

Spiritual and Communal Harmony Through Tarawangsa Traditional Art

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Abstract

Purpose of the Study: This research explores how Tarawangsa Art, as a traditional cultural practice, plays a crucial role in strengthening communal identity and spirituality within the Budi Daya community in Cibedug, Lembang, West Java, Indonesia. **Methodology:** The study adopts a qualitative approach through participatory observation and in-depth interviews with community members, traditional leaders, and practitioners of Tarawangsa Art. **Main Findings:** The findings reveal that Tarawangsa Art not only acts as an expression of culture and spirituality but also as a crucial pillar in nurturing the community's identity and social cohesion. Integrating cultural expressions, spiritual values, and social dynamics forms a strong foundation for communal togetherness. Additionally, the community's adaptability and resilience in maintaining this tradition demonstrate cultural flexibility and robustness in the face of modernization. **Applications of this Study:** These findings provide insights for policymakers, educational practitioners, and cultural preservation institutions on the importance of supporting Tarawangsa Art preservation initiatives. **Novelty/Originality:** This study offers a new perspective on the role of Tarawangsa Art in maintaining communal identity and cohesion in the era of globalization. Through in-depth research on this cultural practice, the study highlights how spirituality and community are interwoven in creating unique cultural adaptations amidst social and economic changes.

Keywords: Communal Identity; cultural adaptation; cultural preservation; spirituality.

Introduction

In the cultural landscape of Indonesia, a myriad of artistic expressions and spirituality materialize in a unique harmony, illustrating the interconnectedness of humans with the universe and a higher power. Tarawangsa Art, a tradition deeply rooted within the Budi Daya community in Cibedug, Cikole, Lembang, offers a window into a deeper understanding of this relationship. This tradition is a celebration of aesthetics and a rich social-religious manifestation, where music and dance serve as mediums to express gratitude, spirituality, and social interaction within the community.

Tarawangsa Art, a traditional Sundanese form of music and dance, profoundly reflects the religious and social structure within the Sundanese society. Tarawangsa performances are not just cultural spectacles but are deeply intertwined with spiritual beliefs and communal values. The musical and dance elements of Tarawangsa often contain spiritual and moral teachings, linking the community with their ancestors and the divine forces governing their lives (Campbell et al., 2020).

Previous research related to traditional arts in Indonesia often focuses on ethnomusicological aspects (Abdullah & Santaella, 2014; Adhimas, Anggoro, Maulana, Yasya, & Deng, 2023; Hoffman, 1978; Irawati, 2019; Sanger & Kippen, 1987) and

anthropology (Aini, 2022; Jannah, Effendi, & Susanto, 2021) without delving into the contained dimensions of spirituality. Meanwhile, studies on spirituality in traditional art practices overlook how these elements interact with the broader religious social context. This study aims to bridge that gap by integrating ethnomusicological analysis and spiritual anthropology within the religious social context of Tarawangsa Art.

Previous research on Tarawangsa Art has investigated various aspects, highlighting its cultural and religious significance. Gufran's study (2023) explored the cultural adaptation of Islam to the traditional music of Tarawangsa, focusing on performances, presentation processes, and the incorporation of Islamic values into this art form. Furthermore, other research has observed how communities perceive the Islamic values embedded in Tarawangsa music, emphasizing the continuation of ancestral traditions in presenting this art (Putrika & Shaleh, 2022). Additionally, Adhimas (2023) investigated Tarawangsa from an Ethnomusicological Perspective. Although previous research has studied the cultural, religious, and ethnomusicological aspects of Tarawangsa Art, there remains a gap in the literature, specifically exploring and delving into the spiritual values contained within the practice of Tarawangsa Art.

This research aims to uncover and understand the spiritual values contained in Tarawangsa Art and its integration into the daily life of the Budi Daya community adherents. This study intends to provide a new perspective regarding the role of music and dance traditions as mediums of spiritual and social religious expression and how these traditions contribute to maintaining identity and coherence within the community. Thus, this research is expected to enrich the academic understanding related to the function and significance of spirituality in traditional practices and its role in strengthening the social and spiritual structure of the adhesive community.

