



Exploring the Cultural Identity of *Ebleg* Kebumen: An Ethnographic Approach

Nazla Maharani Umaya¹, Setia Naka Andrian², Nindya Juniarti^{*3}

^{1,2,3}Indonesian Language and Literature Education, Pascasarjana, Universitas Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia.

*Corresponding Author: nindyaju20@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 25 August 2025
Revised 19 November 2025
Accepted 21 November 2025
Available online 30 April 2026

E-ISSN: [2654-3591](#)

P-ISSN: [2623-1999](#)

How to cite:

Umaya, N.M., Andrian, S.K., & Juniarti, N (2026). Exploring the cultural identity of *Ebleg* Kebumen: An ethnographic approach. *International Journal of Culture and Art Studies*, 9(2), 001-010.

ABSTRACT

This study explores the traditional performing arts of *Ebleg* and *Kuda lumping* in Central Java, Indonesia. Using a qualitative methodology with an emic perspective, the research examines the social context, participants, and activities associated with these performances. *Ebleg*, rooted in Kebumen's cultural heritage, showcases unique costumes and narratives that reflect local identity and history. The findings reveal how these performances serve as mediums for cultural expression and community solidarity, while also highlighting the challenges of preserving such traditions amid an aging performer population and declining interest from younger generations. The study underscores the importance of community involvement in cultural preservation and advocates broader engagement to ensure the continuity and evolution of *Ebleg* as a vital aspect of local heritage. Ultimately, this research contributes to understanding the dynamic interplay between traditional arts and contemporary cultural identity in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Ebleg*, *Ethnography*, *Culture*, *Kebumen*



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International.
<http://doi.org/10.32734/ijcas.v10i1.22582>

1. Introduction

Indonesia, a country with diverse ethnicities, offers a variety of artistic expressions that capture the values and customs of its citizens. One popular art form is *Kuda Lumping*. This dance often appears in public spaces and holds broader social significance, as it not only showcases beautiful movements but also captures the essence of rural Indonesian civilization. *Kuda lumping* has gained popularity for its dynamic movements, bamboo horse props, and enthusiastic gamelan accompaniment. Maharani et al., (2024) note that this dance is known for its appeal and uniqueness, which is further enhanced by transcendental activities such as trance states or extreme performances like swallowing glass shards, walking on hot coals, or body piercing. *Kuda lumping* has spread to various places, such as Banjarnegara (Amin et al., 2017), Magelang (Jauhari, 2017), Cilacap (Ningtias et al., 2024), and Kebumen (Ariffatonah, 2016). In this region, *Kuda lumping* is commonly known as *Ebleg*. Ananda, (2016) explains that *Ebleg* is a performing art related to preservation that requires a great deal of creativity, effort, knowledge, and local properties. *Ebleg* is not just a performance, but also a living history passed down orally by its performers, enriching the region's cultural heritage. Islami & Rukiah, (2019) show that *Ebleg* performances are characterized by unique costumes that reflect local culture and are widely recognized as an important aspect of community identity.

These costumes often feature traditional Javanese motifs and colors, enhancing the dance's visual appeal. In addition, *Ebleg* features a distinctive performance procession that is closely linked to the animistic and dynamic beliefs of traditional Javanese society. This connection to spirituality and ancestral traditions adds another layer of meaning to the performance, making it not only entertaining but also culturally significant. The *Ebleg* heritage, passed down from generation to generation, serves as an important bridge between the

past and the present, allowing younger generations to engage with their cultural heritage. As a result, *Ebleg* is a testament to the resilience and creativity of Javanese society, demonstrating how traditional art forms can adapt while retaining their core values and beliefs.

Studies on *Ebleg* remain very limited and have not comprehensively examined aspects of performance and ritual, and their relationship to community identity, especially in interpretive and theoretical contexts. To fill this gap, this study employs a multidisciplinary approach grounded in Cultural Identity Theory, Interpretive Ethnography, and the Concepts of Performance and Ritual. The Cultural Identity Theory developed by Stuart Hall is highly relevant in this context. Hall argues that identity is not static but a product that continues to evolve alongside history and culture. He describes cultural identity as a manifestation of the social and cultural identity of a community, with a particular focus on intangible culture, which encompasses community identity and cultural practices (Yang et al., 2021). In Hall's view, cultural identity can be understood as the “*nama*” ascribed to the ways narratives of the past position individuals and groups within the contexts of history and power.

This theory is combined with the Interpretive Ethnography approach developed by Clifford Geertz. Interpretive ethnography allows researchers not only to observe but also to interpret cultural meanings by understanding the life experiences of people involved in the arts. Geertz emphasizes the importance of ‘thick description’, which means exploring the meaning behind cultural actions, including traditional performances such as *Ebleg*, in their social and spiritual contexts (Geertz, 2008). In addition, Victor Turner's theory of Performance and Ritual Concepts also serves as a key framework. Turner argues that rituals facilitate transitions for individuals or groups from one social status to another, often marked by ambiguity and the potential for change. Rituals not only reflect the social order but can also actively change it through a process of inversion or reversal of social norms (Maxwell, 2008). In the context of *Ebleg*, performance and trance rituals are not merely acts but rather powerful processes of social and spiritual transformation for the community. By combining these three theories, this study not only maps performances and rituals descriptively but also analyses the cultural identities formed, maintained, and transformed through *Ebleg* performances. This multidisciplinary approach provides a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of *Ebleg*'s role as a symbol of cultural identity and active social practice in Kebumen society.

