



Article

**Spiritual Communication in the Tiban Tradition in Trenggalek Regency**

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the existence of spiritual communication in the Tiban art tradition in the Jajar Village community, Trenggalek Regency. The background to this study began with an interest in spiritual forms that occur in a tradition that develops in society. To see the spiritual communication that occurs, the method used in this study is qualitative with a phenomenological approach, to see every unusual phenomenon that occurs in Tiban. The theory used is the Ritual Communication Theory which is then divided into 5 important points in it. The results of this study are that Tiban is one way that is considered effective to ask for rain, the beliefs held by the community began with the Tiban ritual that has been carried out from year to year to become an art, besides that in Tiban contains meaning with the essence as a medium of communication by humans with God to convey a message and produce a significant impact. The data in the study were obtained from directly seeing the ritual being carried out as well as interviews to literature studies. Keywords: Spiritual Communication, Tradition, Tiban

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## INTRODUCTION

Communication is one of the basic needs for humans, the existence of communication can form relationships between humans and social interactions, because communication can be seen as the central point of building a society, when ignoring the role of communication will have an impact on social problems that are more difficult to overcome (Milyane et al., 2022:80). Communication is a form of the process of conveying messages in the form of meaningful symbols, a combination of thoughts and feelings in the form of information, ideas, hopes, beliefs, appeals made by someone to another person either directly or through the media with the aim of changing attitudes, views and behavior (Nurdin et al., 2013:8). The purpose of communication is to influence all members of the organization so that together they can achieve the goals of the organization. With intense communication, a meaning in the communicator can be conveyed precisely to the communicant (Nurhadi, 2017:10-11). Communication and human behavior patterns are like two elements that will always go hand in hand in human life, so that both are very important in the process of human life development. Communication studies have developed more broadly, not only discussing the

nature of horizontal communication but also vertical communication where communication is no longer carried out between humans but rather the relationship between humans and the creator which is usually carried out through symbols or religious rituals carried out to fulfill basic needs and spiritual needs (Sa'adah, 2019: 2-3). The nature of vertical communication is commonly known as transcendental communication, where this communication is a form of human thinking about how he finds the laws of nature and the existence of human communication with God. In his study, transcendental communication can transform into spiritual communication built on human consciousness at the highest level between himself and God. (Syam, 2015: 45) Transcendental communication is a bridge over human limitations in fulfilling his social communication needs. Communication that describes the meaning of the primordial agreement of declaring beliefs and faith for every human being to understand that God has the nature of universal control. In transcendental communication contains theological, prophetic, and authoritative values that can be seen relationally in the communication process (AS & Rustandi, 2022: 49)

In Transcendental Communication there is always a form of spiritual practice, but in spirituality it has a universal nature, without any time limits, not tied to a particular religion but to life experiences, sacredness without being tied to the practice of a religion so that the spiritual meaning has developed in such a way. Spirituality is a basic belief in the existence of a great power that is able to regulate the universe and there is a purpose in each person (Hendrawan, 2009: 18).

The meaning of spirituality has emerged in local cultures where it contains a meaning to direct society to care, maintain and preserve the surrounding environment (Budi Setyaningrum, 2018: 150). So that spiritual communication is included in the expressive communication category of understanding the meaning that is manifested in a ritual communication that is carried out collectively that can be felt and believed in its existence by humans (Sa'adah, 2019: 30-32.) This is what makes communication that occurs in a tradition or culture will certainly continue and develop along with the development of the tradition itself. The inability of humans to connect directly through the inner self with God, gives rise to various ways to reach the realm of God, often Javanese people communicate with God through certain media that are closely related to tradition. Tradition is taken from the word *Traditium*, meaning something that has been transmitted and inherited from the past to the present. So that a meaning of tradition emerged as a legacy of the past which was then carried out, preserved and believed until now, and the tradition in question can be in the form of values, norms and behavioral patterns that are formed from various aspects of life. Another meaning of Tradition is a form of habit in certain community groups which is then carried out from generation to generation, and also becomes a mechanism that helps in the development of society (Susanti & Lestari, 2020: 98). Tradition becomes a cultural identity in a certain community group, with a cultural background that develops in the community, which is carried out from generation to generation from year to year to maintain its existence. A tradition can be a benchmark for humans in behaving and a source of culture for its community in adapting. Traditions that are preserved from generation to generation can become a characteristic and identity

