



TARI RONGGENG BEKEN AS THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF A MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY IN PERFORMANCE STUDIES PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The Ronggeng Beken dance is a traditional dance art of multicultural communities in Bekasi City. This research aims to analyze the cultural identity of the Ronggeng Beken Dance in a multicultural society from a performance studies perspective. The method used in this research is a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach. Data collection was carried out by observation, interviews and document study. The results of the research explain that the Ronggeng Beken Dance, as a traditional dance art of multicultural society in Bekasi City, is a representation of Bekasi society which reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity in Bekasi City. Apart from that, mass performances of the Ronggeng Beken Dance, when analyzed from a performance studies perspective, produce a cultural identity for the city of Bekasi. Therefore, as a cultural identity, the preservation of the Bekasi Ronggeng Dance should continue to be carried out by the people of Bekasi City, one of which is by utilizing the role of education, both informal and formal education.

Keywords: *Famous Ronggeng Dance, Cultural Identity, Performance Studies*

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the discourse on regional expansion was launched, regional governments have begun to think about their respective regional autonomy rights. Regional autonomy (Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government, 2014) article 1 paragraph 6 explains that: the rights, authority and obligations of autonomous regions to regulate and manage their own government affairs and the interests of local communities in the system of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia . Thus regional autonomy is an opportunity for regions to actualize and optimize the cultural potential that exists in their respective regions.

In the context of the development of regional autonomy, multicultural communities in Indonesia have a unique opportunity to actualize the cultural potential of their regions. A multicultural society can be thought of as a field of cultural encounters, where various cultural elements intersect and interact. In the midst of a multicultural society, each region has unique cultural diversity, including traditional art forms. This diversity of art is often used as a symbol of embodiment and strengthening identity.

In line with the use of art in a multicultural society, art is also used as a cultural identity that can advance Indonesian national culture. The Law on the Advancement of Culture (Indonesian Law Number 5 of 2017, 2017) states that: Regional cultural diversity is the wealth and identity of the nation which is very necessary to advance Indonesian National Culture amidst the dynamics of world development. Art is not just a creative expression, but also a mirror that reflects the values, heritage and identity of a community. In this context, art plays a central role as a reinforcement of cultural identity.

Dance can be used as a reinforcement of cultural identity if it is recognized by being performed and socialized to cultural owners or intercultural associations, because dance (Neveu & Skinner, 2012) can summarize various messages and remain open to interpretation, this indicates that dance is very suitable for realizing identity in the performance.

Bekasi City is a city with a multicultural society that develops local traditional dance arts as its cultural identity with dance performances. The Beken Ronggeng Dance or Cool Bekasi Ronggeng is quite famous in Bekasi City. The Beken Ronggeng Dance is a dance created by Dini Irma Damayanti who is a graduate of the Bandung Indonesian Cultural Arts Institute. This dance is presented in traditional West Javanese clothing and sunglasses, accompanied by energetic music and dynamic movements.

The Beken Ronggeng Dance has many interesting aspects to study, including: (1) The choreography of the Beken Ronggeng Dance is based on 3 ethnic and cultural groups which are quite dominant in Bekasi City, namely Sundanese Ethnicity, Betawi Ethnicity and Javanese-Bantennese Ethnicity. (2) The Ronggeng Beken dance was performed en masse in Bekasi City in 2019 and 2022. In 2019 it was danced en masse by 2019 dancers (Detiknews, 2019) and in 2022 by 3000 dancers from students and the arts and culture studio community in Bekasi City (West Java Public Relations; Rep. Guh, 2022). This cultural attraction is part of the Pesona Nusantara Bekasi Keren event. (3) The mass holding of the Beken Ronggeng Dance was recorded by the Indonesian Record Museum (MURI) as the highest performing arts event in Indonesia. (4) The Beken Ronggeng Dance is used as the main event at Pesona Nusantara Bekasi Keren which is proposed as an annual agenda in Bekasi City and is included in the provincial and national event calendar. This is an interesting phenomenon to mention because it offers a discussion about a traditional dance art that lives and develops in a society that has various ethnic cultures.

