

PENJOR GALUNGAN IN BALI AS A PRODUCT OF CREATIVITY IN THE CURRENT ERA

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Abstract

Penjor is a supplement to *Galungan* Feast Day which is celebrated by the Hindus in Bali. However, nowadays those who produce and use it seem to be so creative that its structural spiritual meaning becomes vague. The visual form of such a *penjor* can be observed in different parts of Bali a few days before *Galungan* Feast Day is celebrated. The spiritual meaning of the contemporary *penjor* cannot be separated from the development of the technology of information and globalization. This present study is intended to describe the visual form of *PenjorGalungan* as a product of contemporary spiritual creativity in Bali. The data source was determined using the sampling purposive technique, and the data were analyzed using the deconstruction and semiotic methods. The result of the study shows that 1) the number of the Hindus in Bali who buy the ornaments they need for making *PenjorGalungan* is greater than those who make such ornaments by themselves; 2) the materials they need for making *PenjorGalungan* are those which are developing in the current global era; 3) the structural spiritual meaning of *PenjorGalungan* is made to be vague by the domination of the contemporary spiritual meaning.

Keywords: penjor, Galungan creativity, spiritual, contemporary

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1. Introduction

Penjor is a supplement to *Galungan* Feast Day which is celebrated by the Hindus in Bali. It has spiritual meaning and beauty. If viewed from how it is made, it is a craft product as it needs handicraft. If viewed from its shape, the materials used, and the meaning which accompanies it, changes have been made. However, several parties consider that the creativity and innovation which have been made are so exaggerated that its presentation exceeds its visualization as a supplement to a religious ritual. It has been made to be a contemporary *penjor*, meaning that it looks like the one which is made as an ornament or for a contest and that it does not show any implementation of the structural meaning. It gives the impression that beauty is more important than the spiritual value. In other words, contemporary spirituality dominates it. The consequence is that it is made as an ornament rather than as a supplement to a religious celebration. It only shows an art creativity and class identity as far as the cultural practice is concerned.

Such a *penjor* is referred to as contemporary *penjor* as it presents the current shape which is different from the previous one. It will keep changing from time to time as it follows the era development which is full of hidden meanings. According to Barker (2000:79), such a reality results from carnal desires. The mixture of propane life style and the religious ritual contributes to the contemporary spiritual phenomenon. Desires are regarded as the energy which leads to the creation of new meaning in the human spiritual life. The objectives of the present study are as follows. First, it is intended to identify the contemporary *PenjorGalungan* in Bali. Second, it is intended to identify the materials used for making *PenjorGalungan*. Third, it is intended to analyze the structural spiritual meaning of *PenjorGalungan*. It is expected that the present study will make every party aware that *PenjorGalungan* should be made in accordance with its function, that is, it should be made to be sacred. It should be made in such a way that its religious functions are more dominant than its aesthetical function.

2. Research Method

This present study is a descriptive qualitative one as it attempts to describe and interpret the object of the study (Sukardi, 2003: 157). The data were collected through observation and documentation. The data source was determined using the sampling purposive technique. The data were analyzed using the method of deconstruction proposed by Derrida and the theory of

Semiotics proposed by Roland Barthes. According to Derrida, deconstruction means deconstructing a text to see the possible values it contains. It does not mean dissolving of a text which comes to an end with the view of emptiness (Santoso, 2007:248—252). In this present study, deconstruction means deconstructing the social phenomenon which has inspired the contemporary *penjor*. The reason is that the deconstructing method can be understood as an activity of analyzing the social text, describing/revealing the motivation or ideology which is hidden behind a text (Agger, 2008:249).

In the semiotic studies, Barthes states that the first meaning of a sign is identical with the denotative meaning or the primary meaning and that the second meaning is identical with the connotative or secondary meaning. The connotative meaning is understood based on the cognitive and pragmatic ability of those who use the sign and the situation. The extent to which people can understand a sign is determined by their feeling or emotion as one of the factors which contributes to the conative meaning. The connotative approach proposed by Barthes is applied to different societal phenomena (Zoest, 1993:4). In this present study, the contemporary *penjor* is regarded as a social text which can be analyzed using the semiotic method in order to see the denotative and connotative meanings.

