

The Role of Art in Disseminating Nature Conservation Awareness: Case Study of Tanen Art in Central Java, Indonesia

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Abstract

Dance as a symbol system could be understood as a marking system. This meant that the presence of dance this research seeked was to find the position of *Tanen* art in growing awareness of nature conservation for the people of Grintingan, Lencoh Village, Selo District, Boyolali Regency, Central Java, Indonesia, and how it played a role in the idea of Indonesian cultural development. The research was conducted using qualitative data obtained through the participant observation method, which was a method that anthropological study enthusiasts commonly carried out. Through this method, researchers lived together in the socio-cultural environment of the community studied and were involved in various life activities of residents. This kind of cultural development could later answer the nation's problems. Strengthening identity by preserving, utilizing, and developing local cultural wealth while still considering the phenomenon of other cultural products, namely general culture (mass, commercial), alternative culture (art, invention), and classical culture containing historical dimensions, would encourage the discovery of a true and adaptive national identity to the pace of the times.

Keywords: Dance, local knowledge, local wisdom, environmental sustainability

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1. Introduction

Indonesia is a country with complex diversity, from religious diversity (Fitriani 2020), ethnicity and ethnicity (Pitoyo and Triwahyudi 2017), language (Melati 2018), culture, and customs (Iskandar 2017). The existing diversity is a potential that the state has managed through development programs. However, the development carried out so far is almost always oriented toward physical infrastructure, which manifests in the infrastructure of physical buildings such as roads, bridges, buildings, and others (Nugraha 2018). Aspects of mental development that lead to ethics, education, religion, and the like, including culture and the arts, are initiated (Mulyana 2015). The development, which has always been synonymous only with physical construction, should be redefined more fully to answer the nation's problems of tension and friction, sectarianism, disorientation, and disidentification, which are increasingly evident today.

On the other hand, recently, the tragedy of natural disasters in the form of landslides and floods often hit. Many casualties and materials fell, urging the assistance and participation of all components of society (Handayani 2022). So far, global warming is considered the main factor in ecological disasters (Novalinda et al. 2022). This phenomenon is due to the reduced carrying capacity of land and ecosystems, which affects seasonal changes that are difficult to predict. Because of its global scale, there is no guarantee that disasters will not happen again in the future; otherwise, they will occur more frequently. It can't help but wait for pro-environmental action to be carried out. Nature conservation became a necessity.

The government, through relevant agencies, has tried to deal with this problem with its regulations and policies. However, instead of manifesting concrete, this effort misses the point of indoctrination, running unilaterally without ordinary consciousness, and is ragged in its implementation. This is due to the lack of sincerity in the work of the government and related agencies to deal with the complexity of the problem and the awareness of the people who still hold traditional procedures. An attractive, contextual and persuasive propaganda tool is needed so that the message can reach the public.

As a plural nation in the expression of cultural arts, art as a creative work in aesthetic forms and flavors has become part of people's lives. Art is an intense form of the general community, thus adding to its power of communication and even expanding its meaning. So, art can be an effective medium to convey awareness about nature conservation. This kind of art may already be widely available in Indonesia. Some dances, such as *tayub*, *Mak Engket* from Minahasa, *Piring* dance from Minang or Lenso dance from Maluku act as fertility rites. However, there are interesting things that we can learn together in Grintingan Hamlet, Lencoh Village, Selo District, Boyolali. In the hamlet at the foot of Mount Merbabu there is *Tanen* art that depicts the daily life of the local people in farming. As the name implies, *Tanen* describes their passion for cultivating farmland, hoeing, weeding grasses, and fertilizing to the joy of harvest.

The art that developed from the art of *ketoprak* that has lived in the hamlet since two decades ago, is played by seven pairs of young men dressed in peasant-style *sorjan*, accompanied by complete Javanese gamelan. Apart

from the rich and diverse types of art in the Merapi-Merbabu area, most of the folk arts of this region feature the figure of a soldier with or without riding a horse or a *buto* (giant) figure. *Tanen* is an interesting alternative spectacle to see a portrait of the reality of the local people. As part of an agrarian society, *Tanen* has a clear understanding in agriculture, nature conservation, and the environment. In addition to being firmly visible in its motion, it also appears in the song's lyrics, the property of musical accompaniment (*kentongan*), and the initial context of its artistic function. Judging from the social sciences, dance connects collective consciousness, social structure, and individual dance function in that structure. In the concept of sociology/anthropology, dance is an integral part of the socio-cultural dynamics of society. Both are carried out through the symbols in the dance.

