

Cultural and Religious Values in the Jemblung Performance at the Kediri Cultural Son Studio

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Abstract: This study is motivated by the declining public interest—particularly among the youth—in the traditional Jemblung art form in Kediri, which serves as a medium for entertainment, the dissemination of Islamic teachings, and the transmission of cultural values. The study aims to examine the cultural and religious values embodied in Jemblung performances at the Sanggar Putra Budaya in Kediri. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, involving data collection through observation, interviews, and the gathering of documentation. Data sources included the studio's founder, musicians, and audience members. Data analysis was conducted through reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing, with validation achieved via triangulation of sources, methods, and timeframes. The findings indicate that Jemblung performances encompass cultural values—specifically social, educational, moral, and aesthetic values—manifested through performer collaboration, ethical life lessons, honesty, courage, and a blend of traditional music with Islamic nuances. Furthermore, religious aspects are evident in the narratives concerning prophets and Islamic figures, the recitation of shalawat (prayers upon the Prophet), and spiritual messages that instill the concept of Tawhid (divine oneness) and strengthen faith. In conclusion, Jemblung performances play a vital role in preserving culture while simultaneously serving as a medium for religious values education for the community of Kediri.

Keywords: jemblung, performance art, culture, religion, Kediri

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with abundant cultural diversity, one of which is evident in the existence of traditional performing arts in various regions. Performing arts serve not only as a means of entertainment, but also as a medium for transmitting cultural, educational, moral, and religious values passed down from generation to generation. The existence of traditional arts plays a crucial role in shaping a society's cultural identity because they contain worldviews, social norms, and local wisdom that serve as guidelines for living together. Therefore, efforts to preserve traditional performing arts are crucial in maintaining the sustainability of the nation's cultural heritage amidst dynamic social change and technological advancement.

The increasingly connected world and advances in information technology have led to significant transformations in people's lifestyles, including in the arts and culture sector. The younger generation, in particular, has become increasingly familiar with a variety of modern entertainment options readily available through digital platforms. This situation has led to a decline in public interest in traditional performing arts, leading many local arts to experience a decline in the number of performances, a decline in the number of performers, and even the threat of failing to regenerate. If this

situation continues, not only will these types of performances become extinct, but the cultural values passed down through traditional arts will also fade.

One form of traditional performing art currently facing these challenges is Jemblung, a popular art form that developed in the Kediri area of East Java. Jemblung is a verbal art form that combines elements of oral literature, traditional music, dialogue, song, and wayang puppetry as a means of storytelling. Jemblung's distinctive characteristic lies in its potential to convey ideas about life through accessible language, humor, and direct interaction with the audience. As it has evolved, Jemblung performances have served not only as a source of entertainment for the community but also as a tool for teaching cultural and religious values, presented in an engaging and accessible format for a wide range of audiences.

Kediri Cultural Sons Studio is an arts group that continuously strives to maintain the existence of Jemblung through training activities, performances, and the replacement of generations of artists. This studio not only preserves traditional performances, but also innovates in terms of presentation to remain in line with the times without losing the values rooted in Jemblung's identity. This effort demonstrates that preserving traditional arts is not only related to maintaining the art form, but also maintaining its social, cultural, and religious functions. The existence of Sanggar Putra Budaya is an example of how the local arts community actively contributes to maintaining the continuity of cultural heritage amidst the rapid flow of modernization.

The urgency of this study stems from the need to recognize and capture the values inherent in Jemblung performances, as a form of intangible cultural heritage. Research on cultural and spiritual values in performing arts is relevant because these two elements are fundamental to the formation of community identity and serve as tools for character development. By understanding the values inherent in Jemblung, this research is expected to contribute to the development of performing arts studies, the preservation of local culture, and the strengthening of the role of traditional arts as a means of education and cultural outreach in a society undergoing ongoing social and cultural transformation.

