

## **Barongan and Jaranan Art Performance As A Form of Cultural Heritage Preservation In Kebumen Village**

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#### **ABSTRAK**

*As the times develop, local culture experiences contact with foreign cultures. Young people are more interested in following foreign cultures that are considered to keep up with the times and forget about local culture. This is a challenge for every culture because of the lack of the next generation to learn and practice its culture. The role of students in service is also to preserve the existing culture, so this paper aims to explain the performance of barongan and jaranan arts in Kebumen Village as a form of cultural preservation. The methods used are field and observation. The result of this study is that in order to preserve the culture owned, the Kebumen Village cultural association held a barongan and jaranan art performance in collaboration with other village cultural associations, where children in the village were included in displaying the art of barongan and jaranan.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia as an archipelagic country has a diversity of cultural tribes, which causes a variety of cultural forms. Although there are similarities in culture, each tribe has its own distinctive characteristics (Fitriani & Sari, 2023). The causes of cultural diversity in Indonesia are influenced by religious, economic, social, political, geographic, and other factors. It is undeniable that Indonesian culture is famous to foreign countries.

Culture cannot be separated from human life which must be preserved from generation to generation. This is a form of respect and pride for the cultural heritage of the ancestors who have contributed to the formation of culture. Each region has its own history and background in its cultural development, so it has distinctive characteristics. The community will continue to develop their culture as needed. In the concept of culture, there are seven cultural elements, namely language, knowledge system, social organization,

living equipment and technology system, livelihood system, religious and artistic system (Halimah & Atiqa Sabardila, 2023).

There are countless cultures in Indonesia, for example, such as barongan and jaranan. The traditional art of barongan and jaranan is a cultural heritage that has meaning and value in it. Both arts developed in various regions in Java, especially in East Java and Central Java. Barongan and jaranan have also been passed down from generation to generation, reflecting the relationship between humans and the spiritual world so that their existence needs to be maintained. There are many ways to keep the culture known and loved by the community. One of them is by holding art performances.

Traditional Indonesian art forms, such as barongan and jaranan performances, have their roots in the cultural legacy of Central Java, which includes Kebumen. In addition to providing enjoyment, these artistic manifestations help to maintain local identity and values for future generations. They both continue to be emblems of collective identity, spirituality, and cultural pride because of their mythological and historical significance (R. Sundari et al., 2020).

Barongan and jaranan art performances are not limited to entertainment, but function as an educational medium, a means of ritual, and establish social relations in society. Unfortunately, in the era of technological advancement and globalization that is increasingly rapid like today, traditional arts have become marginalized and there is a decrease in interest, especially from the younger generation due to the influence of foreign cultures. Technology and globalization have brought culture and values that can affect people's lifestyles so that their progress is increasingly reaching people to receive information about new cultures. Constant development causes problems in culture, such as the minimization and loss of the original culture of a region, the decline of cultural values, and the decline in confidence in regional culture (Surahman, 2013). This is a new challenge that must be solved immediately.

The Barongan performance reflects old stories and moral lessons and is frequently associated with mythological animals and folklore. Barongan has developed in areas like Demak and Kebumen to engage audiences and spread social messages through symbolic connections between performers and viewers. Traditional music groups and colorful costumes are featured in these performances, which improve their visual and aural appeal and promote public engagement and cultural appreciation (R. S. Sundari et al., 2020).

However, Jaranan (also referred to as Kuda Lumping) places more emphasis on themes of mysticism and indigenous beliefs. In this performance, dancers use exuberant choreography to portray horse-riding warriors; gamelan music and trance rites are frequently included. Studies on the Jaranan customs in neighboring areas like Temanggung highlight the significance of these acts as a kind of intangible cultural legacy in addition to being a source of entertainment. They guarantee the continuation of cultural heritage by establishing a link between communities and their historical roots and by creating a forum for the next generation to interact with it ("The Development of Jaranan Temanggungan as Indonesian Intangible Heritage," 2019).