The symbol system is something created by man and conventionally used together, organized, and wholly studied to give an understanding of the nature of "man", that is, a meaningful framework for orienting himself to the other, to his environment, and to himself, as well as a product and dependence in social interaction (Sumandiyo 2007). Dance is seen as a system of symbols that are mental representations of subjects and vehicles of human conception of a message to be permeated. Dance as a symbol system can also be understood as a marking system. This means that the presence of dance cannot be separated from the aspects of movement, accompaniment, place, floor pattern, time, dressing, makeup, and property. This marking system carries a literal meaning and is directly indicated according to conventions formed jointly by the society or culture to which the symbol or sign applies. This will be the rationale for studying *Tanen* art as an expression of art as part of disseminating awareness of nature conservation and an example of a form of Indonesian cultural development. Based on this background, this research seeks to find the position of *Tanen* art in growing awareness of nature conservation for the people of Grintingan, Lencoh Village, Selo District, Boyolali Regency, Central Java, Indonesia, and how it plays a role in the idea of Indonesian cultural development.

2. Method

The research was conducted using qualitative data obtained through the participant observation method, which is a method that anthropological study enthusiasts commonly carry out. Through this method, researchers live together in the socio-cultural environment of the community studied and are involved in various life activities of local residents (Hasanah 2017). This approach is in line with qualitative research and was carried out in Grintingan, Lencoh Village, Selo District, Boyolali Regency, Central Java, Indonesia to understand the role of *Tanen* art for the local community.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. *Tanen* Art as Local Wisdom

Art as a creative work in aesthetic form and taste is part of people's lives. The existence of art develops from cognitive activity that is purely in the ways humans use. As a plural nation in the expression of cultural arts, art as a creative work in aesthetic form and taste has become part of the life of the Indonesian people. Culture is a way of life embraced collectively in a community environment that is the direction in acting and thinking to meet the needs of life both physically and spiritually. Cultural diversity in Indonesia is inseparable from tribal and regional ties, in which art is one of the seven cultural elements that grow and develop in a socio-religious society. In other words, art cannot be separated from social life, and art arises from interests closely related to the beliefs of the local community (Sujono 2003). Its existence has therefore been firmly rooted in a framework about collective life. Art is an intense form of the general community, thus adding to its power of communication and even expanding its meaning. That is why each unit of society grows and develops various arts that reflect the situation and conditions of nature and the social life of the people of a particular region.

On the other hand, the occurrence of natural disasters in the form of landslides and floods recently requires real pro-environmental action that must be carried out. Nature conservation became a necessity. However, the conservation and mitigation carried out became indoctrination, running unilaterally without everyday awareness and ragged in its implementation. This is due to the complexity of the problem and the awareness of the people who still hold traditional ordinances. An attractive, contextual and persuasive propaganda tool is needed so that the message can reach the public. In Grintingan, Lencoh Village, Selo District, Boyolali, Central Java-Indonesia, *Tanen* art depicts the daily life of the local people in farming. As the name implies, *Tanen* describes their passion for cultivating farmland, hoeing, weeding and weeding the grass, and fertilizing until the joy of harvest. Apart from the rich and diverse types of art in the Merapi-Merbabu area, most of the folk arts of this region feature the figure of a soldier with or without riding a horse or a *buto* (giant) figure. *Tanen* is an interesting alternative spectacle to see a portrait of the reality of the local people.

Grintingan is part of the Selo plateau area, located between Mount Merapi and Mount Merbabu. Grintingan is a cool climate mountainous area, a largely agricultural area with the main output of vegetables. The majority of the population worked as farmers and converted to Islam. As a community living at the foot of Mount Merbabu, the Grintingan people grow crops on most of the land with a more than 60 degrees slope. In this case, they also use a unique terrace system according to the contours of the ground veins. With weather conditions and

seasons that are difficult to predict, the residents of Grintingán often experience landslides. Several times there have even been main roads connecting the village with the main road covered by landslide soil as a result of the rain that fell not so heavily.

