

GANDRUNG SEWU FESTIVALS: THE TRANSITION FROM RITUAL DANCE TO TOURISM DANCE IN BANYUWANGI INDONESIA

MAMIK SUHARTI

Faculty of Performing Arts, Institut Seni Indonesia Surakarta
Jl. Ki Hajar Dewantara No.19, Jebres, Surakarta, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia 57126
E-mail address: mamiksuharti1960@gmail.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8221-2864>

CAHYANI TUNGGAL SARI

Department of Management, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Semarang
Jl. Menoreh Utara Raya No.11, Gajahmungkur
Semarang, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia 50232
E-mail address: cahyani031084@gmail.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7616-8964>

MARYONO

Faculty of Performing Arts, Institut Seni Indonesia Surakarta
Jl. Ki Hajar Dewantara No.19, Jebres, Surakarta, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia 57126
E-mail address: maryonomaryono@gmail.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1226-4057>

ABSTRACT

Aim. Ritual ceremonies in East Java, Indonesia are mostly accompanied by dances. The existence of the seblang dance in Banyuwangi, East Java, provides an attraction for local residents and tourists. With more and more people being interested in seeing rituals because of the dance, an idea arose to bring the dance to be the main source of attracting tourists by removing the ritual element and providing tourism packaging for the seblang dance which was then brought into the realm of tourism in the form of gandrung sewu.

Method. This research is qualitative in nature, in which the required data can be in the form of written statements, whether contained in archives, books or documents with a focus on dance performances, charms in them, the possibility of therapeutic elements, and their relation to tourism development. The written data that was successfully collected was then confirmed with field data and information from relevant experts and experts.



Results. The Gandrung Sewu Festival is a form of imitation of the Seblang dance with changes such as: a colossal form of variation, the audience does not need to pay to see it, has an economic and social impact on the surrounding environment, does not have a magical element but is more of a show, and is an imitation of the seblang sacred dance.

Conclusion. The change in form and meaning of the Gandrung dance, which was originally a performance in a sacred ceremony, has become a tourism dance that meets the criteria for tourism art.

Keywords: Gandrung dance, Festival, Colossal, Tourism

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of gandrung dance was in 1985 when a 10-year-old child named Semi suffered from a very serious illness. Her parents have done various things, including going to a traditional healer to cure their daughter, however, these efforts were not successful. Once, the mother, Mak Midhah, vowed that if her daughter recovered, she would make her Seblang. However, if she does not recover, she would withdraw her words. After the vow was made, Semi was cured and at the same time made her a Seblang. Seblang is someone who dances because of a spirit that possesses him. The movement of the Seblang dance which is the movement of the spirit that possesses it is then referred to as gandrung where there are times when the Seblang dancer throws a shawl at the audience as an invitation to dance (Afcarina et al., 2020).

This history is the beginning of the Gandrung dance played by a woman. The tradition began with Gandrung being played by Semi, then other girls followed in Semi's footsteps. This is where the name Gandrung became famous. This art developed until it became the hallmark of the city of Banyuwangi. However, Javanese history and culture became the background for the growth of performing arts in Indonesia and even became part of social life (Sari & Brm, 2017).

At present the Gandrung Sewu Festival is an annual event in the city of Banyuwangi, which was previously initiated by the development of tourism in Banyuwangi Regency since 2003. The development of tourism was marked by the emergence of the Gandrung Dancer mascot which was later created by the Banyuwangi Gandrung Terracotta Park as a new icon of tourism which is quite instagenic in Banyuwangi (Triyono, 2022).

Previously, this dance was performed by men who dressed like women. The development of Islam in Blambangan is one of the factors why the Gandrung dance is no longer performed by men who dress like women. Gandrung Lanang is starting to disappear because of the Islamic philosophy that men dressed up like women is taboo. The Gandrung Lanang era also stopped after the last dancer, Marsan, died. Initially, Gandrung could only be danced specifically for the descendants of the previous dancers (Afcarina et al., 2020).

GANDRUNG DANCE: ITS MEANING AND CHARACTERISTICS

Starting in 2000, artists and humanists from the Blambangan Arts Council continued to show their enthusiasm. Gandrung, for the group is an art form that has historical values for the Osing community who constantly have to face pressure, both structurally and culturally. Gandrung is a way to show how the Osing people have culture. In contrast, gandrung dancers cannot escape negative images or prejudices from the wider community. In fact, some social groups, especially the santri, certainly perceive Gandrung dancers as women who are viewed negatively and receive inappropriate treatment, are marginalised, or are shunned and even experience discrimination in their daily lives (Afcarina et al., 2020).

