



Emergence of Female *Pembarong* in *Reyog* Art: Gender Stereotypes and Cultural Tightness in The Javanese Perspective

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Abstract

The presence of female *pembarong* (performers) in Java is interesting as a form of defying gender stereotypes. The female performers portray those who try to fight stereotypes and gender norms in a patriarchal society. Based on this phenomenon, this study aims to 1) explain the stereotypical experience of *reyog* Ponorogo female performers from the perspective of Javanese culture, 2) explain the experience of cultural tenacity of *reyog* Ponorogo female performers from the perspective of Javanese culture. The research was conducted in two places in Ponorogo. Sawoo Village in Sawoo Subdistrict, Ponorogo Regency which is the location of the Sardulo Nareswari *reyog* community and Plunturan Village in Pulung Subdistrict, Ponorogo Regency which is the location of the Putri Onggopati *reyog* community. This research uses a qualitative method. Data collection techniques used included interviews with female performers, observation of videos of female performers' performances from YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, interview transcripts, triangulation of sources, and data visualization. Furthermore, the data was analyzed using an interactive model: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusions drawing. The labeling of the research results shows that: 1) Stereotypical views towards female performers have begun to diminish. Society began to accept their existence in *reyog* performance art. 2) The loosening of cultural constraints within Javanese tradition, with positive conditions that do not put aside their role as women, wives, and homemakers. These conditions provide freedom and creative opportunities for female performers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ponorogo, a region in East Java, Indonesia, boasts a rich tradition of unique traditional arts, most notably *reyog*, which has gained widespread acclaim nationwide [1, p. 83]. Each region has different *reyog* characteristics [2, p. 181]. Despite being technically spelt as "*reyog*," it is commonly referred to by locals as "*reog*" [3, p. 340]. Ponorogo *Pembarong* is a figure who dances using a tiger head mask crowned with wide peacock feathers (*dadak merak*) of a very large size. Notably, Ponorogo is home to two remarkable female *reyog* communities that do not exist elsewhere in Indonesia, namely *Reyog Sardulo Nareswari* and *Reyog Putri Onggopati*. The uniqueness of these female *reyog* communities lies in the fact that all members of the *reyog* community are women. The emergence of these two female *reyog* communities presents an intriguing issue to the traditional practice where *reyog*

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performances are predominantly male-dominated [4, p. 307], as women now actively participate in *reyog* performances.

It is also important to realize that performing arts norms and practices are dynamic [5, p. 161], [6, p. 75]. The beginning of female *reyog* performers can be traced back to the transition of "*jathil*," traditionally portrayed by men, to being portrayed by women [7], [8], [9, p. 24]. Then, female *reyog* players began to appear, one of whom was Pemandang; the transition has caused many conflicts between *reyog* elders and the community in Ponorogo [10, p. 2623]. Some people argue that female portrayal in *reyog* performances deviates from established norms. Gender shifts diminish the strength of *reyog* as an art form, as female performers are perceived to lack the robustness characteristic of their male counterparts. However, this shift underscores the importance of female inclusion in *reyog* performances, leading to the emergence of numerous female *reyog* performers. In Ponorogo, which is also part of the community upholding Javanese cultural traditions, there is a growing trend among women to challenge their traditional roles. Rather than confining themselves to household duties of caring for their husbands and children, women now dare to express their creativity and assert their existence through art, particularly by participating in *reyog* performances. This phenomenon demonstrates women's courage in rejecting old Javanese cultural traditions that restrict women's existence in performing arts. Rural society tends to stereotype women involved in the arts as morally questionable, as they often leave home to perform outside their area or engage in nighttime rehearsals [11, p. 993].

