



Performance Structure of *Barongan Kademangan* at the Barongan Kademangan Art Studio in Bonang Subdistrict Demak Regency

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Abstract

This study aims to describe and analyze the structure of the Barongan Kademangan performance as presented by the Barongan Kademangan Art Studio in Bonang Subdistrict, Demak Regency. This research employs a descriptive-analytic method with a qualitative approach. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, documentation, and literature study. The findings reveal that Barongan Kademangan is a form of folk art that integrates elements of dance, traditional music, and theatrical performance, with the barong figure serving as the central focus. The performance is composed of distinctive elements such as movement, musical accompaniment, costume and makeup, props, as well as floor patterns and staging. In addition to serving as entertainment, Barongan Kademangan functions as a medium of social communication that fosters community bonding, reinforces local cultural identity, and acts as a means of preserving traditional values. Thus, this art form plays a vital role in strengthening social cohesion and deserves ongoing support for its preservation.

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INTRODUCTION

Art possesses the power to immortalize social, cultural, and spiritual realities in forms that can be passed down across generations. It holds a fundamental role in human life as a medium of expression, communication, and cultural reflection. Art emerges from lived experiences, values, and social interactions within a community, which are then manifested in various forms—one of which is performing arts. Performing arts are not merely a form of entertainment, but also serve as a medium for education, character development, and the preservation of traditional values inherited across generations (Qur'aniyah et al., 2023). Through art, communities express collective identity while also fostering solidarity and social harmony. Traditional arts in Indonesia have a very complex variety of forms and functions. In rural areas, art is often used in traditional ceremonies, religious rituals, folk entertainment, and even as a medium for conveying moral messages. Dance, as a form of performing art, has the advantage of being a stronger form of non-verbal communication compared to other arts. Body movements in dance can convey messages, emotions, and cultural values without the need for words (Rias, 2021).

Dance can also serve as a medium for character building, as it cultivates discipline, cooperation, perseverance, and respect for noble cultural values. The process of rehearsing and performing dance requires a high level of commitment and consistency, thereby indirectly fostering moral and social development in its practitioners. In practice, dance not only provides a space for aesthetic expression but also functions as a therapeutic medium that helps reduce stress and anxiety, and improve mental health (Monekaka et al., 2020). From a psychological perspective, dance provides direct and comprehensive benefits because it involves physical activity that triggers the release of happiness hormones such as endorphins, dopamine, and serotonin (Wahyuni, 2023).

Composition in dance is known as choreography. According to (Sudarsono,

2004) choreography encompasses various essential elements, including movement, floor and aerial design, music, dramatic aspects, dynamics, costumes, properties, and stage layout. Soemandiyo Hadi further explains that dance presentation involves spatial aspects, themes, types of dance, the number and gender of dancers, as well as lighting and props (Febriana & Mulyadi, 2024). Although social dances were originally characterized by spontaneity and interpersonal interaction, many of these forms have now been adapted into staged performances.

Art is the result of human expression and creativity, manifested in aesthetic forms such as movement, sound, or images (Lana, 2022). In dance, form is not merely a visual display, but also a medium for conveying cultural and emotional messages. The presentation of dance in a performance context reflects the diversity of choreography arranged aesthetically to create a deep visual and emotional experience for the audience (Muliadi, 2018).

The main elements of dance performance presentation include movement, music/accompaniment, makeup and costume, props, and floor patterns. These five elements not only form the structure of the performance but also reinforce the cultural values conveyed through dance. Dance movement is the fundamental element that distinguishes dance from ordinary motion. It can be divided into pure movement and meaningful movement (Sumaryono et al., 2006), functioning as a cultural symbol passed down through generations. Music serves as an accompaniment to movement, creating atmosphere and adding aesthetic value (Jazuli, 2001). Traditional musical instruments lend a unique character to each performance. Makeup enhances the dancers' character and expression (Jazuli, 2001), while costumes reflect cultural identity and local philosophies (Khairunnisa, 2017; Muliadi, 2018). Props are visual aids that support the theme and message of the dance, such as fans, scarves, swords, and drums (Sudarsono, 2004). Floor patterns refer to the direction and

formation of dancers' movements on stage, contributing to the dramatic and visual structure of the performance, with forms such as straight lines, curves, circles, and zigzags (Hadi, 2012).

