

# *Seblang* In The *Bersih Desa* Tradition Of “Using” Community In Banyuwangi

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**Abstract** In this paper, *Seblang* and *bersih desa* tradition of Bakungan are described. *Seblang* is a ritual dance that accompanies *bersih desa* (cleansing the village) tradition of *Using* Banyuwangi, especially in the village of Olehsari and Bakungan. The *Seblang* ritual in Olehsari is performed by a teenage dancer, while in Bakungan it is danced by an elderly woman who has no menstruation (menopause). *Bersih desa* tradition is carried out every year, which is one week after the Eid al-Fitri holiday in Olehsari village, and one week after the Eid al-Adha in Bakungan Village. The *Seblang* ritual dance is a representation of Dewi Sri, the Goddess of Fertility in an agrarian society. The Research aim at describing and to explain the function of *Seblang* for society. The theory made use is function theory. The method made use is entography theory. *Bersih desa* is an expression of gratitude to God for all the blessings in the form of sustenance, food and clothing, safety, health, and others. This tradition can be used as a means of social bond, maintaining mutual cooperation, and preserving the environment of *Using* community in Bakungan, Banyuwangi.

**Keywords:** *Seblang*, *bersih desa* (cleansing the village), *Using*, Banyuwangi

## 1. Introduction

*Seblang* is a ritual dance that accompanies *bersih desa* tradition in Banyuwangi. *Seblang* is an agrarian culture-based ritual dance. In Banyuwangi there are two *Seblang* rituals, in Olehsari and Bakungan Village. *Seblang* dancer in the village of Olehsari are young women who are not yet mature, while in Bakungan Village the dancers are elderly (post-menopause) women. Essentially the dancer must be clean (spiritually and physically) when perform *Seblang* dancer. The *Seblang* dance is always performed in *bersih desa* tradition every year. In the Olehsari village is performed after the Eid al-Fitr and in the Bakungan Village, Glagah District, Banyuwangi Regency is carried out after Eid al-Adha.

The *bersih desa* traditions in the Bakungan village and the *Seblang* ritual dance are cultural treasures that are naturally owned by the *Using* community --- passed down by from generation to generation. *Bersih desa* (some people call *ruwat*) is a national culture, which has been preserved by the Indonesian people since ancient era. *Seblang* dance which is a representation of Dewi Sri (Goddess of Fertility), a myth that still lives in an agrarian society. The myth of *Dewi Sri* is a famous myth in Indonesia.

## 2. Research Method

This research was conducted on the "Using" community in Bakungan Village, Glagah District, Banyuwangi Regency. The object is the *Seblang* dance, a ritual dance performed in a series of *bersih desa* traditions. The method of research is field work with a qualitative approach[1]. This research is related to the collection and recording of texts affected by the steps that are patterned in the plan of the collectors and note takers, namely conceptions, theory, objectives, tools, settings and decisions about who should be recorded[2]. Thus, an ethnographic approach is necessary to analyze the qualitative data obtained[3], [4]. Ethnographic approach can also be assumed as a description of the way of life or culture of a society[5][6].

## 3. Results And Discussion

*Bersih desa* tradition as a part of collective culture passed down from generation to generation is actually a composite of ideas, values, and also human activities. *Bersih desa* is done once a year as a manifestation of gratitude towards Almighty God[7]. Groenendael believes that *bersih desa* or *ruwatan* is an ancestral heritage that has existed since the Old Java, in 908 AD when the reign of King Dyah Balitung in the Kingdom of Old Mataram. *Bersih desa* intention is to clean the village area from evil influences. In purify addition, it also strengthens bonds between citizens, invisible "watchers" or their ancestors who are trusted by their citizens to have a positive effect[8]. *Bersih desa* as a Javanese tradition is written in the old manuscript *Serat Babad Ila-Ila*[7], [9].

*Bersih desa* carried out by the *Using* community in Banyuwangi are closely related to the *Seblang* ritual dance. Singodimajan believes that *Seblang* is the oldest ritual dance in Banyuwangi. This ritual dance is inseparable from the history of the *Using* community which is a part of the Javanese ethnic that were isolated because of endless wars with neighboring kingdoms and Dutch companies (VOC). The *Seblang* dance ritual is a symbol of connecting people and their ancestors called *buyut*[10]. *Seblang*, which is the original art of the *Using* community, is a gift to Dewi Sri, who is a Goddess of Fertility in an agrarian society. The *Seblang* dancer is considered as a bead of Dewi Sri as a symbol of fertility. *Seblang* dance rituals that carry cosmic forces are believed to bring prosperity to the *Using* community[11]. *Seblang* dancers according to the local community will be "appointed" by the handler (*pawang*), village elders, and village officials. The *Seblang* dance, as mentioned in the previous section, in Olehsari Village is performed by a teenage girl who is not yet mature, while in Bakungan Village it is danced by an old menopause woman. This *Seblang* dance is then the precursor of the Banyuwangi Gandrung dance.

