

Embodied Heritage: The Creative Process Behind Karang Tumandang Dance in Karanganyar

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Abstract— The objective of this paper is to describe how the Karang Tumandang dance became the identity of Karanganyar Regency. This study was designed using a qualitative method and a descriptive approach. Informants, including the Head of the Education and Culture Office of Karanganyar Regency c.q Head of Culture, choreographers, composers, dance teachers, Karawitan teachers, and students, provided the research data. The study's focus is on the Karang Tumandang dance. Observation, interviews, and documentation are among the data collection strategies. Based on the study's results, the Karang Tumandang dance is based on the interpretation of a prominent female character in Karanganyar Regency, Nyi Ageng Karang. The creator team created the Karang Tumandang dance in stages, beginning with interpreting the character interpretation and progressing to constructing the dance structure and selecting movements. During the dance creation stage, the following procedures were also implemented: exploration, improvisation, and composition. As a regional identity, the dance contains local wisdom values that are reflected in several types of movements, costume, accompaniment cakepan, and floor pattern forms. This dance is then published and socialized to the community, mainly through learning or training at school or studio levels. Another form of effort made by the Karanganyar Regency Education and Culture Office is to hold a Karang Tumandang dance competition for elementary (SD), junior high school (SMP), and senior high school/vocational school students (SMA/SMK).

Keywords— Creation Process; Karang Tumandang Dance; Karanganyar Regency; Regional Identity.

I. INTRODUCTION

A regional government is always identical with various things that are its characteristics, both those that are inherent such as regional logos, as well as socio-cultural including local wisdom values that are still held tightly by its people. These characteristics become symbols of the region that distinguish it from other regional communities. And are guided by the supporting community and are known to other regional communities. However, in reality, not all regions have complex characteristics, for example, not all regions have a type of dance that is a characteristic or icon of the region. So that on certain occasions and interests, types of dances that come from other regions are often presented. For example, for the purpose of welcoming guests for official or community purposes, in the Karanganyar district, the Gambyong dance is used, a traditional dance of the Central Java community in general.

This fact has awakened the community, especially from the arts community of Karanganyar Regency, under the initiator of the Head of the Cultural Division of the Karanganyar Regency Education and Culture Office, determined with enthusiasm to create a form of dance that is projected to become an icon of Karanganyar Regency. This is in line with the opinion of Sri Rochana Widyastutieningrum [1], that in the current era, the phenomenon of creating dance as a regional identity has emerged. In several areas such as Magelang, Kebumen, Klaten and so on, new dances have emerged which are intended to become regional identity

dances. The dances were created by excavating historical sources related to events or stories about their respective regions. Likewise, with Karanganyar Regency, through teamwork consisting of various elements, namely dance masters, composers, dance teachers, karawitan teachers, artists and art observers under the auspices of the Karanganyar Regency Education and Culture Office, the identity dance of Karanganyar Regency was created.

According to Widyastutieningrum [1], the process of establishing identity dance can be done by researching or tracing history, myths, and mythology in various locations; Excavation or recreation of dance forms that once lived and evolved in a place; rework or process existing dances according to the interpretation of today's artists; reactualization, thus attempting to improve on dancing in line with the times or become progressively modern; rejuvenation, specifically aiming to work on dance so that it comes back to life and has an essential position. Based on this perspective, developing dance as a regional identity can be accomplished by determining and agreeing on which steps to take. so that the dance work produced can properly express the local regional identity while also being in accordance with the needs and advances of the contemporary era.

The creative process of creating dance works carried out in Karanganyar Regency involves a team of creators consisting of dance masters, composers, dance teachers, gamelan teachers, and artists. According to Sumandyo Hadi [2], the process of creating dance can be done through three stages, namely exploration, improvisation, and composition. In the process of creating the Karang Tumandang dance in Karanganyar Regency, it was carried out through a workshop activity that implemented the stages of exploration, improvisation, and composition. After the dance was formed, it was tested and performed at several events and consulted with the head of the district, namely the Regent of Karanganyar, Mr. Juliyatmono. Furthermore, based on input from various parties, the dance underwent several adjustments which finally formed the Karang Tumandang dance.

