

# Art Performance in Sedekah Gunung Ritual as an Expression of Gratitude by the Community in Tutup Ngisor Magelang

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**Abstract:** Administratively, Tutup Ngisor is located in Sumber Village, Dukun, Magelang Regency. Tutup Ngisor is located on the slopes of Mount Merapi in the northwest, because of this, the people there mostly use the land as a medium for growing crops. This direct relationship between humans and nature makes the farmers there realize that they must also be grateful to nature and the elements in it. The way the people in Tutup Ngisor express their gratitude during Sedekah Gunung is usually by performing several rituals and performing arts. The existence of art has become something of value for the Tutup Ngisor community and the surrounding villages. Although not all of the people there take part in the arts, both activists and nonactivists can create harmony in an art performance. This research uses a phenomenological approach that aims to understand the point of view of the data source. The data was collected qualitatively by obtaining words and actions which were the source of data from the field by observing or interviewing. This data was obtained from interviews with resource persons who included art figures who work as farmers in Tutup Ngisor. In addition, primary data was obtained from observations of researchers during the Sedekah Gunung ceremony. The results of this research is describing the relationship between tradition, society, art, and nature from the perspective of the Tutup Ngisor community.

**Keywords:** art; gratitude; performances; tradition

## RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The existence of volcanoes in Indonesia has quite an impact on the lives of people living around the mountains. Starting from the economic impact related to livelihoods, then the sociological impact on the culture and traditions that were born in the area, to the philosophical concept of the life of the people who live in the volcanic area. On Java, several volcanoes are still active, one of which is Mount Merapi, which is located in the middle of Java. Administratively, Mount Merapi is located in two provinces, Central Java and the Special Region of Yogyakarta.

Mount Merapi has a great influence on the lives of people around the mountain. One of them is on the northwest slopes of Mount Merapi, precisely in Tutup Ngisor, Dukun, Magelang Regency. As mentioned earlier that the existence of volcanoes has an economic impact related to livelihoods, most of the people on the slopes of the volcano mostly work in the agricultural sector. This can also be found in the Tutup Ngisor where most of the residents here make a living as farmers.

The next impact of the existence of Mount Merapi is the sociological impact where the people who live around it produce culture and traditions related to the existence of the mountain. One of the traditional products that are often carried out is the *Sedekah Gunung* ritual. In Tutup Ngisor itself, the implementation of *Sedekah Gunung* is routinely held every year in February. *Sedekah Gunung* ritual in Tutup Ngisor is often carried out by holding art performances. This is an interesting note held by Tutup Ngisor.

Art life has become the pulse of the Tutup Ngisor community. Apart from being a farmer, the Tutup Ngisor community is also active in carrying out traditional arts activities. The density of art life in Tutup Ngisor cannot be separated from the existence of Padepokan Tjipta Boedaja which is located in the village. Art with tradition-based and customs of the Javanese society grows in the Tutup Ngisor community.

Because customs and traditions become an influential entity in the pattern of artistic life in Tutup Ngisor, it makes the meaning and philosophy in the lives of individuals in Tutup Ngisor have their own color and style. Apart from being cultural and artistic, this meaning is also based on work as a farmer and the existence of Mount Merapi as a manifestation of the great universe.

*Sedekah Gunung* ritual which is held every year features folk art performances that breathe tradition. One of them is a puppet show, played by children to teenagers who live around Tutup Ngisor. So the name of this art show is *wayang bocah* (puppet shows by children). In addition to the puppet show at *Sedekah Gunung*, this year *Macapatan*, *solah Bawa*, and *panembrama* performances were also held the next day.

*Sedekah Gunung* ceremony is a form of traditional ceremony carried out by the residents of Tutup Ngisor as a memorial for the eruption of Mount Merapi in 2001 to be exact on February 10. At that time, interfaith people held a prayer together in Keningar Village. The next day the Merapi erupted and the hot clouds that headed west were blown away by the wind and headed east so that residents on the western slopes of Merapi were not affected by the eruption, one of which was Tutup Ngisor.

