

## Indonesian Local Literary Rituals in Magical Realism

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to find magical realism in the *Bantengan* performance, find namely the irreducible elements, the phenomenal world, merging realms, the unsettling doubts, and disruptions of time, space, and identity at the *Bantengan* show. The method used to reveal these aspects is a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach. Theoretically, this research finds magical realism. Practically for researchers, this research is expected to broaden scientific horizons and can be used as a guide to carry out research, especially about traditions that develop in society. For the community, this research is expected to provide an overview of the actual *Bantengan* performance and provide knowledge to the public that the art of *Bantengan* contains the meaning of a performance that contains the value of magical realism. The results of this study: 1. The irreducible elements namely Cakepan in the art of *bantengan* are read as if telling the figure of a bull in the performance arena, furthermore it is used as advice and a medium for conveying messages to the public. 2. the phenomenal world, namely the movements in the Banteng symbolizing the life of the Banteng animal as an authoritative and strong base or forest animal, 3. merging realms, namely between types of religious magical beliefs and Islam there is a harmonious blend, as seen by the reading of prayers that derived from the verses of the Koran at the ceremony, 4. the unsettling doubts, namely the public's belief is still visible in the giving of offerings or offerings before holding a *bantengan* presentation, 5. disruptions of time, space and identity namely *Bantengan* and *ndadi* being one of the elements of the show that cannot be separated, so that it becomes a special attraction for the community.

**Keywords:** Realism Magis, Art Performance, *Bantengan*



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### 1. Introduction

*Bantengan* is an acculturation of Hindu-Buddhist culture and Javanese Islam. The spread of this martial art is spread by the guardians in various surau and huts that are used for *syiar* media. More specifically, the art of *Bantengan* is a performing art in the form of *solah* from the players accompanied by sounds. This art is supported by the summoning of spirits from the handler. The handler becomes a mediator of magical powers, which will enter the player's body, making the player lose consciousness and lose control of his body.

Rituals are always identified with habits or routines. according to, (Couldry, 2005) ritual is a habitual action (hereditary action), formal action, and also contains transcendental values. Observing these views, it is understood that rituals are related to voluntary performances carried out by the community from generation to generation (based on habits) regarding patterned behavior. The show aims to symbolize an influence on social life. More specifically, (Rothenbuhler, 1998) describes several characteristics of the ritual itself as follows: Ritual as action, Performance, Awareness and Willingness, Irrationality, Ritual is not just recreation, Collective, Expression of Social Relations, Subjunctive and Not Indicative, Effectiveness of symbols, Condensed Symbols, Expressive or Aesthetic Behavior, Customary Behavior, Regularly Recurring Behavior, Communication without information, Sacred.

A ritual is a form of magical realism in the performing arts. An example of a local literary work that applies magical realism in its performance is *Bantengan*. Magical realism is reflected in one of the *Bantengan* plays to be fully involved or participate in this magical realism. This is because within the text environment there is potential for cultural wealth, both myths, legends, and beliefs in magical things. Magical realism is one of the modes of writing that has recently become popular among many writers since it was introduced by the German

art critic Franz Roh in a short essay in 1923 (Hegerfeldt, 2005). This term is used to describe marginal voices and submerged tradition in the text (Faris, 2004). Thus, some writers are categorized as magical realism writers when they point out something magical in their writing style, including Gabriel Garcia Marques' *Hundred Years of Solitude* who is mentioned as a leading writer for spreading magical realism (Thamarana, 2015).

Magical realism is categorized as a complicated story because it appears as a 'mix and juxtaposition of the realistic and fantastic or strange' and it is 'unexplainable', Asga (2014). In other words, the term magical realism in fiction is defined as a combination of realism and the fantastic' so that 'extraordinary things grow organically in the habit' which blurs the distinction between them (Faris, 2004). Realism in literature is not about what is described, but how it is depicted. Realist literary works, according to him, try to describe a particular living environment, which exists in a certain space and time, which is therefore considered to be experienced and verified in human daily life (Watt, 1986).

Various studies have been conducted on magical realism, including works such as "Magic(al) Realism: The New Critical Idiom" by Maggie Ann Bowers (2004), which explores the concept of magical realism in depth. Another study by Brenda (1998) focuses on magical realism in West African fiction and how it offers a unique perspective through the metaphorical "third eye." Anne C. Hegerfeldt (2005) examines the presentation of truth in contemporary British fiction through the lens of magical realism in her work "Lies that Tell the Truth: Magical Realism Seen Through Contemporary Fiction from Britain." WB Fariz (2004) explores the demystification of narrative through ordinary enchantment in his study on magical realism. Additionally, Rosemary J. Rainer (2009) conducts an exploratory study on magical realist narrative techniques in contemporary young adult literary fiction.

