# THE MEANING OF GUCI DANCE IN RUWAT BUMI TRADITION IN TEGAL REGENCY

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**Abstract**

This study aims to examine and describe the presentation of the Guci Dance and uncover its meaning and values within the context of the Ruwat Bumi tradition in the Guci Tourism area, Tegal Regency. This research employed a qualitative approach with descriptive analytical methods and a case study. Data collection techniques included participatory observation, in-depth interviews and documentation. Data analysis included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, with data validity tested through triangulation. The results indicate that the Guci Dance presentation encompasses a variety of movements that combine flexibility, balance, and dexterity. The Guci Dance's distinctive character is characterized by its brightly colored costumes, symbolizing joy and hope; and musical accompaniment with lyrics containing moral messages and prayers. Meaningfully, the Guci Dance serves as an expression of gratitude, respect for nature and the Creator, and a symbol of togetherness and the cycle of life. Its values include religious values, mutual cooperation, environmental preservation, and respect for ancestors and local wisdom. This research is expected to serve as a reference for efforts to preserve the Guci Dance and the Ruwat Bumi tradition.

***Keywords:*** *Guci Dance, Ruwat Bumi Tradition, Presentation Form, Symbolic Meaning, Cultural Values, Tegal Regency.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Tegal Regency is one of the regions in Central Java Province that continues to preserve its rich local cultural traditions from generation to generation. Among the various traditions that are still practiced, Ruwat Bumi Guci holds a special place because it not only serves as an annual ritual but has also become part of the collective identity of the communities living on the slopes of Mount Slamet. This tradition is held every Muharram or Suro as an expression of gratitude for the bounty of nature and a prayer for the village's safety. Ruwat Bumi in Guci Village is not merely anannual ritual, but a reflection of local wisdom that represents an expression of gratitude for the earth's bounty as well as a prayer for safety and well-being for the community. This tradition also reflects the acculturation of Hindu and Islamic cultures, evident in the stages of the procession and the ritual symbols used. (Damayanti et al., 2022; Daneswari et al., 2023; Daningtyas et al., 2021).

The history of Guci Village is inextricably linked to the story of Raden Aryo Wiryo, a nobleman of the Demak Sultanate who wandered until he reached the northern slopes of Mount Slamet. This area, originally known as Kampung Keputihan, was later struck by a widespread outbreak of pagebluge, a skin disease. Kyai Elang Sutajaya, a student of Sunan Gunung Jati, arrived carrying a jar filled with blessed water. The villagers who were sick drank the water, and it was sprinkled in the corners of the village, gradually bringing an end to the epidemic. Since that event, the name Kampung Keputihan has been changed to Guci Village to commemorate the role of that magical jar in saving the community.

The Ruwat Bumi Guci tradition includes various sacred rituals, ranging from Resik Bumi, Napak Tilas, Nandur Kekayon, and Ngiwer, to the highlight of the event: the Kirab Gunungan procession featuring local produce. During these processions, there are various artistic performances that serve not only as entertainment but also carry deep symbolic meaning. One of the artistic performances featured in this tradition is the Guci Dance.

The Guci Dance is a traditional creative dance unique to Tegal Regency, originating from Guci Village in Bumijawa District. This dance was created by Kusti Mutfiah and inspired by the natural beauty, the cool mountain air, and the warm water of the Guci spring a source of pride for Tegal Regency and a popular tourist attraction at the foot of Mount Slamet. The Guci Dance depicts children on the mountain slopes bathing in the Guci spring water, while also reflecting the hospitality and gentle character of the local community. In the context of the Ruwat Bumi ceremony, the Guci Dance is performed as part of the entertainment program before the main ceremony begins, alongside other art forms such as the Kuntulan dance.