One of the traditional art forms that continues to exist and evolve amid changing times is the *Barongan Kademangan* performance from Bonang Subdistrict, Demak Regency. This art form is based in Gebang Village, Bonang Subdistrict, Demak Regency. *Barongan Kademangan* emerged in 1986, initiated by the late Mr. Puji Atmoko. The name *Kademangan* itself is derived from the name of the local *punden* (sacred ancestral site) or village elder. The establishment of the *Kademangan* art studio was driven by Mr. Puji Atmoko's initiative after his unsuccessful bid to become the head of Gebang Village. He founded the *Barongan* performance as a creative outlet for a group of local youth, most of whom worked as fishermen. This form of folk art blends elements of dance, music, and theatrical performance, with the *barong* figure as its focal point (Sriyati, 2015). The *barong* symbolizes goodness, protection, and spirituality within the community (Karthadinata, 2006). The performance serves not only as public entertainment but also carries deep symbolic meanings and values of solidarity upheld by the local community.

The performance presented by the Kademangan Art Studio features the story *Babat Alas Glagah Wangi*, which tells of the clearing of the Glagah Wangi forest under the command of Sultan Fatah. The cleared forest would later become the site of the Demak Bintoro Sultanate. In general, *Barongan* performances in Demak Regency serve as a form of entertainment and an expression of gratitude by parents upon the circumcision of their sons.

The structure of the *Barongan Kademangan* performance consists of several key elements, including dance movements, traditional musical accompaniment, makeup and costumes, props, and floor patterns (Sriyati, 2015). Each of these elements serves a distinct function and carries specific meaning that supports the overall aesthetics of the

performance and reinforces the cultural messages being conveyed (Wijayanto et al., 2025). For instance, traditional live music accompaniment helps create a dramatic atmosphere, while props such as the *barong* mask hold symbolic meaning as protectors against evil forces.

However, the sustainability of this traditional art faces serious challenges. The currents of modernization and globalization have led to a decline in interest among younger generations toward traditional arts. Additionally, the lack of academic documentation and insufficient support from both the government and cultural institutions pose significant obstacles to its preservation. In fact, this art form holds considerable economic potential as a cultural tourism attraction that can contribute to the development of the community's creative economy.

Several previous studies have examined *Barongan* art in the Demak region. One such study was conducted by Sundari, Arisyanto, and Untari (2019), which discussed the performance structure of *Barongan* art at the Kusumojoyo Art Studio. Although the study explored performance elements such as props, characters, and narrative, its focus remained on symbolic interaction in a general context, rather than on the detailed structure of the performance itself. Another study by Sriyati (2015) investigated the existence of the *Barongan Kademangan* performance within the sociocultural context of the Gebang Village community, but it did not provide an in-depth analysis of its presentational structure as a performing art.

Therefore, this study offers a novel contribution by focusing on the analysis of the structural form of the *Barongan Kademangan* performance in Bonang Subdistrict, Demak Regency. To analyze the structure of the performance, this study adopts the performance form approach proposed by Soedarsono (2002), which identifies five main elements: movement, musical accompaniment, makeup and costumes, props, and floor patterns. This approach is used to comprehensively examine the artistic components of the

Barongan Kademangan performance and the interrelations among these elements in forming a cohesive aesthetic and cultural meaning.

This study aims to describe and analyze the performance structure of *Barongan Kademangan* as presented by the Barongan Kademangan Art Studio in Bonang Subdistrict, Demak Regency. The focus of the research includes the elements of performance presentation, choreographic structure, as well as the social and cultural functions of the performance.

This research is expected to contribute theoretically to the study of performing arts and provide practical benefits as a reference for the preservation of local culture. In addition, the findings of this study are also expected to strengthen the role of artists, communities, and policymakers in maintaining the existence of *Barongan Kademangan* amid the dynamics of contemporary cultural developments.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive-analytic method with a qualitative approach. This method was chosen as it is suitable for exploring, describing, and deeply understanding social and cultural phenomena—specifically, the performance structure of *Barongan Kademangan* at the Barongan Kademangan Art Studio in Bonang Subdistrict, Demak Regency. The qualitative descriptive method aims to portray phenomena systematically and factually in accordance with real field conditions and to generate descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from observed individuals and behaviors (Siyoto & Sodik, 2015; Sugiyono, 2017).

This research was conducted in a natural setting, where the researcher served as the primary instrument and interacted directly with the research subjects. Mr. Tampan Rama Putra Karnelis, S.Sn., who served as the interview informant in this study, is a senior choreographer at the Barongan Kademangan Art Studio. In the interview, the researcher explored in depth the

structure of the performance presentation, the storyline including characters and roles, the sequence of dance segments, types and functions of movements, the role of props, as well as changes in presentation patterns over time. This information reinforced the field observation data and clarified the elements of the performance structure under study.

The research site was located at the Barongan Kademangan Art Studio in Bonang Subdistrict, Demak Regency. This location was chosen because the studio presents *Barongan Kademangan* performances that enrich the region's cultural and artistic heritage. These performances are delivered both as public entertainment and as part of community cultural rituals, offering a unique and compelling subject for study. The site's accessibility allowed the researcher to obtain data optimally. Thus, the Barongan Kademangan Art Studio served as the primary subject of this research.

