

Tracing the Historical Evolution of Form and Aesthetic Meaning in Dhadak Merak Reyog Ponorogo, 1920s-1990s

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Abstract: The Dhadak Merak Reyog Ponorogo is a mask that embodies aesthetic and philosophical values. Therefore, this study aims to capture the form of Dhadak Merak Reyog Ponorogo over time and uncover the values it represents. The methodology in this research uses a visual semiotics approach to explain the symbols in Dhadak Merak Reyog Ponorogo. The findings reveal that the development of Dhadak Merak was initially very simple, lacking peacock feathers, and performed by two people acting as jegol in the 1920s. Subsequently, the peacock appearance was neatly arranged, but it did not have peacock cohong until 1940. During the Sukarno period, the peacock cohong began adorning Dhadak Merak, giving it a realistic impression until the New Order era, when the form of Dhadak Merak was standardized. The evolution of Dhadak Merak's form is related to the community's social, political, and economic conditions. Dhadak Merak holds meanings that symbolize the representation of a king and queen, embodying high aesthetic and philosophical values for the people of East Java, Indonesia.

Abstrak: Dhadak Merak Reyog Ponorogo merupakan sebuah topeng yang mengandung makna nilai estetis dan filosofis. Oleh karena itu penelitian ini ingin memotret bentuk Dhadak Merak Reyog Ponorogo dari waktu ke waktu serta mengungkap nilai yang terkandung di dalamnya. Metodologi dalam penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan semiotika visual untuk menjelaskan simbol-simbol secara objektif yang terdapat dalam Dhadak Merak Reyog Ponorogo. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah bahwa perkembangan Dhadak Merak pada awal sangat sederhana, belum memiliki bulu merak dan dimainkan oleh dua orang yang berperan sebagai jegol tahun 1920an. Selanjutnya tampilan burung merak sudah ditata dengan rapi tetapi belum memiliki cohong burung merak sampai dengan tahun 1940. Pada periode Sukarno, cohong burung merak sudah menghiasi Dhadak Merak sehingga terkesan realis sampai pada era Orde Baru ada pembakuan bentuk Dhadak Merak. Perjalanan perubahan bentuk Dhadak Merak terkait dengan kondisi sosial, politik dan ekonomi masyarakat. Dhadak Merak menyimpan makna yang melambangkan representasi dari raja dan permaisuri yang memiliki nilai estetis dan filosofi yang tinggi bagi masyarakat Jawa Timur, Indonesia.

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INTRODUCTION

Dhadak Merak is a unique and traditional dance form from Ponorogo, a region in East Java, Indonesia. It is one of the elements in Reyog Ponorogo's art. Dhadak Merak represents a blend of local Javanese culture and influences from Hindu mythology, reflecting the historical Hindu kingdoms in Java. The dance combines local Reyog Ponorogo dance elements and the mythical phoenix bird or Merak (peacock) story. Dhadak Merak consists of two elements, namely *barongan* and peacock whining. These two things become an integral unit called Dhadak Merak. This mask has undergone significant changes from time to time, judging from the old form of



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the colonial era to the present; if we compare the old model of the Dhadak Merak with the current one, it is quite different, as if we do not believe that the two are the same product. This Dhadak Merak was originally a representation of symbolic criticism, which tells of an ancient government in which an empress controlled a leader (king), a representation of a peacock (Sugianto, 2021).

The visualization of the Dhadak Merak becomes a symbol related to the belief system; the visualization of the tiger is one of the magical symbols of the king, strength, and masculinity, and the peacock represents beauty and refinement. In some cases, the cosmological view implied in the decoration in the ancient era is still found in handicrafts from a younger period. Phrases related to cosmological concepts are manifested in various forms. The diversity of expressions of cosmological symbolism in decoration is influenced by the development of the religiosity of the community supporting the craft. In essence, symbols with sacred connotations always correlate with ontology and cosmology and are related to concepts in ethics and morality (Geertz, 1973).

The Dhadak Merak aesthetic created by the people of Ponorogo is believed to have a purpose. It is related to aesthetic and ethical values, which are the philosophy of the Ponorogo community (Kartomi, 1976). Some people have shifted towards aesthetic and moral values in the current era, showing the opposite symptoms. The Dhadak Merak does not only function as an artistic expression but also as a set of values about life and life in which each element contains philosophical values.