These artistic forms' survival in Kebumen is a testament to the community's efforts to uphold customs in the face of contemporary change. By incorporating young people and

incorporating them into educational and cultural initiatives, art studios and community organizations are essential to the continuation of these performances. Both Barongan and Jaranan are kept alive by these programs, strengthening local identity and fostering cross-cultural understanding (Febrianti & Fajrie, 2023).

To overcome these cultural challenges, cultural associations in Kebumen Village held cultural performances as a form of expression of cultural preservation. Performances such as barongan and jaranan contain the values and identity of a society. The interesting thing about the activity is that the players are taken from children in the village and collaborate with cultural groups from surrounding villages (Oktaviana et al., 2023). So they take turns appearing according to the *rundown* of the event. Villagers flocked to see the performance without age limit. This research aims to reveal the cultural performance of barongan and jaranan in Kebumen Village as a form of cultural preservation.

These performances demonstrate the power of traditional arts in fostering cultural continuity, shaping character, and creating community bonds—ensuring that local wisdom remains relevant in the contemporary era. By nurturing these practices, Kebumen and similar regions contribute to the broader movement of cultural heritage preservation in Indonesia (Annisa Wahdiniawati et al., 2023).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The method of implementing this service activity is based on the results of data obtained from observations carried out in Kebumen Village on August 4, 2024 where barongan and jaranan art performances are carried out to preserve culture. This activity uses field methods and observation. The procurement of performances is carried out as a form of introduction and preservation of existing culture so that the community, especially the young generation in Kebumen Village, knows their own culture.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Kebumen Village as one of the villages located in Tersono District, Batang Regency. It has a varied topography with altitude that affects the land and economic activities. The fertile soil due to the remnants of volcanic activity, so it is suitable as agricultural land, causing the majority of residents to work as farmers of rice, corn, and others. The average temperature of the village ranges from 25°C to 32°C with high humidity throughout the year.

This village is adjacent to Kranggan Village to the west, Tegalombo Village to the east, Gringsing District to the north, West Harjowinangun Village and East Harjowinangun to the south. The number of residents is 3,514 people and the area is 417.75 hectares with the majority embracing Islam.

Like other villages, Kebumen Village has customs and culture that have been integrated with the community. Culture is a unit of ideas that comes from the human head, not a phenomenon that occurs as a result of human habits and behavior. Culture consists of a series of non-norms, values, and prohibitions to take an action in the face of the social and cultural environment. One of the cultures that still exists is the art of barongan and jaranan (Husain, 2013). However, as the times progressed, art began to be eroded by

outside cultures as a result of the development of information. Therefore, there must be a way to preserve it so that its existence is maintained and not less competitive.

Efforts to preserve barongan and jaranan are carried out by village art actors, namely cultural paguyubab who perform by collaborating with paguyubab from other villages. According to Soedarsono, the function of performing arts in the book *Performing Arts in the Era of Globalization* is divided into two, namely primary and secondary fungus. The primary function of the dintar: (1) as a spiritual means, (2) as an expression or personal entertainment, (3) as an aesthetic presentation. Meanwhile, the secondary function of performing arts is for other purposes (Mufriah, 2018).

### 1. Barongan

The art of barongan developed in Java and is often performed at certain events, such as earth alms, celebrations, and others. Barongan has its own interests than other arts. Barongan art is an art in the form of a dance performance with Gembong Amijaya as the main character and gamelan as the accompanying music (Qur'aniyah et al., 2023).

Barongan has a noble meaning and value and contains an important message in life, namely that good always triumphs over evil, which is reflected in the barongan storyline. Balinese and Javanese people have known barongan for a long time so that it has been inherent in people's lives. Initially, barongan was used as a ceremony to worship gods, ancestral spirits, and anything that God considered. However, as time went by, it changed its function as a performing art (Widiastuti, 2019).