This research stems from the argument that Tarawangsa Art is not just an isolated art practice but a crucial element of a broad religious social network, serving to communicate, reinforce, and celebrate spiritual and social values within the Budi Daya community. Through an in-depth analysis of the role and function of Tarawangsa Art, this study proposes that this tradition plays a critical role in nurturing the continuity of culture and spiritual identity among its community members.

Methods

This research concentrates on the practice of Tarawangsa Art carried out by the Budi Daya community adherents in Cibedug, Lembang District, Bandung, Indonesia. The subject of the study was chosen based on the uniqueness of the traditions and rituals performed during the Satu Suro ceremony, which includes the use of complete offerings and the performance of Tarawangsa music as an expression of local culture and spirituality.

The study utilizes a qualitative research type, with primary data collection through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Secondary data were obtained from literature, articles, and documents relevant to Tarawangsa Art and the Budi Daya community's traditions. The primary informants of this research consist of Budi Daya community members directly involved in the execution of Tarawangsa Art, including dancers, musicians, and spectators.

The research began with participatory observation at the Satu Suro ceremony on August 1, 2022, followed by in-depth interviews conducted from August 2 to 30, 2022. This phase involved visits to informants' residences to obtain their perspectives and experiences related to Tarawangsa Art practices. Documentation in the form of photos

and videos from the ceremony was also collected to complement the observation and interview data.

The data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation were processed through a data reduction process, where irrelevant information was eliminated, and crucial data were organized for further analysis. Subsequently, data were presented in the form of descriptive narratives to facilitate the identification of patterns and themes. Conclusions were drawn based on this analysis, focusing on unveiling the spiritual and social values in Tarawangsa Art practices. The analysis process was conducted iteratively until a profound understanding of the research object was achieved.

Results

1. Tarawangsa Art: An Expression of Gratitude and Cultural Heritage

The Tarawangsa Art held in Cibedug, Cikole, represents a profound and festive tradition filled with a sense of gratitude on the night of Satu Sura as an expression of thanks for the blessings bestowed by Allah. This practice is not merely a performance but a celebration deeply rooted in history and spirituality, originating from Rancakalong, Sumedang. The story begins in the 15th century when the Rancakalong community faced famine and a rice shortage, prompting some among them to venture out in search of rice seeds to various kingdoms, including the Mataram kingdom.

This quest for rice seeds birthed the Tarawangsa tradition as a form of homage to Dewi Sri (the Rice Goddess), whose presence transformed the fate of Rancakalong into a fertile and prosperous area. The successful planting of the brought-back rice seeds and the abundant harvest inspired the Rancakalong community to celebrate by playing Tarawangsa music. This act of honor and gratitude towards rice has since become a lasting tradition.

Beyond merely serving as a reminder of history and tradition, Tarawangsa Art offers a vibrant platform to express the joy of farmers. The process of transporting rice from the field to the village, known as "rengkong," is an integral part of this celebration. "Rengkong" transcends mere transportation; it is a lively event characterized by music and dance, alongside processions that utilize large bamboo structures to lift the rice. This creates a unique auditory experience as the bamboo rubs against the rice carrier ropes, further enriched by the accompaniment of traditional musical instruments such as the "dogdog" (a traditional percussion instrument commonly found in the Sundanese culture of West Java) and "angklung" (a musical instrument made from a series of bamboo tubes attached to a bamboo frame).

On the execution day, besides the soulful voice of the *sinden* (a female singer in traditional Sundanese music) delivering songs in Sundanese, the humming of the *kendang* (a traditional double-headed drum) and the strains of the *gamelan* (a traditional instrumental ensemble of Java and Bali) also accompany this celebration, drawing the general public to attend and witness the event. This event also allows vendors to sell their goods, animating the streets that residents traverse to reach the ceremony location.

The array of cultural performances at this event is diverse, from the vibrant *Jaipong* dance (a popular traditional dance in West Java) performed by children and women (figure 1) to the *Pencak silat* (a traditional martial art) demonstrations by men (figure 2), showcasing rich local skills and culture. The event's climax is the Tarawangsa Art, played towards midnight, where dancers and musicians express their spiritual expressions through movements and melodies (figure 3).



