Transcendental Communication of Traditional Custodian in the Kecak Ramayana Performing Arts in Uluwatu Bali

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Abstract

This article is the result of research on the transcendental communication of traditional leader in the Kecak Ramayana performance art in Uluwatu Bali. Traditional Custodian are Hindu religious leaders who are included in the presentation of the Kecak Ramayana. This customary leader does not exist in the new play of the Ramayana story. But his role is very important because he works outside and backstage. The purpose of this study is to reveal spiritual communication carried out by Traditional Custodian in the performance of the Kecak Ramayana dance in Uluwatu. This research method uses qualitative discrete. Data collection techniques used interviews with 4 sources, direct observation when the show was in progress, and retrieval of documentation to strengthen verbal data. The theories used in this research are ritual communication theory, non-verbal communication theory, and transcendental communication theory. The results of the study show patterns of spiritual communication that are customary stakeholders, namely (1) customary stakeholders as a link between the dimensions of the outer (profane) and inner (sacred) stages, (2) stakeholders carry out a reciprocal ritual, and (3) Traditional Custodian as a symbol of transcendental communication between the players, the audience, and Sang Hyang Widiwasa.

Keywords: Traditional Custodian; Ramayana Kecak; Performing Arts


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INTRODUCTION

If you are a tourist and decide to watch the Kecak Ramayana. Of course, you will enjoy the storyline or want to prove the exotic sensation of mass performance art performed by bare-chested men.

Kecak Ramayana is a performance Colossal played by bare-chested male dancers shouting the words cak-cak-cak. During the game, the Kecak dancers make circular formations and formations that provide an imaginative picture of the situation and atmosphere of the Ramayana play (Sumiati & Girsang, 2018). The Ramayana play is a story that describes the journey in exile of Rama and his wife; Goddess Sita. In the middle of the journey, there were always obstacles until Dewi Sinta was kidnapped by the king of the monsters; Ravana. Thanks to the help of Hanuman and his army of monkeys, Dewi Sinta was returned to Rama (Desai, 2012).

Kecak Ramayana in the Uluwatu Temple environment is an entertainment performance held on an open stage in the form of Kecak (Putra Kencana et al., 2020). It was originally founded by the Pecatu Village community, around 1996 (Putra Kencana et al., 2020). Initially, tourists visited Uluwatu Temple only for ritual activities, one or two tourists came to look at the external environment of Uluwatu Temple (Sudira, interview 2023). Ordinary viewers certainly don't realize that the Uluwatu Kecak tourist show contains rituals. This is what this research wants to explain.

Uluwatu Temple is a tourist attraction, of course, there are also food and souvenir traders around Uluwatu Temple. I Made Sudira is one of the managers of the traders, at least also thinking about improving welfare. Together with several people, I Made Sudira started pioneering Balinese dance performances, with the hope that tourists could spend some time exploring the spiritual destination of Uluwatu Temple. A friend who pioneered tourist performing arts in Uluwatu was I Nyoman Suganda. They agreed to form a Kecak Ramayana performing arts community in the Uluwatu Temple environment (Sudira, interview 2023).

The pioneering of the Kecak Ramayana performing arts started from the beginning, in this place, there were not many people who could dance. Information from I Nyoman Suganda, in the Uluwatu Temple environment, at first it was only to look for the possibility of increasing the number of around 64 traders in the pure area, they sold food and souvenirs. Pioneering efforts to create tourist performing arts so that they can become entertainment centers that have exotic appeal (Suganda, interview 2023).

The Kecak Ramayana in the Uluwatu Temple environment from the start wanted to get a magical impression because the source of the Kecak Ramayana came from the ritual dance of Sanghyang Dadari. Because the Sanghyang Dadari dance is only for the ritual of repelling Balak (expelling evil spirits) (Lodra, 2018). Remember that initially, Kecak Ramayana was created by a dance artist from Bedulu Village in the 1930s. At that time it was initiated by a Western missionary named Walter Spies (Bakan, 2009). He often brings European tourists to Bali. Often the tourists who are brought do not yet see the Sanghyang Dadari performance, because it is not during the ritual. This type of sanghyang dance is a type of guardian dance that is always led by Traditional Custodian (jero mangku) during its implementation (Prihatini, 2000).

This research aims to dig deeper into aspects of the Kecak Ramayana performing arts in Uluwatu, which many people often consider mere entertainment. However, this approach raises a fundamental question: is Kecak Ramayana just entertainment? In this context, the artists involved in the performance, especially in the Uluwatu Temple environment, seem to bring a deeper dimension than simply entertaining the audience. They present a significant ritual element, which gives a new dimension to the performance (Hidajat, Prastiawan, et al., 2021).