The news provides information that there is a Dhadak Merak derived from chicken feathers; of course, the shift in the use of chicken feathers as a substitute for peacock feathers is much different from the actual Dhadak Merak in the art tradition of Reyog Ponorogo. This aligns with Djelantik (1999), who says that all objects or art events contain three fundamental aspects: form, weight, content, and appearance or presentation. Of the three elements presented by Djelantik (1999), in the context of the findings of a Dhadak Merak made of chicken feathers, the substance of the actual Dhadak Merak does not meet the value content contained in the Reyog Ponorogo performance. This change is seen as a form of innovation and creation today, but it is far from the true meaning mutually agreed upon by the ancestors who made the tradition. Changes or shifts in the form of the Dhadak Merak Reyog Ponorogo are common and happen from time to time, but they do not change

the implied and explicit meaning contained in the Dhadak Merak. This change in the shape of the Dhadak Merak is interesting to study as a sign of the development of the Reyog Ponorogo so that it does not lose its uniqueness and local cultural identity (Djelantik, 1999).

Scholars have explored various aspects of Dhadak Merak, including its origins, development, cultural significance, and changes over time. Research has often focused on its role in Javanese culture, the symbolism of its costumes and dance movements, and its place within the broader context of Indonesian performing arts (Kartomi, 1976; Kurnianto et al., 2021, 2020; Wijayanto et al., 2018; Yurisma & Bahrudin, 2020). Such research contributes to a deeper understanding of Dhadak Merak's importance in the cultural and artistic heritage of Ponorogo. It provides insights into the dynamic nature of traditional performing arts in adapting to changing times. Although there has been research on Dhadak Merak, the exploration of its aesthetic history, form, and meaning remains limited. This gap suggests that while aspects of its performance, cultural significance, and perhaps even historical evolution have been studied, a comprehensive analysis focusing on the aesthetics, detailed artistic development, and the deeper meanings embodied in its form over time is still needed. Based on the problems above, this research can be formulated as follows: How has the form of Dhadak Merak Reyog Ponorogo evolved? What aesthetic values are associated with Dhadak Merak Reyog Ponorogo, and how have these values changed or remained constant through history?

METHOD

This study adopts a semiotic approach, focusing on visual semiotics, to elucidate the characteristics of the marking system in Dhadak Merak, a key component of Reyog Ponorogo, while integrating a historical perspective. Visual semiotics, which analyzes signs and symbols in visual communication, is utilized to decode the complex system of meanings in the Dhadak Merak performance. The historical aspect of this approach considers the evolution of these signs and symbols over time, reflecting the socio-cultural transformations in the Ponorogo. This approach is used considering the semiotic concept can objectively demonstrate the reading of signs. The study of Dhadak Merak from the 1920s until the Reformasi era in Indonesia would focus on several key aspects of this traditional dance form, tracing its evolution through significant historical periods and cultural shifts. This paper also analyzes

how historical events from the 1920s to the Reformasi era (late 1990s) influenced the development of Dhadak Merak. This includes examining the impact of colonial rule, the struggle for Indonesian independence, the New Order regime, and the eventual shift to a more democratic society during the Reformasi period. Data were collected in three stages: interviews to obtain information from sources and documentation by collecting documents to sharpen analysis and observation. Researchers and the team fully observe and analyze the research object based on context and chronology. Data analysis was carried out using a visual semiotic approach with several stages: review, data reduction, identification, categorization, and interpretation.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION DHADAK MERAK REYOG PONOROGO, 1920S-1990S

A mask is a three-dimensional work imitating a face made with various materials. Likewise, as a face covering, the Dhadak Merak Reyog Ponorogo mask has different sizes, materials, and shapes. A mask is a face covering made of various materials, including wood, paper, cloth, and other materials (Prayekti, 2009). Further explained by Masunah, there are various sizes of masks, including face-sized masks that are larger than the face, smaller than the face, and some that are layered. Based on the shape and style, there are very realistic, abstract, and decorative masks. There is also a depiction of human beings, gods, or imaginative creatures (Masunah, 2003).