## **METHODS**

This study chose to use a qualitative method. A study that aims to gain a deep understanding of human and social conditions and take meaning from the surrounding environment which then influences their behavior patterns with a natural setting (Rukin 2019: 14). To help with the method used, this study uses a phenomenological approach proposed by Edmund Husserl. The use of qualitative methods with a phenomenological approach is because philosophically the phenomenological approach seeks to explain the meaning of life experiences that are expressed naturally (Kuswarno, 2007: 164-166). There is an effort to let reality express itself naturally, the subjects in this study are allowed to tell their experiences in the phenomena that occur in the Tiban art tradition. This is relevant in this study because the object of study is a tradition that develops in society, which will only examine the

tradition as a whole without changing the elements or other things that have been determined in this tradition. The theory used to see the problems in this study is the Ritual Communication theory of Gunter Senft and Ellen Basso. Where there are several specific points that look in more detail at the stages of spirituality in communication. Ritual is one of the media where social values can be expressed. To see this in more detail, Senft and Basso divide it into the following points: (1) Linguistics, (2) Behavior, (3) Micro and Macro Social, (4) Formality and Moral Power, (5) Cline or Indicators. This research took place when the tibana occurred in Jajar Village, Gandusari, Trenggalek.

The selection of this research location was because Jajar Village is rich in culture and tradition. With a majority of Muslims with a Javanese background, they still maintain Javanese traditions to this day. The community in Jajar Village is still very strong in ancestral values that continue to be maintained and their existence is maintained. Data collection techniques are carried out through several stages, including: Informants, who understand directly how the Tibana tradition is in Jajar Village. To strengthen this research, informants were selected from several figures who were considered to have knowledge, experience and were actively involved in implementing the Tibana tradition. The figures are Mbah Misyar as the MC in the implementation, Mbah Wito as a cultural figure and also a musical instrument player in Tibana, and Pak Gimani, and Pak Saini as the Tibana actors. Observation, by directly participating in the elements being studied, is one of the stages carried out in this study. Where the researcher directly sees the research object and observes everything that happens in the implementation of the Tibana tradition, this stage was carried out on June 26, 2022..

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Tibana Tradition**

Tibana is believed to have its history, one time people flocked to their rice fields to plow the fields with their respective buffaloes, but one day a long dry season came which made them short of water to plow their fields, with the water supply starting to run low the community had the initiative to take their buffaloes to a water source, they called it belik. When they arrived there, it turned out that the water supply was also running low so that it would not be enough if all the buffaloes drank. Because of that, the buffalo herders fought over each other and ended up fighting each other. They used whips, the whips that were originally used to herd buffaloes changed their function to become weapons used for fighting. And suddenly the sky got darker and then it rained, since then the community has assumed that by whipping each other to fight over water it can make it rain (Interview, Misyar, May 18, 2023). The term "Tibana" comes from the word "tiba" in Javanese which means fall. There is a meaning contained in the Tibana tradition, namely the emergence of something unexpected. The term Tibana also means rain that suddenly falls from the sky without warning (Ihtiar, 2016). In Jajar Village, Trenggalek Regency, the Tibana tradition is a legacy from our ancestors that is still carried out by the community today. Tibana has become a tradition and an inseparable part of the lives of the people in this village. Over time and its development, the Tibana tradition has not only attracted the attention of local villagers, but has also attracted the interest of people outside Jajar Village from various regions, because over time the tradition that was originally only a ritual to summon rain has developed into an art that is typical of this village. In the past, the Tibana tradition was a sacred moment that was only carried out when a long dry season arrived, but now Tibana can be carried out momentarily. Even so, in Tibana the values and rules have not changed over time, they still carry the rules and characteristics that have been left behind by their ancestors. Although the majority of the people of Jajar Village are Muslim and Tibana is not something that is normalized in Islam, they still preserve the Tibana tradition because of the mutual respect for the traditions that have been brought by their ancestors. become part of the culture that should be preserved so that it does not fade with time tradition emerged since the era of ignorance which was previously carried out and believed by non-Muslim communities, until it became a tradition that is still carried out from year to year (Interview, Saini, May 19, 2023).