3. Results and Analysis

In accordance with the objective of the present study, that is, to describe the visual shape of *PenjorGalungan* as a contemporary spiritual creativity product in Bali, the result of the study can be described as follows.

The Hindu Community in Bali Trends to Buy More Materials Needed for Making *PenjorGalungan*

Galungan Feast Day is one of the holy days celebrated by the Hindus in Bali once in six months (once in 210 days). As part of this celebration, they erect *penjorin* front of their respective gate the day before it is celebrated, making the atmosphere in the rural areas different from that on the other days. It presents the cultural and spiritual nuance for the Hindu social community. The Bali Hindus who stay in the urban areas tend to buy more materials needed for making *PenjorGalungan*. Before they made several components they needed such as what are referred to

as *sampianpenjor*, *tamiang* and *endongan*. The main material needed for making a *penjor* is an intact bamboo of which the upper part curves downward. People only assemble the bamboo and the ornaments needed at home. It does not take them a long time before it can be erected. If they do not buy the ornaments they need, it will take them longer. It will take them much longer if they are not skilled enough.

Such a practice of making *PenjongGalungan* causing the ornaments needed to be commodities which can be bought in seasonal shops and stalls. Several days before *Galungan* Feast Day is celebrated, many people go to Kapal Village, Mengwi District, to buy the ornaments they need for making *penjor*. Such ornaments are sold along the main road. They are sold at every shop and stall. There are so many ornaments which are sold that the front parts of the shops and stalls cannot be seen, as can be seen in the following figure.



Figure 1. The ornament ‘sampian penjor’ sold at Kapal Village, Mengwi District, Badung Regency (Source: nusapenidamedia.com)



Figure 2. The ornament ‘sampian penjor’ bought by people at Kapal Village, Mengwi District, Badung Regency (Source: antarabali.com).

Such *sampianpenjors* are sold twice a year, meaning that they are only sold a few days before *Galungan* Feast Day is celebrated. Some shops also sell *penjor* which is ready to be erected. What is meant is that a buyer can buy a finished one. He just erects it in front of his house. Such a *penjor* is referred to as a packaged *penjor*. There are several reasons why people buy the *penjor* ornaments, one of which is as quoted from what was stated by Ni LuhWidari (aged 36) as follows: “*Tiangnaksibukmekaryanikipak, yen ngaryaninpedidikewehnike, bahanneti tang tenmeduwe*”, meaning “*Sayasibukbekerja, kalaumembuatsendiricukupsulit, di*

sampingitubahansayatakpunya” (I’m busy with my job, it will be difficult if I make it by myself; in addition, I don’t have the materials needed) (Budiarta, 22 September 2016).

Such a phenomenon shows that people have to buy the ornaments they need for making *PenjorGalungan* as they are busy with their jobs and they are not skilled enough to make it. In addition, the Balinese people cannot separate themselves from the secondary as well as tertiary industries, meaning that their working hours are determined by the offices where they work (Nehen in Pitana, 1994:96). This shows that such Balinese people have limited time for doing their household chores including making *PenjorGalungan*. Therefore, they tend to buy the ornaments they need as the cheapest solution.

Based on what is stated by Derrida (Santoso, 2007:248-252) and what is meant by the connotative meaning by Bartes, the implied meaning which can be read from such a phenomenon is that, essentially, people do not want to be busy; they do not want to work hard; they want that making *penjor* is easy and not complicated. As what obliged to be available for the celebration of the feast day, they tend to buy the ornaments needed. In the globalization era, which cannot be separated from the development of the technology of information and communication, people are spoiled by different products which can ease their life. As a result, the skill which their predecessors had becomes disappeared. In addition, this also causes the value which can be obtained from *PenjorGalunganto* shift. As an illustration, making *PenjorGalungan* is not a medium for practicing the skill which should be bequeathed to the next generation so that such a cultural practice can be maintained. However, those who prefer to buy such a *penjor* consider that they should have it available when it is time for them to celebrate *Galungan* Feast Day; they do not care whether they have to make or buy it. The reason is that it can be the identity of Hindus in Bali. Each family erects one in front of its gate, as can be seen in different parts of Bali as the island of Gods, making the atmosphere religious and beautiful. Actually, *penjor* is not only made for the celebration of *Galungan* Feast Day but it is also made on the other Hindu holy days and temple festivals.

