



Form and Aesthetic Perspective Dadak Merak in Art of Reog Ponorogo

Resti Buana Wardani; Suminto Sayuti

Faculty of Languages, Arts and Culture, Yogyakarta State University, Indonesia

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Abstract

A culture that spans the arts, which is an identity for the region, accommodates how the existence of the arts can continue to work in accordance with its flow. The form of cultural heritage that is so embedded in its instincts and veins provides its own strengthening for its lovers. The turmoil of the soul in how to build a mindset to make it an assembled perspective on art. Cultural exotica that can be enjoyed by the five senses gives pleasure to art lovers who look at it. Reog is a marvelous art for all Indonesian people. The main symbol in this case is realized in the form of a work of art called the peacock. An aesthetic of this peacock has its own perspective in the process of development. The manufacturing process requires materials used such as tiger skin and peacock feathers. The aesthetic value given anesthetizes many artists in following the development of reog art. The high spirit of the community in maintaining all forms of beauty or aesthetic value in reog performances makes them have a sense of pride and always strive for the best for the development of traditional arts. The problem limitations presented by the researcher 1) How is the perspective of the shape of the dadak merak in reog art? 2) How is the aesthetic meaning of the shape of the peacock in reog art? In this study using descriptive qualitative methods where all data generated from the flow of thinking researchers are equipped with references as a reference in this research activity.

Keywords: *Reog Ponorogo; Dadak Merak; Aesthetic*

Introduction

The description of an artistic art can be done by how cultural heritage becomes a legend that continues to work until now. Dynamics in culture that interact with each other with beliefs and of course are produced as the way it can be implemented or run. Statement from (Tasrif 2018) Broadly speaking, some products in culture that are faced in our daily lives are the result of aesthetic and ethical systems, systems of thought and social systems.

The upheaval in one's personality and perspective on things offers how a person's thinking patterns in culture. According to (Agus Dono Karmadi 1991) The identity of a national culture is due to the existence of superior creation in local cultures in Indonesia. Local culture was born to create existence, then the nation's culture emerged after that, certainly after the NKRI was proclaimed. And finally this nation's culture gets a superior value inheritance from the birth of the previous local culture. The achievement at the stage of local cultures in Indonesia became a cultural heritage of Cultural

Heritage for Indonesia. The culture that flows in the veins of every community provides aesthetic splashes of how to interpret a life every time.

The exotica of a culture can be enjoyed by the five senses so that it can spoil the art connoisseurs when they see it. Sensitivity to a satisfaction in life will be the beauty of how cultural rules can be conveyed nicely. Defined in a variety of performance languages so that the parameters of an aesthetic can be achieved. The ecology of people's lives has undergone many changes and developments, such as the ideas conveyed by Rangga (2021) A paradigm of science and values in art provides facts about how a link in the life sector becomes different. The essence of life is inseparable from problems and how the cultural crisis is formed. (Rangga et al n.d.) How to create inner satisfaction from artists when appreciated by many parties certainly has a significant impact on the development of an existing art. According to Gie's view (1977: 40) in (Bekti 2022) human nature in its life cycle will have belief, science, philosophy, and art. From all lines mentioned, they contribute and complement each other. This can be proven in everyday life that humans will give rewards to their bodies, namely inner satisfaction, which of course is conveyed in various forms of expression and achievement. How to define the involvement of many parties and other things that accompany the extraordinary contribution to the existence and development of traditional art can be seen from several sides of the creativity that has been created.

Reog is a traditional art that was born in one of the districts in East Java, namely Ponorogo. Reog Ponorogo are two words that cannot be separated at any time. This popular art form that can be enjoyed from various lines of society makes an extraordinary contribution to how traditional art is managed. An art will be in harmony with the life of the local community where the awareness of the community is fully concerned with the development of the art. The reog art performance is increasingly existent when almost all districts in East Java have groups or associations of the reog art itself. The Reyog Ponorogo art actors try to continue to preserve the myths but the younger generation knows less and less about the myths in the Reyog Ponorogo art. However, they still think that the art of Reog Ponorogo is a very amazing art (Harsono, 2015, p. 1).