This *Sedekah Gunung* ceremony is also interpreted as gratitude to God Almighty for the abundance of His gifts and as a form of respect for the ancestors. *Sedekah Gunung* ceremony was also carried out by residents to express their gratitude to Mount Merapi as one of the spiritual symbols of the Javanese people, especially in Central Java and the Special Region of Yogyakarta.

The connection between society, the environment, and socio-culture that is implied in the *Sedekah Gunung* ceremony at Tutup Ngisor is wrapped in the presence of the arts that are displayed. This art performance is a symbol of the relationship between humans and humans, humans and nature, and humans and their creators. This concept is considered to be the meaning of the *Sedekah Gunung* event held at Tutup Ngisor. This is also inseparable from the understanding that art is one element in the culture that develops in a community.

This paper describes the process of how the *Sedekah Gunung* ceremony was held in Tutup Ngisor and the feelings felt by the Tutup Ngisor community after carrying out *Sedekah Gunung* ceremony.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this paper, there are several journals that discussed Edmund Husserl's phenomenology which were obtained from two sources. The first is a book by M.A.R. Habib entitled *A History of Literary Criticism* which was published in 2005. This book discusses various theories of literary criticism from time to time, starting from literary criticism from ancient Greece to literary criticism in the 20th century. The second is a book by N. Driyarkara entitled *Percikan Filsafat* which was published in 1989. In this book, there is an explanation and meaning of phenomenological theory in everyday life and its philosophical values.

A journal that specifically discusses traditional ceremonial activities that are related to art. Aditia Syaeful Bahri in 2015 wrote about traditional arts and rituals in a journal entitled *Pertunjukan Kesenian Ebeg Grup Muncul Jaya Pada Acara Khitanan Di Kabupaten Pangandaran*. In addition to these journals, there is a scientific journal that discusses the theoretical study of the function of art in human life, which was written by Mohammad Rondhi in 2014 in a journal entitled *Fungsi Seni Bagi Kehidupan Manusia: Kajian Teoretik*.

Sedekah Gunung ritual in Tutup Ngisor itself has been discussed in the journal *Preservasi Nilai-Nilai Kearifan Lokal Tradisi 'Kidung Sedekah Gunung Merapi' Melalui Ranah Pendidikan: Kajian Antropolinguistik* written by Wuri Wuryandari and R. Kunjana Rahardi in 2020. This journal discusses one culture product that exists in the Sedekah Gunung Tutup Ngisor named *Kidung Sedekah Gunung*. Then the next journal about Sedekah Gunung is a journal that discusses the existence of figures in Sedekah Gunung ceremony in Lencoh Village, Boyolali. This journal was written by Jatmiko Suryo Gumilang with the title *Eksistensi Tokoh Adat Upacara Sedekah Gunung Merapi Di Desa Lencoh Kabupaten Boyolali*.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This paper uses a phenomenological approach that aims to understand the point of view of the data source. The word phenomenology consists of two formed words, namely *phenomenon* and *logos*. The word *phenomenon* has almost the same meaning as fantasy, phantom, phosphor, photo which means light or light. The root of the word when formed into a verb means: to appear, to be seen by the light, to shine. *The phenomenon*, thus, can be interpreted as something visible, which is seen because it is luminous. In Indonesian, there are words used to mean phenomena, namely: symptoms (*gejala*). (Driyarkara, 1989:116-117)

According to phenomenology, reality can be captured by human understanding. Understanding is a place where humans meet and unite with reality. In that meeting, reality manifests itself, symptoms, but it also hides itself. Human understanding of something can increase, and become more perfect. According to Edmund Husserl, the phenomenological approach shifts the emphasis of our study from the "external" world of objects to examine the way these objects appear to human subjects, and the subjective contribution to the process of phenomena arising. Husserl also argues that we cannot be certain of the nature of the external world, but we can have certainty about the nature of our perceptions, the way we construct the world, and how the world appears to our subjective. (Habib, 2005:710-711)

The data source of this research uses data obtained from words and actions which are sources of data from the field by observing or interviewing. The research data was taken qualitatively

by interviewing the informants which included traditional leaders and villagers. In addition, primary data was obtained from the observations of researchers during the Sedekah Gunung ceremony on February 10, 2022. In addition to primary data, this research also cannot be separated from secondary data obtained from written sources, photographs, or other written sources. Documentation in the form of photos of Sedekah Gunung ceremony taken by researchers and photos of Sedekah Gunung taken by the Padepokan Tjipta Boedaja.