By using the concept of cultural identity proposed by Stuart Hall (Hall, 1990) and performance studies proposed by Richard Schechner (Schechner, 2013), this article views the Ronggeng Beken Dance as a form of cultural identity of the multicultural society of Bekasi City and is always in the process of adapting to the situation. and the conditions in which the famous Ronggeng Dance exists and develops. This research uses qualitative research methods with an ethnographic approach. Ethnographic research (Spradley, 1980) is a written description of social actions, cultural phenomena, and situations in which they occur as a result of these actions, phenomena, and situations. The research location is the Patriot Chandrabaga Stadium, Bekasi City and the Ajen Wayang Studio I. West Kusuma. VI , Duren Jaya, East Bekasi. Data was collected by observation, interviews and document study.

2. IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

This research uses qualitative research methods with an ethnographic approach. Ethnographic research (Spradley, 1980) is a written description of social actions, cultural phenomena, and situations in which they occur as a result of these actions, phenomena, and situations. This definition reflects the core principles of ethnography as a qualitative research method. Ethnography involves immersing oneself in the culture or social context being studied,



gaining in-depth understanding through direct observation, interviews, and engagement with participants. The aim is to provide a rich, detailed and holistic picture of a particular social group or community. The research location is the Patriot Chandrabaga Stadium, Bekasi City and the Ajen Wayang Studio I. West Kusuma. VI, Duren Jaya, East Bekasi. Data was collected by observation, interviews and document study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Form of Presentation of the Famous Ronggeng Dance

The Beken Ronggeng Dance or Keren Bekasi Ronggeng is a dance created by Dini Irma Damayanti in 2018. She is a choreographer and owner of the Ajen wayang dance studio in Bekasi City. This location is precisely in Duren Jaya, East Bekasi District, Bekasi City, West Java.

In the title of the dance it is said that the name "Ronggeng Beken", which comes from the words ronggeng and beken. Ronggeng (*Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI)*, n.d.), namely female dancers who are equipped with a scarf worn around their neck as a dancing accessory. The ronggeng dance in Tatar Sundanese or what is called Bumi Pasundan basically functions as a means of ritual, fertility ceremonies, and is also performed to perform ceremonies asking for rain (mapag rain). Basically, in each region ronggeng has a different term or name, for example in Java it is called ledhek.

Ronggeng comes from the Goddess of Rice, and is also a symbol of fertility (Caturwati, 2007) is a legend that has taken root in Sundanese society in ancient times. The position of ronggeng in West Java is so noble (Nalan, 2000) that even today there are still ceremonies and performances related to ronggeng. Thus, when referring to Sundanese cosmology, ronggeng has an honorable position full of meaning and noble values. Along with the development of the era of folk dance, especially the ronggeng dance in West Java, many of its functions have changed from being a means of ceremony to being a means of performance. The form of performance featuring ronggeng (Caturwati, 2007) that emerged among the common people cannot be separated from the goyang, gitek, and geol movements or what is abbreviated as 3G.

The 3G movement, gitek, geol, and goyang, from the past until now are a unity that cannot be separated from the figure of ronggeng. With the uniqueness of the ronggeng dance, quite a few choreographers are inspired to create new dance creations by developing ronggeng dance movements. One of them is a dance choreographer from Bekasi, namely Dini Irma Damayanti, who created the Beken Ronggeng Dance.

Beken itself is an abbreviation of Bekasi Keren. The meaning of the word cool is famous and famous. Likewise, with the natural wealth, industry, tourism and various cultures that Bekasi City has, it is hoped that it will be able to become the identity of Bekasi City.

Ethnographically, the city of Bekasi has 3 dominant ethnic groups, namely: Sundanese, Betawi and Banten Javanese. The Ronggeng Beken dance was created in such a way that both the arrangement of the movements and the supporting elements are a combination of the three ethnic

groups. The combination of these three ethnic elements becomes an approach in the concept of this dance, including:

In the Ronggeng Beken dance there are several Sundanese dance and Betawi dance movement motifs, some of the Sundanese dance movement motifs are: Gelongsor, Jerete, Sirig, and the dominant movement motif is the 3G movement, namely Geol, Gitek, and Goyang. The Betawi dance movement motifs found in the Beken Ronggeng Dance are: Meeting nindak movements, Kewer, and Betawi Silat movements.

Other supporting elements such as costumes, accessories, with color nuances and make-up are adapted to the concept that has been designed to emphasize the characteristics and soul of the Ronggeng Beken dance. Conveying moral messages about noble values through culture, especially dance creations.