Cultural values are a set of thoughts, principles, and life guidelines that grow and develop within a community, becoming a guide for how people think, act, and behave. Cultural values emerge from ongoing social interactions, shaping the identity of a particular community group. Cultural values are not only evident in traditions but are also expressed through various forms of cultural expression, including traditional performing arts.

One efficient way to convey cultural values is through the performing arts. Performing arts is a combination of various artistic elements, including literature, music, dance, theater, and visual arts, presented to an audience as a form of cultural communication. Performing arts not only create an artistic experience but also serve as a medium for conveying the norms, ethics, and values cherished by the community. Within the local cultural environment, performing arts serve as a platform for communities to maintain their cultural identity and pass on these values to future generations.

Jemblung is a traditional art form native to the Kediri area, performed by combining storytelling, traditional music, dialogue, song, and the use of wayang as a visual element. The stories

presented typically feature themes of heroism, social life, or stories with an Islamic background that include moral messages and religious values. In each performance, the puppeteer serves as the messenger, conveying cultural and religious values to the audience using accessible language, a touch of humor, and active interaction. These characteristics make Jemblung not only a source of entertainment, but also a tool for character education, preservation of local culture, and a medium for cultural da'wah (Islamic outreach).

According to Sarinah (2019), cultural values in performing arts are generally reflected through various elements, such as social, moral, educational, and aesthetic values. The social aspect can be seen in the emergence of cooperation, solidarity, and interaction between artists and the community. Moral values are demonstrated through the delivery of messages about honesty, responsibility, and respect for prevailing norms. Educational values are evident in the form of advice, life experiences, and lessons conveyed through the storyline, while aesthetic values are seen in the beauty of the presentation involving music, dialogue, stage design, costumes, and artistic expression. These four values are interconnected, making performing arts a means of building character while preserving culture.

Besides preserving cultural values, traditional performing arts in Indonesia also contain many religious elements. Religious values are a collection of teachings that arise from belief in the One Almighty God and serve as guidelines for living life. This aspect includes the relationship between humans and God and the relationship between humans and others which are reflected through religious attitudes, obedience, honesty, caring, and good behavior. Malik (2014) states that cultural arts can function as an effective means of da'wah because they are able to convey religious teachings in a communicative, persuasive manner, and in accordance with the cultural background of the community. This culture-based da'wah approach allows the community to accept religious values without having to abandon their pre-existing local cultural identity.

Based on this explanation, it is clear that cultural and religious aspects are two complementary elements in the Jemblung performance. Cultural aspects shape the identity and character of the community, while religious aspects provide the ethical and spiritual foundation for social life. The combination of these two aspects strengthens Jemblung's position as a means of preserving intangible cultural heritage that remains relevant to the advancement of modern society. Therefore, studying the cultural and religious aspects of the Jemblung performance is crucial for providing a more comprehensive understanding of the role of traditional performing arts in preserving local culture and building community character.

Studies on the meaning of culture in traditional performing arts show that these arts are not merely a means of entertainment, but also a way to pass on life values. Sarinah (2019) states that cultural values serve as guidelines that shape people's thought patterns, attitudes, and actions in social interactions. These cultural values encompass social, moral, educational, and aesthetic aspects that develop through communication between communities and are passed down from generation to generation. Within the performing arts, these values are expressed through narrative, dialogue, music, symbols, and interactions between artists and audiences. Therefore,

performing arts play a crucial role in preserving culture and shaping community character.

Meanwhile, Hatta Abdul Malik (2014) argued that art and culture serve as effective means of da'wah (Islamic outreach) because they convey Islamic teachings in a communicative, engaging manner, and in keeping with the cultural characteristics of the local community. Da'wah is not limited to lectures or formal learning, but can also be conveyed through works of art that possess religious values. A culture-based da'wah approach allows communities to embrace Islamic principles in a more natural manner without sacrificing regional cultural identity. Therefore, the integration of culture and religion is a key element in the advancement of traditional performing arts in Indonesia.