To ensure that the data collected accurately reflected actual conditions, the researcher employed several data collection techniques. One of them was direct observation, which focused on examining the structure of the performance—such as movement patterns, transitions between performance segments, the use of props, interactions between dancers, and the arrangement of musical accompaniment.

According to (Sugiyono, 2017), data analysis is the process of organizing, structuring, and interpreting data in order to draw meaningful conclusions. In this study, data analysis was conducted using an interactive model consisting of three main stages. First, data reduction: interview and observation data were filtered to focus on performance elements such as movement structure, sequence of performance segments, function of props, and musical arrangement. Irrelevant or off-topic information was eliminated to maintain research focus. Second, data presentation: the findings were presented in the form of narrative descriptions organized thematically according to the

five elements of performance—movement, musical accompaniment, makeup and costumes, props, and floor patterns. Each element was explained chronologically based on the sequence of the performance. To illustrate spatial dynamics in the floor patterns, visual descriptions and photographic documentation were included. Third, drawing conclusions: patterns emerging from each performance element were identified based on observations, interviews, and documentation, while taking into account the sociocultural context of the fishing community in Gebang Village and the symbolism of movements and character roles within the performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical Background and Social Context of the Performance

The *Barongan Kademangan* performance originates from the Barongan Kademangan Art Studio located in Gebang Village, Bonang Subdistrict, Demak Regency. *Barongan Kademangan* is characterized by unique features that distinguish it from other *barongan* traditions in different regions, particularly in terms of movement, musical accompaniment, and the philosophy it embodies. This art form emerged in 1986 and was founded by the late Mr. Puji Atmoko. The name *Kademangan* itself was taken from the local *punden* (ancestral shrine) or elder of the village. At the time, following his unsuccessful candidacy for village head of Gebang, Mr. Puji Atmoko took the initiative to establish this art studio as a creative outlet for a group of young people in Gebang Village, most of whom worked as fishermen.

Performance Narrative

The narrative *Babad Alas Glagah Wangi* is one of the featured performances of the Kademangan Art Studio in Gebang Village, Bonang Subdistrict, Demak Regency. This storyline depicts the challenging process of clearing the Glagah Wangi forest, which served as the initial

step toward the establishment of the Demak Bintoro Kingdom.

The story begins with Sultan Fatah commanding his *senapati* (commanders) and *jurit* (soldiers) to clear the Glagah Wangi Forest—a dense woodland inhabited by various supernatural beings such as *siluman* (spirits), *dityakala/buto* (giants), and *barongan*. The soldiers face fierce resistance from these mystical forest dwellers. However, through bravery and prayer, they manage to defeat the evil forces and succeed in clearing the forest, which is later established as the center of the new kingdom: the Demak Bintoro Sultanate.

Characters

Barongan is the main antagonist in the story, portrayed as a supernatural creature and ruler of the Glagah Wangi Forest. In the performance, *barongan* is played by two performers inside a single costume. *Dityakala/Buto*, the leader of the spirits, is characterized as cunning and evil, with a costume designed to reflect a terrifying appearance. The *siluman* (spirits) are supernatural beings who follow Dityakala and attempt to obstruct the soldiers' efforts to clear the forest. On the protagonist side, *Senapati* is a commanding war leader who leads the *jurit* (soldiers) in the forest-clearing mission. He is depicted as a valiant and authoritative figure. The *jurit*, loyal soldiers under Senapati's command, play a crucial role in confronting the supernatural beings and opening the forest.

Form of Dance Performance

Seni Art serves as a vessel for creativity, manifested in specific forms and expressed through various media such as movement, sound, or imagery. It grows and evolves as a result of the expression and creativity of the community to which it belongs. Art is inseparable from human life, as it reflects ideas and emotions transformed into tangible forms. In art, form is not merely a visual display but also an expression of beauty that can be appreciated by the audience (Lana, 2022).

Dance Movements

Movement in dance is a fundamental element that plays a crucial role in any performance. Dance movements can be categorized into *pure movements* and *meaningful movements*. Pure movements are focused on aesthetic qualities without specific meaning, while meaningful movements carry identifiable significance (Sumaryono et al., 2006). In various forms of traditional dance, movement functions as a symbol or expression of cultural values passed down through generations. In the *Barongan Kademangan* performance, the choreography features *putra gagah* (heroic male) movements for the characters Dityakala/Buto and *jurit* (soldiers), while the *burung kuntul* (egret bird) character uses *lanyah* or *kemayu* movements, which are more delicate and graceful.

