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Sesaji Jawi Art Forms of Offerings, Wonosari Village, Wonosari District, Malang Regency

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Abstract: Sesaji Jawi is a form of traditional art created in the area of Wonosari Village, Wonosari District, Malang Regency. This art emerged from community traditions related to spiritual practices and respect for ancestral spirits, as well as an expression of gratitude to God Almighty. This study aims to describe the form of Sesaji Jawi art, particularly focusing on its movement elements. The research method used is qualitative with a descriptive approach that explains each component of the Sesaji Jawi art form. The data were obtained through observation, interviews with artists and related community members, as well as documentation of Sesaji Jawi performances. The results of the study show that Sesaji Jawi art has a performance structure that combines aesthetic elements and symbolic values. The research also reveals that Sesaji Jawi art functions not only as entertainment but also as a ritual medium, a form of cultural expression, and an effort to preserve community traditional values. Therefore, Sesaji Jawi art does not only possess aesthetic value but also contains philosophical and spiritual meanings that reflect the worldview of the local community.

Keywords: Cultural Art, Performance Form, Symbolic Meaning, Sesaji Jawi

1. INTRODUCTION

Wonosari District, situated on the slopes of Mount Kawi in Malang Regency, is an anthropologically unique cultural space in East Java. This region is not only recognized as an agrarian stronghold with traditional coffee plantations as its primary commodity, but it is also nationally renowned as an epicenter for spiritual practices, sacred relics (*petilasan*), and multi-faith pilgrimages. The socio-religious phenomena occurring in Wonosari display an intense pattern of interaction among agrarian Javanese societies, *kejawen* (traditional Javanese spiritualism) traditions, ancestor worship, and the enduring influence of Chinese cultural practices embedded within the pilgrimage activities at the sacred tombs of Eyang Djoego (Kiai Zakaria II) and Eyang Raden Mas Iman Soedjono.

It is within this hybrid cultural space that the performing art of *Sesaji Jawi* was conceived and continues to reform itself. In Javanese cosmology, the term *sesaji* (ritual offerings) is not merely a collection of profane material objects such as flowers, incense, or food. Instead, it serves as a visual manifestation of prayer, spiritual negotiation, and a mechanism to balance the macrocosmos (*alam agung*) with the microcosmos (*alam cilik*). When the ritual practice of presenting these offerings underwent objectification and transformed into a collective performing art form, the socio-cultural aesthetic values embedded within it did not vanish. On the contrary, the structural movements, accompanying musical rhythms, and the visual-artistic presentation of the dancers became primary mediums to transmit these philosophical values, ensuring their relevance amidst the rapid modernization of the 21st century.



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Therefore, the urgency of this study lies in analyzing how *Sesaji Jawi* encapsulates the sociological realities of Wonosari's coffee farmers, blends various dance dialects (Malangan, Mataraman, and Sundanese), and sustains its ritualistic-communicative function. A profound structural analysis of this dance's choreography will provide new insights into the resilience of local cultural expressions as they navigate and respond to a living space that is simultaneously sacred and profane.

Traditional art is an important part of community culture that reflects the values, beliefs, and perspectives of a community toward life. Traditional arts function not only as entertainment but also as a medium of cultural expression, ritual practice, and social communication passed down from generation to generation. In Javanese society, various forms of traditional art develop alongside the spiritual and social life of the community. These arts are often associated with traditional ceremonies, beliefs in ancestors, and expressions of gratitude to God for the safety and prosperity received.

One traditional art form that continues to develop in society is *Sesaji Jawi*. This art originates from Wonosari Village, Wonosari District, Malang Regency, and emerged from community traditions closely related to spiritual practices and respect for ancestors. In the life of the local community, *sesaji* (offerings) symbolize a form of devotion that carries deep meaning, representing prayers, requests for safety, and expressions of gratitude to God. This tradition of presenting offerings later developed into a form of performing art presented in various traditional ceremonies and community celebrations.