The Development of the Materials Needed and the Shapes of the Ornaments Needed for *PenjorGalungan*

The materials needed and the shapes of the ornaments used for making *PenjorGalungan* in Bali have been enriched. As an illustration, now palm leaves as well as sago leaves are used. Synthetic material is also used which is referred to as sponge by those who sell such ornaments. The materials used have been adjusted to the current condition. Those who make the ornament ‘*sampianpenjor*’ at Kapal Village say that it is more practical for them to use palm leaf and the other leaves. They are easily shaped and last long. In this way, the sellers can reduce the loss they may suffer.

From the on line medium which is written by I Made Wira, a Balinese, it is stated that the *PenjorGalungan* made at *Kerobokan* Sub district, North Kuta District, Badung Regency, Bali, has changed significantly. According to him, in 1990 the *penjor* in Bali was still made of bamboo and young coconut leaf. Now such a leaf has been changed with the dry young palm leaf. It lasts long and is easily shaped, making *penjor* look more beautiful and artistic. In addition, *penjor* can also last long as it takes a long time to make it. Some people make it one month before they celebrate *Galungan* Feast Day. Before, it could be completed within 2-3 days (imadewira.com, accessed on 27 September 2016). What is stated by Wira shows that the shape and materials used for making *PenjorGalungan* in Bali have changed.

The palm leaf used by those who sell *penjor* at Kapal Village comes from Bali as well as outside Bali such as Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara. Such a palm leaf is directly carried to Bali using trucks. The sponge is the basic material needed for making the *penjor* accessories such as statues and round ornaments attached to what is referred to ‘*sampian*’. In addition, the golden yellow paper is also frequently used for making *penjor*.

The materials used for making *penjor* have also changed the shapes of ‘*sampian*’ and other accessories. Before the shapes of ‘*sampian*’ were simple and were without any ornaments, as the material used was the sago leaf. Now the palm leaf used makes it possible to make different motives, making *penjor* look more beautiful. The motives which are created are the traditional ones. They are developing and are made using the technique of what is known as *metetuasan/mejahitan* in Bali. The creation of such motives needs a special skill, meaning that not everybody has such a skill. The current generation commonly refers to such enriched motives

as references, although, according to several sources, *penjor* can be made simply based on its original meaning.

The Structural Spiritual Meaning of *PenjorGalungan* Starts Being Dominated by the Contemporary Spiritual Meaning

Derrida states that meaning is not absolute; it is not single, universal and stable; it always changes. As what has happened to the current presentation of *PenjorGalungan*, its meaning has changed; it has not been single and absolute either. Different meanings can be presented by the contemporary *penjor*. In accordance with what is stated by Bartes, the second meaning is referred to as the connotative meaning, and that the first meaning is referred to as the denotative meaning (Zoest, 1993:4).

The denotative meaning refers to the relation between a sign and the referent it refers to in reality. This leads to explicit, direct and fixed meaning. The denotative meaning is the explicit meaning. Based on the donative meaning, *PenjorGalungan* is a supplement to the celebration of Galungan Feast Day in Bali which is made of bamboo with its upper part curves downwards, and which is decorated with the sago leaf and other leaves (flowers). It is completed with sweet potato ‘palabungkah’, fruit ‘palagantung’ such as coconut, cucumber, banana and so forth; the second crops ‘beans’, corn, rice and so forth. It is also completed with cake, 11 old Chinese coins, and offerings. To the upper end what is called ‘sampian’ containing betel vine, lime, areca cut and flowers are attached. On Kuningan Feast Day, ten days after Galungan Feast Day, it is completed with what are referred to as *endongan*, *tamiangand kole*m. *Penjor* is erected to symbolize the devotion and thanks of the Hindus to *HyangWidhiWasa*, the Almighty God, as *HyangGiripati*. It is erected the day before *Galungan* Feast Day, that is, on what is referred to as *Anggara Wage WaraDunggulan* after an offering referred to as “BantenPenampahanGalungan” is offered. It can be pulled the day after Kuningan Feast Day which is locally referred to as *RediteUmanisLangkir*, when the ornaments such as *sampian*, *lamak* and offerings can be burned and the dust can be kept within a young yellow coconut which has been religiously processed ‘dikasturi’. On *BudhaKliwon Pahang* (Wednesday after *Galungan* Feast Day), the dust which is kept within the yellow coconut is completed with what is referred to as *kawangen* and 11 coins with square holes in the center ‘uangkepeng’ before it is either buried or washed away.