Figure 1 Jaipong Dance Performance (A vibrant traditional dance from West Java, Indonesia, known for its lively movements and rich musical accompaniment)



Figure 2 Pencak Silat (A traditional Indonesian martial art that combines self-defense techniques and artistic performance)

Implementing the Tarawangsa tradition is not only an expression of gratitude for the abundance of the harvest but also an acknowledgment of the natural resources and other blessings that Allah has bestowed. With various offerings that include symbols of diverse

life experiences, this tradition teaches about gratitude, patience, and appreciation for every aspect of life.

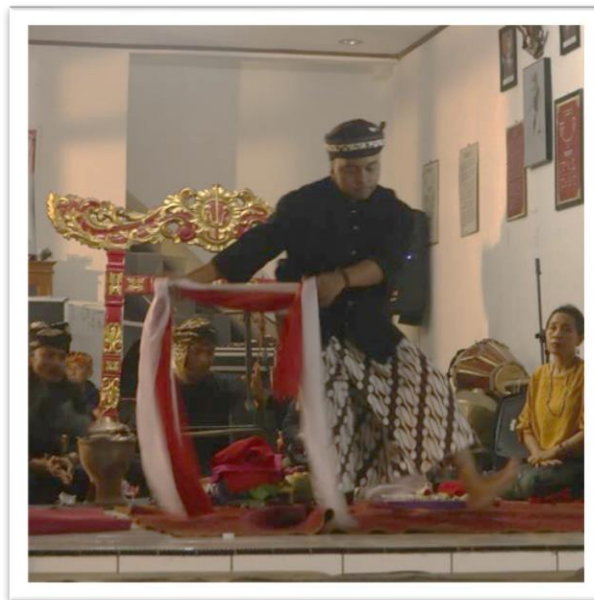


Figure 3 Tarawangsa Art Performance

This tradition also involves the *Saehu*, a wise traditional leader with high physical and mental maturity, who conveys important messages while dancing. In addition, there are roles for *Paibuan* (figure 4) and *Piramaan* (Figure 5), who lead the groups of female and male dancers, respectively, and the *Juru Kunci* (Key Master), responsible for spiritual communication through incense burning.



Figure 4 Paibuan



Figure 5 Paramaan

The Tarawangsa Art procession begins with an opening and communal prayer, followed by the *Saeahu*, who starts not with a speech but with the burning of incense and a silent prayer. Dancers then commence their performance, wafting the incense smoke towards their bodies as a symbol of inviting and honoring the spirits of their ancestors. The event continues until midnight, concluding with a performance by female dancers and followed by various other art presentations, reflecting the rich culture and traditions of the Rancakalong community passed down through generations.

2. Spirituality and the Practice of Tarawangsa Art

Tarawangsa Art is a cultural expression rich with spiritual value, referring to a spiritual awareness connected to a greater force. This practice delves into the depths of mystical worship, discovering eternal values and seeking the meaning of life and beauty, all of which build harmony with the universe. Through Tarawangsa Art, the community experiences interaction with unseen aspects, as Sidi Gazalba (1989) defines value as an abstract entity inaccessible to the senses, highlighting that spiritual value lies beyond the realm of right or wrong but rather in personal preference towards desires or attractions.

The importance of spiritual values in Tarawangsa Art warrants special attention, especially considering the general public's lack of awareness about these values, often leading to negative perceptions. The spiritual history of Tarawangsa Art is closely linked to the musical practices used in the efforts to obtain rice seeds from the Mataram kingdom by the famine-stricken Rancakalong community. Tarawangsa music, played during the journey and serenading, is a means to acquire rice seeds and a medium to express deep resignation to the Almighty, reinforced by faith and hard work.

The spiritual value in Tarawangsa music originates not only from its history but also from how the music is performed. The tones that foster spirituality can immerse listeners in pleasure and evoke a sense of gratitude. The dance accompanying Tarawangsa music also represents a high form of surrender, often raising questions about what inspires the dancers to perform so devoutly and unconsciously. This indicates that Tarawangsa Art is a potent medium for creating a spiritual space.

Dale Cannon's (2002) "The Six Ways of Religion" found that the Tarawangsa

Tradition encompasses mystical elements in their art practices. Through meditation, contemplation, and mystical experiences, Tarawangsa players strive to achieve unity with God or a higher spiritual source. This shows that meditation is a fundamental foundation in gaining understanding and a closer connection with the Almighty. The music and dance movements in Tarawangsa Art mediate between the human world and the spiritual realm, creating a profound atmosphere and reinforcing the presence of spirituality.

