



Research Article

***Ndadi*: A Preliminary Perspective on Trance in the *Angguk* Sripanglaras Folk Performance of Kulon Progo, Yogyakarta, Indonesia¹**

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Abstract

This study investigates the complexities of dancers' experiences during the *ndadi* moment in *Angguk* performances, an emblematic folk performance from Kulon Progo Regency in Yogyakarta. The full *Angguk* performance consists of three sequences, with *ndadi* scenes in each sequence. Researchers have often interpreted the *Ndadi* scene as a state of possession or trance, and this study tries to determine whether it is indeed possession or trance. For this study, *Angguk* Sripanglara's performances were observed, interviews were conducted with performers and leaders, and the relevant literature was reviewed. The results showed that dancers experienced diverse conditions during an *Ndadi* scene, and the experience could vary from performance to performance. Based on observation and interviews, *ndadi* is a mandatory part of a full *Angguk* performance, whether the dancers experience trance, possession, both, or neither.

Keywords: *Ndadi*, *trance*, *possession*, *folk performance*, *Angguk Dance*

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Introduction

On one particular night in a village of Kulon Progo Regency, *Angguk* was performed as part of the *bersih desa* event (an annual ritual for cleaning up the village, physically and spiritually). At 9 p.m. the *Angguk* dancers took the stage. The dancers moved synchronously according to certain patterns following the smooth and harmonious music. *Angguk* is one of the most iconic and popular arts in Kulon Progo. The attraction of *Angguk* lay in the *ndadi* scene.

Figure 1 Kulon Progo Regency Map



Noted. from PKP Kulon progo, 2022 (<https://perkim.id/profil-pkp/profil-kabupaten-kota/profil-perumahan-dan-kawasan-permukiman-kabupaten-kulon-progo/>)

The *ndadi* scene typically occurs at the midpoint of the performance, synchronizing with the tempo of the music. *Ndadi* is regarded as the essential element of an *Angguk* performance. Rabimin defines “*ndadi*” as a state in which an individual’s consciousness is governed by a separate world of



consciousness known as the spirit (Rabimin, 2000, pp. 153–154). Additional definitions of *ndadi* have similar connotations, although in different areas, various terms were used to describe the “*ndadi*” scene.

Although the *ndadi* scene or phase exists in every Javanese folk art, each has different characteristics, rules, and processes. In *Angguk*, the *ndadi* scene is conspicuous because the dancer appears alone and wears sunglasses. In the beginning sequence, the dancers move synchronously, but during the *ndadi* scene, the dancers perform free movements according to their will.

In some writings, *ndadi* is translated as “trance” (Gombloh, 2002; Suryati, 2013; Groenendael et al., 2008) while others translate it as “being possessed” (Christensen, 2018; Rapoport, 2018). Hammons (2013) used both “trance” and “being possessed.” A precise description of the conditions experienced by the dancers is necessary for a complete understanding of the performance, both in text and context. Hence, this study asks whether *ndadi* is trance or possession.

Purpose of study

The objective of this study is to investigate the phenomenon of *ndadi*. Based on this initial analysis, *ndadi* cannot be categorized simply as trance or possession, as the previously cited sources suggest. The objective of this study is to demonstrate the ambiguity or complexity of the situations encountered by dancers who experience *ndadi*, and whether “trance” or “possession” is the appropriate term to describe their experience.



Research Methodology

This study used a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach. The qualitative method gives a more holistic picture of the phenomena experienced by the subjects, including behavior, perception, motivation, and action, and describes the specific context as naturally possible in the form of words and language by utilizing various natural methods (Moelong, 2006). Ethnography is the qualitative study of an individual or a group that describes systematically their deeper cultural characteristics in their own time and space (Spradley, 1997). Subsequently, the multidisciplinary approach used in this study employed various relevant disciplinary perspectives with one primary approach to solve a problem. This approach is used for the complexity and multidimensional aspect of the qualitative data. The primary approach used in this study is the anthropological approach.

1. Research Participants

1.1 Group Type

The group type of this research is to acknowledge dancers who have performed or experienced *ndadi*, especially those who are *Angguk* dancers.

1.2 Key Informant

This research observed performances by dancers who are members of the *Angguk Sripanglaras* group.

2. Instrumentation

This authors took photographs, and used a notebook and cell phone voice recorder during the interview.