Performing arts are often influenced by culture and tradition. For example, the history of storytelling has many versions. When historical traditions which favour a patriarchal society are reinforced, historical and cultural influences can be problematic for women. The historical version of *singo barong* (pemandang) is a symbol of Bhre King Kertabumi or King Brawijaya V with a peacock as a symbol of the strong influence of his consort [12, p. 76], [13]. Pemandang in *reyog* Ponorogo is a satire of Ki Demang Kutu, who likens a tiger ridden by a peacock [14, p. 258], [15, p. 70]. The portrait of the pemandang is realized with a giant mask called *dadak merak*. The image of *dadak merak* is a tiger head mask crowned with wide peacock feathers like a fan with a weight ranging from 40 kg to 50 kg [1, p. 84], [16, p. 148]. Pemandang in the *reyog* Ponorogo community symbolizes a man submitting to a woman. This narrative has shifted the role of women, depicting them as leaders who assist men.

Families with Javanese cultural traditions express concerns about their daughters taking on the role of pemandang due to the risk of injury, as pemandangs are required to grip the *dadak merak* with their teeth and vigorously move their necks and arms while dancing. The cultural stereotype of Javanese women with large bodies and physical imperfections, such as broken teeth and neck injuries from accidents during artistic performances, contradicts the feminine ideal of beauty. This is feared to hinder their chances of marriage and employment and raise concerns about being abandoned by their husbands. Other fears and stigmas arise when women perform as pemandangs, such as losing their identity as women, forfeiting their graceful femininity, tenderness, and gracefulness, and transforming into a figure resembling a strong and mighty man. These stigmas create an unjust gender contrast regarding the role of female pemandangs in *reyog* Ponorogo performances.

Research on *reyog* Ponorogo has been extensively explored by other researchers in the study of philosophy and meaning, performers [17, p. 161], [18, p. 59], [19, p. 1], [20, p. 101], religious studies [17, p. 161], [21, p. 37], [22, p. 68], [23, p. 145], the motif of women playing *reyog* [24, p. 1]. However, few studies still examine female *reyog* art, specifically the pemandang, from the perspectives of gender and cultural tightness. Previous studies have explored female *reyog* but focused on the types of movements and costumes they use [25, p. 205]. This study specifically focuses on female pemandangs who play the central role

and are eagerly awaited in reyog Ponorogo performances. The reyog art performance, which is the main highlight of the female reyog community, centres around women who portray the *pembarong* character. The role of the *pembarong* is considered the benchmark of the success of reyog performances due to their strength and distinctive dancing techniques while carrying the *dadak merak* (tiger head mask crowned with wide peacock feathers).

The novelty of this research lies in depicting the portrayal of *pembarongs* from two female reyog communities and the differences in roles between men and women, which influence stereotypes and cultural dynamics within Javanese society. The presence of female *pembarongs* is inherently linked to gender-related issues. Stereotypes and cultural influences within Javanese society regarding *pembarong* performers are exemplified by the phrase "*wong wedok kok mbarong*," which roughly translates to "why are women playing *pembarong*?" This triggering statement reflects the misogynistic views of the general public towards female *pembarongs*. It demonstrates society's disbelief that women can undertake the role of *pembarong* typically performed by men, as many dance movements, such as *kayang*, rolling, and bowing while carrying the heavy *dadak merak*, are deemed suitable only for men. The gender disparity examined in this study pertains to the differing roles between men and women in socio-cultural contexts. Few female reyog performers are willing to take on the role of *pembarong*. Learning to be a *pembarong* is exceptionally challenging and requires physical strength akin to men's. Performing arts involving physical strength are seen as defying norms and stereotypical ideals of femininity.

What differs from the *pembarong* in reyog Ponorogo today is that it involves women as players. The role of *pembarong* is traditionally dominated by men. In The reyog Ponorogo performing arts, *pembarong* is an important figure who depicts strength and bravery, played by wearing the heavy *dadak merak*. Historically, this role has always been identified with the physical strength of men [26]. However, female *pembarong* in two women's Reyog associations in Ponorogo Reyog Sardulo Nareswari and Reyog Putri Onggopati shows a significant gender shift in this tradition. Women are now daring to take on roles that were previously considered only suitable for men, not only demonstrating their dancing skills but also challenging social norms that limit women's roles [27], [28], [29].

