
**Massage of Da'wah and The Existence of Lengger Dance Culture in
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Abstract

The Lengger dance is a traditional performing art originating from Wonosobo, Central Java. Historically, this dance was performed by a male dancer using a mask, but over time it shifted to being performed by two female dancers with distinctive costumes and makeup. This research examines the da'wah messages and cultural existence embedded in the Lengger dance, aiming to identify the religious values communicated through the performance and to understand how the dance has maintained its continuity from the past to the present. Using a qualitative approach with field study methods, the study reveals that the Lengger dance is historically linked to Sunan Kalijaga, who used the mask as a medium to convey Islamic moral teachings while concealing his identity. The dance contains messages encouraging humans to remember God in all life situations. Through the lens of Islamic communication, particularly cultural da'wah, the Lengger dance functions as a non-verbal medium that integrates symbolic movements, narrative sequences, and communal rituals. Although currently showcased in celebrations, thanksgiving events, village traditions, welcoming ceremonies, and rituals during the month of Suro, the Lengger dance continues to preserve ethical and spiritual values. The findings illustrate how traditional arts can sustain religious communication and remain relevant across generations.

Keywords: Lengger Dance, Da'wah, Culture, Wonosobo**INTRODUCTION**

Culture is the development of a complex of cultivation, meaning the power of reason. The concept of culture means the totality of human ideas, concepts, and works that must be accustomed to learning, as well as the totality of the results of their cultivation and work. Therefore, the word "culture" in English comes from the Latin word *colere*, which means to cultivate, work, especially to cultivate land or to farm. From this word, the meaning of culture is taken, namely all human efforts and endeavors to change nature. Culture is a unified system of values and a series of basic principles that form a set of ideas that serve as guidelines for society in determining the orientation of their behavior. Koentjaraningrat stated that culture is a type of belief that lies within the framework of a belief system. He emphasized that culture functions as a standard and

foundation in the formation of conflict and decision-making, and plays a role as a basic motivation for self-adjustment and self-realization (Abdul Wahab Syakhrani, 2022).

Culture is the totality of human works, feelings and creations which encompass various complex aspects of life, including systems of knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, customary law, as well as all the abilities and habits acquired by humans as part of a social community (Syakhrani & Kamil, 2022). Each region has its own unique culture and traditions, one of which is the Lengger dance from Wonosobo. This dance, a cultural symbol of Wonosobo in Central Java, is known for its graceful movements and vibrant costumes. Beyond its aesthetic appeal, Lengger also functions as a medium of Islamic communication. Within the framework of cultural da'wah, traditional arts like Lengger convey Islamic values through various elements of performance.

The development of da'wah in the Indonesian archipelago is closely tied to the intellectual and cultural contributions of the ulama, who disseminated Islamic teachings through diverse scholarly approaches and communication strategies. Each scholar adapted their methods to the social context, traditions, and cultural tendencies of the communities they engaged with. Among these figures, Sunan Kalijaga stands out as a prominent example of a preacher who effectively integrated Islamic da'wah with local arts and cultural expressions. By utilizing media such as wayang, traditional songs, and folk performances, he conveyed Islamic values in forms that were persuasive, culturally resonant, and non-confrontational. This culturally grounded approach laid an important foundation for later models of cultural da'wah, including those reflected in traditional performing arts such as the Lengger dance (Maulana, 2021).

First, the symbolic function is reflected in the use of masks and specific movements that carry messages of humility, self-control, and the reminder to always remember God. Second, the ritual function is evident when Lengger is performed during thanksgiving celebrations, village slametan, or ceremonies in the month of Suro, emphasizing religious values such as gratitude and prayers for safety. Third, the educational function emerges through stories, narratives, or song excerpts accompanying the dance, which communicate moral teachings about social ethics, cooperation, and living in accordance with Islamic principles. Fourth, the social-communal function is realized through community involvement in the preparation and performance of the dance, strengthening

solidarity, social cohesion, and collective participation. The Lengger dance is accompanied by gamelan music, often accompanied by papeling, a form of advice given before the performance begins. Through this dance, the people of Wonosobo maintain and celebrate their cultural identity, making it an essential part of the region's social and ritual life.

