

TRADITIONAL PERFORMING ARTS FROM A REGION OF ORIGIN AS A CULTURAL IDENTITY IN URBAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

The preservation of traditional performing arts, such as Reyog Ponorogo, in urban settings plays a crucial role in maintaining cultural identity amidst rapid societal changes. This study explores how the Ponorogo community living in Jakarta sustains Reyog Ponorogo as part of Indonesia's intangible cultural heritage. By focusing on cultural inheritance systems, the research highlights the community's adaptive strategies that align with both heritage conservation and modern urban life. Furthermore, it investigates the role of Reyog in shaping communal identity while examining its integration into creative industries. The empowerment of local artists through digital technology and its contribution to the globalization of Reyog as a world cultural heritage are key elements discussed. The research employs ethnographic methods, combining interviews with Reyog performers and cultural custodians with digital analyses of Reyog performances circulated online. The findings reveal a dynamic interplay between traditional values and modern mediums, where digital technology serves as a powerful tool for promoting and safeguarding intangible heritage. The study emphasizes the importance of recognizing traditional arts not just as cultural artifacts but as living practices, deeply intertwined with the urban cultural landscape and global digital platforms.

Keyword: *Reyog Ponorogo; intangible cultural heritage; creative industries; digital technology; cultural identity.*

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The preservation of traditional performing arts plays a vital role in maintaining cultural identity, especially in urban environments that experience rapid societal changes due to globalization and urbanization. Traditional arts serve as a conduit for the transmission of culture, history, and communal values, offering a tangible connection to the past. In the context of urban societies, where diverse populations converge, there is a growing challenge to safeguard cultural heritage while adapting to modern realities (Kasmahidayat & Herliawan, 2023). This is particularly pertinent for displaced or migratory communities who wish to retain their cultural heritage amidst the pressures of integration into metropolitan environments (Yi, 2025). Studies have shown that traditional performing arts contribute significantly to reinforcing cultural identity, fostering a sense of belonging and pride among urban communities, particularly those from regions with strong cultural legacies (Gaddapati, 2025).

In Indonesia, Reyog Ponorogo, a traditional dance performance from East Java,

embodies the rich cultural heritage of the Ponorogo people. As a living cultural expression, it is both an art form and a symbol of the Ponorogo community's identity. However, the evolution of urban society presents challenges to the preservation of such art forms. While Reyog Ponorogo remains an iconic feature of Indonesia's intangible cultural heritage, the preservation efforts in urban settings such as Jakarta face significant difficulties. These include competition from more mainstream entertainment forms and a declining interest among younger generations (Rismayanti et al., 2017). To address these challenges, communities have developed adaptive strategies to integrate Reyog into contemporary urban life while still honoring its traditional roots.

Main Research Problem and General Solution

This study investigates how the Ponorogo community in Jakarta sustains Reyog Ponorogo, a traditional art form, as a core component of their cultural identity amidst the pressures of urbanization and globalization. The main research problem centers on how the community can balance the need for cultural preservation with the demands of modern urban life. In particular, it seeks to explore how the process of passing down traditional knowledge and practices to younger generations is managed in an urban environment, and how these efforts can be supported by modern technological and creative industries (Salar, 2025).

A general solution to this problem involves examining the dynamic interplay between traditional cultural practices and contemporary strategies for their preservation. One key aspect of this solution is the use of digital technology to amplify the visibility and reach of Reyog Ponorogo, enabling it to transcend geographical and generational boundaries. Additionally, integrating Reyog into the creative industries has proven effective in both empowering local artists and promoting cultural sustainability (Wijayanto et al., 2021). By exploring these avenues, this research seeks to provide insights into how traditional arts like Reyog can be preserved while remaining relevant and economically viable in a rapidly changing urban context.

Specific Solution from the Scientific Literature

Existing research highlights various approaches to preserving traditional performing arts within urban environments, with particular focus on community-driven inheritance systems, artist empowerment, and the integration of digital technologies. Community-based inheritance systems have historically been the foundation for passing down traditional knowledge. In the case of Reyog Ponorogo, these systems ensure that the art form is not only maintained but also continually adapted through active participation in the community (Mustikarani & Sabardila, 2023). However, urbanization often disrupts these systems, leading to challenges in maintaining authentic practices. Thus, finding ways to adapt these systems to urban settings without losing their cultural essence is a crucial aspect of the preservation effort.

One key strategy identified in the literature is the empowerment of local artists through both formal and informal platforms, such as digital marketing and online platforms. By utilizing digital tools, Reyog artists can reach a wider audience,

promoting their work and generating income. This, in turn, fosters a greater appreciation for the art form among younger generations and urban dwellers. For example, digital marketing initiatives have helped Reyog performers expand their reach beyond their traditional communities (Wijayanto et al., 2021). These efforts not only ensure the art's survival but also provide financial incentives for local artists to continue their practice. However, the challenge remains to integrate these modern tools while ensuring the preservation of Reyog's cultural authenticity.

