



**Symbolism in Gandrung Dance and Its Preservation Efforts in Kemiren Village,  
Glagah District, Banyuwangi Regency**

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***Abstract***

*Gandrung is one of the traditional dance arts in the Banyuwangi Regency. Gandrung Banyuwangi dance in the performance there are three parts, namely Jejer Gandrung, ngrepen or repenan, paju or maju Gandrung, and seblang-seblangan. This dance is performed in various events such as circumcision, weddings, tourism events, and in commemoration of the anniversary of the Banyuwangi district city, and is used as local content for the school level. The values contained in the Gandrung dance are the values of struggle, beauty, point of view on life, symbols, culture, and responsibility. Efforts to preserve the Gandrung dance culture so that it does not become extinct are using comprehensive training in schools and studios (Sanggar-sanggar) in Kemiren village, even from kindergarten, elementary to high school. The aims of this study are: (1) to describe the origins of the Gandrung dance, (2) to describe the form in the Gandrung dance movement, (3) to describe the values contained in the Gandrung dance, (4) to describe the efforts to preserve the Gandrung dance. This research is a qualitative descriptive study. To achieve this goal, data were collected using participatory observation, documentation studies, and interviews. The data analysis technique used is an interactive analysis model. The research was conducted in Kemiren village, Glagah sub-district. Banyuwangi district as the object of research is the people of Kemiren village, Gandrung dancers, Kemiren village officials, and the Banyuwangi Culture and Tourism Office. The findings of the study indicate that the origin of the Gandrung dance was started during the colonial period of the Dutch government, where Gandrung was performed by a man named Marsan and replaced by a woman named Temu. The Banyuwangi government even began to oblige every student from elementary to high school to take part in Banyuwangi's Gandrung art extracurricular as an effort to preserve the Gandrung dance. The Banyuwangi Regency Culture and Tourism Office also has a program by actualization which is carried out once a year and its implementation itself at the Gandrung Sewu event. Based on the results of this study, it can be suggested that further research can be carried out, for example, the community understands more about the meaning content contained in each culture owned by the Banyuwangi district and how to maintain and preserve regional culture in a sustainable manner, so it cannot be crushed by the flow of globalization.*

**Keyword:** Symbolism, Value, Gandrung Dance



## PRELIMINARY

Life, or perhaps we can call it living culture, has developed in such a way that it is increasingly complex and diverse. Consequently, to appreciate and manage all of this requires a multi-dimensional approach. If we look at it critically, it turns out that developments in living culture have changed in such a radical and revolutionary way.

This educated, creative and productive culture must be willing to allow themselves to be open to cultural practices such as: creating something that can accommodate imagination, see, hear, touch, smell, or feel anything that is produced by other people/communities through concrete things as well as symbolic forms, to further appreciate and evaluate them as critical reflective work. Because only with practical and reflective work (in the sense of placing it in the context of the proportional and creative meaning) that cultural learning will always be enriched.

Gandrung dance as one of the traditional arts contains the values of local wisdom that exist in the Kemiren village community, including the value of responsibility that lies with the dancers themselves. The dancer has the responsibility to perform the Gandrung dance as well as possible, with a sincere heart without any coercion. The value of beauty lies in the movements performed by the dancers, making the dancers look graceful and beautiful (Ilham, in <http://gandrung-panggilan-jiwa-yang-menari.htm>). Gandrung is a unique traditional art and is also one of the cultural treasures that should be preserved considering its existence which is increasingly sinking in the era of globalization. It is not impossible that by reviving the art of Gandrung dance, it can become a characteristic of the Banyuwangi area and can be an asset for the region. Gandrung Dance has an invaluable wealth, which is expected to create a balance in the face of competition that will clearly occur in the era of the free trade market.