This study differs from other traditional performing arts traditions, such as the Balinese *barong* dance and Japanese *kabuki*, where gender roles are more rigid. Although there are female roles in the story of the Balinese *barong* dance, the main characters, such as *barong* (a symbol of strength) and *rangda* (a symbol of evil), are generally played by men, with women often only supporting roles in the narrative. Similarly, in Japanese *kabuki*, although it originally involved women, in the 17th century, women were banned from performing on stage, and women's roles were then taken over by men who played female characters through the *onnagata* technique [30]. This difference suggests that while in reyog Ponorogo, the novelty of women playing as *pembarong* focuses on breaking down existing physical and social boundaries, in other traditions such as *Barong* and *kabuki*, changes in gender roles are more tied to symbolic representation and more limited conventional shifts. Overall, the novelty of female *Pembarong* in reyog Ponorogo refers not only to the change in who plays the main role in the performance but also to how women are beginning to challenge and deconstruct gender stereotypes in traditional performing arts, demonstrating an effort to create a more inclusive and equal space for women in a largely patriarchal culture. This shows that although social norms often limit women's roles in traditional arts, there are efforts to redefine those roles, which aligns with the global feminist movement that advocates for gender equality.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative method to describe the characteristics of female pekarangan in reyog Ponorogo performance art. The purpose of this research is to investigate the experience of female performers in gender stereotypes and cultural tightness and then analyse it from the perspective of Javanese culture. This research seeks to identify the similarities and differences in the experiences of female performers in two communities towards gender stereotypes and cultural tightness that they encounter as female performers.

This research specifically examines gender stereotypes and cultural tightness from the perspective of Javanese culture experienced by female performers. The exploration of gender stereotypes delves into societal and familial views on female performers, including perceptions of the mystical aspects, gender blending, the lifting capacity of the barongan, and challenging dance movements. The focus is on reporting the findings of cultural tightness within Javanese cultural traditions experienced by female performers, including dual roles, differences in performance wages, physical posture, membership and admission permits to reyog communities, and female participation in performances. This research yielded descriptive data on gender stereotypes and cultural tightness in the Javanese cultural perspective experienced by female performers.

This research is conducted in two places: Sawoo Village, Sawoo District, Ponorogo Regency, and Plunturan Village in Pulung District, Ponorogo Regency. These locations were chosen for their distinctive Reyog characteristics: The Sardulo Nareswari Reyog community practices the festival and obyog types of Reyog, while the Reyog Putri Onggopati community preserves the traditional reyog performance. These two communities are pioneering female reyog communities in Ponorogo. Key informants in this study are female performers from both the Sardulo Nareswari and Reyog Putri Onggopati communities.

Firstly, the data collection technique involves selecting suitable informants of reyog players, especially 4 barongan and 10 reyog community administrators. The number of female barongans in Ponorogo is 4 women, with details of 2 from the Sardulo Nareswari reyog community and 2 from the Reyog Putri Onggopati community. Reyog community administrators with details of 5 from the Sardulo Nareswari reyog community and 5 from the Reyog Putri Onggopati community. Second, interviews were conducted with informants. Third, interview results were transcribed transcripts. Fourth, sources were triangulated. Fifth, the results of the interviews were analyzed by making data visualization.

The research instruments used interviews and observation. Interviews were designed to ask about experiences of gender stereotypes considering the views of the community and family about female performers. The instrument for cultural tightness refers to the community's views regarding female performers from the perspective of the Javanese culture. The observation sheet was used to observe videos of female performers on YouTube, live performances, Facebook, and Instagram in the Reyog Sardulo Nareswari and Reyog Putri Onggopati community. Observation was done as a cross-check material to observe easy and difficult movements for female performers to perform. The analysis of data results in this study uses an interactive model, namely 1) data collection, 2) data condensation, 3) data display and 4) Conclusions drawing [31, p. 14].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

The Sardulo Nareswari Reyog Association is in Sawoo Village, Sawoo District, Ponorogo Regency. The Reyog community consists entirely of women. The meaning of Sardulo

