue

Dewojati (2010:176) also suggests that universally, dialogue in drama serves as a medium for the author to convey information, explain facts, or communicate main ideas. In other words, dialogue is a medium for the audience to grasp information, clarify facts, or understand main ideas. In addition to dialogue, drama also includes monologues. Abdullah (as cited in Dewojati, 2010:180) argues that a monologue in its initial sense is a person speaking alone; it is the opposite of dialogue (where two or more characters converse).

7. Mood

According to Kernodle (as cited in Dewojati, 2010:182), the creation of mood in drama involves many elements. In other words, mood is built in relation to other elements, such as spectacle, dialogue, and rhythm in the drama.

8. Spectacle

Spectacle can also be referred to as the visual aspects of a play, particularly the physical actions of the characters on stage. It also refers to the staging, costumes, makeup, lighting, and other equipment. Spectacle is considered one of the elements that bring life to a drama and is an important part of the performance. Kernodle illustrates the significance of spectacle by highlighting how Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are depicted in beautiful robes, seated on a magnificent throne, surrounded by attendees, trumpets, and banners, marking their victory (Dewojati, 2010:185).

Research Method

1. Observation

The data collection process for this research begins with observation. Observation involves conducting field research to examine the object being studied. According to Margono (2007:159), observation techniques are used to see and monitor the changes in social phenomena that are growing and developing, allowing researchers to make judgments about necessary and unnecessary elements. Similar to folklore studies, in the observation process,

researchers identify informants or sources who will support the discovery of research data, including the agreed-upon time and location.

2. Interview

Taun (2011:239) divides the interview process into two stages. The first stage is 'unstructured interview,' which allows informants maximum freedom to speak. The second stage is 'structured interview,' where pre-prepared questions are asked to obtain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding. During both stages, researchers use recording devices to document the informants' responses.

3. Transcription

Transcription is the process of converting audio data into written form. According to Endraswara (2009:227), the transcription process involves the following stages: Rough Transcription: The recorded or field note data is presented as is, without concern for punctuation, capitalization, etc. Perfect Transcription: The text is compared with the recording. Any unclear words are clarified by repeating until their meaning is clear. The text's formatting, including punctuation, is then refined.

4. Performance Creation Technique

Based on the theoretical framework and data collection above, the next step is the performance creation technique. The writer will go through two stages to achieve this:

1. Transformation
Transformation, as previously explained, involves converting mythological text into a dramatic script. The obtained narrative data will be adapted into a script.
2. Following Drama Structure
The drama structure, divided into plot, character, and theme, will be aligned with the transcribed mythological story. Interviews and observations of traditions will be sorted and organized into a structured script concept.

Result and Discussion

1. Sandeq

Sandeq is a type of outrigger canoe typical of Mandar. It is used for fishing and trading, characterized by its white color, a single mast, a triangular sail, and equipped with two outriggers (cadik) and two stabilizers (katir). Based on size, sandeq is categorized into two types: sandeq kayyang (large, crewed by 3-6 people) and sandeq keccu (small, crewed by 1-2 people) (Alimuddin, 2003).

Types of Sandeq Boats

1. *Sandeq pangoli*

The sandeq pangoli is a smaller-sized sandeq that cannot be used for fishing near reefs or areas where currents converge, while dragging a bait made from chicken feathers behind the boat (mangoli). This type of boat is very fast and nimble, allowing for quick direction changes to chase fish while avoiding reefs.

2. *Sandeq parroppo*

The sandeq parroppo is used for fishing at sea, specifically at fish aggregation devices (rappo). This type of boat is relatively large, capable of carrying two to three smaller boats that are deployed in the rappo to expand the fishing area. Sailors can carry supplies for trips lasting between two to five days, and the boat is designed to withstand large waves and strong winds in the open sea where fishing occurs.

3. *Sandeq potangnga*

The sander potangnga is used for fishing in the open sea. This type of boat is large enough to accommodate provisions and equipment needed for voyages lasting two to three weeks. Its design helps it handle high waves typically encountered in fishing areas. This type often features additional raised platforms, known as lewa-lewa, installed on either side behind the mast (Alimuddin, 2005).

Hull Construction

The hull of a sandeq consists of several layers of planks, reinforced by frames, with the entire top covered to prevent water from entering the boat. Specifically, the hull or body of the sandeq consists of a section called **belang**, which is the lower or main part of the hull made from a single piece of wood, usually pailipi. The belang is the first part constructed in the making of a sandeq. The belang is also referred to as balakang. To raise the hull, additional planks are added: **papan tobo** (planks at the bottom), **papan lamma** (planks in the middle), and **papan tariq** (planks at the top). These planks are joined together by **tajo**, curved beams installed inside the boat from top to bottom, serving as the boat's framework or ribs. The tajo ensures that the belang, tobo, lamma, and tariq are strongly integrated. They are fastened with wooden or brass nails, especially at the bow and stern. The number of tajo on each side must be odd (Alimuddin, 2005).

