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Palang Yudho Dance in the Study of Symbolic Meanings

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Abstract: This article aims to analyze the meaning of the symbols contained in several elements in a dance work that represents the wealth of local culture. Palang Yudho dance is based on Dongkrek art which also contains elements of pencak silat, so it can be said that this dance successfully collaborates two local arts inherent in Madiun Regency. The urgency of this research lies in the effort to preserve regional culture whose values can be a source of inspiration. However, in reality, many artists today are starting to forget this aspect. Thus, this research is expected to remind the importance of maintaining cultural values. This research uses qualitative methods with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and document studies which are then analyzed using Sumandiyono's symbol theory which states that dance as a cultural product is a symbol system used by humans to understand themselves, their environment, and social interactions. The results showed that Palang Yudho Dance contains cultural symbols that reflect the values of protection, safety, and identity of the Madiun people expressed through movements, costumes, music, and properties used. This research emphasizes the importance of preserving local culture as part of regional identity. In addition to contributing to cultural studies, the results of this research are also expected to be a reference for artists and academics in efforts to preserve and develop traditional arts in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Palang Yudho dance, cultural symbols, Madiun*

1. INTRODUCTION

Madiun Regency is part of a region in East Java that has been influenced by Mataram culture due to expansion in the 16th century. The region is known as the center of pencak silat with various schools and schools that are growing rapidly. The local government has made pencak silat a regional cultural identity through the city branding "Madiun Regency Kampung Pesilat Indonesia." In addition to pencak silat, Madiun also has the Dongkrek Art which was born in 1867 by Raden Tumenggung Prawirodipuro III in Mejayan as a medium to ward off disease. The name Dongkrek comes from the sound of its musical instruments, namely "dung" from the drum and "kretek" from the lighter. Philosophically, Dongkrek means "donganing kawula rakyat inggala kasarasan" which means a prayer for everyone to be given safety, as protection and safety for the community.

One of the artists who actively preserves Madiun culture is Pipin Dwi Pangesti, S.Pd., a cultural arts teacher who consistently develops local culture-based dance. She has created various dance works, such as Solah Dadung Dance, Bedhaya Dewi Sri, Bedhaya Prawirodirdjan, and Rara Abhinaya Dance, all of which originate from local culture in Madiun. Pipin also created the Gymnastics Dance of Kampung Pesilat which adapts the elements of pencak silat. One of his most influential works is Palang Yudho Dance which combines two Madiun arts, Dongkrek and pencak silat.

Palang Yudho dance was originally created for the FLS2N competition which carries the theme of heroism, followed by SMPN 1



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Balerejo Madiun. Pipin has the view that heroism is not only synonymous with soldiers, but also includes the figures of parents and teachers who have contributed to life. This dance was inspired by Mbah Palang, a character in Dongkrek who fought *pageblug* in the Mejayan area. This dance successfully adapts the original character and composition of Dongkrek Art, and combines it with pencak silat movements.

Along with its development, Palang Yudho Dance received recognition from the Madiun District Education and Culture Office. One of the important moments was when this dance became part of the inauguration of the board of the Regional National Craft Council (DEKRANASDA) of Madiun Regency. Not only that, in 2019, Palang Yudho Dance was successfully performed at the East Java Anjungan TMII Jakarta in the Madiun Regency East Java Cultural Title event. In , this dance also participated in the Madiun Regency Cultural Arts Grant in Malang and Banyuwangi by carrying the charm of Madiun Regency Kampung Pesilat Indonesia and performing the Dongkrek performance art performance. Its success in combining two cultural icons of Madiun Regency makes Palang Yudho Dance more popular than other dances. The government and the community appreciate this dance as a representation of the culture and identity of Madiun Regency.

Based on this background, this research was conducted to examine the cultural symbols in Palang Yudho Dance. The urgency of this research departs from the phenomenon of declining artist interest in traditional arts, even though these arts contain local cultural values as regional identity. Pipin Dwi Pangesti's commitment in maintaining the roots of local culture is expected to inspire other artists to continue working by promoting local wisdom.