Kebumen Village, located in Tersono District, Batang Regency, Central Java, is one of the villages that enthusiastically maintains the tradition of barongan art. Barongan as a type of Javanese art has become public entertainment so that it has become an important part of the social and spiritual life of the Javanese people (Sumanto, 2022). The art of barongan in this village has been passed down from generation to generation, being a silent witness to how the community preserves, and respects their cultural heritage (Erstiawan, 2020).

Preparations for the Barongan performance in Kebumen Village began a few days before the performance. Male and female performers, both children, teenagers and adults, prepare themselves by practicing dance movements and memorizing the rhythm of music. Large and heavy barong costumes must also be well prepared. This barongan performance does not only involve the Kebumen Village cultural association, but also a combination of several villages that participate in maintaining the art of barongan. Barongan performances in Kebumen Village are carried out on important occasions, such as traditional ceremonies, weddings, especially the commemoration of one suro or the month of Muharram. To be precise, this show will take place on August 4, 2024 at the village intersection.

Barongan performances are always accompanied by various rituals and symbolism that are loaded with supernatural meanings. One of them is a large lion figure called Singo Barong. The Singo Barong is considered a guardian and a representation of power that functions to protect the community from evil spirits (Nahak, 2019). As a result, before the show begins, various rituals are performed to invoke protection and blessings

from the ancestral spirits. The recitation of mantras, the slaughter of sacrificial animals, and the presentation of offerings are part of these rituals (R. S. Sundari et al., 2020).

The performance began with thunderous gamelan music, accompanied by barong dancers who came out from the side of the stage followed by the acceleration of the handler. The barong dancers then perform dynamic dance movements, showing the fight between good and evil forces, thus creating a magical atmosphere (Qur'aniyah et al., 2023).

Kebumen Village has a unique barongan dance style. The barong dancers, who wear large costumes, show strength and agility by jumping, spinning, and bowing their heads. All these movements are accompanied by faster and stronger music, creating tension that peaks at the end of the performance, such as some players being possessed by evil spirits, if not handled properly, the soul will be left behind in the ghoib realm, or more commonly known as "Gondo Mayit".

It is not uncommon for barongan players to experience *trance* or trance during performances. This trance is considered an indication that the spirit of Singo Barong has fused with the player. In situations like this, players can perform unusual movements, such as easily lifting a heavy Barong costume, or performing daring actions that show supernatural powers.

Apart from being an effort to preserve art, barongan performances also aim to educate children. With the arts, students are trained to gain skills in the local culture. Especially in the barongan performance in Kebumen Village, children at the elementary school level are invited to perform so that they can develop their culture.

The values contained in the art of barongan include:

- a. Moral Values: reflects the nature of family, cohesiveness, courage, and truth.
- b. Aesthetic value: the dance performed in the barong is not only energetic, it also contains the meaning of being responsible for its duties.
- c. Cultural value: the wealth that is owned and preserved has a uniqueness that can adapt to the development of the times.
- d. Educational Value: the educational value contained is beneficial to human life and is used as a method of conveying a message about a harmonious life that coexists with the environment.

Belief value: barongan is used in the ritual of rejecting logs which when there is an outbreak of disease, natural disasters, and others, the barongan will be staged using certain offerings and prayers led by traditional leaders (Retno M, 2017).

## 2. Jaranan

In addition to preserving barongan culture, the Kebumen Village cultural association also performed a jaranan display in a performance. Jaranan is a dance performance in which dancers ride an artificial horse or Jaran Kepang. The dancers ride bamboo woven in the shape of horses, which is populist (Irianto, 2017). Jaranan can be grouped into several types of jaranan among which there are five types that develop in East Java: (1) jaranan Jawa, (2) jaranan pegon, (3) jaranan sentherewe, (4) jaranan breng, (5) jaranan buda (Widayati et al., 2023). Similar to barongan, jaranan performances in Kebumen Village are not only entertainment for the community, but

also as a big celebration such as traditional ceremonies, weddings, and village festivals that contain spiritual and mystical values ("The Development of Jaranan Temanggungan as Indonesian Intangible Heritage," 2019).

