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Form and Functions of Tayub Performance by Giyantini Cs Group in Grobogan Regency

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Abstract

Tayub remains part of community life in Grobogan Regency, Central Java, where it is staged at sedekah bumi, malam satu suro, weddings, vows (nadzar), and thanksgiving events. Studies of Tayub have mostly examined its ritual role in particular villages or individual dancers, while little is known about how an active group arranges its performances and balances different functions today. This study describes the performance form and analyzes the functions of Tayub as presented by the Giyantini CS group. A qualitative ethnographic approach was used. Data were collected through observation of performances, in-depth interviews, documentation, and literature study. Informants were Giyantini as the group leader, the larasati (female dancers), the pengrawit (gamelan musicians), and community leaders. Data were analyzed through reduction, display, and conclusion drawing, and validated with source triangulation, using Soedarsono's theories of performance form and function. The performance unfolds in five stages: opening, the entrance of the larasati, the tayuban, repeated tayub rounds, and closing. It is built from performers, movement, gamelan accompaniment, makeup and costume, and staging. Three functions were identified: entertainment, which is the most dominant; ritual, at sedekah bumi, malam satu suro, nadzar, and thanksgiving; and aesthetic presentation. The group has adjusted its staging, costume, sound technology, and presentation, but keeps gamelan, the larasati, the penggarih, the pengrawit, and the tayuban interaction as its core. The study shows that the function of a Tayub performance shifts with the occasion while its form stays largely constant.

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INTRODUCTION

Tayub is a traditional performing art that has grown within Javanese society, including in Grobogan Regency, Central Java. In Grobogan it is part of the rhythm of community life. It is staged at *sedekah bumi* (earth alms), *malam satu suro* (the eve of the Javanese new year), weddings, vows (*nadzar*), and various forms of thanksgiving (*tasyakuran*). Its role has never been limited to entertainment; Tayub also carries social, cultural, ritual, and aesthetic value for the people who support it.

Tayub has also changed. Its form of presentation, makeup and costume, music, staging, and the pattern of interaction between dancers and audience have all been adjusted over time. Studies elsewhere show that such adjustments are not optional. In Pati Regency, the popularity of Tayub has declined because of shifting tastes, the pull of social media, weak digital promotion, and competition from other art forms (Hapsari & Jazuli, 2024). Its public image has also been contested; in Blora, the female dancer has long been seen as an object of entertainment for men, which led the local government to regulate performance hours and the distance between dancer and male partner (Ratih et al., 2005). A Tayub group that remains active must therefore manage both tradition and change.

One group still active in Grobogan is Giyantini CS. The group keeps the traditional elements of Tayub in its performances while making changes so that the art continues to attract audiences. Its leader, Giyantini, also trains young dancers. The group is thus a useful case for seeing how Tayub survives in present-day Grobogan.

Previous research on Tayub can be grouped into several lines. The largest examines Tayub as a means of ritual: after rice planting in Wonosoco, Kudus, where the performance symbolically expels pests (Suharji, 2014); at weddings in Karangmojo, Sragen (Prihantoro, 2018); at *sedekah bumi* in Lamongan (Melinda, 2023) and in Ronggomulyo, Rembang, where Tayub is staged once a year as the core of the ritual (Hikmah & Pebrianti, 2025); and in Klopoduwur, Blora, where Tayub closes the ritual sequence as an offering to the village guardian spirit (Utina, 2022). A second line discusses the social functions of Tayub in a community, as in Nganjuk (Pradhana, 2013; Wulandari, 2017). Others look at accompaniment (Febrianto, 2022; Pratomo, 2014), the existence of Tayub in Magetan and Ponorogo (Sistyoningrum, 2020), and its popularity (Hapsari & Jazuli, 2024). Studies in Grobogan itself have focused on an individual *waranggana* (Qomariyah, 2019) and on Tayub (*Ledek*) as a cultural tourism attraction (Suwarti & Dewi, 2022). What these studies leave open is how a working group in Grobogan arranges a full performance and how one performance can serve different functions depending on the occasion.

