Preserving Sigeh Pengunten as a Mode of the Traditional Knowledge of Lampung

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Abstract

This is a preliminary study about (i) the traditional knowledge of Lampung and (ii) the aspects of traditional knowledge that are embodied in "Sigeh Pengunten," the traditional dance of Lampung. This study aims to throw light on the need to preserve Sigeh Pengunten, especially since it embodies several modes and aspects of the traditional knowledge of Lampung. The study employs a qualitative methodology. Results indicate that Sigeh Pengunten is typically performed to welcome important guests to official events hosted in Lampung. The dance form represents the identity, history, and the philosophy of life espoused by the indigenous people of Lampung. However, current interest in the dance form is limited to the movements alone; therefore, it is important to create awareness about the meaning and the significance of the movements that constitute this dance form. It is also important to prevent the extinction of this dance form. It is especially important to preserve the dance form in its entirety in order to make it accessible to future generations.

Keywords—preservation, sigeh pengunten lampung, traditional knowledge, traditional dance

1. Introduction

Typically, preservation entails such acts as defending and protecting. To preserve knowledge, therefore, is to attempt to protect it in order to ensure that it is not lost. Knowledge may be possessed by a person or a group, and by preserving it we can select, store, and actualize knowledge; doing so also allows us to focus on the experiences that arise from specific contexts. Traditional knowledge is one of the most commonly preserved kinds of knowledge.

Traditional knowledge is generally considered to be collective. In other words, it typically belongs to a community or society; it does not belong to any individual. It is usually transmitted through culture, especially orally. It is also usually made privy only to certain people in a community. Traditional knowledge is the information gathered by people in a specific community. This information is typically gathered through experience and adapted to the local culture and environment. Quite naturally, traditional evolves and grows over time. Interestingly, traditional knowledge is used to sustain society and culture, as well as to retain the genetic resources necessary for the community’s survival. Traditional knowledge also pertains to diverse fields, such as science, art, culture, health, agriculture, etc.

Indonesia is home to different modes of traditional knowledge, and these modes of knowledge pertain to a number of distinct fields. Collectively, Indonesia represents the traditional knowledge produced by over 35 provinces. Traditional knowledge also represents the identity, characteristics, history, and uniqueness of a region. In particular, Lampung, a province in Indonesia, is home to diverse forms of traditional knowledge, which pertain to food, plants, medicine, music, dance, clothing, etc. The traditional knowledge of Lampung has a long history, but it is still preserved today. Interestingly, some aspects of Lampung’s traditional knowledge are embodied in a form of dance known as Sigeh Pengunten, the most popular dance form in the region.

Sigeh Pengunten is an essential aspect of the identity of the people of Lampung. Currently, it is mandatory for this dance form to be performed prior to the commencement of every important event organized by the village and district administrations in Lampung. There is a great degree of consensus about the name of the dance form and the movements that constitute it. However, the meaning of this dance form and the symbols that constitute it remain largely misunderstood. Sigeh Pengunten is a unique aspect of Lampung’s culture, and the beauty of this dance form lies in what is believed to be its “gentle weakness.”
However, the younger generation in Lampung studies only certain Sigeh Pengunten movements. As a result, Sigeh Pengunten is currently an endangered dance form; its symbols, movements, and meaning need to be preserved carefully. The symbols employed in the dance and the meaning of this dance form are closely related to the history of the people of Lampung. These aspects are also related to their philosophy of life. Therefore, preserving traditional knowledge about Sigeh Pengunten is an effective way of preserving the dance form in its entirety.

This study focuses on the importance of preserving the forms of traditional knowledge associated with Sigeh Pengunten. By preserving this knowledge, we can educate the general public about the meaning and significance of Sigeh Pengunten. This is one way of preventing the extinction of this dance form.

2. Literature Review

Knowledge Preservation

The preservation of knowledge involves three basic processes: selecting, storing, and actualizing. More detailed ways of preserving knowledge include selecting, collecting, storing, actualizing, protecting, and accessing. The selection process involves the identification of the entity—an individual or a community—from which knowledge needs to be extracted; it also pertains to the identification of the kind of knowledge to be preserved. Following this, knowledge is mapped for collecting. Once knowledge is collected, it is stored in different forms according to specific contexts. Following this, knowledge is actualized. Actualization may also involve mentoring; more specifically, it may require the owner of the knowledge to mentor those who seek the knowledge. A number of factors lead to irregularities or loss of knowledge, and the very process of transferring knowledge is itself fraught with this risk. Once gathered and stored, knowledge must be made easily accessible.

