

MAH MERI'S MAIN JO-OH (HARI MOYANG PUJA PANTAI RITUAL DANCE): FROM TRADITIONAL TO A TOURISM ART ENTERTAINMENT

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ABSTRACT

Hari Moyang Puja Pantai is the traditional ritual still being practised by the Mah Meri indigenous tribe in Malaysia. The ritual celebrated is to seek protection, forgiveness and requests for a better fortune and faith of life for the next new year to come. From their ancestral spirits and ancestors. On this note, this study emphases only the ritual dance named *Main Jo'oh* demonstrated during *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* ritual ceremony. Focusing on the capability of *Main Jo'oh* ritual dance transforming into the art of dance performance as a tourism perspective. The research objective that will be discussed is, to identify and explore the capability of this *Main Jo'oh* ritual dance through dance performance of Poetics Method by Aristotle, as an art of dance to the tourism art performance. It is a qualitative method, emphases on observation approaches. Using the Poetics Method by Aristotle as instruments for data collection and analysing process. The sacredness of this ritual setting has been deconstructed into the element of tourism setting. In the sense of the crowded spectators: tourists and media, who at this extent establish the concept of *Main Jo'oh* is an art of tourism art of entertainment. Drawing the Aristotle Poetic to the notion of *Main Jo'oh* ritual dance, interestingly, the six Poetic structures designed by Aristotle did not signify the element of SETTING as part of the structure. Which to the ritual ceremonial, the element of setting contributes to most important structure to the ritual dance such as *Main Jo'oh*.

Keywords: Mah Meri; Aristotle's Poetics; Anthropology Tourism; *Hari Moyang Pantai*; *Main Jo'oh*

INTRODUCTION

Hari Moyang Puja Pantai or The Day of Worshipping of The Ancestral Spirit, celebrated by Mah Meri indigenous community tribe in Malaysia. Located in Carey Island, Banting, Selangor (state). The ritual performance functions as a mechanism of praying to seek protection, forgiveness, and a better fate of life for a new year, from the spirit of ancestor, believed to be the spirit of the sea and forest, and spirit of their ancestor. It is celebrated on the fifth day of Chinese New Year. The ritual begins from a certain starting area. Which for this ritual ceremony, it started at the community hall of Judah Village, Carey Island. The highlight of the ritual was at the sea when the sea water recedes. *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* celebrated is believed to be the remnants of an ancient ritual ceremonies practiced and celebrated by this indigenous tribe community.

This year (2022), the ritual ceremony once again celebrated after two years of absent due to the Movement Control Order (MCO), as to curb the spread of the COVID -19 epidemic. This ritual is an open celebration to public and media. Even though there is no tourism promotional advertisement, the spectators and media whom function as audiences, crowded this ritual space, is exceptional. Thus, in this study both, the spectators, and the media, are defined as tourists.

On this note, this study will centre only on the ritual dance *Main Jo'oh*, the dance performance demonstrated at the last structure of *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* ceremony. In these senses, the research objective that will be discussed is, to identify and to explore *Main Jo'oh* ritual dance process and characteristics through the dance performance discourses. Using Poetics Method by Aristotle.

The argument will draw on, even though *Main Jo'oh* dance is considered as a part of a ritual ceremonial celebration, will Poetic Method by Aristotle, that usually used by the dance and drama scholars and criticism, fit the structure of this ritual dance as a performance art through tourism perspective. It is a qualitative research, emphasizes on observation approaches. Using Aristotle's Poetics Method as an instrument for data collection and analysing process.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Main Jo'oh demonstrated in *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* ritual ceremonial is one of the significant structures of this remnants of an ancient ritual ceremony practised and celebrated by Mah Meri indigenous tribe community. The whole process of the *Main Jo'oh* as ritual dance performance contributes and functions as sacred. Which defined as worship of the deity or divine spiritual elements. Ritual on the other hand, rest on the structure of prescribed formal behaviour for occasions, which often enacted at certain place and time. Also not given over to technical routine, having reference to belief in mystical beings and power, (J.A.M Snoek in Jens Kreinath, J.A.M Snoek & Micheal Stausberg, 2018). On this note, the element of dance performance demonstrated as part of this ritual remnants of an ancient ceremonial practiced is considered structured. Thus, contribute to the discourse of dance performance which could be performed as an art of the tribal dance performance in the realm of tourism, such as *Sewang* dance from Semai tribal community

To this extent, Aristotle's Poetic Method which is one of the significant methods in the performing art discourse deals with dance dan drama discourse, has never been consider as the measurement tools for indigenous ritual tribal dance performance. There is no research found in Malaysia or Southeast Asia, discussing the relationship of Aristotle's Poetic Method with the indigenous ritual tribal dance.

Hence, the absent of this interesting issue and discussion creates a gap both, in performing art deals with dance discourse, and in culture Anthropology deals with indigenous ritual dance. The argument will draw on the research question that, even though *Main Jo'oh* dance is consider as a part of a sacred ritual ceremonies, will Poetic Method by Aristotle, that usually used by the dance and drama scholars and criticism, fit the structure of this sacred and ritual dance as realm of art performance in the realm of tourism perspective? It is a qualitative

research, emphasizes on observation approaches. Using Aristotle's Poetics Methods an instrument for data collection and analysing process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The discussion of this paper draws on the literature review of two key areas: Aristotle Poetics Method and ritual definition from the perspective of anthropology.