This art form is dominated by a dance with orchestration, namely the art of musical works, so that it can be played by an orchestra, for example, a piano musical instrument that is converted into an orchestral art form. Gandrung Dance is a dance typical of the Banyuwangi region, which is located at the eastern tip of the island of Java. It is not wrong if Banyuwangi is always identified with Gandrung. In reality, Banyuwangi is often dubbed as the Gandrung City. And statues of Gandrung dancers can be found in various corners of the Banyuwangi area.

This shows that art cannot be separated from human civilization, because the creation of a work of art is always related to the impulse of "sense-mind-will" (Finance: 2000: 128). The development of this work of art will always reflect the thoughts, behavior, and human civilization at the time the work is created.

Civilization is also inseparable from lifestyle, views of life, morals, and character at the time where and when civilization takes place. That is why works of art reflect a civilization that takes place at the time the work of art is created. Because in essence, works of art are a reflection of human life and civilization. Therefore, the people of Kemiren village want to continue to preserve the values of local wisdom that they have so far and keep them so that outside influences do not shift traditional arts. It is through this Gandrung dance that the people of Kemiren village try to preserve the values they have so far.



Based on this background, the researchers conducted a study entitled "Symbolism in Gandrung Dance and Its Preservation Efforts in Kemiren Village, Glagah District, Banyuwangi Regency".

### **METHOD**

This type of research uses a qualitative approach. This qualitative approach leads to natural phenomenological research and ethnographic research. Because it was originally used for research in the field of cultural anthropology. This research was conducted because the researcher wanted to explore descriptive phenomena that could not be quantified, such as the meaning of the Gandrung dance, the content of values in the Gandrung dance, pictures, the implementation of the Gandrung dance, its preservation efforts, and so on. This study aims to describe, expound or define the symbolism in the Gandrung dance and its conservation efforts in Kemiren Village, Glagah District, Banyuwangi Regency.

Qualitative research instruments are "human instruments" or humans where the researcher himself is the spearhead of data collection (instruments). Researchers go directly to the field to collect some of the information needed by first already having some guidelines that will be used as tools to collect data. The guidelines are developed from categories/subcategories for which field data will be searched using appropriate techniques. The technique used can be in the form of observation, interviews, and documentation.

### **RESULT**

During the Blambangan guerrilla against Dutch colonialism, Gandrung was played by a man named Marsan. Gandrung art performances at that time were usually performed at night, especially at the full moon in the open courtyard. Gandrung during the Dutch administration was used as a means of struggle, which means that with this Gandrung dance, the Blambangan people were finally free from Dutch colonialism. Gandrung is often performed at weddings, circumcisions, *Petik Laut* (coastal rituals to reflect gratitude to God), and other events. Along with the times, men's dancer was replaced by women because, in Islamic teachings, it had been taught that a man was forbidden to wear jewelry and look like a woman. Performances were held in the evening from 9 pm to 4 am. Sometimes they were also held during the day according to the needs of a particular event. The forms of movement in the Gandrung dance performed in the all-night performance are Topengan, Jejer Gandrung, ngrepen, and Paju Gandrung.

A culture will bring to art. Culture is taken from the values that exist in society. In this case, the art of Gandrung dance contains many local wisdom values such as the value of beauty, the value of responsibility, the value of the view of life, the value of struggle, and the symbolic value. Public perception of the movements and songs in the Gandrung dance, namely the art of Gandrung is able to become the mascot of the city of Banyuwangi.

The Gandrung dancer's costume is a harmonious blend and philosophical meaning requirements and thematic function. This means that each part of the



costume worn by gandrung dancers has a different meaning and function. For example, Omprog or crown, besides it is apart from being a tool to beautify gandrung dancers, also means that a human being always remembers his creator. Ilat-ilat is besides body armor also has the meaning that humans have various kinds of characters and thoughts, all of which can be unified and made one into a nation that needs unity and integrity.