Lengger dance is a traditional art form that holds noble values and culture that exist in the community. Lengger dance is performed by two women, one of whom wears a mask. Initially, this dance was danced by the kakung (male parent), but over time there has been a shift to being danced by women, and sometimes by pairs of women and men. Lengger dance is usually performed at celebrations, thanksgiving, earth almsgiving, village slametan, welcoming dances, and even rituals during the month of Suro. Lengger dance performances involve the performers, audience, movements, accompaniment, makeup and costume, performance venue, sound system, lighting, and props (Maro'atussofa & Kusumastuti, 2019).

The Lengger Punjen Dance is a traditional folk dance form typically performed by male and female dancers. The uniqueness of this dance lies in the moment when the male dancer enters a trance-like state, while the female dancer stands upright on his shoulders, dancing with props such as dolls and umbrellas. This uniqueness sets the Lengger Punjen Dance apart from other traditional dances, as not all dancers possess the ability to perform these movements. Therefore, this dance demands a high level of skill, balance, and experience from the dancers (Tarangana, 2021).

Wonosobo is a traditional city located in eastern Indonesia and is characterized by a unique blend of culture, climate, and local crafts. Geographically and culturally, Wonosobo is known for its stunning natural landscape, marked by mountains, lakes, temples, and ancient sites that represent the continuity of social and cultural activities since ancient times. The city is uniquely nicknamed "mountain city," because from various angles, the panoramic views of the mountains surrounding the city are a dominant element that shapes Wonosobo's geographical and cultural identity (A. Mulyana & Dwiningrum, 2024).

Wonosobo Regency is a regency in Central Java located in a mountainous area with an altitude of 2,250 meters above sea level. Wonosobo Regency has also held various

activities to promote and develop Lengger Dance, one of which is through the Learning Together with Wonosobo Lengger Arts Maestro program, which featured two dance maestros, namely Sukarsih and Sri Winarti. This program aims to teach participants about Lengger and expand the development of this art. Overall, the Wonosobo Lengger Dance has become an integral part of the culture and arts of the Wonosobo region, and has deep meaning and a rich history.

Islam entered Indonesia in various ways, one of which was through the culture brought by Sunan Kalijaga. In the past, Sunan Kalijaga performed wayang (shadow puppets), attracting the public to his preaching (Maulidya, 2022). Previous studies on Islamic cultural transmission in Java have predominantly focused on the role of Sunan Kalijaga in spreading Islam through wayang performances. While these studies provide valuable insights into the use of theatrical arts as a medium of da'wah, they have largely overlooked other forms of traditional performing arts, such as dance, as instruments of religious communication. This study addresses this gap by examining the historical origins of the Lengger dance in Wonosobo, revealing that Sunan Kalijaga also utilized this art form to convey Islamic teachings. By documenting how Lengger functioned as a medium of da'wah alongside its cultural and social roles, this research extends the scholarly understanding of cultural da'wah and demonstrates that traditional dances, like wayang, served as effective channels for religious transmission in local communities (Hidayatullah, 2022).

Javanese society is more receptive to preaching that does not involve violence or coercion. This is because such methods and approaches can align religious teachings with local traditions. Saints, such as Sunan Kalijaga and Sunan Bonang, used traditional art, music, and dance as media to convey religious messages. This method not only made preaching easier to accept and understand, but also enriched Javanese culture itself with Islamic values. By integrating cultural elements already familiar to the community, preaching becomes more effective and can reach various levels of society without creating resistance to drastic cultural change.

Over time, the Lengger dance has undergone continuous changes, including dance movements, costumes, musical accompaniment, and even the dancers themselves. However, it maintains the Islamic teachings that are an integral part of the dance.

Modernization, through the addition of contemporary elements and the use of technology, has further enhanced the Lengger dance, making it more dynamic and appealing to the younger generation. Nevertheless, the moral messages and religious values imbued within the dance remain intact, enabling it to serve not only as entertainment but also as a means of Islamic teaching. In this way, the Lengger dance remains relevant and acceptable to modern society without losing its cultural and spiritual roots.