Socialization and publication happen after the creation of the regional identity dance. The purpose is to present the dance to the community so that the Karanganyar people may recognize and own it. It is anticipated that through socialization, those who do not know will learn, those who do not understand will comprehend, and those who cannot do so will be able to, and so on. Education, namely the study of Arts and Culture in schools, is one kind of socialization and publication aimed at the academic community. The Karang Tumandang dance in learning is implemented using the following components: objectives, materials, methods/models, media, and evaluation. The supporting steps taken include performing dance at the opening of official events or other events and holding a Karang Tumandang dance competition for junior high and senior high school/vocational school students, which is held in order to welcome the commemoration of the Anniversary of Karanganyar Regency in November 2021. In fact, in 2022 a competition will also be held targeting elementary, junior high, and senior high school/vocational school students.

Many studies have analyzed how traditional dance forms are used to preserve cultural heritage, such as those found in Java and Bali. For instance, the creation of dances like Bedhaya Ketawang [3] or Saman dance reflects a deep connection between performance, identity, and region [4]. While there is substantial research on traditional dances and their roles in education and cultural preservation, specific studies focusing on the creative process of the Karang Tumandang dance are limited. Existing literature often addresses the outcomes of such dances but lacks in-depth analysis of the stages involved in their creation, such as exploration, improvisation, and evaluation [5], [6], [7], [8]. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive examination of the creative process behind the Karang Tumandang dance. Although there is considerable literature on traditional dance and regional identity, specific studies on the Karang Tumandang dance are virtually nonexistent.

There is a clear gap in several areas such as documenting the process of creation of Karang Tumandang dance, from ideation, narrative building, music and movement selection, costume design, to institutional support. Analyzing the dance's role as a symbol of Karanganyar Regency's identity, especially in formal and informal cultural performances. Understanding the cultural symbolism and community involvement in shaping the dance's form and meaning. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by providing a detailed and scholarly analysis of the creation of Karang Tumandang dance, connecting it with theories of identity, performance, and cultural representation, especially at the junior high school level in Karanganyar Regency.

II. METHODS

This is qualitative descriptive research. The object of this research is the Karang Tumandang dance in Karanganyar Regency. The data sources for this research are informants related to the creation of the Karang Tumandang dance in Karanganyar Regency, Central Java, consisting of the Head of Culture, choreographer, composer, dance teacher, *karawitan* teacher, and several students. Secondary data sources are in the form of documentation of activities in the form of photos or videos of the process and performance of the Karang Tumandang dance.

In data collection, instruments used are observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were carried out related to the time and place of practice, the creation process, and the elements of the dance. Interviews were conducted to examine information

that cannot be noticed immediately by researchers regarding the background, work concepts, selection and determination of dance elements. Documentation technique was used to complete the information obtained from observation and interview activities to make it more valid, either in the form of photos, videos, and others.

III. FINDINGS

A. Dance Work Concept

A dance is frequently created with a history in mind, as well as local wisdom in an area, which often serves as inspiration for the creation of a dance [9]. The creation of the Karang Tumandang dance is the result of an interpretation of a beautiful, gentle, graceful female figure but also *cakrak*, *sigrak*, *kenes*. The figure in question is Nyi Ageng Karang, a legendary figure in Karanganyar. Nyi Ageng Karang's role has a significant role in the struggle of Raden Mas Said (Pangeran Sember Nyawa) in an effort to expel the invaders from the western slopes of Mount Lawu, which in the end the area was named Karanganyar. The idea of creating dance in Karanganyar district was initiated by the Head of Culture Division of the Education and Culture Office due to the desire to have a dance that is the identity of the district. With the aim that Karanganyar Regency has an identity dance that can be used and performed in various events, both by the government and the community. Inspired by the figure of Nyi Ageng Karang, the choreographer tried to interpret and compose a movement structure from a combination of the styles of the Kasunanan Palace and Puro Mangkunegaran. This is because historically, Karanganyar Regency has cultural influences from the Kasunanan Palace but also cultural or artistic influences from Puro Mangkunegaran [10]. The combination of characteristics from the two cultural centers in Surakarta is a source of creative ideas which are then packaged into a single female dance form.

