
The Ritual Tradition of Rejecting Reinforcements Preserves Sacred Art Values in the Kuantan Singingi Community, Riau Province

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the Ritual Tradition of Rejecting Evil, which carries sacred art values within the Kuantan Singingi community in Riau Province. The research employs a descriptive qualitative method with an analytical approach and literature review. The art criticism theory used refers to four key aspects: description, formal analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. Feldman's art criticism theory is chosen for its ability to provide a deeper and more objective analysis of the subject matter, particularly the *krumpyung* music. Data collection was carried out through observations, in-depth interviews with traditional leaders and community members regarding the ritual, and written documentation. Data reliability was ensured through source triangulation, and data analysis followed a four-stage process: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The findings reveal that the Ritual Tradition of Rejecting Evil in the Kuantan Singingi community is rooted in animistic and dynamistic beliefs, practices that predate the arrival of Islam. Living in close connection with nature, and with limited technological resources, the community has long sought to maintain a harmonious relationship with their environment, which they believe is inhabited or controlled by spiritual beings. The sacred art values embedded in the ritual remain alive, with the Petalangan community continuing to perform the ritual annually. Despite exposure to various other cultures, this tradition endures due to several factors: the inheritance of tradition, its role in disaster protection, and its ability to foster social solidarity within the community. In conclusion, the Ritual of Rejecting Evil is not just a cultural tradition but a living expression of spiritual values that continue to shape the community's identity. This study hopes to serve as a reference for further research into similar traditions and sacred art values in other indigenous communities.

Keywords: Ritual Tradition, Reject Bala, Sacred Art Values, Kuantan Singingi Community

INTRODUCTION

Culture, whether within a village community, a kinship group, or another traditional society, often displays distinctive characteristics that are particularly noticeable to those outside the community. For those who live daily within their own cultural environment, these unique features may become less apparent, especially when compared to the cultural elements of others (Hasbullah et al., 2017). According to sociocultural theory, culture encompasses universal elements, such as language, knowledge, social organization, technology, livelihoods, religious practices, and artistic expression. These elements shape how a community lives and interacts with its environment.

Pangean, a sub-district in the Kuantan Singingi Regency of Riau Province, is an area where the traditional culture is deeply embedded in the community's way of life. Pangean includes villages such as Pasar Baru Pangean, Koto Pangean, Pulau Kumpai, and others (Rusyada, Gozin & Sutiyono, 2020). In these communities, ritual ceremonies are an important cultural practice that embodies social, religious, and

educational values. Rituals, as Koentjaraningrat (2021) suggests, represent systems of human ideas, actions, and creations that, through learning, become integral to social life.

One of the key rituals performed annually in Pangean is the "Tolak Bala" (Rejecting Evil) ceremony, conducted each November as rice planting begins. This ritual is a form of cultural expression where offerings, such as buffalo sacrifices and shared feasts, are made to the spirits in hopes of averting disaster and ensuring prosperity. The ritual reflects not only the community's connection with nature and the divine but also the social values of unity and communal cooperation. As observed by Zackaria et al. (2019), rituals such as these carry religious values, with prayers of gratitude to Allah SWT, and educational values, promoting faith and devotion.

The "Tolak Bala" ritual serves as a form of village healing, where mantras, prayers, and communal activities are used to ward off calamities such as disease outbreaks and natural disasters. Oktizalvi (2019) explains that this tradition involves symbolic acts aimed at maintaining a harmonious relationship between the visible and invisible worlds, particularly through religious ceremonies and offerings. These actions highlight the community's belief in natural forces and their responsibility to maintain these relationships to protect their lives.

Several studies have examined similar rituals in Southeast Asia, such as those on Balinese purification rites (Sutrisno, 2018) and Batak healing ceremonies (Tambunan, 2017). However, there is limited research focused on the specific sacred art values embedded within the "Tolak Bala" ritual in the Kuantan Singingi community. Additionally, while previous studies emphasize the ritual's social and religious aspects, the distinct art forms and symbolic elements—such as *krumpyung* music—remain underexplored. This gap in the literature highlights the need for a more in-depth examination of the sacred art values within the ritual.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the Ritual Tradition of Rejecting Evil in the Kuantan Singingi community, specifically examining the sacred art values embedded in the ceremony. By focusing on the music, symbolism, and communal practices, this research aims to uncover the deeper cultural and spiritual meanings behind the ritual, contributing to a broader understanding of indigenous cultural practices in Riau Province.