As explained by a Tarawangsa musical instrument player, Dani (Personal Communication, August 9, 2022), the story behind Tarawangsa Art is not only about music but also the ancestors' struggles. This indicates that Tarawangsa music and dance play a crucial role in maintaining a connection with ancestral traditions and history and carrying messages and values that have transformative power.

In an interview with Eni (Personal Communication, August 2, 2022), it was mentioned that the performance of Tarawangsa Art in Cibedug is not merely about dancing but also an expression of gratitude and surrender through body movements combined with the chanting of distinctive music. Through this artistic expression, they share beauty, wisdom, and understanding gained in their spiritual search with the world, demonstrating that Tarawangsa Art creates captivating works and shares inspiring spiritual experiences.

Uniquely, the Tarawangsa dance employs colorful scarves (figure 6) that carry deep meanings, representing various aspects of life and spirituality. The entirety of this practice, from the music to the dance and the scarves used, illustrates how Tarawangsa Art integrates physical and spiritual aspects, creating an experience that deepens awareness and understanding of human existence about the spiritual world.



Figure 6 Colorful Scarves Worn by Tarawangsa Dancers

Tarawangsa Art revives narratives of history and communal spirituality and offers a space for practitioners to reflect and contemplate their relationship with the universe and a greater force. This experience, enhanced through music and dance, facilitates transcendental moments that allow individuals and communities to transcend the confines of physical reality, exploring the spiritual dimensions of their existence.

The reverence for Dewi Sri (the Rice Goddess) through Tarawangsa Art is an expression of gratitude for the blessings of the harvest and an acknowledgment of a higher existence that guides and blesses life. Thus, this practice reminds the community of the importance of maintaining a harmonious relationship with nature and spirituality as sources of life and prosperity.

An interview with a community member, Sobari (Personal Communication, August 2, 2022), revealed that participation in Tarawangsa Art is often considered a profound individual spiritual journey. Through meditation and contemplation woven into this

practice, both performers and spectators are invited to explore and reflect on their own mystical experiences, often leading to new understandings of themselves and their relationship with the Divine.

The Mystical Quest in Tarawangsa Art, as outlined by Dale Cannon (2002), emphasizes the importance of an internal search to achieve a higher spiritual awareness. It serves as a bridge connecting ancient traditions with contemporary spiritual practices, proving that the values and spiritual experiences in Tarawangsa Art remain relevant and impactful in the lives of its practitioners.

Active engagement in the spiritual practices of Tarawangsa Art also acts as a means for the community to strengthen their social bonds. Through shared rituals and art expressions centered around common values, Tarawangsa practitioners develop a deeper sense of unity and solidarity, which in turn helps to nurture and fortify the social network within the community.

3. Community and Identity in Tarawangsa Art

The Budi Daya adherent community in Cibedug, through the practice of Tarawangsa Art, highlights how this musical and ritual tradition becomes central to the formation and maintenance of communal identity. Tarawangsa is more than just an art performance; it is a manifestation of collective identity, where community members find and assert themselves in a broader context. Observations of the Satu Sura ceremony reveal the richness of social interactions woven through music and dance, binding community members in a profound shared experience.

According to an interview with Sobari (Personal Communication, August 2, 2022), a local community figure and informant, "Tarawangsa Art is more than just a tradition; it is an expression of who we are and where we come from. It reminds us of our roots and teaches us the values we live by." This quote highlights how Tarawangsa serves as a tool of remembrance and education for the community, carrying messages from the ancestors and strengthening their connection with their history and land.

In this context, the practice of Tarawangsa also reflects important principles that govern the social and spiritual life of the community, such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), solidarity, and respect for nature. Through active participation in the ceremonies, community members reinforce these values, which in turn strengthens social cohesion and group identity.

