

THE “TOLAK BALAK” RITUAL THROUGH “WONG IRENG” TRADITIONAL DANCE IN GUMUK VILLAGE, SELOREJO DAU MALANG

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Abstract: Wong Ireng dance is a distinctive dance art that originates in Gumuk, Selorejo Village, Malang Regency. All dancers are male members of the community. The dance has existed for 60 years since the Dutch colonial era. The Wong Ireng dance tells the resistance against the Dutch colonialists, as seen from the performed dance moves, namely imitation of war dances by bringing dance properties such as spears. The dance is called Wong Ireng Dance because all the dancers cover their bodies with black dye all over their bodies. This dance occupies a vital role in the life of the Gumuk village community. This study aims to describe the function of the Wong Ireng dance for the Gumuk village community. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach using interviews, observation, and documentation. To check the data validity, the authors used source triangulation and technical triangulation, involving group leaders, village officials, and documents collected in the research location and previous studies' results. The results showed that: 1) Wong Ireng Dance has a specific form of presentation; and 2) Wong Ireng dance has a function that is inherent in the life of its people, mainly related to initiation rituals. The function becomes a supporting factor of the existence of Wong Ireng Dance today and the preservation of its authenticity.

Keywords: ritual, *tolak bala*, dance, *Wong Ireng*

INTRODUCTION

Gumuk Village, Selorejo is in Malang Regency. The majority of Selorejo residents work as orange farmers. Currently, the village of Selorejo is famous for its orange picking tours. Gumuk village, in RT 20 RW 06, has unique and still relatively rare art, namely the Wong Ireng Dance. Besides these dances, there are also other arts, namely Jaranan and Pencak Silat. However, the Wong Ireng Dance seems to dominate in the village.

The Wong Ireng dance is developed in the village sixty years ago during the Dutch colonial era. This Wong Ireng dance tells about the life of the Gumuk village community in fighting the Dutch colonialists so that the movement resembles a warrior movement (Febianty, 2018). From the beginning of its development until 2017, the Wong Ireng Dance was not well documented. There is no archive of documentation during the dance performance, nor documentation for dance lessons. They only have documentation in the form of photographs. The archiving of the Wong Ireng Dance has only been carried out since the mobile restrictions for the Dance and Music Study Program students under the supervision of the DPL, who also acts as a research team leader.

However, the description is only limited to a written report. So that in 2018, Ade Febianti, as one of the PKMM participants, followed up in the undergraduate thesis work by making learning media in the form of a video of Wong Ireng Dance. The media is intended as a

learning tool for the people of Gumuk village to maintain their existence because most of the dancers are elderly.

The study has shown that Wong Ireng Dance has a distinctive form of presentation and has a function inherent in the life of the Gumuk village community. It even became one of the prerequisites in implementing various village rituals and initiation rituals, namely as a means of repelling misfortune.

Ritual

In Wikipedia Indonesia, ritual is a series of activities carried out mainly for symbolic purposes. Rituals can be carried out based on religion or based on a particular community's traditions. Thus, whether it is based on religion or tradition, the procedure for carrying out the ritual has been regulated and determined, so people cannot carelessly perform it. If it is related to religion, it has the connotation of right or wrong. It has the connotation of allowed and not allowed when it is associated with tradition, according to local rules where the tradition applies. Tradition is usually associated with a custom, which includes an institution that regulates the behavior of its supporting human in the relationship between people in the indigenous community. Some habits are passed down by traditional leaders or law enforcement (Bastomi, 1992). In the life of traditional society, customs (*adat*) are all the rules and laws that are not written and not recorded but are believed to be related to good and bad provisions for a person or a large part of the community. Anyone who violates customs is considered despicable and may even be excommunicated. In this case, tradition can be translated as inheritance or a custom (Bastomi, 1992)

According to Noor (2012), tradition results from creative works and human works of material objects, imaginary beliefs, events, or institutions passed down from one generation to the next. For the heirs, whatever they inherit is not seen as a tradition. The accepted practice will become a living element in the lives of its supporters and become part of the past that is maintained until now and has the same position as innovations. In this study, ritual refers to a series of activities carried out by the Gumuk region community, which are related to the traditions of their community. The traditional rituals that focus on this research are those related to the community's life cycle, where the Wong Ireng dance is an integral part of a person's life cycle.