A series of performances in the reog Ponorogo show there are several dance characters in it such as warok, jathilan, bujanganong, klana sewandhana, and barongan or people call it dadak merak. Of all the dance characters that have been mentioned have their own roles in the show. It should be noted that each dance character has a set of movements that must be performed. As time goes by, reog performances are increasingly showing their work in the realm of dance aesthetics. Many talented young choreographers have mushroomed in the Ponorogo region, confirmed by the increasing number of dance studios that have emerged and of course have a large number of students. Not only in the realm of children but also the teenage class is also interested in joining the studio.

The role of the Ponorogo Regency Government and related agencies on how to unravel a community art into an art that always has an existence by holding events on a national scale, which of course is currently widely known by people, namely the National Reog Festival, whose moment is always a series of Grebeg Suro activities.

The myth that develops is how a belief about mystical things in the reog art. Of course, this can be addressed wisely by some people as performers in nguri-nguri (maintaining) the continuity of the reog art itself. Belief in myths will bring good or not make the community suffer from misfortune or bad luck, so myths do not need to be questioned (Kariarta, Negeri, and Kuturan n.d.).

From the results of the information that has been conveyed above, it can be seen that how a traditional art can continue to run along the life of the community. The participation of art lovers contributes greatly to the sustainability of reog art in Ponorogo district. The habituation of young people to the responsibility of how to manage a traditional art well is certainly very intensively carried out, this can happen if all parties can provide maximum support. A positive change that is accepted by all artists is one of the hopes of the author when trying to provide an overview of how an art will not change and only the mindset of the community needs to be led to how to behave in a change. In this study, the researchers

conveyed the focus form of the existing problems, namely: 1) How is the perspective of the shape of the dadak merak in reog art? 2) How is the aesthetic meaning of the shape of the peacock in reog art?

By looking at the problem from the two aspects above, the author hopes to provide benefits to the perspective of reog artists on how to utilize and accept changes with the use of raw materials in the peacock curtain in reog art. The expected form of change is certainly not by releasing an identity and characteristic of the reog itself. Theoretically, it can educate this for the wider community or educational institutions in the Ponorogo district where almost all schools have reog art groups, for artists or art connoisseurs can accept a change without reducing existing values, and can provide the best solution for the creative industry of peacock curtain makers.

Research Methods

The study pattern in this journal writing the author uses the Descriptive Qualitative writing method, where the flow of thinking from the author and strengthened with support from various types of journals and other references that are in accordance with the topic of discussion that will be discussed by the author. Qualitative research according to Moleong (2017: 6) is a phenomenon or event where what is felt or experienced by the community is viewed from a behavior, perception, motivation, and an action taken. Delivered in detailed words or described in a special context with how to utilize natural methods. In the data processing process, what has been explored and obtained from various sources can be conveyed properly.

In the process of extracting data related to what is in reog art, of course, it also requires how a supporting theory in this research can run well. The basic concepts that exist in reog art are also a supporting aspect of how the thought process of the researcher and the existing data can be synchronized properly and accordingly.

Data analysis is carried out by how the cause and effect of existing phenomena have a relationship with each other. Examining existing data so that researchers can find information and material to be discussed.

Discussion and Results

1. Perspective of Dadak Merak Shape in Reog Art

An artistic climate in people's lives is very diverse and broad. According to (Hermawan 2011) The boundaries of traditional and modern art in the world of art create a broad and implicit art climate that makes fusion in the process of creation. With the creation of such a climate, all forms of expression, exploration, creation, or work in art become more free and have space from various streams and styles to develop together. This makes it a condition where artist competition becomes more dynamic and a strong impetus to innovate and evolve in their work.

The subjectivity of an artist makes him a creative human being in colonizing his artistic world. Seeking experiences that will be actualized in all his works of art so as to achieve a sense of satisfaction. With this happening, how can an art develop as a whole and there are significant changes.