The process of preserving knowledge can be explained using Nonaka’s four-step SECI theory:

Socialization is the process of transmitting knowledge through means such as practice, guidance, imitation, and observation. Most importantly, knowledge remains tacit even after the completion of this process.

Externalization is the conversion of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. It also involves the documentation of knowledge.

Combination is the process of combining explicit and documented forms of knowledge into newer forms of explicit knowledge.

Internalization is the conversion of explicit and documented knowledge into tacit knowledge.

Faust argues that tacit knowledge can preserved in a variety of ways. For instance, those who possess traditional knowledge can be enlisted to mentor and observe those who seek the knowledge. Similarly, knowledge can be preserved by organizing a structured and sustainable activity, or a seminar, about the transferring and converting knowledge. Tacit knowledge can also be preserved by observing and internalizing the evolving knowledge in a community. Additionally, conducting structured and in-depth interviews with knowledge owners is another way of preserving tacit knowledge (Faust, 2002).

Traditional knowledge: “Traditional” knowledge is not old or untechnical. In essence, it is “tradition-based.” It is “traditional” because the creation of this knowledge reflects the traditions of the communities that create it. Therefore the “traditional” in traditional knowledge refers to the ways in the knowledge is created, preserved, and disseminated (WIPO, 2002).

3. Methods

This study aims to throw light on Sigeh Pengunten as a dance form that embodies the traditional knowledge of the people of Lampung. The study argues that the dance form has its own symbols, values, history, meaning, and functions. Finally, the study also argues that the traditional knowledge associated with the dance form must be preserved and protected.

This study uses a qualitative approach. It is based on observation, interviews, and analyses of documentary studies related to Sigeh Pengunten and knowledge preservation. For the purpose of this study, public Sigeh Pengunten performances were observed. An interview was conducted with an indigenous informant from Lampung. The informant displayed a deep understanding of the history, art, and culture of Lampung. The interview was conducted on November 8, 2017. Documentation involved the collection and analysis of photos, videos, and documents from various sources.

4. Results and Discussion

Sigeh Pengunten represents two distinct cultural identities of Lampung: Pepadun and Saibatin. The word “sigeh” is taken from the Lampung language Pepadun, and "pengunten" is taken from the language of Lampung Saibatin. In essence, Sigeh Pengunten means whiting. There are two versions of the origin of the dance form. As per the first version, Sigeh Pengunten was inspired by a dance form called Tepak. The latter is a unique aspect of the culture of Mesuji Wiralaga, the region that borders Lampung and South Sumatra. Tepak was a welcoming dance, which was mainly performed at wedding ceremonies, or during the appointment of a Pasirah. Tepak was known as a dance of worship, and it was from this form that Sigeh Pengunten was developed. As per the second version, Sigeh Pengunten was influenced by another dance form...
called Gending Sriwijaya, which originated in South Sumatra. This dance was a unique aspect of the kingdom of Sriwijaya in Palembang. Notably, Lampung was once part of South Sumatra, and it was also very close to Palembang. Therefore, in some quarters, Sigeh Pengunten is believed to have been inspired by Gending Sriwijaya. The people of Lampung typically perform Sigeh Pengunten during important events to honor special guests. Notably, the dance form is popular in all regions of Lampung.

In 1989, a meeting involving all indigenous leaders of Lampung was held in Gedung Wanita Durian Payung Building in Bandar Lampung. The meeting pertained to the question of Lampung’s cultural identity. It was as a result of this meeting that Sigeh Pengunten was deemed the traditional dance form of Lampung. The dance form embodies the traditional knowledge of the region, and as per WIPO’s definition, the term "traditional" does not imply that the knowledge is old or untechnical. It only signifies that the knowledge is "tradition-based." It is "traditional" because it is created in ways that reflect the traditions of the society it is created by. Therefore, the term "traditional" does not relate to the nature of knowledge, but to how it is created, preserved and disseminated. In other words, Sigeh Pengunten is not an old or untechnical dance form. It embodies the identity of the people of Lampung and the region’s history.