Nareswari comes from two words: Sardulo, which means tiger and Nareswari, which means beauty. From these two syllables, Sardulo Nareswari means beautiful tiger. Mrs. Tri Heni Astuti pioneered Reyog Sardulo Nareswari as the chairperson, and Mrs. Yulengsi was her deputy. The initiative to establish this women's Reyog Association began because the PKK (Family Welfare Program members) mothers were concerned about the various activities of the PKK mothers, which only revolved around social gatherings and cooking activities, as well as several PKK work programs in general. Mrs. Heni and Mrs. Yulengsi then had the idea to establish the Reog Putri Association, considering that this PKK group is located in the Ponorogo area, which has a unique art form in Reyog.

At the beginning of its establishment in 2015, the Reog Putri Sardulo Nareswari community faced serious challenges from the surrounding community, especially from the Reyog association played by men. This is related to the culture inherent in the community that reyog is generally played by men, so for performances, it should still be reyog played by men. The pros and cons of the Reyog Sardulo Nareswari community are from the community and religious leaders. The establishment of the Reyog Sardulo Nareswari community had even given rise to the desire of residents to demonstrate so that it would be disbanded. As a practical step in responding to this challenge, Mrs. Heni, the association's head, met with the Ponorogo Regency Tourism Office to mediate the conflict. The tourism office firmly stated that art is separate from religion, so art and religion cannot be mixed. It must be underlined that Reog Putri can continue to exist as long as it does not violate religious rules. Even in responding to the assumption that women are going against their nature by playing the role of barongan, this statement was refuted with the justification that women are also allowed to work outside the home, so playing a role like barongan should not be a problem, because, in reality, this is part of preserving the reyog culture.

The Reyog Putri Onggopati community is in Plunturan Village, Pulung District, Ponorogo Regency. The Head of PKK, Mrs. Yayuk, initiated the idea of forming Reyog Putri Onggopati in Plunturan Village. Preserving reog art as a cultural heritage of the Ponorogo community, which is also its main identity, must be done from generation to generation. This is done by the Head of Plunturan Village, Pulung District, who in 2012 took the initiative to form the Reog Putri association. However, it still involved male residents playing several characters in the reyog art. Reyog Putri Onggopati, in 2017, began to have all female members. The birth of this Reyog Putri was an initiative of the Village Head's mother, who also served as the Chair of the PKK group of local mothers who wanted to empower and accommodate mothers who were members of the PKK and were interested in art.

The presence of reyog putri amid reyog culture, where all the players are men, initially received a negative response from several parties, including neighbours and relatives. The assumption that reog is unusual when played by women gave rise to many statements or comments that were not good for the players. This initially disturbed the players' comfort, but over time, the players began to get used to these statements and chose to ignore them, with the support of husbands who realized that their wives had artistic souls and wanted to develop them. In its development, the public's enthusiasm for the Reog Putri performance was higher than for reyog. This is because there is an element of interest in the characterization played by women, especially in the character of the pembarong.

The research report on the emergence of female reyog performers examines the experience of female reyog performers against gender stereotypes, enabling them to persist in their role to this day. The fading of gender discrimination and the problem of cultural tightness as part of Javanese cultural traditions against women allows women to be creative in reyog performance art. This research highlights the importance of providing access and opportunities to work in the arts. Therefore, the main objective of this research is to depict the portrayal of female performers and their experience in confronting gender stereotypes

and cultural tightness in Javanese society. The characteristics of the research are visualized in Table 1

Table 1. Visualization of research results gender stereotypes and cultural tightness of female performers