2. Fisherman Rituals

One of the traditions practiced by Mandar fishermen is the “makkuliwa lopi” ritual. According to Amrullah (2015), this tradition involves a ritual practice and a belief related to their profession as sailors. The makkuliwa lopi ritual is a customary practice among the Mandar community, performed by fishermen (posasiq) when there is a new boat or before setting out to sea. Mandar fishermen always strive to perform the kuliwa ritual for their boats, even if done in a simple manner, because they believe that neglecting this tradition could lead to troubling and disruptive experiences during their voyages.

In the Mandar language, “kuliwa” means "balanced," and makkuliwa means "to balance." According to Ismail (2012:153), in the context of fishermen's rituals, makkuliwa refers to a safety prayer. This prayer is intended to ensure that both land and sea environments remain in harmony, preventing disturbances and disruptions, thus allowing for a peaceful life. The makkuliwa lopi tradition involves a recitation ritual, performed when a new boat (lopi) is launched or when an old boat is put back into service after a long period. Typically conducted by fishermen before heading out to sea, this ritual involves balancing the boat to receive barakkaq (blessings).

During the ritual, certain foods must be present as well. These include *sokkol* (cooked sticky rice), *loka* (bananas), *ule ule' bue* (mung bean porridge), and *tallo'* (eggs). These foods symbolize good fortune and are believed to bring favorable outcomes. They are an essential

part of the ritual, as it is hoped that the positive qualities associated with these foods will be imparted to the boat and its journey.

The preparation stage is the initial step in carrying out the makkuliwa lopi tradition. This stage is crucial as the ritual cannot proceed without it. During preparation, all necessary requirements must be met and all initial conditions of the tradition fulfilled. The first thing to prepare is the boat that will undergo the kuliwa. This boat may be newly built or an old one that has been renovated. In the makkuliwa lopi ritual, the boat is the central element. There are no specific requirements for the shape or size of the boat to be blessed. Whether it is a small boat or a large one, as long as the boat has been newly constructed or renovated, it must be balanced before being used for fishing.

3. Transformation to Performance Art Theater

3.1 Performance Concept: "Weaving the Waves"

This performance, titled Weaving the Waves, will combine two main elements of Mandar culture: the ritual of sailing and weaving. These elements symbolically represent the relationship between humans, nature, and local traditions. In this context, weaving is not only a physical activity performed by Mandar women but also a metaphor for the process of navigating life, maintaining balance between the visible (physical) and invisible (spiritual) worlds. Waves, as an uncontrollable natural element, will symbolize life's challenges, which must be faced with patience, courage, and a deep connection with nature. The story will follow a fisherman who sails using a *sandeq potangnga*, while his wife performs rituals and weaves on land. The ritual performed by the wife reflects hopes for safety, luck, and balance in nature, closely connected to her husband's journey at sea. The performance will feature two actors—one male and one female—playing central roles: the male as the fisherman sailing, and the female as the keeper of tradition, weaving while awaiting her husband's return.

3.2 Dramatic Structure Analysis in the Context of "Weaving the Waves"

3.2.1 Plot

- a. Exposition:*** The story begins by introducing the life of a Mandar fisherman, the *sandeq potangnga* boat, and the weaving tradition practiced by women. In the opening scene, the woman prepares her loom at home, talking with her husband, who is about to sail. Together, they perform the *makkoli lopi* ritual, which involves prayers for the safety of his journey.
- b. Inciting Incident:*** The *sandeq potangnga* boat sails away from the shore, leaving the wife behind, who begins to weave at home, symbolizing the separation between the land and sea. The husband faces challenges at sea while the wife continues weaving with hope and prayers.
- c. Initial Cause:*** At sea, the husband faces a change in weather or a storm that threatens his boat and safety. Meanwhile, on land, the wife feels anxious but continues her work. Tension builds in both worlds.
- d. Complication:*** Tension peaks when a major storm confronts the husband's boat at sea. Meanwhile, the wife performs another ritual for safety, repeating her prayers, and weaving faster, symbolizing her effort to "weave" balance for the rocking boat.

- e. **Building Tension:** Tension increases as the storm shakes the boat, while on land, the wife accelerates her weaving, with each beat of the loom representing the struggle of controlling the boat. At the same time, the wife weaves with the conviction that the balance of nature will guide her husband's safety.
- f. **Climactic Conflict:** A great struggle occurs between the fisherman and the storm, marking the greatest challenge in the journey. On land, the wife prays fervently, weaving with hope that her husband will return safely.
- g. **Resolution:** After the storm passes, the fisherman safely returns to shore. On land, the wife finishes her weaving, symbolizing the long ritual and wait. They perform a thanksgiving ritual together, both experiencing the peace that comes from the achieved balance of nature.