The Rites of Rejecting Misfortune (*Ritual Tolak Balak*)

Ritual Tolak Bala or The Rites of Rejecting Misfortune is a series of activities to protect the village and the community. Most of the residents of Gumuk hamlet are farmers, and the relationship between residents is very close like brothers, and that is indeed one of the characteristics of life in the countryside (Soekanto, 2014). This very close kinship causes a common point of view in addressing a custom. So, it is not surprising that people still believe in customs as an unwritten rule but are believed to be true.

Residents of rural communities usually believe in *Tolak Bala* Ritual. Especially those who still carry out their traditional lives as a ceremony to resist disasters and reject all kinds of misfortunes. This ritual can be referred to as local wisdom as Sibarani (2012) stated that local wisdom is the original wisdom or knowledge of a society that comes from the noble values of cultural traditions to regulate people's lives. It can be emphasized here that local wisdom is a cultural value that can be used to control and organize the life of a community and should be continuously used as a guide for life.

(Wietoler, 2007) further emphasizes that local wisdom had existed since ancient times. Such wisdom grows as positive human behavior in dealing with nature and the surrounding environment, which can be sourced from religious values, customs, ancestral

advice, or local culture. Values are set by the ancestors and then passed down orally to the next generation. The next generation, as heirs, does not accept it passively. They can add, reduce, or process the information so that the so-called wisdom applies situationally and cannot be separated from the environmental system or conditions that must be faced by people who understand and implement that wisdom (Ataupah, 2004).

The *Ritual Tolak Bala* relates to a person's life cycle, or initiation is broadly associated with birth, marriage, and death. Further description of rituals related to a person's life cycle from birth to death as described below:

1. Rituals of birth. When a child is born, parents wash the placenta, put it into a pot, and then plant it in their front yard. The baby's father commonly performs the ritual. Furthermore, a *slametan*, or prayer ceremony, is held, which is called *brokohan*.
2. Wedding rituals. As the groom proposes to the bride, preparations are made to carry out the marriage contract (*ijab qobul*) and reception, if any. The wedding ceremony is usually held in the months of *Maulud*, *Syawal*, or *Besar*. As for determining the date and day, it is generally done by considering the birthday of the two prospective brides, otherwise known as the "*pasaran*." Naturally, families try to avoid certain days, especially the times when the family has experienced misfortune, such as the day of death of a family member. For the event to be carried out properly, the family generally performs a *slametan* ceremony. As for the reception, it is usually filled with various performing arts according to the economic capacity of the host
3. Death rituals. In general, after the body is buried in Javanese culture, a *slametan* is held, filled with prayers, for seven days. The event begins with the delivery of the purpose of doing the *slametan*, and then it is handed over to the leader of the ceremony to start the prayer process

The *Ritual Tolak Bala* related to a person's life cycle/initiation differ from one region to another, depending on the beliefs and customs one believes in.

Traditional Performance Art and *Tolak Bala* Ritual

Humans always experience problems and challenges in their lives, such as crop failure, plague, etc. The existence of these problems triggers various actions taken to deal with them. Different things were done to overcome it. Among the people who still hold firmly to tradition, it is customary to make peace with the natural surroundings and the environment in *Tolak Bala*'s ritual. The ritual is believed to be an effort that contains belief in a supernatural spirit that will come from their help. However, it is more of a relationship symbol between the community and their ancestors, who are considered to have the power to protect them (Hasbullah et al., 2017).

In a *Tolak Bala* Ritual, people usually use things that are believed to be a medium in facilitating communication with the ancestral spirits (*sing mbaurekso*) and/or the environments. In some regions, many performing arts function as a means of rejecting misfortunes, such as *Bantengan* Dance in *Tolak Bala* Ceremony in Mojokerto (Istiwianah, 2017); *Barongan* in *Murwakala* Ritual in Blora (Bagus et al., 2018); *Ketoprak* as Symbolical Interaction Media in *Sedekah Bumi* Ritual in Rumbut Malang Village, Rembang (Oktoviana, 2011). Many performance arts also serve as a ritual to reject misfortune, especially in an agrarian society.

