THE FORM AND THE MEANING OF RITUAL TRADITION
TANDHAK SETREN AND THE ROLE OF TANDHAK DANCER
(In Padepokan Gunung Ukir Batu City)

Lilis Lestari, S.Sn, M.Pd
Nip: 196603021992032001, Research title: The Form and The Meaning of Ritual
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ABSTRACT

The title “The Form and The Meaning of Ritual Tradition Tandhak Setren and
the Role of Tandhak Dancer” is a type of traditional art that lives on Gunung Ukir hillside
of Torongrejo village, Joenrejo sub-district, Batu-East Java. This phenomenon is very interesting and unique when in millennial era some people still having mystical belief. The problem of study in this research is how the form of visualization and the meaning of symbolic message in the ritual sequence and it is believed that some people still do it.

The results of this study, not only analyse the origin of setren ritual but also describing the power that influence tandhak dancers when they have performed setren ritual. This empirical data is expected to broad our horizons, especially spiritual tourism object in Batu-East Java. The tradition meaning of setren ritual for tandhak dancer is a means of mental practice, because from setren it can influence self-confidence "feeling more beautiful and attractive" besides the dancer feels save and strengthens his/her instinct. Thus, tandhak dancer never feels awkward dealing with people. A medium to gain magical power as pengasihan, more appeal, and for the dancer himself / herself. There is also a serious stimulation from the dancer of tandhak penglarisan by assuming setren is a means of training the body, exercising and interacting with the audience. Moreover, he /she feels more active in dancing after following a setren ritual.

Keywords: Form and Meaning, Setren Ritual, Tandhak Dancer, and Padepokan Gunung Ukir.

I. PREFACE

The perspective of Padepokan Gunung Ukir in Batu with various aspects surround it is a local cultural tradition, therefore it is closely related to patterns of relationship in the society and trying to find self-identities that are able to give local color as an icon in regional, national and international. On the other hand, the phenomenon of cultural homogenization that has happened across countries in the world, especially in Indonesia which has a diversity of cultures and ethnicities,
is a symptom of cultural phenomena that can not be avoided. The process of cultural homogenization ‘attacks’ local cultures and ethnic traditions through popular culture, namely the industrialization of culture and the technological process. Does this phenomenon create violence or a situation that is not conducive in art development of Indonesian society.

The phenomenon of modernism believes in progress and uses science or technology, post-modernism respects what already exists, tradition, learning related to ancient thing. Post-modernism works have polysemy and it does not have a single meaning or monosemy, in art, post-modernism approach is tend to use style as a form of eclecticism.

Responding to some of the phenomena above, in fact, it does not change the tradition of Padepokan Gunung Ukir society to hold a Sentren Ritual that still wanted by tandhak dancer as a form of tradition which bring many benefit. Thus, Its development is able to adjoin with global phenomena which become very interesting issues. On the one hand, traditional ritual is understood as society tradition that is done routinely for certain interest, on the other hand, it is seen as an activity that has been left behind and syirik (shirk to God) because the form of ritual activity believes something outside of God's power.

This study will use phenomenological research. The term 'phenomenology' is often used as a general assumption to refer to the subjective experience of various types and subject that is found (Lexy J Moleong, 2007). Phenomenology is defined as: 1) subjective experience or phenomenological experience; 2) a study of awareness from the main perspective of a person (Husserl in Moleong, 2007).

According to Victor Turner (1967: 50-51) who creates the theory of interpretation, which consists of: (1) exegetical meaning (meaning of doer from the ritual doer) (2) operational meaning (meaning derived from behavior in ritual) (3) positional meaning (the meaning of the result of the interpretation to one symbol with other symbols in its relation). (Deni Andriana 2009 essay on Cultural Reproduction in Hajat Bumi Ritual). In a society trust system there are two basic substance,
namely the human substance as a believer and the substance that is believed. In religious life, almost every step of human through a series of rites that are symbols to express someone feeling in the relationship substance which is believed.

Ritual is an adjective from the word *rites* and it is also a noun. As an adjective ritual is everything that is connected or associated with religious ceremony, such as dance ritual, ritual laws, as a noun relates religious ceremony (Hornby 1984: 733, in Bustanuddin A 2006: 96).