This Dhadak Merak mask is made of *dhadap* (*Erythrina variegata*) wood, while the *rengkek* is made of bamboo and rattan. Dhadap wood was chosen because it is light, easy to carve, and resistant to termites, while bamboo is lighter and does not break in easily because it has good elasticity. While based on this size, it is different from the general, as stated by Masunah (2003), the size of the Dhadak Merak is much larger than the size of the face. Inside is a *cokotan* made of bamboo that is used to support the Dhadak Merak. The dancer's field (*pembarong*) is located on the front above a row of tiger teeth and given a rectangular hole so that the view of the contractor is flexible. Then, the peacock feathers are arranged in such a way on a board called *rengkek*, which is made of bamboo and rattan and is neatly knitted to produce a neat appearance like a peacock spreading its tail.

The Dhadak Merak mask is wrapped in animal skin, ideally a tiger; on both sides of this tiger mask, loose hair made of buffalo or cow tails is added. It is said that this mask depicts a roaring

tiger. The mask's red-colored mouth is greatly flared, revealing a row of sharp white teeth and fangs. (Simatupang, 2019). The peacock's head is placed a few centimeters above the tiger's head, with the beak facing forward. There is a place for a handle that functions to maintain balance. The Dhadak Merak also features a long red and black cloth attached to the back of the mask, which covers the wearer's body. The Dhadak Merak, as a Javanese art product, has a Javanese aesthetic concept; namely, those values are based on cosmological values, symbolic classifications, and the orientation of Javanese life (Iswidayati, 2007)

In Iswidayati's opinion, Javanese life has cosmological and symbolic values and orientations. In the context of the mask, the Dhadak Merak has Javanese cosmological values related to belief in animism and dynamism, manifested in expression. For them, adherents of this belief believe that in every life, there is a ruler who can protect, provide peace, and even bring danger. Therefore, they respect local rulers by performing ritual practices to the local "*danyangan*". In the context of the *dhadak*, the peacock, the tiger's spirit is believed to be the most powerful in the wilderness. Therefore, making a "god" is believed to provide protection and peace of life, while the peacock is the most beautiful wild animal spirit (Kurnianto, 2017). In Javanese cosmology, in general, the main characteristic of the principle of *kejawen* is syncretism, namely compounding, the mixing of various beliefs or beliefs (Rohman., 2006)

Meanwhile, the symbolic classification of the Dhadak Merak is a symbolic representation of the king of Brawijaya V in his reign was ruled by his empress named Dewi Kian, so in the Dhadak Merak, there is symbolism where the tiger is a representation of a king. In contrast, the peacock is perched on the tiger's head. It is his consort, which a peacock symbolizes; cosmology is different in the context of orientation. There is an element of belief in belief, while from a symbolic element, there is a political element. The Dhadak Merak is an expression of the culture of the people at that time and, until now, continues to experience dynamics and developments according to the times. The Dhadak Merak mask is a mixed form between the tiger and the peacock, forming an imaginary animal. This picture shows the style or representation, the level of abstraction, and the elements represented or symbolized (Hidayanto, 2012). In the 1920's, Dhadak was still very simple, as the oldest data found were as follows.



Figure 1. Reyog Ponorogo circa 1920's (Source: Tropenmuseum)



Figure 2. Reyog Ponorogo, circa 1930's (Source: Leiden University Library)

Figure 1 shows the Dhadak Merak, played by two people as a tiger with four legs. In the *dhadak*, the peacock above has a cosmological value of regularity, which was made by ancient people regularly according to the shape of a tiger. The actor in the back, as a substitute for the tiger's hind legs, was formerly known as *legal* or the person who stands behind the Dhadak Merak wearer and is in charge of holding the end of the long cloth is still maintained; the Dhadak Merak wearer (*jegol*). The existence of *Jegol* is now abolished because some consider *Jegol*'s role less meaningful in performances.

Jegol was abolished in 1930, as in the second photo above; the Dhadak Merak is not too big, about 1.5 meters, with peacock decorations, neater arranged but not complete with no *cohong* peacock. *Cohong* refers to the complementary accessories for Dhadak Merak Reyog Ponorogo are made from vel-

vet fabric decorated with a sequence of beads shaped like a peacock. This change in shape to be neater is also marked by a more distinctive tiger mask model, identical with roaring fangs, and looks realistic like a real tiger. The development process is related to several things, including changes in the community's economy, society, and culture. These changes were also closely related to activism at that time. For example, at that time, the Reyog performance was still limited and limited by the government because it feared it could endanger the colonial position. Therefore, even if it is allowed, the performance is very limited. As in the photo above, the show appears rickety away from the general public at certain formal events.