In addition to providing inspiration, this research also reminds us that a work must be written down so that if later the work begins to fade, the results of the writing will be able to facilitate the process of cultural reconstruction. Artworks based on local culture will not become obsolete, but instead become a tangible form of preserving traditions and cultural heritage. By continuing to carry local cultural values, artists and the community have indirectly maintained the existence of traditional art so that it does not become extinct.

The research entitled "Palang Yudho Dance in the Study of Symbolic Meaning" is focused on the meaning of symbols in the Palang Yudho Dance in Madiun. From here, the question arises how the meaning of symbols in the Palang Yudho Dance in Madiun. The discussion of the meaning of symbols in Palang Yudho Dance is dissected and described using the symbol theory of Sumandiyo which according to his theory says that, dance as a cultural product full of meaning and value, can be called a symbol system. A symbol system is something that is created by humans and conventionally used together, regularly and actually studied, so as to give an understanding of the nature of "human", namely a framework that is full of meaning to orient itself to others, to the environment, and to itself, as well as a product and dependence in social interaction (Sumandiyo, 2007: 22). The theory is a concept of thinking to solve problems that are expected to explain the main objectives in this study.

2. METHOD

The method in this study uses qualitative research methods. Qualitative research methods research methods based on the philosophy of postpositivism, used to research on natural object conditions, (as opposed to experiments) where the researcher is the key instrument, data collection techniques are triangulated (combined), data analysis is inductive / qualitative, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization (Sugiono, 2016: 9). Through this qualitative approach, researchers will conduct observations, interviews with sources, and document studies to extract information from the real situation and described according to the facts, then qualify the data, then analyze it based on theory.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

Palang Yudho Dance has a close relationship with local cultural elements in Madiun Regency. In addition to making Dongkrek Art as the source of its work ideas, Palang Yudho Dance also has elements of pencak silat so that it successfully combines two characteristics of Madiun Regency at once. This makes Palang Yudho Dance full of local cultural values of Madiun Regency. In dance, local cultural elements are raised through symbols that exist both in motion and other supporting elements. This dance successfully adapts the original character and composition of Dongkrek Art and combines it with pencak silat movements, so it can be said that Palang Yudho Dance is another form of Dongkrek Art which is packaged in dance form. Based on the data obtained, this research is also reinforced by Sumandiyo's theory which says that dance as a symbol system can also be understood as a signaling system (semiotics). This means that the presence of dance cannot be separated from several aspects that can be seen in detail, among others: movement, accompaniment, floor patterns, place, time, makeup, fashion and property. The signaling system of this semiotic view contains literal meaning, is primary and directly addressed according to the agreement or convention formed jointly by the community or culture where the symbol or sign applies (Sumandiyo, 2007: 23-24).

3.2 Discussion

The title of Palang Yudho Dance consists of two words, namely "Palang" which means hero in this context refers to Mbah Palang, a community leader in Dongkrek Art and "Yudho" which means war. The art of Dongkrek itself is a typical art of Madiun Regency that depicts the occurrence of *pageblug* in a village. Thus, *Palang Yudho* can be interpreted as a hero who fights against *pageblug* in the story of Dongkrek Art in Madiun Regency.

Palang Yudho Dance depicts Dongkrek Art by bringing up the forms of characters and telling the plot that is explained exactly the same as the composition sequence in Dongkrek Art. The elements of local culture in Palang Yudho Dance are raised through symbols contained in the movements, accompaniment, floor patterns, makeup and clothing, and properties.

Meaning of Motion

Palang Yudho Dance is a dance that depicts the struggle of Raden Ngabehi Lo Prawirodipuro in facing *pageblug*. The concept of

this dance presentation is packaged with a majestic feel but still close to the community. The variety of movements created not only displays firm movements, but also gentle movements so as to create a more dynamic impression.



Figure 1. Mbah Palang's meditation

Raden Ngabehi Lo Dipuro performs asceticism with his magic wand, surrounded by cloth props that symbolize great power in fighting evil.



Figure 2. Butho

The arrival of *pageblug* is depicted through the appearance of *butho*, but the movement of *butho* is presented in the form of symbols without the use of *butho* masks which in this context symbolize evil.



