



Unveiling Transcendental Symbols in the Rejang Ayunan Tradition of Pupuan, Tabanan

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ABSTRACT

The Rejang Ayunan Dance tradition is one of the rituals conducted during the full moon ceremony (*Purnama Kapat*) in the *Piodalan* Ceremony at Puseh temple, Bale Agung Village, Pupuan Sub-district, Tabanan Regency, Bali. This tradition involves a group of male dancers, ranging from children to unmarried individuals, performing *en masse*. The Rejang Ayunan Dance is a ceremonial dance specifically intended for ritual purposes, particularly the Dewa Yadnya ceremony. According to the belief of the people of Pupuan Village, failure to perform the Rejang Ayunan Dance may result in crop failure, pest infestation, and disease outbreaks. The tradition of Rejang Ayunan Dance has been passed down from one generation to the next and plays a significant role in the social, cultural, and religious life of the Pupuan Village community. However, the existence of this tradition faces challenges from the influences of modernization, urbanization, and changing cultural preferences. The influence of mass media and popular culture can also reduce the interest of the community, especially the younger generation, in learning and practicing this tradition. To address these challenges, the Pupuan Village community needs to strengthen their commitment to preserving this tradition. Steps that can be taken include raising awareness of the value and beauty of the tradition through appropriate education and promotion, actively involving the younger generation in traditional activities, strengthening intergenerational communication, and obtaining financial support and resources from various parties concerned with the preservation of local culture.

Keywords: Rejang Ayunan, Pupuan Village, Transcendental Symbols.

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BACKGROUND

The influence of mass media, tourism, and modern entertainment can affect the interest and preferences of society towards local traditions and cultures. Culture, as a system, will influence communication because communication itself originates from societal culture. Junaidi (2006: 29) states that culture has three influential reasons on communication: teaching significant rules, values, and interpersonal relationships.¹ The impact of culture on communication occurs through three ways: each culture encourages specific communication styles, culture shapes perceptions in society, and culture unites people together (Junaidi, 2006: 29-30). Many traditions and cultures are beginning to fade, such as the *Rejang Ayunan* Dance in Pupuan Village, Tabanan Regency, Bali.

The Rejang Ayunan Dance tradition is one of the rituals conducted during the full moon ceremony (*Purnama Kapat*) in the *Piodalan* Ceremony at Puseh temple, Bale Agung Village, Pupuan Sub-district, Tabanan Regency, Bali. This tradition

involves a group of male dancers, ranging from children to unmarried individuals, performing *en masse*. The Rejang Ayunan Dance is a ceremonial dance specifically intended for ritual purposes, particularly the Dewa Yadnya ceremony. According to the belief of the people of Pupuan Village (cited in Lestari, 2017: 8), failure to perform the Rejang Ayunan Dance may result in crop failure, pest infestation, and disease outbreaks.² The existence of the Rejang Ayunan Dance tradition in Pupuan Village, Tabanan, Bali, represents a cultural phenomenon of significant value to the local community. This tradition has been passed down through generations and plays a significant role in the social, cultural, and religious life of the people in Pupuan Village. The Rejang Ayunan Dance in Pupuan Village is considered a sacred offering associated with religious practices and traditional ceremonies. Typically, this dance is performed as part of ritual sequences and religious celebrations such as offerings to Hindu deities, harvest ceremonies, weddings, and other religious

events.³

Understanding the history and significance of the Rejang Ayunan Dance for the people of Pupuan Village, specifically, and Bali in general, can provide a profound understanding of the importance of this tradition. This dance has deep cultural roots and has been part of Bali's cultural heritage for centuries. However, information about this dance is very limited, including its creator and its significance to the local community (Oktaviari, 2015: 5).⁴ Indonesia possesses a wealth of traditional cultural richness that embodies various meanings unique to each region. However, with rapid development, foreign cultures entering Indonesia can threaten the sustainability of local wisdom in this country (Ermawan, 2017: 7-8).⁵ For example, in Bali, significant social changes have occurred in recent decades, including the impact of globalization and modernization. Therefore, it is crucial to preserve and conserve the values of this art through communication processes that deepen the understanding of meaning.



Figure 1.⁶ The existence of the Rejang Ayunan Dance tradition in Pupan Village, Tabanan, Bali, represents a cultural phenomenon of significant value to the local community.