One aspect that attracts attention is the involvement of 'Traditional Custodian' in organizing this show. The question arises as to why Traditional Custodian or religious figures are involved in performing arts. To answer this question, we must understand that the Kecak Ramayana performing arts in Uluwatu has a deeper role than just entertainment. This performance also functions as a medium to carry out and maintain the rich cultural and religious heritage of Bali (Prastiawan & Suharyanto, 2014).

Traditional Custodian have an important role in maintaining cultural integrity and
spiritual values in this performance. They ensure that every aspect of the show respects the traditions and norms that have been passed down through the centuries. Thus, a deeper understanding of the ritual aspects of the Kecak Ramayana brings us to the realization that this performance is not just mere entertainment. More than that, this performance is a form of dedication to deep traditions and beliefs, which makes this performing art a very rich cultural and spiritual expression in Bali (Hidajat, Jamnongsam, et al., 2021; Hidajat & Hasyimy, 2021).

Walter Spies met I Wayan Limbak from Bedulu Village. They duplicated the Sangyang Dadari dance into tourist art. The results of this duplication are now widely known as the Kecak Ramayana dance (Seriasih, 2019). However, in its implementation, Traditional Custodian are still included. Paying attention to this, it becomes a question. Considering that in Western theater, this certainly won't happen. Remember that everything on stage is always planned and stated in the script (Harun et al., 2022).

The author's research which has been carried out in the Kecak Uluwatu performing arts environment has been written in the form of an article entitled: The Aesthetics of the Hanoman Character in the Performing Arts of the Indonesia-Thailand Ramayana Stories. This article is more focused on discussing the characteristics of the character, namely Hanoman. Considering that the character Hanoman is the focus of the audience's attention, even the results of comparative research. The character Hanoman has the same characteristics as Indonesia and the Ramakien play in Thailand (Hidajat, Pujiyanto, et al., 2021). Apart from that, the article entitled Communication Presentation of Indonesian Identity Figures at the Ramayana Ballet at Prambanan also discusses the Ramayana figures featured in the Ballet at Prambanan (Hidajat et al., 2022). From the results of this research, researchers are interested in discussing the presence of figures who are not found anywhere in the Ramayana manuscript, namely Traditional Custodian.

Since the beginning, the tradition of performing the Kecak Ramayana at Uluwatu Temple has always been led or accompanied by Traditional Custodian. I Made Sudira also explained that when determining the location of the performance stage, the place was also cleaned by traditional officials. Even around the Kecak Ramayana performance stage, a worship building was also set up. Every time there is a performance, rituals are always held at that place, and in various places, offerings are always given and prayers are said by the traditional officials on duty (Sudira, interview 2023).

The Traditional Custodian in question are Hindu religious leaders who are included in the presentation of the Kecak Ramayana. These Traditional Custodian do not appear in the new play of the Ramayana story. However, his role is very important, because he works outside and behind the stage (Hidajat et al., 2023). This research aims to reveal the spiritual communication carried out by Traditional Custodian in the Kecak Ramayana dance performance in Uluwatu. The scheme of thought in posing problems can be understood as follows:

![Scheme 1](image)

Scheme 1 is a framework for thinking about Traditional Custodian in the Kecak Ramayana tourism performing arts at Uluwatu Temple. As a performing arts reviewer, this is of course a very basic question. Because the presence of the actor in the scene is certainly not part of the text or script. This is the main attraction of conducting this research. The problem raised is what is the function of Traditional Custodian in presenting the Kecak Ramayana at Uluwatu Temple.

**RESEARCH METHODS**

This research method uses qualitative discrimination (M. Djunaidi Chony & Fauzan Almanshur, 2012). Data collection techniques
used interviews with 4 sources. Interviews with key sources consisting of I Made Sudira (58 years) as chairman of Sekaa Karang Bona, I Made Astra (56 years) as deputy chairman, I Wayan Chary Antara (48 years) as secretary, I Made Tarka (57 years th.) as incumbent. The focus of collecting interview data is words, statements, and testimony (Rachmawati, 2007). To understand the actions and behavior of the subjects used as data, researchers use direct observation. Observations were made during the Kecak Ramayana performance at Uluwatu Temple. Apart from that, documentation is also taken as a form of visual data to complement verbal data.