The identities of Lengger dancers have undergone complex changes in line with social and cultural developments. Historically, Lengger dance has often been associated with fluid gender expression, with male dancers wearing women's costumes and displaying soft, graceful movements. However, over time, this representation has begun to receive attention and criticism from some groups in society who consider the practice inconsistent with prevailing social norms. This situation has prompted artists to undertake a process of identity negotiation, namely adapting to social demands in order to maintain public acceptance without losing the aesthetic value and cultural essence contained within Lengger art itself (Rohmatu Aeni, 2025).

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is a qualitative method with a field approach. Field research is the type of research used in this study. The purpose of field studies is to understand natural phenomena occurring in a specific environment. Data for this study were collected in the field by closely monitoring various events and occurrences (D. Mulyana, 2001).

The method used in this research is qualitative, employing a field-based approach. Field research was conducted to understand natural phenomena occurring within the specific context of Wonosobo and the practice of the Lengger dance. Purposive sampling was applied to select key informants, including traditional dancers, community leaders, and cultural experts, who possess in-depth knowledge about the history and function of Lengger as a medium of da'wah. Purposive sampling is a technique in which the researcher deliberately selects informants or cases considered to have specific knowledge, experience, or characteristics relevant to the research focus. This approach allows the researcher to obtain in-depth and contextual data from sources that are most

representative for addressing the research questions. In this research, purposive sampling was employed to select key informants, including a highly experienced Lengger dancer and a local elder who is also a gamelan player, both of whom possess in-depth knowledge of the historical and cultural aspects of the Lengger performance.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation of performances. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing patterns, recurring themes, and cultural meanings related to Lengger and its role in Islamic communication to be systematically identified and interpreted. Semi-structured interviews are a data collection method in which the researcher uses a set of main questions as a guide but allows flexibility for informants to elaborate their answers freely. This approach enables the researcher to explore information in depth while capturing unique nuances and perspectives from the informants' experiences. In this research, interviews were conducted with Lengger dancers, local community leaders, and gamelan players. During the interviews, additional unstructured questions emerged, which were not initially planned but remained relevant to the primary research questions.

In this study, data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews involve direct communication with informants to gather detailed information about their experiences, perceptions, and knowledge relevant to the research focus. Observation allows the researcher to systematically watch and record behaviors, interactions, and events in their natural setting, providing contextual understanding of cultural practices. Documentation refers to the collection and analysis of existing records, written materials, photographs, or audiovisual media, which serve as supplementary evidence to validate and enrich the findings obtained from interviews and observations. Together, these methods provide a comprehensive approach to capturing both explicit and implicit aspects of the Lengger dance as a medium of Islamic communication. This research took place in Lamuk and Wringinanom hamlets, Wonosobo.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**1. The Message of Da'wah in the Lengger Dance**

Dakwah is an activity carried out consciously by an individual or a group of Muslims to invite or call others to live according to the teachings of Islam, namely to perform all of Allah's commands and avoid all of His prohibitions, as stated in the Qur'an and Hadith, in order to attain happiness in both this world and the hereafter (Ahmad & Dalimunthe, 2023). Dakwah generally has several key elements: (1) Da'i, the individual or group delivering Islamic teachings; (2) Mad'u, the target audience or recipients of the da'wah; (3) The content of da'wah, which includes moral messages, religious teachings, and Islamic values; and (4) The method or medium of delivery, which refers to the approach or channel used to convey the message effectively (Muhid Abdul, 2022).

In the context of the Lengger dance in Wonosobo, these elements are clearly reflected. The da'i are represented by the Lengger dancers and local cultural figures who master the dance tradition and its embedded moral values. The mad'u are the people of Wonosobo who watch and engage with the performances, whether during ritual ceremonies or cultural celebrations. The content of da'wah is conveyed through movements, symbols, narratives, and gamelan music that communicate ethical teachings, the reminder to remember God, and social and spiritual values. The method or medium is manifested in the Lengger performance itself, which combines elements of entertainment and ritual, allowing the da'wah message to be delivered naturally, subtly, and contextually. Thus, the Lengger dance functions not only as a cultural performance but also as an effective medium of da'wah within the framework of Islamic communication.