The Gandrung dance is a typical Banyuwangi dance which has a special meaning or meaning when it is played. This dance is more than just a dance to celebrate the harvest. But also to express gratitude for the community for what they have obtained. The word Gandrung also means to be infatuated, or fascinated. This meaning is addressed only to Dewi Sri, Rice Goddess who has provided welfare for the community. That is why this dance is usually performed after a large harvest, as a sign of gratitude and joy to Dewi Sri. However, now the dance continues to develop and eventually becomes an art of entertainment for the local community (Suharti, 2012).

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DANCE CONSIST OF FASHION, HEADDRESS AND BATIK CLOTH.

The dress code for the Gandrung dancers shows that the dress is very different from the dress code for the Javanese area. This is because there is still Balinese influence that emerges, namely from the influence of the Blambangan Kingdom. The clothes on the dancers' bodies are clothes made of black velvet, then yellow gold ornaments appear as decorations. In addition, there are beads that look shiny with a shape resembling the neck of a bottle, wrapped around the neck to the chest. The shoulders, and half of the back are not covered. On the neck, the dancer's clothing has an *ilat-ilatan* covering the chest, its function is to decorate the upper part. While the sleeves are decorated with one shoulder strap, and on the waist there is a belt and a colourful cloth decoration. All parts of the decoration are also equipped with a scarf on the shoulder. The dancer's head also has a crown design which is usually called *omprok* made from buffalo skin which has been cleaned with gold and red ornaments. There is an ornament of the Antasena character who has a giant head but a snake-shaped body that covers all the hair of the gandrung dancer (Suharti, 2012).

The function of the silver ornament is to give an oval impression on the dancer's face. There is also an additional floral ornament at the top which is named *cundhuk mentul* which is also added incense to create a magical impression. The gandrung dancers wear batik cloth of various patterns.

The most popular and very distinctive pattern is the elephant patterned batik, plant patterns along with elephant trunk accents on a white cloth are a hallmark of Banyuwangi (Suharti, 2012).

GANDRUNG SEWU FESTIVAL

This festival has always been there, running regularly every year for the past nine years, starting from 2012. In fact, the festival has also become a favourite show for national and foreign tourists. The typical Banyuwangi Gandrung dance has also become part of Indonesian Cultural Heritage. Every time it is held, the Gandrung Sewu festival presents a different theme. Generally, these cultural arts performances are open with the presence of thousands of Gandrung Sewu dancers on the shores of the Bali Strait (Dewi et al., 2019) (Figure 1).