METHOD

The research method in this study uses descriptive qualitative methods by referring to analytical approaches and literature studies as well as Feldman's theory of art criticism. The theory of art criticism refers to four aspects, namely description, formal analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. The application of Feldman's theory of art criticism is based on the need for in-depth analysis of the object of study, namely *krumpyung* music, in a more objective manner. The data collection stages used observation, in-depth interviews with traditional leaders and the Kuantan Singingi community regarding the ritual of rejecting evil, and written documentation. Data reliability techniques use source triangulation. Data analysis uses four stages starting from data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and data conclusion..

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ritual Tradition of Rejecting Evil in the Kuantan Singingi Community, Riau Province

The people of Kuantan Singingi, before knowing and embracing Islam, had beliefs that were animistic and dynamic. The lives of the Kuantan Singingi people who live on the outskirts of the forest or in the forest make this belief deeply rooted in their lives. A life that depends on the natural environment and is unfamiliar with technology requires them to establish a harmonious relationship with the natural environment. In their view, the natural environment is inhabited or controlled by supernatural beings or spirits (Hikmatul Mustaghfiroh and Muhamad Mustaqim, 2014).

They believe that some of these spirits are good and some are evil. Therefore, good spirits are made friends (called *akuan*), and evil ones must be persuaded not to disturb people's lives. For this reason, they carry out various ceremonies so that the good ones remain friends, and the evil ones do not disturb or bring disaster. This understanding is based on the belief that these spirits can bring happiness and can also bring disaster. Therefore, they try to maintain "good relations" with these spirits by, among other things, carrying out certain ceremonies or by complying with the "abstinence and prohibition" provisions stipulated by custom (Gustiranto, 2017).

According to James.J Fox, Ritual is a sacrificial ceremony to restore and maintain harmonious relationships with God, ancestors, and with nature. This means the demand for worship in ceremonies to communicate with the universe or with God in the cultural context of a society, for example, traditional

diversity ceremonies and religious ceremonies (Hasbullah et al., 2017). Meanwhile, according to Umi Fariha, Ritual is a form of celebration that aims to purify oneself from bad luck that will or has not yet come. This celebration itself is still related to several beliefs or a person's religion and is characterized by special characteristics, such as generating respect for ancestors in the sense that it is a sacred experience (Turner, 2020). In Anthropology, ritual ceremonies are known as rites. Rites are carried out for various purposes, some are to obtain blessings or a lot of good fortune from a job, such as sacred ceremonies when going down to the rice fields; exist to repel danger that has occurred or is expected to come; there are ceremonies for treating illnesses (rites of healing); there are ceremonies due to changes or cycles in human life, such as marriage, starting pregnancy, birth (rites of passage, cycles of rites); and so on (Hasbullah et al., 2017).

The people of Kuantan Singingi hold a ritual of rejecting evil as an anticipation of various diseases or disasters caused by the disturbance of spirits. Therefore, they make offerings of buffalo heads to ask for help so that the spirits do not disturb them. Apart from using buffalo heads as offerings, they also put up barriers at home and also at village borders to protect the village. Protection using this deterrence is based on the existence of the Kuantan Singingi people who use akuan to do evil to other people. So that this evil act does not enter the homes of the people of Kuantan Singingi, a shaman provides a protective barrier to trick the taken so that the house that is targeted is "not visible". Meanwhile, the barrier at the village border aims to deceive the evil actions of people who have claims so that the targeted village is "invisible". As seen in the picture below.

Figure 1. Ritual for rice fields that will be planted in the fields

Figure 2. Ritual asking for safety for the village

Carrying out the ritual tradition of rejecting evil begins with a joint meeting chaired by the leaders of each tribal head of the Petalangan community, called Ninik Mamak. During the meeting, the implementation of pushback was discussed, looking for common ground if there were differences to reach an agreement. This preparation was formed through the cooperation of the Ninik Mamak to gather the children of their respective nephews (a tribe), to attend a meeting with the agenda of preparing for the ritual of rejecting evil (village healing). This preparatory meeting aims to ensure that the implementation of this ritual runs well and can be accounted for, as well as forming an implementing committee.