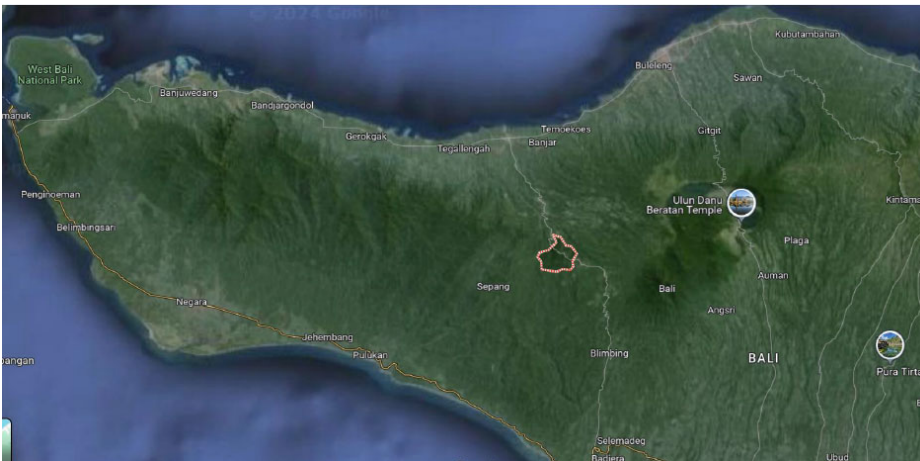


Figure 2.¹¹ Location of Bantiran Village.

The Existence of the Rejang Ayunan Dance Tradition in Pupan Village, Tabanan, Bali

Bandem and deBour, in their book "*Kaja and Kelod: Balinese Dance in Transition*" (2004: 22), state that Rejang is one of the ancient and formal performances characterized by dignity, elegance, and enchanting features. Rejang is a professional dance performed by female members of the temple congregation. The Rejang Ayunan Dance has a close connection with the Dewa Yadnya ceremony at Pura Puseh, Bale Agung Village. Without this dance, the ceremony is considered incomplete. From a functional perspective, dance

performances can be classified as follows:

- Wali* Dance (sacral, religious dance) is an art performed in temples and places related to ceremonies and religious rituals, generally without scripts/roles.
- Bebali* Dance (ceremonial dance) includes all dance arts serving as accompaniments to temple ceremonies or outside temples, usually with scripted stories.
- Balih-balihan* Dance (secular dance) encompasses dance arts with basic elements and high artistic value that do not fall into the categories of *Wali* and *Bebali* dances, serving as entertainment.^{7,8}

According to the belief of the people of Pupan Village, failure to perform the Rejang Ayunan Dance may lead to crop failure, pest infestation, and disease outbreaks. Thus, based on the above provisions, it can be concluded that the Rejang Ayunan Dance is a sacred dance classified as *Wali* dance. This classification is due to the fact that the Rejang Ayunan dance does not involve scripts that serve as tools in conducting ceremonies and is only performed during the Dewa Yadnya ceremony at Pura Puseh, Bale Agung Village in the Pupan indigenous Village.⁹ The Rejang Ayunan Dance utilizes signs and symbols to convey messages and meanings to the audience. Symbols such as body movements, hand positions, facial expressions, and dancer costumes can carry cultural values, beliefs, or stories related to this tradition. During the *Ngusaba Tegteg* or *Ngenteg Linggih* ceremony at Pura Puseh Bale Agung, Pupan indigenous Village, the Rejang Ayunan Dance was performed for the first time. The idea was conceived when they recently cleared the forest. The Rejang Ayunan Dance was performed by males, aged 14 and above. Generally, the Rejang Dance is performed by female dancers, but in Pupan Village, particularly the Rejang Ayunan Dance, it is performed by male dancers because the local community at that time believed that only men were capable of and had the obligation to fell trees and clear the wilderness.¹⁰

How the Dance is Performed and Inherited

The Rejang Ayunan Dance tradition in Pupan Village is preserved due to the strong awareness and commitment of the community to uphold their cultural heritage. The younger generation in Pupan Village is also involved in learning and continuing this tradition through oral teachings and direct practice with their predecessors. Additionally, the crucial role of intergenerational communication in transferring knowledge and skills related to the Rejang Ayunan Dance also supports its existence. Young dancers learn through observation, guidance, and training provided by more experienced and knowledgeable dancers. Strong interpersonal communication between



Figure 3.¹⁵ After all the dancers take their turns, they compete to climb the tree branch via the rope.

