

Kudo Dindiang Art as Multicultural Identity of Javanese Community in Nagari Alang Lawas

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses the phenomenon of the existence of Kudo Dindiang art in Nagari Alang Lawas, Lareh Sago Halaban District, which reflects the cultural identity of Javanese society with a multicultural environment. Kudo Dindiang art is a typical Javanese performing art inherited by immigrant communities so that it becomes a symbol of diversity as well as a community-unifying tool. This art involves magical and ritual elements, such as the phenomenon of possession (ndadi) and the attractions of the players. This research aims to analyze how the Kudo Dindiang art becomes a representation of the cultural identity of the Javanese community in Nagari Alang Lawas. The research uses descriptive and analytical qualitative methods by conducting observations, in-depth interviews, and literature reviews in order to collect true and concrete data. The theory used, namely the theory of cultural identity proposed by Stuart Hall. The results showed that the Javanese community in Nagari Alang Lawas was able to maintain its original cultural identity through the Kudo Dindiang art of fostering a sense of tolerance and cultural integration in creating social harmony in a multicultural society.

KEYWORDS

Kudo Dindiang,
Cultural, Identity,
Multiculturalism,
Javanese

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INTRODUCTION

Nagari Alang Lawas, one of the villages in West Sumatra, has a long history, colored by cross-ethnic social and cultural interactions since the Dutch colonial period. The Javanese community migrated to Nagari Alang Lawas, Lareh Sago Halaban District, Lima Puluh Kota Regency, resulting in cultural mixing with indigenous people. This cultural difference was well received and open by the local community without eliminating the essence and thickness of the original Minangkabau culture (indigenous) in Nagari Alang Lawas. Although there are significant cultural differences, the local community still has a sense of unity and brotherhood without any social gaps which ultimately builds very strong values of togetherness and tolerance (Tiara Pusparani, 2020). So that this culture coexists with the local Minangkabau culture without eliminating the original cultural identity of the indigenous people and the Javanese community.

The presence of Javanese ethnicity in Nagari Alang Lawas enriches the cultural diversity in this region, some of the arts that developed in the area, namely *wayang kulit* and *Kudo Dindiang* art. However, currently only the Kudo Dindiang art still exists in the community, because the successor to the shadow puppet art is extinct. The mention of Kudo Dindiang art is a term from the local community. This is due to the mixing of cultures and languages in Nagari Alang Lawas. Kudo Dindiang art has become the cultural identity of the Javanese community in Nagari Alang Lawas.

Identity is a marker or identity of a group that can distinguish it from other groups. Group

identity is a society that has characteristics and gives birth to collective actions that have their own characteristics and characteristics (Prabangkara, 2018). Culture is one of the important elements in shaping the identity of a group. Public trust in a group will help a region have an identity as an identifier to the world outside it. Why art and culture are also very influential in the development of a region, because in art and culture there are noble values of life that can be the basis for a social life (Suacana, 2012). Culture can be interpreted as an embodiment of a way of life and the identity of a civilization that must always be maintained and passed down from generation to generation so that the identity of a region is not lost. The cultivation of an identity cannot be carried out without reviving cultural awareness. One of the factors forming identity is primordial factors, namely kinship ties, similarity of tribes, regions of origin, languages, and customs (Ani. S. R., 2015; Ani S.R, 2015). Stuart Hall, a Jamaican-British cultural theorist, is known for his idea of cultural identity as a dynamic and evolving concept. According to Stuart Hall, cultural identity is not something static, but dynamic, fluid, and always evolving. Cultural identity is not only inherited from the past but also results from interactions with various external influences, such as globalization, migration, and media (Christian, 2017; Hall, 1996).

This phenomenon was found by the author in the Kudo Dindiang art, where Javanese people who migrated from Java to Minangkabau so that they brought their original culture while maintaining their cultural identity. Based on this background, this research is interesting to study how the cultural identity of the Javanese community in the Kudo Dindiang art because it contains cultural and social values. Analyzing how the Javanese community can maintain their cultural identity because they have migrated and settled for a long time in Nagari Alang Lawas. This study is expected to provide a better understanding of how cultural identity is formed and maintained in a multicultural society in Nagari Alang Lawas.