Tradition (Latin: *traditio*, "passed on") or habit, in the simplest meaning is something that has been done for a long time and it is a part of life in the society.

Javanese empirical experience is defined as an experience that is not solely empirical. The metaempiris realm, which is believed to have supernatural trait, to state itself through non-empirical forces and it is personified as spirits. There is a village protective spirit, there is who scares to human (memedi), there is a supernatural creature that possesses a person body, there is spirit that lives in trees, crossroads, old houses, and others. Every event that is experienced in the empirical world, it is always associated with the influence of these spirits. However, the metaempiris realm that is personified as spirits are not always evil. There are also spirits that bring blessing. Life and wealth depend on their good intentions (Magnis-Suseno, 2001: 87).

1. Setren

The term of *setren* is not found in a dictionary, according to Ki Iswandi most people are more familiar with the term of *trance* than *setren*. However, *setren* and *trance* still have different meaning. As stated below:

**Setren** is to pray or ask, ask the God to be given strength. This strength is called *Yoni*. **Setren** is asking *Yoni* to enter the body. If *yoni* has entered the body or trance, he/she forgets anything, a person will be able to do something
impossible. (Interview, Ki Iswadi: 2-3-2019).

2. Dancer (Tandhak)

Looking at Thomas Stamford Raffles report in his book *The History of Java* about social dance performance which is generally more showing female dancer called *tandhak* or Ronggeng (Raffles 1978: p. 342). In general, the predicate as *tandhak* or *Tayub* dancer is a bad predicate, because it is related with prostitution. Thus, *Tayub* dancer who is called "Ledhek" (Geertz 1960: 298-300), is woman who entertains man. So it is not surprising that Raffles shows the profile of *tandhak* dancer with a sexy body, dynamic and an aggressive temperament. A reproduction based on thinking which see negatively, so that it is described by expression of motion that is open and emotional.

3. Art Performance as an Industry

The culture of performing art industry has influenced indonesian culture. If we want to watch as long as there is *saweran* (some money that we give to the dancer because of dancer performance), we can enjoy the sacred culture and typical culture of the archipelago as long as is paid. Industrial culture begins to change into attractive entertainment in a package that has value for sale. The pattern of paying to watch this art performance, even though it gets protest because in every performance is often traded and it causes tension.

4. Symbolic Interactionism

*Herbert Blumer*

Symbolic-interactionism theory is developed by The Chicago School group such as Goerge H.Mead and Herbert Blummer. The beginning of the development of symbolic interactionism can be divided into two groups namely the Chicago group, which is lead by Herbert Blumer, continuing the research conducted by George Herbert Mead. Blumer believes that human studies cannot be carried out in the same way as in the study of inanimate object. Researcher needs to try empathy with the subject matter, learn their experiences, and trying to understand the value of each person. According to H. Blumer this theory is based on the premise that:
(1) humans act on something based on the meaning that exists in "something" for them,
(2) the meaning originates from "one's social interaction with others", and
(3) the meaning is to perfect through the process of interpretation when the "process of social interaction" occurring.

The first to third premises mean:
**First**, humans acts on something (whether it is a certain object, event, or phenomenon) relates to the meaning that own by them.
**Second**, the meaning is given by human as a result of interaction with each other. So, the meaning is not inherent, it is not attached to the object or the phenomenon itself but depends on the people who involved in the interaction.
**Third**, the meaning is handled and modified through the process of interpretation in order to deal with certain other phenomena. The meaning interpreted by an individual can change from time to time in line with the change of situation that is found in social interaction.

### III. A BRIEF STORY OF GUNUNG UKIR BATU AREA

Batu is one of the areas surrounded by mountains in East Java, it has several mountainous tourist areas or natural tourism such as hot water, waterfall, and there is artificial tourism. Besides that, Batu has nickname "Batu Kota Sejuta Pesona". It has famoused since the late 9th century, as a tourism city because of the beauty of its natural scenery, the city is located about 19 km west side of Malang city, the temperature ranges from 15-19 degrees Celsius.