Moreover, digital platforms, such as social media and video streaming, offer Reyog Ponorogo the opportunity to be recognized globally. The global exposure helps to position Reyog as a valuable cultural asset that transcends local boundaries. However, the integration of digital technology into traditional arts has sparked concerns about the potential commercialization and distortion of the cultural values embedded within these practices (Baharuddin et al., 2020). As these digital platforms expand, it becomes increasingly important to balance visibility with cultural integrity, ensuring that Reyog remains true to its historical roots while evolving to fit modern contexts.

Specific Literature Review that Finally Led to Research Gaps

A critical review of the literature reveals that much of the existing research on the preservation of traditional performing arts focuses on general strategies for cultural heritage conservation but often overlooks the specific challenges faced by art forms in urban settings. While studies have extensively documented the role of digital technology in promoting traditional arts (Zhang et al., 2025), there is limited research on how these technologies can be used to empower local artists while maintaining cultural authenticity (Tias, 2025). Moreover, previous studies tend to focus on either the cultural or economic aspects of preservation, with little integration of the two.

Additionally, existing research tends to address preservation strategies from the perspective of rural or small-town communities, leaving a gap in understanding how these strategies can be applied in urban contexts (Supriono, 2020). Urban settings present unique challenges, such as the fragmentation of community networks and the competition with more mainstream forms of entertainment. This gap in the literature underscores the need for studies that specifically address how traditional performing arts, like Reyog Ponorogo, can be preserved in urban environments, particularly in the context of digital globalization.

Objective, Statement of Novelty, or Justification of the Hypothesis, and the Scope of the Study

The objective of this study is to explore how the Ponorogo community in Jakarta preserves and sustains Reyog Ponorogo as a form of intangible cultural heritage amidst the challenges of urbanization and globalization. This research will investigate the community's adaptive strategies for cultural inheritance, artist empowerment, and the role of digital technology in promoting and safeguarding Reyog. By focusing on these elements, the study aims to provide insights into the preservation of traditional arts in modern urban contexts.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on Reyog Ponorogo as a living

cultural practice in an urban setting. Previous studies have concentrated on the preservation of traditional arts in rural settings or on a broader level without considering the specific dynamics in urban environments. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining how urbanization and digital technology intersect with traditional practices. The research will also contribute to a deeper understanding of how digital platforms can be used to promote cultural sustainability without compromising authenticity.

The scope of this study is centered on the Reyog Ponorogo community in Jakarta, focusing on their strategies for preserving this traditional art form while integrating it into contemporary urban life. Through interviews with artists and cultural custodians, as well as digital analyses of Reyog performances online, this study will provide a comprehensive examination of the challenges and opportunities associated with preserving Reyog in an urban context.

METHOD

Ethnographic Approach to Studying Reyog Ponorogo in Jakarta

This study adopts an ethnographic approach to explore the preservation and adaptation of Reyog Ponorogo in Jakarta, where the Ponorogo diaspora has actively maintained this traditional performance art. Ethnography is an ideal method for understanding the nuanced socio-cultural dynamics that shape the practice of Reyog Ponorogo in urban settings, particularly in terms of how the art form helps the community preserve its cultural identity in a rapidly changing environment (Baharuddin et al., 2020). The research involves participant observation, where the researcher attended community rehearsals, public performances, and cultural festivals that featured Reyog. Through direct engagement with the community, the study seeks to capture the lived experiences of performers and cultural custodians, identifying how they navigate the challenges of maintaining cultural traditions amidst competing modern influences. This immersive approach also allowed for a deeper understanding of the cultural significance of Reyog, providing valuable insights into the ways in which this tradition has evolved to remain relevant in Jakarta's urban landscape.

Data Collection: Interviews with Cultural Custodians and Artist

To complement the ethnographic data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with cultural custodians, including leaders of Reyog Ponorogo troupes, performers, and other key stakeholders involved in its preservation. These interviews provided a more detailed understanding of the community-based inheritance systems that sustain the art form (Wijayanto, 2024), as well as the roles played by both the community and individual artists in maintaining Reyog. Particular attention was paid to the challenges faced by the artists in adapting Reyog to the urban context of Jakarta, where issues such as economic pressures and changing social dynamics often impact traditional practices (Rahayu, 2018). The interviews also explored the integration of Reyog into the creative industries, assessing the economic opportunities and creative innovations that arise from this process. Additionally, interviews with younger performers and emerging artists helped gauge their perspectives on the future of

Reyog, especially in terms of how digital technologies could contribute to its preservation and promotion (Rachman, 2024). The data collected from these interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns, providing insights into the strategies that the Ponorogo community employs to keep Reyog alive and culturally meaningful.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Analyzing Digital Platforms as Tools for Cultural Preservation