Tanen art, is an expression embodied in the form of dance that describes the daily life of the local people in farming. As the name implies, *Tanen* in Indonesian means farming or farming. This art illustrates the spirit of the local community in cultivating agricultural fields, hoeing, weeding and weeding grasses, fertilizing, and harvesting joys. This art is played between 7 pairs of dancers or 14 people who are all men, using a farmer-style sorjan consisting of a long-sleeved top and calf-length pants, brown with a horizontal line motif, using a slope-patterned jarik cloth wrapped around the waist (above the pants) with folds of supit-shaped fabric on the front, and a black circular headdress, accompanied by Javanese gamelan. Unlike the folk arts in the Boyolali Regency area, which mostly display the concept of soldiering by using braid horses as property or *buto* (giant) figures, *Tanen* is a unique art because it reflects the reality of society in the maintenance of nature and presents the characteristics of the region.

The simplicity of its motion vocabulary does not diminish the message embodied in this art, such as the value of togetherness in society seen in the appearance of movement and the value of awareness of the conservation or maintenance of nature and the environment. Like the concept put forward by SD. Humardani (1979, 6) on folk art concerning the simplicity of the vocabulary of *Tanen* dance movements that folk art does not require distant medium movements, so it does not demand long preparation and practice for its embodiment or reasonable demonstration. The equipment is simple; this form grows and develops in rural areas. As part of an agrarian society, *Tanen* understands agriculture, nature conservation, and the environment. In addition to being firmly visible in its motion, it also appears in the lyrics of the song used (culture and conservation), the property of musical accompaniment (*kentongan*), and the initial context of its artistic function.

Anthropological studies have shown that various peoples and cultures of the archipelago have an ethical and *local genius* base that accumulates as economic, social, and symbolic capital. Religious ethics has established the institution of faith as a manifestation of spiritual intelligence. Art ethics has fostered aesthetic institutions as concretizations of emotional intelligence. Social ethics has established an institution of solidarity as a representation of social intelligence. The ethics of science has accelerated the institution of knowledge as a dynamism of intellectual intelligence. Environmental ethics develops ecological institutions as an embodiment of the intelligence of the cosmos. Their needs fulfillment system includes all elements of life, so they understand programs, activities, and related implementations to maintain, improve, and develop these needs by paying attention to ecosystems (flora, fauna, and minerals) and human resources contained in themselves. Judging from the social sciences, dance connects collective consciousness, social structure, and individual dance functions in that structure. Textually, dance can be understood from the forms and techniques related to its composition or the technique of its dancers. While conceptually related to sociology or anthropology, dance is an integral part of the socio-cultural dynamics of society. Both are carried out through the symbols in the dance.

The symbol system is something created by man and conventionally used together, organized, and studied to give the understanding of the nature of "man," that is, a meaningful framework for orienting himself to the other, to his environment, and himself, as well as a product and dependence in social interaction (Sumandiyo 2007). So, dance is seen as a system of symbols that are mental representations of subjects and vehicles of human conception of a message to be permeated. Dance as a symbol system can also be understood as a marking system. This means that the presence of dance cannot be separated from the aspects of movement, accompaniment, place, floor pattern, time, dressing, makeup, and property. This marking system carries a literal meaning and is directly indicated according to conventions formed jointly by the society or culture to which the symbol or sign applies. In context, *Tanen* is staged at every celebration of the 28th of *Sapar* month. As with the meaning of the month of *Sura* in most areas of Java, *Sapar* has an essential meaning in Grintingán. This month, a ceremony is held asking for the blessings of safety and welfare for the local community. Related to most of the population who make a living as farmers, the ritual of kenduri and planting tree seedlings is carried out around the springs that irrigate their hamlets.

Beyond the belief of *pepundhen* (shrine), like most other Javanese community groups, nature conservation awareness has been expressed in Grintingán. And this continues in *Tanen* staging form. The lyrics of the song, it is revealed the call for conservation: *He prakanca aja bingung/ Ayo jaga gunung-gunung/ Merbabu lan Merapi/ Lumakune konservasi/ Uga penghijauan iki/ Dadi sarana sayekti panguripan/ Warga ing Lencoh, Selo* (Hey friends don't be confused/ let's take care of the mountains/ Merbabu and Merapi/ conservation efforts/ and also this greening/ become a way to achieve a better life/ for residents in Lencoh, Selo).