Traditional music, like Tarawangsa, plays a critical role in preserving cultural identity amid globalization and social change challenges. Tarawangsa serves as a significant tool for maintaining cultural continuity and fostering a sense of togetherness (Supriatna, Gunawan, & Cipta, 2019). Music, in general, has been shown to aid in understanding self-identity, relating to others, enhancing well-being, and expressing spirituality (Hays & Minichiello, 2005). Moreover, music can contribute to developing national identity and preserving cultural heritage, especially in oral traditions where music adopts written notation and theoretical systems (Jones, 2012).

Further observations indicate that, beyond serving as a vessel for cultural expression, Tarawangsa Art also provides an arena for individuals to explore and develop their personal identities. In Tarawangsa dance and music, dancers and musicians find a space for unique self-expression, which helps them articulate their position within the community and the broader collective narrative.

This understanding is reinforced by an interview with Shelly (Personal Communication, August 2, 2022), a Tarawangsa dancer, who stated, "Each time I dance,

I feel connected not just to our history and traditions, but also to myself. It's like having a dialogue with the ancestors while also finding my own voice." This illustrates how Tarawangsa practice becomes a medium for individuals to engage with their cultural heritage while asserting their individual identities.

Furthermore, the role of Tarawangsa in life cycle events and community celebrations highlights how music and dance serve as means of emotional and spiritual communication between individuals and the community. In the context of weddings, births, and deaths, Tarawangsa is played to mark significant transitions in the lives of community members, integrating spiritual practices into the fabric of daily life.

The influence of Tarawangsa on community identity is also reflected in the way community members interact with their environment. Through lyrics and movements that depict nature and the agricultural cycle, Tarawangsa teaches respect for the land and natural resources, instilling an understanding that communal identity is inseparable from their relationship with nature.

4. Discussion

This research highlights the complexity and richness of Tarawangsa Art as a form of cultural expression that functions not only as an art performance but also as a principal mechanism in strengthening communal identity and spirituality among the Budi Daya community in Cibedug, Lembang, Bandung. More than just a tradition, Tarawangsa Art plays a role in various aspects of communal life: as an expression of gratitude for blessings received, as a means to nurture and deepen spiritual relationships, and as a foundation for maintaining social harmony and sustainable relations with the natural environment. The findings of this study reveal the significance of Tarawangsa Art in uniting the community, demonstrating how cultural practices can be key in the maintenance of collective identity and the continuity of spiritual traditions.

Tarawangsa Art distinguishes itself through its deep integration with spiritual and communal elements. This integration reflects the importance of musical traditions in preserving local identity amid globalization pressures and social transformation (Gufran & Setiawan, 2023). The influence of Islam on Tarawangsa music emphasizes the value of faith, showing how cultural practices like Tarawangsa Art can incorporate spiritual beliefs (Gufran & Setiawan, 2023). Furthermore, discussions about the development of Tarawangsa in the tourism and creative industries highlight the culture's resilience and adaptability in the face of modernization (Supriatin, 2017).

The spiritual dimension of Tarawangsa Art aligns with a broader understanding of the role of spirituality in various life domains. The spiritual aspect in traditional arts, a multifaceted theme intertwined with artistic expression, is acknowledged in art therapy studies by Kirca (2019). This research affirms that art inherently possesses a spiritual essence, underlining the intrinsic relationship between art and spirituality throughout human history. The connection between spirituality and traditional arts is also reflected in studies on traditional Islamic art, particularly Arabic calligraphy, which Alashari et al. (2019) describe as a means of communicating messages and spiritual values. Moreover, Özdemir (2019) explores how Turkish performance traditions become mediums for transmitting spirituality, highlighting that art not only acts as a channel for artistic expression but also as a vessel for profound spirituality embedded in artistic practices. This entire discourse illustrates that, across various cultures and contexts, art is often viewed as a vital medium for exploring and communicating the spiritual dimension of the human experience, aligning with the findings related to Tarawangsa Art that underscore

the importance of spirituality in shaping and articulating cultural and communal identities.

Reflection on the results of this study underscores the importance of preserving musical traditions, including Tarawangsa Art, as a vital means of maintaining cultural heritage, strengthening social cohesion, and nurturing community identity amid globalization and cultural homogenization challenges. These findings resonate with the research of Gunara et al. (2022), which highlights how music contributes to the maintenance of identity and cultural heritage in rural communities. This parallels the study by Hays & Minichiello (2005), which found that music plays an essential role in self-identity formation and health maintenance, especially among the elderly. The research by Clayton et al. (2020) underlines how musical engagement strengthens social unity through the formation of interpersonal bonds.