The Lengger dance comes from two words, namely "ileng" and "ngger" or "ilengo ngger" which means "remember, son." Lengger also means "ayo padha ileng marang Pangeran ngger," which means "let's remember God, son." Some also interpret lengger as "lenggang commotion." So if there are many people it causes a commotion, then people will watch. Others say that lengger comes from the word langgar which means prayer room. So it's like "ayo padha watch lengger." After watching lengger, they will go to the prayer room or prayer room to pray. According to the story told, before there was a

langgar, there was already lengger. So that's why it is called a medium of da'wah (Interview with Mr. Sumadi, an elder of Lamuk Hamlet).

This dance was pioneered in Giyanti Hamlet by an arts figure from Kecis Village, Selomerto District, Wonosobo Regency, namely Mr. Gondowinangun, around 1910. Lengger dance is a legacy of ancestors from this area (Puspitawati & Sabardila, 2021). Then, in the 1960s, this dance was further developed by Ki Hadi Soewarno. Lengger is a traditional folk dance performed by two people, a man and a woman; the man wears a mask while the woman wears traditional clothing. They dance for 10 minutes in each act, accompanied by music from the gambang, saron, kendang, gong, and other instruments. Lengger dance is usually performed in ritual ceremonies such as village cleaning, hair cleansing rituals, welcoming wedding guests, circumcisions, and welcoming the Eid al-Fitr holiday (Setyawati, 2021).

The Lengger dance has existed for a long time, but was developed by the late Mbah Hadi Suarno Giyanti in the 1950s. Mbah Hadi said that lengger comes from the word "ilengo ngger" which means "remember, son." So, the living must always remember what is above, and must remember death. The meaning of the dance, the lengger dance has many versions of the title. There are gundangkeli, sontoloyo, jagung mas gareng, etc. The meanings also vary. Before the performance begins, there is a babatano, like an opening. The movements include prayer movements that mean asking for salvation from God (Interview with Mrs. Sri Winanti, second-generation lengger dance maestro).

Initially, the lengger dance had two dancers, and it still does today. In the past, the lengger dancers were kakung (a female dancer) with kakung (a female dancer), but they were made up like women. However, in the early years, to boost the lengger art form and make it more interesting, because watching men dance with men was less interesting, so it was replaced by women. The first female lengger dancer was Mak Sukarsih, then the male lengger dancer who was originally a dancer now switched to being a pengrawit (a singer). Currently, Mak Sukarsih has earned the nickname "The Maestro Lengger." However, due to her age, now it is succeeded by Sri Winanti, the second generation lengger maestro after Mak Sukarsih.

According to Mr. Sumadi, the lengger dance performance is accompanied by gamelan, played by 10 musicians. In Wonosobo, there are also two versions of lengger:

the jantinan version and the jambunan version. The difference lies in the singing. The jantinan version uses a female singer (sinden), while the jambunan version uses a gerongan or brawukan, where all members gather to sing together. The jantinan version is called kunangan, while the kambunan version is called bendenan. The lengger dance also has many versions of titles. There are gundangkeli, sontoloyo, jagung mas gareng, and others, each with its own meaning. The sinden or waranggono sings the parikan in the jantinan gagrag, while the jambunan is performed by wiraswara using brawukan or celukan to convey the parikan (Alaudin, 2023). The underlying message conveyed through the Lengger dance includes encouragement to perform the five daily prayers, maintain social bonds (silaturahmi), and preserve local cultural traditions. Through its movements, musical accompaniment, and performance context, Lengger communicates these moral and spiritual values in a way that is accessible and engaging for the community. Rather than being a mere entertainment, the dance functions as a medium for instilling religious practices, fostering social cohesion, and reinforcing cultural identity among the people of Wonosobo.