This study addresses that gap by examining the Giyantini CS group with two questions: what is the form of its Tayub performance, and what functions does the performance serve? Form is analyzed through Soedarsono's elements of presentation, namely performers, movement, music, makeup and costume, and the structure of the performance (Soedarsono, 1977). Function is analyzed through the three primary functions of performing arts proposed by Soedarsono (1998): ritual, personal entertainment, and aesthetic presentation. The study contributes a group-level account of Tayub in Grobogan that links the form of performance to the occasions in which it is staged.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with an ethnographic method (Creswell, 2013). Ethnography was chosen because it allows cultural practice to be understood through direct observation of the activities, behavior, and interaction of performers within their social setting.

The research was conducted in Grobogan Regency, Central Java, with

the Giyantini CS Tayub group as its object. Fieldwork included observation of performances in January 2025. Informants were Giyantini as the leader of the group, the *larasati* (female dancers), the *pengrawit* (gamelan musicians), and community leaders who know the development of Tayub in Grobogan.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and literature study. Observation followed the performance from beginning to end. Interviews gathered information on the form of presentation, the functions of the performance, and the development of Tayub from the informants. Documentation in the form of photographs, field notes, and supporting archives completed the data.

Data validity was tested through source triangulation, comparing observation, interview, and documentation data. The data were then analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014), with reference to Soedarsono's theories of performance form and function.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Giyantini CS Tayub Group

Giyantini CS is a Tayub group that remains active in Grobogan Regency. It is led by Giyantini, an artist who has practiced Tayub since she was young (Figure 1). What she learned from earlier generations of Tayub artists became her basis for keeping the art alive. Besides taking performance invitations in various areas, Giyantini trains young dancers so that Tayub has successors.



Figure 1. Giyantini, leader of the Giyantini CS group (Source: Fathuliya, January 2025)

The group often performs at community events such as *sedekah bumi*, *malam satu suro*, weddings, *nadzar*, and *tasyakuran*. Its performances keep the traditional elements of Tayub but are packaged to meet present-day demands so that they still appeal to a wide audience.

The Form of Tayub Performance by Giyantini CS

Observation and interviews show that a Giyantini CS performance runs in five stages: the opening, the entrance of the *larasati*, the *tayuban*, repeated *tayub* rounds, and the closing.

The opening begins with the sound of the gamelan, which signals that the performance has started. The *penggarih*, the host who guides the event, then opens the program and greets the guests. The *larasati* enter the performance area with graceful movement, accompanied by an opening *gending* as a sign of respect to the invited guests.

The core of the performance is the *tayuban*, the defining feature of Tayub. Here the *larasati* invite guests, the *pengibing*, to dance with them. The interaction creates a communicative, familiar, and cheerful atmosphere (Figure 2). When one round ends, the *penggarih* invites the next guests, and the rounds continue until the whole program is complete. The role of the *penggarih* matters here: by calling guests in turn, the host gives order to an interaction that could otherwise become crowded and uncontrolled.



Figure 2. The tayuban session between larasati and pengibing (Source: Fathuliya, January 2025)

In the closing stage, the *larasati* present a closing dance accompanied by the final *gending*. The *penggarih* then thanks all the guests before the performance ends.

In terms of the elements of form proposed by Soedarsono (1977), the performance is built from several main elements: the performers (the *larasati*, *penggarih*, *pengrawit*, and *pengibing*), dance movement, gamelan accompaniment, makeup and costume, and staging. The *pengrawit* play the gamelan that drives every stage (Figure 3), while the *larasati* dance and also sing; in the performance documented in Figure 4, they hold microphones as they perform in front of the gamelan set. These elements support one another and produce a complete performance. Hikmah and Pebrianti (2025), studying Tayub in the *sedekah bumi* of Ronggomulyo through ethnochoreology, also include theme, storyline, gaze, floor patterns, and props among the elements of form; these aspects of the Giyantini CS performance remain open for further description.



Figure 3. Pengrawit of the Giyantini CS group (Source: Fathuliya, January 2025)



Figure 4. Larasati of the Giyantini CS group performing (Source: Fathuliya, January 2025)

The Functions of Tayub Performance by Giyantini CS

Soedarsono (1998) divides the primary functions of performing arts into ritual, personal entertainment, and aesthetic presentation. All three appear in the performances of Giyantini CS.