[Source: Results of interviews with informants, 2023]

| Stereotypes of Female performers | Reyog Sardulo Nareswari | Reyog Putri Onggopati |
|--|--|--|
| Community perception | Some find it odd | Already familiar |
| Family perception | Supportive | Supportive |
| Mystical beliefs towards Performers | None | None |
| Coach | Male | Male |
| Size of dadak merak used | Medium to large size | Medium size |
| Easy movements | Thakuran, kebat, siungan, jeglongan gulung, macanan, kaplakan, kipu | Thakuran, siungan, jeglongan, macanan, kaplakan, kipu |
| Difficult movements | Kayang, sembah | Kebate, gulung, Kayang, sembah |
| Intensity of Movement | Slower and shorter duration of performances | Slower and shorter duration of performances |
| The Cultural Tightness of Female Performers | Reyog Sardulo Nareswari | Reyog Putri Onggopati |
| Multiple roles | Farmer, housewife, art students | Housewife, casual labourer |
| Wages | Lesser | Lesser |
| Body posture | Big and muscular, resembling males | Big and muscular, resembling males |
| Association members | All circles | Family Welfare Program members/ Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (PKK) |
| Permission to join the community | No procedural permission required | Husband's permission Required |
| Performances | Sometimes perform exclusively with Reyog Putri, sometimes with Reyog Putra | Always performs with Reyog Putra |

The data visualisation results in Table 1 were identified to explore the depiction of female performers' practice of gender stereotypes and cultural tightness from a Javanese cultural perspective. The results showed differences and similarities in gender stereotypes and cultural tightness between Reyog Sardulo Nareswari and Putri Onggopati gemeinschaft. The similarities include family support for the performers' decision to play reyog, the

abandonment of mystical elements during performances, and being trained by male trainers. They also receive lesser wages compared to male performers. Pembarong has a large body posture like men. The differences in the characteristics of the two communities are influenced by cultural differences, which affect views on gender and cultural tightness. The differences can be seen in whether or not it is strange for a woman to be a pembarong, the size of the dadak merak used, the difference in movements, the double role in society, membership permission to become a reyog member, and whether performances are mixed with males or not.

3.2. Discussion

a. Stereotypes of Female Reyog Ponorogo Performers from the Perspective of Javanese Culture

This research reports that female performers have proven their ability to exist and perform equally with male performers. The portrait of the pembarong is depicted in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Portrait of the female Pembarong
[Source: Personal Documents]

Pembarong in different places gets different treatment according to the local culture in the area. Cultural differences affect the level of stereotypical views towards art performances. Pembarong in the Reyog Sardulo Nareswari community, some people still consider it strange because they question how women can lift the dadak merak using their teeth. They wonder whether their teeth will not break. If they do, it could detract from the women's beauty. These feminine reasons contribute to the small number of pembarong compared to other reyog performers such as *jathil*, *pujanganong*, *klono sewandono*, and *warok*. Lately, female performers have begun to be accepted by society because of their achievements and proof that they can work within gender norms. This shows the weakening of stereotypes against female performers [32, p. 85]. The view of the disappearance of gender stereotypes is felt by the performers from the Putri Onggopati community, who believed that the society has become accustomed to the existence of female performers, as Plunturan village is a reyog Ponorogo tourist village. The establishment of the reyog tourism village has increased acceptance of the role of female pembarong as reyog artists [33, p. 77].

The female performers in the Reyog Sardulo Nareswari and reyog Putri Onggopati come from the lineage of artists. Families strongly support the decision of female performers to keep working. The family plays a big role in providing motivation and enthusiasm to face the rigors of Pembarong's struggle in reyog ponorogo performing arts. Family support motivates

pembarong to challenge the gender stereotypes, negative perceptions, and treatment of women. Pembarong challenges gender stereotypes by behaving indifferently to others' opinions. They also show their contribution to the empowerment of female pembarong, which is now urgent and sought after because of its uniqueness. The self-exploration of female pembarong becomes a real and expressive behavior, making female reyog performances more popular with the audience than reyog in general. Female reyog performers become eagerly anticipated figures in their performances.