the dancers and traditional figures helps maintain the authenticity of the movements, songs, and meanings of this dance. The process of communication in conveying the meaning of the Rejang Ayunan dance tradition in the Pupuan Village community is inseparable from the role of the village customary council. The customary council has made various efforts to continue the meaning of the Rejang Ayunan dance tradition. This effort is also supported by the community environment in Pupuan Village, which is still rich in the implementation of sacred religious activities, making it easier for the community to understand the meaning of the Rejang Ayunan dance tradition. As a process that follows its course, the inheritance of the meaning of the Rejang Ayunan dance tradition in the Pupuan Village community shows similarities to Lasswell's basic communication analysis model. The communication process in the inheritance of this tradition applies to communication within their youth environment. With its components including communicator, message, media, receiver, and effect, the communication process in this model is unidirectional.¹²

Transcendental communication can be used to understand and analyze the Rejang Ayunan Dance from a symbolic and meaningful perspective. The Rejang dance is performed at the peak of the *piodalan* ceremony at Pura Puseh Bale Agung in the Pupuan indigenous Village. It is important to note that the term *Ayunan*

refers to a swinging game that uses ropes tied to tree branches. Thus, the Rejang Ayunan Dance is a swinging dance. After the dancers make three rounds around the temple in the central courtyard, they immediately proceed to a *cempaka* tree (*magnolia champaca*) in the temple courtyard to play on a swing prepared beforehand by hanging onto one end of the rope. The Rejang Dance is performed at the peak of the *piodalan* ceremony at Puseh Bale Agung temple. Based on this information, it can be inferred that the Rejang Ayunan Dance dates back to the 11th century in 1072 AD, inherited from the ancestors of the Pupuan indigenous Village community, which needs to be preserved.

The dancers of the Rejang Ayunan dance consist of males aged approximately 4 years to unmarried individuals, numbering between 40-60 dancers. The previous Rejang dancers are not predetermined. All local residents or supporters of the temple can dance as long as they are unmarried. With the sound of the gong signalling that the dancers are ready at Pura Puseh Bale Agung at the predetermined time of 13:30 WITA. The Rejang Ayunan dancers are already prepared in their respective homes. After being instructed by the indigenous leader, the officials sprinkle holy water on the dancers to pray for safety and cleanliness. The gamelan starts playing with a slow rhythm, signalling that the dancers are ready to perform their duties.

The Rejang Ayunan dance has very simple dance movements, characteristic of ancient dances full of dedication to the ancestors. The treasury of dance movements includes:

- a. *Dengkleng Kanan*: starting from the left position, the right foot is lifted forward with the left foot as the support. The left hand is parallel to the eyes, the right hand is parallel to the chest, with both wrists rotating continuously, performed in 3x8 counts starting after the gong.
- b. *Dengkleng Kiri*: starting from the right position, the foot is lifted forward with the left foot following, the right hand is parallel to the eyes, the left hand is parallel to the chest, with both wrists rotating continuously, performed in 3x8 counts after the gong.
- c. *Nyeregseg Right*: performed towards the right front corner, where the right foot movement is followed by the left foot, performed 1x8 times, starting after *kempur*.
- d. *Nyeregseg Left*: performed towards the left front corner, where the left foot movement is followed by the right foot.
- e. *Nglenjong Right*: the body leans forward (bowed), the left foot is lifted backward about 90 degrees, the right foot is used as support. The right hand is straight backward, the left hand is straight forward, with both palms facing upwards, performed 1x8 (one gong).^{13,14}

The performance venue for the Rejang Ayunan Dance is not specifically constructed in terms of size or decoration. However, this dance takes place in the temple courtyard, central courtyard, and temple courtyard. In the temple courtyard, the dancers circle the shrine three times. Then, in the central area, the dancers move from the temple courtyard to the central area and circle it three times. After circling three times in the central area, the dancers move to the temple courtyard while continuing to dance to the melodious gamelan rhythm. When approaching the third circle, the tempo of the gamelan is accelerated. Finally, the dancers head to the magnolia tree in the temple courtyard. One of the branches of the tree, previously tied upwards with a rope whose end hangs down. The end of the rope is tied to the tree

branch, hanging various offerings such as a roasted chicken, a piece of wooden banana, ketupat, and a bottle of arrack. After all the dancers take their turns, they compete to climb the tree branch via the rope. Once a dancer successfully reaches the top, they are entitled to the feast prepared beforehand on the tree. Other dancers return to the temple courtyard, signalling the end of the performance.

Challenges

The Rejang Ayunan Dance tradition in Pupuan Village also faces difficulties. The interest of the younger generation in learning and practicing this tradition can be influenced by modernization, urbanization, and changes in cultural preferences. Moreover, communities more exposed to contemporary entertainment may no longer be interested in this tradition due to the influence of mass media and popular culture. In Pupuan Village, Tabanan, Bali, the community faces several challenges in maintaining the Rejang Ayunan Dance tradition, including 1) Changes in Values and Community Interests, 2) Lack of Financial Support and Resources, 3) Intergenerational Communication Challenges, and 4) Influence of Modernization and Technology.