The development of Reyog art after Indonesian independence experienced significant growth. Almost every Ponorogo village has a Reyog art community. In terms of quantity, the organization of the Reyog association has increased quite well. Nevertheless, the quality has not shown progress. Unfortunately, however, the development of Reyog art was used for political purposes. This resulted in the quality of Reyog art, which is no longer used to improve Reyog art for the better but is used as a tool for political struggle. In the 1950s, the Communist and Nationalist parties used *warok* (leader of the Reyog community) and Reyog extensively as part of their campaigns. The PKI-style populist rhetoric and opposition to orthodox Islam appealed to most *waroks*. Likewise, the PKI's goal of embracing local strongmen meant that the *waroks* found their rightful place in the party hierarchy structure. Reyog's ability to attract many people makes it an effective campaign tool. Discipline and secrecy that led to party members also became a strong attraction for *warok* and *heroes* because they had similarities with the structure of colleges and hermitages (Anderson, 1990).

At that time, almost all political parties in Ponorogo used Reyog art as a medium to gain mass sympathy, gain votes, and show strength among the broader masses. To show this seriousness, each party established a cultural arts association as part of the party's organizational wing to accommodate and appreciate the Ponorogo Reyog artists. The Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) has *Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat* (the People's Cultural Institute/Lekra), NU has *Lembaga Seniman Budayawan Muslimin Indonesia* (the Indonesian Muslim Cultural Arts Institute/Lesbumi), the PNI (*Indonesian National Party*) and the *Lembaga Kebudayaan Nasional* (National Cultural Institute/LKN), Masyumi has the *Himpunan Seni Budaya Islam* (Islamic Arts



Figure 3. PKI campaign using Reyog Performance Art in 1956 (Source: Reyog Ponorogo Archives)

and Culture Association /HSBI), Perkindo with the *Lembaga Seni dan Budaya Indonesia* (Indonesian Cultural Arts Institute/LESBI). As a political organization wing institution that operates on a local to national scale, the institution is moving massively to the grassroots of several regions, including Ponorogo (Shinta, 2012). “Lekra, Lesbumi, LKN, and HSBI are more famous in the community than their party.” The story of KH Mujab Tohir, the head of Lesbumi, is also a *warok* figure from among the *santri* (Murdianto, 2009). The statement by KH Mujab Tohir, who is also the caretaker of the Al Idris Islamic Boarding School, during the Interactive Village Culture dialogue is very reasonable because these institutions are at the forefront of contacting the community to gain mass at the grassroots.

At that time, there were hardly any political parties in Ponorogo that did not take Reyog as a tool to gain people’s sympathy and support. Among the party wing institutions above, the PKI’s dominance in bringing Reyog to seize the masses in Ponorogo was huge and difficult to shake. The Reyog PKI line was increasingly at the peak of its glory when the populist doctrine received a warm welcome among the Reyog Confederations. The popularity of Reyog among the public at that time made political parties, especially the PKI, use Reyog as a tool to gather the masses; the PKI also used Reyog to divert people’s attention, namely when lifting the bodies of PKI murder victims in PKI holes. Public attention was diverted through Reyog art (*Jawa Pos*, 1989). This was done by the PKI in order to look good and gain sympathy from the public. Along with the competition between nationalist, communist, and religious groups.

Based on the compared document photo, In the fifty’s era, the Dhadak Merak Reyog Ponorogo

began to be neatly arranged and equipped with peacock *cohongs* to be more attractive and realistic. This form of Dhadak Merak started well as the use of Reyog art for the benefit of political parties with accessories for the logo of political parties at that time as an effort to introduce it to the broader community, so that many political parties competed for Dhadak Merak as attractive as possible, from this development then the beginning of other accessories which is attached to the Dhadak Merak in the future with various types of beads, prayer beads, and others. One of the Dhadak Meraks that appeared attractive and attractive was the PKI.