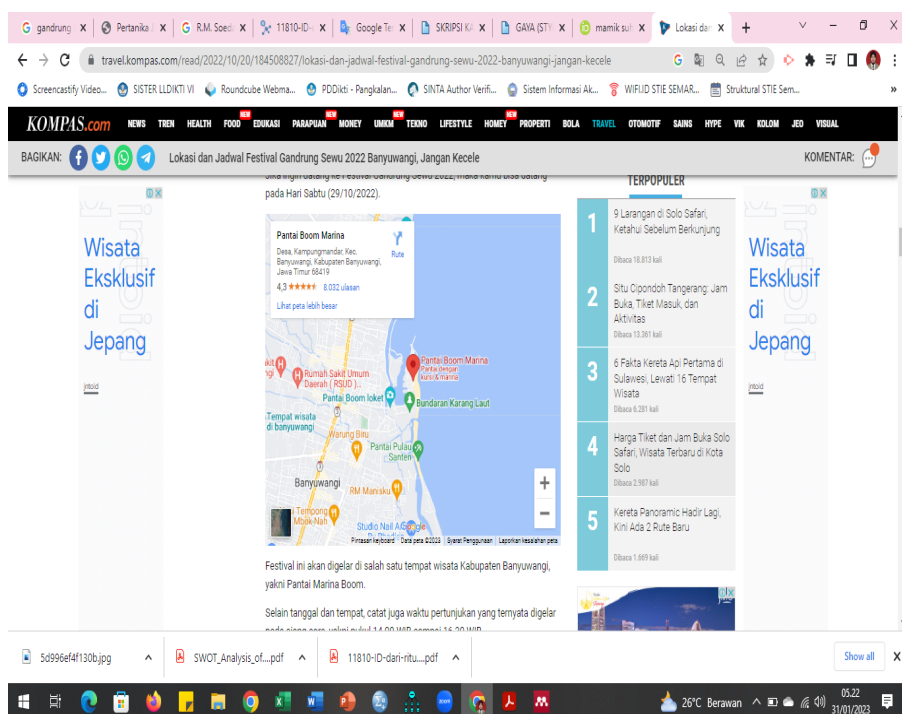


Figure 1

Location of Gandrung Sewu Festival on the shores of the Bali Strait at Marina Boom Beach

Source: Marina Boom Beach (Google Maps, 2023)

THE THEMES THAT ARE USED BY GANDRUNG SEWU FESTIVAL

Paju Gandrung

The theme is taken from one act, Paju Gandrung. The dancers invite the leaders to dance together, by throwing a shawl at the leaders and draping it using a shawl to dance together. There is also the All-night Gandrung round, Paju Gandrung that can be played as a way of welcoming guests (Dewi et al., 2019).

Seblang Subuh

Taken from a Gandrung round all night, is the closing dance in the Gandrung Terop show. The dance functions as an invitation to wake up after the party, so that one must remember to return to work, children, wife, as well as a deep philosophy to invite one back to God Almighty (Suharti, 2012).

Padha Nonton

Tells the story after a year of war between the Blambangan people and the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* [Dutch East India Company (VOC)] in Songgon. The VOC then took revenge by attacking Fort Bayu directly. The unequal power pushed the Bayu people into a corner, but they continued to fight so that many people were caught. The cruel VOC soldiers caused many people to lose their lives sadistically, including throwing them into the ocean alive while tied with ballast. This incident became the reason for the emergence of Syair Padha Nonton, a group of people singing to the accompaniment of a wasp and eventually being named the Gandrung Dance Art (Yoniardini, 2020).

Seblang Lukinto

Tells how the people of Blambangan were able to fight against the Dutch colonialists in 1776-1810. This is a continuation of the Podho Nonton theme, to describe the rise of the remaining Rempeg Jogopati warriors (Dewi et al., 2019).

Kembang Pete

Taken from various verses in Seblang Lukinto, tells how the struggle of the Blambangan people uses cultural arts including barong, gandrung, and others (Suharti, 2012).

Layar Kumendhung

A fragment of the story of Layar Kumendung, which tells the story of the end of the struggle of the First Regent of Banyuwangi, Mas Alit, who died on the voyage, it is displayed by around 60 fragment players. Only after that, thousands of Gandrung dancers appeared as the background of the

story. The events of the war left many soldiers dead defending Mas Alit. It left many children orphaned and sad. It was then that several senior Gandrung dancers tried to cheer them up by practicing the Gandrung dance of the Blambangan orphan warriors (Dewi et al., 2019).

Panji-Panji Sunangkoro

This theme tells the story of the resistance of the hero Rempeg Jogopati who continues to fight against the Dutch. They received tacit support from the first Banyuwangi Regent, Mas Alit. The soldiers who were ready to fight at sea with Panji Sunangkoro, as soon as they saw a VOC ship passing by, they immediately attacked the ship without knowing that Mas Alit was on board (Suharti, 2012).

TRANSITION FROM RITUAL DANCE TO TOURISM DANCE

Based on the background of the description above, the main problem that will be discussed in this paper is why the Gandrung at the Gandrung Sewu Festival was made as a tourist attraction. Through this paper, we explain what kinds of transitions from the Gandrung dance became a tourist attraction in Banyuwangi. Many factors influence the transition such as economics, social and politics (Marx, 2017). With Gandrung as a moral object and tourist attraction as a formal object that will be discussed using the Soedarsono (1999) tourism theory that the characteristics of the art travel package is imitation of the original, packaging in a brief and short manner, attractive or entertaining, leaving out sacred values, and at a cheap price for the tourists (Sari & Subagyo, 2020; Wulan & Handayaningrum, 2020).