Aristotle's Poetic Method

Aristotle's Poetic is said to be the earliest work of Greek dramatic art theory. Rest on first, the performing art. Draws from drama and music. Second, rest on literary texts. Significant Poetic scholarly debates concerned on the conceptual definition of catharsis and hamartia. Which the former refers to the purification and purgation of emotion and the later depict the flaws of the characters.

For Aristotle, Poetic Method functions as the art of mimesis or imitation of these actions and life of the human beings. Richard Janko (in Jonathan Goossen, 2018), suggests that Aristotle's poetic imitation of action and life begins with a choice, action inevitably has a moral dimension, which is closely linked to the concept of character acting. Hence, for Goossen, the character acting through an actor does not represent the character, but the character action on the life he is acting.

Poetic for Aristotle representation of people in action which refer to the element of tragedy genre that defines as serious action in life, compared to comedy. For him, tragedy as genre, represents life, which people attain their objectives through their serious actions. For Goossen, in regards of Aristotle Poetics, through the tragedy genre, the character and his or her characterisations is significance to determine the genre of the play and by exceptionally close link with the plot of the story. He then continues to argue that,

Aristotle's central insistence upon and account of the unity of dramatic action at the heart of the Poetic is the assertion that *praxis spoudaia* or serious action to designate what Stephen Halliwell describes as 'the organized totality of a play's structure of events, its complete dramatic framework.'

(Goossen, 2018).

Poetics Method of a tragedy, emphasised fall "on what [Aristotle] refers as the objective emotive properties of the well-constructure plot.", (Stephen Halliwell in Jonathan Goossen, 2018:45). On this note, 'the organized totality of a play's structure of events, its complete dramatic framework' suggests that Aristotle Poetics' plot organisation define the structure of beginning, middle and ending. Which to the extent evoke his most important principles of the plot organisation. According to Goossen, Aristotle's Poetic identifies six hierarchical order characteristics: plot (*mythos*), character (*ethos*), thought (*dianoia*), diction (*lexis*), melody or song (*melos*) and spectacle (*opsis*). Meanwhile, on the extent of tragedy, Joanna Friesen in Diana Theodores (2017,13), argues that,

Although there was dance in the plays when they were performed, Aristotle did not categorize dance as a separate element of tragedy, but simply as an aspect of spectacle in his hierarchy of dramatic elements.

Friesen agrees with Goossen that within the definition of tragedy, Aristotle identifies six hierarchical order characteristics: plot, character, thought, diction, melody, and spectacle. In these senses, for Friesen each of Aristotle's hierarchical characteristics does have a specific implications and relationship to dance or dramatic dance in the realm of tragedy genre,

To be a possible vehicle for dance then, the drama chosen to be danced must first include human relationships. [...]. It seems, however, that if the dance seeks to express

essentially the fable as the play upon which it is based, the choreographer must choose a dramatic source which itself has a strongly unified plot. (15)

At this point, the choreographer must follow the dramatic incidents of the chosen play and transformed these dramatic ideas through the language of dance movement.

Poetic & Ritual (Ritual Poetic)

Ritual is a medium of storytelling. It defines as dramatic art narrative. It tells story of the believer. Thus, ritual represented serves as a mechanism of negotiating between the mortals and their gods or higher spirit, which defines as character, action, and life.

Focuses on the symbolic and expressive function of ritual in dramatic terms, highlighting especially what ritual communicates about plot and character in the play in which occurs.

(Adriana Brook, 2018:4).

Ritual and dramatic art through its narrative share certain significant qualities. These shared qualities visible through ritual framework and, in Aristotle Poetic. Thus, the inter-relationship between ritual and Poetic that emphasis on plot or narrative works on ritual as a poetic device state by Adriana Brook (2018,18), states that,

Rituals that are embedded in narratives, therefore, because they are subject to the same cognitive imperative as the narrative itself, influence the logic the reader [or audience] will attempt to impose on the story.

As for Froma Zeith in Adriana (2018:5)), ritual can express the characters feeling and emotion. This feeling and emotion will be demonstrated and develop the character acting (as mentioned by Aristotle) in ritual story which serve as a mechanism of action to the space and life.

At this point, ritual is structured by what Aristotle Poetic characterised as plot, character, thought, diction, melody, and spectacle, ritual contributes to tragedy modes. These two modes of performance-tragedy and ritual-share many characteristics, making ritual a natural and logic fit Aristotle Poetic.

Drawing on Dimitrios Yatromanolakis and Panagiotis Roilos works, the theory of poetics arrive to the sense 'as a set of general laws that constitute a theory of the structure and functioning of literary discourse of texts,' (Lela M.Urquhart in Sandra Blakely, 2017:318). In their work, the 'general laws' 'arrive at such by considering the characteristics typical of Greek ritual that correspond to characteristics typical of Greek literature,' (Lela M.Urquhart in Sandra Blakely, 2017:321). To this extent these two modes -ritual and poetics - contributes to the notion ritual poetics that signify the modes of 'ritual action'. The modes embedded in the narrative, functions as the notion of plot and character. Thus, represented as story to tell of action and life of character.