In the 1955 election, the PKI’s dominance showed its existence by getting great sympathy from the people of Ponorogo. This can be seen from the election results in 1955. The PKI received the most votes. Meanwhile, in East Java, the PKI received 2,266,801 votes, or 20% more than the number of voters, 10,961,181 (*Suluh Indonesia*, 22 November 1955). While in Ponorogo, the PKI also dominated in first place with 137816 votes, followed by NU with 9,609 votes, then the PNI with 79,008 votes, Masyumi with 34,198 votes, the Labor Party with 6,023 votes and the Indonesian Christian Party (Parkindo) received 361 votes (*Trompet Masjara-kat*, 1956).

In Ponorogo, there was a Reyog association called *Barisan Reyog Ponorogo* (BRP) in 1957, led by *waroks* from various Reyog associations, observers of arts and culture in Ponorogo. This organization aims to establish communication and friendship with all Reyog associations in Ponorogo apart from arts and cultural institutions belonging to the political party wing. It has nothing to do with political parties, although many activists from arts and cultural organizations belonging to the political party wing are also the motor of the organization’s founding. This resulted in many representatives and administrators of the BRP often having conflicts of interest (Sugianto, 2020).

In the early 1960s, the BRP’s development grew rapidly, marked by the number of BRP members reaching 200 Reyog groups and leaning towards the PKI. At this time, there was a split within the BRP, which resulted in the emergence of a rival Reyog organization. The BRP continued to grow and strengthen and finally succeeded in holding Reyog Ponorogo deliberations throughout Indonesia. The meeting, held on 25-28 February 1965, was attended by representatives from South Sumatra, West Java, and East Java, especially the Ponorogo area (*Harian Rakjat*, 1965).

As a result of the congress, the dominance of

Lekra within the BRP became even stronger in the election of the board in the next period. *Warok* Paimin, a retired soldier and Lekra activist who was then the village head of Purbosuman won over Warok Marto Jheng from LKN and KH Mujab Tohir from Lesbumi. Efforts to organize a collective committee of existing cultural institutions failed because the *warok* Paimin forced almost all BRP administrators from the Lekra circles. So, the BRP was then fully controlled by the PKI organ in the Cultural Sector. As a result, Lekra's opponents no longer recognized the BRP as the only forum for the art of Reyog Ponorogo. (Murdianto, 2009)

Honestly, how many Reyog figures experienced that period by becoming historical actors in the political arena admitted that Lekra was indeed the most followed by Reyog associations, even though they disagreed ideologically? "Many work friends from Reyog associations whom I know do not subscribe to communism to join Lekra," said Mbah Samandikun, one of the works in Ponorogo from Sumoroto Village (Murdianto, 2009).

Lekra's superiority in the arena resulted in the BRP being considered to belong to the PKI and dominated by Lekra administrators. Several essential figures from the BRP who felt uncomfortable and agreed with them then set up an organization that specifically managed Reyog. Warok Marto Jheng, who was previously keen to seize the BRP but failed, founded the National Reyog Front (BREN) in 1965, which specifically accommodated the nationalist Reyog association. Meanwhile, work H Ahmad Tobroni Turedjo, to balance this strength, established the Religious Arts Branch of Reyog (CAKRA), and Warok KH Mujab Tohir founded the Islamic Arts and Culture (KRIS) under the Indonesian Muslim Artists and Cultural Institute (Lesbumi), the wing of the Nahdatul Ulama Party movement. The development of Reyog at this time experienced a golden age, as evidenced by the 364 units of Reyog art scattered throughout the Ponorogo area (Fauzannafi, 2005).

The organization's movement aims to instill ideology to provide social benefits, not only entertainment advice. The Reyog artists and cultural figures from the *waroks* follow the organization's goals. Given that the task is quite heavy, it is necessary to have a figure who understands the situation and conditions in the local area. Usually, they are local, regional figures who are seen as having expertise in propagandist matters. They were chosen because they have several criteria: propaganda experts in general, especially in planning, and specialists in Reyog art. (Budi, 2013). The characters chosen are

usually *waroks* who are well-known in their respective areas, making it easier to influence the broader community as it is known that the *warok* for the people of Ponorogo is a central figure, influential, and highly respected.