Elements in Dance

Elements in dance are divided into 1) main elements and 2) supporting elements. The main element of dance is movement, while there are many supporting elements of dance, namely: make-up, costumes, stage sets, lighting, property, and dance music. However, depending on the dance needs, not all supporting elements might be present.

Movement in dance is distinguished into meaningful and pure movement. Meaningful movement implies the existence of meaning from the movement itself, for example, the movement of a dancer holding a spear and moving it as if stabbing an enemy. While the pure movement does not contain a specific meaning, for example, a dancer who performs a jumping motion for the sake of its beauty.

On the other hand, make-up is the art of using cosmetics to create the desired character (Harymawan, 1988). As one of the supporting elements of dance, Make-up is a very supportive part of achievement in acting. The make-up materials themselves are adapted to the needs, and there is no standard benchmark. Nowadays, the classification of cosmetics has become even more specific, namely daily make-up and stage make-up (Thowok, 2012). Furthermore, stage make-ups are then specified into several types: character make-up, fantasy, horror, comedy, racial, etc. The definition of stage make-up is make-up that displays a certain face for an actor according to the role. The right make-up will significantly support the creation of an image in conveying a message to the audience.

Costumes are all clothing and equipment worn on stage (Harymawan, 1988). The dressing is also a supporting element of a dance performance, although there are no rules on how the performance dress should be set. However, choreographers and costume stylists need to pay attention that the costumes worn by dancers must match the characteristics and make-up performed by the dancers. The comfort factor should also not be forgotten in designing dance costumes. Costumes must also pay attention to the dance concept, including themes, characters, and dramatic interpretations. This is due to costumes having a unified relationship with other elements. Costumes serve to cover the dancer's body and convey the intention of the creator of the dress to the audience (Herlinah, 2014).

Furthermore, the floor pattern in dance is divided into a solo dancer floor pattern and a group dancer floor pattern. In solo dance, the boundaries of a floor pattern is the line drawn by the dancer on the stage. For example, dancers walk or run to form a circle, figure eight, triangle, etc. While in group dances, the floor pattern refers to the appearance, embodiment, or placement of dancers on the stage. For example, horizontal, vertical, circle, or a combination of those. There are floor patterns that contain meaning according to the dance theme, but there are also those only made as an aesthetic variation so that the dance is not monotonous. The venue or stage is a supporting element in a dance presentation, where the performance is in the form of an arena, horseshoe, and proscenium. Traditional folk art is usually performed in an arena, where there is no clear boundary between the dancer and the audience. The audience is even free to interact with the dancers who dance. In general, performance venues in Indonesia consist of three forms. namely Arena form (theater in the round), proscenium form, mixed form (arena and proscenium) (Cinthya & Bachrun, 2016)

Property or equipment used in dance performances can be divided into two, namely the on-stage property in the form of decorations and the property used by the dancer. The properties used by dancers are distinguished based on the properties used for variations in movements such as kris, spears, and properties attached to the dancer's clothing, for example, scarves.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach using a holistic single case study (Yin, 2011). The reasons for choosing the research method are because: 1) the subject under study is an important activity; 2) the uniqueness of the subject; 3) this research is a disclosure of an event carried out by an organized group of people (Yin, 2011). This study intends to track phenomenal events and cannot be manipulated because the data obtained are from actual events and not experiments. Data collection techniques in this study used multiple sources (Yin,

2011), namely: 1) interviews, 2) observations, and 3) document studies. We interviewed informants who can answer the Wong Ireng Dance that grew and developed in the Gumuk village. The informants of this research are Supriyono, the head of the *wong ireng* dance group, and Sani, a *wong ireng* dance group member. The two informants are Wong Ireng Dance actor and trainer from Gumuk village.

The procedures carried out are: 1) conducting in-depth interviews with key informants/people in the form of structured and unstructured questions; 2) making active observations; 3) study of documents from several research results related to the Wong Ireng Dance. Data verification is done through the triangulation of sources and techniques. At the same time, data analysis uses a braided analysis model in which the components of data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing are verified and carried out continuously (Sutopo, 2002).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There are two main findings in this study, namely 1) Wong Ireng Dance has a specific form of presentation, and 2) Wong Ireng Dance has functions that are inherent in people's lives, mainly related to initiation and social rituals.