Ritual Definition from The Perspective of Anthropology

Ritual through anthropology perspective, ritual is a culturally constructed system of symbol communication. It signifies a symbolic behaviour and 'follows highly structured standardised sequences and is often enacted at certain places and times that are themselves endowed with special symbolic meaning,' and 'prescribed formal behaviour for occasions not given over to technical routine, having reference to belief in mystical beings and powers', (Jens Kreinath, J. Snoek & Micheal Stausberg, 2018: 6). Likewise for Andrew J. Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart (2021,11), ritual is a mode of performance 'ritual function as kind of 'cultural bias'; expressed intentionally as sign of events.

Sue Jennings (2018) on this note, argues that Anthropologist have made their own distinction between ritual and theatrical performance, which for this research defines as tragedy

play, suggest that tragedy theatrical performance has evolved from ritual. She mentions that Beattie (1977:35), defines ritual,

comparing [to] the early medieval and Greek theatre forms with the contemporary spirit possession, defines ritual as “the performance of expressive acts, usually involving symbolism with the underlying conviction that such performance will or may be casually effective”.

On this note, ritual through a mode of performance connotes as a medium of ‘sign of events’ which defined as the mechanism of storytelling as mentioned by Adriana Brook. In the sense that, theatre or tragedy play discussed to Poetic Method is an emphasis on aesthetics. However, ritual on the other hand, are obligatory and aesthetics are not significantly under consideration.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research draws on the case study method of Mah Meri’s *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* ritual ceremonial, celebrated the fifth day of Chinese New Year. Rest on the ritual dance of *Main Jo’oh*

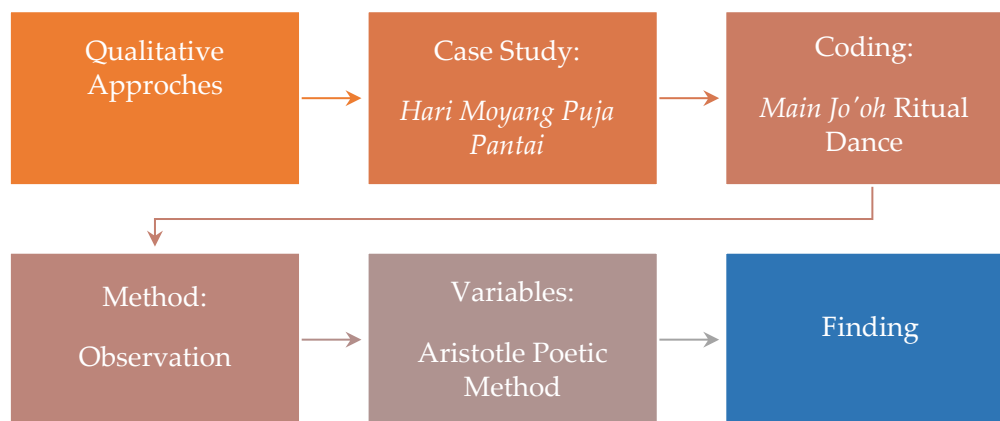


Figure 1: A Qualitative Approches- Case Study Research Design: *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai*’s Ritual Dance: *Main Jo’oh*, Through the Perspective Aristotle Poetic Method

The research code focuses on the *Main Jo’oh* ritual dance demonstrated in the ritual ceremonial celebrated. Thus, it is one of the significant structures of the ritual. As it, as the processes of the ritual, the dance is part of the storytelling process that serves as the mechanism of communication between the mortal and God (s) or spirit (s) or ancestral spirit (s). Therefore, the dance is a medium of communication.

As a notion of ritual dance which has a story to tell, *Main Jo’oh* dance is then considered as a mode of ritual and poetic. Hence, defines as mode of tragedy, mentioned by both, Jonathan Goossen (2018) and Adriana Brook (2018), that characterised by six Poetic Method elements, design by Aristotle as to the main structured in tragedy genre: plot, character, thought, diction, melody, and spectacle.

Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework rest on the notion of ritual and dance which defines as Aristotle definition of tragedy. Characterised by six elements: plot, character, thought, diction, melody, and spectacle.