Figure 3. People Working

The depiction of the people working together while joking creates an atmosphere of togetherness. Large baskets made of bamboo are used as props, symbolizing their efforts in seeking sustenance. This also depicts Madiun with its agrarian culture that develops in the daily lives of its people. *Pageblug* is not only manifested in the form of disease outbreaks or famine, but also in human attitudes that are arrogant, envious, spiteful, and selfish without respect and care for others, contrary to human values. As humans, each individual has obligations and natures that must be carried out in accordance with their role in life. Harmony, harmony, and cleanliness of heart become the main principles in rejecting all forms of calamity and ugliness.



Figure 4. Mbah Palang and Tongkat Sakti

Raden Ngabehi Lo Prawirodipuro gives advice to the people, especially women, who have forgotten their obligations and natures. This is depicted through the behavior of women who like to be lazy at work, too busy adorning themselves, and lacking respect for others.

Raden Ngabehi Lo Prawirodipuro, known as Mbah Palang, plays the role of a figure who fights evil with his magic stick. Mbah Palang's appearance is made clear by the use of an old mask, which symbolizes virtue and wisdom.

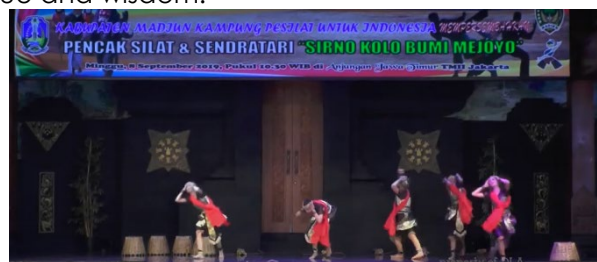


Figure 5. Pageblug

Pageblug is defined as a deadly disease outbreak, where a person can fall ill in the morning and die in the afternoon, or vice versa. However, in this dance, *pageblug* is not depicted as a physical illness, but rather as the impact of human behavior itself, when they forget their obligations and duties as responsible beings in the world.

The cloth property used as a symbol of Mbah Palang's hermitage is also reused to depict the great disaster that struck the village and its people. The cloth is realized as a strong wind that destroys human life and the surrounding nature. In this section, the dance movements depict the struggle against *pageblug*, where the red cloth is used as a weapon by the people to survive and fight against the disaster that occurred.



Figure 6: War against Pageblug

Pageblug occurs as a result of *butho* disrupting the lives of the villagers. The presence of *butho* symbolizes an evil force that brings misery and imbalance to people's lives.

The battle between good and evil is depicted in suspenseful fragments. A wise figure, Mbah Palang, fights against the *butho* who tries to spread evil. While others firmly sneer at evil intentions, rejecting all forms of injustice. On the other hand, they also chant prayers for salvation, which are realized through the sounds of musical instruments, creating a sacred atmosphere. In every battle between good and evil, virtue always prevails and is upheld on earth.

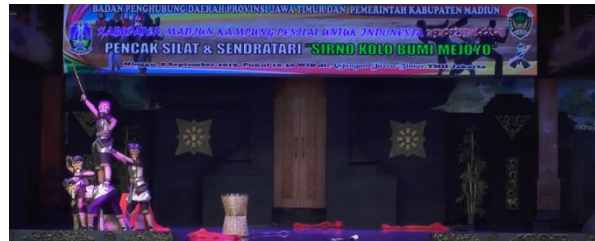


Figure 7. The glory of Mbah Palang

In a fierce battle, a fight ensued between the *butho kolo's* entourage and the magic old man. With his strength and wisdom, the old man defeated the *butho kolo* with his magic wand, reestablishing balance and goodness in society.

Meaning of accompaniment

The accompaniment of Yudho Dance is exactly the same as that of Dongkrek. Symbols in the musical accompaniment of Palang Yudho Dance can be interpreted through the vocal lyrics:

Hom bawaana langgeng

(Eternal Harmony of the Universe)

Sidem-sidem bawaana sidem, rep lerep bawaana lerep

(Be still and the world will be still, be quiet and the world will be quiet)

Wanita iku kudu sing mituhu, marang keluargane lan kewajibane

(A woman must obey her family and her obligations)

Yo, budal, yo ayo ayo, nyambut gawe

(Let's go, let's go, work!)