Torongrejo village is located in Joenrejo sub-district of Batu city. Many of the society work as farmer. Most of the society is Islam. However, public interest in the art is very high, it can be seen by the establishment of the house of art Gunung Ukir.

A brief history of Torongrejo village, the existence Torongrejo village has been known since prehistoric era, this is based on the finding of archaeological data in the form of *punden* Megalithic artifact located in Tutup hamlet (Krajan)
which is well known as Mbah Ganden (Tunggul Wulung) *punden*. This *punden* building is still maintained by society as the center of village ceremony, especially in *bersih desa* ceremony (*cleaning village from bad thing*). In different places, between Beji village and Torongrejo village, there is a kind of stone mortar used as a grinder for grain (*a kind of paddy*), and religiously used as an instrument of soil fertility ceremony and plants. During the Hindu Buddhist period, it is known as the Goddess of Sri ceremony, besides that, based on the information in the inscription data source in another area of stone mortar, it is also used as ceremonial equipment for establishing *perdikan* area (*Sima*). On this event, a chicken neck is cut (*menetek guluning pitik*) with a stone mortar as its foundation. The brief description above shows that Torongrejo village has been inhabited since prehistoric era with the economic background of farming. (Interview: Ki Iswandi 2019)

Ngukir Hamlet, *Ngukir* is taken from the name of a mountain located in Torongrejo village, because it is located on the sidehill of mountain. The first time who finds this village is Mbah Endek, whose grave is still sacred as a village *punden*. According to the story, the name of *endek* changes from *endho* (*Ken Endhok*) who is mother of Ken Arok the king of Singosari. Another story says that since Ken Arok was taken care by someone else because his father ignored him, Ken Endhok often lived as an ascetic till her body and soul vanish (*muspro*) in mojo (now is given name of Mojorejo *punden*). Then, because it was known that Ken Endhok died and it was carved on Cendono hill, this area was called Ngukir village, because Ken Endhok carved Ken Arok's body and soul, so that he would become the king of Singosari kingdom.

” The Condition of Gunung Ukir ”

(Doc: Lilis Lestari 2019)
"Padepokan Gunung Ukir" is a color that has meaning in Javanese language, Padepokan which means a medium or a place of practice so that it is expected that there will be a unique and interesting artistic creation that can be showed in front of many people. *Gunung* means glorious or great, and *Ukir* which means creativity and art work. For this reason, if the studio continues to be developed, it will become an art and cultural group that grows large, it has high value and it is expected to be protected by copyright (interview, Ki Iswandi 2019).

One of the activities is collaboration forum of Padepokan Gunung Ukir with STKW Surabaya in the context of Society Service MOU program in the art development concept subject (Lilis Lestari Lecturer, S.Sn, .M.Pd), so that this activity will give supporting data to the author' research result. In addition, besides this activity, there are several activities namely, the creativity process, there are dance, martial art, theater, *jaranan* etc., so that there are many opportunities for the surrounding society and also from outside the village and sub-district who is interested to join with art studio.

(Doc : Lilis Lestari, workshop 2019)

It is said that the two items, in the form of dance scarf and *gongseng* are still sacred by Ki Iswandi. Purified every month of *Syura* and it is given offering also prayers on every full moon night at the same time with *setren* ritual. But the thing that is sacred should not be shown to every one, because the object is believed to have a unseen being. Therefore, before all the ritual processions begin, Ki Iswandi does his own ritual (Suguh).

The ritual is basically the same as sending prayer as in general Javanese send prayer to his/her relative who has died. This tradition is believed to have really existed, the evidence is can be proofed of historical relics such as tomb and punden (petilasan) and relics. All the arts here are instructions from there
IV. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

1. Overview of Informant

Although Ki Iswandi only graduates from junior high school, he is able to create art creation that is known well by public such as Jaran Dowo (long horse), Bacan, Jlegur and others. Ki Iswandi believes that all the art creations that he created are the instructions from his ancestor because he has held a ritual on every full moon at night which he believes that it is a mandate for him. It will regenerate by his daughter, Dewi who always follows the setren ritual and padepokan members, but there are also people from outside padepokan who follow the ritual.