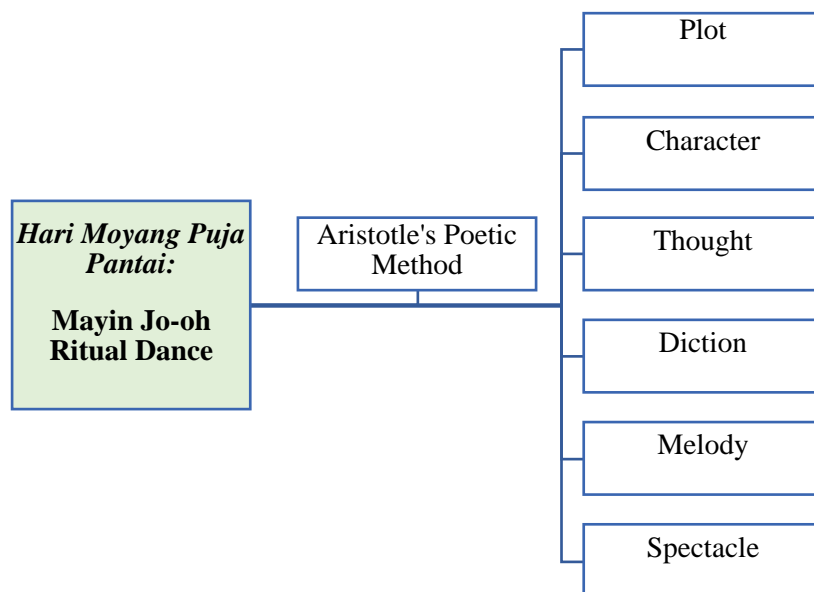


Figure 2: Theoretical Framework: Aristotle’s Poetic Method

Ritual dance that considers as an art of dramatic dance, *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai*’s ritual dance thus, for this research is defines as the notion of Ritual Dance for this research. Hence, as mentioned by Friesen in Diana Theodores (2017), ritual dance does have a specific implications and relationship to dance or dramatic dance in the realm of tragedy genre.

To be a possible vehicle for dance then, the drama chosen to be danced must first include human relationships. [...]. It seems, however, that if the dance seeks to express essentially the fable as the play upon which it is based, the choreographer must choose a dramatic source which itself has a strongly unified plot. (15)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Malaysia Indigenous Tribal Community Group

Indigenous people in Malaysia is termed Orang Asli for indigenous people of Peninsular Malaysia and *Pribumi* for the communities of Sabah and Sarawak.

The term Orang Asli, meaning ‘original people’ was coined by the post-independence Malaysia government and refers exclusively to the indigenous people of the Peninsular Malaysia and does not inclusive the Malay-Muslim population, nor the *Pribumi* communities of Sabah dan Sarawak,’ (Govindran Jegatesen, 2021: 5)

The Orang Asli is a tribal community lives within their own customs and traditional culture and belief. ‘For official administrative purposes the Malaysian government distinguishes 18 culturally distinct Orang Asli groups in three categories: Negritos, Senoi and Aboriginal Malays (Melayu Proto)’, (Kirk Endicott, 2016:1).

Hence, these tribal community is not a homogenous group. Each community communicate with their own language and practice their culture and belief. Thus, perceives each one of them as a different from other tribal community.

Refer to JAKOA (The Department of Orang Asli Development) website, <https://www.jakoa.gov.my/engagement-session-with-agencies-related-to-recruitment-of-orang-asli-2020-spm-students/> (retrieved 13th September 2022), the Negrito tribal ethnicity : Kensiu, Kintaq, Jahai, Mendriq, Bateq and Lanoh. The Senoi tribal ethnicity: Temiar, Semai, Jah Hut, Che Wong, Semoq Beri dan Mah Meri. And the Aboriginal Malays (Melayu Proto ethnicity: Temuan, Jakun, Semalai, Orang Kuala, Orang Seletar and Orang Kanaq.

Table 1: Malaysia Indigenous Tribal Group Community

Negrito	Senoi	Aboriginal Malays (Melayu Proto)
Kensiu	Temiar	Temuan
Kintaq	Semai	Jakun
Jahai	Jah Hut	Semalai
Menriq	Che Wong	Orang Kuala
Bateq	Semoq Beri	Orang Seletar
Lanoh	Mah Meri	Orang Kanaq

Refer to the above table, Mah Meri tribal ethnicity falls under Senoi tribal group community. Which is the largest of Peninsular Malaysia indigenous or Orang Asli group.

Mah Meri Tribe

Mah Meri indigenous tribe is a community who inhabit coastal regions is under category of Senoi Orang Asli. Resides from Sungai Pelek up to Carey Island, Selangor. The word Mah Meri in their language refers to two terms, first defines as ‘people of the forest’ and the second refers as Betisek which defines as coastal. ‘The term Ma’ Betisek meaning ‘people with scale’ have commonly referred to as Besisi or Mah Meri,’ (Wazir-Jahan Karim, 2020: 13). Mah Meri ancestor were fishermen and mangrove hunter-gathers.

For this study, the focus of *Main Jo’oh* ritual dance will rest only on *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* performance by Kampung Judah village, Carey Island, Selangor. This village is one of the two well established in terms of tourism operation besides Bumbon Village.

Hari Moyang Puja Pantai (Mah Meri)

Hari Moyang Puja Pantai or The Day of Worshipping of The Ancestral Spirit. Believed to be the remnants of an ancient ritual ceremonies practised and celebrated by this indigenous tribe community. It is the day where Mah Meri tribe seek for protection, forgiveness, and a better fate of life for a new year, from spirit of their divine ancestral spirit (s), believed to be the spirit of the sea and the forest, and their ancestors. It is celebrated on the 5th day of Chinese New Year. *Moyang* defines by Suet (2010, 46):

Moyang means “ancestral spirits.” There are three ways of understanding moyang. First, moyang refers to the spirits of Mah Meri dead ancestors believed to dwell in the supernatural world. Mah Meri believes their ancestors are constantly watching over them and appeal to them for protection and safety. They also request favors and the fulfillment of desires and invoke blessings from their moyang. Second, moyang also refer to the spirits of plants and animals, benevolent or malevolent. The Mah Meri appeal to their moyang assistance in times of sickness believed to be retribution for acts of *tulah* (curse). Third, moyang are also supernatural beings sighted in the forests and seas. These beings are often exalted into deities believed to be spirit guardinas of territories (villages), for example Moyang Gadeng of Kampung Sungai Mata, and Moyang Amai of Kampung Sungai Salang.