In his motion, *Tanen* has indirectly implied the agricultural pattern measures that the government has been formulating through its agricultural policies. The Grintingán people have transcended such consciousness, which is reflected in *Tanen*'s artistic movements. The vocabulary motion in question is *nyabit* (splitting), *ngarit* (looking for grass), *macul* (hoeing) and also *jlong-jlong* (jumping around). This is local wisdom in the form of self-knowledge, exploring meaning and relationships more broadly, having a broad perspective, taking

perspectives in their considerations, having an accurate view of their strengths and weaknesses (including the limits of what can be done), and looking carefully at important issues (Leary in Fauzanafi, 2005). Traditional people can interpret nature most simply but also smartly. They take a sign from the environment that lives it and derive it from technology and local knowledge that relates to value, religion, and social life (Maksum 2001).

3.2. Dissemination of Nature Conservation Awareness

Nevertheless, it is worth understanding that the view of the symbol system points to the concept, not the object. Dance is a presentational symbol that points to hidden meanings that require interpretation, that is, uncovering the meaning hidden behind the meanings that are immediately visible or revealing the level of meaning presupposed in the literal meaning (Langer 1988). In addition to its integrative function for his society, *Tanen* reveals his concept of performance as a mediator without falling into vulgar and banal apparitions. The concept of nature conservation and the environment flows smoothly and comfortably incorporated into the expression of its art.

Tanen has more value as a unique art, in contrast to the surrounding arts, which actually represent the characteristics of the region. Therefore, he was able to attract a large audience. It is at this point that *Tanen* can become an effective medium for disseminating the value of nature and environmental conservation awareness. Not only in farming communities which, of course, have an absolute dependence on the preservation of nature, along with the increasing issue of global warming, but nature conservation has also indeed become a necessity. Currently, *Tanen* art is well known by the wider community in Selo and continues to grow with the support of the local community, who have a high sense of care, enthusiasm, and love for art. *Tanen* art performance is entertainment to relieve people's fatigue after they carry out their daily routines and become a vehicle for meeting between community members because when the show is held, the audience comes not only from Grintingan but also from the area around this district. Thus it can be understood how potential the power of *Tanen* art is in the dialogue of civilizations, such as spreading awareness about nature conservation.

In Grintingan itself, supported by the context of its routine implementation as an art that must be displayed at the time of *Saparan*, indirectly, the awareness of nature conservation continues there. The *Sendang* ritual that is part of the *Saparan* ceremony, which is in the form of offerings on the tree protecting springs for Grintingan hamlets and regular performances of *Tanen* art, however, plays an important role in carrying out nature conservation awareness for the Grintingan community in particular. In effect, in the dry season, their springs never dry out, and the strength of the soil is stronger due to the clutches of the trees planted and growing on it, as well as directly proportional to the success of their agricultural work. In addition, *Tanen* art has begun to receive attention from the local government to become a characteristic of the local area, displayed in the packaging of tourist dishes. As is known, Selo was inaugurated by the President (at that time) Megawati became a tourist area of SSB (Solo-Selo-Borobudur).

4. Conclusion: The Role of Art in the Idea of Cultural Development

The ecological footprint produced by development so far cannot be maintained. The development paradigm concentrated on the economic sector must be changed. Spatial orientation is not just about making roads, malls, and factories but saving the environment. The economy is part of the ecosystem, but the cost of missing or damaged resources and social impacts are not calculated. The environment is a long-term and sustainable issue. Knowledge of the impact of environmental damage may already exist, but it is desperate to be breached.

So far, Indonesia has been known as a paradise land, so calm, calming and spreading prosperity for the people living there. But when it rained in just one day, in an instant, the picture turned scary and ruined what had happened. *The mindset* that has always been using nature for the benefit of the present must be revised and followed by real action. With an integrative function for the community, *Tanen* art has more value that can attract a large audience. It is at this point that *Tanen* art can be an effective medium for the learning and appreciation of the arts and the management of the performing arts, as well as the real revitalization of *local wisdom* values in common life. In a broader context, *Tanen* art can be a vehicle for cultural development and learning the positive values of Indonesian human mental development.

This kind of cultural development can later answer the nation's problems. Strengthening identity by preserving, utilizing, and developing local cultural wealth while still considering the phenomenon of other cultural products, namely general culture (mass, commercial), alternative culture (art, invention), and classical culture containing historical dimensions, will encourage the discovery of a true and adaptive national identity to the pace of the times.

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