In another research, Matthew C. (1999) contributes to the understanding of personal identity in the works of Murakami Haruki by discussing the theme of "Magic Realism." Ignacio Lopez Calvo (Eds.) (2014) offers critical insights into magical realism, providing a comprehensive perspective on the subject. Rames Srikanth (2014) focuses on specific elements of magical realism through an analysis of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's "One Hundred Years Of Solitude" and the works of Salman Rushdie. Warren Christopher (2009) explores the intersection between magical realism and the postcolonial novel, examining the dynamic relationship between faith and irreverence in his book "Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel."

These studies tend to make literary works in written form to be the subject of research. In this study, the performance art of *Bantengan* is made as to the research subject. The work of magical realism combines two conflicting ways of understanding life, namely what is called a realistic code and a magical code. This definition means that both have a balanced position by not eliminating each other.

Literary works with the magical realism genre are a literary genre that is currently very popular and representative of the development of the latest global civilization because it combines positivistic, modernist, and realistic socio-cultural and literary codes with phenomenological, pre-modernist, and magical social codes. As a genre that brings together two cultural codes, namely the positivistic and modernist and the phenomenological, premodern, and magical realism (Faris, 2004), which provides great opportunities for people with traditional and religious-based cultures.

As a performance art that contains magical realism in it, *Bantengan* is an art that adapts from fairy tales from the past. There is nothing wrong with learning from the animal world because it is a fairy tale that is included in literary works that talk about morality and is not patronizing or dogmatic. The bull is believed to be a symbol of nationality against the tiger as a symbol of the wrath of the Dutch imperialists and capitalists at that time. If in England you have a *royal Shakespeare company*, in the Netherlands you have a *stadsschouwburg & Philharmonie Haarlem* if in America you have *the royal theatre*, then in Indonesia, you also have a *Bantengan*.

Performance literature in Indonesia is thriving a lot, but the most visible and historical is the *Bantengan*. Finally, our *Founding Father* describes in the symbol of Pancasila that the values of colonialism or nationalism are the image of a bull. So, the *Bantengan* is a symbol of the arts that the Indonesian people are proud of, especially Mojokerto which is the forerunner of the insight into the archipelago (Palapa Oath) and *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* during the Majapahit era. For this reason, the element of magical realism will make the *Bantengan* show a quality performance so that it becomes a pattern of local wisdom as a typical Indonesian show.

## 2. Wendy B. Faris Magic Realism Theory

Bowers (2004) divides the term into magical realism, magical realism, and amazing realism. The history of the terms is a complicated story that spans eight decades with three turning points and main characters. The first period occurred in Germany in the 1920s, the second period in Central America in the 1940s, and the third period, which began in 1955 in Latin America, continues internationally to this day.

There are three criteria that make a story called a magical realist narrative. First, there are two opposing views of reality, such as natural and supernatural, rational and irrational, or 'enlightened' and 'primitive'. Second, the two views above are equally accepted by the narrators. Third, there is no need to look for reasons or logical explanations for the authenticity of supernatural events, Chanady (1985).

The five main characteristics of magical realist fiction according to Faris (2004) are that the text contains elements of irreducible magic, something that we cannot explain according to the laws of the universe as we know it; descriptions detailing the strong presence of the phenomenal world; the reader may waver between two contradictory understandings of events – and thus experience some unsettling doubts; we experience the closeness or near fusion of two realms, two worlds; This fictional question accepts ideas about time, space and identity.

To find out whether a work can be said to be magical realism or not, it is necessary to explore its characteristics. According to Faris, magical realism has five characteristics, namely *the irreducible elements, the phenomenal world, merging realms, the unsettling doubts, and disruptions of time, space, and identity*. However, in this discussion, only three characters are studied. The first characteristic, namely *the irreducible elements*, contains magical events. The *irreducible element* is something that cannot be explained according to the laws of nature as formulated in Western empirical discourse, namely based on logic, general knowledge, or existing beliefs, as described (Young, 2026). Therefore, the reader has difficulty compiling evidence to answer questions about the status of events and characters in a work. Something that cannot be explained is conveyed ordinarily so that it feels like something (also) real. On the other hand, the magic is still visible even though it is led through the narrative as something that seems ordinary, with a clear, detailed, and concrete depiction. Such a depiction looks like a grain of sand in a shell of realism (Faris, 2004). *the irreducible element* used in works of magical realism usually underscores certain issues. These issues can be explored in contexts that occur outside of literary works. In underlining the central issue, it often interferes with the logic of cause and effect (Faris, 2004; Gapur et. al., 2018).