Female performers can also reject the negative stereotype of the mystical "*mantra pembarong*" attached to a dancer's identity. The wider community still believes other powers help the performer lift the *dadak merak* [34, p. 3]. All female performers refute this view: they do not use mystical powers like inserting talismans into their bodies or filling the *dadak merak* with spirits/genies [35, p. 126]. True pembarongs manage to lift the *dadak merak* with their strength. They train physically with special techniques to strengthen their teeth and neck muscles [26, p. 19]. Training to strengthen teeth and neck muscles involves using a bamboo reel filled with water and a bucket of cement chunks. They did this exercise so that their teeth could support the weight of the *dadak merak*. Javanese traditions such as giving offerings, stuffing (spirit/jin) on the *dadak merak*/ peacock, and wearing "*susuk*" /talisman before the performance have been abandoned by the performers. The religious beliefs of the performers are the reason for the abandonment of these traditions. However, they always pray before performing by reading prayers according to their religion, which is believed to help facilitate the performances and keep them safe from harm.

Female pembarongs' ability is not instant but is developed through extensive training [26, p. 18] for approximately 5 to 10 years. Female pembarongs also received professional trainers in the art of mbarong. The mixed-gender interaction with trainers of the opposite sex does not make female pembarong uncomfortable but rather motivates them to become proficient pembarong like their trainers quickly. They feel embarrassed if they make mistakes while learning the barongan dances. Gender mixing in training fosters positive relationships [36, p. 36]. It creates a sense of appreciation for the achievement of being a female pembarong who can be involved and trained by a professional male pembarong. Confidence is built in female reyog performers as their coach supports them against gender stereotypes of women's alleged inability to perform as pembarong. Male trainers continue to motivate them that women can be as strong as men and capable of performing barongan. Generally, males are already accepting and respecting women learning mbarong.

Female dancers during rehearsals use medium and large sizes of *dadak merak*. At the same time, only one female barongan in Ponorogo can lift a large-size *dadak merak*, and three other barongan use a medium-sized *dadak merak*. The portrait of the *dadak merak* is depicted in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Portrait of the Dadak Merak
[Source: Personal Documents]

The size of the *dadak merak* that the dancer can lift is determined by the size of the body posture, agility when dancing *barongan*, and the strength of their teeth and neck muscles. This distinguishes male and female *barongans* from the size of the *dadak merak* used for performance. Usually, male *barongans* use a large size of *dadak merak*. Female *pembarongs* are aware that males are generally stronger than females. There is still awareness of female performers about gender differences in terms of physical and gender norms in general. Despite these physical differences and prevailing gender norms, females remain enthusiastic about improving their physical abilities to perform alongside males [37, p. 233].

The complexity of the movements the *barongan* must perform by lifting the *dadak merak* using their teeth is notable. While all male *pembarong* can perform all *barongan* movements, it is different for female *pembarong*. There are movements that, according to the female performers, fall into the category of easy movements, namely *thakuran* (movements like a tiger looking for prey), *siungan* (finger position movement forming tiger claws), *jeglongan* (free movement with song accompaniment pattern), *macanan* (squatting position movement with both hands crossed facing down and fingers forming tiger claws), *kaplakan* (The *dadak merak* moves sideways to the right and left alternately while jogging), *kipu* (The body position movement is supine and the *dadak merak* is above the *Pembarong*). The category of movements that are difficult for female dancers to perform are *kebat* (the *dadak merak* flapping motion is made by swinging the body forward and pulling it back, simultaneously with the rotating body movement), *gulung* (the rolling movement is maintained by moving the *dadak merak* chest), *kayang* (the movement of bending the body backward so that the *dadak merak* touches the floor with the support of both feet), and *sembah* (the *dadak merak* face-down movement towards the front with the body bent and the legs kept straight). Limitations in playing movements are due to physical factors and lack of practice. Women's physical limitations are based on the concept of physical feminism; hence, empowering women through physical training is necessary. Training space for female performers is necessary [38, p. 413] to maintain privacy, such as dressing up and changing clothes. *Pembarong* will feel they are given a special place to express themselves during rehearsals because they need special training and a large place to practice. This will increase the morale of female performers and overcome negative perceptions about them as "weak."