The theory used in this research is function theory (Wijayati, 2020), Considering that function theory is placing human activity for the benefit of humans in carrying out social activities, which is related to ritual communication theory, non-verbal communication theory, and transcendental communication theory. This theory places performing arts about entertainment as a non-verbal communication effort, while transcendental communication is internal, namely for the benefit of artists in expressing their spirituality as followers of the Hindu religion.

Observation to directly observe the Kecak Ramayana performance, and taking documentation. obtained from participant observation. The focus of the data is meaningful attitudes, actions and movements. So that observations become closer to the source. The validity of the data is carried out using triangulation techniques of sources, techniques and methods. Then tabulate the data according to the topic and research objectives, namely the function of Traditional Custodian in the presentation of the Kecak Ramayana at Uluwatu Temple.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Spiritual Communication Patterns of Traditional Custodian in the Ramayana Kecak Event Environment at Uluwatu Temple.

This research discusses the Traditional Custodian involved in the Kecak Ramayana performance at Uluwatu Temple. The data collected from interviews, observations and document retrieval focused on Traditional Custodian who were in charge of organizing the Kecak Ramayana performance in Uluwatu. The research results show that the understanding of Traditional Custodian can be expressed in three aspects, namely as follows (1) the function of Traditional Custodian, (2) the responsibilities of Traditional Custodian, and Traditional Custodian as symbols.

(1) Functions of Traditional Custodian

There are three traditional officials in charge of Keecak Uluwatu, one of whom provided a lot of information was I Made Tarka. The incumbent (pinandita) is a Hindu clergyman. Etymologically, Pemangku comes from the word 'Pangku' or 'Nampa', which means carrying the burden of responsibility or support. Its function is to serve the people and as an intermediary for the community in connection with Sang Hyang Widhi Wasar or ancestors (Tarka, interview 2022).

His function as a traditional authority is part of the activities of the Sakaa Karang Bona community, namely holding various rituals, including the performance of the Kecak Ramayana in the Uluwatu Temple environment (Tarka, interview 2022). According to I Made Sudira, the function of Traditional Custodian in the Kecak Ramayana environment in Uluwatu functions as a link between the dimensions of the outer stage (profane) and the inner stage (sacral).

Preparatory activities for the Ramayana Kecak dancers begin at approximately 16.30 (WITA). Before the dancers arrive, the traditional authorities are present to prepare the offerings, first going to the sanggah, praying, and going around the stage placing the canang sari, and ending at the costume equipment place, especially the character's crowns. These items belong to the association and cannot be taken home, even once every 6 months a special ritual is carried out.

Traditional Custodian stand in this place to give blessings by sprinkling holy water, Kecak dancers take white chalk to put on their foreheads and right and left temples.
Figure 1. The traditional leader, I Made Tarka, sprinkles holy water when the Hanoman figure is about to enter the stage. Meanwhile, the character Hanoman, played by Agus Syantara, after receiving a splash of holy water, raises his hands and prays.

(2) Responsibilities of Traditional Custodian

Traditional Custodian in the Kecak Ramayana Environment in Uluwatu are responsible for carrying out the balak ritual. Traditional Custodian prepare offerings (banten) and serve (banten), worship and pray. Chary Antara, secretary of Saka Bona at Uluwatu Temple, explained the responsibilities of Traditional Custodian starting before the performance, preparing for the performance, during the performance, and at the end of the performance. The officials are always ready, paying attention to various conditions and situations, especially always ready to bless and pray for the players by sprinkling holy water. This communication shows the existence of spiritual action to prepare the player's mentality so that they can perform wholeheartedly.

In the Ramayana Kecak performance at Uluwatu Temple, the responsibility of the holder is to maintain, bless and connect the devotional puja in the form of performing arts to Sang Hyang Widi Wasa. I Made Tarka, emphasized that performing arts performances are essentially the same as worship, therefore their responsibility is to be an intermediary to convey good intentions, or ask for protection so that activities can run smoothly.
Figure 2

Traditional Custodian are responsible for providing prayers for the safety of Kecak players
(photo of research document)

Figure 2. In the first scene, Traditional Custodian enter the performance arena and sprinkle holy water to offer prayers for safety. Traditional Custodian circle the dancers clockwise by sprinkling holy water. The aim is to prepare a spiritual mentality so that dancers can carry out their duties well. The task of sprinkling holy water is also carried out at the end of the performance, only the dancers are seated in rows facing the audience. The goal is to express gratitude and be grateful that everything that has been done has been completed.