The second characteristic of the work of magical realism mentioned by Faris is *Phenomenal World*, a detailed description of the phenomenal world in the story. This is the realism in magical realism that distinguishes between fantasy and allegory. Claims that realism provides details with an "*effet de réel*" (reality effect), which conveys not any specific information but rather the idea that the story is real (Bartes, 1962). There are phenomenal world objects in the story. These are sounds, things, and places. These objects can identify in the story. To prove these objects are real, seeking the truth about objects in the real world is a must that these objects are the same things in the real world.

The next third characteristic of magical realism is *merging realms*. With this characteristic, the reader can feel the closeness and almost unification of the two worlds. From the point of view of cultural history, merging realms in magical realism often unifies the traditional and modern worlds. Ontologically, *merging realms* in magical realism unites the magical and material worlds. In general, judging by the combination of the words realism and magic in this genre, this narrative technique can be seen as a technique that brings together opposite sides of the world, combining elements of reality and the fantastic. In the process of unifying the two worlds, magical realism is seen as being in *a space of the in-between* or a *space of uncertainty*. The two worlds are expanded and are no longer a matter of which is real or imaginary but rather on the other side of the apparent reality. In the process of unification or transfer between these worlds, magical realism blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction by eliminating mediation between different realities.

The fourth characteristic of the work of magical realism mentioned by Faris is *the unsettling doubts*. *The unsettling doubt* is a state in which the reader hesitates between two contradictory understandings of events before categorizing them as *the irreducible element*. This difficulty is due to the many variations. Doubt can also obscure *the irreducible elements* whose consequences are not always easy to see as such. The doubts experienced by contemporary western readers often fall between understanding the event as a dream or a character hallucination, if not understanding it as a miracle. Scenes in magical realism may look like dreams but they are not dreams, and the text can simultaneously co-opt them by categorizing them as dreams and prohibiting such co-optation (Faris, 2004). There are three variations of doubt (*hesitation*) based on Faris' explanation, namely doubts triggered by the text (*ontological*), doubts triggered by object properties, and doubts caused by the reader's cultural background.

The fifth characteristic of magical realism is the *Disruption of Time, Space, and Identity*. In addition to merging different worlds, this fiction disrupts accepted ideas about time, space, and identity. Time, space, and identity in the modern world are disrupted by the magic of the real world. Although it uses time and space, not all traditions, myths, legends, and gothic are completely covered but leaked. Magical time and space leaked out in the real world's space and time. This disrupts of time, space, and identity in the modern world (Faris, 2004).

Overall, the five characteristics that define magical realism fiction illustrate how the narrative structure of magical realism as a narrative technique brings together magical elements and narrative realism techniques within itself. Through these five characteristics, it can also be seen how the relational relationship between the two, such as magical and real overlaps that give rise to *doubts*, magical and real encounters in the world between (*in-between*), and *disruptions* as a result. the interaction of magical elements on the concepts of realism. In magical realism, the positions and relationships between the magical and the real as well as the traditional and the modern are to be aligned so that they are no longer hierarchical as in the modern trend. Thus, a new alternative appears in viewing reality which makes magical realism have a postmodern tendency.

### 3. Methods

The method used is an ethnographic approach, with the following steps: (1) setting the setting, (2) determining the informant, (3) data collection techniques (recording stories, observations, in-depth interviews, and one's individual experience), (4) data selection. , (5) the validity of the data and informants, (6) transcription techniques (transfer from spoken to written), (7) translation techniques, and (8) data analysis techniques [29]. The data analysis of this research uses the theory of magical realism which includes *the irreducible elements, the phenomenal world, merging realms, the unsettling doubts, and disruptions of time, space, and identity*.

### 4. Results and Data Analysis

The illustration used in the Art of Bull is cute whose contents describe objects through visuals in the form of cute read by one of the musicians Cakepan is read at the same time as the music is played with the need to accompany the performance. Cakepan becomes a symbol and has a certain meaning to be conveyed. Cakepan in the art of *Bantengan* is read as if telling the figure of a bull in the arena of performances, furthermore, it is used as advice and a medium for conveying messages to the public.



Figure 1: Players and Bulls Out Early  
(Photo: personal document, 2022)

The meaning contained in the *Cakepan* above is the gathering of the community in the *Bantengan* performance and can be a gathering place for everyone who comes, such as between players and players, players and musicians, players and society, as well as society and society itself. This gathering is the main foothold for all people so that they can live in harmony in one word and maintain the red and white saka that overshadows the ancestral culture of the nation's entire archipelago based on Pancasila. *Silaturahmi* becomes an adhesive tool in society, maintaining love between others and kinship as a means of strengthening the unity and integrity of a nation.

