

Function of Topeng Tunggal Dance In Betawi Society

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ABSTRACT

The Topeng Tunggal Dance is a traditional Betawi art form created by Mak Kinang and Kong Djiun in 1930. The inception of the Topeng Tunggal Dance was inspired by a vision experienced by Mak Kinang, which was subsequently brought to life through dance and musical accompaniment by Kong Djiun. This research aims to explore and understand the values and functions inherent in the Topeng Tunggal Dance. The methodology employed in this study is qualitative, utilizing an analytical descriptive approach and the functional theory of RM. Soedarsono. Data collection techniques include observations, interviews with artists, and documentation. The findings indicate that the Topeng Tunggal Dance embodies two primary values: moral and aesthetic. Additionally, this dance serves three functions: as entertainment, as a performing art, and as a medium for education. These values and

functions position the Topeng Tunggal Dance not only as a cultural heritage but also as a means for character development and the preservation of the cultural identity of the Betawi people.

Keywords: Topeng Tunggal Dance, Inspiration, Value, Function, Betawi Society

INTRODUCTION

The Topeng Tunggal Dance is a significant traditional cultural treasure that thrives within the lives of the Betawi people, particularly in Jakarta and its surrounding areas. This dance is a component of the Betawi Mask art, which encompasses various performance forms, including dance, music, and theater. Topeng Tunggal Dance is a form of cultural expression that emphasizes the portrayal of movements and characters through single female dancer. The uniqueness of this dance lies in the use of three masked characters, which are interpreted as symbols representing the life of the Betawi people. Within the context of Betawi society, this dance functions not only as a form of entertainment but also as a medium for conveying moral values and providing educational insights.

The existence of Topeng Tunggal Dance can be said to be popular as evidenced by its existence until now is still often seen in events or art performances in Jakarta and its surroundings. Many Betawi arts are still popular besides Topeng Tunggal, such as Lenggang Nyai, Ronggeng Blantek, Sirih Kuning, Ngarojeng and

others. Nevertheless, Topeng Tunggal, which was created in 1930, continues to shine. Topeng Tunggal dance spreads in Betawi and surrounding areas, this dance is also expected to be appreciated by the wider community. Along with the development of Betawi society, Topeng Tunggal Dance has developed from the time it was created until now. The most significant development is the formation of several variations of the dance and can be performed freely outside the Betawi Mask Theater Performance (www.selasar.com).

The Topeng Tunggal Dance, as a component of traditional arts, embodies intrinsic values that are integral to its expression. Each element of the dance—including movements, costumes, musical accompaniment, and character portrayal—reflects the cultural heritage of the Betawi people. Beyond its inherent values, the Topeng Tunggal Dance serves multiple functions that are closely tied to the social dynamics of the Betawi community, including entertainment and educational roles. This diversity of values and functions shows that Topeng Tunggal Dance is a multifunctional means of communication and is very important

in maintaining social harmony.

Previous research related to the object has been conducted, namely : “Tari Topeng Betawi: Kajian Filosofi dan Kajian Simbolis”, “Tari Topeng Tunggal Karya Mak Kinang dalam Ekspresi Budaya Betawi di Kelurahan Cisalak Kota Depok”, “Analisis Koreografi Tari Topeng Tunggal Karya Mak Kinang dan Kong Djiun di Sanggar Ratnasari Ciracas, Jakarta Timur”. However, to date, no scientific work or journal specifically titled “Function of Topeng Tunggal Dance in Betawi Society” has been identified as the primary focus of study. Previous research has predominantly concentrated on aspects of performance structure and choreography, while the value and function of the dance have not been the subject of in-depth, separate studies.