The people in Ponorogo district are of the Javanese ethnic group. People in this group generally have a broad perspective on life that includes a view of God and His universe of creation along with the position and role of humans in it. In the process of human life that cannot be separated from a culture, especially the Ponorogo region will not be separated from the name Reog Ponorogo. In the statement of Bkti, et al (2022), Ponorogo Regency is a region which was established in 1486 by the first regent, who was a descendant of King Brawijaya V who was called Raden Katong. Long before the existence of a regency, Ponorogo was the Wengker region with the king Klana Sewandana and Patih Klan Wijaya who were known to be powerful. According to (Ambarwangi 2014) in Ponorogo Regency, traditional art

forms that are now wrapped in contemporary art in terms of movement aesthetics are increasingly mushrooming.

Reog is the cultural identity of the local community. The form of performance that reveals with various elements such as magic, mythology, dance aesthetics, and music aesthetics is magnificent and dynamic. As stated by (Herawati 2015), beauty is a human nature that will be felt and always appear from each individual. It comes in various forms and levels ranging from the beauty of nature, art, art, and the beauty of how to behave and morals. The meaning of beauty varies depending on cultural context, personal experience and philosophical understanding.

The most prominent completeness in this reog art property is dadak merak. Dadak merak is realized in the form of a large mask in the shape of a lion's head with peacock feathers on it attached to the skeleton. This large mask is played by a player with the term *pembarong*. Of course this is an extraordinary skill where dancing with a very heavy burden on his head is also supported by the strength of his teeth and neck. This property or dadak merak clearly provides visual beauty of the performance, but also shows the physical strength, skill, and technicality of a *pembarong* in playing it.

The reog Ponorogo performance is accompanied by traditional music in the form of gamelan in the form of gong, kenong, drum, selomporet, angklung, and ketipung. By combining these various musical instruments, the magical and deep nuances of the reog performance can be felt. The combination of the elements of property, dance, music, the audience is carried away by the flow of how a legendary folklore and continues to regenerate. The statement from (Achmadi 2016) that reog art in general is one of the riches of Javanese culture that is closely related to *adiluhung* (main) values. The community is so proud of the form of art that has been owned.

The Ponorogo community is very proud of the art form that is legendary in almost all parts of Java. The form of care given by the community at large with the hope that the art can waltz its existence into the souls of traditional art enthusiasts. Forms of appreciation that can be done by the community such as actively contributing and playing a role in reog performances such as watching the full moon show where reog is performed on stage at the *alon-alon* Ponorogo where the system of performers is taken from reog groups in each sub-district or studio. The sense of belonging in the soul of the people of Ponorogo can be felt how to manage and create from this art well and maximally.

The activities in Ponorogo are formed through a long process and flow through the hearts of the community as well as the euphoria in the Grebeg Suro activities. (Indriyani, Nugroho, and Sherlu 2023) The manifestation of Grebeg Suro activities in Ponorogo Regency makes it one of the centers or main destinations of a series of major activities in Ponorogo, and makes it a tourist attraction both locally and internationally.

Speaking of legends of origin, it is closely related to how a story or opinion is led by the community at large and believed to be the story that can occur. In the Ponorogo community, the story that is understood regarding how the Reog art can occur is that there are five versions. Each of the Ponorogo reog stories has its own meaning and meaning when viewed from the dadak meraknya story. A piece of the story of how a reog art can be created is the same as that conveyed by (Sudirman: 2009: 44 in Kristianto 2019: 6) the origin of the creation of the reog show from one of the retainers from the Majapahit kingdom who had exiled himself and made a hermitage called the Suro Kubeng kademangan and the title Ki Demang Kutu or Suryo Alam. With this, over time many people followed as students of Ki Ageng Kutu to carry out a training called Kanuragan science. In this situation, Ki Demang Kutu continued to monitor how the king acted in leading the kingdom. What Ki Demang Kutu knew was how the king always made decisions based on the consideration of his queen so that he appeared weak and not wise at all in responding to this matter. Everything he did was always based on what his queen told him.