(3) Traditional Custodian as Symbols

I Made Astra, chairman of Sakaa Karang Bona explained. Traditional Custodian in the Kecak Ramayana environment as symbols. Because Traditional Custodian in performance performances are not included in the Ramayana play text. Therefore the position is independent. This view uses theories about content dimensions of communication and relationship dimensions of communication (Mukarom, 2021). Traditional Custodian were present as an effort to carry out transcendental communication from preparation, process, and until the end of the Kecak Ramayana performance. I Made Tarkah understands that there are spiritual powers that must be united, namely the spiritual power of love, the spiritual power of destruction, and the spiritual power of loyalty. In this connection, it can be seen in the figures of Rama, Hanoman, Dewi Sinta. This is a hope for humans who want to unite these three spiritual forces (Tarkah, interview 2022).

Understanding of Traditional Custodian in the Kecak Ramayana Performance at Uluwatu Temple

(1) Tolak Balak

Based on function theory. That Traditional Custodian are people who are tasked with purifying the universe, including humans individually or in groups. Those who have been purified become clean, holy, and even protected from various calamities.

The actors in the Kecak Ramayana environment in Uluwatu function as a liaison (transmission) for the dimensions of the outer stage (profane) and the back stage (sacral). The back stage is a place that is considered sacred, namely to give blessings to all the dancers. The front stage is a profane arena, namely a place for performances, holding symbolic depictions of life. The place must be sanctified and guarded. Therefore, the symbol of the stakeholder's presence as a holy person is in the form of a kecak lamp which has five lanterns. The lights were on throughout the show. At the start of the performance, all Kecak dancers are cleaned so they can carry out their duties smoothly. Kecak dancers are a picture of life, humans who must carry out good activities, namely avoiding evil deeds. This is an illustration of the play Ramayana. Ravana is depicted as an evil force that must be perfected through a process of back and forth.
(2) Purification

Traditional Custodian in the Kecak Ramayana Environment in Uluwatu are responsible for carrying out purification rituals; environment and humans. This action is a very important part of various rituals of Hindu society in Bali. Traditional Custodian always carry out spiritual actions intended for spiritual cleansing or purification using holy water, either individually or as a group. So the role of Traditional Custodian is to become community protectors, or as main transmitters. This physical presence is marked by a white costume which means purity, but when not present it is symbolized by a kecak lamp with five fire lanterns that punctuate from the beginning to the end of the performance. Fire is a symbol of cleansing.

Figure 3 is a depiction of Traditional Custodian praying before Hanoman was sentenced to burn himself alive. The meaning is that the character Hanoman, as someone who has the power to destroy, must be purified. Thus, the purification ritual was led by traditional officials to start the burning. Traditional Custodian as a symbol of purification are tasked with ensuring the security, smoothness and safety of individuals or groups of Ramayana Kecak artists at Uluwatu Temple.

![Figure 3](image3.jpg)

Traditional Custodian are praying to repudiate Hanuman before being burned (Research document photo)

(3) Harmonious Unity

Traditional Custodian in the Kecak Ramayana environment are a symbol of the god Shiva, a god who has destructive power. This understanding is based on transcendental communication which is based on understanding the process of sharing ideas, information and messages with other people at a certain place and time and is closely related to things that are transcendent (Taufik, 2016).

Traditional Custodian are a transmission between the performer and Sang Hyang Widiwasa, but also a transmission between the audience and the performer. So a triangle occurs which creates hope for harmony. The position of the holder is the central part of spiritual interaction, namely the audience, players, and Sang Hyang Widiwasa.
Scheme 2 shows the stakeholder as a transmission between the audience, the Kecak player, and Sang Hyang Widiwasa. In the play Ramayan, the spiritual power of Sang Hyang Widiwasa is shown, asked to provide protection. The spiritual power is love, the symbol is Rama, the spiritual power in the form of destructive power is the symbol of Hanuman, and the spiritual power of loyalty is the symbol of Sinta. In connection with being a way for Balinese people to reconcile the universe, even in the form of entertainment. However, the presence of Traditional Custodian becomes a transmission that gathers strength and creates harmony.

CONCLUSION
Transcendental Communication of Traditional Custodian in the Kecak Ramayana performing arts in Uluwatu Bali is a form of transmission function, responsibility and symbolism in connecting the human world (immanence) and divine nature (transcendental). Traditional Custodian in the Kecak Ramayana performing arts environment at Uluwatu Temple are an illustration of the activities of the Balinese people in carrying out their religious life. The integral power of spirituality is a harmonious life, namely the function and responsibility of Traditional Custodian as a symbol of the central orientation of spiritual life, so that they are able to unite the spiritual power of love, the power of destruction and loyalty. Traditional Custodian carry out activities outside the stage and also on the performance stage which carry out and guide self-purification, safety,

REFFERENCES