Wong Ireng Dance has a Specific Form of Presentation

Each dance has a different style, characteristics, and presentation from one another. The Wong Ireng dance from Gumuk village is very distinctive in dance movements, levels, properties, make-up, fashion, and musical instruments. The form of Wong Ireng Dance presentation is described from the motion, level, floor pattern, make-up, costumes, and dance accompaniment music. The form of the presentation referred to here is the elements related to dance as follows.

1. Dance Moves

Like most traditional arts, both primitive and folk art, the names of the various movements and their creators are almost non-existent (anonymous), unlike Royal Traditional Arts, which already has a standard. Likewise, the Wong Ireng dance in Gumuk, Selorejo, Malang district. Nobody knows who creates Wong Ireng dance; it just developed along with the community.

The Wong Ireng dance itself does not have the name variety of motion and standard motion. However, there is a dance movement structure that is always followed in every performance. The structure of the movement in the Wong Ireng dance is divided into 3 (three), namely: (1) Initial Movement; (2) Core Movement; (3) Closing Movement (Supriyono, in an interview on Saturday 17 March 2018 at 17.00 WIB). The arrangement of the Wong Ireng Dance movement sequences begins with playing the *gending* (music) first, then followed by dance movements. After some songs are played, the dancer Wong Ireng walks out with the movement as shown below:



Fig. 1. The Dancers Entered the Arena (Doc. Pepenk, 2018)

2. Level

There are three movement levels in Wong Ireng Dance: upper, medium, and lower level. The dancer is said to be doing the upper-level movement if the position of the feet is not fully treading the floor. Furthermore, the medium-level motion is the position of the dancer's feet completely touching the floor. At the same time, the low level is when the dancer's legs bend until they touch the floor.

Upper Level

The following pictures show some of the dancer's moves with the upper level. There is no name for the movement, and the dancers say it is a movement pattern 1,2,3, and so on. The following is the Wong Ireng dance movement demonstrated by the research team.

Pattern 1: The dancer holds the spear in the right hand, while the left hand is placed on the waist. The dancer stands straight with the left leg raised to the side and the legs raised alternately.



Fig. 2. Upper-Level Movement, Pattern 1 (doc: Ade, 2018)

Pattern 3: The dancers stand straight with the jump position sideways right and left alternately and the legs are bent back. The right hand holds the spear while the left hand is bent at the waist



Fig. 3. Upper-Level Movement, Pattern 3 (doc Ade,2018)

Pattern 5: dancers stand straight with a jump position and legs bent to the side to form a 90-degree angle. The right hand holds the spear, and the left hand is bent at the waist



Fig. 4. Upper-Level Movement, Pattern 5 (doc: ade,2018)

Lower Level

Pattern 2: The dancer holds the spear with both hands in front of the chest. The dancer sits in a half-squat position, the left knee is attached to the floor and the right foot forms a stance with a 90-degree angle.



Fig. 5. Lower-Level Movement, Pattern 2 (doc: ade,2018)

Medium Level

Pattern 3: The dancer stands in a half-bent position, called *mendhak* with the body slightly leaning back flowing from right to left slowly and alternately. The right-hand holds the spear and the left hand is bent at the waist.



Fig. 6. Lower-Level Movement, Pattern 2 (doc: ade,2018)

3. Properties

The property carried by the dancers is a bamboo spear with raffia tassels, a sword, and a whip. One of the dancers is in front of the line, indicating that that person is the dancing leader. The property should be adjusted to the dance theme, the dance content, and the description of the dance story as stated by (Holt, 2009).



