

**EXPRESSION OF URBAN COMMUNITIES THROUGH RITUAL
PERFORMANCES FOR THE INAUGURATION OF RENI'S GRAVE
AS THE CULTURAL SITE IN PALAWIJEN VILLAGE,
MALANG CITY, EAST JAVA**

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ABSTRACT

Performance arts in current days should not be understood with limited words because it always involves complex dimensions. It not only executes the mission of *entertaining* and *guiding*. It also represents “the reality” involving actors and audiences into one integral unity. Performance arts may not be organized anymore with structural nature or by internalizing values. More than that, this review attempts to observe the phenomena expressed by the communities of Palawijen Village. The approach is structural functional prospective, which is aimed to find out the esthetic expression of urban communities. It answers why there is the inauguration as cultural site for the grave of Reni, a famous artist of Wayang Topeng Malang. In the environment of Malang Regency, Reni is popularly named after Tjandra Suwono. The arts strengthen the potential culture of Palawijen Village communities in building their existence as urban communities. Through esthetic ritualism on Reni's grave cultural site, several values could be advocated, such as (a) social immunity, (b) social harmony, and (c) building social identity.

Keywords: Performance, Ritual, Urban Communities.

INTRODUCTION

This study observed the phenomena of ritual performances conducted by urban communities. Communities itself found their culture always changed. In the context of Indonesia communities, urbanization was a condition when rural communities moved to urban environment. According to Robert Redfield and Gerhard Lenski, social change was a condition when traditional communities transformed into urban communities [1]. Some issues were emerging during the process of social change in the communities, including communities in Palawijen Village, Blimbing District, Malang City, East Java. There was a legendary village known since twelfth century. It was a village where Empu Purwa, a priest of Budha Tantrayana, lived. Empu Purwa lived with his daughter, Ken Dedes.

This village was also the place of birth of a person called Jaka Lola (meaning an orphan). People called him with a name of Ken Arok, who would be the husband of Ken Dedes, and also the first king of Singosari Kingdom [2]. Besides being popular of historical place, Palawijen Village was also recognizable due to its legendary artist, Reni or Tjandra Suwana [3]. Effendi admitted that Reni was a famous artist and also the people of Palawijen Village, and his relatives were still found in this village (Effendi, interview on 26 October 2016). In early part of twentieth century, there was an artist, the mask artisan, who served the loyalty to Malang Regent. This artist was R.A.A. Soeria Adiningrat (1898-1934). All creative necessities were

supplied by Malang Regent [4]. Around 1990s, the author acquainted with a dancer named Hariyono. He lived in Palawijen Village. In 1997, on 15 May, he told the author a dream. He dreamed about Reni who showed his grave location in the cemetery of Palawijen Village. In the morning, Hariyono narrated his dream to his relatives. However, he suddenly suffered from ill for few days (Hariyono, interview on 15 May 1997). He decided to find the grave and put sign on it. But, it was awful because Hariyono dead before he did it. Overview above shows that cultural agents had certain positions and roles [5]. Reni was potentially positioned as a positive orientation of spirituality. Being the legend of Wayang Topeng Malang, his presence had inspired and motivated Palawijen Village communities to have at least equal quality. What was done by cultural agents would be the base for formulating a question in this review: “What is the meaning of Reni’s grave for Palawijen Village communities?” This question indeed was pointing the condition of Palawijen Village communities that had changed into urban communities. The village was autonomous region during ancient time because the residence of Empu Purwa was located there. Palawijen Village communities had lived on the village since twelfth century.

On that time, the power of several kings in Java Island, from Kediri Kingdom to Majapahit Kingdom, had produced the Story of Panji. This story contained the enthusiasm among nobilities to unify many kingdoms that were still closely related, such as Jenggala or Kahuripan (at North), Kediri (at South), Singhasari (at East), and Urawan (at West)[6]. But, due to the development of the age, Palawijen Village had changed into urban or city. The living of Palawijen Village communities experienced cultural degradation because they did not know anymore the traditional spirituality of their ancestors. One culture that started to degrade was the performance of Wayang Topeng Malang.