The presence of the Guci Dance in the Ruwat Bumi tradition is no coincidence. This dance is closely tied to the identity of the Guci community and the values upheld in that tradition. The choreography of the Guci Dance combines flexibility, balance, and agility, with close interaction between the dancers and the pottery props that symbolize the region's identity. The brightly colored costumes symbolize joy and hope, while the lyrics of the accompanying songs are not merely

musical accompaniment but a medium for conveying moral messages, prayers, and expressions of gratitude. All these elements make the Guci Dance not just a performance but also a means of cultural communication that embodies the values of local wisdom. (Dwijayanti et al., 2023; Ibrahim et al., 2023).

Research on the Guci Dance has been conducted in various contexts, particularly in relation to dance education in schools. However, studies that specifically examine the Guci Dance within the context of the Ruwat Bumi tradition especially those that explore its performance forms and symbolic meanings remain limited. In fact, the role of the Guci Dance in the Ruwat Bumi tradition has a more complex dimension than that of a mere artistic performance. Amid rapid tourism growth, there is a trend among the younger generation toward a shift in the meaning of rituals from a spiritual dimension toward one of mere entertainment. The Guci area itself is a popular tourist destination, with visitor numbers reaching 830,768 in 2024. Therefore, an in-depth study of the meaning and value of the Guci Dance within the Ruwat Bumi tradition is essential to ensure that this tradition continues to thrive in an adaptive manner without losing its cultural essence. (Hidayah, 2022; Satrianingsih, 2021).

## METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using descriptive-analytical methods and a case study design. This approach was used to understand the performance style of the Guci Dance, as well as the cultural meanings and values associated with the Ruwat Bumi tradition in Tegal Regency. The research location focused on the Guci area in Tegal Regency, where the Guci Dance and the Ruwat Bumi tradition originated. The data sources used include information on the Guci Dance, previous research, and documentation related to the research subject. To obtain direct field data, relevant informants included the choreographer or dance director, dancers, community leaders, and parties involved in organizing the Ruwat Bumi ceremony.

Data collection was conducted using three techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to examine the presentation of the Guci Dance, particularly its movements, props, costumes, and musical accompaniment. Interviews were conducted to gather information regarding the background of the dance's creation, the meanings of the performance elements, and the community's views on the role of the Guci Dance within the Ruwat Bumi tradition. Documentation was used to supplement the data through photographs, videos, and documents related to the research.

Data analysis was conducted in three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction was performed by selecting information relevant to the research focus.

Next, the data were presented in the form of descriptive analysis to explain the form and meaning of the Guci Dance. The final stage involved drawing conclusions based on the information that had been collected and analyzed.

Data validity was verified using triangulation, which involves comparing information from multiple sources and data collection techniques. Through this method, the consistency of information regarding the Guci Dance was verified by cross-referencing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on an interview with the creator of the Guci Dance, it was revealed that this dance was originally created to participate in the National Student Arts Festival and Competition (FLS2N) at the elementary school level. After winning the competition, the creator sought to develop the Guci Dance as a way to promote Guci as a tourist destination in Tegal Regency through the art of dance. The choice of the Guci tourist attraction as a source of inspiration stems from its natural beauty and the daily activities of the local community. The choreographer drew inspiration from the activities of children in rural areas specifically, bathing at public fountains as the foundation for the dance movements. These activities were then developed into a dance piece that not only emphasizes the beauty of movement but also conveys a message of character education.

In an interview, the creator explained that the Guci Dance was created with the aim of promoting tourism in Guci while also conveying the importance of maintaining personal and environmental hygiene. This shows that the creation of the Guci Dance did not stem solely from the need to participate in a competition, but also aimed to showcase the region's potential through artistic expression. The process of creating the Guci Dance also involved the creator's imagination in depicting the lives of people in the past. One example of this is the use of a guci (earthenware jar), which was envisioned as a vessel for drawing water. Although the creator is not originally from the Guci region, he sought to develop this concept into a series of movements that align with the dance's theme. Based on the interview findings, it is evident that the environment and daily activities play a significant role in the creation of the Guci Dance. This work serves as an example of how simple activities can be developed into a dance performance that conveys a story and a message to its audience.