Entertainment

Entertainment is the most dominant function. Residents enjoy the performance as recreation at *hajatan* (family celebrations) and *tasyakuran*. The interaction among the *larasati*, *pengibing*, *pengrawit*, and audience creates a lively atmosphere, which makes the performance the main attraction of each event. In Soedarsono's terms, this is personal entertainment, since the *pengibing* do not only watch but take part in the dance.

Ritual

Tayub still carries a ritual function. Giyantini CS is often invited to *sedekah bumi*, *malam satu suro*, *nadzar*, and other expressions of gratitude. In these settings the presence of Tayub is believed to be part of a tradition that holds hopes for safety, blessing, and harmony in community life. This matches what has been reported for Tayub at post-planting rituals in Kudus (Suharji, 2014) and in the earth alms ritual of Klopoduwur, Blora (Utina, 2022). In Ronggomulyo, Rembang, Tayub in *sedekah bumi* expresses gratitude for the harvest and a request for safety in the work of the community, and it is considered irreplaceable by any other performance (Hikmah & Pebrianti, 2025).

Aesthetic Presentation

Giyantini CS performances also serve aesthetic presentation through the beauty of the movement, the gamelan, makeup, costume, and the coordination of all performers. These elements give the audience an artistic experience and show Tayub as a performing art of high cultural value.

Constant Form, Shifting Function

The findings show that Giyantini CS keeps the traditional features of Tayub while making several adjustments. Changes appear in staging, costume, the use of sound technology, and the pattern of presentation, which are meant to make the performance more attractive to today's audiences. The core, however, remains: gamelan accompaniment, the roles of the *larasati*, *penggarih*, and *pengrawit*, and the *tayuban* interaction.

Read together, the form and the functions point to a pattern. The five-stage structure is largely the same whether Giyantini CS performs at a wedding or at *sedekah bumi*. What changes is the occasion, and with it the dominant function. At a family celebration, the *tayuban* is first of all entertainment; at *sedekah bumi* or *malam satu suro*, the same interaction becomes part of a ritual addressed to safety and blessing. The function of a Tayub performance is therefore set less by its form than by the event that hosts it. The comparison with Ronggomulyo sharpens this point. There, Tayub is bound to a single annual ritual and cannot be substituted (Hikmah & Pebrianti, 2025); for Giyantini CS, the same performance moves across ritual and non-ritual invitations throughout the year. This supports the view of Soedarsono (1998) that one performing art can serve several functions, and it explains why Tayub can move between ritual and celebration without having to change its basic structure.

The adjustments made by the group also respond to pressures noted in other regions. Hapsari and Jazuli (2024) link the decline of Tayub in Pati to changing tastes and weak promotion; Giyantini CS answers part of this by updating its staging, costume, and sound while keeping the *tayuban* that audiences come for. The ordered rounds led by the *penggarih* also keep the interaction within accepted norms, an issue that has shaped the public image of Tayub elsewhere (Ratih et al., 2005). Finally, the training of young dancers by Giyantini resembles what Sabila (2025) found at Sanggar Tari Tiara in Banjarnegara, where structured training and management help keep a regional dance community active.

CONCLUSION

The Tayub performance of the Giyantini CS group in Grobogan Regency runs in five stages: the opening, the entrance of the *larasati*, the *tayuban*, repeated *tayub* rounds, and the closing. It is supported by performers, dance movement, gamelan accompaniment, makeup and costume, and staging, which together form a complete performance.

The performance serves three functions. As entertainment, the most dominant function, it is a medium of recreation and social interaction. As ritual, it is still staged at customary events and thanksgiving as an expression of gratitude and a hope for safety and blessing. As aesthetic presentation, it displays beauty through movement, music, makeup, costume, and the coordination of its performers. The form of the performance stays largely constant, while its dominant function shifts with the occasion.

Giyantini CS shows that Tayub can survive through preservation, the training of young dancers, and adjustments in presentation that do not abandon its traditional core. This study is limited to one group and to performances observed over a short period. Further research could compare several Tayub groups in Grobogan, follow performances across different occasions over a longer period, and examine how audiences, especially younger ones, receive Tayub today.

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