In line with the current dynamics and the combination of theories, the problem can be posed as follows: How does *Ebleg* represent the cultural identity of the Kebumen community through its performative and ritual elements? And how is this heritage preserved in the context of modernity? Through this, the article can explain the cultural and spiritual meaning of *Ebleg* as a form of community identity expression and document its practices and dynamics to preserve art amid social change.

2. Method

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach to obtain data. This method was used to gain an in-depth understanding of social meanings and phenomena (Bagaskara et al., 2024), as it is particularly well-suited to examining traditional art activities rich in cultural meaning, social performance, and symbolic value. The phenomena discovered were then examined in terms of the interrelated unity between people, places, and activities. The research location was in Central Java, one of the centers of *Kuda lumping* or *Ebleg* performances, specifically in Wonorejo Village, Karanganyar Subdistrict, Kebumen Regency. The research subjects consisted of artists, audience members, and community leaders directly involved in the performances. Data collection techniques included participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and visual documentation. The researcher was directly involved in the community's life, attending rehearsals and performances and engaging in dialogue with cultural practitioners to gain a contextual understanding of the performances' meanings.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive-qualitative methods, namely by organizing data into narratives and thematic categories. Descriptive-qualitative research is appropriate because it describes data in narrative form rather than numbers (Perangin-angin et al., 2024). This is in line with the main focus of the analysis in this article. The main focus is to reveal the cultural meanings embedded in the form, movements, music, costumes, and rituals accompanying the *Kuda lumping* performance. The meanings extracted are adapted to the conditions in the field (Dennis & Opore Darko, 2024). This study also highlights those performances are a space for intercultural interaction and a means of preserving local values. With this approach, the study is expected to reveal the cultural meanings and transformation processes in *Kuda lumping* performances, while enriching scientific knowledge of culture and traditional performing arts.

Overall, the methodological justification for this descriptive qualitative approach lies in its ability to capture the depth of cultural meaning and social interaction in the context of traditional arts such as *Kuda Lumpung*, which cannot be measured quantitatively. This approach aligns with the research objective of revealing cultural

meaning, transformation processes, and the preservation of local values through contextual, descriptive narratives, thereby making a profound scientific contribution to the study of culture and the performing arts.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Result

Performative elements that support cultural interpretation were found, as follows.

Table 1. Elements that support interpretation

No.	Element	Utility	Role in the Performances
1.	Horse made of woven bamboo	Dancing mediums	The main actor's performances
2.	Gamelan	Accompanying Music	Dancer's Support
3.	Costume and makeup	Something Worn by Dancers	Dancer's Support
4.	<i>Sesaji</i> (offers)	The media prays for the ancestors to God	Interpretation of Java's Culture

Table 2. Comparison of Similar Performances

No.	Aspect	<i>Ebleg</i>	<i>Jathilan</i>	<i>Reog</i>
1	Religiosity	Strong and intense	Present, but more controlled	Limited, emphasizing physical strength
2	Background Music	Banyumasan <i>gamelan</i>	Classical Javanese gamelan (Yogyakarta style)	<i>Reog gamelan</i> (strong and majestic / <i>horeg</i> sound system)
3	Introductory Language	<i>Ngapak</i> Javanese	High-register Javanese	East Javanese dialect

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1 General Description of *Ebleg* Performance

Ebleg is a traditional dance performance rooted in the cultural heritage of Kebumen, Central Java, and is distinguished by its unique visual and performative elements (Santosa et al., 2017). This traditional art form is particularly noted for its costume designs, which feature motifs resembling soldiers riding horses, symbolizing strength, valor, and cultural identity. One of the villages that continues to preserve and practice *Ebleg* is Wonorejo Village, located in the Karanganyar District of Kebumen Regency. According to the village head, Mr. Oyong Tri Sambodo, the *Ebleg* tradition has been passed down from generation to generation in an informal, autodidactic manner. This intergenerational transmission of knowledge reflects the community's dedication to cultural preservation and continuity. As of 2025, there are three *Ebleg* groups in Wonorejo Village, though only the community based in Kaliurang Wetan Hamlet remains actively performing. This group has sustained the practice of *Ebleg* over an extended period, maintaining its presence and relevance within the village's cultural landscape.

A prominent figure in this tradition, Mr. Sirun, revealed that he has been performing *Ebleg* for over fifty years, underscoring the longevity and depth of personal commitment among its practitioners. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the *Ebleg* group in Kaliurang Wetan Hamlet frequently performed in various regions, extending even beyond Kebumen Regency. However, due to the social and logistical constraints imposed by the pandemic, the performances are now restricted to local areas within the regency. Currently, *Ebleg* performances in Kaliurang Wetan Hamlet are held on specific cultural occasions, particularly after the Eid al-Fitr holiday in Shawwal. These performances serve not only as entertainment but also as a reaffirmation of cultural identity and community solidarity. The continuation of *Ebleg* underscores the resilience of traditional arts in the face of changing times.