Clothing used is a $\frac{3}{4}$ long kebaya in green Bekasi batik cloth, lined with tyle cloth as a rempelan, Apok/kemben, belt, shawl Long trousers, Kewer tongue. The accessories used to complement the costume are gold decorations with flower and leaf motifs on the right and left of the head, gold mountains with leaf motifs, jasmine flowers to cover the bun, strings of jasmine hanging from the bun on the right side, colorful flowers to decorate under the bun. The bun used is a medium sized bun. The make-up used is corrective make-up. This type of make-up is often used to beautify facial features or hide imperfections.

The props used in this dance are a scarf worn around the neck, and sunglasses worn during the middle of the dance. Sunglasses were chosen to represent the Javanese-Banten ethnic culture in the Ronggeng Beken Dance. The Javanese-Bantennese ethnic group is famous for its sintren art which is unique in wearing sunglasses. The use of sunglasses is also an embodiment of the word cool from the title of the Ronggeng Beken Dance.

The fashion for this dance is dominated by green, red and yellow, which is a combination of the colors of the Bekasi regional symbol. Bekasi City Regional Regulations (Regional Regulations of Bekasi Level II Regional Municipality Number: 1 of 1998, 1998) have approved the regional symbol of Bekasi City with a base color of green which means breadth of insight and clear thinking, yellow which shows residential areas, red which shows courage to make sacrifices and shows agriculture and horticulture.

3.2 Popular Mass Ronggeng Dance Performances According to a Performance Studies Perspective

Performance means doing; organizing matters; play (in drama, music and dance); appearance (*Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI)*, n.d.). Performance is also interpreted as communication. This communication occurs if the sender of the message (performer) really has a purpose (intention) and the audience has attention (attention) to receive the message (Murgiyanto, 2016). Messages sent can be via audio, visual, or a combination of both. This communication



process is also seen as an event and can have an effect on a community. The resulting effect is influenced by 3 things, namely form, function and meaning (Simatupang, 2020).

Performance can occur on stage, and in typical social situations such as public ceremonies and can also occur in everyday life. There are no clear boundaries that separate daily life from family and social roles, or social roles from work roles. By realizing that our lives are structured based on repetitive behavior and are socially sanctioned, it can be said that all human activities can be considered performance (Schechner, 2003).

Based on this opinion, it can be concluded that performance studies has emphasized the importance of studying experience or appearance. This is done as a process of knowing appearance through space, time, social context and the culture of the supporting community. Performances when viewed from the time sequence and performance space consist of processes before the performance (preparation), during the performance (performance), and after the performance (aftermath) (Schechner, 2013).

The Ronggeng Mass Dance Performance is popular if analyzed through the performance stages according to Schechner, namely, Before the performance (preparation) preparations are made for a performer, including: 1) Training. Before this performance took place, the 3,000 dancers who came from students and arts activists in Bekasi City had taken part in training held by the Department of Culture and Tourism long before this performance was held, each school representative sent their students to take part in this training; 2) Exercise regularly. In this mass dance performance involving around 3000 dancers, training was carried out in 2 stages, namely training per school and overall combined training; 3) Preparation before the show. Preparations are made from the start of the dress rehearsal and the dancers getting dressed up in costumes. Apart from the players, preparations are also made by the audience, (Schechner, 2003) including: deciding to attend, getting dressed, going, staying, and waiting.

During the performance, the Ronggeng Beken Dance dancers enter the arena stage and perform, then the audience watches the performance. Performance has three main elements (Simatupang, 2020), including: 1) Appearance is an event, which is strictly or loosely planned (for example: place, time, participants, rules) which differentiates the performance from other events that occur by chance. ; 2) As a social interaction, performance is marked by the physical presence of the perpetrators of the event in a certain physical space, and 3) Performance events are directed at the display of skills and abilities in personal, physical and spiritual, or both. More specifically, performance events apart from involving performers or performers also involve the audience or spectators. Performance is the most important part of communication, because this is when the audience observes and interprets the message or meaning conveyed in the performance.

After the performance (aftermath), after the performance is over, the performers and audience leave the performance area, dismantle the set, and tidy up the set. For the audience, they have to free themselves from the fantasy of performing, returning home, being a family member, going to work the next day, reading reviews. For actors, how to escape from stage roles and return to everyday life (Murgiyanto, 2016).