This research aims to thoroughly examine the value and function of the Topeng Tunggal Dance within society, while emphasizing the significance of preserving local culture. By revitalizing the value and function of this dance, it is anticipated that people, particularly the younger generation, will gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Indonesia's cultural diversity as a vital asset in the

development of national identity.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative methodology with a descriptive analysis approach. The objective of this study is to obtain insights related to responses, opinions, and perspectives; consequently, the discussion is articulated through descriptive. Qualitative research aims to comprehensively understand phenomena related to the experiences of research subjects, including behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and actions. This approach relies on descriptive language and is conducted within a natural context using various natural methods (Slamet MD, 2018). The approach employed for studying objects involved interviews, observations, and documentation. This research refers to the theory of RM. Soedarsono in (Henny & Sekarningsih, 2006) which identifies several functions in community dance, including as a means of entertainment and educational media.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Topeng Betawi



Picture 1. Topeng Panji, Samba and Jingga (Source: Personal Archive)

Topeng Betawi is a traditional art form of the Betawi ethnic community that encompasses three key elements of performing arts: theater, dance, and music. These elements work in synergy to create an artistic concept that embodies the cultural characteristics of the Betawi people. Topeng Betawi is recognized not merely as a form of entertainment, but as a significant cultural expression (Yanuar & Mulyana, 2019). Topeng Betawi is a product of this cultural melting pot, emerging as a distinct art form during the colonial period in the early 20th century. The dance is deeply rooted in Betawi traditions, often performed during significant events such as weddings, circumcisions, and other community celebrations (<https://tnchronicle.com>). The accompanying music in the Topeng Tunggal Dance features a set of musical instruments known as Gamelan Topeng,

which comprises a pair of large and small *kendang*, *rebab*, *ancak kenong* or *kenong* 3, *kecrek*, *kempul*, and *gong* (Nailasalma, 2020). The performance begins with a musical piece known as *tal* or *tetalu*, usually preceded by an instrumental composition featuring *Arang-arangan*, *Tetopengan*, and others, signaling the start of the performance. Once the *tetalu* is complete, a female dancer, referred to as Ronggeng Topeng, appears to perform a solo mask dance.

The belief in the magical power of Ronggeng Topeng makes the role of Ronggeng Topeng not assumed by just anyone. “A *Ronggeng Topeng* must possess the ability to sing, dance, and perform various roles, as well as demonstrate mastery of all material in the Betawi mask show, which defines the essence of a *Ronggeng Topeng*” (Interview Atien Kisam, 2025). The above statement highlights that a Ronggeng Topeng is not merely a dancer, but also a versatile artist proficient in various aspects of the performing arts. This emphasizes the importance of dedication and the advanced skills required to become a Ronggeng Topeng.

According to Betawi leaders, there are three technical requirements that prospective Betawi mask dancers must fulfill to achieve precise and accurate movements that contribute to aesthetically pleasing and harmonious body dynamics: flexibility (*gandes*), cheerfulness (*ajar*),

and agility without strain during performance. Over time, Topeng Betawi has evolved into a distinct form of performance. Currently, various Betawi mask dances, including the Topeng Tunggal Dance, Lipet Gandes, Enjot-enjotan Dance, Gegot Dance, and Kang Aji Dance, are presented independently from Betawi mask performances.

Idea or Basis For Creation

Topeng Tunggal Dance was originally created to busk from village to village, then became a Betawi Mask performance ritual which was considered mystical as a repellent by the people at that time. (www.kebudayaanbetawi.com). *“The Panji, Samba and Jingga masks were created from Mak Kinang's experience of being inspired by her dreams. In these dreams, she envisioned the characters, shapes of the masks, and the unique movements associated with each character. The choreography was further enhanced by her husband Djiun's musical accompaniment”* (Interview Atien Kisam, 2025).

Statements from the interview concerning the creation process of Topeng Panji, Samba, and Jingga indicate that traditional dance artworks are frequently grounded in spiritual experiences and profound creative

intuition. Mak Kinang's account of drawing inspiration from dreams not only illustrates the influence of individual imagination but also highlights the strong connection between artists and the symbolic world.

The involvement of her husband, Djiun, in the creation of the musical accompaniment highlights that Topeng Tunggal emerged from a harmonious collaboration between two artists. This underscores the notion that traditional art is a product of collective effort that emphasizes not only aesthetic qualities but also the values of togetherness, familial harmony, and organic cultural inheritance. The process of creating this dance emphasizes that the masks serve not merely as physical objects, but as representations of complex human characters, each embodying specific expressions and meanings through movement.