3.2.2 Performance Structure of *Ebleg*

Ebleg begins with *Tukang Timbul* lighting incense and preparing offerings for prayer. The prepared offerings include fruits, vegetables, flowers, various drinks, incense, and young coconuts. *Tukang Timbul*, Mr. Satriyo, stated that the offerings have been modified, including the removal of sharp objects to ensure the dancers' safety. After the offerings are prayed over, the performance props are prepared. Then the *slompret*

craftsman (trumpet player) arrives to blow the trumpet, signaling the start of the performance. The dance begins with the older dancers moving like soldiers preparing for battle. The troops are lined up and then dispatched by the commander. The dance continues, with the younger troops using horses as props.

The dance continued with horse props. Then, dancers carrying barong props appeared to liven up the event. Two people played the barong as its bearers. Dancers who experience trance still appear in *Ebleg* performances, but they do not use broken glass, fire, or sharp weapons as in *Kuda lumping* performances, as described in the thesis by Perdana, (2023) and research by Santosa et al., (2017) and Juwariyah et al., (2023). At the end of the performance, the dancers perform a war dance using props resembling kris (traditional knives) and shields. Young dancers, symbolizing the battle, perform this dance. At this point, fireworks are lit to replace the firearms used by the colonizers. When the fireworks are lit, many dancers collapse and become possessed.

At the end of the performance, the dance concludes with the appearance of a *gunungan*. The *gunungan* is carried by a young dancer, symbolizing the end of the battle (Damayanti, 2019). Even though the *gunungan* has appeared, the dancers with horse props still come out and dance in a trance-like state. Finally, the *Tukang Timbul* performs a ritual called *uwis-uwis*, in which he concludes the event by praying over the props to neutralize and release any remaining spiritual presence.

3.2.3 Supporting Elements of the Performance

Based on *Ebleg*'s performance, which interprets its culture through an ethnographic approach, supporting elements were obtained. These elements include:

3.2.3.1. Horse made of woven bamboo

The woven bamboo horses used in *Kuda lumping* performances in Wonorejo Village have distinctive characteristics that reflect the unique nature of local handicrafts. Each component of these horses is handmade by local craftsmen using traditional weaving techniques passed down through generations as an integral part of the community's intangible cultural heritage. The manufacturing process is not merely a craft activity but also a reflection of cultural values that are preserved and maintained through traditional practices. These woven horses serve as the main props in the performance, but they are also cultural symbols laden with philosophical and spiritual meaning.

The main unique feature of this woven horse is the careful selection of symbolic colors: red, yellow, and blue. Red symbolizes the dancers' courage and fighting spirit, reflecting the battle present in every movement on horseback. Yellow depicts glory and strength, marking the dominance of heroic values in the performance. Meanwhile, blue symbolizes determination, patience, and stability in facing life's challenges. Visually, the use of these colors is not merely decorative, but also an aesthetic element that enlivens the dynamic atmosphere during the performance, capturing the audience's attention while enhancing the magical atmosphere.

The selection of bamboo as the primary material for the manufacture of woven horses is based on its water-resistant, extreme-weather-resistant physical characteristics. This allows woven horses to be used repeatedly, especially since performances usually take place in open spaces. Furthermore, bamboo is an abundant local resource in rural areas such as Wonorejo Village, so its use is not only environmentally friendly but also provides sustainable local economic value. In addition to the woven bamboo structure, the craftsmen add decorative ornaments in the form of fabric, feathers, and other accessories that enrich the horse's symbolic dimension. In the context of Central Javanese culture, these woven horses are not only a medium for performing arts but also a marker of collective identity for the community. These horses embody the ritual meaning of strength and the preservation of ancestral values that thrive in the tradition of performing arts.

The *Kuda lumping* performance itself functions as a medium for social interaction as well as a local economic agent. The development of this woven bamboo horse craft helps to maintain the traditional economy while strengthening social solidarity. Therefore, the woven bamboo horse has become an aesthetic object and a symbol that integrates the historical, cultural, and social values of the Wonorejo Village community, making it a living and relevant cultural heritage for current and future generations.

3.2.3.2. Gamelan

The music that accompanies *Kuda lumping* performances traditionally relies on gamelan with the Banyumasan style, which is characteristic of the region. This type of gamelan specifically refers to the Kaliurang Wetan Village area, located in Kebumen Regency, Central Java. The Banyumasan style distinguishes itself from other gamelan styles, such as those used in Yogyakarta, as explained by Jauhari (2017). The main difference lies in the music's more dynamic, louder, and more open character, which creates an energetic and intense atmosphere during the performance.

One of the unique elements of the Banyumasan gamelan is the Banyumasan *imbal* pattern, which emphasizes fast rhythms and strong beats, as stated by (Suharto et al., 2024). This pattern involves the interaction between instruments such as the *gong*, *kendang*, and *saron*, which are played alternately to build tension and climax. In the context of *Kuda lumping* performances, this gamelan music not only serves as background music but also drives the movements of the dancers and woven horses, reflecting the spirit of war and courage at the heart of the performance.

Banyumasan gamelan is usually played by local music groups consisting of traditional artists who diligently preserve cultural heritage through regular practice and community performances. The main instruments include *gongs*, *kenongs*, *sarons*, and *kendangs*, all of which create a distinctive harmony that is easily recognizable as part of Banyumasan musical identity (Amalia et al., 2024). The use of this style is also a marker of regional identity, as Kebumen is known as a center for the performing arts, with a rougher, more spirited feel than neighboring areas. This characteristic gives *Kuda lumping* performances a unique flavor, making them livelier and appealing to audiences from all walks of life. Through this music, local values and performing arts traditions are preserved and passed on, while also strengthening social interaction within the community.