It is not known for sure when exactly the Tibana tradition emerged and was preserved

in Jajar Village, this tradition has existed for hundreds of years during the time of our ancestors "this tradition has existed since my grandparents, while I myself was born in the 70s" (Interview, Saini, May 19, 2023). Because of its long existence, Tiban has been taken out of town to be competed, and its players often receive invitations from various regions to take part in Tiban there (Interview, Gimán, May 19, 2022)

Tiban is held during the day, usually starting at 13.00 WIB to 15.00 WIB. If the time is up but the rain has not fallen, then Tiban will be carried out repeatedly for weeks until the rain really falls heavily. With the implementation of Tiban which is carried out routinely every year, the community hopes that the ancestral cultural heritage will remain sustainable and become a characteristic of the nation that will continue to live and develop, so that the community will not forget the existence of local cultural wisdom. Jajar Village that Tiban is a local wisdom where this is the result of the philosophical thoughts of the ancestors, a form of *ijtihad* with deep contemplation in reading the code of nature (Interview, Wito, May 20, 2022)

### **Representation of Ritual Communication in Tradition**

According to Gunter Senft and Ellen Basso, the characteristics of the representation of ritual communication in tradition can be seen from 5 aspects in it, including:

#### **Linguistics**

Linguistics as a scientific study of language, explains that language as a means of communication plays an important role as a means of social interaction, so that there is a meaning from the communicator and the communicant. As social beings, humans need interaction with other humans, the surrounding environment, and the creator

Language often plays a major role in an action carried out by a person or group in a society, because language forms an interaction in the behavior they do. The form of speech or language in rituals has a function as a metapragmatic figure to achieve the stages of the actions taken. Where the metapragmatic nature as a form of discourse is then contextualized in the function of linguistics itself (Basso, 1852: 5)

In the implementation of Tiban, language plays an important role used by the figures and actors. Tiban figures who have more capacity to speak throughout the show. Because the majority of the population of Jajar Village are Javanese, the language commonly used is Javanese with *krama alus* which is also combined with Indonesian in general. This language is symbolized during the interaction of the MC to open the event until becoming a commentator at each stage of the Tiban implementation. There is no special script for an MC when he is in the field, everything is only based on his spontaneity who already understands very well how the flow of Tiban is carried out. It's just that occasionally he will issue a warning as a form of warning when there is an incident that violates the rules of Tiban itself. As for the perpetrators, before the whipping action appears, they communicate first to agree on the rules that have been set in Tiban. Tiban as a form of competing in supernatural powers by whipping each other will certainly be very worrying for the perpetrators, therefore for the perpetrators of Tiban, of course they have spiritual prayers and *aji-aji* that are used as a fortress for themselves, although they are not shown openly because this is one of the private areas of the Tiban perpetrators.

#### **Behavior**

Each tradition has its own uniqueness and characteristics, therefore local communities try to maintain these traditions by trying to maintain the values contained in the tradition. In Jajar Village, the Tiban tradition has a distinctive behavioral pattern, which is shown in every movement carried out in Tiban. There are 3 types of whipping carried out in Jajar, namely (1) *Keweran*, which means retaliating by whipping while holding the belt used by the opponent, (2) *Sabetan*, which is one of the whippers whipping his opponent first, and (3) *Tayungan*, which whips alternately accompanied by music from the gamelan being played (Interview, Misyar, May 18, 2023).

The behavioral pattern in Tiban is also shown in the rules and characteristics carried out by the perpetrators through music, namely the spontaneous dance of the perpetrators in between the whipping action. For the music in Tiban in Jajar Village, the old rhythms that

have been used since long ago are still maintained, because the rhythm produced by the music in Tiban can affect the course of Tiban in the field. The rhythm is produced by traditional gamelan musical instruments. Musical accompaniment from various gamelan musical instruments to further enliven the event. In the past, the musical instruments used were only kentongan and kendang, but over time the musical instruments used have become more numerous and varied, ranging from Gendang, Kentongan, Saron and Gong. In the past, the musical instruments used were only kentongan and kendang. Gamelan is one of the musical instruments that is an important part of the Tiban performance, through the rhythm produced by each combination of gamelan musical instruments, the actors are increasingly immersed in every movement they make.

### **Micro and Macro Social**

In the sociology of communication, there are two directions that are commonly used to view a social problem that arises, namely micro and macro. Where both have differences, the difference is that macro sees something much broader in the group or social system, while the micro perspective emphasizes the relationship between individuals (Nugroho, 2021: 186). Micro and macro social in the Tiban tradition play a role in a larger and smaller scope. As with the development of the times, the Tiban Tradition has developed into an art that often occurs at two times at once. If in the past it was interpreted as a ritual by the surrounding community, now Tiban can be carried out as a much larger and more developed momentous event.

The existence of micro social with a much smaller scope is reflected when a Tiban performance takes place. This cannot be separated from the role of local village community groups who also participate in preparing the event. In every Tiban performance, of course, a special committee is formed to prepare the event from start to finish. There is no written structure in each event, only those who really understand how Tiban works. Likewise, for the perpetrators of Tiban in Jajar Village, there is no age limit, from any group they are welcome to participate in enlivening this tradition. This freedom aims to have a positive impact on the next generation, because young people can participate in feeling the sensation of the Tiban tradition directly so that this tradition will be maintained forever. For the perpetrators of Tiban, participating in it will provide its own satisfaction, because not just anyone can do it. It can be likened to not participating in Tiban like someone who does not get basic necessities (Interview, Misyar, May 18, 2023).

