

## **Public Perception of the Role of Regional Leaders in Preserving Benjang Mask Culture**

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### **Abstract**

Traditional art is a performance that results from the legacy of previous ancestors. This traditional art must be maintained in its integrity. Traditional art has a massive role for a nation or country, namely as a national identity, where the identity is representative of the national identity and a symbol that the country has cultural purity. However, now in an era of rapid development, traditional arts are on the brink of extinction. This is because traditional arts must be able to survive in foreign cultures whose influence is absorbed by the Indonesian people more quickly. With this, the role or support of all parties involved is essential. The purpose of this study is to understand how the public's perception of the role of regional leaders or local governments in terms of preserving the culture of Benjang (Topeng Benjang). The research method applied in this study is a qualitative method with the type of literature study and interviews. The results of the study indicate that there are several roles of regional leaders or local governments in the preservation of Benjang Topeng, namely the roles of ownership, innovation, education, coaching, legality, and facilitators.

### **Keywords:**

public perception; the role of regional leaders; cultural preservation; the benjang mask

### **Introduction**

In the study of public administration, regional leadership is an essential part. Regional leadership is closely related to local government management and organizations. The effectiveness of achieving the goals of regional government organizations is determined by how big the role presented by the regional head concerned. In addition, the key to the success of regional development that is in line with the needs of the community is the Regional Head.

The synergistic local government process can be seen from the extent to which the Regional Head presents the effectiveness of the role in terms of society and local government institutions. The capability, ability, and competence of the Regional Head will determine the goals and direction of local government organizations as well as support from the community.

Thus, the Regional Head must carry out the functions of service, administration, and leadership, as well as other tasks that are the full responsibility and obligation of the Regional Head. Regarding regional autonomy, regional leadership is an essential part of determining the achievement of regional development based on community needs.

The art of benjang is a traditional martial art of the Ujungberung community, where this art is the development of the art of flying that originated from Islamic culture (KIKI YOVITA, 2012). In addition, the art of benjang is also an art that has a unique position in the eyes of the people of Ujungberung, Bandung City. In its development, this Benjang art is divided into 3 (three) types, namely the Benjang Mask, the procession Benjang or Helaran Benjang, and the Gelut Benjang or Wrestling Benjang. All these types of performances are often performed in a series of events.

Ujungberung people are closely related to the art of benjang, as well as the art of Benjang cannot be separated from the people of Ujungberung, like two coins that are interconnected and cannot be separated. In 2019, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbud RI) decided that Benjang is one of Indonesia's intangible heritage.

Beijing art is permanently displayed or performed in almost every event, for example, at entertainment events, weddings, birthdays, circumcisions, and other essential events in the Ujungberung area. The type of benjang that is often displayed or shown at these events is usually the type of benjang mask. Topeng Benjang is the art of mask dance that is performed at the end of a series of Benjang Helaran or Benjang procession performances. The dance is performed by a dancer who plays several roles at once: the role of the emban, the role of the giant, the role of the warrior, and the role of the princess (KIKI YOVITA, 2012). Thus, it is undoubtedly a matter of pride for the people of Ujungberung to display the art of Benjang at important events or other entertainment events.

On the other hand, Ujungberung is an area that is included in the metropolitan area. A city or metropolitan district is an urban area with prominent population characteristics compared to the surrounding rural population. The Ujungberung area with this metropolitan label which still preserves the art of benjang amid the many foreign cultures that enter Indonesia, is an advantage or uniqueness of the Ujungberung area itself. In addition, to preserve or maintain the traditional culture or, in this case, the art of Benjang involves many

parties who have their respective roles, including local governments. In this case, the views or perceptions of the local community on the role that the local government has pursued regarding the preservation of the Benjang Arts is important. This is so so that we can find out how significant the role of the local government is in terms of the preservation of the Benjang Art. It is hoped that in the future, the local government's role in preserving the Benjang Art can continue to the maximum to the point that all parties expect.