On this note, for Kampung Judah is *Moyang Panglima Hitam*. The ritual started with the three-kilometer grand marching of the villagers and the tourist to the sea where the ritual ceremonial took place. This ritual ceremonial centred at *Mahligai* or *Sanggar* which translated as grand altar. Build and placed at the sea (during the tide recedes) a few days before the ceremonial took place. The *Mahligai* serves as a setting or place marked the channel of path for the sea spirit communicated and pass through.

The marching started the main gate of *Balai*. Functioned as *Rumah Moyang* or Ancestor Main House, thus up whole the concept of a spirit house. Both, the gate, and the house were

decorated by hand-crafted *nipah* fronds and pandanus leaves. Folded into geometric patterns and shapes that resembled birds, fishes, and flowers.

The marching carrying the *busut*, a cone shaped represent an anthill made by *nipah* leaves, serves as an offering index to the ancestor spirit of the sea. It is this offering is to be the centre or the focal point which *Main Jo'oh* took place when the tide recedes.

***Main Jo'oh* Ritual Dance**

Main Jo'oh is a ritual dance. Thus, it is one of the significant structures in the *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* ritual ceremony, celebrated by Mah Meri tribe. It is the last structure of the sacred ritual ceremony, which believed to be the remnants of an ancient ritual ceremonies practised and celebrated by this indigenous tribe community. The ritual dance was performed on the muddy and mudflats of the recedes tide space.



Figure 3: *Main Jo'oh* Ritual Dance

This ritual dance was performed after the offering food and drinks to the ancestor and, to sea ancestral spirit at the *Mahligai* or grand altar, by the the shaman who was possessed by main ancestral spirit of Kampung Judah - *Panglima Hitam*, to the sea ancestral spirit was done. The offering in this sense was served as a medium of communication. This last ceremonial structure functions as welcoming and inviting their ancestors' spirit and ancestral spirit of the forest and sea together celebrates the joyful and wonderful day.

Main Jo'oh ritual dance may last for a few hours. It was performed by the young female dancers, who had been blessed by the ancestors before the ritual dance performed. The dancers dressed in their traditional ritual attire. The dancing movements was in a manner counterclockwise of circling the *busut* (mound) made my *nipah* leaves in a shape of cone modelled of anthill. The dances then joined by the shamans who were possessed by other ancestor spirits. Later it was joined by the 'Panglima Hitam'.

Thus, at the last sequence of this ritual dance will invite and include the participant of the audience: locals (the Mah Meri villagers), tourists and media to join the circle of *Main Jo'oh* dance.

Table 2: Ritual Dance: *Main Jo'oh* and Aristotle Poetic Method

No	The Elements of Aristotle Method	Note /Remarks
1	Plot	<i>Main Jo'oh</i> demonstrated, is a notion of Mah Meri tribe communication which define celebration. Tell a story of this tribe welcoming and invitation for the ancestral spirit and their descended ancestors to join and celebrates the sacred day of the tribal belief.
2	Character (s)	1. Ancestral spirit - guardians of territories 2. Ancestor (s) – spirit of the dead ancestors 3. Shamans 4. Dancers
3	Thought	The motivation and expression behind the movement demonstrated by dancers and the characters involved in the Ritual dance: 1. Ancestral spirit - guardians of territories 2. Ancestor (s) – spirit of the dead ancestors 3. Shamans 4. Dancers
4	Diction	The gestures and movements of the dance – <i>Main Jo'oh</i> – like joget style
5	Melody	The ritual <i>Hari Moyang Puja Pantai</i> .
6	Spectacle	The characters costume, grand altar and <i>busut</i>

Plot

Main Jo'oh is a concept of ritual dance of *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* ritual ceremonial. It is the last structure of the ritual ceremonial. Ritual as mentions earlier is defines as a concept of storytelling, 'ritual tell stories. They have characters, plotline, climaxes, and denouements,' (Adriana Brook: 2018, 3). In this senses, *Main Jo'oh* ritual dance functions as an index of storytelling of *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* ritual ceremony demonstrated. Thus, *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* ritual ceremony tell a story of - seeking for protection, forgiveness, and a better fate of life for a new year, from spirit of ancestral. In these senses, the ritual dance of *Main Jo'oh*, which performed at the last structure, tells a story of this tribe welcoming and invitation for the ancestral spirit and their descended ancestors to join and celebrates the sacred day of the tribal belief.

The ritual dance of *Main Jo'oh* was performed after the most significant ritual of the ceremonial done at the grand altar. Which the demonstration of seeking for protection, forgiveness, and a better fate of life for a new year - from spirit of ancestral, believed to be the spirits of the sea and their ancestors, by the key shaman who been possessed by the key ancestors- *Panglima Hitam*.