In addition to providing amusement for the local populace, Jaranan art attracts visitors from both inside and beyond the city as a desirable cultural attraction. Jaranan art is featured in numerous Indonesian cultural festivals, increasing its public awareness and popularity (Zifkos, 2015). Even though the Jaranan tradition is well-known, it still faces a number of difficulties, including dwindling public interest in learning about and upholding it, changing lifestyles that are incompatible with the cultural values of the tradition, and a lack of community and governmental support for ensuring its continuation (Zhang & Mace, 2021). Thus, in order to protect and develop Jaranan Blitar as a priceless cultural asset, more focused and coordinated efforts from a variety of stakeholders, including the government, society, media, and tourism industry professionals, are required. Furthermore, a greater awareness and knowledge of the value of preserving cultural traditions for future generations must be fostered across society (Priutami, 2016).

Before performing the stage act, the performers will perform a series of rituals led by village elders or handlers. The purpose of this ritual is to ask for the blessing of ancestral spirits and supernatural forces to ensure that the performance runs smoothly and without interruption. Before performing, the male and female players made special preparations. They wore lumping horse costumes consisting of special tops, special trousers, dance vests, woven bamboo horses, special bracelets, dance shawls, sesumping, whips, and other decorations. In addition, they also wear beautiful and terrible face makeup. During the show, some players are given amulets or objects that are considered to have magical powers to protect them.

The more they dance very flexibly and enjoy the accompaniment of gamelan music, many dancers experience a trance. When in a trance, dancers can perform actions beyond reason, such as walking on broken glass, eating broken glass, eating embers, and other sharp objects (Festival Jaranan Yang Berkelanjutan et al., 2023). Not infrequently when the dancers are in a trance, some residents who are losing their minds because they are drunk are also in a trance. Even though the distance between the residents and the players was quite far, but still they were in a trance. In addition to residents who are not drunk, there are usually also ordinary citizens who watch the sudden trance, this is immediately handled by the handler to remove the spirit from his body. If it does not succeed, then the suknja is left behind in the supernatural realm or more often known as "Gondo Mayit".

The meanings contained in the tools and properties used in the art of jaranan include:

- a. Horse : the horse that the soldiers rode had a meaning based on its color. The black horse symbolizes invincible strength, the yellow horse with a red motif symbolizes the unquenchable spirit, the white horse symbolizes purity and sacredness.
- b. Singo barong: describes evil to meet the needs of life and symbolizes greed.
- c. Celest: a ferocious and voracious wild boar.

d. Kiri'an: the color of hitan and white symbolizes purity and strength to protect soldiers from piggy bank attacks.

In today's era, information affects changes in people's mindsets. With cultural contact, a more active culture will influence a passive culture. Public awareness is still low to maintain the preservation of local culture because foreign cultures are considered more practical and in accordance with the times, even though foreign cultures are not in accordance with the personality of the nation. Local culture has experienced many declines due to the lack of a generation of young people who study and pass it on.

Seeing the reality of the Indonesian people who are currently familiar with and interested in foreign cultures, efforts to perform culture in Kebumen Village as the preservation of barongan and jaranan arts are certainly still lacking. Cultural preservation as a form of maintaining traditional values, cultural arts values that adapt to changes and developments of the times. In addition to holding art performances, there are still other ways including:

#### 1. Culture experience

Cultural preservation can be done by directly entering into new experiences, for example, learning dance directly and performing in a performance so that culture can be preserved. As done by Kebumen Village art actors who invite young people around the village to take part in the performance. They are trained to dance jaranan.

#### 2. Culture knowledge

Preservation is carried out by creating a cultural information center that can be functionalized into many forms that aim for education or cultural development and tourism potential, so that the next generation can increase cultural knowledge (Ahmadi & Lestari, 2012).

The performances of Jaranan and Barongan in Kebumen are prime examples of the work done to maintain and conserve the region's cultural legacy. These age-old artistic disciplines have great cultural and symbolic significance (Cahyono, Sunarto, Da Ary, et al., 2023). Incorporated into community rituals, barongan is a performance with mythological lion-like characters that symbolizes spiritual protection and reconnection with ancestral traditions. The agrarian identity of the region is reflected in Jaranan, a dance style that features dancers imitating horseback riding moves. Both performances are essential to communal celebrations such as harvest festivals and village ceremonies (Utina, 2019).