b. The Cultural Tightness of Reyog Ponorogo's Female Performers

Socioeconomic issues, such as income inequality and dual roles, significantly influence women's participation in the performing arts across cultures [39], [40]. In many traditional societies, women are often burdened by domestic duties and family responsibilities, which limit their ability to engage in arts activities, especially those requiring time and energy, such as rehearsals and performances. In addition, income inequality often leads to women's limited access to arts education and training provided to men. In traditional arts such as *Reyog Ponorogo*, although women are beginning to engage in roles previously dominated by men, they continue to face social and economic barriers, such as the stigma against women working outside the home and cultural expectations to maintain a feminine image. This contrasts with men, who are often more encouraged to pursue artistic careers and receive social and financial support to thrive in the performing world.

Traditional arts generally adapt to the entry of women into patriarchal societies in varying ways, depending on their cultural and historical contexts. In Japan, for example, although women were originally part of the *kabuki* tradition, despite attempts to accommodate women in the form of male representation, *kabuki* art remains influenced by patriarchal norms that limit women's space for expression. In India, in performing arts such as *Bharatanatyam*, women play a central role but often face challenges related to social status and traditional expectations that limit their freedom to create [41]. Despite modernization movements that have given more space to women, these traditional arts remain bound by history and cultural norms that place women in positions often marginalized in some aspects of social and political life. In African performances such as traditional dance and music,

although women have a significant role in many cultures, they often face inequality in artistic recognition and opportunities to perform, especially in social contexts that are still very patriarchal [42]. In all these cases, traditional art adapts to the entry of women, although often with tension between restrictive traditional norms and the drive to create more inclusive spaces for women. In this case, art reflects existing social dynamics and becomes a tool for women to challenge and change existing power structures.

The dual roles of female performers entail many responsibilities [43, p. 618]. Female performers in the Reyog Sardulo Nareswari have more complex roles, such as housewives, farming/gardening, and art students. The role of female performers in the Reyog Putri Onggopati is simpler in that they are housewives doing odd jobs. Differences influence the varying dual roles of female performers in community traditions. The dual roles of female performers are responded positively by the performers themselves. They feel that engaging in multiple roles makes their lives more beneficial for the family. The family also does not restrict them from doing multiple jobs, but the pembarong realizes that managing household affairs is their duty as wives and mothers. Pembarong also works willingly to help support their family's economy by taking on additional jobs [44, pp. 10-11], as they believe that being a pembarong and performing reyog is not solely about making money. Female pembarong responds that playing reyog is a hobby, exercise, a way to socialize with the community, and a means to preserve the reyog art they love. Female stereotypes are also countered by a female performer from the reyog Sardulo Nareswari that "*wong wedok ora perlu sekolah duwur-duwur bakale yen rabi melu bojo*" (there is no need for women to have higher education since they will marry and follow their husband). This stereotype does not apply to her since her husband strongly supports continuing her studies in art. According to the view of pembarong from the Reyog Sardulo Nareswari, women artists must be highly educated in order to be able to develop and preserve the culture of performing arts; because art continues to develop, so they must continue to learn new things.

Being a pembarong is not the main occupation. Sometimes, pembarong and other reyog teams are invited to commercial performances such as weddings, circumcisions, thanksgiving, village ceremonies, and other celebrations [45, p. 214]. Commercial activities are not always available and are seasonal. This is why playing reyog is not the main job but a hobby. According to the narrators, every time they are invited to play reyog, they receive wages of approximately 50,000 to 300,000 rupiah depending on the performance venue, the number of players who perform, and the duration of performances. Based on the statements of female performers, their wages are lesser than those of male performers. There appears to be gender inequality [46, p. 618], but female pembarongs can accept this. The difference in performance wages was considered reasonable because male pembarong are usually more agile when playing and have a longer performance duration, as they are physically stronger and more energetic.