In the light of Aristotle's Poetic which refer as tragedy and defines as ritual dance in this research, the plot is structured into three stages: beginning, middle and conclusion. In this research, *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* identifies as the concept of tragedy play that consequence

of the main plot. Hence, *Main Jo'oh*, which uphold the meaning of the last ritual celebration and closure, serves as the concept of conclusion to the Poetic structure. However, the ritual dance of *Main Jo'oh* itself embedded its own story to tell. Thus, structured into the the *Main Jo'oh* own ritual dance narrative: beginning, middle and conclusion.



Figure 4: Plot: Closure-Celebration

The *Main Jo'oh* ritual dance tell the story of celebration and closure of the prayer for protection, forgiveness, and a better fate of life for a new year - from spirit of ancestral as the objective of *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* ritual ceremonial. The concept of this ritual dance is in a formation counterclockwise movement. Focused and centred around the *busut* (mound) made from *nipah* leaves. This counterclockwise movement of ritual dance tells the story of their 're-annates their myth of origins, and therefore that the *Main Jo'oh* asserts their identity as original inhabitants,' Suet, C.C. (2010,89). Karim in Suet (2020) states that, *Main Jo'oh* is the a rejoice celebration and the purpose of this ritual dance is to invites the ancestral spirit and ancestors' spirit to join and celebrates this sacred ritual occasion together.

The characteristic of invitation in this ritual dance then functions as the notion of the plot's dramatic art, mentioned by Aristotle Poetic as the core characteristic that defines 'action and represent life' in tragedy play. Which refers to hope for the mortal and the yes and the no or refusal for the invitation to the divine: ancestral spirit.

At this stage, only the ritual characters: the dancers, the ancestors, the ancestral spirits, and the shaman were allowed to participate in this ritual, spectated by the tourists and the media. At this point, the function of invitation upholds the concept of a sacred communication between the mortal and the divine characters. Thus, follows by the concept of welcoming after or if the invitation is accepted. In this research case study, the invitation accepted, and the ritual dance then celebrated with happy ending as a conclusion.

The function of inviting and welcoming as a sacred ritual ceremonial for the *Main Jo'oh* was then deconstructed by the characters at the last sequence of the ritual dance. At this point, the circle of the sacred ritual dances was opened to the 'non-ritual' characters, refers to tourists and media. The dancers invited and welcomed the tourists and the media to join and participated in this ritual dances. As a consequence, the deconstruction signifies the transformation of the notion of originality to the ritual dance of *Main Jo'oh* and *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* as a whole, to a notion of a tourism art performance and entertainment product.

Character

The most fundamental things when reading Aristotle Poetics are the ideas to what Aristotle responding of the notion action which define the character and acting. For Janko in Goossen

(2018), suggest, action that Aristotle terms as ‘character acting’, results from a rational decision and responsible that begins with a choice that embedded with a moral dimension. For Goossen, Aristotle Poetic’s character acting, ‘represents “people in action” by stating more precisely that “tragedy is a representation not of human beings, but action of life”, (2018).

On the other hand, Aristotle through Friesen in Taplin, (2018,17), states that “a tragedy is impossible without action but there may be one without character.” For Taplin, in the dramatic dance study through Aristotle ‘s Poetic, identify the figure of the choreographer of the dance’s performance as the index who responsible to relates the particular story. It is this choreographer’s challenge to structure a movement medium of characterisation expression in dance. At the extent, ‘characters which are presented have particular qualities which must be expressed through dance,’ (Friesen in Taplin, 2018,17). *Main Jo’oh* is a ritual dance of celebrates Ancestral Day or *Hari Moyang*. *Moyang* defines by Suet (2010, 46), as:

Moyang means “ancestral spirits.” There are three ways of understanding moyang. First, moyang refers to the spirits of Mah Meri dead ancestors believed to dwell in the supernatural world. Mah Meri believes their ancestors are constantly watching over them and appeal to them for protection and safety. They also request favors and the fulfillment of desires and invoke blessings from their moyang. Second, moyang also refer to the spirits of plants and animals, benevolent or malevolent. The Mah Meri appeal to their moyang assistance in times of sickness believed to be retribution for acts of *tulah* (curse). Third, moyang are also supernatural beings sighted in the forests and seas. These beings are often exalted into deities believed to be spirit guardians of territories (villages), [...]

Main Jo’oh ritual dance which define as dramatic dance, refers to table 2 (Characters), comprises of four characters. First, the Ancestral Spirit which refers to the supernatural beings sighted in the forest and seas that signify the deities. Whom to this case refers to *Moyang Panglima Hitam*, *Panglima Janggut Panjang* and *Moyang Bajus*. Second, the Ancestor which refers to the spirit of the dead ancestors who dwell in supernatural world. Whom to this case, refers to a few unknown (nameless) ancestors. Third, the Shaman, whom in this ritual identify as those who been possessed by the ancestral spirits and ancestors’ spirit. And fourth, the dancers. Refer to a group of young female dancers who was blessed by the ancestral spirit before the ritual dance performed.

Interestingly, *Main Jo’oh* is defined as a notion of dramatic dance, the concept did not fit to what Taplin discussed. The figure of choreographer was absent in this ritual dance. Another, the characteristic of the characters who involved in the process of character acting was different to what Taplin and Aristotle Poetic structured.