From these various data, this paper discusses the meaning of each art performance in the Sedekah Gunung ceremony in Tutup Ngisor. The meaning of each existing art starts by explaining how the preparation and appearance of the art is then the opinion of the data source regarding the displayed art. After that the meaning of the author of the paper as an individual involved in a Sedekah Gunung ceremony.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Sedyawati stated that performing arts are a cultural expression, a mode for conveying cultural values, and the embodiment of artistic aesthetic norms that develop according to the times. The acculturation process plays a major role in bringing about change and transformation in many forms of cultural response, including the performing arts. (Sedyawati, 2002)

Performing arts at Tutup Ngisor is unique from other regions. Even though they are both on the slopes of Merapi, the implementation of traditional rituals is always wrapped with art performances. For example, the Sedekah Gunung ceremony in another village is different from Tutup Ngisor. What makes the difference is the concept of the event that we can find at Tutup Ngisor wrapped in thick traditional arts. This is evidence that explains the concept of performing arts as a model for expressing something. The people of Tutup Ngisor feel that their feelings are represented more through performing arts. Art has finally become a necessity. Indeed, traditional art and the Tutup Ngisor community are difficult to separate. The lively performing arts at Tutup Ngisor is an asset that the people who live there may indirectly own.

Durachman explained that performing arts depart, develop, and are owned by a certain community, so that art can never be separated from the community that supports its sustainability, therefore in that environment an agreement will be created, both according to the customs section, and need for entertainment. (Kurnianingsih, 2013)

At Sedekah Gunung ceremony various artistic performances are incorporated into a series of traditional ceremony events. The first is the *wayang bocah* or children's puppet show which is performed on February 9, 2022, as the opening ceremony for this Sedekah Gunung event. On the same night, the *Macapatan* is also held. The next day on February 10, 2022, there is *solah bawa* or *olah gerak* and followed by singing the Kidung Sedekah Gunung at the Panembrama ceremony.

The puppet show, which was held at the Sedekah Gunung ceremony in Tutup Ngisor village, was very entertaining. The success of this performance also cannot be separated from the hard work of the actors who have prepared this for months. Despite the young age of the cast, this show seemed to be managed professionally for the size of a ceremony that was held by a hamlet community.

It shows how serious the residents of Tutup Ngisor are towards an art performance. They think art is something that cannot be done haphazardly. The concept of art function as a meaning of expressing feelings has been put to good use by the residents of Tutup Ngisor. The processes that support the performance of this *wayang bocah* performance are also organized and structured.

The existence of *wayang bocah* as an artistic product belonging to Tutup Ngisor signifies how the artistic life there flows from generation to generation. Referring to Sedyawati's statement that art can be a mode to convey values, the existence of this *wayang bocah* shows that art is a mode of cultural education in Tutup Ngisor. With the existence of art that involves children to adults, the delivery of cultural values is implied.

Then Macapatan activity started right after the end of the puppet show. Macapatan is an activity that involves singing Javanese songs together. According to Untung Pribadi, an art activist at Tutup Ngisor, Tembang Jawa has noble teachings for human life from birth to death. That's why this Javanese song (Macapat) is included in a series of Sedekah Gunung ceremonies.

Referring to what Untung Pribadi said, it can be interpreted that arts with cultural nuances have noble teachings about character, as stated by Durachman regarding arts and culture that are inherent in society and are difficult to be separated. In the case of Sedekah Gunung Tutup Ngisor, art is also used as a tool to express an open attitude towards the arrival or presence of people from outside Tutup Ngisor who also bring their own culture and lifestyle. This is in line with what Setyoko, an art activist at Tutup Ngisor, said gratitude for the blessings of life can be shown by entertaining various guests fairly without distinction. This fair behavior can also be inspired by the noble teachings contained in the Macapat song.