Some studies on Kudo Dindiang art are as follows; First, research that discusses art as a cultural heritage that represents the identity of a community group. Art is seen as a medium to maintain cultural values and certain ethnic identities, which are passed down from generation to generation. In this context, Kudo Dindiang art reflects the cultural identity of the overseas Javanese community and symbolizes cultural diversity in a multicultural environment (Prabangkara, 2018; Suacana, 2012; Tiara Pusparani, 2020). Second, the study of the process of cultural adaptation through traditional arts. Research shows that traditional arts can serve as a tool of social integration in a multicultural society. Javanese people who migrated to the Minangkabau region brought the Kudo Dindiang art as part of their efforts to maintain their original culture, while adjusting to the local community (Dedi Asmara, 2014; Ona Yulita, 2021). Third, research on the dynamics of preserving traditional arts in the midst of changing times. In the context of Kudo Dindiang art, the existence of this art is influenced by the role of the local community, especially the younger generation, who are committed to maintaining and preserving the art. This is in line with the finding that the sustainability of a traditional art depends on the collective support of the community (Tri Rahayu Zulfiana, 2014). Fourth, the study of the role of art in creating social harmony. Kudo Dindiang not only functions as a cultural expression, but also as a medium to strengthen tolerance and a sense of togetherness in the multicultural society in Nagari Alang Lawas. This art is a clear example of how art can be a bridge to build harmonious relationships between different ethnic groups (Christian, 2017; Hall, 1996). Fifth, the existence of Kuda Lumping art in West Sumatra is still developing in various regions. Where this art serves as a means of entertainment, a means of friendship, and preservation of Javanese culture. Sixth, multicultural communities do not only exist in the Nagari Alang Lawas area of Lima Puluh Kota Regency, but Sawahlunto and Pasaman are also multicultural communities that also accept Javanese culture in their regions. This is evident until now in Sawahlunto, the performance of Jalan Kepang, which is similar to the Javanese art of Kuda Lumping, still exists today (Dede Pramayoza, 2014), and so does Bandarejo Village, West Pasaman Regency (Tiara Natasya, 2024).

From these various studies, there are still limited studies that specifically examine the art of Kudo Dindiang as a traditional art form that not only maintains local cultural values but is also able to adapt to a multicultural environment. This research is expected to emphasize the importance of preserving the Kudo Dindiang art as a symbol of Javanese cultural identity in *Nagari Alang Lawas*.

METHOD

The research method used in this research is a qualitative method used to look at social and cultural phenomena related to Kudo Dindiang Art. Qualitative research as said by (Falahi & Larasati, 2024; Lestamega, n.d.; Mikaresti & Mansyur, n.d.; Saleh S, 2024; Yunidar, 2024) is research that tries to understand phenomena in their natural settings and contexts (not in a laboratory), that is, researchers do not try to manipulate the phenomena observed (P.D, 2015). Qualitative methods aim to provide a broad and in-depth description of a problem, symptom, fact, event, and reality so that a new understanding is obtained (Raco, 2010). The techniques used in this research are observation, interview, and data analysis. The observation stage is one way to obtain information about the cultural identity that exists in the Kudo Dindiang Art by observing and reviewing directly to the research location, namely Nagari Alang Lawas, Lareh Sago Halaban District, Lima Puluh Kota Regency. Furthermore, conducting interviews by asking questions directly with sources, such as artists, dancers, and other informants. Interviews allow the author to explore rich and multi-dimensional data on matters from the participants (Myers, 2007). As said by Myers, by conducting interviews the author gets diverse information from informants.