After the performance (aftermath) is a proof of the performance, whether the message conveyed in the performance will be received and understood by the audience or vice versa. In this case, the Ronggeng Beken mass dance performance succeeded in stealing the attention of the audience, many viewers spread news about the performance and uploaded it to online news pages, and the response generated after this activity was very positive. The mass holding of the Beken Ronggeng Dance was recorded by the Indonesian Record Museum (MURI) as the highest performing arts event in Indonesia. And the Beken Ronggeng Dance is used as the main event at Pesona Nusantara Bekasi Keren (West Java Public Relations; Rep. Guh, 2022) proposed as an annual agenda in Bekasi City and included in the provincial to national event calendar. This is a good step in strengthening the cultural identity of multicultural society in Bekasi City.

3.3 The Ronggeng Dance is Famous as a Cultural Identity of Multicultural Society

Cultural Identity refers to the special character of an individual or a member of a particular social group. Identity comes from the word "idem" in Latin which means the same. Thus, identity contains the meaning of similarity or unity with others in a certain area or things (Rummens, 1993).

Culture (Hofstede et al., 1991) is always a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared by people who live or live in the same social environment, where the culture is studied. The emergence of the meaning of a group's cultural identity cannot be separated from the level of mobility as the main factor in the search for an appropriate identity model amidst the widening of local boundaries towards global space (Abdullah, 2006). In other words, the movement of each individual in one culture to another cultural environment gives rise to the process of cultural reproduction.

Cultural identity (Hall, 1990) is a product that is never finished, formed in a representation that is always in a continuous process. In this case, Hall expressed his views regarding cultural identity, that cultural identity can be seen based on 2 points of view, namely cultural identity as a form (Identity as Being) and identity as a process (Identity as Becoming).

The first view (Identity as Being) states that cultural identity is a form of shared culture shared by a group of people who have the same history and descent. In short, a cultural identity reflects the same historical experiences and cultural codes which tend to be stable and unchanging. In this view, based on research findings it can be said that the Ronggeng Beken Dance is a representation of the cultural identity of multicultural society in Bekasi City. The Beken Ronggeng Dance is believed to be a collective property that reflects the culture of 3 ethnic groups which are quite dominant in Bekasi, namely Sundanese Ethnicity, Betawi Ethnicity and Javanese-Bantennese Ethnicity. In this case, the Ronggeng Beken Dance Movement contains several Sundanese and Betawi Dance movement motifs, including the movement motif that is very strongly associated with Sundanese Ethnicity, namely the 3G Movement (Geol, Gitek, Goyang), and the Betawi Dance movement motif in the Ronggeng Beken Dance is the tight movement. *nidak* and *kewer*. Apart from that, the use of sunglasses in the Ronggeng Beken Dance has similarities with the characteristics of *sintren* which is a traditional Javanese-Banten ethnic art.



The second view (Identity as Becoming) states that cultural identity is not completely fixed (unchanged), but rather undergoes continuous transformation to become a subject of history, culture, and power play. This view is also strengthened by Homi K. Bhaba, who is a figure in Postcolonial Studies. Culture is not the result of a natural and inevitable or primordial totality, but rather the result of a naturalized process (Bhaba, 1994). Homi K. Bhabha also interprets culture as ambivalent and always changing (Vissicaro, 2004). Likewise with the famous Ronggeng Dance. This research found changes in the ronggeng dance performance activity itself. The change in the ronggeng dance performance from being only used as a means of ritual, fertility ceremonies, and also performed to perform ceremonies asking for rain (mapag rain) to being a means of entertainment performed on an open arena stage. Apart from that, this can also be interpreted as a strategic step to strengthen the cultural identity of the multicultural community in Bekasi and as a form of intercultural communication, where people with different ethnicities meet in interaction.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion regarding the Ronggeng Beken Dance as a cultural identity of a multicultural society from a performance studies perspective, it can be concluded that the Ronggeng Beken Dance, as a traditional dance art of the people of Bekasi, is a representation of the cultural identity of a multicultural society which reflects the cultural diversity that exists in the 3 dominant ethnic groups. in Bekasi, including the Sundanese ethnic group, the Betawi ethnic group and the Javanese-Bantenese ethnic group. Apart from that, changes in the form of performances from only being used as a means of rituals, fertility ceremonies, and also carried out to carry out ceremonies asking for rain (mapag rain) to becoming entertainment facilities performed on open arena stages, are a form of strengthening cultural identity carried out by multicultural society so that the famous Ronggeng Dance can be accepted and its existence in Bekasi can still be preserved.

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