Therefore, the author is interested in examining how or to what extent the role of the Ujungberung local government in preserving the benjang culture, especially the benjang mask culture, which is seen from the perspective of the Ujungberung people who directly feel it or experience it. This research was conducted as an effort to obtain new concepts and contribute to the development of science, especially the social sciences. Then this research is also expected to make a scientific contribution to the study of Benjang, especially regarding the local government's role in preserving the Benjang mask culture.

In this case, the researcher emphasizes several concepts of public perception, which serve as the central concept. (Jalaluddin Rakhmat, 1999) States that perception is an observation of relationships, objects, and events resulting from inferring information and interpreting messages. Meanwhile, Sigihartono et al. (2007: 8) (Yanuariska, 2014) state that view or perception is the ability of a vital body part (brain) in the process of translating a stimulus that enters one of the senses of a human being. Regarding sensing and perception, there are several different points of view. Where human actions that are real or visible to the naked eye are influenced by negative perceptions and positive perceptions about something. In addition, perception can be said as a process that comes from within a person to evaluate and understand the extent to which a person can understand other people well (Listyana & Hartono, 2015)

## **Methods**

The paradigm applied in this research is qualitative. The qualitative paradigm is a research method that provides descriptive information. Information that has a descriptive nature here is data that contains words that are written orally or in writing from an object that is being studied to understand what are all the phenomena that are happening. The purpose of this qualitative research is to get a more detailed or in-depth explanation of a phenomenon.

Qualitative research determines social phenomena, including education, public policy, law, and so on.

The technique of obtaining qualitative information applied in this research is through literature studies and interviews. A literature study is a collection of activities related to processing methods, reading methods, library data collection methods, and recording research materials. Literature study can also be regarded as library research, where library research is a research activity carried out by collecting information and data from various sources of information contained in the library, including the results of previous research in the form of articles, reference books, and various journals related to the problem you want to know the solution for.

While the interview is a conversation that has a purpose and is preceded by some informal questions, research interviews are intended to obtain information from one side only. Therefore an asymmetrical relationship must appear. Researchers are more likely to direct the interview to the discovery of participants' feelings, perceptions, and thoughts. The data obtained from various sources through various stages of data collection methods are then processed using data analysis methods. At this stage, the author uses data triangulation techniques.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Benjang Traditional Art (Benjang Mask)**

Art can be divided into 4 (four) types, namely: (1) Highart (high art), is the highest art that usually develops in the palace environment; (2) Folkart (folk art), is an art that develops or is usually played by the people (people outside the palace), this folk art is in accordance with the conditions of the surrounding environment and in accordance with the cultural needs of the environment. natural and simple; (3) Popart (pop art), where pop art is an art that is played or developed between folk art and palace art, where this type of art is developing or quickly born, but on the other hand this art is also quickly abandoned and quickly forgotten; (4) Massart (mass art), is art that develops and is displayed commercially, this art is more entertaining regardless of whether the art is classified as low art or high art (Hauser, 1974) in (Mantri, 2014). Of the four explanations of art, in Indonesia the art that develops is usually

folk art or folk art. Art that develops and grows in the community that is closely related to customs, arts, and beliefs is referred to as folk art (Shils, 1981) in (Mantri, 2014).

Then, we can say that traditional art that develops and grows in Indonesia is the traditional folk art that was handed down by ancestors from generation to generation so that its presence can be maintained until now in a very modern era. However, so far, traditional art is more dominant in the form of performance art and its makers tend to be unknown to many people, this leads to the emergence of various obstacles in the preservation of traditional art itself (Irianto, 2017). According to (Shils, 1981) in (Mantri, 2014), The reason a tradition can be maintained is because the tradition cannot change just like that or by itself, even though these changes can come from humans accidentally or intentionally.

These changes can occur because there are external influences or exogenous changes, where this change is a change caused by factors originating from outside the community or cultural actors themselves. Meanwhile, on the other hand, these changes can also occur due to internal influences or endogenous changes, where these changes are changes that come from outside the cultural actors or society itself. In Indonesia, the development of art comes from 5 (five) major religions originating from outside, namely Catholicism from Europe, Hinduism from India, Islam from Arabia, Protestantism from Europe, and Buddhism from India (Soedarsono, 1998) in (Kusmayati, 2006).