METHOD

This study was empirical study about ritual performance art that was centralized on Reni’s grave. It observed social condition of communities by interacting with the agents, and also by conducting interview, participatory observation and documentation. Key informants included: Jaet (70 years old), a military veteran who was the grand grandson of Reni; Yudit Pradananto (62 years old), a collector of Wayang and Topeng of East Java Genuine; M. Nasai (36 years old), a cultural photographer; and Effendi (45 years old), a respected figure in Palawijen Village. The approach of the study was structural functional prospective because the study attempted to review social and operational functions of the social structure of communities in Palawijen Village, where performances were conducted as a ritual structure. Structural function had put the cultural agents being as the innovation actors, and thus, adaptive action was set out. It may help answering the question of “What is the meaning of performance ritual on Reni’s grave for Palawijen Village communities?” The answer can be related with the assumption that agents were innovative in making a social adaptation based on goal attainment to create social integration in the community. It created a society with stability and balance through *pattern maintenance* [7].

DESCRIPTION OF DATA AND DISCUSSION

(1) Data Description

The study of ritual performances had been carried on for 3 years, since the choreographic presentation of *Ziarah Tanah Leluhur* for 5 hours in State University of Malang. This choreography was arranged for celebrating the Worldwide Dance Day in 2013 which involved 300 dancers and musicians. The march was going around the campus of State University of Malang. First row was offerings, and it was followed by the masked dancers who will form a collaboration of *pancer papat* (fourth point) on the urban park of Semarang Road. This scene tried to describe a negotiation with spiritual forces. Then, the march went to the Rector Building of State University of Malang and presented the story of “Gendari Gugat”. It involved 20 female dancers who wear white costume with their eyes covered by white fabric to resemble the oath of Dewi Gendari, the mother of Kurawa. The procession continued to the Library in order to express the condition of modern communities who used social media as their main necessity, and contributed a book as the learning source to the library. The end of procession peaked at the front of the Dean Building of Faculty of Literature with *pancawarna* presentation. It was a collaboration of music, dance and fine arts.

Dancers were stepping on 100 meters-length white fabric and painting the fabric with various colors. After Jumat prayer, next action was pilgrimage to the cemeteries of the legends of Wayang Topeng Malang in any Malang regions. This procession symbolized a synergy between academic communities and traditional communities. Pilgrimage after procession reflected “*bakti*” or a devotion to ancestors. In this case, Reni was the ancestor, and also a legendary artist who pioneered the origin of Wayang Topeng Malang. The presence of Reni was deliberated by performance art communities in East Java when Munardi wrote about Reni as the mask sculptor from Blimbing District, Malang City [8]. Munardi was born in Surabaya and observed Wayang Topeng Malang in 1972. His observation emanated from his concern with dance artists of East Java who started lacking of creative sources. This concern was strong after he saw International Ramayana Festival at Ampu Theater Candra Wilwatikta Pandaan, East Java, in 1971. The choreography of East Java contestant took a source from Surakarta dance, which it was Central Java origin.

Ong Hok Ham wrote that a genuine mask created by Wayang Topeng Malang artists could still be found in various villages in Malang, especially the mask created by Reni. Ong Hok Ham did not track down the genealogy of Reni and his families in Palawijen Village. It may be because in 1960s, the family of Reni only performed the dance of Wayang Topeng Malang (Jaet, interview on 10 May 2012). The writers of Wayang Topeng Malang did not acknowledge Reni directly, but they were informed about Reni from Kang Sen, the nephew of Reni, who still preserved Wayang Topeng Malang from his residence in Jabung Village. However, Ong Hok Ham explored data of Reni from the tale of Topeng Ragel Kuning. This mask (topeng) was owned by Reni’s daughter, Mbok Dari, a 40 years old widow, who lived in simple small house with beautiful sculptures. This mask described about the figure of Ragel Kuning. It had perfect proportion with fine sculpture. Eyebrows, eyes and mouths were thinly sculpted but still producing strong lines. However, the color was dulled by the age. But, in whole, it gave you a smooth skin with a thin golden sheet (*prada*). Princess stared upon you with a smile of “Budha”, and the meaning of this smile was hardly

