



ANALYSIS OF BENJANG ART ON THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE SUNDANESE COMMUNITY IN UJUNG BERUNG DISTRICT, EAST BANDUNG

ANALISIS SENI BENJANG TERHADAP IDENTITAS BUDAYA MASYARAKAT SUNDA PADA KECAMATAN UJUNG BERUNG BANDUNG TIMUR

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Abstract

Benjang art is a traditional art form that reflects the cultural identity of the Sundanese community, particularly in the East Bandung region. The analyze of Benjang art represents the cultural values, traditions, and identity of the Sundanese people. A qualitative approach was employed with data collection techniques including observation, interviews, and documentation studies. The findings reveal that Benjang art serves not only as entertainment but also as a means of preserving cultural values and strengthening community identity. This study contributes theoretically to the relationship between art and cultural identity and offers practical benefits for the conservation of traditional arts.

Keywords : Benjang Art, Culture, Sundanese

Abstrak

Seni Benjang adalah salah satu dari bentuk kesenian tradisional yang mencerminkan identitas/ciri budaya masyarakat Sunda, khususnya di wilayah Bandung Timur. Adapun analisis Seni Benjang merepresentasikan nilai-nilai budaya, tradisi, dan identitas masyarakat Sunda. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara dan studi dokumentasi. Hasil dari analisis memperlihatkan bahwa Seni Benjang selain berfungsi sebagai hiburan, juga sebagai media pelestarian nilai-nilai budaya dan penguatan identitas komunitas. Kajian ini memberikan kontribusi teoritis tentang hubungan seni dan identitas budaya, serta manfaat praktis dalam pelestarian seni tradisional.

Kata Kunci : Seni Benjang, Budaya, Sunda



1. INTRODUCTION

Culture is one of the important elements in people's lives that functions as a reflection of identity, norms and social values. Each community group has a unique culture, and this culture plays an important role in shaping identity and strengthening social cohesion. In Indonesia, cultural diversity is an important asset in building national character.

One form of traditional art that is an important part of Sundanese culture is Benjang Art . Benjang is a typical art originating from East Bandung, especially in Ujungberung District and its surroundings. This art includes several elements, such as dance, martial arts, traditional music, and physical strength attractions, which overall depict strength and agility. Initially, Benjang grew as a form of martial art used as physical and spiritual training for the local community.

However, as time goes by, Benjang has developed into an entertaining performing art that still maintains the spiritual and philosophical elements of the Sundanese people. The existence of Benjang Art is not only entertainment for the local community, but also a symbol of cultural identity that strengthens the sense of togetherness among the Sundanese people.

Cultural identity plays an important role in maintaining the sustainability of the community. This identity includes values that are passed down from generation to generation and are manifested in various forms, such as language, customs, and cultural arts. Benjang Art, in this context, not only functions as a medium for cultural expression, but also as a means to affirm and preserve Sundanese identity amidst rapid social change. Therefore, it is important to understand how Benjang Art influences the cultural identity of the Sundanese people in East Bandung and its role in facing the challenges of globalization.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research Approach

A descriptive qualitative approach is used to understand complex social and cultural phenomena through an in-depth analysis of Benjang Art and the Sundanese community in East Bandung. This is because:

- a. Benjang art is a complex cultural phenomenon that is not only seen from its physical form, but also from the social values and symbolism attached to it.
- b. The descriptive qualitative approach allows this research to capture the uniqueness of Benjang Art in its actual social and cultural context.
- c. Helping to present the voices of local communities and their perspectives on Benjang Art without the reduction or simplification that usually occurs in quantitative methods.

Purpose of Descriptive Qualitative Approach

- a. Gain a deep understanding of the values, meanings, and cultural practices of Benjang Art in the lives of Sundanese people.



- b. Presenting a rich and detailed picture of the social interactions and cultural dynamics related to Benjang Art.
- c. Revealing aspects that cannot be measured quantitatively, such as perception, aesthetic value, identity, and symbolism in Benjang Art.
- d. Produce authentic and contextual qualitative data in accordance with the social reality of Sundanese society.

