

# **INTERRUPTION CONCEPT IN “AWAK TAM ONG” PLAY BY TEATER KOSONG OF ACEH**

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## **Abstract**

Comedy drama as a media of communication plays a role in enlightening the people who support it. Comedy drama is a means to express idea and thought as well as philosophical values comically or even to spread propaganda. Drama series Komedi Ampon Yan (Ampon Yan Comedy) usually borrows the elements of other art forms to support its work and one of them is the concept of interruption owned by folk theater. Comedy play “Awak Tam Ong” is a story in Komedi Ampon Yan series performed by Teater Kosong as an attempt to interpret various conditions in Aceh after the tsunami attack, such as social, cultural, politics, economy, law, ecology, and religious conditions.

**Keywords:** Comedy theater, work concept, socio-cultural condition

## **A. Introduction**

Comedy drama is a performance that shows comical acts containing criticism towards the occurring social discrepancy. Dewojadi said that;

“In a primitive understanding, comedy is similar to funny entertainment in which the shows only emphasize its humorous side... Comedy in its modern defini-

tion is a ceremony to laugh at the society's flaws and weakness. The show attempted in modern comedy criticizes social discrepancy without omitting its humorous element. Comedy drama aims to give smart spiritual education to the audience" (2010:47).

Comedy comes from the Greek word *komoidia* which means making people happy. (Yudiaryani 2002:68). James Medrinos mentioned that;

*"Comedy is that delicate balance of artistry, your own sense of humor, and your craft, which is comedic construction. This balance holds true for all genres of comedy. To begin the writing process, you need to recognize your individual sense of humor and identify the styles of comedy you can write for".* (2004:5).

A comedy drama show is a means to express idea and thoughts as well as opinions that contain cultural values and presented humorously on stage by a group of people. Various social events featured on comedy drama are actually related to various phenomena developing in the society, such as social, cultural, politics, economic, law, ecological, religious, and other phenomena. This is in line with Yudiaryani's statement that says "The presence of theater as an art really depends on the society condition". (2002:1). This statement implies that a comedy drama as a media of expression can be used for various purposes such as for personal and social purposes, entertainment, education media, enlightenment media, and even propaganda tool.

Humor resources of a comedy drama can be various things such as human behavior, institution conflict, social digression, freedom of speech, and cultural clash. Those resources are then turned into jokes, sarcasm, and criticism materials delivered comically. Likewise is "Awak Tam Ong", one of the play in drama series Komedi Ampon Yan performed in 2016 by Teater Kosong. "Awak Tam Ong" is a comedy play that exposes various problems in Aceh, such as social, cultural, economy, law, ecology, and religious problems in a humorous way. It inserts puns, jokes, and social criticism using Indonesian language and sometimes Acehnese words.

## B. Discussion

Teater Kosong group was established in 1993 by T. Januarsyah, Nurmeida, Din Saja, and Sulaiman in Banda Aceh. At the beginning of their career, they also did a script using Western approach such as "Difficult People" by Anton P. Chekov, translated by W.S. Rendra. Because the scripts they performed did not reflect the actual socio-cultural, politics, and law phenomena in Aceh, T. Januarsyah as the director and head of Teater Kosong wrote his own comedy script with a performance similar to Lenong Betawi (Jakarta traditional play). It was entitled Komedi Ampon Yan.<sup>1</sup>

The play "Awak Tam Ong" is a comedy drama that tries to combine the materials of folk play and Western play methods. This combination has different level of complication. People who are used to enjoy folk play only or Western play only will find difficulties in enjoying this type of fusion play. It can be understood because watching a folk play that is full of symbolism and values needs intelligence. The Eastern theater is more spiritual, born from intuition, expresses togetherness, and uses integrated multimedia of expression. It is not focused solely on one media. The performance can be in the form of drama, dance, and music, which are all coordinated together (Acmad 2006:26). On the other hand, Western theater is more into visually strong media technique. In using the main media of expression, they tend to "limit" it only on the professional skill and concentrate only on one media of expression, be it drama, dance, or music (Kasim Ahmad 2006:27).

The combination of folk and Western plays in "Awak Tam Ong" can be seen through its script, which is the basis of the play, and its venue choice that can be indoor or outdoor. The director's role during the making is to coordinate all the-

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<sup>1</sup>Ampon is a term given by Acehnese for male royal blood from Teuku line. If the royal member name is Teuku Budiman, then people will call him Ampon Budiman.

atrical elements with understanding, skill, and intelligent imagination to create a successful performance (Harymawan 1986:63). Folk play elements are also present in "Awak Tam Ong" play, such as the chance of interruption from the music players or comment from the audience during the performance as shown in the following dialogue between Minah, the music players, and audience.

065. MINAH :

(AFTER THE SONG FINISHED, SHE APPEARS WHILE CHECKING PEOPLE WHO HAVE COME. THEN, SHE ASKS THE AUDIENCE)

assalamualaikum. Ada lihat bang Sudin

assalamualaikum. Did you see older brother Sudin?

066. AUDIENCE

Ada. Di belakang.

Yeah. At the back.