The Banyumasan gamelan contributes not only to the aesthetic aspect of the *Kuda lumping* performance but also to the preservation of local cultural values as intangible heritage. It enriches the experience of traditional art and strengthens the cultural identity of the people of Kebumen and its surrounding areas, ensuring that this tradition remains alive and meaningful in an ever-evolving social context.

3.2.3.3. Costumes and Make-Up

The costumes worn in the *Ebleg* performance in Wonorejo Village show similarities with *Kuda lumping* performances in other regions, as noted by Falah & Zaki, (2022), Perdana, (2023), and Sumanto, (2022). This indicates the cultural homogeneity of traditional arts in Central Java, where costumes are designed to resemble ancient warriors ready for battle. A distinctive feature is the use of striking colors, especially red, which symbolizes courage and blood in battle, creating a strong visual impression that captures the audience's attention. These costumes are complemented by accessories such as *slendang* or *basofi*, which add dimension to the dancers' movements. Magnificent headdresses, such as crowns or feathered hats, are used to reinforce the image of heroism. The facial makeup emphasizes masculine ferocity, with bold patterns and dark colors that accentuate fierce expressions, as if ready to face the enemy.

According to Ningtias et al., (2024) This makeup is imbued with patriotic values, embodied through a combination of symbolic colors and shapes. These elements collectively depict the spirit of soldiers preparing for battle, creating an intense atmosphere during the performance. In a cultural context, these costumes and makeup serve to preserve local identity, as dancers feel transformed into legendary figures. This enriches the performance experience, making it a ritual that connects the past and present and strengthens social bonds within the Wonorejo community.

In general, *Ebleg* costumes consist of traditional clothing complemented by horse props made from woven bamboo. The performers are seen wearing predominantly red-colored outfits. The horse prop serves as the main characteristic of the performance. However, as the performance evolved, other elements such as the *barong* were added. Later on, *kris* (traditional daggers) were also introduced as part of the dance, although the costumes and makeup remained the same as those used with the horse props. The next prop used is the *keris*, a traditional weapon rich in meaning and historical value. The *keris* not only functions as a tool for self-defense, but also symbolizes courage and the spirit of resistance (Ananingsih et al., 2024). In the context of the struggle against colonial forces, the *keris* represents the strength of indigenous troops who bravely took up arms to defend their homeland. Its unique and sacred form indicates that resistance was not only physical, but also spiritual and filled with honor. The *keris* stands as a symbol of the determination and sacrifice of fighters willing to give their lives for Indonesia's independence.

Ebleg. In the context of *Ebleg*, the *gunungan* serves not only as a visual element but also as a deep symbol. It marks the conclusion of the dance sequence and acts as a sacred closure to the entire performance. Its presence conveys the message that everything has a beginning and an end, and reflects philosophical values about the cycle of life. Thus, the *gunungan* closes the performance with a solemn and meaningful impression.

3.2.3.4. Offerings (Sesaji)

Offerings in traditional performances serve not only as a complement to the ceremony but also as offerings that hold deep symbolic and spiritual significance essential to maintaining the balance of the universe and the supernatural world (Iriani, 2024). In general, offerings are presented to spirits or *danyang* (local guardian spirits believed to protect a particular place) who are believed to accompany and protect the performance, as a form of respect and a request for protection so that the artistic process can run smoothly without interference

from negative energies. In the context of *Ebleg* performances, offerings have an essential function as a spiritual medium used by the *Tukang Timbul*, who is the person responsible for managing and neutralizing the trance state of the dancers during the performance, so that the integrity of the ritual is maintained and a conducive atmosphere can be created.

The variety of offerings used in the performance includes agricultural produce and carefully selected symbolic materials. For example, *degan ijo*, or young coconut, symbolizes purity and coolness of heart, introducing the pure intentions of the performers and the audience. Water mixed with flowers symbolizes a plea for safety and balance, representing the hope for harmony between humans and the universe. In addition, the coffee and tea used, both bitter and sweet, represent the complexity of human life, accepting both sweet and bitter experiences in life's journey with gratitude and generosity.

The use of flower arrangements as part of offerings signifies respect and gratitude to ancestors and spiritual beings believed to protect the sanctity of the performance. Meanwhile, water sprinkled with *dhadhap serep* symbolizes purification and protection so that negative energy does not interfere with the ritual (Sumanto, 2022). Thus, offerings serve as a medium of spiritual communication between humans and the supernatural world. They are not merely physical rituals but symbols of harmony that strengthen cosmic relationships and maintain balance between the real and spiritual worlds, in accordance with cultural values passed down from generation to generation. Offerings in *Ebleg* performances teach important values such as respect, purity of intention, and harmony in carrying out cultural traditions (Hardiarini & Firdhani, 2022). The ritual of offerings is an integral part of traditional performances that combine art and spirituality, emphasizing that these performances are not only entertainment but also a vehicle for preserving the noble values and local wisdom within the community.

3.2.4 Comparative Aspects of Traditional Performances

Ebleg performances are one type of performance that has developed and thrived in Central Java. Their existence enriches the diversity of traditional performing arts. As is well known, *Ebleg* is similar to *Jathilan*, *Kuda Lumping*, and *Reog*. A comparison is shown in Table 2.