This study also reaffirms the importance of preserving social practices among the youth to ensure sustainable community cohesion and identity, as described by Rodionova (2020). Research by Islam et al. (2020) adds a perspective on how leadership quality can influence community cohesion, indicating the importance of nurturing a cohesive social environment for general well-being. Specifically, the practice of traditional knowledge transmission in indigenous communities, as conducted in Kampung Naga and Cikondang in West Java, serves as a concrete example of how music traditions play a central role in maintaining cultural authenticity and community identity. Thus, the results of this study signal the urgency in recognizing and supporting initiatives for the preservation of traditional music as a key component in broader efforts to maintain cultural diversity and community identity in the global era.

This research underscores the importance of preservation and documentation efforts for Tarawangsa Art, serving as a cultural heritage and a foundation for building and maintaining community identity and social cohesion. These implications demand more inclusive policies and substantive support from the government and cultural institutions, to ensure the survival of this tradition as a valuable heritage. The arts, including traditional forms like Tarawangsa, play a vital role in community and social participation, fostering intercultural and intergenerational connections, and preserving cultural authenticity (Anwar McHenry, 2011; Beauregard et al., 2020). Institutions like Permadani in Central Java contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage by documenting and studying traditional arts, ensuring the continuity of cultural practices (Wasisto, Jumino, & Krismayani, 2021). Empowerment initiatives, such as Karang Taruna in Mekar Jaya Village, focus on preserving traditional arts like Kompangan and traditional dances, highlighting the importance of community involvement in art preservation (Waluyo & Wahyuni, 2023). Moreover, government initiatives, like digital preservation projects for cultural heritage resources and manuscripts, demonstrate efforts to ensure the accessibility and longevity of cultural artifacts (Singh, 2012).

These findings reflect the intrinsic relationship between music, dance, and spirituality in nurturing the social structure and community identity. They also show how communities adapt and maintain their traditions amid changing social and economic dynamics, displaying cultural adaptability and resilience in the face of contemporary challenges.

Concrete actions are needed to support the preservation of Tarawangsa Art, which could include integrating education about this tradition into school curriculums, promotion and documentation using digital platforms, and community initiatives that facilitate the strengthening of practices and traditional knowledge transmission. Further research is required to assess the impact of these interventions on the maintenance of communal identity and tradition adaptation in the contemporary scope, ensuring that this

heritage continues to evolve over time.

Conclusion

This research successfully reveals the importance of Tarawangsa Art not just as a cultural expression but also as a critical element in strengthening identity and social cohesion within the Budi Daya community in Cibedug, Cikole. The main findings highlight how this tradition integrates aspects of spirituality, history, and communal togetherness in its practice, and plays a role in maintaining the relationship between humans, nature, and the transcendent. Tarawangsa Art serves as a medium for expressing gratitude, preserving communal values, and as a means to maintain cultural identity amidst changing times.

This study makes a significant contribution to a deeper understanding of the vital role of traditional art in maintaining and strengthening communal identity and spirituality. Through a comprehensive analysis of Tarawangsa Art practice within the Budi Daya community in Cibedug, Cikole, this study reveals how the integration of cultural expressions, spiritual values, and social dynamics forms a strong foundation for communal togetherness. By highlighting the essential role of traditional art in preserving social cohesion and providing a means for collective identity expression, this research expands academic insights into the mechanisms by which communities utilize their cultural heritage as a response to the challenges of modernity. Therefore, the contribution of this study lies not only in enriching the knowledge corpus about Tarawangsa Art in particular but also in emphasizing the importance of the preservation and adaptation of traditional art as a key element in the maintenance of identity and spirituality in a changing society.

Although this research provides valuable insights into Tarawangsa Art, there are limitations in geographic scope and the number of participants, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, further research could be conducted to explore how similar practices contribute to communal cohesion and identity in other communities with different cultural backgrounds. Future research directions could also focus on evaluating the impact of cultural preservation interventions on youth and the adaptation of traditions in the context of globalization, as well as developing innovative methodologies for documenting and promoting traditional arts in the digital era.

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