Meanwhile, the form of Macro is based on the Tiban tradition which can widely occur in various regions. Indonesia has a culture that has developed in various regions with its own uniqueness and diversity, such as in the Tiban tradition developed in various regions in southern East Java, such as in Kediri, Blitar, Tulungagung to Trenggalek. Even so, in various regions it has its own meaning why Tiban has been able to develop until now.

In Kediri, it is usually held in Purwokerto Village, Ngadiluwih District, Tiban is held in the month of Sura at the Rajakaya cattle market in Purwokerto Village. In this village, before Tiban is held, it begins with the opening of the parade which is carried out from the village hall to the market with flowers scattered along the way and carrying tumpeng, this parade is carried out by players, landang and Tiban elders who then place offerings on the stage and then continue praying led by the elders (Agustina & Salim, 2021:16-19). In Kediri, Tiban exists and develops starting from the greed of the community for abundant natural resources to the point of making them forget themselves, but suddenly a long dry season arrives which causes all animals and plants to die. Until then the elders received instructions to make a sacrifice as atonement for sins until blood dripped to the ground, the sacrifice was carried out in the form of whipping each other under the scorching sun, and sure enough in a third of the game the sky suddenly became cloudy until heavy rain fell (Febiola, 2020:48-49). In Tulungagung, Tiban is carried out as an event to show self-existence for its people and the desire that Tiban will continue to exist and live there. Tiban is also considered as a gratifier of instincts that include comfort, security and recreation (Putri, 2020:131). Meanwhile, in Trenggalek, the Tiban tradition developed starting from Trenggalek which is known as an area rich in natural resources, which makes the lives of its people prosperous. Especially in

the agricultural sector, to process agricultural products, people use traditional methods, one of which is plowing the fields using buffaloes (Ihtiar, 2016:110). This also happened in Jajar Village, Trenggalek, which believes that Tiban is one of the means that is considered effective in asking for immediate rain.

### **Formality and Moral Power**

The existence of formal ethics in a performance will certainly always be there to make the event more structured. In Tiban, the application of formality lies in the rules that apply, namely the Tiban movement in Jajar Village is prohibited from whipping the shoulder area up and the navel down, only the middle body area is allowed. If this is accidentally done, a warning will be given. However, if what happens is simultaneous whipping, it will be stopped immediately. This rule will be explained by the landang before Tiban begins (Interview, Misyar, May 18, 2023). This rule exists because in Tiban, the chest is considered a point of someone's authority. Giran, as one of the Tiban observers, said that a fighter's self-esteem lies in the front of the body, therefore when the whip hits the chest, it is like self-esteem has been uprooted. The tool used in whipping is called sodho which comes from woven aren palm fronds, aren palm fronds are chosen because they have a flexible and strong texture so that they do not break easily when used. Another rule that must also be obeyed by the perpetrators of the Tiban tradition is to take off their clothes first before the whipping action takes place, this is a symbol of masculinity by the Tiban perpetrators who indirectly have the aim of making the wounds caused by whipping more visible as a consideration for assessment. That is why the perpetrators of Tiban are generally men, this is not because the figure of women looks weak but rather the factor of the genitals of the women themselves

Formality is also reflected by the perpetrators of Tiban, in every Tiban held in Jajar Village, the community will always coordinate directly with the Police Chief to maintain security during the performance. Because when Tiban is carried out in Jajar, it is not only attended by local residents, but also many Tiban perpetrators from outside the city who participate in enlivening it

In Tiban there is also a moral value, as is always emphasized in the Tiban tradition in Jajar Village, although in the implementation of Tiban there is a fight that seems hostile to each other, but this only happens in the arena. Because in Jajar Village this tradition is passed down from generation to generation with noble values, one of which is the value of sportsmanship where there is a moral awareness that the opponent is a friend. Tiban is carried out by two people who whip each other in an arena that has been circled by the audience, supervised by the match field starting with the accompaniment of music being played, this is also an interesting feature because the presence of music can make movements in harmony and look good to see. The diversity of traditions that have developed with their own characteristics makes the tradition look more interesting with the various meanings contained in it. Like the Tiban tradition in Jajar Village with its characteristics and characteristics that are still maintained today. The rules in the implementation, types of movements in whipping, other elements that support the implementation, and the beliefs of the community. In every implementation of Tiban, it is not just a contest of magical powers symbolized through movements, behind what happens there is a moral value that the Tiban performance is one proof of the harmony of the community to continue to preserve this tradition.