Based on these two studies, we can see that culture and religious values are interconnected and support each other in traditional performances. Sarinah emphasized the importance of cultural values as a foundation for shaping a community's identity and character, while Hatta Abdul Malik emphasized that performing arts can serve as a tool for internalizing religious values through a cultural approach. These two perspectives demonstrate that performing arts not only have aesthetic value but also serve as a means of education, cultural preservation, and the transmission of religious teachings.

However, research combining these two perspectives within the Jemblung art form remains relatively limited. To date, Jemblung studies have focused primarily on history, performance styles, or entertainment roles, while in-depth research exploring the relationship between cultural values, as articulated by Sarinah, and religious values, according to Hatta Abdul Malik, in the context of Jemblung performances at the Sanggar Putra Budaya Kediri is rare. Consequently, there has been no in-depth overview of how social, moral, educational, and aesthetic values intertwine with values of faith, piety, and morality throughout the performance. Given this situation, this study seeks to address this research gap by holistically analyzing cultural and religious values in Jemblung performances at the Sanggar Putra Budaya Kediri. This analysis adopts the cultural values perspective proposed by Sarinah and the concept of cultural da'wah introduced by Hatta Abdul Malik. Through this approach, this study aims not only to identify the forms of values present in Jemblung performances, but also to explain how these two values are integrated to form Jemblung's function as a means of cultural preservation, character education, and cultural preaching. Therefore, this study offers a conceptual contribution to the study of traditional performing arts and strengthens understanding of Jemblung's position as a cultural heritage that is still relevant in modern society.

2. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the cultural and religious values embedded in the Jemblung performance. This approach was chosen because the focus of the research was on understanding the meaning and processes of the Jemblung performance. The object of study was the Islamic Jemblung performance, while the subjects included the studio founder, Jemblung performers, and audience members participating

in the event. This research was conducted at the Putra Budaya Studio in Kediri, East Java.

Information was collected through observation, interviews, literature review, and document collection. This research was conducted directly to understand the characteristics of the performance and the cultural and religious values embedded within it. Interviews were conducted with the studio founder, performers, and audience members to obtain information about the history, development, and meaning of the Jemblung performance. Additionally, documentation in the form of photographs, videos, and audio recordings was used to support the research. Secondary data was collected from journals, articles, and other documents related to research on Jemblung performing arts.

The analysis technique was implemented in three stages: data simplification and conclusion drawing. Data simplification was carried out by sorting and simplifying information related to cultural and religious values in the Jemblung performance. Next, the data was presented systematically in a descriptive format for easy understanding. The final stage was drawing conclusions based on the results of interviews, observations, and analyzed documentation. Data validity was strengthened through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time to ensure the data obtained corresponded to the reality on the ground.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

Sanggar Putra Budaya is an arts organization actively promoting Jemblung art in Kediri City. Founded by Mr. Sujiman in response to declining public interest, particularly among young people, in traditional performing arts, Sanggar Putra Budaya serves not only as a training venue, but also as a center for study, artist regeneration, and the preservation of local culture. Sanggar Putra Budaya's activities include regular rehearsals, performances at cultural events, religious activities, arts festivals, and local government events. During each performance, members of the studio learn not only performance techniques but also the cultural meaning and religious values embedded in the Jemblung story.



Jemblung performance image

https://youtu.be/dFJx1HHfTV4?si=V_A1dhYVxLxHTYwB

The special thing about the Jemblung performance at Sanggar Putra Budaya is that it uses wayang suket as the visual medium. The

story is told through dialogue, songs, humor, and the direct vocalization of gamelan sounds by the performers themselves. These characteristics make the performance more communicative, allowing cultural and religious messages to be easier for the community to understand and accept.

Research shows that the Jemblung performance embodies four important cultural values: social, moral, educational, and aesthetic. These four values emerge simultaneously through dialogue, storyline, character interactions, and communication with the audience.