The impact of this makes it how the soldiers in Majapahit are also weak and not brave on the battlefield. Thus, the form of protest or dissatisfaction of a soldier to his king was created by a popular

traditional art depicted with a symbol of a large mask with a tiger's head where the top was decorated with towering peacock feathers depicting the king's empress, and from there the term reog art emerged. The meaning of the strongest symbol of the artwork makes a meaning if the king who runs his government is always driven by the queen. Ki Demang Kutu also created a dance performed by men with a gentle and slightly feminine character, which implied that the soldiers of the kingdom did not have a brave attitude like in the battlefield. From this, Ki Demang also tried to unravel by training the soldiers in *kanuragan*, a form of alertness from the army if the king was angry and disappointed with the popular art created by Ki Demang Kutu. From the explanation above, it can be taken as an outline of how a traditional art was created on the basis of a legend that is believed to this day with the term reog art.

Dadak Merak performances that have occurred in reog performances have been made in the form of performance packaging from the function of dance and entertainment aesthetic values. According to the opinion of (Kristianto 2019) aesthetics or beauty in reog art performances where the contortion of the *dadak merak* is one of the weighty values contained in this art because of the energetic dance movements in which there is implied meaning or meaning. This can be shown how the players of this peacock *dadak* focus on how to create a variety of movements that are very good and beautiful even though they use large properties. However, the concept of the *dadak merak* performance if in the realm of the National Reog Festival (FRN) performance is certainly a series of stories raised from one version of the reog story which is worked on by the choreographer for the needs of stage *eloktika*.

The peacock is the main symbol that is very visible in the reog Ponorogo performance. *Dadak merak* is also a characteristic of the art because it is the only art form on the island of Java. The results of the interview with Vian as the *dadak merak* player conveyed that the attraction of the *dadak merak* itself is a work of art that is made with a large enough volume, measuring approximately 1.8 m in height and width. In the reog performance itself, *dadak merak* is the most anticipated performance by the community when a series of reog performances are shown. Similarly, Misemun said that *dadak merak* peacock when associated with the Bantarangin version of folklore is an art that has existed since 1440. In the process of making the peacock that needs to be considered is how the material has been used. The main material in the process of making *sirah reog* or *barongan* is *dhadap cangkkring* wood. The wood is made oval and then the outer material is equipped with a braid. As for the use of the outer skin, how the tiger skin is attached to the wood material with a size of 50cm. The form of community assumptions about the magic that exists in the art of reog is how it is believed and believed that reog contains magical elements. One of the peacock *dadak* craftsmen in Ponorogo district Mbh Misemun (63), revealed:

“The process of making *sirah reog* or *barongan* takes one month from start to finish. The first step is to form the *dhadap cangkkring* wood as the basic framework of the *sirah reog*. According to people's stories, this *dhadap cangkkring* wood is a mystical wood that is suitable for making reog *barongan*. In the terms of the Ponorogo people so that this reog *sira* has a firm character and its aura can come out.”

From what has been said, how an art that has a connection with the magical world is getting thicker in the realm of reog art. In the process of making *barongan*, there are several things that need to be considered, namely how the process of sticking the tiger skin starts from the center and then spreads to the right and left. In attaching the tiger skin, there is no special ritual performed by the craftsmen. As for the process of the peacock itself how a basic pattern is made on the *rengkek*. *Rengkek* is the shape of the arch above the *barongan*. The process of making *rengkek* which is categorized as quite complicated is how to organize every inch of woven bamboo tied with rope but also must pay attention to its flexibility. If this has been completed, the next thing that must be considered is how the process of attaching the peacock feathers. Similarly, it has been conveyed by (Andini Idhad et al. 2022) The interesting things about the peacock *dadak* include how the meaning contained in it is the combination of a beautiful peacock book is a power, beauty, power and how a courage is valued in charming artwork. The number of peacock feathers used is around 900-1000 peacock feathers. While the peacock feathers used come from India. With the passage of time, the peacock *dadak* also experienced many developments seen from

how the size of the peacock dadak is very diverse and different. The weight of the peacock curd is also different, some believe that the heavier the peacock curd used it will add a beauty value to the peacock curd. Players of the peacock or called *pembarong* if the load or weight of the peacock itself is looming then the strength of the teeth of the player also becomes a problem. Teeth can be broken when these players try to play the performance of the peacock.