understood. On both ears, two pieces of jewels glimmered. This mask was possibly the best mask made by Reni [9]. In 2011, Reni's grave was found with the information of communities. A grave without tombstone was there, and it was only marked with a tree on the edge of traffic line from old settlement to new residence (Pradananto, interview on 12 November 2011). It remained on the south part of main village. After grave discovery, few observers of Wayang Topeng Malang initiated to put tombstone (*kijing*) on Reni's grave. These observers were Dwi Cahyono, the owner of Resto Inggil Restaurant and Museum Topeng in Malang; Sunari, a dancer; and Yudit Pradananto, a collector of wayang and topeng. On November 2011, the grave was coated with gravestone, and tombstone was made from black stone. The length was extended little bit to resemble the grave of religious leaders behind Demak Mosque. In 2016, Reni's grave was inaugurated as a cultural site. This grave was painted black and covered with green gravestone. This color was given after *wangsit* (divine inspiration) received by Yudit Pradananto and M. Nasai (Nasai, interview on 28 October 2016).

In 2014, the author composed a colossal choreography entitled with *Ziarah Tanah Leluhur* supported by 500 students which involved also the reading of 100 poetries. This collaborative choreography was held for 5 hours. After this performance, the pilgrimage was done to the graves of Wayang Topeng Malang legends, such as Reni, the prominent figure of Wayang Topeng Malang in 1930s; Karimoen, the conservator of Wayang Topeng Malang in Kedungmangga Village; and Monawi, the dancer of Kelana Sewandana of Mangu Village. All of them were Wayang Topeng Malang artists in 1950s generation. Other personages to be the object of pilgrimage included Rasimon, the dancer of Gunungsari from Gelagahdaha Village, Tumpang, and Chattam AR, the dancer and choreographer of Wayang Topeng Malang in Malang City. In 2015, precisely, during *bersih desa* event in Palawijen Village, Yudit Pradananto composed *the march of the masks*. In same year, Jaet provided the facility for the pilgrims and among them was Moch Soleh Adi Pramana, the Head of Mangundharma Art Residence from Tumpang. He was a grandson of the Wayang Topeng Malang conservator at Tulus Besar Village. At that time, Yudit composed the march to escort the procession of Topeng Ragel Kuning. It was the mask created by Reni himself and became the only one left or even successfully discovered. It was said so because since 1970as, it was assumed that all Reni's masks had disappeared from Malang City.

During the presentation of the March of The Masks, Yudit Pradananto believed that Topeng Ragel Kuning would be proper if it was processed through transvestite dance. Characteristic and spirituality of the Topeng may be made prominent with this procession. In 2015, Topeng Ragel Kuning was presented by Supriyanto, a dancer and also a young puppet master, the son of Moch Soleh Adi Pramana (Pradananto, interview on 4 May 2016). The continuity of those events was planned for 2016, but it was arranged for the inauguration of Reni's grave as a cultural site by recall that Reni was a popular artist of Wayang Topeng Malang in 1920s. The procession was simple, called *nyadran*, and continued with the signature on stone inscription by the Head of the Official of Tourism for Malang City to acknowledge Reni's grave as cultural site. Pandi, the respected figure in Palawijen Village communities, organized village theme contests and gave the roads in Palawijen Village by the names of characters in the Story of Panji. One character, Kartala, was excluded. This exclusion was made because the name was almost similar with a

comedian of Ludruk Surabaya, whose name was Kartolo (Pandi, interview on 22 October 2016). On 30 October 2016, the rite *nyadran* and the inauguration of Reni's grave site were processed. The procession started when the sun went high. Cemetery seemed fresh possibly because the night was rainy. The soil of cemetery was brown wet with few waters left in the grasses and leaves. The rite welcomed the visiting of the Head of the Official of Tourism for Malang City and the entourages, and the receptionist group was led by the character of Udupati Kartala played by Marsam Hidajat, a director of *Ludruk Lerok Anyar* of Gondanglegi District. Behind him was Pendeta Muda played by Gantar Samiaji with his dauntless moves. His hand swayed small bell in rhythm notes. On right and left sides were the masked ladies who brought with them the ancient bell of Yudit Pradananto's collection. The mask was collected from the artisans from Malang Raya.