The art of Benjang departed from the art of flying, which later developed into the form of martial arts, procession, and performing arts on stage. Some people have an understanding that the word "Benjang" comes from "ben" and "jang", where the word "ben" here is the density of the word "amben" or "bale-bale (terrace)", while "jang" here is the density of from the word "bujang (male)", this is so because the art of benjang can only be played by men. In addition, the word Benjang comes from the word genyenyeng which means to pull by force and pakenyang-full which means to attract each other, the development of which is shortened to Genyang and the longer the word turns into the word Benjang. Another source states that the word Benjang comes from the Dutch language, namely the Sundanis Youngs Band. Where it started from the Dutch who watched or saw the traditional art, then the Dutch spontaneously called him the Youngs Sundanis Band. If we look at the word Ben comes from the word Band which means equipment related to musical instruments, and the word Jang comes from the word Youngs which means young people (Widjaya, 2006) in (Mantri, 2014). So from some of

the explanations above it can be concluded that, Benjang is a game that is carried out in the yard (*amben*) or a fairly large area accompanied by flying musical instruments played by men or bachelors (young people).

According to historical sources, in the mid-19th century, the Dutch East Indies government began to issue a policy, namely by prohibiting all forms of development of martial arts or self-defense. With this policy, the leaders of self-defense science lovers at that time began to work around this by forming sports and arts associations with religious (Islamic) nuances that were secretly taught in *suaru* or Islamic boarding schools accompanied by chanting *asrokol*, prayers, and lyrics. - other Islamic nuanced song lyrics. In the Ujungberung area, the art with Islamic nuances gave rise to an art known as *Rudat* art, then over time the art developed into *Genjring* art or *Kencring* art. At the end of the 19th century until the beginning of the 20th century the art changed its name to *Gedut* art. *Gedut* art is an art in which there is a competition of male agility accompanied by the strains of flying music. Thus, the Ujungberung people at that time called the art of *Gedut* as the art of flying.

At the beginning of the 20th century the art of flying experienced development with the presence of other *pencak silat* musical instruments, such as drums and trumpets. According to history, the art was first performed in muddy rice fields after the agricultural harvest season. After that, in 1925, the place for the art game began to be moved to a *bale-bale* or to an *amben* in the courtyard of the house. In general, these arts are performed or played by men with unmarried status or still single. Then in 1926 this art underwent a form of refinement, where the *benjang* art gave birth to several parts. It can be seen in general that the art of *Benjang* is divided into 3 (three) parts, namely *benjang* with the art of procession (*benjang helaran*), *benjang* with performing arts on stage (*benjang mask*), and *benjang* with martial arts (*benjang wrestling*).

Then on the other hand, in general, masks are always associated with the face or face, which is an object that resembles a face that serves to replace or cover the physical embodiment of the face of someone who wears it. In 1939, the *Benjang Mask* was a form of dance performed using a mask, accompanied by a series of *Benjang* or *Waditra Benjang* musical instruments. *Waditra Benjang* or a series of musical instruments including, namely *terebang*, drum, drum, trumpet, *kecrek*, gong, *kulanter*, and *kempring*. The *benjang mask* is usually played after a *benjang helaran* or *benjang procession* performance. This *benjang mask*

dance is played by a dancer who plays several characters at once, these characters include the hero character, the giant character, the princess character, and the emban character. Changes in the character of these figures are marked by the change of masks used by players or dancers.

According to history, the art of Topeng Benjang originated from the upper Ujungberung community, where before independence the upper Ujungberung community was a religious and agrarian society or had extensive agricultural land. The Upper Ujungberung community consists of natives and immigrants. Where the migrant population comes from Banten, Jakarta, areas in Central Java Province, areas in East Java Province, as well as various areas in West Java Province itself. The plurality of the community turned out to be one of the driving factors for the development of arts living in the Ujungberung area, especially in the upper Ujungberung area. Where the art of Mask Benjang is present as a form of dance art that originated from the art of Benjang Wrestling. Where the art of Benjang Wrestling is an art that is included in the type of folk art that combines dance with physical movements or self-defense. Benjang Wrestling has a very deep pattern of meaning, where the movement is a form of communication or delivery of a message that is poured into a form of symbols.