**Tandhak Setren Ritual Process**

1. Before the ritual

*Suguh,* is a ritual done by Ki Iswandi in Nyi Srigati *punden* and for scarf also *gongseng* relics from Nyi Srigati which are believed to bring a luck before all events begin. *Suguh in punden* is the same as sending prayer to the ancestor in order to *setren* ritual can be done perfectly. Whereas *suguh* to the scarf and *gongseng* because of a belief that both objects give good luck. The *suguh* ritual is done by carrying incense or *perapen kemenyan* (charcoal fireplace that is given incense), and offerings namely *pecok bakal dan sandingan,* including incense used as a medium in prayer. Ther is unseen being inside scarf and *gongseng*, so I have to treat them before the event, after that I will go to the *punden.* Suguh, actually, it is just send a prayer. But there are conditions in the form of offerings for *pecok bakal* and *sandingan* (Ki Iswandi: 2019)

*Pecok bakal* and *sandingan* are an offer called *uba rampe* as the main requirement for the ritual. This *Pecok bakal* and *sandingan* must be made in every event. The meaning of *pecok bakal* is that humans always stand and walk. For standing and walking they need energy and to get energy they need equipment which is symbolized in their *pecok.* The offering has function to prevent bad thing or *tolak bala* so that the event will run safely and successfully, as Ki Iswandi said below:
Pecok bakal is the most important offering, in all events there must be made. Not only in padang mbulan event but also in wedding ceremony will also have offering. That is function of suguh. The requirement and the equipment must be complete, if there is less one thing the consequence can be fatal. In kirab and setren are also there. (Ki Iswandi, 2019)

The contents are as follows:

- Kampung Chicken egg
- Flower (bunga tujuh rupa)
- Kinangan (sirih, pinang, njet, etc.)
- Mpon-mpon (various herbs)
- Badeg (water from tape making process)
- Perfume
- Koco serit (glass and comb)
- Jenang sengkolo (red porridge)
- Buceng (cone-shaped white rice)
- Ampyang (blackened rice such as popcorn)
- Cigarettes, incense, and duo
- A bunch of banana of ayu - arranged like two hands looking up

2. Kirab

Kirab is done at noon where all members of arts who will be performing in Padang Bulan event in a carnival around the village include "Tandhak". This Kirab is not a must to be held every month. The most important thing in Padang Bulan event is suguh and also tandhak setren at night. The reason is, at Kirab, it is needed much more money. Usually this Kirab is held only when there is a request to clean the village from bad things for example on every month of syura. But kirab is not a must to do, it is only for giving information or woro woro as told by Ki Iswandi the following:

Rontek jabutan (snack and money) to fight over. Snack or Jajan pasar as a symbol of prosperity and diversity. Money as a medium of exchange.

Market is a symbol of prosperity. There is kaki janggol nyai janggol kang ngrekso ing konten. Because in the market, there are various kinds of people, every thing is in the market. Money is as a medium of exchange for everything in the world. umbul-umbul monco
warno (five color banners) symbol of civilization or glory symbol of padepokan gunung ukir. After kirab, there are also various other art performances which usually start, namely Reog, Kuda Lumping, and several other dances. The art behind, it is as woro-woro or giving information to the public that will be held setren in the evening. To get "roso" in art. Seeing and hearing art performances is very important. This art performance is to train member, also entertaining people so they don't get bored waiting for the main event. (Ki Iswandi July 2019)

During the Ritual
1. Ritual

At Ritual Arena when the torch has been lit, all the light is turned off. Here, the atmosphere had begun to be felt sacred situation, only the audiences’ voices who are whispering and the gamelan music playing softly. This sacred atmosphere is intentionally created, even the audiences do not dare to speak out loud like in the art performance in general. This proves that not only the performers of ritual feel sacred but also the audiences. The ritual requirement besides pecok bekal is white fabric as a symbol of cleanliness and being clean, Kembang setaman which is given water (for siraman), kebuli rice or cone rice or tumpeng and banyu panguripan or traditional water jug (for selamatan) as a source of life energy. The serving is placed behind the ritual arena on a small table in front of the main stage. This main stage is a place for the pengrawit and waranggono who will accompany the ritual with gending music and songs that have been determined.