Singgah kala singgah, tan suminggah durgakala sumingkiro, sing A sirah, sing A wulu, sing Atan kasat mata, kabeh sumingkiro (If any evil energy singgah, let it singgah, but that which cannot singgah (durgakala), get out of the way! That which is in the head, that which is in the hair, that which is not, all get out of the way!).

Eling-eling dha elingo, urip ning donya mung sak derma, paribasane mung mampir ngombe, mula aja dha sembrana (Remember, always remember! Life in this world is only temporary, as if only stop by to drink, then do not be reckless (careless, negligent, or rash))

What's the trouble? The wind is so, the sky is so dull.

(What was that disaster? What big tornado! The sky looks very dark and thick)

Butone teko nyebar praha gawe geger para manungsa, Bumi Mejayan di gawe karang abang

(*Butho* came to spread disaster, making people uproar, Mejayan land turned into a sea of blood) *Raden ngabehi lho prawiradipura dadi pepalangan yudha habrasta durangkara* (Raden Ngabehi Prawiradipura becomes a stronghold, a fierce war against evil or chaos)

Suro dira jaya ningrat lebur dening pangastuti

(Courage, strength, and worldly glory fade with gentleness and wisdom)

The first lyric shows the concept of balance and sustainability of the universe, containing teachings about inner balance and its influence on the universe. In *kejawen*, humans are considered as the small center of the universe (microcosm) that is in harmony with the universe (macrocosm). If a person's mind is calm, the world around them will be peaceful.

Furthermore, there are expressions that reflect traditional values in Javanese culture that emphasize the role of women in the family and their responsibilities. However, in a modern context, the meaning

of "mituhu" or obedience can be broader, not just submission, but also has a sense of loyalty, responsibility, and balance in carrying out roles as individuals, wives, mothers, and members of society. Next is the invitation to start work immediately with enthusiasm. In Javanese culture, "nyambut gawe" does not only mean physical work but can also reflect a diligent, responsible and dedicated attitude to life.

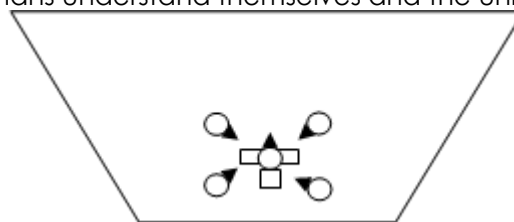
The scene that follows shows a plea for the negative energy to stay and move away, asking for protection from all forms of harm, both visible and invisible. These lyrics have the spiritual power to ward off bad luck, keep away negative energy, and protect oneself from danger. , there is an invitation to always be aware of the nature of life, reminding that the life of the world is only a trust and is not eternal, there is a parable that life is short, like a traveler who stops for a moment to quench his thirst before continuing his journey, so live life wisely, consciously, and not be carried away by worldly pleasures.

As the *butho* enters, the music becomes more tense, asking what is happening, explaining that there is a dangerous strong wind, signaling a tense atmosphere, perhaps a sign of a storm or disaster. This becomes an expression in a real situation when seeing bad weather or in a metaphorical context to describe a challenging life situation, then comes the *butho* as a great power or *the butho* a devastating event that brings catastrophe and panic. "Karang abang" is a symbolic term that describes the ground turning red from the sheer number of casualties or destruction. It has mystical and epic overtones, often used in Javanese history, myth or literature to describe wars, major disasters or cataclysmic changes in people's lives.

Finally, the appearance of Raden Ngabehi Lo Prawiradipura who stood firm, became the vanguard or protector in battle, acting as a hero in the face of a great war against evil forces. "Suro Diru Jayaningrat Lebur Dening Pangastuti" is one of the deep and meaningful teachings of Javanese philosophy. It asserts that any amount of strength and courage will eventually be melted by gentleness, wisdom and compassion. In life, it is not violence or physical strength that solves problems, but a heart full of sincerity and wisdom in action.