### The Philosophical Significance of the Guci Dance

The Guci Dance not only depicts the act of bathing at a fountain but also conveys philosophical values intended by its creator. Based on interview findings, there are three main values in the Guci Dance: environmental conservation, personal hygiene, and gratitude to God. The value of environmental conservation is evident in the choice of the Guci tourist site as the

source of inspiration for the dance's creation. The natural beauty of Guci is a vital part of the creator's vision for showcasing the region's potential. Through the Guci Dance, the creator aims to convey that the natural environment must be protected so that its beauty remains preserved. This message relates to the lives of the communities living around the Guci tourist area. (Damayanti et al., 2022; Daneswari et al., 2023; Dwijayanti et al., 2023).

The value of personal hygiene is conveyed through movements that depict the act of bathing under a shower. This activity was inspired by the daily routines of children in rural areas and was later developed into dance movements. The depiction of bathing signifies that maintaining personal hygiene is an important habit that must be instilled from an early age. Thus, the Guci Dance can also serve as a medium for character education through the art of dance. (Daningtyas et al., 2021; Hidayah, 2022; Laili, 2022).

In addition to these two values, the Guci Dance also conveys a sense of gratitude to God for the beauty of nature that has been bestowed upon us. This is evident in the "sembahan" and "ulap-ulap tawing" movements. According to the choreographer, the "sembahan" movement is an expression of gratitude, while the "ulap-ulap tawing" movement depicts the act of admiring the beauty of Guci's natural scenery.

These three values form an essential part of the message conveyed through the Guci Dance. The values of environmental conservation, personal hygiene, and gratitude are intertwined with the activities depicted in the dance. This demonstrates that the Guci Dance serves not only as entertainment but also carries a message relevant to everyday life. (Ibrahim et al., 2023; Satrianingsih, 2021).

**The Structure and Variations of Guci Dance Movements**

Based on the interview results, the sequence of movements in the Guci Dance was choreographed to depict the activities of children as they make their way to the bathing area until they finish bathing. The movements in this dance are arranged in sequence so that the activities that served as the source of inspiration can be conveyed through the performance. In the opening section, the dancers depict the journey to the bathing area while carrying a jar as a prop. The use of the jar is based on the creator's imagination regarding the customs of people in the past, who used jars as containers for drawing water. This prop serves as one of the elements that reinforces the depiction of activities in the Guci Dance. Upon arriving at the bathing area, the dancers depict the activities of playing in the water and filling the jar. Next, the movements continue with bathing activities consisting of several types of movements: gebyur, gosokan, and nguretek. The gebyur movement depicts the act of splashing water on the body, while the gosokan movement depicts the

act of cleansing the body. Meanwhile, the nguretek movement depicts the act of combing one's hair after bathing.

In addition to these main movements, there are transitional movements that serve to connect one movement to another. Transitional movements are necessary to ensure that the flow of movements is continuous and consistent with the sequence of actions depicted in the dance. The use of the sampur also serves a distinct function in the Guci Dance. The first sampur is used as part of the dance movements, while the second serves as a substitute for a towel draped over the body after bathing. The use of these two sampurs demonstrates that props in the Guci Dance do not merely serve as accessories but also help clarify the depicted activities.

Based on this description, it is evident that the movement structure of the Guci Dance is organized with careful attention to the sequence of activities that form the basis of its creation. Each movement is interconnected with the others, forming a sequence that depicts the activities of children at the bathing area. The use of the guci and sampur props also supports the storytelling within the dance.

**The Meaning of Costumes and Colors in the Guci Dance**



**Figure 1.** Costume of Guci Dance
(Source : Kustimutfiah Archieve, 2017)

Costumes are one of the supporting elements that help shape the identity of the Guci Dance. Based on interview findings, the costumes used in the early stages of the dance's creation were still subject to change and were adapted to the needs of each performance. The choreographer once used white batik combined with green accents, as well as purple costumes. Changes to the costumes began when the choreographer collaborated with students from Semarang State University around 2016–2017. During this collaboration, the choreographer and the

students defined the symbolic meanings of the costume colors to ensure they were connected to the concept behind the creation of the Guci Dance.