Accordingly, two of the characters: the ancestral spirit (deities) and the ancestors, in this dramatic dance did not fit what Aristotle term as Poetic an actor who represent ‘people in action’ whom ‘represent action of life’ or character acting. Thus, both these characters staged their own characteristic of ‘character acting’ as the deities and the ancestor spirit to the audience.

Likewise, the character of Shamans, is a person (actor) selected by these deities and ancestor regarding the unknown special qualities of the person through the spirit perspective. These Shamans will be possessed by these ancestral spirits and ancestor spirits as to be part of the *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* ritual ceremonial. Hence, celebrates the closure of the Ancestral Day during the *Main Jo’oh*.

Only the characters of the dancers were selected by the mortal refers to the villagers and approved by *Tok Batin*. These dancers were the young female from the village. These chosen dancers were blessed by the Ancestral Spirit such as *Panglima Janggut Panjang* and *Bajus* before they entered the ritual dance space that already marked by the ancestors. At this point, the spectators were only witnessed the ritual dance from outside the marked space.



Figure 5: The dancer received blessing by one of Ancestral Spirit

The character acting of the dancers which refer to action of life during the ritual dance were absent. In other words, the function of the dancers was not for character acting of ‘people in action’ whom represent action of life’. Having said that, the absence of character acting mode then fit to the notion of imitations by Aristotle. The young female as a character of a *Main Jo’oh* dancer was just a mode of imitation from the original *Main Jo’oh* of an ancient ritual ceremony practised and celebrated by this indigenous tribe community. As mentioned by Aristotle, poetry is a mode of imitation and even dancing is a mode of imitation (Aristotle, 2020).

Here, on one hand, the dancers through the counterclockwise movement and circling the *busut*, represent the mode of imitation of the past. On the other hand, the dancer as means of the ritual celebration dancers that welcomed and celebrated the closure of the ritual ceremonial of *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai*.

Thought

Thought in Poetic includes every effect which must be produced by speech or dialogue. For Friesen in Taplin (2018,18), thought in Poetics for dramatic arts defines as ‘determines the motivation behind the action.’ Ritual which defines as a medium of storytelling, in this sense, serves as an index of thought to *Main Jo’oh*. Thus, ritual in *Main Jo’oh* functions as poetic device directing the spectators experience of this ritual dance plot as a closure and celebration stage of the *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* ritual ceremony conclusion.

The ritual dance movements of every character and dancer in *Main Jo’oh* through which express the ‘character acting’ symbolised thought of closure and celebration of *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* ritual celebration. Hence, much of the expressive of the ritual dance embedded through the dramatic dance movement uphold the character characterisations of celebrations. Such as *Panglima Hitam*, the key Ancestral Spirit of Kampung Judah. Even though he was the only character in the *Main Jo’oh*, danced with a harsh and unrhythmic steps of movement, he was at his joyous self, celebrating closure of Mah Meri ancestral day.

Diction

Diction for Aristotle Poetic defines as word and dialogues that playwright chooses to express ideas and thought. Aristotle describes eight types of words used in tragedy. For Friesen (in Taplin, 2018,18) ‘each of these types of word has a movement parallel which is a familiar compositional tool for choreographers.’ Thus, words in Poetic defines as gesture of dance movement that conveys the dancer -character expressions.

Noting on this point, *Main Jo’oh* as a ritual dance, do established this concept. The dancers’ gestures and movements of circling the *busut* in a manner of counterclockwise, expresses the meaning of the Mah Meri traditional belief system of animism, myth, and identity of the remnants of an ancient ritual ceremony practised and celebrated by Mah Meri indigenous tribe community.

Melody

Aristotle Poetic highlighted melody in the tragedy is the most pleasurable accessory. Therefore, melody serves as an effective tool to enhance the action through character acting. Which in *Main Jo'oh* refers to the dance movements of the characters. In this sense, the term 'accessory' for Aristotle contribute to melody serves as a tool which is not a significant element in the tragedy play as plot, character, and diction. Melody for Aristotle in Friesen in Taplin (2018, 20),

It is a sign of weak dramatic structure if an audience member leaves the theatre humming the music and feeling that the dancing seemed 'right for the music', instead of feeling that the music was "right for the dance."

Main Jo'oh, on this premises, as a form of ritual dance marked as the closure for ancestral day ritual ceremony, which defines celebration to the whole structure of *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* ritual, melody or musical form offers and enhance the ritual characteristic as important structure of the dance presented. A form of Mah Meri traditional belief system and the remnants of ancient ritual ceremonies practised and celebrated, the musical is essential to this ritual dance as a sacred characteristic during the performance. To this degree the element of melody or musical form in *Main Jo'oh* is essential and it cannot be considered as a separate element. Hence, the musical is significant to the whole ritual ceremonial of *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai*.

Spectacle

'Aristotle reminds the reader that the elements of spectacle are "the least of all the parts and have the least to do with the art of poetry,"' (Friesen in Taplin, 2018:21). For Aristotle, spectacle is an element of "pleasurable accessory" as the Melody, which discussed earlier. On a different note, Joanna Friesen in Diana Taplin (2018), argues that 'unlike a play, which can be read, the dance cannot be perceived unless there is a production. As visual and spatial art, dance must be performed', (20).