Through the structure of the forward movement of the *beksan* or introduction, the *beksan* or core, and the backward *beksan* or closing. The choice of movements includes the typical female dance movements of Kasunanan and the typical movements of Puro Mangkunegaran. The typical movements of the Kasunanan and Puro Mangkunegaran palace dances become the identity that characterizes the movements in the Karang Tumandang dance or can also be called an icon, which is the relationship between a sign and its reference which is related to similarity [11]. The typical movements of Kasunanan are the movements from the Srimpi Anglir Mendung dance section [12], while the typical movements of Puro Mangkunegaran are the Gambyongan movements, namely *kebar*, *laku telu*, and the warrior movements, namely *kebyokan*, *ngancap*, *capeng*.

B. Creative Process

The presence of new works of art is the result of a person's creativity. This creativity arises from imaginative thinking, namely feeling, experiencing, imagining, and finding a truth [13]. Likewise, the creative process of creating the Karang Tumandang dance in Karanganyar district was carried out through workshop activities attended by a team of creators consisting of resource persons, namely choreographers and composers, and participants consisting of dance art teachers and karawitan art teachers and artists in the Karanganyar district.

The team of creators guided by choreographers and composers carried out the processing stage of interpreting the characters who were the source of inspiration, composing the dance structure, movement choices, and dance accompaniment. In the workshop, the resource person invited the artists of Karanganyar district who in the activity acted as participants to develop the movements and accompaniment needed in order to create the district's iconic dance.



Figure 1. The process of creating the Karang Tumandang dance

The Karang Tumandang dance movement represents a soldier's struggle, with each movement expressing its spirit and incorporating the elegance of a woman, influenced by various factors. One of them is the observation process carried out on the classical dance style of Surakarta as a firm foothold in producing the Karang Tumandang dance, which comprises a female dance with the character of *lanyap*, flexible, and *catas* or agile. There are several elements of movement contained in the karang tumandang dance such as in the *ada-ada* movement which aims to invite soldiers to go to war and learn *gladhen*, then in the *kebaran* movement entering the nuance of showing the *kenes* of a woman and remaining in her nature. Then entering the *capenangan* which is amazed by someone who is preparing herself to go to war, then continued with the *kembali beksan* which ends with *srising* which still shows the beauty of a *srising* woman.

C. Form of Accompaniment Work

From the aspect of the accompaniment, the Karang Tumandang dance uses an external type, namely accompaniment that comes from outside the dancer, usually in the form of sounds or sounds of certain musical instruments. For the accompaniment of the Karang Tumandang dance, it comes from the sound of Javanese gamelan musical instruments. According to Jazuli, dance art is defined as a musical rhythm that as an accompaniment can be used to express the intent and purpose that the dance creator wants to convey through the dancer (personal comm., 2025). For the accompaniment, *gendhing* forms are used: *ada-ada*, *gending lancar*: Karya Krodha, and *gending ladrang*: Wanita Tamtama. For cakepan or poems (*syair*) there are several parts: (1). *Ada-ada*: *Kontaping pra wadya bala, mangsah jurit mapag mungsuh, tan sumelang nora mingkuh, maju baris rintip lumaksana*; (2). *Gerongan Lancaran Karya Krodha*: *Tandya sigra gya lumaksana ,ngrungkebi pertiwi njunjung derajating bangsa. Gandhes luwes mrak ati pra wanita solahe nyata putri utama*; (3). *Kebar Ladrang Wus pinesthi kodrating wanita, ambangun bangsa srana kluwarga. bilih ana bebaya datan bisa endha, kudu melu hambrastha amrih nir sambekala* 4. *Gerongan Ciblon Wiled Purwa hambuka kanthi langen mataya, gladi siyaga kusumaning bangsa, jurit padhepokan Nyi Ageng Karang, cukat lan trengginas mungkasi karya. minangka pamong praja yekti ngawula brayat agung sami; sinartan donga lan pamuji Gusti, saeka kapti guyup gumregut. Tangguh samubarang pakarti luhur, golong gilig sedya bela nagara. Ngabekti wong priya jaga bale wisma , karaharjan kawibawan ingkang dipun gayuh rangkep lahir batin pulung wahyunipun Sampun turun temurun rahayuwa salaminya*