One of the colors described by the creator is green, which symbolizes the lush natural landscape of Guci, particularly its forests and surrounding environment. This color was chosen because it aligns with the tourist attraction that inspired the creation of the dance. Meanwhile, the meaning of the color red cannot yet be explained with certainty because the creator does not recall the details of the previous formulation. The use of bright colors in the costumes provides a distinctive visual characteristic in the performance of the Guci Dance. In addition to enhancing the dancers' appearance, the costumes also form part of the work's identity. Changes in the costumes indicate developments in the presentation of the Guci Dance, particularly regarding color selection and the assignment of symbolic meanings. From the interview findings, it is evident that the Guci Dance costumes have evolved alongside the dance's introduction and dissemination. However, information regarding the meaning of each color still needs to be supplemented with documentation or additional explanations from the creator to prevent misinterpretation.

**Efforts to Preserve the Guci Dance**

Based on the interview results, the creator has made several efforts to preserve the Guci Dance, including through outreach to elementary school students, large-scale performances, and the registration of intellectual property rights (IPR). These various efforts are aimed at ensuring that the Guci Dance gains wider recognition and maintains its presence amid the development of other creative dance forms. One such effort involved introducing the Guci Dance to elementary school students in Tegal Regency through the local cultural affairs office. This initiative aimed to familiarize students with the Guci Dance so they could learn it from an early age. In 2017, the Guci Dance was also performed in a mass performance to commemorate Tegal Regency's anniversary. According to the creator, the performance involved approximately 1,000 dancers and received recognition from the Indonesian World Records Museum (MURI). This performance served as a way to introduce the Guci Dance to a large audience. In addition to outreach and performances, the creator has also registered the Guci Dance to secure intellectual property protection. (Faiz & Hendriani, 2024; Difa'ul Haq, 2024; Linda et al., 2024).

Based on the interview findings, the intellectual property rights certificate for the Guci Dance was issued in December 2024 following a process that spanned several years. This registration is one of the efforts to provide protection for the Guci Dance as a creative work. Although various preservation efforts have been made, the creator revealed that the Guci Dance is currently beginning to be supplanted by other creative dance forms. This situation poses one of the challenges in maintaining the Guci Dance's existence. The outreach and performances that have been held need to be followed up with ongoing activities so that this dance remains known and

studied by younger generations. Thus, the preservation of the Guci Dance does not depend solely on its creator but also requires support from local governments, educational institutions, dance studios, and the community. Ongoing educational activities and performances can serve as a means to preserve the Guci Dance as a form of regional art. (Hikma, 2024; Abdilah & Firdaus, 2025).

**The Guci Dance in the Ruwat Bumi Tradition**



**Figure 2.** Guci Dance Performance in Ruwat Bumi Tradition
(Source : Info Tegal Archieve, 2019)

The Guci Dance has also been performed during the Ruwat Bumi ceremony, held annually in Guci Village. According to interview findings, the inclusion of the Guci Dance in this event stems from the village's request to feature an artistic performance as part of the program. The inclusion of this dance is expected to enhance the appeal of the cultural event while also showcasing Guci's tourism potential. However, the choreographer explained that the Guci Dance was not specifically created as a ritual dance. The worshipful movements in the dance are an expression of gratitude to God, not part of a specific ritual sequence. The choreographer also stated that he did not intend to create a dance with a ritual function, as such dances require specific stages and regulations to be followed.

Based on this information, the Guci Dance performed during the Ruwat Bumi ceremony is best understood as an artistic performance that complements the community's cultural activities. The inclusion of the Guci Dance in this event does not alter its original purpose as a creative dance inspired by the natural environment and community activities. The inclusion of the Guci Dance in Ruwat Bumi demonstrates that dance can be an integral part of community cultural activities. In addition to providing entertainment, the performance also serves as a means to introduce the Guci Dance to the community and attendees.