Topeng Tunggal Dance Value

Based on the research findings in the field, Topeng Tunggal embodies two core values: moral values and aesthetic values. The following delineates the moral and aesthetic values present in the Topeng Tunggal

Dance.

a. Moral Value of Topeng Tunggal Dance

Topeng Tunggal Dance holds significant moral value, as each element within the performance conveys life lessons that can serve as guidelines for community behavior. The three main characters—Panji, Samba, and Jingga—embody attitudes and values that are exemplary, specifically courage, self-control, and honesty.

The research that becomes the reference for researchers is the results of (Ciptiningsih, 2017) entitled “Nilai Moral Pertunjukan Barongan Risang Guntur Seto Blora”. The performance of Barongan Risang Guntur Seto contains moral values, where the positive values displayed include religious attitudes, honesty, tolerance, friendship, and responsibility. Meanwhile, the negative values are depicted through the conflict between brothers that leads to a great war.



Picture 2. Topeng Tunggal Dance Performance (Source: Personal Archive)

The Panji Mask character has moral values of honesty and sincerity that symbolize a gentle and unpretentious person. His smooth and calm movements show someone who is honest in attitude and sincere in behavior. The Panji character teaches the importance of maintaining determination in living life. In the context of Betawi society, this message is a reminder that in facing all forms of social challenges, honesty remains the main foundation in maintaining harmony.



Picture 3. Topeng Tunggal Dance Performance (Source: Personal

Archive)

The Topeng Samba character depicts a lively and energetic character, but still in self-control. This character contains the moral value of the importance of self-control, especially when facing difficult situations that are emotionally demanding. This value teaches that one needs to have patience and the ability to regulate emotions, so that this self-control can be a reflection of good manners.



Picture 4. Topeng Tunggul Dance Performance (Source: JakartaTourism)

The Topeng Jingga in Topeng Tunggul Dance symbolizes a character who is full of enthusiasm, aggressive, and passionate. Its strong, firm, and expressive movements reflect courage and firmness in facing life's challenges. The moral value of Jingga's character is the importance of having the courage to speak the truth and make firm decisions in difficult situations. In the context of Betawi society, Jingga teaches that

emotions must be channeled in a positive and controlled manner and must have a brave spirit while remaining in social order.

Through the synthesis of the three characters, Topeng Tunggul Dance communicates a moral message regarding the significance of balance and harmony in social life. Each masked character embodies distinct human traits; however, when integrated into a performances, these characters complement one another. This portrayal suggests that variations in nature and roles should not serve as a source of conflict, but rather as a foundation for fostering social harmony.

b. Aesthetic Value of Topeng Tunggul Dance

The Topeng Tunggul Dance possesses significant aesthetic value through the harmonious integration of movement, attire, and music, which are deeply rooted in the cultural traditions of the Betawi people. The distinctive accompaniment of Gamelan Topeng enhances the beauty of the dance, and the musical accompaniment of Gamelan Topeng makes the audience

hypnotized and increasingly feel its beauty, captivating the audience and deepening their appreciation of its artistic merit.

This is also supported by (Rizanti & Indriyanto, 2016) research with the title “Kajian Nilai Estetis Tari Rengga Manis Di Kabupaten Pekalongan” The aesthetic value of Rengga Manis Dance is also reflected in the supporting elements of choreography, such as dancer makeup and clothing, musical accompaniment, and dance content which includes atmosphere, ideas and messages. In addition, the performance aspects that include wiraga, wirama, and wirasa also strengthen its aesthetic value. But to assess the aesthetics of a dance can use 4 basics, namely as wiraga, wirama, wirasa, and wirupa. These elements are things that exist in every dance art. (estetikaindonesia.com).

Dancers in the Topeng Tunggal Dance convey aesthetic value through their wiraga, a term in Javanese that refers to movement. Wiraga is closely associated with dance techniques and an individual's dancing skills (A.

Restian, 2019). Topeng Tunggal dancers must adeptly embody various characters, which is reflected in their mastery of movement and technical proficiency. This goes beyond mere physical motion; it requires dancers to bring characters to life through their bodies. For instance, the Panji character demands smooth and controlled movements that convey gentleness, while the Samba character necessitates faster, dynamic, and agile movements to embody a lively and dexterous nature. Additionally, the Jingga character requires strong and assertive movements with significant spatial volume to reflect its powerful essence. These distinct styles of movement collectively create a harmonious aesthetic.