Copy of the original

The Gandrung Sewu dance does not replace the existence of the seblang ritual dance. Gandrung Sewu dance takes the dance performance side of the seblang ritual to attract local, national and foreign tourists. The form of performance in Gandrung Sewu is different from the original dance. In motion, the dance is still the same, but in terms of the number of dancers, it has changed, that is, what was originally danced by one person in the seblang dance, in the Gandrung Sewu show, thousands of dancers dance. The ages of the dancers also vary, unlike seblang dancers who are only danced by women who are old or young who are the descendants of seblang dancers. Currently, the Government of Banyuwangi Regency requires each student from elementary to high school to take part in extra-curricular arts in Banyuwangi. One of these obligations is learning the Jejer dance which is part of the Gandrung Banyuwangi performance. So, the dancers in the Gandrung Sewu festival range from small children to adults (Santiko, 2021).

Full of Variations

The Gandrung Sewu Festival is greatly expanded by involving 1000 dancers as the meaning of the word *sewu* means a thousand or thousands. In addition to gandrung performances, festivals are also packed with certain themes that change every year so that there are variations in the performances. Gandrung dancers are also equipped with additional props such as socks and fans in the show (Figure 2). Gandrung dancers only use one fan for certain parts, especially during the seblang dawn performance.

The Gandrung dance is also inseparable from the characteristics of the accompanying music. Gandrung Banyuwangi is always held with one gong or kempul, one triangle or kluncing, one or two violins, a pair of kethuk, as well as two kendhangs. Meanwhile, sometimes the show is interspersed with Balinese saron, tambourine, angklung for creative forms accompanied by electone. The element of creativity is an element that gives colour to the performing arts of tourism (Cole & Derke, 2022).



Figure 2

Gandrung Sewu dancers equipped with traditional fan properties

Note. [Untitled photograph of Gandrung Sewu Dance equipped with traditional fan properties]. (n.d.). <https://www.banyuwangitourism.com/festival/internasional-gandrung-sewu>

Not Sacred

In the process of performing the Gandrung Sewu Festival does not involve a ceremony with magical elements as in the seblang dance. Shows currently provide more elements of promotion and tourism. Gandrung dance has succeeded in becoming the official tourism mascot of Banyuwangi. The

2022 *Karisma Event Nusantara* (KEN) program was officially launched by the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno as an effort to stimulate activity in the region and Gandrung Sewu Banyuwangi is one of the 2022 KEN agendas (Kemenparekraf/Baparekraf RI, 2023).

The Gandrung Sewu Festival has always been successful in attracting the business sector, including accommodation. Starting from hotels, flights, local transportation, as well as culinary outlets, they are always in demand ahead of the Gandrung Sewu festival. This festival has succeeded in being a blessing for batik cloth craftsmen and the MSME scale industry. Fabrics and fans for dancing were ordered from UMKM Batik. Thus, the existence of this cultural performance is very useful because it has an economic impact on society. As for the dancers, they are Banyuwangi children, many of whom have migrated, then have to return to their hometowns for the festival. Thus the economic and social aspects in the Gandrung Sewu show are more visible than the sacred aspects (Yoniardini, 2020).

Low Cost For Tourists

The Gandrung Sewu Festival is an art performance that audiences can enjoy free of charge. So that it can attract local, national and foreign tourists to visit Banyuwangi both to see performances and as a venue for photography. Spectators will benefit from the free Gandrung Sewu festival, because spectators from out of town only need to consider travel expenses and receive tourism benefits (Narawati, 2004).



Figure 3.

Gandrung Sewu Festival consists of thousands dancers

Note. [Untitled photograph of *Gandrung Sewu* Dance at Banyuwangi]. (n.d.). <https://banyuwangikab.go.id/berita/ingin-melihat-ribuan-gandrung-menari-di-pantai-jangan-lewatkan-gandrung-sewu-pekan-depan>

CONCLUSION

Gandrung dance is a typical Banyuwangi dance to show the existence of the local Banyuwangi community or what is known as the Osing tribe. The Gandrung Sewu Festival is able to bring in all Banyuwangi residents in various places in the archipelago. Thus, the festival is a consolidation event, a symbol of synergy and mutual cooperation. From a social aspect, the Gandrung Sewu Festival is able to provide a spirit of mutual cooperation for the people of Banyuwangi. The change in form and meaning of the Gandrung dance, which was originally a performance in a sacred ceremony, has become a tourism dance that meets the criteria for tourism art, namely a colossal form of variation, the audience does not have to pay to see it, has an economic and social impact on the surrounding environment, does not have a magical element but is more in performances only, and is an imitation of the sacred seblang dance.