On this account, *Main Jo'oh*, a form of a ritual dance which part of *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* ritual ceremonial did not emphasize on aesthetics of spatial arts, both mentioned through Aristotle Poetics or by Taplin. But *Main Jo'oh* performance embedded by a symbolic behaviour and 'follows highly structured standardised sequences and is often enacted at certain places and times that are themselves endowed with special symbolic meaning,' and 'prescribed formal behaviour for occasions not given over to technical routine, having reference to belief in mystical beings and powers', (Jens Kreinath, J. Snoek & Micheal Stausberg, 2018: 6).



Figure 6: Busut

For this reason, spectacle in *Main Jo'oh* ritual dance which define celebration and joyous moment, is more than the element of "pleasurable accessory". Spectacle refers to *Main Jo'oh* is operable in this ritual dance through the elements of costumes and props.

Since *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* is considered as the remnants of ancient ritual ceremonies practised and celebrated, the costumes of the dancers and prop, which canon as *busut*, a con made by *nipah* leaves modelled anthill, were significant to this ritual dance. They revealed the meaning and story of *Main Jo'oh*. Acknowledge the character acting and the relationships between the dance with the whole narrative of *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* especially with Mah Meri belief system, cultural milieu and underlying a certain symbol.

Drawing the Aristotle Poetic to the notion of *Main Jo'oh* ritual dance, interestingly, the six Poetic structures designed by Aristotle did not signify the element of **SETTING** as part of the structure. Which to the ritual ceremonial, the element of setting contributes to the most important structure to the ritual dance such as *Main Jo'oh*.



Figure 7: *Main Jo'oh* Setting- Day (morning), at the sea when the tides recede

The setting which could be define as stage for the tragedy play for Aristotle and dance stage for Taplin play a very significant role and function the *Main Jo'oh* ritual dance. The concept of stage for *Main Jo'oh* is determined by a significant space and time. *Main Jo'oh* as a ritual dance and as a significant structure of *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* ritual ceremony, is performed only on the fifth day of Chinese New Year celebration, at the recedes tide sea and during morning to noon. The selective setting to the Mah Meri is considered sacred since it is the sacred chosen day for the mortal to communication with the ancestral spirit, that the tribe defines as divine beings or deities.

However, the sacredness of this ritual setting has been deconstructed into the element of tourism setting. In the sense of the crowded spectators: tourists and media, who at this extent establish the concept of *Main Jo'oh* is an art of tourism art of entertainment.

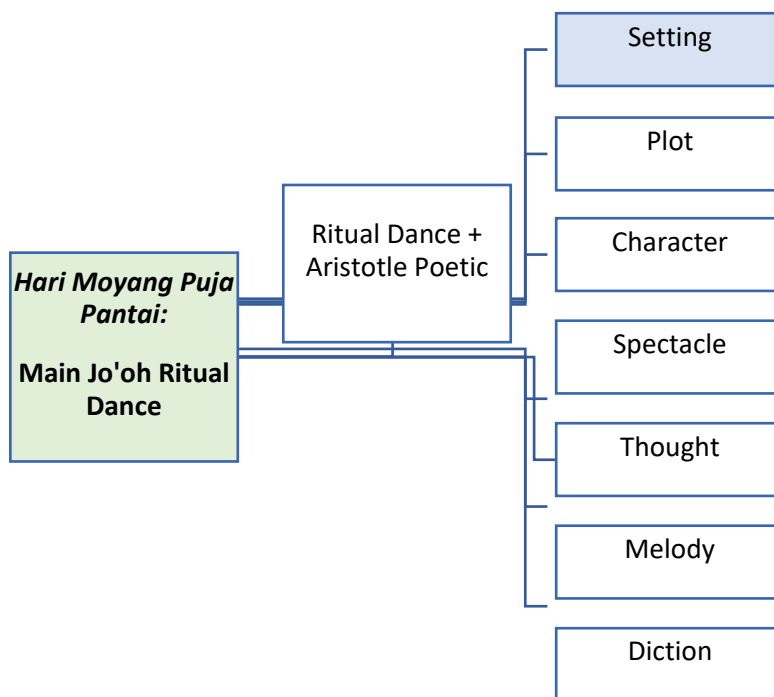


Figure 8: Ritual Dance Poetic: The Findings

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Main Jo'oh ritual dance defines the closure and celebration of joyous moment to the *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai* ritual ceremony. To put it concisely, to study Aristotle Poetics through the notion of ritual dance like *Main Jo'oh*, which defines a set of dramatic art for tourism performance art characteristic, does not put at the complete structure of the definition of ritual, that refers to **Setting**.

Thus, first, the element of setting of ritual ceremonial such as *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai*, defines the significant structure of the whole meaning of ritual to *Main Jo'oh*. Second, the element of pleasurable accessory to Aristotle Poetic such as spectacle, is considered as among the fundamental and significant characteristic to the ritual dance of *Main Jo'oh*.

Ritual dance *Main Jo'oh* defines as the joyous celebration signifies a closure for a ritual ceremonial of *Hari Moyang Puja Pantai*. Having said that, the notion of a sacred ritual performance deconstructed when it opens 'the door' to tourism entertainment art. The conceptualisation of tourism art characterised by the participation of the crowded spectators at the scene of the ritual ceremony. Thus, who are considered as outsiders or others.

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