### **Indicators**

The existence of a culture in a nation can form a distinctive characteristic that then develops along with the progress of the times, the culture that develops in a nation is called local culture, a creative result. In a nation, of course, it has its own belief system, which will be adopted and preserved. Culture is an expressive symbol as an expression of the existence of art itself, art cannot be separated from a society and is the reason for a cultural element that is created. Art is an expression of creativity from the existence of culture itself, Koentjaraningrat in (Putri, 2020:8). The local culture that developed in Jajar Village contains

spiritual practices as a form of communication between humans and God, and also God and nature. One form of spiritual communication is manifested in a Tiban art tradition which until now is believed to be an effective way that must be done by the community to pray for rain.

Tiban is timeless. The existence of community belief in this tradition is still maintained in this modern era, as evidenced by the implementation of the Tiban tradition in 2022. The Tiban figures and actors are very enthusiastic in welcoming this traditional performance. There is a belief that rain will soon fall through the Tiban tradition, because the majority of people in this village are farmers, so their needs are very crucial for them. This tradition is carried out every September, not without reason for this choice because in that month there is usually a long dry season (Interview, Saini, May 19, 2023). Although the Tiban tradition has been going on for quite a long time, the existence of Tiban still survives to color the diversity in Jajar village, because in Gandusari District, Jajar Village is the only village that still maintains this tradition.

Unconsciously, every human behavior that occurs along with a tradition will always contain the meaning of belief in the tradition, both in the ancestors who are considered the main bearers of the tradition in the area or in God or something that is considered an offering. Because humans have had a connection with a belief system and religion since birth, so this influences the tendency to believe in something that has supernatural powers and something that becomes an object of offering (Abidin & Saebani, 2014:82).

Traditions are developed because of the attachment to a culture that has become a characteristic of an area, including a tradition in Jajar Village, Trenggalek Regency. Preservation as an effort to maintain and maintain a culture so that it remains the same as it is, in the Big Indonesian Dictionary, preservation comes from the word "lestari" which means as before. As a legacy that has been carried out by ancestors, the Tiban tradition is no longer a ritual tradition, but more than that this tradition has become the local wisdom of Jajar Village.

The existence of several aspects gives rise to spiritual communication that often occurs in a tradition. As in the Tiban tradition which essentially contains a meaning of spiritual communication carried out by humans with God. The existence of spiritual communication in Tiban is based on the beliefs of the communicants and the belief in the purpose of the communication. In the Tiban tradition there is an element of spiritual communication between humans and God which is attempted to convey a message. Spiritual communication also has the nature of each belief in what is inside humans. A belief that is considered sacred because it is considered capable of connecting humans with the highest substance in order to obtain a peaceful, holy, clean life and is considered a form of gratitude to God, Gods or ancestral spirits (Ariestarini, 2020:11). In the Tiban tradition, the form of Spiritual Communication is based on things that are considered important, including (1) the form of communication with God is when the prayer is read before the tradition begins and (2) when the whipping match occurs. Through the movements of whipping each other until blood is drawn which is considered a sacrifice to nature and a request to God to ask nature to send rain. Nina Winangsih Syam mentioned in the sense of transcendental communication, with a similar meaning to spiritual communication, namely a form of communication that occurs within oneself with something outside oneself and then realized by the individual because of the awareness of the essence behind existence. Which can then be interpreted that communication can also explain the relationships between humans and God or ancestors which are often reflected through a tradition, a ritual that has been specifically designed for a certain purpose.

## **CONCLUSION**

Tiban is a tradition of ancestral arts that is still maintained and preserved from time to time, along with its development there are changes that appear significant, starting from the musical instruments used to the implementation which was originally only a ritual developed into a momentary art. This art shows two people competing in their magical powers by whipping each other using sodho aren. In Jajar Village, Trenggalek, this traditional art has distinctive

movements that are still maintained today, these movements include Keweran, Sabetan, and Tayungan. It can be concluded in this study that in the Tiban art tradition there is an essence of the meaning of interaction between humans and God, namely the existence of a request made by humans through the tradition of whipping each other so that rain will fall soon. The Tiban tradition is considered a means of communicating with God because of the symbols that are carried out through interaction. In addition to having these functions and purposes, Tiban is also a form of expression and existence of a sense of mutual respect for what has been left behind by our ancestors.

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