Social values are evident in the cooperation of all members of the dance troupe, from rehearsals to their performances on stage. Each performer performs their duties effectively, resulting in a harmonious and enjoyable performance. Furthermore, the interaction between the performers and the audience demonstrates a strong social bond, fostered by mutual understanding and humor interspersed throughout the performance.

Moral values emerge through various conversations and stories that teach honesty, responsibility, hard work, mutual respect, and consideration for others. These messages are explained in a way that is easy for everyone to understand.

The educational value is evident in the way knowledge about local culture, history, and character building is conveyed to the community. Sanggar Putra Budaya also uses the training process as a way to provide new members with an understanding of the philosophy of the Jemblung performance.

The aesthetic value is realized through the combination of speaking, singing, the use of grass puppets, the performers' expressions, dialogue improvisation, and artistic presentation, creating the distinctive characteristics of the Jemblung performance.

In addition to cultural values, research also shows that Jemblung performances possess religious values. These values are evident in the stories, songs, prayers, and dialogue delivered by the puppeteers. These religious values include faith, piety, morals, and preaching. The values of faith can be seen in the storytelling of the prophets and Islamic figures who taught others to believe in God. These values of piety are manifested by encouraging people to carry out religious commands, worship, and avoid prohibited acts.

Moral values are evident in messages about respecting parents, being honest, patient, and caring for others. Meanwhile, the value of da'wah (preaching) is embodied in conveying Islamic teachings through artistic performances, making them more easily accepted by the community.

3.2 Discussion

According to Sarinah (2019), cultural values are a group of values that serve as guidelines for society in thinking, behaving, and acting. These values grow through interactions between humans and are preserved from one generation to the next through various cultural activities, such as performing arts. From that perspective, the Jemblung performance can be interpreted as a cultural place that not only maintains its artistic form, but also changes the values of life to society. Social values are the most important aspect in the Jemblung performance. Based on research results, cooperation between the players is the main thing that determines whether the performance is successful or not. Each player has a different role,

from the leader, to the shooter, to the player who produces the vocal music sound. All parts work well together to create a harmonious performance. In addition, the way the players interact with the audience shows a social relationship that involves the participation of both parties. The audience does not only watch the performance, but also gets involved in it.

These findings align with Sarinah's opinion that social values are formed through interpersonal relationships based on cooperation, solidarity, and a sense of caring toward a common goal. In Jemblung performances, social values are manifested through strong cooperation among performers, smooth communication throughout the performance, and a positive relationship between the artists and the surrounding community. Thus, Jemblung performances serve as a means of strengthening social bonds and cementing cultural ties within the community.

In addition to their social value, this study also found that Jemblung performances convey moral values through stories, dialogue, and advice given by the puppeteers. These moral values include honesty, responsibility, hard work, respect for one another, and concern for others. These moral values are conveyed indirectly through the problems faced by the characters, or directly through the advice given in the performance.

Moral values are an important part of cultural values because they serve as guidelines for determining good behavior and conforming to societal rules and customs. Research shows that the moral values in Jemblung performances are not taught directly, but rather conveyed through an easily understood storyline, making them more enjoyable to listen to and easier for the public to digest. This approach demonstrates that performing arts can shape the moral awareness of viewers through the beautiful experiences they experience. Therefore, Jemblung performances not only provide enjoyment but also serve as a way to shape a personality that is appropriate for social life.

Educational value is one of the important findings of this study. The results indicate that the teaching and learning process does not only occur during performances but also continues during participants' rehearsals at the Sanggar Putra Budaya. The members of the sanggar understand the history of Jemblung, the performance philosophy, playing techniques, and the cultural values embedded within it. Consequently, the sanggar serves as a learning center that helps renew the artists while simultaneously preserving traditional arts.