#### 4.1. The Phenomenal World

*Bantengan* art as a representation of the bull, tiger, and ulo animals. All three are fugitives. The movement is called *solah*. *Solah* players in *Bantengan* art are the main medium for expressing expression so that any discussion about *Bantengan* art cannot be separated from *solah*.

The movements in the *Bantengan* symbolize the life of the Banteng animal as an authoritative and strong forest or pedestal animal. Banteng is colony animals, that cannot live alone and must together represent a community in an atmosphere of togetherness and intimacy and a strong solidarity and family system. Therefore, the bull animal is used as a symbol of strength that can give extraordinary strength and power to the whole show.



Figure 2: Solah and the Form of a Bull  
(photo: personal document, 2022)

The existence of differences in background, ideology, culture, and others between individuals or community groups sometimes becomes the cause of disputes. At almost every level of social conflict can occur. The conflict has a good impact if it is controlled properly and has a bad impact. This teaches the community to be able to control conflict by fostering a sense of tolerance and staying in touch with one another.

#### 4.2. Merging Realms

The ritual function is a primary function whose audience is invisible powers such as gods or ancestral spirits. There is a harmonious combination between religious magical beliefs and Islam, as can be seen by the reading of prayers derived from the verses of the Koran at ceremonies.



Figure 3: The handler reads a prayer/ritual  
(photo: personal document, 2022)

The handler of the Bantengan art still uses some needs or practices as the beliefs or beliefs of the Javanese people, which are not necessarily the case for other communities. The ceremony or prayer together before the bantengan performance begins is a mandatory requirement for the safety of all members. The prayer is carried out sitting with your eyes closed and both hands on your knees with full concentration asking God for salvation. The handler leads the ceremony/prayer.

#### 4.3. The Unsettling Doubts

There are still people's beliefs that are influenced by animism and dynamism culture. This can be seen in the giving of offerings or offerings before holding a Bantengan presentation. The offerings are prepared by the host who held the event or the responder. This aims to honor the ancestral spirits or *dhanyang* so that they are given smoothness at the time of presentation.



Picture 4: Offerings  
(photo: personal document, 2022)

The offerings consist of several types of ingredients that have symbols including bananas, rice, ointment, coconut, incense, market snacks, money, and glass. If the offerings are incomplete or incomplete, it is believed that there will be obstacles during the event or after.

Offerings or accompaniments are very necessary because sometimes goods spirits or spirits will interfere with the performance if pairing not set up. If it has been prepared but there is only a little less will. When will do a response anywhere First, it will be asked who is in charge of the area's reco. The term is doing greetings or permission to visit. go safe home will be safe.

#### 4.4. Disruptions of Time, Space, and Identity

By imitating the movements of heroes and supernatural beings from the spirit world, people can gain a little power from their mysterious powers (Royce, 2007). *Bantengan* and *ndadi* (trance) become one of the elements of the show that cannot be separated so that *ndadi* (trance) becomes a special attraction for the community. Presented in the context of performances and rituals, there must be one in *Bantengan* art. *Ndadi* in the context of the show is performed as a frontal and violent scene to make it seem like a trance, this is back again for reasons of attracting public interest.



Figure 5. Trance

(photo: personal document, 2022)

*Bantengan* art is an art that requires magical powers with the inclusion of spirits or intentional inclusion of spirits in the bodies of players and spectators. This makes the *ndadi* scene more dominant in terms of performance, *Bantengan* art remains beautiful in the eyes of the audience or the wider community. Players can do absurd things that haven't been done before when not in a *ndadi* state. The method of healing a *trance* in the *Bantengan* dance is by suggesting by reciting the verse of the chair and *al-Fatihah* prayers that have been mastered by the handler (*babok*). This is done because it is believed by the handler (*babok*) to be able to remove the negative things that are in the dancer's body and provide help and protection from disturbances and incitement by the devil to be given safety. These prayers and mantras cannot be known by anyone because there is a special knowledge that must be learned by *the handler* (*babok*).

## 5. Conclusion

*Bantengan* is a traditional folk performing art who came from the Mojokerto area. This show uses *Barongan* is in the form of a bull's head and uses more footwork. After the development of the *Panji Siliwangi* group add the martial art of *pencak silat* at the beginning of the dish. Name Bull comes from the word bull which is one of the animal forest dwellers who are brave, tough, and brave. The properties of the bull animal are then applied into motion. *Bantengan* is very dynamic. This year, the bullfighting groups began to pattern the bull's-eye performance. All *Bantengan* groups throughout Mojokerto, Indonesia began to explore looking for a standard motion for the *Bantengan* performance. The show is patterned so that the *Bantengan* has a distinctive performance and is under the depiction of the bull character.

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