



## COMMODIFICATION OF REOG AND WAROK ARTS AS CULTURAL IDENTITY OF PONOROGO REGENCY

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### **Abstract**

*The art of reog an warok in Ponorogo Regency is a community culture formed through a long historical process. Amid the onslaught of foreign cultures, reog Ponorogo still exists as an artistic tradition and is in demand by the community. Commodification is an unavoidable phenomenon in the era of globalization, where an object is converted into a selling value. Culture is inseparable from commodification, where economic value is the main attraction in commodification. This research aims to reveal and describe the various strategies of the commodification of reog and work arts in the Ponorogo Regency. The method used is descriptive qualitative. The research data collection used in-depth interview techniques, observation, and documentation studies. The research analysis was conducted inductively, and the data validity technique used source triangulation. The results of this study are, the art of reog Ponorogo has experienced commodification where the Ponorogo Regency government makes reog a symbol of tourism, which aims to present to source of regional income. Commodification and the existence of tradition in the art of reog Ponorogo can go hand in hand, despite the shift in orientation but reog art is still attached as the identity of the people of Ponorogo Regency.*

**Keywords:** Reog and Warok Arts, Commodification, Cultural Identity

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the current era of globalization, the existence of folk art is at a nadir. In the Indonesian context, cultural analysts explain the occurrence of neo-Feudalism in the economy, politics, and culture so that democracy is also interpreted as the spirit of feudalism values. Cultural transformation has resulted in cultural involution where feudal dualism and modernism are obstacles in the process of cultural and value integration (Sutrisno, 2005). The pressure from outside influences on folk art can be seen from the influence of various popular art works and also more modern art works known as pop culture.

These popular arts have more freedom and ease of communication both naturally and technologically. In addition, government officials seem to prioritize economic benefits over cultural ones, so that folk art is increasingly eroded in its originality. In fact, for Indonesian folk art, the opportunity to adapt various arts from outside is very open, because the wealth of art owned by the Indonesian people is very adequate to be popularized internationally. To achieve this, there is a need for efforts or improvements that need to be considered so that the traditional art packaging of the Indonesian nation can be accepted and developed globally, while still referring to the strength of original values and local wisdom.

Cultural commodification is a phenomenon that cannot be avoided in the era



of globalization. There is a shift in meaning in a culture, where previously culture was the result of human creativity and creativity which later became a guide to life, but in the era of globalization cultural elements such as language, art and social organization are transformed into commercial goods (Niko & Atem, 2019). Cultural exploration through tourism is a form of cultural commodification strategy, where the essential values in the culture then fade because the orientation of economic income becomes a priority (Laila & Qudsy, 2021).

One of the cultures that still exists today is Reog Ponorogo. Reog is a colossal folk performing art that has been recognized by the people in Indonesia. The legendary story that surrounds the existence of reog art is an attraction in itself. Reog was born in society not only as an entertainment, but has become part of the life of the Ponorogo community (Suseno & Utami, 2022). Reog usually examines more about the culture that exists in Indonesia and the psychological implications in it (Ibrahim et al., 2023; Ibrahim & Riyadi, 2023; Mukhlisin et al., 2023; Sumaryanto & Ibrahim, 2023). Ponorogo is a district located in East Java Province. Ponorogo itself has abundant natural resource potential. Geographically, Ponorogo Regency consists of low and highlands that span an area of 1,371.78 km.

Based on the official website of the Ponorogo Regency Tourism Office, it is known that, Ponorogo has several cultures that still survive, namely; reog, elephant-gajahan, kelingan and wayang kulit. However, the nuances of reog culture are felt when stepping into Ponorogo Regency. The Reog Ponorogo art is one of the arts that cannot be separated from the commodification of culture, this can be seen from the promotion of tourism in Ponorogo Regency which makes reog a symbol. The heavy tourism promotion of Ponorogo Regency, which makes reog as its symbol, indicates that the art of reog has been dragged into the flow of commodification, which is part of the consequences of globalization. Thus, this study aims to reveal the various forms of commodification strategies of the reog and warok arts in Ponorogo Regency.