Wirama in dance seeks to unite dancers in their ability to adapt to the rhythm or tempo of the accompanying music. In the Single Mask Dance, the musical accompaniment provided by Gamelan Topeng features varying tempos for each distinct mask character. Dancers must possess a keen sensitivity to fast, medium, and slow rhythms, unifying each

variety of movement. The harmony between movement and rhythm mixes the two into a beautiful and harmonious result in a dance work.

Wirasa in dance refers to the way dancers embody and express emotions to the audience through their facial expressions and movements. Character development is crucial, as dancers must effectively portray the characteristics of gentle Panji, agile Samba, and dashing Jingga without relying solely on facial expressions. Therefore, the essence of each character must be conveyed through the dancer's body and movements. The deeper the dancer's appreciation of these roles, the more profoundly the audience can experience the emotions being expressed.

Wirupa can be reflected in the overall physical appearance of the dancer, and supporting visual elements, such as costumes, makeup, and props. In Single Mask Dance the combination of colorful costumes helps strengthen the expression of each character displayed. The use of red cloth props also has an important role in helping to convey messages to mark

dramatic transitions between mask characters.

Function Of Topeng Tunggal Dance

a. Topeng Tunggal Dance as Entertainment Function

Topeng Tunggal dance as entertainment aims to create an atmosphere of joy, intimacy, and social engagement in various events. The dance was originally created for busking from village to village

(www.kebudayaanbetawi.com).

Topeng Tunggal dance is usually danced by one female dancer, but nowadays it can be danced in groups and can be performed at any event such as at Setu Babakan event activities, as well as at weddings, circumcisions, vow releases, and schools depending on the request.

b. Topeng Tunggal Dance as a Performance Function

Topeng Tunggal Dance as a performance also has a role to develop regional tourism. This traditional dance can be showcased at various events, including the welcoming of distinguished guests at official DKI Jakarta functions and during holiday celebrations. The performance aims to elicit

responses and appreciation as a form of artistic expression that not only captivates the eyes but also resonates with the hearts of the audience. Consequently, dance as a performing art necessitates a deeper level of observation beyond mere entertainment. Therefore, dance, categorized as a performing or spectator art, is considered a performance, as it prioritizes the quality of artistic value over other objectives.

c. Topeng Tunggal Dance as a Medium of Education

Topeng Tunggal Dance serves as an educational medium aimed at developing aesthetic sensitivity through appreciation activities and creative work experiences. Through workshops, performances, and cultural programs, both locals and visitors can learn about the dance, its meanings, and its role in Betawi society. This educational aspect helps to raise awareness and appreciation for Indonesia's diverse cultural heritage (<https://tnchronicle.com>). Topeng Tunggal dance has been widely recognized by the public even though this dance is from Betawi but other regions have begun to

recognize and learn this dance. It serves as an educational medium in dance studios, schools, and universities throughout Jakarta. Through the study of this dance, participants are instructed not only in movement techniques and mask mastery but are also encouraged to grasp the values and philosophies embodied by the mask characters, including patience, agility, and assertiveness. Engaging with this art form positively impacts the creators, as their work is embraced by a broader audience.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the research conducted on the value and function of Single Mask Dance, the author has drawn several conclusions that aim to support the overall results of the study. Single Mask Dance is a traditional Betawi dance created by Mak Kinang and Kong Djiun in 1930, accompanied by Gamelan Topeng music. This dance embodies two key values: aesthetic value and moral value. The aesthetic value of the Single Mask Dance is evident in the harmonious combination of movements and supporting elements, each showcasing distinct beauty and

impressions. The moral values embodied in this dance are represented by the three mask characters—Panji, Samba, and Jingga—highlighting exemplary virtues such as courage, self-control, and honesty.

Topeng Tunggal Dance is a dance that functions as entertainment, performing arts and educational media where Topeng Tunggal Dance was first performed for busking around the village, this shows that Single Mask Dance has a function as entertainment and over time Single Mask Dance is known in the community as proven to often be a performance during weddings and other events. In addition to entertainment, Tunggal Mask Dance has also begun to be studied in educational institutions, one of which is in studios, schools and universities as learning material and participate in appreciating it. This certainly makes a sense of happiness and pride for the creator of the Single Mask Dance, where his creation is well received by the wider community.

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