Emban Dawala was also acted, and this character was the beloved servant of Dewi Ragel Kuning in the Story of Panji. When the official group met with pilgrims, Udupati Kartala invited the officials to enter cemetery. The group was accompanied by three men who were representatives of Reni's family. Pilgrims were 80 persons with the mask. Exactly in the front of Reni's grave, the group was welcomed by transvestite dancers who acted as Dewi Ragel Kuning. First welcome move was "*sembah*" (worship), and it was continued with moving hands and head gracefully. The movement conformed to *tembang dandang gula* sung by Udupati Kartala. Of pilgrims with mask, only three representatives of Reni's family and the Head of the Official of Tourism for Malang City who did not wear the mask. It means that "topeng" is only a symbolical aspect but retaining something meaningful within it. In the history of topeng, indeed, topeng was functioned as "disguise" [10]. Dancer who acted for Dewi Ragel Kuning was Agus who was also popular as the dancer of Ny. Dadak Purwa (*transvestite dancer*). He was willing to dance Topeng Ragel Kuning because he admitted that he received "wangsit" requiring him to wear white costume. In the appearance, it looked great. His expression of move was not strong as Supri but Agus' dance was more elegant. Yudit insisted that Topeng Ragel Kuning was alive when the dancer was male (Pradananto, interview on 30 October 2016). Ancestral spirit awakens through *wangsit*, and it is a spiritual moment experienced by *suguh pundhen* dancers in Kedungmangga Village, a village that is able to preserve the associations of Wayang Topeng Malang for more than one century [11].

In the end of welcome procession with Topeng Ragel Kuning dance, Yudit Pradananto invited the Head of the Official of Tourism for Malang City to give signature on the stone inscription for inaugurating Reni's grave as cultural site. It was the core of the show, and indicating the recognition of government to the cultural artifacts of immediate communities. The close was Islamic pray by one inhabitant of Palawijen Village. After pray, the masked pilgrims accompanied the Head of the Official of Tourism for Malang City to exit from cemetery. The characters playing Dewi Ragel Kuning, Emban Dawala, Pendeta Muda, and Udupati Kartala, as well as soldiers and ladies with ancient bells of Yudit Pradananto's collection were also resigned from the cemetery. It was a very simple procession without sound-system and also gamelan. It just involved a Sundanese *suling* played by Rudi Riffai, a music teacher who was Sunda. There is a mix of Java and Sunda. It must be proud. After Bubat tragedy, Javanese and Sundanese were not interacted well to each other. All dancers of each region preferred to use their own rhythm, but

the melody of *suling* created a melancholic ambience. The morning is calm and quiet despite the crowd of people. Such ritual was already found during the ancient days when a *Rama* of the village led the pray to affirm the settlement of *Sima Land*. It delivered autonomy to the communities of *Sima* to do their culture for supporting spiritual interest of the nation [12].

(2) DISCUSSION

The rite *nyadran* with esthetic expression is about producing “self-immunity” [13]. Being self-immunity means being immune from the adverse impact of uncertain life. It is also immune from heavy burden caused by complex urban communities. If agrarian communities are facing hard work to cultivate the land, then Palawijen Village communities remain within urban culture environment. Many problems show up in unexpected ways. Traditional communities develop their immunity by *tolak balak*, but among urban communities, they only need positive suggestion. Modern people believe that their social environment is already conducive although their sense of community is still individualist. However, urban communities still yearn for socialization with mutual and interdependent relationship between individuals.

Reni’s grave and Topeng Dewi Ragel Kuning are the objects aimed to revive the social spirituality of Palawijen Village communities. They need rejuvenation through new social and cultural adaptation to determine the goal of building the balance in communities [14]. Each member of communities does the adaptation by entering social space that they are themselves incapable to predict. Adaptation from old culture to another culture of other communities must be done continuously [15]. Cultural adaptation in Palawijen Village communities, however, was done by external agents, in this case, Yudit Pradananto and friends, who were themselves taking initiative to search for Reni’s grave, putting *gravestone*, conducting the rite *nyadran*, and inaugurating the grave as the cultural site. After Reni’s grave was inaugurated (wait for registration) as one cultural site, Palawijen Village communities have new immunity. This grave created a spiritual support to develop social existence. Communities would be more mature, self-reliant, and proud of themselves in achieving the future.