In this context, the Lengger dance serves as a cultural da'wah medium in Islamic communication, which not only provides entertainment and preserves local culture but also conveys moral messages, religious teachings, and social values through its symbols, movements, music, and ritual performance. Thus, the dance functions as an effective non-verbal communication tool, delivering Islamic values subtly, contextually, and accessibly to the Wonosobo community.

Every traditional dance performed contains meaning or values, such as: the values of mutual cooperation, loyalty, discipline, power, religiosity, happiness, and courage (Ida Kusumawardani, 2013). The impact of the Lengger dance on the Wonosobo community can be observed in several aspects. First, the dance encourages the community to maintain social bonds, as performances are usually held during communal events, village celebrations, or rituals that involve various members of society. Second, it allows the community to enjoy and preserve local traditions, ensuring that cultural heritage remains alive and is passed down to future generations. Third, the Lengger dance functions as a cultural da'wah medium, enabling the community to internalize moral values and religious teachings embedded in the performance, such as performing prayers, upholding

social ethics, and remembering God. Thus, Lengger performances not only strengthen social cohesion and cultural identity but also instill religious practices in daily life.

This dance contains a moral message that encourages each individual to always call for goodness, defend the truth, and stay away from all forms of evil (Setyawati, 2021). In an interview with one of the dancers, the lengger dance contains elements of da'wah performed by Sunan Kalijaga, according to Mrs. Sri Winanti, in the past Sunan Kalijaga wandered. In the middle of the crowd there were dancers, then Sunan Kalijaga joined in dancing but he wore a mask to cover himself. When he heard the call to prayer, Sunan Kalijaga ordered all the dancers to stop and pray in the langgar or prayer room. So in the lengger dance using the mask reflects Sunan Kalijaga at that time.

Besides the masks, the Islamic element of the Lengger dance lies in its musical accompaniment, which includes prayers, making it more Islamic. The movements of the Lengger dance contain Islamic meaning, for example, the gesture of worship, the hands as if in prayer. There is a movement to wash the ears, which signifies ablution. While the layperson may simply watch, it actually contains elements of Islamic teaching. The Lengger dance also includes the Gambyong dance, which is called *kembangan* (a dance development) (Interview with Zumaidi, an arts activist in Lamuk Hamlet).

Before the event begins, the Lengger Lanang dancers perform offerings. The offerings in the Lengger dance represent local wisdom that has been passed down through generations; the dancers now simply carry on. The offerings in the Lengger dance are not intended to be idolatrous; they still believe in God. The offerings are merely complementary and symbolic (Nurfaiza, 2023). It's not meant to summon demons. The offerings include various types of flowers, including red and white roses, which symbolize life: that life has joy, sorrow, happiness, and sadness, so they always come in pairs (Interview with Mrs. Sri Winanti).

The relationship between the practice of the Lengger dance and the Wonosobo community runs harmoniously, as the majority of the local population adheres to Islam. Their religious beliefs do not conflict with the traditions that have been passed down through generations; instead, they coexist in a balanced and harmonious manner. This demonstrates that the people of Wonosobo are able to maintain a balance between religious identity and local culture, allowing traditional values, such as the Lengger

performance, to be preserved while remaining aligned with Islamic teachings. This condition reinforces the role of the Lengger dance as a cultural da'wah medium that is widely accepted without causing social friction.

Like most dances, the Lengger dance also features a particularly captivating moment: possession. In the Lengger dance, dancers often experience possession, believed to be possessed by ancestral spirits. This possession is typically characterized by scenes of trance, such as eating shards of glass, razor blades, or nails, although upon awakening, the dancers feel no pain at all. Possession can also occur when dancers follow the fast rhythm of the gamelan (H Kistanto, 2017). Like many other traditional dances, the Lengger dance also presents moments that are considered compelling and symbolically rich, particularly the trance phenomenon, which some community members interpret as a form of ancestral spirit possession. During a Lengger performance, dancers may exhibit unusual behaviors—such as chewing shards of glass—yet experience no pain once they regain consciousness. Trance states also frequently emerge when dancers follow the increasingly rapid rhythm of the gamelan.