As a performing art, *Sesaji Jawi* consists of elements that form a complete performance structure, especially in terms of movement. The movements in this art are not only aesthetic but also contain symbolic meanings related to spiritual values and the philosophy of Javanese life. Likewise, the accompanying music functions not only as a rhythm regulator for the movements but also as a means of building the atmosphere that supports the meaning of the performance. The presence of properties in the form of offerings further strengthens the relationship between this art and the ritual practices that exist in the community.

Despite having important cultural value, the existence of traditional arts often faces various challenges amid modern developments. Modernization and changes in people's lifestyles can affect the sustainability of traditional arts if not balanced with proper preservation efforts. Therefore, studies of traditional arts are important to document, understand, and introduce the cultural values contained within them to a wider generation.

Based on this background, research on the form of *Sesaji Jawi* art becomes relevant. This study aims to describe and analyze the elements that form the *Sesaji Jawi* performance so that a deeper understanding of the structure, function, and meaning contained in the art can be obtained. Through this research, it is expected to contribute to the preservation of traditional arts and enrich the study of cultural arts, especially those related to traditional performing arts in Javanese society.

2. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. The qualitative method was chosen because this study aims to understand and describe in depth the form of Sesaji Jawi art that develops in Wonosari Village, Wonosari District, Malang Regency. The descriptive approach is used to systematically describe the elements that form this art, especially the movement elements.

The object of this research is the Sesaji Jawi art performance presented by the people of Wonosari Village. Meanwhile, the research subjects include art performers such as dancers, musicians, creators or managers of the art, and community leaders who understand the history and development of Sesaji Jawi. The presence of these informants is important to obtain data related to the performance form and the meanings contained in the art.

Data collection techniques in this study were conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was carried out by directly observing the Sesaji Jawi performance process to understand the structure and variety of movements. Interviews were conducted in depth with informants to obtain information regarding the history of the art, symbolic meanings, and the function of Sesaji Jawi in community life. Documentation techniques were also used to collect data in the form of photos, video recordings, and notes related to the performance.

The data analysis technique used in this study follows a qualitative analysis model consisting of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was conducted by selecting and simplifying the data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation according to the research focus. Next, the data were presented in a systematic descriptive form to facilitate understanding of the research findings. The final stage was drawing conclusions by interpreting the analyzed data to obtain a comprehensive description of the form of Sesaji Jawi art.

Through this research method, it is expected that accurate and in-depth data regarding the structure and form of the Sesaji Jawi performance can be obtained, so that this study can contribute to the development of performing arts studies and the preservation of traditional arts in society.

3.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An ethnochoreological approach is utilized as the primary analytical tool to bridge the choreographic text of the dance with the socio-cultural background of its native community. Ethnochoreology perceives dance not merely as a pure, isolated aesthetic product, but as a living cultural phenomenon conditioned by its social environment. Consequently, the analysis of movement cannot be detached from the socio-religious systems, local livelihoods, history, and philosophical values of the society that birthed it.

Movements in traditional dances frequently adopt everyday human activities (*mimesis*), which then undergo a process of stylization

(*penghalusan*) or distortion (*perombakan*). In the case of *Sesaji Jawi*, these mimetic movements stem directly from the agrarian routines of coffee farmers on the slopes of Mount Kawi and local religious-spiritual rites (such as the act of bowing in veneration or shaking a container of fortune-telling sticks). Through an ethnochoreological lens, the transformation of profane gestures (harvesting coffee) into sacred-aesthetic texts within the choreography is analyzed as a mechanism for the local community to articulate gratitude and reassert their distinct cultural identity.

Movement in choreography is a form of communication arranged in movement patterns performed by male and female dancers with energetic characteristics. Movement is the foundation of expression; therefore, it can be understood as a representation of emotional and mental experiences expressed through bodily motion. In *Sesaji Jawi* art, the movements originate from the activities of coffee farmers who use offerings as expressions of prayer and gratitude in their daily lives. The theme of this dance is socio-cultural, describing the farming activities of coffee farmers from before to after the coffee harvest. Dynamic, agile, and gentle movements appear in this performance.