REFERENCES

- [1] Afcarina, G. I. R., Puji, R. P. N., & Hartanto, W. (2020). Sejarah perkembangan Gandrung di Bumi Blambangan dalam perspektif budaya Masyarakat Banyuwangi [History of infatuated development on Blambangan Earth in the cultural perspective of Banyuwangi society]. *Santhet: Jurnal Sejarah, Pendidikan Dan Humaniora*, 4(2), 55-61. <https://doi.org/10.36526/santhet.v4i2.930>.
- [2] Banyuwangi Government. (2019). *Ingin melihat ribuan Gandrung Menari di Pantai, jangan lewatkan Gandrung Sewu pekan depan* [Want to see thousands of Gandrung dancing on the beach, don't miss Gandrung Sewu next week]. BeritaBwi, Banyuwangi Government. <https://banyuwangikab.go.id/berita/ingin-melihat-ribuan-gandrung-menari-di-pantai-jangan-lewatkan-gandrung-sewu-pekan-depan>.
- [3] Banyuwangi Tourism. (n.d.). *Internasional Gandrung Sewu*. <https://www.banyuwangitourism.com/festival/internasional-gandrung-sewu>.
- [4] Cole, V. R., & Derke, R. W. (2022). Arts management, social identity, and leadership: organisational resiliency in an arts organisation during COVID-19. *American Journal of Arts Management*, 11.
- [5] Dewi, A. T., Sumarjono, & Sugiyanto. (2019). Gandrung Sewu Festival in Banyuwangi from 2012 to 2018. *Jurnal Historica*, 3(1), 90-103.
- [6] Kemenparekraf/Baparekraf RI. (2023). *110 Karisma Event Nusantara*. Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif, Badan Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif, Republic Indonesia. <https://kemenparekraf.go.id/rumah-difabel/110-karisma-event-nusantara-2023>.
- [7] Marx, M. (2017). "I am because we are" dancing for social change! *Educational Research for Social Change*, 6(1), 56-71. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2221-4070/2017/v6i1a5>.
- [8] Narawati, T. (2004). Dari Ritual Ke Panggung Pertunjukan Perkembangan Tari Dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat. [From Rituals to Stage Performances of Dance Development in Community Life]. *Humaniora*, 16(3), 332-343.
- [9] Santiko, P. B. (2021). *Seni Untuk Pariwisata [Art For Tourism]* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Universitas Hasanudin.
- [10] Sari, C. T., & Brm, S. T. (2017). Learning organisation of Javanese culture: A case study of Kasunanan Palace Museum in Surakarta. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 25, 115-120.
- [11] Sari, C. T., & Subagyo, H. (2020). SWOT analysis of art performance as city promotional strategy in Yogyakarta. *Journal of Education Culture and Society*, 11(1), 370-378. <https://doi.org/10.15503/jecs2020.1.370.378>.

- [12] Soedarsono. (1999). *Seni Pertunjukan Indonesia dan Pariwisata*. [Indonesian Performing Arts and Tourism] Masyarakat Seni Pertunjukan Indonesia.
- [13] Suharti, M. (2012). Gandrung Dance as Banyuwangi' s favorite tourism object. *HARMONIA - Jurnal Pengetahuan Dan Pemikiran Seni*, 12(1).
- [14] Triyono, J. (2022). Penyelenggaraan Festival Gandrung Sewu dan pengelolaan Taman Gandrung Terakota Banyuwangi sebagai wisata unggulan [Organizing the Gandrung Sewu Festival and management of the Banyuwangi Terracotta Gandrung Park as featured tourism]. *Jurnal Sosial Ekonomi dan Humaniora*, 8(4), 557-564. <https://doi.org/10.29303/jseh.v8i4.179>.
- [15] Wulan, P., & Handayani, W. (2020). Pesona Tari sebagai Aset Pariwisata Budaya Indonesia. [Enchantment of Dance as an Indonesian Cultural Tourism Asset]. *Jurnal Sosial & Budaya Syar-i*. 7(4), 283-298.
- [16] Yoniardini, N. B. (2020). Gandrung at Gandrung Sewu Festival as a tourist attraction in Banyuwangi District. *Jurnal Terob*, 10(2), 1-15. <https://www.jurnalterob.stkw-surabaya.ac.id/index.php/TEROB/article/view/141/124>.