The "Dadak Merak" in Reog art has become a hot topic currently being discussed by various groups, especially by animal lover organizations widely known by the public. This is due to the fact that the main or raw materials used in making the Dadak Merak are real tiger skin and peacock feathers. From this, it becomes apparent how a widely recognized art form can have an unfortunate side. The use of real tiger skin and peacock feathers is considered ineffective as it contributes to the decline and possible extinction of these two species. In many regions and forests, the population of both animals has significantly decreased due to illegal hunting by wildlife poachers. There is great hope for the continuity of this art form—namely, the emergence of solutions and the discovery of alternative materials that can be utilized by Reog artists and craftsmen.

2.A Perspective on the Form of Dadak Merak in Reog Performance Art

The value within the realm of aesthetics is one where everyone interprets it differently. Divergent paradigms surrounding this give rise to the realization of aesthetics in various forms. The statement conveyed by Freedman (2000) in contemporary theory suggests that it continues to evolve and increasingly embodies artistic and aesthetic qualities in practice. This is inherently tied to aesthetic values and captivating interpretations—not merely as a matter of expectation, but also in terms of how promotion can be conducted through art itself.

As the field of art grows more vibrant, the very existence of the artistic body becomes a prolonged dilemma for both creators and appreciators of art. Art, which is often said to be a form of entertainment, in reality cannot be so easily or effectively implemented. According to Riess (1988), the ongoing process of exploring the scope and definition of art is likely to be perceived as a gimmick, as we tend to seek experiences within the meta-aesthetic domain—those which fall into a philosophical or critical realm about art in a broader sense, rather than being focused solely on art itself.

Flowing into a form of beauty, where each individual's paradigm differs, it is impossible to arrive at an absolute, universal value of aesthetics. As Saputra (2020) states in the discourse of art, it will always follow the rhythm of cultural change. Culture itself is a product of human activity, carried out continuously and passed down through generations. On the other hand, humans are also a product of culture. This affirms how profoundly human beings influence the development of both culture and art. The value within culture is reflected in how well the resulting work is executed and becomes a shared product, created and embraced by many.

Life experiences in the process of living create a paradigm, a perspective, or a way of thinking. This aligns with Bourdieu's theory of *Habitus*, which is closely tied to the context of social life. According to Mustikasari, Arlin, and Kamaruddin (2023), *habitus* is a term introduced by a philosopher to describe a cognitive structure that connects individuals with social reality. A person carries out daily activities in alignment with the existing social reality. The resulting structure demonstrates how individual experiences generate subjectivity. This cognitive structure also provides a framework for everyday actions within a shared social environment.

As explained by Burhan Bungin (2008:89 in Santoso, 2016), from the perspective of communication sociology, this structure is seen as a form of reality. It can be proven through the way society directly creates reality through human sensory experiences in the essence of aesthetics. However, this reality can also be perceived virtually by society, especially when human life cannot be given meaning when exchanged only symbolically. In a real-world context, Reog art plays a role in contributing to society. As stated by Sarjono, Trianti, and Yohanes (2021), efforts to improve the standard of living in

Ponorogo aim to boost the region's economic growth and development. Therefore, the contribution of Reog art is considered highly strategic and appropriate for building economic growth in Ponorogo.

Symbolism in Reog art is embodied in the striking visual of the Dadak Merak, which captivates the wider public. According to Devinta and Susilo (2023), as the central component in a Reog performance, the Dadak Merak consists of two main symbolic elements: the peacock and the tiger. Other elements or additions present in the Dadak Merak merely serve aesthetic purposes, enhancing the visual appeal of this traditional art object. From this, we can analyze how the community's dedication and persistence contribute to the refinement and ongoing development of this art form. The beauty of the peacock feathers, as performed by the Dadak Merak dancer, mesmerizes art enthusiasts as they witness the sequence of Reog performances. The responsibility of managing traditional arts does not lie solely in preserving the main components, but rather in fostering a collective empathy among all members of the community to protect and preserve Reog art with care.