## **METHODS**

Based on the main research problem, which emphasizes the commodification of reog and warok as a medium of identity communication of Ponorogo Regency, the type of research used is a descriptive qualitative research approach. Descriptive qualitative research, which is a research method that emphasizes the deepening of data in order to obtain the quality of the research results (Bungin, 2011). This research aims to obtain an in-depth and concrete picture related to the commodification of the art of reog Ponorogo and warok. Data collection in the study used direct observation techniques, namely observing reog and warok performances that were displayed as tourism promotion events, in-depth interviews with reog and warok performers, as well as with the Ponorogo Regency Tourism Office, documentation studies, namely researchers conducted literature reviews related to cultural commodification.

The unit of analysis of the research conducted includes figures who know about Reog and warok. Those who became research subjects were chosen with the criteria of people who mastered and knew a lot about Reog and warok as a medium of communication of the Ponorogo identity according to the researcher's initial knowledge of the research subject, so that the researcher could identify it.

The analysis in this study was conducted inductively, where data interpretation was carried out since the data collection process in the field. The researcher made data transcripts from field notes and interview recordings, which were then reduced to obtain data relevant to the research topic.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Commodification of Reog and Warok Arts

Society, culture and communication are inextricably linked. This is because the element that forms members in a society is the transmission process between messages and communication between members. Culture itself is a language used as a communication tool (Gudykunst, 2003). Reog and warok as cultural products are symbols for the people of Madiun Regency, in the art of warok there are martial values inherent in the character of warok. In reog art, warok functions as a representation of a spiritual figure who is famous for his wisdom and wisdom, so that the warok character is inherent in the behavior of the Ponorogo community.

Reog is an art performance that relies on dance and music as a communicator medium to convey its message to the audience. Reog art develops both in terms of history, philosophy, and the art of performance itself. The journey of the reog performance from the beginning of its emergence until now has also experienced a transition process. The increasing interest in tourism, especially in cultural products, has made stakeholders compete to preserve their culture, not only stopping at preserving it, but there has been a shift in orientation towards commercialization (Ulum, 2020). The arts of reog and warok are inseparable from the influence of high tourist interest, so the Ponorogo Regency government then made reog and warok as symbols of tourism.

Reog is a representation of human creativity in the form of folk performing arts. Various mythologies about the origin of reog prove that this art has its own uniqueness. The role of warok as part of the reog story also colors the culture in Ponorogo Regency (Oktyawan, 2015; Khoirurrosyidin, 2014). Ponorogo, reog and warok have become a holy trinity for the community. The rapid influx of external culture has influenced the pattern of people's lives. Protection of regional identity is needed in order to maintain its cultural extension. Cooperation between the government and the community as guardians of culture is needed, this is because the nature of culture is dynamic to the various flows that are around it.

Reog art has a strong dominance of the authorities in each of its developments. Reog art experiences dynamics both in terms of origin stories, dance concepts and even the meaning of the art. The figure of warok as part of reog also experienced reinterpretation and redefinition in society. The domination of the State through several policies has made reog and warok a "power less" position. However, this hegemony is in fact obeyed by reog art groups in Ponorogo Regency.

Reog is no longer just a form of artistic expression, but has become a form of commodity. The end result of this process is the strengthening of regional identity. This can be seen in the management of reog and warok arts as a medium for communicating regional identity. The most obvious thing is the implementation of several national-scale events using the splendor of reog art

(Achmadi, 2012; Oktyawan, 2015; Suseno & Utami, 2022). For the people of Ponorogo Regency who are reog art workers, the shift in meaning and orientation in reog art is seen as an adaptation to changing times. The incessant use of reog as a tourist promotion event, on the one hand, is considered a form of cultural preservation, but on the other hand, it is considered an asset that brings revenue to the region.

Dance is one of the cultural elements that has an attraction for tourists, art is the creation of aesthetic forms that are pleasing (Ulum, 2020). In the reog and warok arts, which include elements of dance and attractions, it is a creation or creation that brings aesthetic pleasure to the audience, especially tourists who are watching reog art for the first time. With the high interest of tourists in reog art, on the other hand, it is also an economic potential, especially for reog art workers who have been performing reog and warok performances based on tradition and ritual, but after the high interest of tourists, reog art has become a commercial performance.

### **Reog Obyogan and Reog Pentas**

The commitment of the Ponorogo Regency government in preserving the art of reog, which is still maintained and continues to grow, one of which is through the national reog festival which has become an annual routine agenda, which is held on Suro night in the Javanese calendar. The reog performance, which used to be witnessed at the local level, has now developed into a national level that is packaged in the form of a festival. The ability of reog to attract tourists is an achievement in itself.