B. Data collection technique

- a. Participatory observation of Benjang Art performances and community activities.
Participatory observation is an observation technique carried out by directly involving and participating in community activities, especially in Benjang Art performances and their daily activities.
- b. In-depth interviews with artists, elders and local communities.
The interviews were semi-structured or open, allowing the informants to tell their stories freely but still focused on the research topic. Artists such as artists, Benjang puppeteers, and traditional figures or community elders were the main focus.
- c. Documentation study related to the history and development of Benjang Art.
Documentation studies involve the collection and analysis of various written and visual materials related to Benjang Art.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- a. Benjang art as a reflection of the social and spiritual cultural values of Sundanese society.
 - Benjang Art as a Representation of Social Cultural Values
Benjang Art is one of the traditional art expressions that not only displays aesthetic beauty, but also contains deep social values for the Sundanese people in East Bandung. This art functions as a social communication medium that reflects the norms, customs, and social structures of the local community.
 - Strengthening Social Identity
Benjang Art strengthens the identity of the Sundanese people through symbols reflected in music, movement, and inherent narratives. Benjang Art Performances are a moment for the community to showcase and celebrate their origins and traditions.
 - Social Interaction and Community Cohesion
In the performance, there is close social interaction between residents. The community gathers and collaborates, strengthening social ties and a sense of togetherness.
 - Dissemination of Educational and Moral Values
Through songs, stories, and dance movements, Benjang Art conveys moral messages, traditional norms, and local wisdom teachings to the younger generation to preserve and continue cultural heritage properly.



b. Benjang Art as an Expression of the Spiritual Values of Sundanese Society

Apart from its social function, Benjang Art also acts as a medium for expressing deep spiritual values in the lives of Sundanese people.

- Relationship with Nature and the Supernatural

Benjang Art Performances are often accompanied by rituals that contain spiritual meaning. The community believes that this art is a medium for communicating with ancestors and spirits, maintaining harmony between humans, nature, and the spiritual world.

- Rituals and Symbolism

Some elements in Benjang Art, such as musical instruments and dance, have special symbolism related to the traditional beliefs and philosophy of life of the Sundanese people. The harmony of rhythm and movement is associated with cosmic balance.

- Involvement of Elders and Traditional Figures

The role of elders and traditional figures is important in maintaining the spiritual values of Benjang Art, ensuring that the implementation of the art remains in accordance with customs and ancestral teachings.

Benjang art is not just entertainment, but a mirror that reflects the social and spiritual cultural values of the Sundanese people in East Bandung. Through this art, cultural identity is maintained and communicated from generation to generation. Social values such as togetherness, moral education, and community cohesion go hand in hand with spiritual values that strengthen human relationships with nature and the supernatural world. Benjang art, therefore, has an important role as a medium for preserving culture as well as strengthening the identity of the Sundanese people.

c. Preservation of Benjang Art through community practices and local communication media.

- Conservation through Community Practices

The preservation of Benjang Art in Sundanese society, especially in East Bandung, takes place naturally through various practices and activities carried out by the community itself. Here is a detailed explanation of the practice through the community:

- Active Community Involvement

The community collectively helps maintain the continuity of Benjang Art by regularly holding performances at various customary events, traditional celebrations, and religious ceremonies.

Learning and training in Benjang Art is carried out from generation to generation from elders to the younger generation through informal and formal processes in the community.



The cadreship of Benjang Art players through family education and local art communities ensures the regeneration of art players.

- Local Rituals and Traditions

Benjang art is often integrated with traditional rituals that serve to maintain the values and philosophy of the original Sundanese culture.

Benjang Art Tradition as part of local traditional ceremonies and beliefs strengthening the meaning and function of art as a social and spiritual glue.

- Social and Economic Support

The community and traditional leaders provide moral and material support for the Benjang Art performance as a form of commitment to cultural preservation.

Benjang Art activities also become a source of livelihood for artists and practitioners, encouraging the sustainability of this art.

• Preservation through Local Communication Media

Local communication media plays an important role in expanding the reach and increasing public awareness of Benjang Art, as well as encouraging more systematic cultural preservation.

• Information Dissemination and Publication

Local radio, community magazines, and local print media often carry articles, interviews, and coverage of Benjang Art, thereby increasing public appreciation. Social media and local digital platforms are also utilized to document Benjang Art performances, facilitating access and interaction for the younger generation with traditional culture.

• Cultural Documentation and Archives

Audio recordings, videos, and photo documentation of Benjang Art performances are stored and disseminated through local media as cultural archives that can be accessed for educational and research purposes.

Cultural communities and local institutions initiated digital preservation activities by uploading Benjang Art content on *online platforms*.

• Strengthening Networks and Collaboration

Local media act as facilitators in building networks between artists, communities, local governments, and cultural institutions to support various Benjang Art preservation programs.

Through the media, information about art festivals, workshops, and cultural activities is communicated so that Benjang Art receives wider public attention.

d. The challenges of modernization faced by Benjang Art and the adaptation efforts made by the community.