3.2.4.1. Religiosity

Found in Hammons' research (2013) On *Jathilan* in Yogyakarta, there is a detailed discussion of the religious aspects inherent in the procession of this traditional performance, with a particular focus on trance or possession phenomena. In *Jathilan*, scenes of possession manifest as dancers enter trance states, but these spiritual occurrences are carefully moderated and overseen by traditional leaders. These leaders invoke prayers and spiritual safeguards to ensure that the performance proceeds smoothly and safely, controlling the flow of the trance experience to prevent harm to performers. This controlled possession is not merely a spectacle but reflects a deep communal acknowledgment of the spiritual forces at play within the performance context.

Similarly, *Ebleg* performances in Kebumen incorporate these elements of spiritual possession. Traditional leaders play a pivotal role in guiding the performance process, offering prayers and ritualistic support to navigate the spiritual energies involved. Despite the presence and prayers of Islamic traditional leaders, trance experiences still occur during *Ebleg*, reflecting the interweaving of cultural and religious elements. The intensity of these trance states varies, and sometimes dancers may experience a trance so strong that additional healing or ritual intervention is necessary to restore balance, demonstrating the lived spiritual dimensions of the art.

In contrast, (Widodo, 2018) provides insights into the *Reog* tradition in Sidoarjo, illuminating its rigorous physical training and ceremonial procedures. *Reog* dancers undergo extensive training focused on conditioning their mouths and heads, as these body parts bear the significant weight of the large lion mask, which can weigh tens of kilograms. This demanding preparation is a prerequisite for performance, ensuring dancers' physical readiness to carry the heavy mask safely. Failure to meet these standards poses serious risks, including injury or death, underscoring the physical and spiritual discipline intrinsic to *Reog*.

Unlike *Jathilan* and *Ebleg*, the *Reog* tradition embeds its religious and mystical elements within arduous training and physical endurance, highlighting a distinctive approach to performance spirituality. The presence of traditional leaders and trance phenomena in *Jathilan* and *Ebleg* emphasizes the role of spirituality in performance safety and communal harmony. At the same time, *Reog*'s demanding physicality reflects a distinct cultural articulation of sacred performance.

3.2.4.2. Background Music

The accompanying music for the *Ebleg* performance in Kebumen is distinguished by its use of gamelan in the Banyumasan style, a form native to the Banyumas region of Central Java. This style is recognized for its

rhythmic intensity, fast tempos, and dynamic character, which lend a vigorous and energetic atmosphere to the performance. A key distinctive feature of the Banyumasan gamelan is the inclusion of the *slompret*, a wind instrument that produces a shrill, piercing tone that cuts through the ensemble's soundscape. The *slompret* plays a crucial role in guiding the dancers, marking rhythmic cues and transitions within the dance sequences. It acts almost like a conductor's voice, synchronizing dancers' movements with the intricate cyclical patterns generated by the gamelan orchestra.

Despite its pivotal role in the *Ebleg* performance, the *slompret* is facing continuity challenges. According to sources from Kebumen, this instrument is nearing extinction, with only one remaining player in Wonorejo Village, aged around 50. The younger generations in the village show declining interest in learning the *slompret*, a trend attributable to modern lifestyle changes and shifts in cultural priorities. This generational gap threatens the long-term sustainability of this critical traditional musical practice, underscoring the urgent need for preservation efforts to maintain the cultural fabric associated with *Ebleg* performances.

In contrast to the Banyumasan gamelan used in *Ebleg*, the *Jathilan* performance in Yogyakarta employs the *gendhing* from the classical Yogyakarta style of Javanese gamelan. As Salim (2018) notes, the *Jathilan* accompaniment employs a slendro-tuned iron gamelan ensemble comprising *kendang ciblon* (drums), *demung*, *saron*, *peking*, *engkok*, *kemong*, *kempul*, *gong*, and *kenthongan*. The *gendhing*, musical compositions performed on these instruments, establishes a vital emotional synergy between musicians and dancers, fostering a deep connection felt throughout the performance. This musical relationship helps to facilitate trance states and accentuate the spiritual dimensions of the dance.

The most elaborate and luxuriant musical accompaniment can be found in the *Reog* tradition. Widodo's, (2018) Research categorizes the *Reog* music into traditional and modern components. Traditionally, *Reog* performances are supported by six membranophones percussion instruments that generate powerful rhythmic textures. In contemporary settings, the *Reog* is often accompanied by Horeg, a large modern sound system boasting powerful bass and high volume, which has emerged as a cultural phenomenon in East Java. According to Fikri & Baharun, (2025). Horeg reflects a vibrant subculture where communities engage in nighttime sound system competitions, expressing identity, solidarity, and social presence through auditory dominance. Although the acquisition of Horeg equipment involves significant financial investment, it remains economically accessible and culturally significant as a modern form of musical accompaniment that parallels traditional practices. Overall, the diverse musical styles accompanying *Ebleg*, *Jathilan*, and *Reog* performances highlight the rich tapestry of Indonesia's cultural heritage, illustrating how traditional and modern elements coexist and adapt within vibrant performing arts traditions.