However, from an Islamic perspective, this phenomenon requires careful interpretation in accordance with the principle of Qur'an 17:36 (Al-Isrā'), which urges believers not to follow or affirm claims without clear knowledge. Thus, the notion of "ancestral spirit possession" in the Lengger dance is better understood as a cultural expression, a psychological state, or a musical-ritual response rather than a theological assertion. This approach aligns with Islamic ethical teachings that call for caution when encountering supernatural interpretations while still honoring local wisdom and cultural heritage.

From another Islamic perspective, especially within the framework of *hifz al-'aql* (the protection of intellect), such trance phenomena should be approached critically and ethically. Islamic scholars emphasize that any cultural expression must not compromise one's rational faculties, dignity, or belief system. Hence, practices associated with trance are better viewed as psychological or performative states shaped by collective expectation, ritual immersion, and musical stimulation, rather than as literal interactions with metaphysical entities.

This understanding resonates with the principle of tasharruf al-‘ādāt, where local customs may be embraced as long as they do not contradict core Islamic teachings. Many Nusantara scholars have long adopted this approach, acknowledging that cultural performances like the Lengger dance hold symbolic meaning, communal function, and aesthetic value without requiring doctrinal validation of supernatural claims. Thus, Islamic ethics allows the community to appreciate the Lengger tradition as part of their cultural heritage while maintaining theological clarity and safeguarding essential principles of faith.

Not only dancers can be possessed; audience members can also become possessed due to excessive concentration and enjoyment of the performance. If someone in the audience becomes possessed, they will be awakened by someone else. However, if the possessed person is a dancer or the musician, a special person is assigned to awaken them.

Before the Lengger dance begins, there is usually a "pepeling" or "ileng-ileng" ritual, meaning a reminder. Before the Lengger Dance begins, a ritual known as pepeling is performed. This pepeling is a form of preparation and respect performed by the dancers and the ceremony leader to ask for protection and a smooth performance. During this procession, prayers are offered to ancestral spirits and the forces of nature, asking for the dance to proceed smoothly and to avoid any harm. The pepeling also serves as a reminder for the dancers to always maintain good manners and respect the values embodied in the dance.

The songs in the pepeling are sung together, and contain a kind of advice to remind you to pray. The lyrics of the pepeling are as follows:

Wis wancine, tansah dielingke. Wis wancine, podo ninda'ake. Azan wes kumandang. Wayahe sembahyang. Netepi wajib dhawuhe pangeran. Salat yekti cagak ing agomo. Limang wektu kudu tansah dijogo. Kanthi istiqomah. Lan sing tumakninah. Luwih sampurno.. yen berjamaah. Subuh, Luhur, lan Ashar. Salat sayekti ngadohke tindak mungkur. Maghrib lan Isyah' jangkepe. Prayogane ditambah salat sunate. Jo sembrono iku perintah agomo. Neglingono neng ndonya mung sedelo. Sabar lan tawakal.. pasrah sing kuoso. Yen kepengin mbesok munggah suargo

The meaning of this reminder is to explain that it's time to remind, time to act. The call to prayer has sounded, and it's time to pray to fulfill God's obligation. Prayer is a pillar of religion; it must be observed consistently and calmly throughout its five daily

routines. Prayer is more complete when performed in congregation. Fajr, Dhuhr, and Asr prayers serve to prevent evil. Maghrib and Isha prayers complete the ritual. It would be even better if they were supplemented with sunnah prayers. Don't ignore this religious command; remember that life on earth is short. Therefore, patience and trust in Allah are essential if you want to enter Paradise.

The song "*Pepeling*" also contains a message of Islamic propagation regarding the rules of prayer, based on verses from the Quran and Hadith. The song's lyrics convey that human life on earth is temporary, as the Javanese proverb says, "urip iku mampir ngombe." Therefore, whenever Allah calls us, whether we are ready or not, it will surely happen. The first deed to be accounted for is prayer. Therefore, we must fill this short life with good deeds so that they will be accepted by Allah. When the call to prayer sounds, a Muslim must immediately perform prayer to draw closer to Allah, strengthen his religion, and expiate past sins. Therefore, the five daily prayers must always be maintained and performed consistently and consistently. Prayer is best performed in congregation. Furthermore, prayer is also a form of worship that can prevent evil and wrongdoing. Allah has prepared rewards for both obedient servants and those who disobey His commands (Achsan, 2019).