3.3 Themes and Meanings in "Weaving the Waves"

3.3.1 Main Theme

Weaving the Waves explores the relationship between humans and nature through ritual. This theme is expressed in two aspects: the interdependence between women and the sea and the balance in life maintained through tradition. On one hand, the ritual of women weaving at home reflects continuity in everyday life, while on the other hand, the perilous voyage highlights how uncontrollable nature must be faced with courage and spiritual connection.

3.3.2 Ritual and Tradition

Weaving is not only the work of Mandar women but also a symbol of maintaining balance in life and nature. This activity reflects the cycle of life, which, in the context of this performance, intersects with the husband's journey at sea, which is riskier and more unpredictable.

3.3.3 The Relationship Between Women and the Sea

Although Mandar women engage in weaving on land, they have a deep connection with the sea through the rituals they perform. Rituals such as *makkuliwa lopi* are ways they maintain balance between the land and the sea, ensuring that everything remains harmonious and in sync.

3.3.4 Implicit Themes

- a. **Courage and Balance:** Mandar women not only maintain the family and household but also safeguard their husbands' safety through prayer and ritual. In this context, weaving becomes a symbol of the courage and patience women exhibit in the face of the uncertainties their husbands encounter at sea.
- b. **Gender Roles and Tradition:** This performance also reveals the gender dynamics in Mandar culture, where, although men sail to earn a living, women play an equally vital role in sustaining the family through their domestic duties and rituals.

3.4 Dramatic Texture Analysis

3.4.1 Dialogue and Monologue

Dialogue: Dialogue between the husband and wife will reflect their hopes, anxieties, and courage. The wife will use language that contains prayers and mantras, showcasing her belief in the rituals she performs. Meanwhile, the husband, at sea, will speak about the difficulties and challenges he faces, but with optimism fueled by his belief in his wife's prayers.

Monologue: The wife's monologue while weaving may express her inner feelings of worry and hope. Similarly, the husband's monologue while struggling at sea will depict his inner struggle between fear and trust in nature, as well as in his wife's weaving at home.

3.4.2 Mood

On land, the mood begins with calm and peace created by the weaving routine. However, when the storm hits, the mood shifts to tension and anxiety. This contrast will be enhanced with dramatic lighting and sound effects, creating a shift between the tranquility on land and the chaos at sea.

3.4.3 Spectacle

Visual: The visual representation of the *sandeq potangnga* boat will show the movement of the voyage at sea, while on land, the act of weaving is performed with costumes representing everyday Mandar women's life. Props such as the loom and the boat's sails will emphasize the difference between the land and sea worlds, reinforcing the symbolism of "weaving the waves."

3.4.4 Dramatic Movement:

The actors' movements imitating the actions of weaving and sailing, as well as transitions between the two, will intensify the dramatic impact. Lighting and sound will add to the intensity of the atmosphere, highlighting the contrast between the visible and invisible worlds and the crucial role of women in maintaining the balance of both.

Conclusion

In this performance, the life of Mandar fishermen and their reliance on the Sandeq boat will be vividly brought to life. The story unfolds through a carefully crafted dramatic structure, capturing the essence of their maritime world. The plot will begin by immersing the audience in the unique culture and rituals of the Mandar fishermen. It will follow their preparation for the voyage, the actual journey across the sea, and the trials they face. The narrative will reach its peak as the fishermen confront a powerful storm or other formidable challenges, before concluding with the rituals and reflections that follow their return to shore.

Characters will be richly drawn, featuring a wise captain who guides the crew, spirited sailors who navigate the seas with skill, and new recruits who are still finding their way. Their interactions and dialogues will reveal their personalities and their deep connection to the sea. At the heart of the performance is a theme that explores the delicate balance between humans and nature. It will highlight the courage needed to face the unknown and the significance of

preserving cultural traditions. Through the characters' experiences, the rituals they perform, and the obstacles they overcome, this theme will be poignantly expressed.

The texture of the drama will be brought to life through dynamic dialogue, including traditional mantras and expressions from the fishermen. The mood will be crafted with a blend of visual and auditory elements, creating an immersive atmosphere that transports the audience to the world of the sea. The spectacle will involve detailed representations of the Sandeq boat, the actors' movements, and the stage design, all reflecting the maritime environment.

Dialogue will play a crucial role in conveying the essence of the story, building character relationships, and embedding cultural nuances. Monologues will offer deeper insights into the characters' thoughts and emotions, enriching the narrative. The mood will be shaped by a synergy of dialogue, visual elements, and sound, evoking the varied conditions of the sea and the fishermen's emotional landscape. Finally, the spectacle will include visually striking elements such as costumes, props, and lighting, enhancing the audience's engagement and highlighting the beauty and challenges of the fishermen's journey. Through these elements, the performance aims to deliver a compelling portrayal of the Mandar fishermen's life, celebrating their rich cultural heritage and the profound relationship between humanity and nature.

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