The repulsion of reinforcements which is held every year requires thorough preparation because it involves many people, and is not for the benefit of the Ninik Mamak. Therefore, this ritual must be carried out in mutual cooperation, both in the form of energy and material (money). According to Jiun, the organizing committee has determined the amount of contribution for each head of family. Nursahabat also stated the same thing; however, residents are still allowed to donate more or less than what has been determined by the committee. Mothers are also actively involved in the implementation of this ritual; one or two days before the kenduri to reject reinforcements, they work together to cook and bring kitchen spices from their respective homes. The size of the kenduri to reject reinforcements can be seen from how many goats there are. However, actually the banquet banquet is considered big when slaughtering a cow or buffalo. Meanwhile, whether it is festive or not can be seen from how much chicken is cut. Goat is the main menu which is used as a side dish at the feast.

The process of carrying out the ritual tradition of rejecting evil always uses media. Because every medium is a symbol that has a certain meaning. By using certain media, a ritual can achieve the desired goal.

Without media, a ritual is impossible to carry out. According to Parsudi Suparlan, the meaning of a symbol represents an abstract, broad, and universal understanding.

There are several media used in the implementation of the ritual of rejecting evil which symbolize the meaning of the offering symbols, namely: (1) Agarwood, which functions to invite the spirits of ancestors and other spirits. (2) Pulut yellow, as an offering to spirits to become their food, which is likened to humans eating rice. (3) Animal offerings (in the form of goats, cows, or buffalo), are offerings for spirits, in this case, what is served includes: head, entrails, and meat. In essence, all these parts are considered as one animal that is offered to the spirits of ancestors and spirits. (4) Plain flour, done in the house with the aim of making it difficult for spirits to disturb or enter the house. Thus, plain flour is a symbol of protecting the house. The ingredients used for plain flour are: as a tool for plain flour taken from the setawe, sedunia, ati-ati, and adau uso plants.

Meanwhile, the sprinkler for plain flour is lime (orange), cucumber, and kasai. When combined, they become lime kasai. Kasai is made from finely ground rice and colored white, red, and yellow. These colors have meaning: white represents bones, red represents flesh, and yellow represents protection. So, the essence of this color is to protect from various dangers. (5) Kencono cloth and sling catwalk (material for making tangkal). Kencono cloth is equipment made from cloth consisting of various colors, namely red as a symbol of society, white as a symbol of employees, black as a symbol of dubalang, and yellow as a symbol of the kingdom. The sling rope is a piece of equipment attached to a kencono thread made from kepau leaves or coconut shoots. The kencono cloth and sling catwalk function as house protectors. (6) Lime, as a sacred symbol that is able to cleanse, ward off, and eliminate disease. In the ritual of repelling evil, lime is a symbol of banishing disease that is inherent in the house or in humans.

The implementation of the ritual of rejecting evil goes through several stages, namely: (1) Cutting the lime. Before the lime is cut, it is first cast under a spell by a shaman. It is not very clear what kind of mantra the shaman recites, only that what is heard is the recitation of Basmalah. Mantra is an example of syncretism par excellence. It not only contains original local elements (animism) but also elements of Hinduism and Islam. Belief in ghosts, spirits, and guardians is the original belief of the Petalangan people, namely since the emergence of animism as their belief. Then came the influence of Hinduism. The concept of god was also taken as a supernatural power. After coming to Islam, they combined Islamic beliefs with existing beliefs. According to Law. Hamidy, including Basmalah at the beginning of the mantra and ending it with the words "La ilaha illallah, Muhammadar Rasulullah", is a form of Islamization of Malay literature, especially in the field of mantras.

Before the lime is cut, a bowl filled with water is first provided as a place to drop the lime cut by the shaman. Cutting limes is a sign of the start of the ritual of rejecting evil, where the mantra read while cutting limes aims to summon the spirits of ancestors and supernatural beings to provide protection to the people of Petalangan Betung Village. (2) Feast of Rejecting Reinforcements; During the feast to reject reinforcements, the people of Petalangan read Surah Yasin together and closed by reading a prayer to reject reinforcements. Before reading Surah Yasin and the prayer to reject evil, first prepare offerings (buffalo/cow/goat head), lime juice, and tangkal.

The offering items are placed right in the middle of the house and surrounded by people who are holding the kenduri. The purpose of carrying out the kenduri is to ask Allah to protect the people of Petalangan and their village from various kinds of dangers. (3) Use of the Tangkal Reject Bala; After the banquet event was over, the people of Petalangan took home lime juice and tangkal. If one of the community members was not present at the event, the lime juice and tangkal were entrusted to their neighbors. Meanwhile, the ustadz and shaman brought the lime juice and tangkal to the village border (Nurhasanah et al., 2021).