Based on the interview findings, the Guci Dance is a creative dance piece that integrates the creative process, philosophical values, movement structure, costumes, and preservation efforts. This dance originated from the need to participate in a competition and later evolved into a medium for

promoting the Guci tourist attraction in Tegal Regency. From a creative perspective, the Guci Dance demonstrates that everyday activities can serve as a source of inspiration for producing a dance piece. The activity of bathing at a fountain, which served as the basis for its creation, was developed into a sequence of movements with a narrative flow and meaning. The use of a guci (earthenware jar) and a sampur (shawl) further clarifies the activities depicted in the dance. From a philosophical perspective, the Guci Dance conveys a message about the importance of maintaining personal hygiene, preserving the environment, and appreciating the beauty of nature. These values are conveyed through movements inspired by everyday life. This demonstrates that dance can serve as a medium for conveying character-building messages to the public. In terms of presentation, the evolution of costumes and the use of props reflect efforts to strengthen the identity of the Guci Dance.

The collaboration between the creator and UNNES students in defining the symbolic meanings of the costumes is part of this development. However, the meanings of some colors still require further research to ensure that the information conveyed aligns with the creator's original intent. In terms of preservation, outreach to elementary school students, a mass performance in 2017, and the registration of intellectual property rights are all efforts to safeguard the existence of the Guci Dance. Nevertheless, the gradual displacement of the Guci Dance by other creative dance forms indicates that preservation efforts must be sustained. The involvement of educational institutions, dance studios, local governments, and the community is essential to ensure that the Guci Dance continues to be studied and performed. Meanwhile, the inclusion of the Guci Dance in the Ruwat Bumi ceremony demonstrates that creative dances can be featured in community cultural events without necessarily serving a ritual function. This distinction must be maintained to ensure that the original purpose of the Guci Dance's creation remains distinct from the context of its performance.

Overall, the Guci Dance not only holds artistic value but also embodies educational and cultural significance. Through its movements, props, and costumes, the Guci Dance serves as a means to showcase tourism potential and convey messages about community life and the environment. Therefore, the Guci Dance must be preserved through documentation, education, and performances so that future generations may continue to appreciate this art form. (Laili, 2022; Faiz & Hendriani, 2024; Linda et al., 2024; Hikma, 2024).

## CONCLUSION

Based on research findings, the Guci Dance is a creative dance inspired by the daily lives of the people in the Guci area, particularly the activities of children as they play and bathe at the fountains. This dance was originally created to participate in the National Student Arts Festival and Competition (FLS2N). After achieving success, the creator developed the Guci Dance as a way to showcase Guci's tourism potential through dance. The Guci Dance depicts a series of activities, from heading to the bathing area, playing in the water, filling a guci, to cleaning oneself after bathing. Each sequence of movements carries meaning related to the community's life and the

surrounding environment. The values embodied in this dance include gratitude to God, a commitment to personal hygiene, and the importance of preserving nature. The use of earthenware jars and sampur scarves further enhances the depiction of these activities, while the green-colored costumes symbolize Guci's pristine natural environment.

Over time, the Guci Dance has not only been performed in competitions but has also been introduced to the public through outreach programs in schools and various cultural events. According to sources, this dance was once performed on a large scale during the anniversary celebration of Tegal Regency and received recognition from MURI. In addition, the Guci Dance has also been performed as part of the Ruwat Bumi tradition in Guci Village. However, the Guci Dance is a creative dance intended for entertainment and artistic performance, not part of the Ruwat Bumi ritual sequence. Efforts to preserve the Guci Dance must continue on an ongoing basis. One of the challenges faced is the increasing number of new creative dances that are capturing the public's attention, which means the Guci Dance risks becoming less well-known, especially among the younger generation. Therefore, efforts to introduce the dance through education, cultural activities, and performances must continue so that the Guci Dance remains recognized and can be passed down to future generations. (Difa'ul Haq, 2024; Abdilah & Firdaus, 2025).

Overall, the Guci Dance is not only a form of artistic expression that depicts the life of the Guci community, but also a medium for showcasing the region's potential and conveying cultural and environmental values. The existence of this dance demonstrates that simple activities in everyday life can be transformed into meaningful works of art and can contribute to efforts to preserve local culture.

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