### **The Role of Regional Leaders in Preserving Traditional Arts**

In Law Number 32 of 2004 concerning Regional Government, that local governments can produce several implications including, namely social change and good facilities that can give birth to real opportunities for the region in terms of generating regional potential, as well as to develop the region, where the region is an inseparable part of the term National Development. To follow up this requires a basic understanding of the diversity of religions, cultures and ethnicities throughout the archipelago. This is so, because every region in Indonesia must have a diverse or different culture that is unique to each region. Culture is a symbol of pride for a community in a certain area, and even becomes one of the determining factors for the progress of a region or country concerned. In addition, culture can also be said as a national character, a national identity, a characteristic of a country, and as a sign that the country has a history of life journey that starts from the beginning until a country can be officially formed.

Efforts to preserve culture are closely related to what has been aspired or expected by the independence of this country, namely the ideals of "educating the life of the nation".

Referring to the word proves that "educating the life of the nation" is the responsibility, duty, and obligation of the State in terms of its realization (Yusuf, n.d.). The goal is not a sentence that does not have an unimportant meaning, nor is it a sentence born from the concept of genetic biology or born from the concept of science and technology, but the sentence is based on the concept of culture or concepts related to culture. The intellectual life of the nation is an effort to increase the level of the nation's culture, and as a process to elevate the human status of our nation.

In this regard, traditional arts are an important element of culture. Traditional art has a very high value in culture. This is so, because art brings with it the progress of the nation's culture and the nation's cultural civilization. Then, traditional art is one of the means that can be used in terms of expressing the element of beauty that comes from the human soul itself. Besides being used as a means to express, traditional arts also function as a form of determining norms in order to produce regular human behavior, to maintain cultural values and existing customs, and to function as a means to strengthen solidarity relations in certain communities. Basically, traditional art is something that is not absolutely owned by certain regions, because traditional arts are not limited by certain regional claims. With the existence of these limitations, making traditional arts used as a means to give birth to cultural resilience that must be faced with an attitude of national resilience.

The Indonesian people have an obligation to maintain or preserve the cultural diversity in our beloved homeland, especially to traditional arts in their respective areas of residence or in the environment around their respective areas of residence. Success in terms of preserving traditional arts is strongly influenced by the reliability of the apparatus in formulating policies or programs. Where the policy or program must be implemented by all government officials to community groups who take part and jointly implement the policy or program that has been determined, then the policy or program must be supported by the existence of adequate facilities and infrastructure. This proves that the role of government officials or regional leaders is very important or indispensable for the assurance or preservation of a traditional art. Where all the activities of the Indonesian people have a strong and detailed legal basis, so that the presence of regional leaders in the preservation of traditional culture is something that needs to be maintained. This is so that the symbol of cultural identity remains intact and maintained.



The National Tourism Development Regulation is an effort to continue to stimulate figures in the tourism sector regarding the achievement of targets that are focused on predetermined goals (Fernando, 2016). Tourism and Cultural Development is a very important part of regional development. Where regional development can essentially be said to be a process that has an integrative nature both in terms of planning, implementation, or control that is carried out continuously. The development is carried out as one of the efforts to increase the prosperity of the Indonesian people. Where the world of tourism has a fairly broad scope, therefore development activities in the tourism and culture sector are not only the responsibility of local governments or regional leaders, but are a shared responsibility that is encouraged by all levels of society.

### **Community Perceptions of the Role of Regional Leaders in Preserving the Benjang Mask**

Community perception is a process of a group of people who live and live together in a certain area and provide responses or arguments regarding an event or things that occur. Where there are 3 (three) factors that greatly influence people's perceptions, namely: (1) perpetrators of perception, where if someone sees an object and tries to translate what he sees, in this case the translation is very much determined by the personal characteristics of the actor who perceives it. concerned; (2) object or target, this factor greatly influences what is perceived. An object should not be viewed in an isolated situation, and the background link with a target greatly influences the perception that will be generated by the public; and (3) the situation, in which case it is very necessary to look at the context of the event or object, this is so because the elements contained in the surrounding environment greatly affect the perceptions raised by the community.