Changes in values and community interests can pose challenges in maintaining the Rejang Ayunan Dance tradition. In an increasingly globalized modern era, the interest of the younger generation in traditional cultural traditions often decreases. Factors such as the tendency to adopt dominant popular culture or a shift towards more materialistic values can make people less interested and actively involved in practicing and learning this dance. Furthermore, preserving cultural traditions like the Rejang Ayunan Dance requires adequate financial support and resources. Activities such as training, making and maintaining traditional costumes, and organizing performances require significant costs. Without adequate support from the government, cultural institutions, or sponsors, communities may struggle to maintain and develop this tradition.

Other problem such as Intergenerational Communication

Challenges emphasized on the importance of transferring knowledge and skills from older generations to younger generations in maintaining the Rejang Ayunan Dance tradition should not be overlooked. Challenges in intergenerational communication, such as differences in understanding, different lifestyles, and lack of interest from the younger generation, can hinder the effective transfer of knowledge and skills of this tradition. lastly, the influence of modernization and technological advancements can change the lifestyle and cultural preferences of society. Adoption of social media, digital entertainment, and fast-paced lifestyles may reduce the time and attention given to learning and practicing cultural traditions. The community in Pupuan Village may face challenges in balancing modern development and cultural tradition preservation.

Based on the Minister of Internal Affairs Regulation number 52 of 2007 concerning guidelines for the preservation and development of customary and social cultural values, it is stated in Article 3 that the Preservation and Development of Customary and Social Cultural Values are carried out through: a) basic concepts; b) basic programs; and c) implementation strategies.¹⁶ The younger generation in Pupuan Village, Tabanan, Bali, can play a significant role in preserving the Rejang Ayunan Dance tradition.

Some efforts that can be made by the younger generation to maintain and preserve this tradition include Learning and Increasing Awareness. The younger generation can actively learn and understand the Rejang Ayunan Dance tradition through training, workshops, or courses organized by experienced dancers or local traditional figures. Increasing their awareness of the importance of preserving this cultural heritage will help them appreciate and preserve this tradition better. The younger generation can actively participate in performances and ceremonies related to the Rejang Ayunan Dance. They can become dancers, musicians, or play other important roles in traditional events involving this tradition. Their participation not only provides practical experience in practicing this tradition but also strengthens their

emotional bonds and cultural identity.

The younger generation can play a significant role in documenting and using social media to promote the Rejang Ayunan Dance tradition. They can capture important moments in the form of photos and videos and share them through social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, or personal blogs. This will help expand the reach and increase public awareness of this tradition. The younger generation can engage in research and writing about the Rejang Ayunan Dance tradition. By conducting further research on the history, meaning, movements, and related musical instruments, they can contribute to a deeper understanding of this tradition. Their research findings can be published in the form of articles, books, or academic journals, thus serving as a reference for cultural researchers and future generations.

In efforts to maintain its existence, preservation and promotion efforts for the Rejang Ayunan Dance tradition need to be undertaken. The government, cultural institutions, local communities, and individuals concerned with cultural preservation can collaborate to enhance public appreciation and understanding of the importance of this tradition. Documentation, performances, and training of the Rejang Ayunan Dance can also serve as means to introduce and preserve this tradition to the younger generation and the wider community. With consistent and sustainable efforts from the younger generation in Pupuan Village, the Rejang Ayunan Dance tradition can remain alive and thrive. Their role is crucial in passing down this cultural heritage to future generations and ensuring its long-term preservation.

CONCLUSION

The tradition of Rejang Ayunan Dance has been passed down from one generation to the next and plays a significant role in the social, cultural, and religious life of the Pupuan Village community. This dance is considered a form of sacred offering related to religious practices and customary ceremonies, often performed in a series of rituals and religious celebrations such as harvest ceremonies, weddings, and other religious events. However, the

existence of this tradition faces challenges from the influences of modernization, urbanization, and changing cultural preferences. The influence of mass media and popular culture can also reduce the interest of the community, especially the younger generation, in learning and practicing this tradition. To address these challenges, the Pupuan Village community needs to strengthen their commitment to preserving this tradition. Steps that can be taken include raising awareness of the value and beauty of the tradition through appropriate education and promotion, actively involving the younger generation in traditional activities, strengthening intergenerational communication, and obtaining financial support and resources from various parties concerned with the preservation of local culture.

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