PenjorGalungan is erected on the right of the gate of every compound. What is referred to as ‘sanggah’ (something which is attached to *penjor* and where offering is put) and the *penjor* itself faces the street along with it is erected (*Tafsir Agama HindudalamBabad Bali.com*, 3 Nov. 2012, which was accessed on 22 September 2016).

The connotative meaning refers to the level of signification which explains the relation between the signifier and the signified, in which the implicit meaning operates. Such a meaning is indirect and changeable, meaning that it is open to different possibilities. The connotative meaning refers to the second layer which is formed when the signifier is related to various psychological aspects such as feeling, emotion or faith. The connotative meaning leads to the second layer of implicit, hidden and multiple meaning. According to the father of semiotics, Ferdinand de Saussure, it is not possible to catch the second meaning entirely, as it may lead to multiple meaning like what is called jigsaw puzzles. This is possible as the perception of a sign, according to him, is based on the principle of negative difference, meaning that the meaning of a sign is not acquired through the answer to what it is but through the answer to what it is not (Budiman, 2002:30). In this present study, the second meaning of *PenjorGalungan* is identical with the spiritual structural connotative meaning. Its visual presentation is contemporary but it fulfills the requirements of becoming a supplement to the religious ritual. Based on *Tafsir AgamaHindu*, the structural connotative meaning of *penjoris* that it is a supplement to the religious ritual which is performed for the celebration of *Galungan* Feast Day. *Penjor* symbolizes the mount which gives prosperity and safety; it symbolizes gratefulness to God *MahaMeru* for giving people with knowledge and prosperity.

Penjor which is made of bamboo and is decorated with what is referred to as ‘sanggah’ (something where offering is put) symbolizes the personification of what is referred to as *Naga Basuki*, *Naga Anantabhoga*, and *Naga Taksada* who are believed to keep the cycle of water perfect in the universe. It is hoped that through such an offering the giant snakes (*Naga Basuki*, *Naga Antabhoga* and *Naga Taksada*), which actually are the personifications of Gods, may keep the cycle of water in harmony. In this way, every creature in the universe will be prosperous. If thoroughly observed, *penjor* looks like a giant snake whose tail soars up to the sky and whose mouth is open and chews food. In addition, *Galungan* Feast Day is celebrated as the victory of

dharma (what is true) over *adharma* (what is not true) (Tantra, 2014). The connotative meaning of *PenjorGalungan* with its contemporary presentation can be interpreted as follows:

As the Arena of Artistic Creativity

From how *PenjorGalungan* is presented, it can be interpreted that the Balinese people care about arts. Whatever they can offer to God is made to be in accordance with the individuals who are involved in it. Every individual can show their art activity especially when they make *PenjorGalungan* by themselves. Costing much money for making it sometimes does not matter to them. As a result, various shapes of *PenjorGalungan* appear and there is an impression that beauty is more important than its spiritual meaning. To some people, such a presentation of *penjor* is considered exaggerated. In their opinion, such a *penjor* goes too far from the norms which have been adhered to. What makes such a *penjor* exaggerated are the puppetry statue (picture 4), the statue of mythical bird 'burunggaruda' (picture 5), the tale of a mythical animal 'barong' (picture 6). The forms which had already had particular functions and objectives, due to creativity, are applied to *PenjorGalungan*. Such an application seems to be forced for the sake of aestheticism and the ethic and logical points of view are neglected. Such elements are neglected in the creation of an art work including *PenjorGalungan*. Such a contemporary *penjoris* a creativity which is intended to satisfy desires and it is possible that it is legally used to show the identity of the owner.

However, it was instructed by Head of *Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI)* (the Hindu Highest Administrative Council), Prof. Dr. I Gusti Ngurah Sudiana, that Hindus are expected to make simple *PenjorGalungan* based on its meaning, as illustrated in picture 3. Essentially, when making *PenjorGalungan* attention should be paid to its components. As an illustration, it should be completed with agricultural products symbolizing prosperity and holy place 'sanggah'. It is expected that the Hindus do not use exaggerated materials. *PenjorGalungan*, which is erected in front of the gate of every compound, should be different from the *penjor* for competition which should be perfectly and beautifully made. It is not necessary to be expensive. According to Sudiana, the families who stay along the same corridor can share one *penjor* which is erected in front of the corridor (Sutika, 2016).