People's perceptions can be born, of course starting from several individual perceptions in a certain area. Thus, it can be said that public perception cannot be separated from individual perceptions. Individual perception is simply something that comes from the individual himself. Then, factors from within the individual itself or individual factors as well as environmental factors or factors originating from the individual's environment itself are two factors that greatly affect the perception of the individual concerned (Fuady et al., 2017)

Sondang P. Siagian (1995) divides the factors that influence a person's perception into three, namely: (1) factors from the person concerned himself, namely factors that arise when someone sees something and tries to give an interpretation of what he sees, it influenced by

individual characteristics such as attitudes, motives, interests, interests, experiences, and expectations; (2) factors from the target of perception, namely factors that arise from what will be perceived, the target can be in the form of people, objects or events whose properties from the target usually affect the perception of people who see it, such as movement, sound, size, action. -horns, and other characteristics of the target of perception; and (3) factors from the situation, namely factors that arise in connection with the situation at the time of perception. In this section, perception must be seen in a contextually meaningful way in the situation, where the perception arises and needs attention because the situation is a factor that plays a role in the growth of one's perception.

Based on the literature study and the results of interviews with researchers with the viewpoint of the concepts above, it can be stated that the role of regional leaders or local governments in the preservation of the art of Topeng Benjang, namely: (1) the role of ownership of traditional arts, this role is very closely related to pride in the elements of traditional art. the beauty of art, in this role it is not only limited to one area (Ujungberung), but becomes an ethnic area in West Java; (2) innovative roles, as we know that one way to further increase the resilience of traditional arts is through the implementation of innovation activities. Of course, in the implementation of this innovation activity, the regional leader must involve or cooperate with related parties, such as involving Benjang pagurons or other Benjang arts groups; (3) educational role, in this role regional leaders are able to educate people from various age groups, so that people are aware or know about the importance of the Benjang Mask art, which is the identity of a region. In addition, the Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office also involves the pagurons or Benjang Mask groups in terms of organizing events organized by the Bandung City government or non-government, this aims to make the wider community aware of the traditional art of the Benjang Mask; (4) the role of fostering, in the arts, at the Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office, is to provide guidance to Benjang Mask pagurons or Benjang Mask groups located in Bandung City. The guidance is carried out by means of cadre conducted by the Department of Tourism and Culture of the City of Bandung to the paguron or the group concerned in the area of the City of Bandung; (5) the role of legality, in this role the local government of the City of Bandung does not complicate the licensing of the establishment of a Benjang community or group (Topeng Benjang), and does not make it difficult and even strongly supports the performance of the Benjang Mask in

public places, but it does so while ensuring public safety; (6) the role of facilitator, in this role the Bandung City government provides various facilities for the Benjang Mask pagurons or Benjang Mask groups in the form of traditional clothes, musical instruments, and so on. In addition, the Bandung City government also holds a routine event for performing the Benjang Mask art, namely the Benjang Festival which is held every year.

## Conclusion

Benjang art or in this case the Benjang Mask art is a traditional art that has become the identity of West Java, especially in the Ujungberung area, Bandung City. This art can exist until now, of course, thanks to the role of the parties involved in the preservation of the Benjang Mask art culture. This role is also shown by the local government of the City of Bandung or in this case, the Department of Tourism and Culture of the City of Bandung. Based on the perception of the people who directly feel it, the role of the Bandung City government in terms of preserving the Benjang Mask culture, namely as the owner of traditional arts, those who carry out innovative activities, those who carry out educational roles for the wider community, those who routinely provide guidance to paguron or related arts groups, parties that act as legal providers for the activities or events of the Benjang Mask art, as well as parties that provide facilities in the form of procurement of goods or festival event organizers.

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