067. MINAH

Di belakang? Kok belum sampai dari tadi saya tunggu-tunggu? Hari inikan ada jadwal rapat penting sama Ampon. At the back? Why hasn't he arrived? I have waited for him for quite some time. Today is the schedule for an important meeting with Ampon.

068. MUSIC PLAYERS

(LAUGH) Ciahei.....

Yooohoo.....

069. MINAH

Biasarapat DW

*As usual, meeting DW*

The chance of interruption is an effort made by Teater Kosong group to open the border between performers and audience. By engaging the audience with the performers, it is hoped that "Awak Tam Ong" can be understood more easily

because the audience will feel more involved with the plot. Dewojati stated that;

“Most modern drama in Indonesia try to build an intense communication and open the border between characters and audience as in traditional theater. This is usually done by building some parts of the plot that allow the characters to make a direct dialogue with the audience so that they become parts of the drama... this technique is also known in traditional drama performance” (Dewojati, 2010:98).

Based on the opinion above, it can be seen that Western theater method is used in “Awak Tam Ong” as a technical guidance in doing comedy, such as the script, directors, characters, and arts. Furthermore, the performance can be held either outdoor, in a park, or in a field without leaving Western methods. Similarly, the performers need to organize the interruption from music players or audience constructively and correctively so that there will not be any chaos that disturbs the performance.

The characters in “Awak Tam Ong” play are Ampon Yan, Sudin (Ampon Yan’s household assistant), Minah (Sudin’s girlfriend), and Sabar (a transmigrant from Tapanuli). Every character has its own role in the story. Ampon Yan acts as an orator who delivers the vision and mission of the play. Minah characters acts as an instructor who gives information about the events and characters’ conflicts. Sudin and Sabar are in charge of building conflict.

“Awak Tam Ong” consists of 4 acts and 334 dialogues, in which the dialogue between characters only presents in act 2 and 4. Meanwhile, act 1 and 3 only contain information about the events. The change of decoration made by the artistic team during act shifts was done openly and there is a singer singing. This is a type of play that is never done by Teater Kosong before in Komedi Ampon Yan play.

“Awak Tam Ong” is a play motivated by the Rise of Second Cosmopolitanism, marked by the born of “World Residential” post tsunami attack in Aceh that attracts job seekers to stay in Aceh. They come with various interests, such as

socio-cultural, economy, and even politics that certainly affect how Aceh local residents response. Even though those newcomers or in Aceh language "Awak Tamong" bring benefits for development and life of Acehnese, their arrival worries T. Januarsyah<sup>2</sup>. He believed that the fragile socio-cultural foundation post conflict and tsunami attack will be easily dominated by the culture brought by the newcomers. Social discrepancy related to job availability for the newcomers and Aceh local residents are inevitable, as portrayed in Aceh idiom "Buya krueng teudeung-deung, buya tameung meuraseki"<sup>3</sup>. This idiom means that the local people do not get anything, yet the newcomers get profits.<sup>4</sup> This social phenomenon was then captured by T. Januarsyah and documented into Komedi Ampon Yan, specifically in "Awak Tam Ong" play. This disappearing term "Awak Tamong" was then brought back to the Acehnese and aimed to the newcomers so that they understand where they stand, thus creating a harmonized social relationship in Aceh.<sup>5</sup> It can also be assumed that the term Awak Tamong is a form of Acehnese's and the newcomers' self-consciousness so that they do not get oppressed by the development of Aceh.

Based on this background, it can be concluded that "Awak Tam Ong" theme is newcomers. This theme is inspired by the socio-cultural, economic, and political conflicts and it contains moral values regarding the situation of people and newcomers who reside in Aceh after tsunami. The theme is actually not only T. Januarsyah's worry towards the situation and condition of Aceh, but universally, it also responds to the social conflict with the foreign newcomers who live and reside in Indonesia. T. Januarsyah believes that this issue has

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<sup>2</sup>The term *Awak Tam* actually a word play of *Awak Tamong* (the newcomers).

<sup>3</sup>The river crocodiles are staying aside, the crocodiles entering the water get the profits.

<sup>4</sup>T. Januarsyah, interview, 12 April 2015. Banda Aceh

<sup>5</sup>The term *Awak Tam Ongis* actually a word play of *Awak Tamong* (the newcomers).

created a discord between the residents and the country. People believe that the newcomers who seek jobs in Indonesia have overwhelmed the socio-cultural life of the locals.<sup>6</sup>

### C. Conclusion

“Awak Tam Ong” is a comedy drama that tries to combine folk play and Western play method, and is the only modern theater in Aceh who is able to engage communication between the performers and the audience. The script, as the play’s framework, can develop because of the interruption from the audience during the performance. This comedy is not an attempt to fade out the materials of folk play or expressing doubt on Western play. On the contrary, it shows an intention to improve comedy so that ideas and thoughts about various issues in Aceh can be more easily accepted. Thus, new idea and formula are needed for comedy theater in Aceh, especially thus related to local heritage and elementary issues in theater involving Eastern ethics, logics, and aesthetics.

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<sup>6</sup>T. Januarsyah, interview, 12 April 2015. Banda Aceh