3.2.4.3. Introductory Language

Kuda lumping, as a traditional performing art, has a linguistic component that closely corresponds to the region in which it is performed. Language in *kuda lumping* is not merely a communicative tool but also a cultural marker that reflects the identity, oral traditions, and social history of the local community. In Java, where *kuda lumping* is prevalently performed, the primary language used is Javanese, encompassing a rich spectrum of dialects and accents that express the diversity within the Javanese cultural sphere (Winarsih, 2010).

One notable dialect used in *kuda lumping* performances is the *Ngapak* dialect, spoken predominantly in Cilacap and the surrounding Banyumas region. This dialect, characterized by its distinct phonetic and lexical features, adds a unique flavor to performances and communicates specific regional values and cultural nuances (Wulansari & Hartono, 2021). The use of the *Ngapak* dialect is also integral to *Ebleg* performances in Kebumen, indicating a shared cultural and linguistic heritage that enhances the aesthetic and communicative depth of the art (Wulandari, 2021).

Beyond central Java, the linguistic landscape surrounding *kuda lumping* adapts to local languages and dialects. In Kubu Raya Regency, West Kalimantan, for example, the language used in *kuda lumping* performances shifts closer to the local Malay dialect, accommodating the linguistic preferences and cultural identities of the community (Azwardi et al., 2019). Similarly, in Southeast Sulawesi, *kuda lumping* integrates the local Indonesian dialect alongside indigenous languages, exemplifying how the art form molds itself to diverse sociolinguistic environments to maintain relevance and cultural resonance (Sunarto et al., 2018; Umran & Handayani, 2024). Overall, language use in *kuda lumping* performances serves as a cultural conduit, preserving local languages and dialects while allowing the art to bear regional identity and collective memory. This adaptation empowers *kuda lumping*, particularly *Ebleg* in Kebumen, to remain vibrant and meaningful in both its traditional heartlands and more diverse contemporary contexts.

To investigate ethnic elements in traditional performances in Central Java, specifically *Ebleg* and *Kuda Lumpung*, this study employed a descriptive qualitative method supplemented by an emic approach. By taking into account the environment, setting, participants, and actions as a whole rather than as distinct variables, the

descriptive qualitative technique enables the study to capture social reality in its completeness. To accurately convey authentic meanings grounded in the local community's knowledge, the emic approach is used to understand cultural phenomena from the perspective of the cultural actors themselves (Sasiwongsoj et al., 2024). This guarantees that the researcher's viewpoint as an outsider won't skew the portrayal of cultural practices (Yeganeh et al., 2005). Three primary methods were used to collect data for this study: visual documentation, in-depth interviews, and participatory observation. By monitoring the rehearsal process, performances, and the rituals that accompany them, participatory observation enables researchers to be actively involved in the art community's daily activities (Cohen et al., 2007). Researchers can gain an understanding of social dynamics, individual roles in art groups, and the connections between audiences, performers, and the environment through this involvement (Sunardi et al., 2025). In-depth interviews were conducted with key actors, such as dancers, art group leaders, gamelan players, and community leaders. These interviews aim to explore emic perspectives on the meaning, function, and changes in cultural values that accompany the performance. Meanwhile, visual documentation in the form of photos and videos supports data validity and assists in the symbolic analysis of costumes, props, body expressions, and movement patterns.

All data were analyzed descriptively and qualitatively, focusing on narratives reflecting cultural interactions, performance symbolism, and cultural identity dynamics emerging from the performance transformation process. This analysis aims to reveal how traditional practices such as *Ebleg* and *Kuda lumping* are not only forms of cultural expression but also spaces for negotiating values and identities in an ever-changing social context (Yeganeh et al., 2005). By combining these methodological approaches and the supporting literature, this study aims to explore the intercultural meanings inherent in traditional performances and explain how practices such as *Ebleg* and *Kuda lumping* have transformed and become media for lively cultural dialogue. The research was positioned within its actual environment: Central Java as the location, the performers of *Ebleg* and *Kuda lumping* as the subjects, and their traditional performance activities as the focus. This approach allowed the researcher to gain in-depth insights into the cultural dynamics at play during the performances. By employing an emic approach, in which the researcher becomes immersed in the cultural environment, the study captured the perspectives of local participants. The findings highlight how the spread of *Kuda lumping* in Central Java may convey messages about cultural identity, adaptation, and interaction.

4. Conclusion

Ebleg, a traditional art form deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of Wonorejo Village, especially in Kaliurang Wetan Hamlet of Karanganyar District, Kebumen Regency, continues to hold an important place as a symbol of local cultural heritage. This vibrant tradition has been preserved largely through the passionate dedication and collective efforts of the village youth. Motivated by a strong desire to maintain their community's unique cultural identity, these young people have taken on the responsibility of organizing, practicing, and performing *Ebleg*, despite the absence of formal support or financial assistance from government bodies. The persistence of *Ebleg* in Wonorejo Village epitomizes a grassroots cultural movement to safeguard a heritage passed down through generations. The initiative taken by these youth represents a conscious act of cultural stewardship, ensuring that this art form remains a living, breathing part of community life rather than a forgotten relic. Their activities go beyond mere performance; they serve as a vital form of cultural transmission, in which knowledge, skills, and values are passed along within the community, strengthening social bonds and fostering a sense of pride and identity.