Not all lengger dances are accompanied by pepeling; this is also adjusted to the time of day. If the time is close to prayer time, then usually only the final dance is performed without pepeling. Lengger dances are usually performed after prayer, for example, if they start at 3:30 PM, they finish at 6:00 PM, or before Maghrib. If they start at 9:00 PM, they finish at midnight. This is done to avoid disrupting prayer time. If it's prayer time, they should rest first.

Each hamlet's performance traditions vary. Some regularly hold performances every Friday Kliwon night, while others are more irregular. In Lamuk Hamlet, every Tuesday and Friday Kliwon night, elders perform a "send pray" (sentence ceremony). They offer prayers to their ancestors and honor objects such as masks, gamelan instruments, jaran (traditional musical instruments), and other items. They use perfumes and the scent of incense, which are used as a medium or instrument, represented by the elders.

Similarly, Giyanti Hamlet also has rituals. Every Friday Kliwon night, the hermitage holds a river bathing ritual to relieve irritation and restore aura. Usually, during the month of Suro, there is a Nyadran (a ritual bathing ritual) and a lengger graduation ceremony. Lengger dancers are encouraged to attend the graduation ceremony, which aims to educate them on the etiquette of lengger dancing and how to practice it in the past. There are also quarantines and white fasts. This allows the dancers to learn both the theory and practice of lengger dancing. (Interview with Mrs. Sri Winanti).

2. The Existence of Lengger Dance from Past to Present

Lengger dance is usually performed at celebrations, village thanksgivings, 17th August celebrations, halal bihalal (traditional gatherings), and various other events. Lengger dance is also frequently performed outside Wonosobo, typically in the areas of Temanggung, Bandar, Banyumas, and Banjarnegara. During village celebrations or hamlet slametans, the week is filled with diverse artistic performances, including wayang (wayang) and tayub (traditional dance), jaranan (traditional dance), lengger (traditional dance), and many more. Typically, 30-40 hamlets perform lengger dances daily, especially during Eid al-Fitr for halal bihalal (traditional gatherings).

Nowadays, the Lengger dance is often combined with various dances, one of which is the Kuda Lumping dance. It begins with several Lengger dances, then interspersed with the Kuda Lumping dance. So, the Lengger dance pauses for a moment, then the Jaranan dance enters. This is done to prevent the audience from getting bored. However, despite the frequent performances, the people of Wonosobo never get bored. They are always enthusiastic about watching them. Some say that art is "joyful." So, people feel happy when they see art or performances. The public's enthusiasm for art is high. People remain happy when there are performances, even though they are frequent, they never get bored and are always enthusiastic. In the context of the performance, the Wonosobo Lengger dance is performed in pairs by a feminine lengger dancer and a masculine topeng dancer (Alaudin, 2023).

Nearly every hamlet in Wonosobo has a community, with some hamlets even having two or three. Before performing, the lengger dancers gather for practice. During these rehearsals, children are invited to join in the dance to learn about their local culture.

They practice together in their hamlet's community. Children are introduced to the lengger dance from an early age. They are taught not only lengger but also the kuda lumping dance.

There's no age limit for lengger dancers; the important thing is that they can dance, have a desire to dance, and are willing to put in the effort. Currently, elementary and middle schools, as well as even high schools, are incorporating lengger as an extracurricular activity. In the past, children who danced lengger were often looked down upon by society, but because a love of art was ingrained in the dancers, they ignored this as long as it didn't harm anyone. However, now lengger has grown, and many children are now involved.

Lengger has evolved significantly from its ancient to modern forms, from its movements, musical accompaniment, costumes, and even its dancers. While lengger performances used only oil lamps for lighting, today they are grand and equipped with lights that further enhance the stage's beauty. There are also differences in costumes; previously, a simple shirt, trousers, and a sampur necklace were all it took to dance. However, now there are various costumes, variations in movements, and the musicians have also developed, while maintaining the tradition. The typical costumes for lengger dance today include wearing velvet, a jamang (a traditional headdress), a vest, and a sampur (a traditional headdress). Therefore, lengger art does not abandon its traditional traditions, but instead follows the current era to maintain its popularity and maintain its popularity.