Fig. 7. Bamboo Spear, one of the Wong Ireng Dance Property (doc: ade,2018)

4. Make-up

Make-up is the art of using cosmetic ingredients to create the desired character (Harymawan, 1988). In general, stage or dance make-up always uses colorful make-up tools and materials to add and strengthen the dancer's character on stage. However, in this Wong Ireng dance, the make-up tools and materials used by dancers are slightly different from make-up in general. Where the dancers wear all-black make-up all over the body, from head to toe



Fig. 8. Wong Ireng Dance Make-Up (doc ade, 2018)

As the name of the dance, the Wong Ireng (Black Person) Dance, the entire face and body of the dancer is covered in black dye. The make-up ingredients are as follows

- a. Cream detergent
- b. Used machine oil
- c. *Oker* (black carbon powder found in dry cell batteries)
- d. Red food coloring

How to apply make-up on dancers is as follows:

- a. Mix used oil with *oker* with a ratio of 1:1 (1 liter of oil: 1 pack of *oker*)
- b. Apply cream detergent all over the body, wait until it dries a little
- c. Apply oil and *oker* mix into the body
- d. Apply red food coloring to the dancer's lips.

The ingredients and procedures for this make-up are still very traditional, without paying attention to the make-up ingredients' side effects and paying attention to the application procedure. This is as stated by (Thowok, 2012) that traditional artists are accustomed to using perfunctory make-up materials.

5. Costume

Costumes are all clothing and equipment worn on stage (Harymawan, 1988). Basically, costume functions as dance supports. In some dance, the costume itself has a specific symbolic means that support dance presentation, and each color in costume have different philosophical means (Kawindrasusanto, 1981).

The costume arrangement in the Wong Ireng Dance uses a tufted skirt made of raffia rope. The skirt is made by combing the raffia using a needle comb. Meanwhile, his head and head are using *jamang* accessories made of palm fibers



Fig. 9. Wong Ireng Dance Costume (doc ade, 2018)

6. Musical Instrument

Musical instruments are all things that produce sound, both pitched and unpitched. Musical instruments commonly used to accompany folk dances, which are common in Java, are pentatonic musical instruments. The musical instruments used in the Wong Ireng Dance are simple because they only consist of *kendang*, *kempul*, and *kenong*. The musicians themselves will carry these three musical instruments during the Wong Ireng show.

Wong Ireng Dance has Functions That Are Inherent In People's Lives, Mainly Related to Initiation to Social Rituals.

Initiation comes from *initium*, which means entering or beginning, literally means entering into. It is explained that the initiation ritual is carried out starting when the baby is still in the womb, born, after marriage, marriage until death. What is meant by initiation in the research conducted is related to the wedding ceremony.

Javanese people hold specific and distinctive wedding ceremonies because they are considered a sign of entering the gates of a new life. Each sub-region has a different form of a wedding ceremony, which is greatly influenced by the cultural and social environment prevailing in that society (Sarwanto et al., 2017).

The Wong Ireng dance is believed to ward off misfortunes in carrying out wedding ceremonies for most people in Gumuk village, Selorejo. The research team and a group of students carried out PKMM (KKN pattern typical of the Department of Art and Design, State University of Malang), which made several improvements in movement patterns and floor patterns to improve dance aesthetics. The new form of the Wong Ireng dance was applied at the wedding ceremony of one of the residents of Gumuk village, which can be seen from the recording made by UM students with the research team on Youtube with the link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wab68-LRT6s&t=257s>.

In the video, the Wong Ireng dancers walk in front of the bridal procession to circle the village. The dancers spearhead the convoy and act as *cucuk lampah*, dispelling obstacles for the bride and groom who are about to enter their new life. When the research was conducted, there was no more detailed information on whether there were special rituals related to the presentation of the Wong Ireng dance in connection with the wedding ceremony. However, from observations when the research team conducted PKMM (KKN) in Gumuk hamlet, a series of chanting prayers before the dance and a pre-event procession can be seen in the video recording above.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The presentation of the Wong Ireng dance from Gumuk village, Selorejo, Dau District, Malang Regency has characteristics that can be recognized from the movement, level, property, make-up, costume, and musical instruments used. The make-up materials used today are still very traditional, even using used oil, detergent soap, and battery carbon.

Wong Ireng dance has a function that is closely related to the main initiation ritual at the wedding ceremony of the Gumuk village community, which is believed that by carrying out a procession around the hamlet as *cucuk lampah* it will protect the bride and groom in treading their new life.

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