Modernization Challenges Faced by Benjang Art and Community Adaptation Efforts

- The Challenge of Modernization to Benjang Art



Benjang art as a traditional art faces various challenges that come from the rapid flow of modernization and socio-cultural changes in society. The following is a detailed explanation of the challenges faced:

- The Influence of Globalization and Cultural Modernization
 - The entry of popular culture and modern entertainment such as electronic music, films and social media has shifted the interest of the younger generation towards traditional arts.
 - Urbanization and changes in people's lifestyles have brought about changes in art preferences towards instant and commercial entertainment.
 - The decline in interest and participation of the younger generation in studying and maintaining Benjang Art as part of cultural identity.
- Structural Changes in Society
 - High levels of community mobility cause artists and art lovers to be scattered, making it difficult to maintain the continuity of regular performances.
 - Social and economic changes that lead to work and activities that prioritize time effectiveness make it difficult to allocate time for traditional arts activities.
- Limited Institutional Support
 - Lack of attention and support from local governments and cultural institutions in terms of financing, facilitation, and Benjang Art development programs.
 - The lack of documentation and systematic research on Benjang Art hampers data- and policy-based preservation efforts.
- Technical and Creative Challenges
 - The difficulty of innovating without eliminating inherent traditional values causes Benjang art to appear static and less attractive to contemporary audiences.
 - Limited facilities and infrastructure for adequate performances to improve the quality and attractiveness of Benjang Art.
- Adaptation Efforts Undertaken by the Benjang Arts Community

To face the challenges of modernization, the Benjang Arts community take creative and strategic adaptation steps to maintain the relevance and continuity of this traditional art:

 - Innovation in Presentation and Collaboration
 - Combining elements of Benjang Art with modern music or dance genres in collaborative performances without losing the traditional essence.
 - Involving young artists and contemporary creators to create new variations that are relevant to today's tastes.
 - Digital Media and Documentation Development
 - Utilizing social media and digital platforms to promote Benjang Art, document performances, and reach a wider audience.



- Creation of digital educational content such as video tutorials, art stories, and performance archives that can be accessed by young people and researchers.
- Structured Education and Training
 - Initiating formal and informal training for the development of new artists, both in communities and in collaboration with schools and cultural institutions.
 - Implementation of project-based learning methods and direct experience in maintaining the quality and attractiveness of Benjang Art.
- Fundraising and Networking
 - Building collaborative networks with other cultural communities, local governments, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to strengthen social, financial, and policy support.
 - Participating in local and national art festivals and events as a means of promoting and recognizing Benjang Art.

4. CONCLUSION

1. Conclusion

- a. Benjang Art as a Reflection of the Social and Spiritual Cultural Values of Sundanese Society

Benjang Art is not just a traditional art, but also a deep cultural representation of the social and spiritual values of the Sundanese people. Through Benjang Art, the values of togetherness, mutual cooperation, and harmony with nature and ancestors are reflected in real terms. This art becomes a medium of expression that strengthens the collective identity of the community and becomes a means to strengthen social and spiritual relationships within the community. The symbolic and ritual meanings inherent in the Benjang Art performance show how this traditional art plays a role as a guardian of noble values and a shaper of the Sundanese people's perspective on life.

- b. Preserving Benjang Art through Community Practices and Local Communication Media

The preservation of Benjang Art takes place through two main complementary channels. The first is direct practice in society, starting from routine performances, hereditary learning, to the integration of art with traditional rituals and daily life that strengthen cultural roots. Second, the role of local communication media is very important in expanding the reach and increasing cultural awareness. Media such as local radio, print media, and digital platforms function as a means of documentation, information dissemination, and collaborative networks between actors, government, and society. The synergy between direct practice and media support is a solid foundation for maintaining the sustainability of Benjang Art so that it remains relevant and alive in the lives of modern society.



c. Challenges of Modernization Faced by Benjang Art and Adaptation Efforts Undertaken by the Community

Benjang Art faces various major challenges due to the currents of modernization such as globalization, changes in lifestyle, and minimal institutional support. The declining interest of the younger generation and competition with modern entertainment are real problems. However, the Benjang Art community does not remain silent; they adopt various innovative adaptation strategies, including combining traditional and modern art elements, utilizing digital media for promotion and documentation, and conducting structured education and training. Collaborative efforts with various parties and strengthening social networks are also the main keys to facing the dynamics of the times while maintaining the core values of Benjang Art. This adaptation ensures that Benjang Art not only survives, but also develops into part of a dynamic cultural discourse.

2. Suggestion

- a. Community Involvement in Traditional Rituals: Ensuring Benjang Art remains a vital part of traditional ceremonies and religious activities as a reinforcement of spiritual identity.
- b. Strengthening Community Networks: Building collaboration between Benjang Arts communities in various regions to share experiences, resources, and organize joint performances.
- c. Optimizing Local Media: Maximizing radio, television, and digital platforms to broadcast Benjang Art performances and create educational content that is interesting to the wider community.
- d. Sustainable Creative Innovation: Developing innovation in the form of cross-genre art collaboration without sacrificing traditional values so that Benjang Art remains relevant and attractive to modern society.
- e. Digital and Technology Approach: Expanding the use of social media, streaming applications and other digital platforms for active promotion and interaction with global audiences.
- f. Youth Engagement: Creating inspirational and competitive programs that engage young people in the creation of contemporary Benjang Art and involvement in the arts community.

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