For the sake of analyzing this research, qualitative research data is needed. There are two types of research data, namely primary and secondary data. Primary data is data obtained from the perpetrators themselves or eyewitnesses who experience and know the event. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from other sources that may not be related to the event (Sukardi, 2019). This research obtained information from the successor and leader of the “Sapu Jagat” Community in Nagari Alang Lawas, namely Bambang. Secondary data in this study can be found in related readings, namely the Minangkabau Community Acceptance of the art of lumping horses in Nagari Alang Lawas, Lima Puluh Kota Regency, West Sumatra Province written by Tiara Pusparani.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Kudo Dindiang Art in Halaban Society

Kudo Dindiang art in *Nagari Alang Lawas* reflects how the community maintains, preserves, and adapts this art as a form of maintaining their cultural identity from their ancestral heritage. The Javanese community has adapted and maintained their cultural identity for a very long time since they migrated to *Nagari Alang Lawas* from 1923. This migration occurred because the colonial government established a tea company that employed people from various ethnicities in the archipelago and brought them to *Nagari Alang Lawas* (Dedi Asmara, 2014). The cultural identity of the Javanese transmigrant community may experience adaptation or change, Hall, (1996) argues that cultural identity is not fixed, but rather becomes the subject of history, culture, and power that are constantly at play, and also relates to how to position and be positioned. This research uses Stuart Hall's theory that there are two ways to think about cultural identity. First by positioning cultural identity within one culture. Second by positioning cultural identity by recognizing similarities and differences (Hall, 1996). Javanese transmigrants have the ability to form a cultural identity in their living environment which is a transmigration area with a Minangkabau background by maintaining their cultural identity through language, art, traditions, and livelihoods. By maintaining their cultural identity as Javanese descendants.

Most of the Javanese descendants who were brought to *Nagari Alang Lawas* only became romusha workers for the Dutch government, so they indirectly brought their culture and traditions with them because they had settled in *Nagari Alang Lawas*. This condition is one way for them to maintain their cultural identity in the midst of a very different cultural environment. Despite cultural differences, Javanese people still maintain Javanese elements, such as the naming of the art of “Kuda Lumping”. The local community calls this art “Kudo Dindiang” in Minang. This name arises because Kudo Dindiang uses animal-like properties, such as horses and pigs made of woven bamboo commonly referred to by the surrounding community as *tadia*. *Tadia* in ancient times was used by the surrounding community for house walls and therefore the art of Kuda Lumping is called Kudo Dindiang art. Kudo means horse and dindiang, the wall. This reflects a dynamic and open cultural identity. The indigenous people did not make the influence of Javanese culture a threat, but accepted

it as an element that enriches the diversity of local culture. This process shows that the community groups in *Nagari Alang Lawas* are able to maintain their original cultural identity by accommodating new cultural elements.



Figure 1. Lumping horse art dancer
Source: (Faraswatye, 2024)

Kudo Dindiang art has a myth that is believed by the surrounding community about a Javanese Kingdom hero knight riding a horse who is fighting a war. The knight riding the horse symbolizes strength and courage. In the Kudo Dindiang art there is a traditional dance, called the Pegot dance. This dance is one of the series of Kudo Dindiang art that functions as a form of offering and respect for the spirits of the ancestors. This performance is performed by six to a dozen male dancers. But in general, there is no limit for dancers because in every performance, the number of dancers is always different. In addition, Pegot dancers use simple makeup and costumes by only using everyday clothes. Simplicity in the performance of Kudo Dindiang art is one of the characteristics of ethnic dance as stated by Sumaryono in his book, that ethnic dances are treated and packaged by artists into entertainment performance art, spectacle, or individual expression that emphasizes artistic and attractive considerations (Dr. Sumaryono, 2011).

Kudo Dindiang art is always performed with its handler, because this performance has magical and attractive elements. Dancers are required to perform several series of rituals, before performing, such as fumigating the field using incense. It is believed that this is done so that the dancers are protected from danger or injury during the performance. Furthermore, at the climax of the performance the dancer experiences possession or the local community calls it *ndadi*. This is the attraction in this performance, the local community states that this *ndadi* is only found in the Kudo Dindiang art performance, not found in other performances (Interview with Mr. Ain on April 12, 2024). When the dancers experience *ndadi* they will eat some offerings that have been prepared by the handler, such as roses, incense, jasmine flowers, mermaid oil, eggs, rice, and coconut. Not only that, there are several restrictions that must be obeyed by the audience when watching the *ndadi*, namely not being allowed to wear red clothes or green clothes, wear glasses, watches, umbrellas, and red sandals. This is prohibited because Kudo Dindiang dancers feel disrespected, disturbed, and dislike these objects, so there is a great potential to be chased by dancers. (Interview with Mr. Adi on April 13, 2024).