If a transition were to occur in which the traditional raw materials—such as tiger skin—were replaced with cow or goat hide, and peacock feathers with synthetic materials, it would be due to the ease of livestock farming, making these animals viable alternatives. To mimic the appearance of tiger skin, these hides would undergo a painting process to make them resemble the original as closely as possible.

According to Harsono, Santoso, and Hilman (2017), the extensive use of genuine tiger skin has been identified as a major factor contributing to the endangerment of these animals. In the economic context, the practice of buying and selling Dadak Merak elements as part of Reog art has shifted its essence—from being a cultural commodity to becoming a high-value economic product. This transformation has occurred largely due to the high selling price of these items.

The Dadak Merak dancer, or Pemandoran, possesses a unique perspective on how to elevate the quality and appreciation of the art. The performer's confidence gives rise to a distinct energy that enhances the audience's experience when Dadak Merak is showcased. Broadly speaking, Dadak Merak is a work of art that captures the attention of many. The essence of the Dadak Merak dancer lies in breathing life into an inanimate object, aligning its movements with the intended character. Upon realizing that one of the primary materials used is genuine tiger skin, it becomes understandable why performers feel a deep sense of responsibility—as if embodying the tiger, the king of the jungle, through their performance. The use of tiger skin has sparked public controversy, leading to ongoing debates between traditional artists and wildlife activists. Yet, this has not deterred Reog artists from their commitment to preserving this traditional art form.

Conclusion

Firstly, the traditional art in Ponorogo Regency, particularly Reog art, has undergone notable development in terms of its form. A significant evolution is evident in the Dadak Merak, which serves as the central symbol of this art form. This development has been well received by the public, as it reflects attention to various aspects and dimensions that deserve special consideration. The transformation is especially visible in the size and weight of the Dadak Merak. Previously, the standard height was around 1.85 meters, but now it is not uncommon to see versions measuring up to 2 meters or even 2.3 meters. The weight borne by the Pemandoran (performer) has also significantly changed. The dominant strength required from the performer's neck and jaw to carry and dance with the Dadak Merak, combined with the dancer's attractive stage presence, generates a unique sense of satisfaction in every performance. Each dancer feels a strong sense of confidence when performing with a Dadak Merak that is distinct in form or larger in volume. This inner belief, tied to mystical confidence and emotional connection, has long been nurtured among the dancers. Thus, the powerful character of the tiger, beautifully adorned with peacock feathers, reinforces the idea that the transformation in Reog's physical form is not a major issue—it all ultimately depends on the Pemandoran themselves.

Secondly, the cultural and aesthetic values of any performing art depend on the perspective from which it is created. The paradigm through which a work of art is evaluated, along with the subjectivity involved in that evaluation, greatly influences the interpretation. Different experiences will naturally yield different assessments. The absence of a specific parameter for understanding beauty or aesthetics sometimes leads to unintentional debates even among the artists themselves. In the context of Reog art, the core values conveyed through its performance can have a broad impact on society. The development of young artists who help preserve the existence of Reog plays a crucial role in this process. Therefore, the aesthetic value of Reog is heavily dependent on who is evaluating it and from what background they come.

From the performers' perspective, Reog is a cultural asset of global significance that must be preserved. From the viewpoint of wildlife activists, however, Reog can be seen as harmful, given that it traditionally uses rare materials. Meanwhile, the role of the government is to listen and respond to the aspirations and concerns of all parties involved in Reog art. Thus, the strength of Reog's aesthetic value ultimately lies within oneself and in those who choose to assess this artistic tradition.

Durability of the cultural heritage. Throughout its history of involvement, women have not only participated as artists and performers in the performance, but they have also been instrumental in preserving the methods, rules and meanings that are part of this tradition.

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