It proves that people call this city the City of Gandrung Banyuwangi and put the statue of the Gandrung dancer that was viewed before entering the Banyuwangi area. Every movement and song that is sung contains a meaning which means that it can inspire the spirit of fighters in fighting the Dutch colonialists. The Ngelayung movement is a closing movement to the audience, both hands above their heads while shaking their heads. This dance is a symbol of gratitude to Dewi Sri who has given prosperity to the people of Kemiren village. In addition, the gending Podo Nonton and Seblang Lukinto which contain the meaning of struggle are used as a code to deceive the Dutch. Banyuwangi government does not remain silent in preserving regional culture, especially this Gandrung dance, this is proven by the existence of various comprehensive training in schools and studios (Sanggar-sanggar Gandrung) in Kemiren village even starting from kinderkarten, elementary to high school.

### DISCUSSION

Based on the results of research on the origin of the Gandrung dance, the researcher concluded that the origin of the Gandrung dancer was carried out by a man named Marsan, the man who became Gandrung from the remnants of the Blambangan and Balinese troops. Every day they walked around tirelessly visiting places inhabited by the remnants of the people of Blambangan, who lived in dispersal with very poor conditions, in addition to providing entertainment, collecting donations, and distributing them to those who needed help. They also sang the contents of the songs about the messages of struggle. It turned out to bring brilliant results that were hard to believe. Gandrung during the Dutch administration was used as a means of struggle, which means that with the Gandrung dance, the Blambangan people were finally free from Dutch colonialism because, with the Gandrung dance, the Dutch could be tricked into carrying out their every action.

In recent developments, the Gandrung dance was finally replaced by women, because in Islam it has been taught that a man is forbidden to wear jewelry and look like a woman. The origin of female Gandrung dancers comes from Seblang dancers. At one time the daughter of a resident of Cungking hamlet named Semi was seriously ill and there was no medicine that could cure her. Then her mother said to Semi who was sick as follows: "If you are healed, I will make you Seblang, but if you don't get well, then no".

Coincidentally, after that, Semi recovered from her illness, and to fulfill Mak Midah's words, then Semi became a Seblang dancer. It turned out that many people admired him and then every night the people around him tried to hold performances of the art. What happened to Semi was also experienced by Temu around 1969, then the idea arose from the people around him to make Temu a Gandrung dancer. Since



this, male Gandrung dancers have been gradually reduced to none at all and since then, Temu has become a beginner for the start of a new round of Gandrung dancers performed by women until now.

(Ilham, in <http://ilham89.ngeblogs.com//gandrung-panggilan-jiwa-yang-menari>) states that the values of local wisdom contained in the Gandrung dance are responsibility, beauty, way of life, culture, and symbolism. The value of responsibility is found in a Gandrung dancer teacher who teaches the Banyuwangi cultural dance to students at school to be preserved in modern society, although many changes have occurred from modern society to the response of Gandrung dance.

The value of the beauty of the Gandrung dance is the beauty that can be obtained when the dancer plays his role. Performing the Gandrung dance with a smile even though there are many spectators who sometimes are not polite to the dancer's response. The movements performed by the dancers make the dancers look graceful and beautiful. Apart from the movement, the beauty of the gandrung dance can also be seen from the accessories worn by the dancer, such as the clothes worn, plus a crown called *omprok* worn on the head. The accompaniment music also makes the gandrung dance beautiful, making the audience want to join in the dance.

The view of life in the form of ideology is contained in the Gandrung story. A view of life means an opinion or consideration that is used as a guideline, direction, guide to life in the world. The opinion or consideration is the result of human thought based on historical experience according to the time and place of his life. Thus, this view of life does not arise immediately or in time, because in the Gandrung dance film there is a view of life that aims to preserve the gandrung dance culture.

The symbolic values in the Gandrung dance include the main dancer and the accompanist (*pengibing*). Women in this case are more interpreted as a medium of thanksgiving for the rice harvest to the goddess of fertility. Women in this context also play a central role in a dance that plays an important role and is highly respected.