During the peak era of Reyog art in 1965, especially the Lekra organization with its BRP, an incident occurred when the G 30 S PKI occurred, which caused communism as an ideology to end. The PKI was declared a banned party. This resulted in many people being killed. An owner even burned all the Reyog (Tempo, 1979). At that time, a massacre of the Reyog association took place in the village of Sumoroto, and for two years, the people were afraid to play Reyog for fear of being mistaken for PKI sympathizers (Shinta, 2012). It was automatically based on government regulations above the Reyog Ponorogo BRP organization, which at that time was at the peak of its glory as the under bow of the PKI; the existence of the BRP fell because, at the end of 1965, the BRP was declared dissolved, along with the dissolution of the PKI.



Figure 4. Little boy posing with the paraphernalia for Reog Ponorogo, in Jakarta 1983 (Source: KITLV)



Figure 5. Dhadak Merak

After the G30 S PKI incident, the art of Reyog was vacuumed for three years. Many Reyog instruments were burned because some were afraid of being accused of being PKI followers. The *waroks* who were freed and unaffiliated from the G 30 S PKI incident dared to appear again, beating the Reyog drum in 1969. Mbah Wo Kucing, whose real name is Kasni Gunopati, was the first person to beat the Reyog drum while the other *waroks* appeared. They began to retire from performing arts Reyog. The rise of this art was also marked when it appeared at the opening of the PON VII (National Sports Week) event in July 1969 in Surabaya, where 60 Reyog were displayed under the coordination of the Ponorogo Regency Government. The appearance of Reyog art in the national arena is used as a promotional medium for Ponorogo Regency, one of the cultural cities in East Java. It marks the rise of Reyog Arts in Ponorogo. According to records of Regent Sudono Sukirdjo, 61 groups of 1,206 members were formed after the PKI rebellion outbreak (Kartomi, 1976). This number decreased drastically due to political agitation against the fragmented Reyog arts affiliated with political organizations, including the PKI.

During the New Order era, the Dhadak Merak became more interesting. There was an *embog gombyok* under the Dhadak Merak, and the size of the Dhadak Merak was increasingly varied in height

and width. There were also large and small tiger heads, as shown in the photo data of the Dhadak Merak in 1980 model Dhadak Merak Reyog Ponorogo has a much larger size of about 2 meters more and weighs approximately 50 meters. This change occurred in several places, and the Reyog Ponorogo community, and the Reyog association with one another seemed to compete with the *gedhen-gedhenan* Dhadak Merak; the bigger it showed, the more powerful the players were, or it was also called mystical elements. The bigger the Dhadak Merak shows *the social prestige* of the pemong, the more it is not uncommon in this decade of the year that there are many rituals in the Reyog Ponorogo community. This Dhadak Merak is complete with a peacock, so combining the two tigers and the peacock is much more precise and realistic (Sugianto, 2020).

The fourth photo shows that the Dhadak Merak is better with *krakab* accessories as a form of identity for the Reyog Ponorogo community. The change in the Dhadak Merak towards standardization occurred after a debate among the Reyog Ponorogo artists on 24 November 1992. The event was motivated by the Reyog Ponorogo festival, but in the festival model, the shape of the Dhadak Merak in the performance has different sizes between one community. With other associations, a standardization emerged that has been standardized by the Ponorogo Regency Government where the Dhadak Merak consists of several elements including *caplokan*/tiger's head, peacock whining, *krakab* as a place to write Reyog's identity and a veil as a cover for the *pemong*. In terms of overall height, the height is 240 cm, the top circumference is 215 cm, the middle circumference is 225 cm, the back width is 250 cm, and the bottom width is 190 cm (Pemda Ponorogo, 1993).

To make efforts for the art of Reyog Ponorogo to continue to grow and develop according to the authenticity of the Ponorogo government, together with related parties, especially the Reyog Ponorogo artists and observers of Reyog art, held a meeting. The meeting was held in the KORPRI building on 24 November 1992. It resulted in formulating basic rules about dance Reyog Ponorogo in a book entitled "Basic Guidelines Art Reyog Ponorogo in Performance and National Culture" published in 1993. This book is bound in yellow and is called the Yellow Book. The presence of this book is essential as a reference in the Reyog Festival stage, as it holds the values of local wisdom of the Ponorogo community. During the new order era, Reyog art began to be nurtured well. However, unfortunately, there was still hidden politics in it, namely



Figure 6. The *jangkep* (complete) Reyog Ponorogo format (Source: Dinas Pariwisata)

government hegemony by carrying out a kind of “yellowing” associated with color that was identical to the ruling party at that time (Kurnianto, 2017).