Sigeh Pengunten consists of four important elements. The dancers are considered the first important element. Sigeh Pengunten is typically performed by an odd number of women—it usually involves at least three dancers. Typically, however, the dance involves five women. The female dance at the front of the row is considered the Queen. The second element of this dance pertains to clothing and accessories. The dancers typically use traditional Lampung clothing, such as the attires worn by brides in marriages conducted according to the traditions and customs of Lampung. In addition, the dancers also wear a variety of accessories that reflect the culture of Lampung. The dancers perform in a form of clothing called Sesapar, which includes white braided shirts, sleeveless shirts, and long clothes that reach until the dancers’ thighs. At the tip of these dresses is rumbai rumbai: a series of golden coins hung at the tip of the dancers’ attires. In addition, the filter cloth is made of cotton and traditional woven fabric. It is usually red or black in color, and it contains an embroidered gold motif, a pucuk rebung motif, or a tumpal motif. The dancers’ subordinate typically wears a sarong and a filter shawl, which is pinned to the front. Dancers also wear what is known as bebe, a fine cloth with holes and decorated edges. It is typically worn on the neck, and it also covers the dancers’ chests. Dancers also wear red or yellow scarves at their waists.

The dancers also use the following accessories: Siger, a horn-shaped crown, which is decorated with dots. Dancers usually use as many as nine sigers. These contain sharp, curved pieces and are decorated with cypress flowers. The top of the siger consists of a small decorative crown called serenja bulan, which has a sharp dome at the bottom and is decorated with flowers. The siger is made entirely of brass. Siger pending is a belt made of Dutch ringgit money with a picture of Queen Wilhelmina at the top. Balu serti is a belt made of velvet fabric; it is covered with red cloth. The top of the belt is made of round brass and is embroidered with small round hangings, which are worn over the pending. Mulan temanggan is a horn-shaped ornament, and it does not contain any motif, is worn on the neck dangled to the chest and is made of brass. Dinar, the Arabian currency, is pinned and hung on the abdomen; more specifically, it is worn on the sesapar. Buah Jukun is a small, fruit-shaped ornament on the cloth, and a few of these are strung together like a garland. They are strung together using a thread, and the garland-like ornament covers the dancers’ shoulder’s, stomachs, and backs. Gelang Burung is a bird-shaped ornament, which dancers wear on their arms. Gelang Kani is a bracelet made of carved brass. It is worn on both hands, usually under the wrists. Gelang Arab are carved ornaments worn on both wrists. Tanggai are cone-shaped ornaments made of brass, which resemble fingernails.

The third element is music. The following instruments are typically used in Sigeh Pengunten performances: a set of Talo Balak (kulintang), the gong, the tambourine, tabuh gupek, and tabuh tari. Tabuh gupek is an accompaniment used to create a fast tempo, whereas tabuh tari is used to create a slow tempo.

The fourth element pertains to the variety of movements that constitute Sigeh Pengunten. The following information was obtained through interviews with indigenous informants. The dance form consists of 17 distinct motions, and each motion has a special name in Lampung: lapah tebeng, seluwang mudik, jong simpuh, jong silo ratu, samber melayang, ngerajang, ngetir dan mangkurancang, kenui melayang, balik palo, ghubuh ghagang, nyiwau biyas, sabung melayang, tolok tebeng, mempan biyas, behah huwi, lippeto, dan jong ipek.

Lapah tebeng is performed at the beginning, as well as at the end of the performance. More specifically, it is performed before the dancers occupy the stage and when they exit the stage. The movement requires the dancers to display a strapped body position. Their right hands are placed above their left hands, and they are held in front of their chests. The hands form an ukel shape. The coming together of the thumb and the middle finger is called ngecem. The dancers are required to look straight ahead while performing this movement. During the beginning of this movement, the right foot and the left foot are placed at the same level. The hike forward is accompanied by what is called gupek. This movement requires the dancers to adjust their positions according to the "V"-shaped pattern on the floor. The dancers’ transition from a standing position to a near-sitting position represents the process of homecoming. During this movement, the dancers
with tepak are required to hold their bodies straight and follow the movement of their hands with their eyes. The dancers rotate their wrists from right to left and vice versa. The wrists move in one direction for as many as four counts before the direction is changed. At the end of the eighth count, the dancers place their hands in front of their chests. Jong simpuh requires the dancers to kneel on the stage while holding their right wrists above their left wrists; this position is known as ngecum. Jong silo ratu requires the dancers to assume a sitting position, with their legs folded. The right foot remains in front, whereas the left foot is pulled under the right foot. The position of the hand shake with arm in the crib and face following the direction of the hand that greet.