The *Seblang* dancer in Bakungan now is Mbah Supani (70 years old). She is a descendant (grandson) of Mbah Dawi, her mother is Misnah who is also a *Seblang* dancer. Based on the story of Mbah Supani, she is the heir to the *Seblang* dancer "chosen" or "got a will" from the previous *Seblang* dancer. Mbah Supani has been a *Seblang* dancer for 4 years. The handler (*pawang*) of *Seblang* in Bakungan is Pak Asri. *Pawang Seblang* has an important role in the implementation, both before and after the *Seblang* ritual. Singodimajan said that the main task of the handler is to call "ancestral spirits" when the dancer is already in the arena[10]. Mbah Supani dances with two other dancers, male and female, accompanied by 15 *gendhing* musicians. *Bersih desa* and *Seblang* Bakungan ritual dance were held in the morning, Sunday

*Pahing*, August 25, 2019. The series of activities were carried out for three consecutive days, from Friday, August 23-25. In this event, the Bakungan people were busy preparing for the rituals as the highlight of the event. The sequences of the *Seblang* Bakungan ritual can be described as follows. Preparations for the *Seblang* arena is in front of the art studio. All activities seemed to be carried out by all members of the community in preparing for this event. Some make the stage, decorate the studio with coconut leaves, and various *tuwuhan* (*para bungkil*). *Para bungkil* are various kinds of vegetables such as beans, petai, mustard greens, fern leaves, and fruits such as papaya, banana, jackfruit, orange and *pala kependem* such as cassava, yams, and potatoes. In addition, a string of rice, corn, and coconut are also displayed in various corners of the village that resemble a small shop - all harvest of Bakungan people.



Fig 1 “Parabungkil” Bersih Desa (Cleaning the Village)  
Bakungan, Banyuwangi (Source: personal documents)

Villagers prepare *pecelpitik* rice cone (*tumpeng*), a whole chicken which is seared and then cooked. In 2019, the Bakungan community prepared 3000 steamed chicken (*ingkung*) to make *pecelpitik* cuisine which was provided by each head of the family. In front of their houses, the residents had started to cook 2 or 3 steamed chicken. One resident said that *pecelpitik* will later be eaten by all members of his family and guests in Bakungan Village after the salvation prayer (Interview with Mr. Sugito, 67 years old, village elder, on Sunday, August 25, 2019).

Preparation for the *Seblang* ritual performance begins at noon around 14.00 WIB. First a pilgrimage or *nyekar* to the tomb of BuyutFitri, a *Seblang* dancer. After that the journey continues to fetch water from *SumberPenawar* in WatuUla, Bakungan Village. Water from the well is believed to be efficacious as a treatment.

In the evening, exactly after the evening prayers, *iderbumi* is carried out. *Iderbumi* is trip of religious leaders, and residents starting from the front of the mosque around the village with a torch (*oncor*) for about 30 minutes in complete darkness, the electric lights are turned off. The torch is also placed on several village roads and in front of the art studio where the stage of *Seblang* is located. After the procession was finished, a group prayer was led by one of the ulemas, who pray the grateful to God for the abundance of blessings in the form of sustenance and asking for salvation for all Bakungan residents.

*Bersih desa* traditions is accompanied by *slametan* (prayer) with *pecel pithik*. The residents and the guests enjoyed the rice cone *pecel pitik*. The people's party in the village of Bakungan is held by its citizens with joy. *Pecel pitik* is also served in other traditional events. The basic ingredient of this food is chicken (about 8 months old) - this chicken is grilled in a fireplace. After that it is served with grated green coconut mixed with mashed beans. The roasted beans are mixed with spices, spicy seasonings' and stirred evenly with coconut water until the spices

are absorbed and mixed with chicken that has been cut into several parts[12]. The *Seblang* ritual, both in the village of Olehsari and Bakungan cannot innovate like other traditional arts. The ritual sequences are strongly obeyed by the people[13].

*Seblang* performances can be explained as follows. First, the *Seblang* dancer entered the stage area. *Seblang* Bakungan is a tradition that has been going on since 1639. *Seblang* is a form of gratitude for the abundance of crops. In addition, it is a wishing for the abundant harvests and avoid all kinds of disasters, diseases, and pests. Second, *Seblang Lokento*; the night performance begins with the chanting of the song *Seblang Lokento*. Chanting as a tribute to the ancestors attempt inviting the ancestors to the arena. Third, *Padha Nonton*, an invitation to watch or witness the

*Seblang* ritual. *Padha Nonton* is a form of tribute to the audience who watch the *Seblang* ritual. Moreover, it honors the struggle of the ancestors who sacrificed for the glory of Bumi Blambangan and Indonesia. *Padha Nonton* is also an invitation and message of the struggle of the people of Banyuwangi to continue to strive to achieve mutual prosperity[13].



**Fig 2.** Seblang dancers, Bakungan, Banyuwangi  
(Source: personal documents)

*Omprog* is a special crown worn by *Seblang* dancers. During the ceremony, the *omprog* looks sacred with the decoration of colorful fresh flowers and leaves. *Omprog* has a philosophical meaning as the incarnation of Dewi Sri[10].

The tradition in Bakungan Village is carried out to praise God Almighty for abundant blessings, to preserve traditions, and to strengthen harmony of the community. This is in line with the information from Mr. Fathur Rofik, Head of Bakungan Village, Ms. Yuliati, Chairperson of the PKK Team, and Mr. Jumanto, Chairperson of *Seblang* Bakungan. *Seblang* tradition is an art of peace in the *Using* community, Banyuwangi.

#### 4. Conclusion

*Seblang* is a ritual dance that accompanies the *bersih desa* tradition functioning as a binder of peace, forming brotherhood, and welfare of the *Using* Banyuwangi community. *Seblang* dance and *gendhing* movements in the form of *wangsulan* can be used as a pillar of cultural resilience because of the nuances of struggle and the spirit of the *Using* Banyuwangi community. *Bersih desa* tradition of the *Using* Banyuwangi community is full of local

wisdom, which is respecting "food" is an expression of gratitude for the harvest of the *Using* community. *Tetuwuhan* called *para bungkil* is a symbol of *tetanen* (agriculture) in an agrarian society. Bakungan's cleansing village which is an expression of gratitude to God can be used as a social bond for the community, foster mutual cooperation, and preserve the environment.

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