In the era of the Regent of Ponorogo Markum Singodimedjo (1994-2004), Reyog’s development began to be nurtured well by holding a Reyog Art Performance on a Full Moon Night whose participants rotated between Reyog associations in Ponorogo as an effort to preserve *adiluhung’s* (high values) art. This Full Moon Reyog was held on the Main Stage of the square; thus, the art of Reyog in Ponorogo began to be well-lived. In addition, the Ponorogo Reyog Festival, initiated in 1989 in 1994, was upgraded to the National Reyog Festival. It gave birth to a new color for developing Reyog Ponorogo art. The participation of Reyog groups from outside the Ponorogo area, including abroad, made Islamic *da’wah* through Reyog art very quickly known and even began to be well understood. Of course, this is a very influential cultural *da’wah* action. Moreover, this event was held to commemorate the Islamic New Year (Sugianto, 2020).

AESTHETIC MEANING

This Dhadak Merak dance on its stage depicts the attitude of chivalry and bravery as reflected in the tiger mask. Meanwhile, the Dhadak Merak is the

center of the beauty value, which is charming and has antique and graceful characteristics. This Dhadak Merak dance is the central character addressed on the entire Reyog art stage. Strong and Beautiful are the two main pillars of personality, and this message is the basis for the philosophy of art in Reyog Ponorogo. The performance is the Dhadak Merak dance, which has the characteristics of the fighting peacock dance and the procession of *Panaragan*.

The peacock war dance, played by the *barong*, depicts the movements of two peacocks fighting. In the performance, two male dancers must play the peacock war dance. The equipment used is still the Dhadak Merak with a *barongan* head. The dance, which is accompanied by *gendhing sampak*, in the stage forms several formations such as worship, fighting two Dhadak Merak, fighting between two Dhadak Meraks with two *jathilans*, crossing paths, alternating fighting between two peacocks *dhadak* and *pujangganong*, fighting between two Dhadak Merak with *klanasewardana*, procession *gendhing* Panaragan. as well as the loose *barong* dance, the differences at a glance between the loose *barong* dance. The fighting peacock dance includes the loose *barong* dance, which is performed squatting, while the peacock war dance is performed standing up (Sugianto, 2020).

This dance movement represents the characteristics of a tiger and a peacock. The character of the tiger emanates from the movement of the *stretcher*, or in other terms, it walks like an agile child while the peacock looks like it is dealing with its opponent by showing the charm of spreading its tail like a fan while circling, showing off its beauty while walking around so that it emits the sheen of its feathers. These two animal characteristics make it a harmonious, unified movement with a brave character and a teasing character as a form of showing skill and strength to others. This movement inspires the artist to create the Reyog Ponorogo performance into one of the mandatory dances used in the show so that this unit is firmly attached to the “standard” that dancers must do as one of the movements that must be done.

In addition, there is also the Panaragan convoy dance, which is a type of dance with a walking position paraded for all supporters of the Reyog Ponorogo art. The name of this convoy dance movement is used to accompany the Reyog performance, either in in-door format on stage or outdoor in street performances from one place to another, usually around the village, so that it resembles a cavalry troop who wants to fight. If on stage, this dance is a continuation of the full dance of the Peacock War by forming the following formation.



Figure 7. Reyog Ponorogo Performance Formation

The substance of the value of local wisdom in the *barongan* dance movement or peacock symbolizes that in carrying out life in this world, one must always be vigilant to achieve true Dhadak happiness. It means that every human being in the world must have many trials and temptations of the sparkling beauty of the world; therefore, humans, so that they do not fall asleep, must be vigilant to get the actual share. As expressed by the movement of

the Dhadak, the peacock performs *crossing* by looking left and right as a form of vigilance when walking in the world so as not to slip into the wrong path, and *ukel cloves* is an expression of being ready in all fields of struggle so that they have authority with their weapons.

Aesthetic value can be explained according to the property of something that is valued according to itself or according to its relation to other sources of value. Aesthetic values are related to social values and become public policy issues. Something is considered aesthetically valuable when attention and reflection on an intrinsic property generate pleasure or contribute positively to other human affairs. Ethical value is a matter of individual response to a socio-cultural context of that response (Eaton, 2010).