Samber melayang is a movement that requires the dancers to cross both their hands in front of their chests. They are also expected to assume the ngecum position. From this position, the dancers extend their hands until they are parallel to each other. Ngerajung can be classified into top ngerajung and bottom ngerajung. Bottom ngerajung is performed in a sitting position. The dancers are required to place the left hand under the stick on the floor, whereas the right hand must be held parallel to the shoulder. The right hand then alternates between this position and the position that represents the ukel process. Top ngerajung is performed in an upright position; more specifically, the dancers hold the upper half of their body upright, with their feet slightly lowered, as in a crouch. With their heels touching each other, the dancers stretch their right hand until it is parallel to their shoulders. The left hand is extended such that is parallel to their chests. This set of movements is alternated with the ukel process. The Ngéter movement requires the dancers to hold their bodies forward while stretching their hands until they are parallel to their chests. This movement also involves the ukel. This movement paves the way for mangkurangac. The latter requires the dancers to position their left foot behind the right foot in front and do mendak movement. They are also required to position the right hand above the right knee, whereas the left hand must be parallel to the waist. The Kenui melayang movement is very similar to the samber melayang movement. However, unlike the latter, the former requires the dancers to position their hands parallel to their waist. Balik palo requires the dancers to position their right palm in front of their foreheads, whereas the left hand must be parallel to the chest. The dancers must also simultaneously rotate their bodies backward.

The Ghabuh ghagang movement requires the dancers to walk upright and sideward, first to the right and then to the left. While doing so, the dancers are also expected to hold their elbows perpendicular to their body. At first, the left foot is positioned in front of the right foot, whereas both hands are extended forward such that the palms are bent at an angle of 180 degrees. In other words, the palms are parallel to the chest. The left foot, then, is placed behind the right foot, and the hands are placed parallel to the waist such that palms align with each other. Nyiau bias begins with the mendak position. The dancers are required to incline toward their right, at an angle of 45 degrees. The right hand is positioned in front of the left hand before the dancers assume the ukel position. Following this, the dancers place the left foot in front of the right foot and display the mendak position again. Nyiau bias requires the dancers to alternate between these two movements. The sabung movement is very similar to the samber mislaying and kenui melayang movements. However, the sabung movement requires the dancers to hold their hands in the ngecum position only. Following this, the hands are to be stretched simultaneously, such that they are parallel to the shoulder. Reject the tebeng is a movement that is done requiring the dancers to stretch their right hands such that they are parallel to the shoulders, whereas their left hands are to be held parallel to their chests. Following this, the hands are to be held upright. The dancers are also required to bring their heels together such that they form the letter "V." This movement is typically adjusted according to the dancers’ positions on stage.

The mempan bias movement is performed by placing the palms above the shoulders, whereas the feet are rotated at an angle of 90 degrees. The dancers’ bodies are also inclined toward the direction in which the feet are rotated. The Belah huwi movement is performed by four dancers facing each other. The dancers stretch their hands forward to form a “cross” shape. At the same time, they also hold their feet in the mendak position. Lipetto requires the dancers to position their right hands parallel to their faces, whereas their left hands must be held parallel to their right hands. Moreover, the dancers are required to hold their left hands in the mendak and ukel positions and rotate them at an angle of 45 degrees until they arrive at their original position. The Jong Ipek movement requires the dancers to assume a kneeling position right hand is placed above thigh and palms above knee, whereas the left hand is held parallel to the waist.

The four elements that constitute this dance form must be preserved through the four-means advocated by the SECI theory.