The value of the struggle in the Gandrung dance is that during the struggle period it is used as a gathering place for the fighters and becomes an information center and a source of encouragement for the fighters, which is conveyed through the songs that it brings and with the songs, various information which is the password is conveyed to the fighters, that is the contribution of Gandrung art during the struggle.

The public's perception of the gandrung dance is that every movement and song that is sung contains a meaning which means that it can inspire the spirit of fighters against the Dutch colonialists. One of his movements, like the *Nglayang* movement, is a closing gesture to the audience, both hands above his head while shaking his head. This dance is a symbol of gratitude to Dewi Sri while singing sad-themed songs such as *seblang lukito*.

At this time Gandrung is rarely shown in a particular event. This does not become a barrier for the people of Kemiren village to maintain it, because in reality even though there are various entertainments such as *electone* (modern culture) or other entertainment, the community still recognizes the existence of Gandrung. This is evidenced by the comprehensive training in schools and dance studios in Kemiren village. In addition, there is good cooperation between the Department of Tourism and Culture and the people of Banyuwangi who are aware of regional culture by





actualization which is carried out once a month and its implementation during the month of Padang.

There are 2 ways to preserve Gandrung dance, the first is by holding training in schools, in studios, and the second is through actualization or performances from the Culture and Tourism Office. The efforts carried out are generally only traditional by the groups of indigenous people concerned.

### CONCLUSION

Gandrung was first performed by a man named Marsan, the man who became Gandrung from the remnants of the Blambangan and Balinese troops. Every day around tirelessly visiting places inhabited by the remnants of the people of Blambangan, who live in dispersal with very poor conditions, in addition to providing entertainment, collecting donations, and distributing them to those who need help, they also sing the contents of the songs. about the messages of struggle, it turns out to bring brilliant results that are hard to believe.

In the last development, Gandrung dance was finally replaced by women, namely from Seblang dancers. Once upon a time, the daughter of a Mak Midah, a resident of Cungking Hamlet, named Semi, was seriously ill and there was no medicine that could cure her. Then his mother conveyed a vow to Semi who was sick as follows: "If you are healed, I will make you Seblang, but if you don't get well, then no".

Coincidentally, after that, Semi recovered from her illness, and to fulfill Mak Midah's words, then Semi became a Seblang dancer. It turned out that many people admired him and then every night the people around him tried to hold performances of the art. What happened to Semi was also experienced by Temu around 1969, then the idea arose from the people around him to make Temu a Gandrung dancer. Since this, male Gandrung dancers have been gradually reduced to none at all and since then, Temu has become a beginner for the start of a new round of Gandrung dancers performed by women until now. The form or form of movement in the Gandrung dance is lined up, ngrepen or repenan, forward or paju Gandrung, and seblang-seblangan. The values of local wisdom contained in the Gandrung dance are responsibility, beauty, outlook on life, culture, and symbols. The perception of the Kemiren village community towards the Gandrung dance is the public's perception of every movement and song performed in the Gandrung dance and the public's perception that the Gandrung dance needs to be preserved. Efforts to preserve the Gandrung dance are training and performances. There are various comprehensive training in schools and studios in Kemiren village, even starting from kindergarten, elementary to high school. The Banyuwangi district culture and tourism office also has a program in preserving the Gandrung dance, namely by actualizing it in the Gandrung Sewu Festival which is held once a year.

### SUGGESTION

Based on the results of the study and in accordance with the research problem, the authors try to provide the following suggestions:



For the Banyuwangi City Culture and Tourism Office, this research hopes that the Banyuwangi City Culture and Tourism Office will continue to preserve the traditional arts in Banyuwangi Regency by increasing routine training and actualization as is being done now so that it will not be crushed by globalization. The Banyuwangi City Tourism and Culture Office must also be able to filter/filter foreign cultures that enter every area in Banyuwangi so that traditional arts such as the Gandrung dance can be maintained until the next generation. In addition, the government provides special funds or budgets for the development of regional arts, especially the Gandrung dance, because regional arts can become one of the revenue assets for local governments.

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