Economic Meaning

The connotative meaning of the contemporary *penjorin* Bali also includes the economic meaning, as it has been used as a commodity which can be traded. The reason is that the Balinese people tend to buy the components; they tend not to make them by themselves. They have limited time and skill. In the process of commodifying it, there has been a shift from the functional value to the exchange value which is usually done by the capitalist to achieve what is aimed at. The funds needed for making *penjor* are relative, depending on the motivation and funds which every individual has. The price of a *penjor* ranges from hundreds of thousand rupiahs to millions rupiahs, depending on the ornaments used and the height. At this moment (2016), the price of one *penjor* in Denpasar is Rp. 200,000. Such a *penjor* is decorated using young coconut leaf. The one which is decorated using palm leaf is more expensive. The trading of different materials and *penjor* components contributes to the economic development.

Meaning of Identity and Power

The contemporary *penjor* can be used as a medium for showing the power and legitimacy of the social class identity of every individual as far as the societal relation in Bali is concerned. The good and expensive *penjor* shows that its owner has better power of economic capital than another, meaning that its owner can show that the identity of his social class is higher than another's. According to Marx, the social class difference cannot be separated from the economic matter or the production relation. However, according to Bourdieu the society's social class is determined by habitus (Ritzer, 2012:87). What is expected from the *penjor* which is regarded as having more aesthetic value is that the social class of the owner will appreciate him, causing such a social class to produce new meaning, for example, the social class identity difference. This can be understood as each group of people has one *penjor* as their obligation. As a result, the day before *Galungan* Feast Day is celebrated we can see units of *penjor* along the street in every rural and urban area. Such a presentation can change the atmosphere of such areas; they look livelier. The presentation of one unit of *penjor* is different from that of another; the owners intend that their units of *penjor* are better than others', although that means that they have to spend more money. Each group of people evaluates and compares theirs and others' although they are not involved in a formal competition. People, as consumers, form the social meaning of their position, taste and identity in a social text (Burton, 2012:38).

From the more innovative and creative construction of *penjor* we can state that the owners' economy is improving; they intend to control the social space through different and better types of *penjor*. In this case, it can be stated that such groups of people/individuals intend to give priority to what they desire over what they need. They always do their best to make their units of *penjor* better than the others'. It is this which has been responsible for the appearance of the exaggerated *penjor*. According to the theory of Maslow, the satisfaction of someone's desire cannot be separated from his/her psychological needs, meaning that he/she needs appreciation, acknowledgement, and status. It is impossible to satisfy the perpetual desire of exploring new things as they are unlimited (Martono, 2011:134). Furthermore, Neitzche states that the desire of filling out what is lacking will never come to an end.

Such hidden meanings dominate the ones which are presented by the construction of the contemporary *penjor*. According to de Saussure, they cannot be entirely understood. However, the appearance of *PenjorGalungan* seems to be accepted by the society, although it is difficult to differentiate its function as a supplement to the religious ritual. Based on the theory of functionalism, social changes can be accepted by the society if they are useful; however, if they are not, they will be refused. Social changes take place perpetually and do not need any explanation. If mused over, ontologically, *PenjorGalungan* contains new values, depending on the era development which should be accepted. The following pictures show several shapes of *penjor* and the ornaments used.



Picture 3. Simple *Penjor*



Picture 4. *Penjor* with puppetry statue made of sponge



Picture 5. *Penjor* with statue of Garuda made of sponge.



Picture 6. *Penjor* which looks like tail of Balinese baron



4. Conclusion

The conclusions which can be drawn from what was described above are as follows: 1) the Balinese people tend to buy the ornaments they need for making *PenjorGalungan* such as bamboo, sago leaf, *sampian* and so forth; 2) the materials used for making *PenjorGalungan* have developed, following the global era development, for example, sponge. The young coconut leaf and sago leaf 'ambu' are still used; in addition, they have been enriched with palm leaf although it is more relatively expensive; 3) there has been an impression that the structural spiritual meaning of *PenjorGalungan* has been neglected; the contemporary spiritual meaning is made to be more dominant.

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