This view aligns with Sarinah's theory, which explains that culture has a teaching function because it serves as a way to introduce knowledge, rules, and life experiences to the next generation. In Jemblung performances, educational value is realized by conveying messages about life, learning about local cultural history, and fostering an appreciation for cultural heritage. This demonstrates that performing arts not only help preserve culture but also support character development by instilling a sense of responsibility, discipline, and a love for local culture.

The next cultural value identified is aesthetic value. This research shows that the aesthetic aspect is evident in the combination of various elements such as storytelling, songs, gamelan pronunciation, the use of grass puppets, the performers' expressions, and improvised dialogue, which form the distinctive characteristics of Jemblung performances. These artistic elements not only create a

beautiful appearance and sound but also help convey cultural messages more clearly to the public.

Aesthetic value is a part of culture that demonstrates the human ability to create works of beauty. Aesthetic value involves not only the physical appearance of a work of art, but also the work's ability to convey emotional impressions and meaningful meaning to the community. In this study, the use of wayang suket, vocal music, and interactive storytelling techniques demonstrates that the beauty of Jemblung's performance is formed from a combination of various artistic elements that support each other. This beauty becomes the main attraction that allows the cultural message to be received by the community without reducing the entertainment value of the performance. Overall, the results of the study indicate that social, moral, educational, and aesthetic values are integrated in shaping the character of the Jemblung performance. These four values help Jemblung play a role as a medium for preserving culture and become a means of shaping the character of the community. From Sarinah's perspective, the presence of cultural values in the performance shows that traditional art is a form of representation of cultural identity that is still alive and continues to be preserved through the process of passing down knowledge from generation to generation. Therefore, preserving Jemblung is not only about maintaining the way the performance is presented, but also about ensuring that the cultural values contained within it remain alive and in line with current societal developments.

Research shows that the Jemblung performance at the Kediri Putra Budaya Studio not only displays cultural values, but also conveys religious values, which are a very important part of the overall form of the performance. These religious values are realized through telling Islamic stories, reciting prayers, salawat, religious songs, dialogues containing advice, and moral messages that invite the community to increase faith, piety, and good manners. The religious values present in the performance show that Jemblung has a role beyond simply providing entertainment, namely as a tool for preaching that spreads Islamic teachings through art and culture. According to Hatta Abdul Malik's perspective, art and culture are one of the effective means of preaching because they are able to convey religious values in a way that is easy to understand, interesting, and in accordance with community customs. Cultural preaching uses culture as a way to convey religious messages, while still maintaining the cultural identity that already exists and lives in the community. This approach makes art a means that not only conveys religious information, but also helps increase spiritual awareness through the aesthetic and emotional experiences felt by the audience while enjoying the performance.

Research findings indicate that the values of faith in the Jemblung performance are embodied through storytelling featuring exemplary Islamic figures and conveying teachings about the greatness of God. These stories are not delivered through speeches, but rather structured into engaging narratives, making them easier for the public to understand and accept. This presentation demonstrates that the application of religious values occurs naturally through the performing arts. Thus, Jemblung serves as a means of religious learning that reaches various community groups without feeling like it is simply giving advice. In addition to cultivating faith, this study also found that the value of piety is manifested through calls to carry out

religious commands, increase worship, maintain relationships with others, and avoid actions that conflict with Islamic teachings. These messages are conveyed through conversations between characters or advice given by the puppeteer in certain parts of the performance. According to Hatta Abdul Malik, teaching religion through art has the advantage of making the message enjoyable for the public, making it easier to understand and feel. The findings of this study support this view, as the value of piety is not only seen as a ritual task but is also demonstrated through social actions that illustrate religious teachings.