1. Socialization
2. As stated above, knowledge remains tacit even after the completion of this process. In other words, this process converts tacit knowledge into newer forms of tacit knowledge. In practical terms, socialization occurs in several studios located in various regions of Lampung. The dance instructor imparts training, whereas the dancers attempt to understand and internalize the training. It is worth remembering that socialization is the process of transmitting knowledge through means such as practice, guidance, imitation, and observation.
3. Internalization
   This process involves the conversion of explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge, and
individuals seek to absorb knowledge that is collected and documented. In Lampung, this process is quite widespread. For instance, several aspects of the community’s traditional knowledge have been archived and documented in the video form. The first such video made by Sai Betik Record in collaboration with Sanggar Classic Dance in 1999. This was in fact a recording of a Sigeh Pengunten performance. Another video compiled by Nowo Intan Production focuses on the most elementary details of the dance form; the video also offers a synopsis of the dance form. In addition, the video also shows a Sigeh Pengunten performance, complete with traditional music and dancers clothed in the traditional dance costumes. This video is very popular in Lampung that it is now tacit knowledge.

4. Combination
This process involves the creation and dissemination of newer forms of documented knowledge by combining different forms of documented knowledge. Notably, the people of Lampung have not yet employed this method to preserve the modes of traditional knowledge associated with Sigeh Pengunten.

5. Externalization
This process involves the conversion or codification of the knowledge possessed by an individual into explicit knowledge. This method has not been fully utilized to preserve the modes of traditional knowledge associated with Sigeh Pengunten.

Therefore, although the processes identified by the SECI theory have been employed in various forms in Lampung, they have not been employed very effectively. The relative dearth of explicit knowledge about Sigeh Pengunten in Lampung is a relevant example in this context. The traditional knowledge in Lampung is mainly converted into tacit knowledge, which may give rise to inaccurate perceptions about Sigeh Pengunten. It is important to address this situation in order to prevent the proliferation of inaccurate information. Therefore, it is necessary to preserve the traditional knowledge possessed by individuals, as well as institutions, in order to create more explicit knowledge.

Generally, hosts organize Sigeh Pengunten to convey thanks, homage, or gratitude to the guests. The dance is performed during the commencement of an event. Sigeh Pengunten is also an expression of the philosophy practiced by the people of Lampung. Notably, Kuntara Raja Niti’s book entitled “Pil Pesenggit” also focuses on the philosophy of Lampung. The book focuses on five aspects of the philosophy practiced by the people of Lampung: bejuluk beadek, nemui nyimah, nengah nyappur, sakai sambaiyan, and titie gemattei. In particular, nemui nyimah and nengah nyappur are closely related to Sigeh Pengunten. Nemui nyimah pertains to values such as generosity and acceptance. It especially focuses on the need to accept joy and sorrow. The dance also contains a number of symbolic gestures. For instance, dancers offer Sigeh betel leaves to the guests. Nengah nyappur espouses the values of interaction and commingling. Interestingly, Teak, a golden box-shaped container used to carry betel leaves, represents this aspect of their philosophy in symbolic terms. In fact, these two aspects of their philosophy are essential features of the dance form.

Another meaning implied in the variety of motion, clothing, and accessories as well as music create a unity of this dance. Sigeh Pengunten consists of 17 distinct motifs, which are expressed through graceful movements. For instance, the Lapah tebeng motif is used to express congratulations to the guests. The dancers walk in a formation, and those at the front carry sigeh and pengunten, which is presented to the guests. This is another symbolic aspect of the dance form. The Seluwang mudik motif evokes what could be called “gentle weakness.” It is characterized by the dancers’ flexible hand movements. The Jong simpuh motif is used to convey respect to important and honorable guests. Jong siro raiu intended to greet from the right side to the left, and the front means to all guests who are willing to attend the event. The Sambur melayang, kenui melayang, and sabung melayang motifs express the gentler, and more feminine, aspects of the dance form. The motifs ngerunjung and ngetir represent the element of flexibility, whereas balik palo and ghubuh ghagang represent beauty and gentleness respectively.