Becoming a female pembarong often does not come from the pembarong's desire. They are usually appointed to be pembarong because they have the main asset of being big and muscular like men. Initially, there were concerns and low self-confidence about whether they could perform as pembarong. The support from family, friends, and male trainers convinced them they could play the role of pembarong. Pembarong needs to adjust to gender norms to balance their feminism as a barongan performer who is characterized by masculinity. The opinion of society is that if a woman plays the role of a man and acts masculine in the performing arts, she may lose her identity as a feminist [47, p. 387]. This perception is disproved by the evidence that female pembarong still carry out their duties as wives and homemakers. The success of female pembarong is widely accepted in the community, and their performances are eagerly anticipated at every event. This is tangible proof of the positive impact of the adaptation to gender norms carried out by the female pembarong.

The role of pembarong as a member is generalized in the Reyog Sardulo Nareswari. Anyone who has an interest in female reyog can become a member. No permit or procedural recruitment exists for members who want to join the Reyog Sardulo Nareswari community. All people in various places can join the reyog Sardulo Nareswari if they are interested, dedicated, and passionate about Ponorogo reyog performance. In contrast, in the Reyog Putri Onggopati, all members are members of the Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK). Reyog Putri Onggopati is more exclusive to preserve the traditional reyog pakem version of mbah gani, the elder of the reyog community in Plunturan village. The concept of patriarchy

is still strongly held by the people of Plunturan, that the husband's position is the leader in the household. The strong patriarchy is reflected in the fact that every woman who joins the Reyog Putri Onggopati must have their husband's permission. This condition also shows the strong influence of religion on the Plunturan community, stating that everything the wife does is with the husband's permission. The husband's permission also protects against social problems that arise because reyog players usually practice at night.

The majority of pembarong's husbands are reyog performers. Pembarong in the Reyog Sardulo Nareswari is more independent. During performances, they usually perform exclusively with only females' reyog, sometimes also with the male's reyog, according to the request of those who invite them to perform. Based on Pembarong's explanation, they more often perform only with the women's reyog team. According to the pembarong, female reyog is very popular with the public. During reyog performances, if Reyog Putri is the one performing, there tend to be more spectators. This event is a concern that there will be a shift in the existence of male reyog to female reyog. A different situation occurs in the Reyog Putri Onggopati, where every female reyog performance is always performed with a male reyog. Patriarchal views remain strong in Plunturan village to protect women's dignity [48, p. 15]. Women will feel safer and more protected if they perform with Reyog Putra. Gender mixing in the performing arts has a positive impact on female performers. Moreover, the male reyog players are her husbands, relatives, or neighbors.

4. CONCLUSION

The researcher concluded that the stereotype of female reyog performers has begun to fade. The acceptance of female pembarongs is marked by the public's increasing interest in watching female reyog performances. Female performers have proven to defy gender stereotypes labeled as "*wong wedok kok mbarong*" (why is a woman a pembarong). Pembarong has proven their existence by lifting the dadak merak and dancing, although the movements are still slower and their performances shorter than those of men.

Not much different from the traditional art of Balinese barong dance and Japanese kabuki, there are also strong gender stereotypes. However, the results of this study indicate that patriarchy is starting to fade in the performing arts of Reyog Ponorogo. In contrast to Balinese barong dance and Japanese kabuki, which are still strongly dominated by patriarchy in their main characters. In Balinese barong dance, the role of women is limited to being extras. The same is true of kabuki, which is a traditional Japanese performing art with the main characters mostly being men.

The loosening of cultural tightness experienced by female performers also shows the fading of Javanese culture in society. The double role of female pembarongs is still inherent in household and social life. However, this dual role is viewed positively by female pembarong as a requirement for them to remain in the female Reyog community. Female pembarong never forget their roles as mothers and wives while continuing their artistic endeavors.

Shifting gender roles in traditional performing arts with global movements advocating gender equality, especially in the cultural and creative industries. UNESCO initiatives, such as the convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions, provide a foundation for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage that promotes inclusivity and diversity. However, challenges arise when more exclusive and patriarchal traditional values collide with modern values that emphasize equality and the empowerment of women. To achieve a sustainable balance, artists, cultural communities, and related institutions must create spaces that respect traditional practices while integrating inclusive values supporting women's participation.

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