D. Dance Work Form

Karang Tumandang Dance is packaged in the form of a female solo dance composition. The concept of the presentation of the Karang Tumandang dance consists of three parts, namely: *maju beksan*, *beksan*, and *kembali beksan*. (introduction, content, and closing). This concept has the meaning that the reality of human life in this world begins with birth, then socializes, and will eventually experience death. The Karang Tumandang dance movement is centered on hand movements, foot movements, body movements, and head movements. And the provisions on the eye view are to follow the direction of movement with the eye gaze (the fall of the eye gaze is about 3-4 meters).

The purpose of creating the Karang Tumandang dance is as a welcoming dance for guests. With the intention of being able to be performed at the opening of official events within the scope of the district government or in events in the community in general. Can be known and owned by all people in various corners of Karanganyar. In addition, the Karang Tumandang dance is also used as a means of promoting regional potentials to improve the economic level of the community. Like a welcoming dance performed by female dancers, this dance has soft and dynamic movements. The characteristic of this dance movement is the *lanyap* movement as a symbol of enthusiasm in facing challenges, including the movements: *ngancap*, *endhan*, and *capenangan*. Where these movements are characteristic of warrior movements. Similarly, the Karang Tumandang dance, influenced by classical Surakarta dance style, incorporates female dances with characters like *lanyap*, flexible, and *catas*, embodying the spirit of struggle while incorporating femininity.



Figure 2. Costume makeup for the Karang Tumandang dance

The movement pattern in the Karang Tumandang dance uses a movement pattern that is hard, fast, agile with a large volume, this is to describe the figure of Nyi Ageng Karang as a brave, tough and firm fighter. In other parts, it uses a slow, flowing movement pattern, as a depiction of a mother figure who is gentle, loving and protective. In addition, it also uses a movement pattern that is agile, fast, *sigrak*, as a depiction of a cheerful, cheerful figure full of beauty. The following is the movement flow in sequence of the Karang Tumandang dance: (1). *Forward beksan lumaksana kapang-kapang*; (2). *Kebyok seblak kebyokan 2 kali srisigan*; (3). *Forward leg movement of mancat kebyokan*; (4). *Ngancap- sekaran panahan-srisig*; (5). *Kebar 1 (ulap-ulap tawing) -entrak-seblak*; (6). *Kebar II (penthangan trap jamang)-ngracik genjot - ogekan* (7). *Panggal-batangan encot - seblak* (8). *Tatapan gambul lembut - singgetan ukel karno* (9). *Laku telu lamba-magak* (10). *Lumaksana genjot - rimong - srisig* (12). *Embat-embatan asta - seblak tanjak kiri* (13). *Capengan, trap jamang* (14). *Ngancap kebyok sampur kebyak putar* 15. *Endhan - backward beksan*.

E. Socialization and publication

After the creation of the dance work is completed, it is then published and socialized so that it is known, liked, and owned by the Karanganyar community in particular and the wider community in general. The efforts made are to communicate the dance work to the public in an informative and persuasive manner. The realization of this publication and socialization effort is by determining the main target, namely the academic community for dance teachers and students and involving the role of dance studios.