Music

Music in dance serves as an accompaniment that provides rhythm and atmosphere to the performance. The accompanying music typically features traditional instruments specific to each region. In dance, music functions as a guide for movement, a creator of dramatic nuance, and an aesthetic element (Jazuli, 2001). The music used in the *Barongan Kademangan* performance consists of a set of traditional Javanese *gamelan* instruments, including *gong*, *kenong*, *kendang*, *saron*, *demung*, and *balungan*, combined with modern instruments such as drums.

Costume and Makeup



Figure 1. Dance costume for the character of the Glagah Forest ruler
(Source: Nisa, March 2025)

Makeup in dance performances functions to transform the dancer's persona, enhance emotional expression, and increase visual appeal. It must reflect the character being portrayed (Jazuli, 2001). In the *Kridha Jati* dance, the makeup used is corrective, applied to both female and male dancers. Female characters wear beauty-enhancing makeup (*rias cantik*), while male characters wear bold, refined makeup (*rias bagus*) (Khairunnisa, 2017).

In the *Barongan Kademangan* performance, the makeup styles used include; Soldiers (Prajurit): *Rias gagah putra* in the Surakarta style, Yaksa or Buto (demonic characters): bold, theatrical makeup representing monstrous traits, Egrets (Burung Kuntul): soft and graceful makeup to enhance feminine beauty.

Props

Props in dance are objects used in performances to enhance expression and support the thematic elements of the show. In the *Barongan Kademangan* performance, the props used by the **soldiers** include flags, ceremonial banners (*umbul-umbul*), umbrellas, hobby horses (*kuda lumping*), and swords.



Figure 2. Dance props: ceremonial banners (*umbul-umbul*) and hobby horse (*kuda jaran*)

(Source: Nisa, March 2025)

Floor patterns

Floor patterns in dance refer to the arrangement or movement of dancers within the performance space. These patterns serve to enhance the visual aesthetics of the performance, guide the audience's focus, and support the thematic elements of the dance. Floor patterns can take various forms—such as straight lines,

circles, diagonals, zigzags, or specific configurations that reflect the character of the dance (Hadi, 2012). In the *Barongan Kademangan* performance, the choreography does not strictly follow rigid floor patterns. The dancers' movements are improvisational, adjusting to the storyline and the interaction between characters. Straight-line patterns are used when the soldiers enter the stage in formation. Circular patterns appear in battle scenes to convey dynamics and tension. Zigzag patterns are used by antagonistic characters to reflect unpredictable and frightening movements. Diagonal patterns are performed by the *Barong* to symbolize power and dominance on stage.



Figure 3. Dynamic floor patterns in the *Barongan Kademangan* dance.
(Source: Nisa, March 2025)

The performance opens with a sacred and stirring gamelan musical accompaniment. The character of Sultan Raden Fatah appears and commands the *Senopati* and his soldiers to clear the Glagah Wangi forest. The soldiers enter the stage carrying props such as ceremonial banners (*umbul-umbul*) and hobby horses (*kuda lumping*), performing bold and dynamic dance movements. Antagonistic characters then emerge, including *Buto* (giants), *Dityakala* (spirits), and *Siluman Burung* (bird-shaped spirits). They dance with expressive and frightening movements, creating a tense and dramatic atmosphere. The *Barong* (Singo Barong) appears as a symbol of strength and virtue. The *Barong* is performed by two dancers—one controlling the head and the other the tail—executing agile and energetic movements. A battle ensues between the soldiers and the spirits, represented by

Buto and *Senopati*. The choreography in this scene is full of vigor, showcasing the dancers' bravery and agility. The performance concludes with the triumph of good over evil.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the *Barongan Kademangan* performance is a form of folk art that combines elements of dance, traditional music, and theatricality. The *barong* character serves as the focal point of the performance and symbolizes protection and spiritual strength. The chosen narrative, *Babad Alas Glagah Wangi*, is rich in historical and spiritual messages related to the founding of the Demak Sultanate.

The structure of the performance encompasses five main elements: dance movements, musical accompaniment, makeup and costumes, props, and floor patterns. The dance movements are symbolic and representative, adapted to the characteristics of each figure (such as the *Senopati*, *Buto*, and *burung kuntul*). The music used is a blend of traditional *gamelan* instruments and modern instruments. Makeup and costumes enhance character portrayal, while props and floor patterns support stage dramatization and enrich the visual presentation.

This performance holds not only aesthetic value but also functions as a medium of social communication, a means of cultural education, and a vehicle for character development—for both performers and audiences alike. However, its existence faces challenges, including declining interest among younger generations, limited academic documentation, and a lack of institutional support. Therefore, preservation efforts are essential to ensure the continuity of this traditional art form amid the currents of modernization.

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