Several types of movements appear in this art form

1. Budhalan Movement

The budhalan movement begins with a step commonly found in East Javanese dance. Female dancers step forward lightly on tiptoe with small floating movements, creating an agile and graceful impression. Male dancers perform a *tanjak* movement and step forward starting with the right foot while spreading their arms shoulder-width apart, symbolizing male dominance and readiness.

The use of the right foot as the first step symbolizes good intentions, hopes, and purposes. Stepping with the right foot also reflects politeness and courtesy, which are identities of the local community.

As the piece transitions into the *Singget* movement (Figure 2), a unique stylistic convergence takes place. The choreographer deliberately avoids confining the dance to a single regional dialect. Instead, a stylistic synthesis emerges by blending the sharp, abrupt, and spontaneous energy of the *Malangan* style with the refined, continuous, and restrained energy of the *Mataraman* style. This *pertautan* mirrors the geographical identity of Malang's agrarian core, which historically absorbed cultural waves from the Mataram courts of Central Java, resulting in a highly adaptive and distinct local aesthetic.



Figure 1. Budhalan

2. Singget

The singget movement functions as a connector between movements that are continuous. Singget has many variations depending on the next movement sequence. In Sesaji Jawi, male and female dancers perform different singget styles.

Male dancers perform singget malangan, which can also be found in Malang dances such as Bapang, Panji, or Klana dances. Female dancers combine Malangan and Mataraman styles, visible in the hand shapes resembling Malangan style and body and head movements resembling Mataraman singget.



Figure 2. Singget

3. Unduh Kopi

Unduh means harvest in Javanese; therefore, unduh kopi means coffee harvesting. This movement imitates the activities of Gunung Kawi community members when harvesting coffee traditionally by picking coffee beans one by one from branches and placing them into a bamboo container called rinjing. Male and female dancers perform different movements reflecting their respective roles.



Figure 3. Unduh Kopi

The *Unduh Kopi* movement (Figure 3) is a direct choreographic abstraction of the cultural ecology of Wonosari Village. The up-and-down mimetic motions of the hands replicate the physical harvesting of ripe coffee cherries from branches, which are subsequently placed into a woven bamboo basket (*rinjing* or *tenggok*) held closely against the female dancer's hip. Here, the profane act of farming undergoes artistic stylization. The repetitive harvesting gestures symbolize patience, meticulousness, and an appreciation for the natural agricultural cycles provided by the earth. The spatial contrast between the male penari clearing undergrowth and the female penari picking fruits showcases a harmonious gendered division of labor (*division of labor*) within traditional agrarian societies.

4. Selut Jaipongan dan Pencak Silat Movements

The selut movement from Jaipongan dance, originating from West Java, appears as a variation in Sesaji Jawi. This variation is influenced by the choreographer's artistic background as a Jaipongan dancer. Pencak silat movements are also included, which are common in Jaipongan choreography.



Figure 4. Selut Jaipongan dan pencak silat movements

5. Singget Jawa Timuran

This movement refers to singget styles found in East Javanese dances, such as Remo dance. Remo often becomes an inspiration for artistic creations in East Java, particularly in the Arek cultural region such as Surabaya and surrounding areas.

This movement emphasizes firmness, density of meaning, and honest body expression in response to social realities.



Figure 5. Singget Jawa Timuran

6. Bumi Langit

The Bumi Langit movement is commonly found in Javanese dance. involves head movements following the hand motions from top to bottom combined with tanjak and gejug footwork.

This movement symbolizes awareness of the life force generated by the earth and the sky. Between the earth and the sky, humans exist to live their life.