The ethical value contained in the Dhadak Merak is an expression in the mask of a spectacular work of imagination seen from the models and shapes surrounding the Dhadak Merak. The shape of the Dhadak Merak can emphasize the brave, dashing, and mighty character in the sparkling light of the peacock perched on the tiger’s head, especially in the show. This courage and beauty have become a kind of character for the people of Ponorogo, as Dutch Resident Lucien Adam said that the people of Ponorogo are brave. “Ponorogans are more independent and self-confident, but rougher, bolder, more reckless, hot-tempered and fonder of traveling than the ordinary central Javanese” (Adam, 1938).

The cultural characteristics of the Ponorogo people are also automatically reflected in the culture described in the Dhadak Merak character, where the competition of tiger animals is famous for being brave as a tiger, but also has a soft heart as reflected in the beauty of the peacock. In the sense that the Ponorogo people have a kind attitude, but if they are injured, they can become brave. This Dhadak Merak, in addition to the brave character of the tiger symbolism and the beauty of the shining representation of the peacock, is also another aesthetic value in the form of *krakab* as a place of identity for the Reyog community, which is usually behind the name of Dhadak Merak there are typical names of tigers such as *gogor*, *sima lelana*, *singa jaya*, lion barong, and other names as a communal bond of the name of the association. Above the *krakab*, the peacock in the present era is decorated with *tasbih* seeds to remember Allah. This *tasbih* seed is located in the beak of a peacock, and it is familiarly used in the modern era other than as an accessory. This *tasbih* seed is an effort to Islamize art carried out by

the late KH. Mudjab Tohir said that being successful is an effort to get closer to the creator, the pinnacle of aesthetic value.

There are many differences in the aesthetic values of Reyog art before and after the reform era. Before the reform era, the Dhadak Merak was very simple; after the post, many accessories were attached to the Dhadak Merak, adding to its beauty. Still, sometimes it was no longer by the Ponorogo Reyog character, such as the presence of chicken feather Reyog, so as this era develops, it is necessary to strengthen the character and value of Reyog so that Ponorogo has not disappeared along with developments that are increasingly leading to the loss of the beautiful values in Reyog art. This research complements previous research, such as the work of the Government of Ponorogo Team Field (Pemda, 1993) and (Kurnianto, 2017), which has yet to study the historical dynamics of the development of dhadak. It is hoped that the results of this research will contribute to the historical dynamics of the Dhadak Merak along with new values as part of strengthening the identity of Reyog Ponorogo.

CONCLUSION

The evolution of Dhadak Merak Reyog Ponorogo mirrors the societal changes over time. Initially depicted in the simplest form with a barongan and a peacock devoid of feathers, the Dhadak Merak has transformed significantly. Historical photographs reveal that the earliest representations involved two performers embodying a four-legged tiger. This format evolved, with performances later conducted by a single individual, granting greater fluidity and creativity in the dance movements. As the art form progressed, variations emerged, particularly noted in the absence of peacock plumage, a modification dictated by the era's constraints. During the Sukarno Era, performances were restricted and selectively permitted, yet the Dhadak Merak was elaborately adorned with peacock feathers, enhancing its resemblance to the intended tiger and peacock imagery. This period also saw the politicization of Dhadak Merak, which was frequently utilized in campaigns adorned with political party symbols to draw public interest. The New Order period introduced further diversity in the size and design of Dhadak Merak, leading to a distinctive disparity among the Reyog performances. To maintain a semblance of uniformity and enhance aesthetic appeal, the Ponorogo local government implemented standardization policies, issuing guidelines for Reyog art, which facilitated a more consistent and refined presentation. The metamorphosis of Dhadak Merak Reyog not

only signifies aesthetic evolution but also encapsulates the Ponorogo community's ethos, reflecting their bold yet gentle nature, akin to the tiger's bravery and the peacock's beauty. These attributes resonate with Lucien Adam's observation of the Ponorogo populace as inherently courageous and adventurous. Thus, Dhadak Merak Reyog stands as a vibrant testament to Ponorogo's cultural identity, embodying the spirit and values of its people and remaining an integral part of their cultural heritage.

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