The packaging process carried out by the government in the art of reog gave birth to two forms of reog performances in Ponorogo Regency. The first is the reog stage, which is a reog performance in the form of a festival, which has been clearly stated in the guidebook and is carried out by the reog art worker community who participates in festival events held by the Ponorogo Regency government.

Reog performances are reog art performed at FRN and full moon performances held at the town square. Secondly, reog obyogan performances, where these performances are more attractive to the audience and less obedient to predetermined rules. Reog obyogan is reog art that is more often performed in rural areas, usually in the streets or yards (Suseno & Utami, 2022; Yulianto, 2013). Both reog performance models are representations of the existence of tradition and commodification, reog obyogan which is more attached to the grassroots is a tradition that is still inherent, and reog performances through festivals are a form of commercialization to increase tourists and present a source of income for the region.

Gambar pertunjukan reog dan warok



Commodification is the starting point in the process of forming the political economy theory of communication. Commodification narrates the way capitalism achieves its goals by accumulating capital, and realizes the transformation of use value into exchange value. Commodities and commodification are two things that have a relationship between objects and processes, and become one of the indicators of global capitalism. Commodification is a form of transformation of relationships, which are initially free from things that are traded, into commercial relationships (Agata, 2009; Barker, 2004; Roxanne E. Burton, 2011). Apart from the different perceptions of various groups regarding the art of reog Ponorogo, which is faced with two realities, namely the shift in orientation from tradition to commercialization, as well as the segmentation of reog art performances, namely reog obyogan and reog festival, which is a form of commodification that has been going on all this time.

### **Reog and Warok as Communication Media of Ponorogo Identity**

Media has become the main means for people to experience and learn about various aspects of the world around them. Media and critical culture scholars have used several approaches to understand the socio-cultural significance of media in various aspects of life (Sutrisno, 2005; Giddens, 1990; Gudykunst, 2003). Reog is a communication medium that represents the Ponorogo Regency government in shaping its cultural identity as well as a symbol of tourism. The representation carried out by the Ponorogo Regency government is by providing clear boundaries for reog performances so that they can be accepted and give an aesthetic impression by people outside the region and abroad.

These limitations are contained in the reog performance guidebook issued by DISBUDPARPORA Ponorogo Regency. Although the reog performances have been segmented into two performances, where the reog obyogan market segment is the local community, especially in rural areas, while the reog festival is a government development that makes reog a symbol of tourism in Ponorogo Regency. Reog obyogan is a representation of communication media between communities, that reog is an identity for the people of Ponorogo Regency, while the reog festival performance is a communication medium for the government to people outside the region and abroad to promote tourism in Ponorogo Regency.

The Ponorogo Regency Government also built several statues that symbolize the reog art performance. Some of the figures that are an important part of the reog performance are the warok and bujanganong figures. The main stage on the edge of the Ponorogo Regency square was built as an arena for folk performances. According to Sharp & Malmqvist in (Febriyanto et al., 2018), commodification is an effort to give value to an object where the object can then be traded. The reog art performance that has been managed and developed by the Ponorogo Regency government is an effort to preserve culture and make reog as a culture has a selling value.

The strong currents of globalization that enter the realm of culture, force the Ponorogo Regency government to continue to strive to maintain its regional identity. The reog art chosen by the Ponorogo District Government is an effort to represent the identity of the Ponorogo community. In addition to maintaining the existence of a tradition, it is also a source of income for the region through tourism promotion. In this case, reog art workers also gain recognition, so that

cultural preservation and commodification can go hand in hand.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the reog art of Ponorogo has experienced commodification where the Ponorogo Regency government makes the reog art a symbol of tourism which aims to be a source of regional income. The commodification strategy of the reog art by the Ponorogo Regency government is through the reog festival which is used as an annual agenda, to attract foreign and regional tourists. On the other hand, reog art at the grassroots level still exists through reog obyogan performances, which are commonly performed in rural areas and on the side of the road, in this case commodification and the existence of tradition can go hand in hand. The policy of the Ponorogo district government through the Regent's circular letter that requires every civil servant in the Ponorogo working environment to wear warok clothing as a form of identity is one example of cultural commodification. Penandon as one of the identity symbols of a warok has now become part of the commodity of the Ponorogo district government. These policies are made as a form of commodification of reog and warok from use value to economic exchange value.

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