Social Harmony

The function of ritual performance art arranged on Reni’s grave is about *uri-uri* (preservation) which creates a paradigmatic imagination. It creates a transformative situation that brings rural communities into a situation resembling the condition of East Java Kingdom age. The conqueror was very attentive to the spirituality of the communities in creating interaction with their ancestors. The rite *Manusuk Sima* was arranged to give the communities autonomy to manage the village without the collection of tax [16]. The rite *nyadran* on Reni’s grave at least maintains the memory of history and spirituality of Java. It has close relation with Wayang Topeng Malang. The function of wayang topeng itself in the rite *suguh pundhen* was to respect the ancestors and to carry out self-introspection for *asal usuling dumadi* [17]. For Palawijen Village communities, they seem alive with the essence of *asal usuling dumadi*. This effort was aimed to reacquaint with their ancestors, at least to Jaka Lola (Ken Arok) or Reni. People must know Java spirituality, and they should recognize the importance of moral ethics such as *sowan* (visiting), *suguh* (give

offerings), *sembah* (respecting), and *ngalap berakah slamat* (expecting for blessing). *Slamat* does not mean material welfare, but it concerns with social condition called *tata tentram kartaraharja* (the prosperity of social life). Social harmony is the ultimate goal. *Nyadran* on Reni's grave is designated as the effort to construct a social pattern in such way that the communities will comprehend their mask and wear it to symbolize meanings. Hiding genuine identity is needed to develop social adhesiveness. Building a tolerance, and producing and reproducing social pattern, must be compatible with the soul of the age [18].

Social Identity

The book written by Pigeaud, entitled with *Javaanse Volksvertoningen* (Java People Show), was published in 1938, and it wrote about a Regent who led Malang Region, named after Ario Adipati Sam (1934-1942). He was appointed ahead of the independence of Indonesia Republic. As noted by Pigeaud based on information from Malang Regent, it was said that Raden Bagoes Mohamad Serib was given a noble title, and he was renamed with Raden Adipati Ario Soerio Adiningrat (*Ridder der Offecer Oranje Nassau*). Wayang Topeng Malang was practiced throughout villages. In 1928, topeng dancers came from Pucangsanga Village, Tumpang District. In those days, chief of the village, Saritruno, was known for his excellence of topeng dance. But [19], Pigeaud did not tell about the identity of the Chief of Pucangsanga Village. Topeng Malang is mostly produced in Palawijen Village (now become the region of Belimbing District, Malang City). This exposition is only the history data left but it contributed the chronological aspect of Wayang Topeng Malang in Malang Raya (including Malang Regencies, Malang City, and Batu). Data enforce the fact that Reni was born from Palawijen Village, and it gives important sense to the communities of the village. Internal innovation agents have reconstructed successfully the social role of the communities which it then develops communities' self-expression through performance art.

Reni's grave is not the only artifact to reinforce the existence of Palawijen Village communities. Historical power of this village also strengthens its existence, and it allows some social memories to deliver stronger senses on the historical existence of Javanese characters, including Ken Dedes, Ken Arok, Empu Purwa, and Reni. The existence of these legends creates what so called a center or *pancer*. In performance art, Reni is the legend and also *pancer* because he is the original orientation of any existences of Wayang Topeng Malang in Malang Raya. Yudit Pradananto believes that Reni's grave will be the place of the meeting of dancers, artisans, collectors and observers (Pradananto, interview on 26 October 2016). Early step to empower the motivation, said Effendi, internal agent, can be done by naming the roads in the environment of Palawijen Village with the name of characters in Wayang Topeng Malang. It built a social identity with Reni's grave as the center. Indeed, Reni and Wayang Topeng Malang have stronger social attachment, and it is proved that it has close relation with the Fourth Malang Regent, R.A.A. Soeria Adiningrat.

CONCLUSION

The rite *nyadran* on Reni's grave in Palawijen Village was a ritual phenomena conditioned by internal and external agents. It tried to awaken communities who had been submerged within urban culture environment, and persuaded these communities

to adapt their old culture to develop the immunity for them against individualistic culture. The immunity of communities could be enforced through spiritual awakening by positioning the ancestors as the center of positive energy. Yudit Pradananto emphasized that Reni's grave could be set as "pancer" or "punjer" for the growth of Wayang Topeng Malang in Malang Raya. Not surprisingly, Reni's grave became the place of the crowd among dancers and observers of wayang topeng. This mix should be good aspiration because it could create the climate of social balance that facilitated the spiritualities of collectivity, interaction, and universal social adhesiveness. It also grew social identity that would create a dialogic position between Palawijen Village communities and the art communities.

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