Yet, despite these commendable efforts, the future of *Ebleg* is fraught with uncertainty. One of the most significant challenges facing the profession is the aging demographic of the current practitioners. Many of the active performers are elderly, and there is growing concern about limited interest or engagement among the younger generation, especially among the children and descendants of these performers. This trend poses a critical threat because, without effective knowledge transfer and continuous practice, the art form risks gradual decline and possibly extinction. The situation highlights a common dilemma in cultural preservation, in which modernization, changing lifestyles, and alternative entertainment options divert younger people's attention from traditional arts.

To ensure the sustainability and revitalization of *Ebleg*, broader community involvement must occur. Cultural preservation cannot depend solely on a handful of passionate individuals. Instead, it requires a comprehensive, inclusive approach that engages not only committed youth but also other residents, educational institutions, cultural organizations, and even local authorities. Schools, for example, can play a pivotal role by including *Ebleg* in their extracurricular activities or cultural curricula, exposing children to the art at an early age and fostering a deeper appreciation.

Moreover, cultural organizations could support by facilitating workshops, providing resources, and promoting public performances that raise awareness and invite wider public participation. Government

support, though currently lacking, would significantly enhance these efforts through funding, policy initiatives, and infrastructural backing. Together, these stakeholders can help shift *Ebleg* from the brink of obscurity towards renaissance, making it relevant for contemporary society while preserving its traditional essence.

Ultimately, with concerted community effort and strategic support, *Ebleg* has the potential not just to survive but to flourish as a dynamic, living tradition. It can continue to adapt alongside evolving social and cultural landscapes without losing the core cultural identity it embodies. The preservation of *Ebleg* is not only about maintaining an artistic form but also about safeguarding a vital piece of Wonorejo Village's heritage, ensuring that future generations recognize and celebrate their cultural roots.

5. Acknowledgment

The author extends profound appreciation to the editor and reviewers of the *International Journal of Culture and Art Studies* for their invaluable support and for providing critical and well-considered feedback, which significantly contributed to the successful publication of this article. The author also gratefully acknowledges the Institute for Research and Community Service at Universitas Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia Semarang for its financial support of this research. Sincere thanks are further extended to all individuals and institutions whose contributions and support have been instrumental to the completion of this study.

References

- Amalia, R. N., Fatimah, A. T., & Amam, A. (2024). Mathematical concepts exploration of gamelan musical instruments and dance movements in *Kuda lumping* Wanareja. *Interdisciplinary International Journal of Conservation and Culture*, 2(1), 5-14.
- Amin, S., Hari Bakti Mardikantoro, & Ahmad Syaifudin. (2017). Pemertahanan bahasa Jawa dalam kesenian *Kuda lumping* di Banjarnegara. *Jurnal Sastra Indonesia*, 6(1). <http://journal.unnes.ac.id/sju/index.php/jsi>
- Ananda, R. (2016). *Ebleg Singa Mataram*. Penerbit Harfeey.
- Ananingsih, E. S., Kusumawaty, I., & Yunike, Y. (2024). Utilization of *Kuda lumping* culture in reducing cancer stigma in society. *Utilization of Kuda lumping Culture in Reducing Cancer Stigma in Society*, 3(2).
- Ariffatonah, H. (2016). *Tinjauan filsafat nilai max scheler terhadap tarian rakyat Ebleg Kebumen*. Universitas Gadjah Mada.
- Azwardi, A., Ismunandar I, & Sanulita. (2019). Manajemen pengelolaan sanggar tari *Kuda lumping* bangun trisno di kecamatan Rasau Jaya Kabupaten Kubu Raya. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran Khatulistiwa (JPPK)*, 1.
- Bagaskara, A., Rokhani, U., & Wahyuningsih, S. (2024). Cultural encounters: puppetry performing arts (wayang) and dangdut music as a reflection of India-Indonesia integration. *International Journal of Cultural and Art Studies*, 8(1), 27-36. <https://doi.org/10.32734/ijcas.v8i1.15333>
- Cohen, M. I., Royo, A. L. Y., & Noszlopy, L. (2007). Indonesian Performing Arts across Borders. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 35(101), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639810701233672>
- Damayanti, R. (2019). *Group Ebleg Singa Mataram kelurahan Panjer, kecamatan Kebumen, kabupaten Kebumen tahun 1980-2015*. Universitas Sebelas Maret.
- Dennis, A. D., & Opare Darko, F. M. (2024). Exploring Materials for Constructing Fancy Dress Masquerade Costumes in Winneba, Ghana (1958-2020). *International Journal of Culture and Art Studies*, 8(1).
- Falah, M. Z. R. F., & Zaki, N. (2022). Eksistensi Kesenian *Kuda lumping* Turangga Tunggak Semi di Era Globalisasi dan Endemi Covid-19: Suatu Pendekatan Budaya. *Jurnal Dinamika*, 3(2), 163-177.
- Fikri, M., & Baharun, H. (2025). Sound Horeg as A Popular Cultural Discourse: A Cultural Criticism Study of Religious Responses in East Java. *Tutur Sintaksis: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia, Kajian Linguistik dan Kearifan Lokal*, 1(1), 25-41.
- Greetz, C. (2008). *Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books, inc.
- Hammons, C. S. (2013). *Jathilan* : Trance and Possession in Java. *American Anthropologist*, 115(3), 509-510. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.12035>
- Hardiarini, C., & Firdhani, A. M. (2022). Kesenian Kuda Lumping: Tinjauan Studi Multiperspektif. *Indonesian Journal of Performing Arts Education*, 2(1).
- Iriani, A. D. (2024). *Makna sesajen dan nilai terkandung dalam kesenian Ebleg serta upaya melestarikannya di era globalisasi*. Universitas Negeri Malang.
- Islami, A., & Rukiah, Y. (2019). Sejarah dan perkembangan pertunjukan *Ebleg* sebagai atraksi tarian rakyat khas Kebumen. *Visual Heritage: Jurnal Kreasi Seni Dan Budaya*, 1(2).