On the morning of 10 February 2022, a series of Sedekah Gunung ceremony activities began with carrying out *solah bawa* or *olah rasa* together. According to Sitras Anjilin, an elder of Padepokan Tjipta Boedaja, this *solah bawa* is an activity to move freely to feel calm in one's mind or self. This free dance is an attempt to know oneself by allowing the limbs to move according to their independence. By freeing the movement an individual is considered to be calmer and more relaxed so that he is wiser in thinking and acting.

*Solah bawa*, which is performed at Sedekah Gunung ceremony, is carried out together near a river in Tutup Ngisor. Mbah Bambang, an elder of Padepokan Tjipta Boedaja, stated that if *solah bawa* was outdoors, it would be easier to feel calm because it was directly in touch with nature. So that *solah bawa* in this Sedekah Gunung ceremony indeed manifests how the relationship between humans and nature spiritually. Coupled with the concept of Hasta Brata in *solah bawa* which means that human attitudes and behavior must be like the eight elements, namely water, fire, wind, earth, stars, sun, moon, and revelation. Sitras Anjilin added that a river is a place where water flows from a higher place which is a symbol of the bestowing of blessings from the Creator.

Referring to what was conveyed by Edmund Husserl that certainty about the nature of our perception and about how to build the world, *solah bawa* itself is a way for humans to understand how they relate to humans, nature, and the Creator. With an understanding of the positive relationship between humans and humans, nature, and the Creator, the perspective on building life will be wiser.

The last series of activities in this Sedekah Gunung ceremony is Panembrama which is more or less similar to Macapatan where the participants of Sedekah Gunung ceremony sing together. But what makes the difference is the song that is sung, in this activity participants are singing the song titled Kidung Sedekah Gunung. Kidung Sedekah Gunung as oral literature owned by the people of the western slopes of Merapi is collectively an expression of the art of speech and a means of entertainment, as well as space and time to gather and interact. In the "complex" of performances, in the Kidung Sedekah Gunung, there is the reality of the social phenomenon of the people of the slopes of Merapi and contains philosophical meanings related to the culture of the people of the slopes of Merapi. (Wuri Wuryandari, R. Kunjana Rahardi, 2020)

The feeling of happiness in the art performance is also shown by the enthusiasm of the children who take part in this activity. The process of art regeneration in Tutup Ngisor itself is far from being forced. Because the art figures there explained that the artistic life in Tutup Ngisor went naturally where the young children there had witnessed traditional arts since they were young. So that they will indirectly be interested in art activities and choose to learn traditional arts.

Likewise, the people there who work as farmers also feel that their gratitude is conveyed because of this art performance. One example is how some of the adults there helped prepare some of the necessities to support performing arts. It can be said that they work together on several tasks, such as arranging the layout of the audience, helping park vehicles, arranging food and drinks for the audience, and cleaning the hermitage when the event is about to take place.

The feeling of mutual gratitude is one of the reasons behind the holding of this Sedekah Gunung ceremony. The harmony between people's lives and the existence of Mount Merapi as a source of life is felt by this ceremony. Maybe if the eruption in February 2002 didn't happen, it could mean that the Sedekah Gunung ceremony didn't exist. This makes the existence of Mount Merapi very crucial for the lives of the people in Tutup Ngisor, especially those who work as farmers whose livelihoods are directly related to nature and the environment.

## CONCLUSION

The Sedekah Gunung ceremony held by the Tutup Ngisor community on February 10, 2022, featured several arts that were inherent in the culture of Tutup Ngisor. The relationship between humans and humans, humans and nature, and humans with the Creator was wrapped in the packaging of artistic performances which include puppet shows, macapatan, solah bawa, and panembrama performances. Each of these arts has its meaning which is a symbol of existing relationships.

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