Figure 6. Bumi Langit

The *Bumi Langit* (Figure 6) and *Sembahan* (Figure 7) movements shift the axis of the performance from a horizontal plane (profane/social) to a vertical plane (sacral/transcendental). The *Bumi Langit* gesture visually encapsulates the Javanese cosmic philosophy of *Memayu Hayuning Bawana*. The hand pointing toward the heavens symbolizes humanity's deep awareness of the Supreme Divine Power, while the hand pointing toward the soil emphasizes the physical reality of human existence, which must remain dedicated to preserving the ecological integrity of the earth.

This aesthetic ritual reaches its peak in the *Sembahan* movement. The dancers lower their center of gravity close to the earth by adopting a kneeling stance (*jengkeng*). Choreographically, this drastic reduction in level represents the dissolution of human ego (*kasunyatan*) before the grandeur of the Creator. Swinging the brass

bowls filled with fresh roses, jasmine, and cananga flowers in three directions (front, right, left) visually replicates the ritual act of dispersing prayers, honoring the ancestral spirits who founded Wonosari, and asking for divine protection against agricultural failures (pagebluk) and communal misfortune.

7. Sembahan

This movement represents the tradition of paying respect (sinembah) practiced by the community of Wonosari Village and surrounding areas when visiting the sacred graves of Eyang Djoego and other figures at Gunung Kawi.

The dancers walk slowly forward, kneel, and swing flower offerings to the front, right, and left. This movement symbolizes respect for ancestors and prayer to God.



Figure 7. Sembahan

8. Kocok Ciamsi

The kocok ciamsi movement imitates the actions of visitors performing ciamsi, an ancient Chinese fortune-telling tradition involving shaking a bamboo stick container until one numbered stick falls out, which corresponds to a verse in a ciamsi text.

This movement is characterized by intertwined hand gestures, stamping feet, and a 360-degree body rotation following the accompanying music.



Figure 8. Kocok Ciamsi

Furthermore, the *Kocok Ciamsi* movement represents the choreographer's interpretation of the multicultural realities surrounding the temples and sacred sites of Mount Kawi. The gesture of cupping the hands together at chest level and rapidly shaking

them—replicating the ritual shaking of bamboo fortune sticks (*ciamsi*)—illustrates how a Chinese spiritual practice has been textually absorbed into Javanese choreography. The subsequent 360-degree rotation punctuated by a heavy foot stamp (*gejug*) symbolizes the cyclical nature of human life, where luck, fate, and destiny constantly rotate under divine governance

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that Sesaji Jawi art in Wonosari Village, Wonosari District, Malang Regency is a traditional performing art that contains aesthetic, symbolic, and spiritual values. The structure of the Sesaji Jawi performance is formed through several supporting elements, particularly the element of movement which becomes the main focus of this study. The movements in Sesaji Jawi are not merely decorative dance movements but represent expressions of social and cultural life within the community.

The movement forms found in Sesaji Jawi, such as budhalan, singget, unduh kopi, selut jaipongan, East Javanese singget, bumi langit, sembahan, and kocok ciamsi, illustrate various aspects of the local community's life and belief system. These movements are inspired by the daily activities of the Gunung Kawi community, especially coffee farmers, as well as spiritual traditions such as prayer, respect for ancestors, and expressions of gratitude to God. Each movement carries symbolic meanings that reflect the relationship between humans, nature, and spiritual forces.

Furthermore, Sesaji Jawi art also shows the influence of various cultural elements, including Javanese Mataraman dance, Malangan dance style, Jaipongan movements from West Java, and pencak silat movements, which enrich the artistic form of the performance. This combination of influences demonstrates that Sesaji Jawi is a dynamic cultural expression that develops through artistic creativity while still maintaining its traditional roots.

Therefore, Sesaji Jawi art functions not only as a form of entertainment but also as a medium for ritual activities, cultural expression, and the preservation of local traditions. The existence of this art reflects the worldview and cultural identity of the Wonosari community. Through research and documentation of Sesaji Jawi art, it is expected that this traditional cultural heritage can continue to be preserved and appreciated by future generations.

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