Barongan and Jaranan also highlight the adaptability of cultural heritage, demonstrating how communities negotiate between tradition and modernization. The inclusion of gender diversity in these performances, such as women playing traditionally male roles, further indicates the flexibility of cultural practices in addressing present-day challenges (Cahyono, Sunarto, da Ary, et al., 2023).

The Barongan and Jaranan art exhibitions in Kebumen serve as prime examples of how crucial it is for contemporary societies to preserve their cultural legacy. These ancient forms of expression represent historical continuity, spiritual values, and local identity in addition to being enjoyable. Both kinds have developed from ceremonial activities into

shows that combine entertainment with community involvement, guaranteeing their continued importance over time (Tiyas & Retnowati, 2020).

The engagement of younger artists and the incorporation of these customs into tourism endeavors demonstrate attempts to preserve cultural sustainability while adjusting to modern-day social shifts. This development is consistent with research from other areas, like Demak and Blora, where customs are evolving while maintaining their symbolic value (Wijayanti, Hesti, Cahyono, 2016).

Based on field observations and interviews, it has been determined that these performances have transformed from their ceremonial beginnings into venues for entertainment that appeal to both residents and visitors. Nonetheless, the fundamental cultural components that guarantee the persistence of beliefs and practices have not changed despite this change. In addition, the involvement of younger artists shows that cultural information is being passed down through the generations, supporting the survival of culture in the face of modernity.

The dynamic interaction between cultural adaptation and preservation is emphasized by the sustainability of Barongan and Jaranan in Kebumen (Damayanti et al., n.d.). As in Blora and Demak, performances in Kebumen have negotiated shifting social environments by striking a balance between traditional values and novel presentation techniques. In spite of the growing commercialization of these arts, the ceremonial quality is preserved through the utilization of symbolic encounters, such as those facilitated by clothing, musical instruments, and choreography (Kedasih, 2020).

The resurgence of these artistic expressions is indicative of wider patterns in Indonesian heritage preservation, as indigenous groups assume responsibility for their customs. These initiatives are in line with performance studies' structural-functional theories, which highlight the significance of rituals in preserving social cohesiveness and cultural identity. Furthermore, gender dynamics in these performances—for example, female dancers taking on traditionally masculine roles—illustrate how current interpretations of culture are inclusive and continue to negotiate gender norms.

To sum up, the performances of Barongan and Jaranan in Kebumen Village serve as an example of how cultural legacy can flourish when it is continuously reinterpreted. By drawing tourists, they support the local economy and culture while fostering a sense of community through active participation. In order to protect and develop Kebumen's cultural history for future generations, more study on audience response and government support systems may be beneficial.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The influence of the advancing times that causes technology and information to develop rapidly can help make it easier for humans to carry out their daily activities. Not only has a positive impact, but this development also has a negative impact, especially in the cultural field. Currently, the existence of local culture is increasingly eroded due to the lack of interest of the next generation to preserve culture. So that the actors or cultural associations of Kebumen Village hold barongan and jaranan art performances by collaborating with other village cultural associations, where children in the village

participate in displaying barongan and jaranan art. This art performance was also held as a form of commemoration of the Islamic New Year and the celebration of Indonesia's independence. Not only by holding performances to preserve local culture, it can be through cultural experiences or directly learning about culture and by means of cultural knowledge or making cultural information for education.

In conclusion, the preservation of Jaranan and Barongan in Kebumen promotes social cohesiveness, economic opportunity, and local identity (Ramadhan et al., 2023). Communities' ongoing involvement guarantees the continued relevance of these traditional traditions, which supports Indonesia's larger heritage conservation effort. These customs can be further protected and ensured to survive for future generations by bolstering institutional support through educational and tourist initiatives.

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