The clothing and accessories worn by the dancers also have special meaning. Their attire symbolizes the harmony of the two indigenous tribes of Lampung: Lampung Pepadun and Lampung Saibatin. Siger is as an accessorium crown, which consists of nine shoots that are shaped like horns. Each shoot represents the nine titles in tribal society from pepadun, the clan Abung Siwo Mego. Siger is also an official symbol of the province of Lampung. Tapis fabric, the traditional cloth of Lampung, symbolizes the social status of its wearer. It is believed that the fabric can protect the wearer from evil spirits and also works as a form of greatness of creator of the universe. The dancers also carry with them a golden cheek containing whiting. This is typically given to the guest of honor. It also symbolizes the host’s goodwill toward the guests.

Other supporting accessories symbolize the grandeur, prosperity, and cultural wealth of Lampung. The clothing and accessories are typically preferred in three colors: white, red, and gold. White symbolizes the cleanliness, purity, and simplicity of the people of Lampung; it also represents their ability to accept joy and sorrow. Red symbolizes the joy and happiness of the hosts to welcome the guests; the latter are also revered and much respected. Gold symbolizes prosperity. The music that accompanies a Sigeh Pengunten performance is typically joyful; it is also intended as a welcome to the guests.
Sigeh Pengunten embodies the traditional knowledge of Lampung, and it is also widely considered the traditional dance of Lampung. Therefore, it is all the more important to preserve the modes of traditional knowledge associated with this dance form. And to do so is to preserve the four elements that constitute Sigeh Pengunten and to create awareness about the philosophy practiced by the people of Lampung.

As discussed above, knowledge can be preserved by selecting, collecting, storing, actualizing, protecting, and accessing crucial information. Thus, Sigeh Pengunten has been chosen (selected) in order to preserve the traditional knowledge of Lampung. This has been done with the approval of Lampung Saibatin and Lampung Pepadun. The modes of knowledge associated with Sigeh Pengunten are then mapped in order to make it easier to collect important information about the traditional knowledge of Lampung. To this end, it is important that the provincial government cooperate with the local government—the regency or the municipality—and traditional dance and data centers in Lampung. Cooperation between these entities can be mandated by a gubernatorial order or other policies. Following this, knowledge can be stored in suitable forms—as in a video or a book. It is important that these forms explain the history and the significance of the dance form.

Explicit knowledge can then be actualized; this can be done by sharing the knowledge with the community. Actualization may also require the owners of the knowledge to mentor those who seek it. Actualization of explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge is also in accordance with Nonaka's theory. By internalizing knowledge, we can also create newer forms of knowledge. That is, when the explicit knowledge about Sigeh Pengunten, which may be embodied in videos and books, is disseminated throughout the province of Lampung, it may pave the way for the emergence of newer forms of tacit knowledge. Following this, it is necessary to determine the best way to preserve and protect these forms of knowledge. Finally, it is necessary to ensure that the explicit knowledge about the dance form can be accessed easily and efficiently. Most importantly, explicit knowledge is concrete proof of the fact that Sigeh Pengunten is an essential aspect of the culture and traditional knowledge of Lampung. This prevents people and institutions from appropriating this dance form.

5. Conclusions

This study argues that Sigeh Pengunten embodies several aspects of the traditional knowledge of Lampung. Although it is the traditional dance of Lampung, Sigeh Pengunten is not obsolete or untechnical. Therefore, it is erroneous to think that it must be replaced by a new and modern dance form. Sigeh Pengunten represents the history, meaning, identity, and the philosophy of life practiced by the people of Lampung. Efforts have been made to preserve this dance form, but more effort is needed to preserve its history, value, and uniqueness. It is especially important to preserve the dance form in its entirety in order to make it accessible to future generations. To this end, it is necessary to disseminate explicit knowledge, which is easier to access and internalize. In addition, explicit knowledge also prevents people and institutions from appropriating this dance form.

Recommendation

This research embodied in this study is preliminary. It is hoped that the researcher can explore the ways in which Sigeh Pengunten is perceived in various parts of the province of Lampung. In other words, there is great scope for a comparative study. In addition, it is necessary that the local government of Lampung device policies to facilitate the production of books and videos about Sigeh Pengunten. This explicit knowledge can then be disseminated in formal (schools) and informal settings (Sanggar) throughout Lampung. The indigenous leaders of Lampung also have an important role to play. They can identify and gather the various forms of tacit knowledge about Sigeh Pengunten owned by traditional leaders, which can then be disseminated throughout Lampung.

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