The growing tourism in Dieng and Wonosobo has also influenced the existence of the lengger dance. Now, every Sunday there is a lengger dance performance in the recreation park to promote Wonosobo culture. Furthermore, the lengger dance is often performed as a welcoming dance for guests from out of town visiting Wonosobo. The public's enthusiasm for the lengger dance is greater than for other dances. It's clear that visitors are more crowded during lengger dance performances, but other performances are generally less crowded.

The Lengger dance once experienced a decline, but now it's making a comeback, even better. Since the patenting of the Lengger dance by the Department of Tourism and Culture, Wonosobo has received recognition as an intangible cultural heritage of

Wonosobo. This has also helped the dance develop further and become more widely known.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Lengger dance effectively supports cultural da'wah strategies in Wonosobo through observable practices that occur within the performance itself. One clear example is the presence of papeling—a form of religious and moral advice delivered by the wiraswara or sinden before the dance begins. In these papeling sessions, performers explicitly remind the audience to perform their prayers, uphold ethical conduct, and maintain harmonious social relations. Additionally, several songs performed during the dance contain moral and spiritual messages, including calls to mutual respect and reminders to preserve communal peace. Ritual elements such as slametan held prior to the performance further illustrate how Islamic values are integrated into traditional cultural expressions, making the Lengger performance a culturally resonant medium for da'wah.

The implications of these findings for Islamic communication models are significant. The empirical evidence shows that da'wah can occur through symbolic, artistic, and performative channels—not solely through verbal sermons. Audiences do not merely watch the performance as entertainment; they also receive embedded Islamic messages through the papeling, song lyrics, and communal rituals surrounding the event. This interaction among dancers, musicians, and community members creates a symbolic communication space where aesthetic expression aligns with religious values. Thus, the Lengger dance enriches Islamic communication models by demonstrating that culturally grounded da'wah can be dialogic, contextual, and highly effective, especially within communities that deeply value their local traditions, such as those in Wonosobo.

Lengger dance serves more than just entertainment; it also contains religious values that encourage people to always remember God, fulfill their obligations, and obey His commands. These religious values are reflected in the dance movements, musical accompaniment, and the dancers' attire. Similar to Sunan Kalijaga's cultural approach to Islamic propagation, Lengger dance also serves as an effective means of conveying

Islamic teachings through an artistic medium that is closely connected to the lives of the people.

In the context of Wonosobo's predominantly Muslim society, the Lengger Dance is not only preserved as a cultural heritage and artistic expression, but also as a means of preaching, conveying moral and spiritual values. Developments have influenced the presentation of the Lengger Dance, including changes in costume, movement, musical accompaniment, and the use of gamelan instruments, adapting to modern dynamics. Nevertheless, the essence and spiritual meaning it embodies remain as the art form's core spirit.

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that efforts to preserve the Lengger Dance be carried out through an educational and religious approach oriented towards strengthening the values of Islamic propagation (dakwah). Local governments, cultural institutions, and educational institutions are expected to collaborate in integrating the Lengger Dance into educational and cultural activities as a means of internalizing moral and spiritual values. Revitalization of the performance form also needs to be carried out selectively so that the Lengger Dance can adapt to current developments without losing its philosophical meaning and the essence of Islamic propagation.

The cultural da'wah approach through artistic media such as the Lengger Dance is considered strategic in conveying religious messages contextually and humanistically to the community. Furthermore, further research is recommended to more deeply examine the semiotic, symbolic, and theological aspects of the movements, musical accompaniment, and costumes of the Lengger Dance to enrich the scientific body of cultural da'wah. Thus, the preservation of the Lengger Dance not only contributes to the preservation of local cultural identity but also to strengthening moderate, inclusive, and adaptive Islamic da'wah to the socio-cultural dynamics of society.

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