- Jauhari, B. R. Al. (2017). *Musik Iringan Kuda Lumping Bekso Turonggo Mudo di Kabupaten Magelang*. Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta.
- Juwariyah, A., Trisakti, T., & Abida, F. I. N. (2023). Conserving the traditional Indonesian performance art “langen tayub” through “waranggana” creativities. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2247672>
- Maharani, A., Karo, P. B., Meylani, D., Gukguk, R., Aprija, D., Siburian, Y., Khairi, N., & Abstrak, I. A. (2024). Kajian *Kuda Lumping* sebagai identitas budaya Jawa: Menuju pengakuan internasional sebagai warisan budaya tak benda politeknik pariwisata Medan, Indonesia. *Studi Budaya Nusantara*, 2. <https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.sbn.2024.008.02.03>
- Maxwell, I. (2008). *Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance* (G. st. John, Ed.; 1st ed.). Berghahn Books.
- Ningtias, F., Sirojul Munir, & Andri Noviadi. (2024). Nilai Pendidikan dalam pertunjukan Kesenian *Kuda lumping* Di Kecamatan Kampung Laut Kabupaten Cilacap. *Diksatrasia*, 8(1).
- Perangin-angin, A. B., Jalil, Z. A., Pranata, J. S., & Amalia, F. (2024). Locally Taboo Words Within East Java Society: A Sociolinguistic Study. *International Journal of Culture and Art Studies*, 8(1).
- Perdana, T. P. (2023). *Eksistensi Kesenian Kuda lumping (Jathilan) Dalam Melestarkan Kesenian Jawa Di Desa Purworejo, Kecamatan Kuala, Kabupaten Nagan Raya*. UIN Ar-Raniry.
- Santosa, D. H., Dewi, G. K., & Rahayu, A. D. (2017). Lawet Dance and *Ebleg* Dance: The Term Analysis Towards its Movement Qualities. *Harmonia: Journal of Arts Research and Education*.
- Sasiwongsoaraj, K., Ono, M., Duangkaew, S., & Kimura, Y. (2024). Emic and etic perspectives in transnational migration research: methodological reflections of a cross-national research team. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 24(2), 194-204. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-12-2023-0185>
- Suharto, S., Widodo, W., & Indriyanto, I. (2024). Senggakan: Gaya Vokal Banyumasan dari Klasik, Kerakyatan menuju Budaya Massa. *Bookchapter Seni Universitas Negeri Semarang*.
- Sumanto, E. (2022). Filosofis dalam Acara Kuda Lumping. *Jurnal Pendidikan Sejarah Dan Riset Sosial Humaniora (KAGANA)*, 5(1).
- Sunardi, S., Saka, P. A., Sulastuti, K. I., Mulyana, A. R., Ansari, I., Novianto, W., Kiswanto, K., & Putro, R. L. U. (2025). Aesthetic Transformation of Javanese Wayang Performances in the Digital Era. *Harmonia: Journal of Arts Research and Education*, 25(1), 211-226. <https://doi.org/10.15294/harmonia.v25i1.11320>
- Sunarto, T., Irianto Ibrahim, & La Ode Sahidin. (2018). Seni Pertunjukan *Kuda lumping* Lestari Budoyo di Desa Wonua Sari Kecamatan Mowila Kabupaten Konawe Selatan. *JPSB: Jurnal Pembelajaran Seni Dan Budaya*, 3(2).
- Umran, L. M., & Handayani, R. (2024). Analisis makna simbolik tari *kuda lumping* jaranan buto sebagai identitas etnis jawa di kecamatan konda. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi Dan Media*, 1(2), 178-195.
- Widodo, R. A. (2018). *Belajar Pada Reog Gemandi Sidoarjo* (1st ed.). Embrio Publisher.
- Winarsih, S. (2010). *Mengenal Kesenian Nasional 12 Kuda Lumping*. PT Bengawan Ilmu.
- Wulandari, D. (2021). Peran Pawang dalam Pertunjukan *Kuda lumping* Sembego Jati di Desa Candi Kecamatan Karanganyar Kabupaten Kebumen. *Jurnal Seni Tari*, 10(2). <http://journal.unnes.ac.id/sju/index.php/jst>
- Wulansari, A., & Hartono. (2021). Regenerasi Kesenian *Kuda lumping* Di Paguyuban Lengen Budi Setyo Utomo. *Jurnal Seni Tari*, 10(2). <http://journal.unnes.ac.id/sju/index.php/jst>
- Yang, B., Zhao, D., & Liu, L. (2021). An Analysis of Hall’s Theory of Cultural Identity and Its Application in Flipped Class. *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Language, Communication, and Culture Studies (ICLCCS 2021)*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.211025.030>
- Yeganeh, H., Shu, Z., & Elie Virgile M.C. (2005). Critical Review of Epistemological and Methodological Issues in Cross-Cultural Research. *Journal of Comparative International Management*, 7(2).