A key component of this study is the analysis of digital platforms and their role in the promotion and preservation of Reyog Ponorogo. The research involved a comprehensive review of online content, including social media posts, YouTube videos, and digital archives where Reyog performances are shared and promoted. This digital content analysis enabled the study to evaluate the effectiveness of these platforms in reaching both local and global audiences, as well as the degree to which they contribute to the transmission of cultural knowledge and practices (Permatasari et al., 2020). Metrics such as viewership statistics, audience engagement, and content dissemination were analyzed to assess the digital reach and impact of Reyog performances online. In addition, the study explored how digital platforms empower Reyog artists by providing new avenues for exposure and economic opportunities (Harisanty et al., 2024). However, the study also critically examined the potential risks associated with the commercialization of traditional arts in digital spaces, including the possible dilution of cultural values in the face of global trends and market demands (Sugianto et al., 2021). By combining digital content analysis with the perspectives gained from interviews, this study offers a comprehensive view of how digital technology interacts with traditional cultural practices and contributes to their preservation in the modern age.

Findings on Reyog Ponorogo and its Role in Strengthening Cultural Identity in Jakarta

The ethnographic research highlights the significant role that Reyog Ponorogo plays in reinforcing the cultural identity of the Ponorogo diaspora in Jakarta. Community members view Reyog not only as a traditional art form but as a vital symbol of their heritage, connecting them to their ancestral roots. Public performances of Reyog, especially during cultural festivals and religious ceremonies, create a shared space of communal pride and collective memory, reinforcing a strong sense of belonging among the Ponorogo people. These performances serve as important moments for cultural expression, helping to bridge generational gaps and ensure that younger members of the community remain connected to their cultural heritage despite the challenges of urbanization and modernization (Baharuddin et al., 2020; Yi, 2025).

Impact of Creative Industries on the Preservation of Reyog Ponorogo

The study reveals that the integration of Reyog Ponorogo into the creative industries has had a significant impact on its preservation and promotion. Through partnerships with local governments, tourism boards, and event organizers, Reyog

has found new avenues for visibility, reaching both local and international audiences. The art form's inclusion in commercial cultural events has provided performers with new economic opportunities, allowing them to sustain their practice in a competitive urban environment. However, concerns persist regarding the commercialization of Reyog. Some community members worry that the cultural depth and meanings of Reyog may be overshadowed by its entertainment value, reflecting broader concerns about the commodification of traditional arts (Atmadiredja et al., 2024). Despite this, the integration of Reyog into the creative industries remains a vital strategy for ensuring its survival and relevance.

Digital Technology as a Medium for Heritage Preservation

Digital technology has emerged as a powerful tool for the preservation and global promotion of Reyog Ponorogo. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook have allowed Reyog performances to reach audiences far beyond Jakarta, enabling the art form to expand its traditional audience base. Many artists and cultural custodians now utilize these platforms to share live performances, tutorials, and behind-the-scenes content, thereby fostering greater engagement with the art form. The study found that younger generations, especially those from urban settings, have shown increased interest in Reyog through these digital platforms, furthering the dissemination of this intangible cultural heritage. This finding aligns with global trends in cultural heritage preservation, where digital tools are increasingly used to document and share traditional practices (Permatasari et al., 2020; Harisanty et al., 2024). However, the use of digital platforms also raises concerns about maintaining the authenticity of the art form, as digital content often emphasizes aesthetics and entertainment over cultural depth (Sugianto et al., 2021). Balancing accessibility with cultural preservation remains a critical challenge.

CONCLUSION

Preservation of Reyog Ponorogo in Urban Society: Findings and Implications

This study highlights the vital role that Reyog Ponorogo plays in maintaining the cultural identity of the Ponorogo diaspora in Jakarta. The findings suggest that, despite the challenges of urbanization and the pressures from modern entertainment, Reyog continues to serve as a key symbol of intangible cultural heritage. The incorporation of Reyog into the creative industries and the use of digital platforms have provided both opportunities and challenges for its preservation. While these developments have helped to increase its visibility and generate economic benefits for the artists, there are ongoing concerns about the potential dilution of cultural authenticity. The study underscores the importance of balancing commercial success with cultural integrity in ensuring that Reyog remains a living, dynamic practice that can thrive in urban environments.

The Future of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Digital Age

As the digital age continues to transform how traditional arts are practiced and consumed, the preservation of intangible cultural heritage like Reyog Ponorogo must adapt to these new realities. The integration of digital platforms has the potential to

expand audience engagement and provide new avenues for cultural expression, but it also raises important questions about authenticity and the commercialization of heritage. Going forward, efforts to preserve Reog and similar traditional art forms must prioritize community-led initiatives that leverage technology without compromising the cultural values embedded in these practices. The future of intangible cultural heritage in the digital era will depend on the ability of communities, artists, and cultural policymakers to harness the power of digital tools while safeguarding the integrity of their traditions for future generations.

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