Spiritual values are also an important finding of this research. The Jemblung performance consistently conveys messages about the importance of honesty, responsibility, patience, caring for others, and respect for parents. These values also shape the characters' personalities and become part of the way to solve problems in the story. Hatta Abdul Malik emphasized that the main purpose of da'wah through art is not only to provide information about religion, but also to shape people's attitudes and behavior to align with Islamic values. Therefore, the presentation of moral values in Jemblung demonstrates that performing arts can be a means of shaping a person's character. This connects cultural aspects with religious values. The research also shows that the Jemblung performance serves as a medium for cultural da'wah, capable of combining local culture with religious teachings. This integration is evident in the use of regional languages, traditional songs, wayang suket (a traditional puppet show), and the distinctive communication patterns of the Kediri community as a means of conveying Islamic messages. This strategy demonstrates that culture is not seen as something that conflicts with religion, but is instead used to strengthen the spread of religious values. Therefore, the Jemblung performance demonstrates a harmonious integration between local culture and Islamic teachings.

The main result of this study is the integration of cultural values with religious values. Based on the research results, social, moral, educational, and aesthetic values cannot be separated from the values of faith, piety, morals, and da'wah. The social value of cooperation between the performers is a form of implementing religious teachings about the importance of brotherhood and mutual assistance. Moral values that teach honesty and responsibility are in accordance with the principles of morality in Islam. Educational values serve as a means to pass on culture and instill religious values to the younger generation. Meanwhile, aesthetic values serve to strengthen the appeal of a performance, so that cultural and religious messages can be better received by the community. These findings indicate that culture and religion in the Jemblung performance are not separate, but rather complement each other to shape the meaning contained in the performance. The results of this study indicate that traditional performing arts have great potential as a means of learning character values based on culture and religion. The study shows that the preservation of Jemblung is not only important for maintaining the sustainability of intangible culture, but also helps in shaping the personality of the community through the application of social, moral, educational, aesthetic, and religious values. Therefore, the results of this study can be used as a reference for educational institutions to utilize traditional performing arts as

learning materials that combine cultural aspects and character building.

Establishing Jemblung's function as a means of entertainment, character building, cultural preservation, and the development of cultural propagation. These findings help enrich research on traditional performing arts and provide a theoretical basis for further research into the relationship between culture and religion in Indonesian performing arts.

In general, the research results indicate that the survival of Jemblung art depends not only on the ability to maintain its performance form, but also on the success of transmitting cultural and religious values to the next generation. By combining these two values, Jemblung remains relevant as a cultural heritage capable of facing the challenges of modernization without losing its local identity and retaining its educational function. Therefore, maintaining Jemblung's sustainability should be considered a step towards preserving the cultural and religious values that underpin community life.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Jemblung performance at the Kediri Putra Budaya Studio contains integrated cultural and religious values and plays a crucial role in preserving traditional performing arts. The cultural values identified include social, moral, educational, and aesthetic values, reflected through collaboration between performers, the delivery of life messages, the preservation of traditions, and an artistic presentation that combines storytelling, music, and wayang. Religious values, meanwhile, are embodied through stories of the prophets, religious poetry, salawat (prayer chants), and messages of Islamic propagation that teach faith, piety, and noble character.

Research findings indicate that Jemblung serves not only as a medium of entertainment, but also as a means of character education, cultural outreach, and the transmission of the cultural identity of the Kediri community. The innovations made by Sanggar Putra Budaya in developing performance forms without eliminating traditional values demonstrate that Jemblung art is able to adapt to current developments while maintaining its educational and religious functions.

This research contributes to the study of traditional performing arts by demonstrating that the integration of cultural and religious values is a crucial factor in maintaining the sustainability of Jemblung as a cultural heritage. Therefore, synergy between artists, the community, educational institutions, and the government is needed to support the preservation, development, and transmission of Jemblung art to the younger generation to ensure its relevance amidst modernization.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The first author was responsible for formulating the research concept, developing research tools, collecting information through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzing and interpreting the data. Furthermore, this author was responsible for preparing the manuscript and making revisions based on suggestions from the second author. The second author contributed to designing the research methodology, overseeing the research implementation, validating the analysis results, providing input to the discussion, editing the article content, and reviewing and providing final approval for the manuscript prior to publication.

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