2. Tandhak Setren Ritual

Sitting cross-legged on the main stage, Ki Iswandi reads the opening prayers. Still in the same position he told me briefly in Javanese about Nyi Srigati who the owner of tandhak setren ritual. During that time gamelan music is playing. After Ki Iswandi finished with his narration, slowly iling-iling gending is begun with tandhak coming into ritual arena. Inside ritual arena, tandhak or dancers are on positions, and Ki Iswandi is going down from the main stage, he is standing behind the arena next to the
offerings while he is also reading prayers and burning incense. This atmosphere, for all tandhak themselves have begun to be felt into their body, the cold of night is accompanied by the melody of iling-iling gending and the light is only from torchlight and the aroma of incense that spreads everywhere.

*At ritual, it is really sacred... so we will be carried away by the sacredness... yeah... wow, I feel goose bumb, miss (interview with Hanifah)*

The reason for using *iling-iling gending* is believed that very sacred and it can invite ancestor (inviting danyang). For ordinary people in general, maybe this music is just ordinary music, but according to animistic belief in Javanese society, this music only should be performed during sacred rituals. At first, there are many people who protested against me, why I use *iling-iling gending*, it is only for sacred ritual. But I say this *setren* is also a sacred ritual. So it doesn't matter to me. (Interview with Ki Iswandi July 2019)

Dewi often dreams of being visited by a beautiful woman named Nyi Srigati ... I am always taught to dance with very flexible movement. ... *gambyong* dance from Central Java. In my dream she told me that she had escaped from war to a remote village in Batu. From the palace in Central Java, she is undercover herself as a dancer by teaching teenagers to dance. (Interview with Sri Dewi Mulyawati (Putri Ki Iswandi)

After the dance is over, all *tandhak* sit kneeling in the arena accompanied by the *ayun-ayun* song. In this kneeling position, all *tandhak* bow their heads and closes their eyes accompanied by reading mantras from ki Iswandi. All *tandhak* closed their eyes pray for themselves, and all *tandhak* praying are more directed to the presence of *kakang kawah adhi ar-i-ari*, which is *sedulur papat kalimo pancer*. In this step, the atmosphere is still sacred and the aroma of incense remains to smell by the audience.

Every time before the ritual, I always pray for myself, miss, *dulur papat pancer*
limo teko kabelh nang awakku (four of my sisters come all to me) by now ... after that it is fine ... at setren it is really felt (interview with Dewi)

Then, it continues with siraman or padusan kembang setaman. At siraman, the sacred atmosphere is felt more sacred by tandhak, where flower water of seven forms (air bunga tujuh rupa) that have been given a prayer making tandhak is more and more ngelangut (wander) in sacredness. Flowers which spread on the head of tandhak is left and tandhak does not move constantly on its concentration by kneeling.

3. After ritual

After dulangan event, all tandhak stand up and dance remo dance, this is called tanjakan. Continue with tayuban (a pair dance) followed by tarik sampur where the sampur or dance scarf is given to one of the audience to be invited to dance in arena. Based on the explanation above, setren in tandhak aims to open the aura and to give pengasihan. By having a good aura and having prestige make the audience interested to see. At this tarik sampur event is an opportunity for tandhak to prove it. If the audiences feel happy, it is a good value for tandhak, besides the income will increase. While the purpose of setren itself according to Ki Iswandi are as follows:

The purpose of Setren is to pray or ask, yes, asking to the God to be given strength. This strength is called Yoni. Setren is asking Yoni to possess the body. (Interview with Ki Iswandi July 2019)

The Process of Understanding of Tandhak Setren Ritual by tandhak understanding of setren will also varies. This is caused by the personal experience of tandhak after following setren ritual which are not the same. As in the following expression:

When I followed setren for the first time, honestly, I didn't know what this setren really was, whether it was its purpose or function. I only have hobbies of dancing and singing. Then, I joined this padepokan. I often also
participated in motion practice and vocal practice. Moreover, I join setren every month, I feel more confident to gather or to perform in front of many people from anywhere. (Interview with Anita Wijaya, July 2019)