Figure 2. Offerings eaten by the dancers
Source: (Faraswatye, 2024)

2. Kudo Dindiang as Multicultural Cultural Identity of Javanese Society

The Kudo Dindiang Art aims to be an entertainment medium for the local community. Not only does it function as a cultural expression, but also as a medium to strengthen the cultural identity of the Javanese diaspora community in *Nagari Alang Lawas*. This art is a symbol of nostalgia and emotional attachment to the culture of origin, as well as a tool to maintain social harmony in the midst of diversity. Kudo Dindiang art is displayed in a large field or in an open space. This art is performed after Eid al-Fitr, this is done to strengthen the sense of togetherness and brotherhood in community life, as well as to maintain the bond of friendship and not only that this performance is carried out after Eid al-Fitr because it treats the homesickness of the Javanese ethnic community for their hometown. The Javanese people feel in their hometown because they are watching this Kudo Dindiang art performance. This art can create a sense of togetherness and cultural romanticism towards fellow people. So that the local community has a fairly high spirit of tolerance.



Figure 3. The performance of the Lumpung Horse Art that is crowded with community appreciation
Source: (Faraswatye, 2024)

However, from the perspective of the local community, Kudo Dindiang art raises two different views. Some people consider this art to be a shirk act because it refers to the belief in animism and dynamism. Dynamism belief is one of the beliefs that humans believe in the spirits of ancestors that initially appeared among primitive humans, while animism beliefs are beliefs in an object (Ahmad Afandi, 2016; Fitri Nurul Afni, 2020). And also the community does not trust the people, because this attraction is considered to be just a pretending or just a show. However, most of the public also really appreciated this performance. They argue that this art is very unique because of the existence of this ndadi.

Although the local community has two different perspectives, this art is still alive and thriving in a multicultural environment. The art of Kudo Dindiang in *Nagari Alang Lawas* is a reflection of how cultural identity can survive in the midst of social and cultural change through adaptation and integration. This art not only serves as a medium for preserving the ancestral traditions of the Javanese people, but also serves as a means of strengthening togetherness, maintaining social harmony, and strengthening a sense of cultural nostalgia in a diverse environment. The process of cultural adaptation, including local mentions and the integration of Minangkabau traditional elements, shows that cultural identity is dynamic, open, and capable of transforming without losing its original essence. By continuing to be preserved, this art is a strong proof of the ability of the Javanese diaspora community in Nagari Alang Lawas to maintain the sustainability of their cultural identity while building tolerance in diversity

CONCLUSION

Nagari Alang Lawas is a real example of cultural diversity and harmonious social interaction between the Javanese and Minangkabau people. The migration of Javanese people since the colonial period has brought significant cultural impacts, including the preservation of traditional arts such as Kudo Dindiang art. The art of Kudo Dindiang, which comes from Javanese tradition, has become a

symbol of the cultural identity of the Javanese diaspora community in the area.

The adaptation process can be seen from the mention of the local and the integration of Minangkabau cultural elements into the art without eliminating the essence of the original culture. Kudo Dindiang art is not only a medium of entertainment and tradition preservation, but also serves as a tool to strengthen social relations, maintain harmony, and treat people's homesickness for their hometown. By maintaining tradition through adaptation, the Javanese diaspora community in *Nagari Alang Lawas* shows how cultural identity can be dynamic and continue to evolve. Kudo Dindiang art is a strong testament to tolerance and a spirit of togetherness in diversity, which enriches local cultural identity without sacrificing traditional roots.

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