The lime juice that residents bring home is used by rubbing it on their face, hands, and feet. This is done by all family members and is carried out at night. The lime water is also sprinkled on each wall of the house and followed by installing a guard on the front door, which is done during the day. According to Jasa, lime juice has the property of getting rid of bad luck in everyone, such as being sick, often having problems, and so on. Meanwhile, lime water is sprinkled on the walls of the house, and the installation of a barrier aims to protect the occupants of the house from evil spirits (Zackaria et al., 2019)

A similar view was also expressed by Kumbi and Kemel. So it is not surprising if people find several stems in their homes because they installed new ones and did not throw away the old ones. Meanwhile, the barriers installed at the village borders were made specifically to protect the village. The tangkal is hung using special wood, namely mother wood. According to Kumbi, ibuibu wood was chosen to hang the tangkal

because it is believed to be the oldest wood compared to other woods, which is why it is called ibu-ibu wood (Hasbullah et al., 2017).

The Value of Sacred Art in the Ritual Tradition of Rejecting Evil in the Kuantan Singingi Community, Riau Province

As previously explained, the ritual of rejecting reinforcements is carried out routinely every year by the Petalangan people. There are several reasons that explain why this ritual is still carried out by the Petalangan people and still survives even though they have been in contact with various other cultures (cultural contact), namely:

a. Inheritance of Tradition

The Petalangan community is very rich in traditions and rituals that are still maintained and passed down from generation to generation. Dugang said that the people of Petalangan have known the ritual of rejecting reinforcements since time immemorial and continue to carry it out as an effort to preserve the traditions of their ancestors (Rusyada, Gozin & Sutyono, 2020). Ninik mamak plays an important role in maintaining various traditions owned by the Petalangan community. For the Petalangan people, carrying out the ritual of rejecting reinforcements every year is considered an "obligation" that must be fulfilled, because something similar was carried out by their ancestors (Hasbullah et al., 2017).

b. Protection and Resisting Disasters

The implementation of the ritual of rejecting evil is also a fulfillment of the "promise or agreement" that their ancestors made with supernatural beings. The agreement contains mutual protection and not disturbing each other. As a realization of this promise, the Petalangan people make offerings in the form of buffalo, cow, or goat heads, and spirits guard or protect and do not disturb the community members (Gustiranto, 2017). People believe that this is violated (the ritual is not carried out), then there will be various kinds of interference from spirits (Hasbullah et al., 2017).

c. Building Community Social Solidarity

Implementation of the ritual of rejecting reinforcements requires the support and involvement of all community members. This activity cannot be carried out only by a group of community members, considering that this activity requires a lot of human power and also funds. Apart from that, this activity also requires various skills so that the expected goals can be achieved (Zackaria et al., 2019). Therefore, the activities carried out every year show a form of social solidarity among the Petalangan community. They donate whatever they can, both energy and money. This can be clearly seen from the large number of community members who take part in or attend these activities (Putri et al., 2020). They were there of their own awareness and not coercion, either from the ninik mamak or the organizing committee. The social solidarity shown by the Petalangan community can be called mechanical social solidarity. Durkheim, as quoted by Soerjono Soekanto, explained that mechanical solidarity is based on a "collective consciousness" (collective consciousness/conscience), which refers to "the totality of shared beliefs and sentiments that generally exist among members of the same society. It is a solidarity that depends on individuals who have the same characteristics and adhere to the same beliefs and normative patterns (Hasbullah et al., 2017).

CONCLUSIONS

Ritual Tradition of Rejecting Evil in the Kuantan Singingi Community, Riau Province. The Kuantan Singingi community, before knowing and embracing Islam, had beliefs that were animistic and dynamistic. The lives of the Kuantan Singingi people who live on the outskirts of the forest or in the forest make this belief deeply rooted in their lives. A life that depends on the natural environment and is unfamiliar with technology requires them to establish a harmonious relationship with the natural environment. In their view, the natural environment is inhabited or controlled by supernatural beings or spirits. The Value of Sacred Art in the Ritual Tradition of Rejecting Reinforcements in the Kuantan Singingi Community, Riau Province. As previously explained, the ritual of rejecting reinforcements is carried out routinely every year by the Petalangan community. There are several reasons that explain why this ritual is still carried out by the Petalangan community and still survives even though they have been in contact with various other cultures (culture contact), namely, Inheritance of Traditions, Protection and Resisting Disasters, Building Community Social Solidarity.

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