Tandhak's Attitude in Following Tandhak Setren Ritual

Relax and concentration are the basic keys that must be had by tandhak in the procession of this setren ritual. That is why before this ritual should only be followed by a single woman who is not married. The consideration is that unmarried woman has not had many problems in her mind and it makes easier for the power called yoni to possess her body. But now it looks like the rule is starting to fade. Setren ritual can be performed on married woman with different prayer, although it still use the same way. As stated by Ki Iswandi:

For woman who has not been married, yoni can possess easily, when she dance, it looks like someone moves her body ... always being accompanied ... well, if married woman has a different ritual and prayer, usually to woman who is married will only accompany her ... (interview with Ki Iswandi)

The Meaning of Tandhak Setren Rituals for Tandhak

1. Confidence

Confidence is one of the most important thing for someone who is involved in the entertainment. Especially tandhak, and that confidence is believed can be obtained by following tandhak setren ritual. This was stated by a tandhak named Ita who initially did not know or understand the meaning of ritual. But after following ritual, she has more self-confidence as stated as follow:

... after I have followed setren ... I have more self confidence moreover if performing in public ...

(Interview with Ita, July 2019)

There is more confidence because dancer belief that following the ritual will give some strength. Thus, from
above understanding, setren ritual for dancers are to give confidence that they have more strength after following the ritual. This belief is including animistic belief. Where tandhak believes in the existence of a metaphysical power that possess her body, giving more feeling of confidence when performing in public. This analysis is supported by the following tandhak expression:

... I feel more relaxed after following the ritual, in dancing like there is a strength in me that encourages more brave to show my ability or perform in front of many people from any group and anywhere.

(Interview with Ita, July 2019)

By following setren ritual, making them able to take over the leadership role or be able to attract the audience to see it. The dance that they do seem to have a very strong power that is a metaphysical power where this power is an energy that is absorbed by a human being from nature and it is used or got from the teacher or by asceticism and fasting. This energy comes from outside human body and possess it, according to its need and use. That is through setren ritual. Thus, the appearance of tandhak is interesting to be seen or watched.

After joining setren, I felt more confident, at first, I just perform on campus, now I am performing everywhere.

Initially, I had felt embarrassed to perform in front of many people, but the proof was after joining setren I started to be brave and more confident.

(Interview with Pundi July 2019)

2. Compassion Power (Ilmu Pengasihan)

Compassion power is given to each tandhak by Ki Iswandi through setren ritual. With compassion power will make it easier for tandhak to attract the attention of the audience. This is recognized by Ki Iswandi himself, as he states: Setren goal is for compassion power, so that tandhak has prestige, so it's easy for her to attract the audience. If the audience is interested, then she will ask to come again (Ki Iswandi,
March 2019)

**Conclusion**

Before all events begin, *Suguh* ritual is conducted by Ki Iswandi himself at Nyi Srigati *punden* and at scarf and *gongseng* relics from Nyi Srigati who are believed having supranatural power to give a luck. Then, continue with *kirab* which is conducted during the daytime where all members of the art who will perform in *padang bulan* event is paraded around the village, including "Tandhak" and the main event is a sacred ritual in the following order:

- By sitting cross-legged on the stage in front of the offerings Ki Iswandi as the leader of the ceremony reads prayers.
- Continue by *tandhak* who come into the ritual arena and perform opening ritual dance dance which is *gambyong* dance accompanied by crazy dance.
- After the dance is over, *tandhak* sit kneeling accompanied by *iling-iling gending* and *ayun-ayun tembang*. Here, Ki Iswandi reads mantras which are then followed by a splash of flowers or *kembang setaman*, drinking jug water, and spoon-feeding with kebuli rice, the rest is distributed to the audience.

**Suggestion**

*Padepokan* should expand cooperation with various institutions. For example, working with schools to find talented children to be trained in various kinds of arts. The purpose is to get more next generation of existing arts. The most important thing is the members of *Padepokan* should always be trained to create new art, so that they can increase the art wealth in *Padepokan*.

For *tandhak* or woman who want to join *setren* ritual, initially, they should understand what is *setren* and its benefits. Thus, from *padepokan* before the ritual, it should give an understanding relating to *setren* that will be performed by the woman. This is important, because of remembering that this *setren* ritual can give benefit to *tandhak* or woman who follow it.
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