The government has a very important role in efforts to publish and socialize dance works as an identity. For the Karang Tumandang dance in Karanganyar Regency, what the government has done through the Cultural Sector of the Education and Culture Office is to hold a workshop for dance teachers and a dance competition for elementary, junior high, and senior high/vocational high school students which is held to commemorate the Regency's Anniversary. The Karang Tumandang dance competition itself has been held twice, namely in November 2021 and November 2022. Another effort made by the government and the community is to stage the Karang Tumandang dance at official events within the district and outside the district, such as the World Dance Day stage in the 24 Hours of Solo Dance agenda at the Pendapa of ISI Surakarta. Information and socialization are also carried out through scientific forums, namely the National Seminar with the theme Examining Dance Works Through a Multidisciplinary Approach (Case Study of the Karang Tumandang Dance) on August 20, 2022, which is a collaboration between the Indonesian Arts Educators Association (APSI), the Indonesian Arts Institute, Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta, and the Karanganyar Regency Education Office. This aims to publicize the Karang Tumandang dance work and to obtain responses and input related to the existence of the dance as a regional identity.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that Karang Tumandang Dance was consciously created as a cultural artifact intended to represent the resilience, unity, and spiritual richness of Karanganyar Regency. The choreographer integrated local myths, traditional Javanese movement vocabulary, and symbolic music and costumes to root the dance in local heritage. The dance reflects a process of cultural encoding, where each element gesture, rhythm, formation serves as a medium for storytelling and identity transmission. The involvement of the local government and cultural agencies underscores the institutional support behind

identity-driven cultural production. This aligns with Hobsbawm's [14] concept of “invented traditions,” where new cultural expressions are intentionally created to foster social cohesion and identity.

The Karang Tumandang dance, inspired by Nyi Ageng Karang, is a dance in Karanganyar district, aiming to represent the district's identity [15]. The choreographer combines styles from the Kasunanan Palace and Puro Mangkunegaran, incorporating cultural influences from both centers. The dance is a blend of beauty, grace, and *cakrak*, *sigrak*, and *kenes*, showcasing the district's history and cultural significance. The dance is performed at various events, both by the government and the community. The Karang Tumandang dance features typical female dance movements from Kasunanan and Puro Mangkunegaran palace dances, forming an identity or icon. Kasunanan's movements are from the Srimpi Anglir Mendung dance section [5], while Puro Mangkunegaran's include Gambyongan movements and warrior movements like *kebar*, *laku telu*, and *capeng*. The Karang Tumandang Dance is a female solo dance composed of three parts: introduction, content, and closing [5]. It focuses on hand, foot, body, and head movements, with eye gaze guidelines. The dance is intended for welcoming guests and promoting regional potentials. It is performed at official events and community events, and is known and owned by people in various parts of Karanganyar. The dance's distinctive movements include the *lanyap* movement, *ngancap*, *endhan*, and *capenangan*, symbolizing enthusiasm and facing challenges.

The Karang Tumandang dance in Karanganyar district was created through a collaborative process of choreographers, composers, dance art teachers, and artists. The process involved interpreting inspiration characters, composing dance structure, movement choices, and accompaniment. The artists in the district were also invited to participate in the workshop to develop the dance's iconic movements and accompaniment. The Karang Tumandang dance uses external accompaniment, typically from Javanese gamelan musical instruments, to convey the dancer's intent and purpose, as defined by Jazuli, (personal comm. 2025), a dance art that uses musical rhythms. The Karanganyar community publishes and socializes dance works to make them known and owned. The main target is the academic community, including dance teachers and students, and dance studios. The government plays a crucial role in publishing and socializing dance works as an identity [16]. The Cultural Sector of the Education and Culture Office [17] holds workshops for dance teachers and a dance competition for elementary, junior, and senior high students. The dance is also staged at official events and scientific forums, such as the National Seminar on Examining Dance Works Through a Multidisciplinary Approach.

V. CONCLUSION

Karang Tumandang dance, a cultural artifact, represents Karanganyar Regency's resilience and spiritual richness. It incorporates local myths, Javanese movement variations, and symbolic music, reflecting cultural encoding and identity transmission, supported by local government and cultural agencies. The creation of the Karang Tumandang dance went through quite a long stage and involved many related parties. It began with a process of reflection to explore the source of the idea of the work which finally chose the source of the historical story of the legendary figure Nyi Ageng Karang. Furthermore, the idea of the work was actualized into a dance through the stages of exploration, improvisation, and composition. As a result of the creative process rooted in local wisdom, the Karang Tumandang dance is rich in symbolic meanings and noble values that can be internalized by the younger generation. As one type of dance created from the tradition, the Karang Tumandang dance is worthy of being an alternative material that can be implemented in learning Arts and Culture (Dance) in Junior High Schools and Senior High or Vocational High Schools.

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