Floor Pattern Meaning

There are several patterns that have philosophies such as *papat kiblāt lima pancer* which means four cardinal directions and one center point. The four cardinal directions refer to the four main directions of , west, north and south. *Papat kiblāt* is also associated with the four elements of life: wind, water, earth and fire. While *pancer* means center or core which symbolizes the human self (consciousness, soul, or spirit), and describes the human relationship with the universe where the self becomes the center of balance from all directions. The concept of *papat kiblāt lima pancer* has deep meaning in Javanese and Sundanese spirituality. It is not just about the cardinal directions, but also how humans understand themselves and the universe.



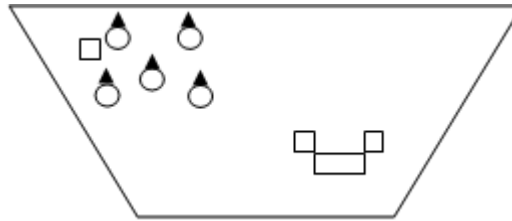


Figure 8. Sample Floor Pattern

The Meaning of Makeup and Fashion

The makeup used in this dance carries the concept of beautiful *makeup*. Because all the dancers are women, the characters in the performance are emphasized through symbolic movements and the use of supporting properties to clarify the characterization.

The fashion in this dance is dominated by black and gold. The black color symbolizes evil, while gold reflects a person's authority and luxury. addition, the red cloth is slung from the right shoulder to the left waist adds an accent of boldness. The presence of supporting accessories further strengthens the impression that this dance has been carefully prepared. In addition to beautifying the appearance, accessories also make it easier for the audience to recognize the characters played in the performance.



Figure 9. Make-up and Fashion

Property Meaning

The properties used include the following:



Figure 10. Old Mask

As the main character in this dance work, the figure symbolizes virtue or goodness. His role is central in the fight against evil, reflecting noble values and courage in maintaining balance and harmony in life.



Figure 11. Stick

Raden Ngabehi Lo Prawirodipuro's weapon in fighting *pageblug* was his magic wand. This stick symbolizes strength, wisdom, and protection in the face of evil and various forms of calamity that threaten society.



Figure 12. Red fabric

The red cloth in this dance has a strong symbolic meaning. The cloth symbolizes the majesty in Mbah Palang's hermitage, describes the plague of great disasters such as winds that hit the village, and serves as a weapon for the people in fighting *pageblug*. In addition, the red cloth is utilized as part of the dance outfit, slung across from the right shoulder to the left waist, adding to the impression of courage. Finally, it is also used as an element of stage decoration, enhancing the dramatic atmosphere of the performance.

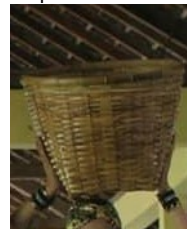


Figure 13. Basket

This property functions as a tool for work in meeting daily needs, reflecting the life of an agrarian society. In addition, this property is also used as an element of stage decoration to beautify the appearance of the performance arena, so that the atmosphere of the performance is more alive and supports the meaning to be conveyed in the dance.

4. CONCLUSION

The local cultural elements of Madiun Regency can be read through the symbols contained in the Palang Yudho Dance, starting from the movements, accompaniment, floor patterns, makeup and clothing, to the properties. The symbols in Palang Yudho Dance actually have the same meaning as the original source, namely Dongkrek Art. This is evident from the various symbols that are still maintained in several elements of the dance, such as movements, properties, and clothing, which represent the values of struggle, protection, and the fight between good and evil as the main values in Dongkrek Art. Pipin's effort to make Dongkrek art more attractive to the public is done through the creation of Palang Yudho Dance. In addition to providing new nuances, this dance work also plays a role in preserving culture, maintaining the meaning and values contained

in Dongkrek Art, so that it remains known and appreciated by current and future generations.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Rahma Raffi Aristawati as the researcher and author of the article
Jajuk Dwi Sasanadjati as companion, reviewer, and article reviser

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