3. Data Collection

This study was conducted in several steps. First, the data collection was divided into two types: primary and secondary. Primary data included field observations, interviews, and ethnographic notes. Secondary data included literature and other supporting sources. Next, the data were classified into two types: field data and text data. Afterward, triangulation was carried out to verify the accuracy (academic validity) of the data. The valid data were then analyzed and interpreted. The findings were included in the results and conclusions. This qualitative study used a multidisciplinary approach. The research effort included participatory observation, in which the researcher becomes part of the subjects' community or society. This participatory observation enabled the researchers to see the *Angguk* performance in Kulon Progo. It was important to use these two research methods in order to do in-depth and comprehensive research.

The second method of data collection was the interview. Esterberg in Sugiyono stated that an interview is the exchange of questions and answers between two or more people in order to elicit information and ideas and to obtain meaning in a particular topic (Sugiyono, 2013). This study used a semi-structured interview method. According to Sugiyono, in a semi-structured interview, research participants can give free and unconstrained answers but they should not get out of line from the determined themes (Sugiyono, 2013). The interview process is explained more fully in the next paragraph. The selection of sources or informants is also divided into primary informants, and secondary or ordinary informants. Primary informants are people or groups of people who have the basic, important, or central information about a particular culture (Endraswara, 2006). Interviews were conducted with Sri Wuryanti, the owner and trainer of the *Sripanglaras Angguk* group, and the *Angguk* dancer, Aprilia Wedaringtyas.



4. Data Analysis

Field observation data, including photographs, performance notes, live-streaming broadcast via YouTube, and voice recordings of an interview with experts, were collected, sorted, and classified in accordance with the study's theme: *ndadi* in *Angguk* performances. The purpose of the study was determined during a meeting and discussion after the data collection. Data triangulation was conducted by comparing field observations with interviews with experts.

Sutaryo (1979) described a performance of *Angguk Putra* in Garongan, Purworejo, Central Java. She explained that *ndadi* was a kind of trance, in which the dancer loses consciousness and a spirit takes possession of the dancer's body. Suryati also defined *ndadi* as a trance and possession by a spirit. Suryati (2013), who researched *Angguk Sri Lestari* in Kulon Progo Regency, focused on the religiosity of the music. Gombloh (2002), who drew on Rabimin's research, wrote in *Gong* magazine about the trance that occurred in "*Angguk Ndadi*" in Kebumen, Central Java. All of the researchers translated *ndadi* as "trance." This research discusses the complexity of *ndadi* and will try to determine whether "trance" is the correct description.

Result

The Performance of *Angguk Sripanglaras*

Angguk is a folk dance from Kulon Progo that is no different than female dancers in hotpants. Initially, *Angguk* was performed with a cohort of male dancers donning knee-length pants with attributes similar to the female *Angguk*. Dancers wore black long-sleeved shirts with a pile of red yarn at the shoulders. This yarn accentuates the oscillating impression created by the rapid back-and-forth movement of the dancer's shoulders known as *kirig* or *kekirig* motion. The dancers' also wear crimson colored socks and red scarves known as *sampur gombyok*. The female *Angguk* dancers



have their hair down. A black cap with beads dangling on both sides of the face enhances the dancer's body movements. All dancers wear the same clothes. This is the traditional look of *Angguk*.

Angguk is performed at many different events, but in rural areas *Angguk* is regarded as a therapeutic ritual or protection against negative forces. *Angguk* is often performed at night, from 21.00 to 02.00. The length of the performance is determined by the organizer and the license granted by regional security. The *Angguk* performance can be adapted to fit whatever physical space is provided by the organizer.

On June 17, 2023, a full three-sequence *Angguk* performance was performed at the *Bersih desa* of Banaran Sub-village event, Demangrejo Village, Sentolo Sub-district, Kulon Progo Regency, Yogyakarta (Demangan Media, 2023) The *Angguk* group that was invited to perform was one of the well-known groups and the pioneer of women's *Angguk* in Kulon Progo, *Angguk Sripanglaras*. A 1.5-meter-high stage with an area of about 60 square meters was arranged neatly in front of the house of the head of Banaran Sub-village. On the left side of the stage, there was a banner reading "Angguk Campursari Sripanglaras" with a telephone number. This shows that the *Angguk* performed by this group was popular and accepted requests for *campursari* songs (a genre of popular Javanese songs that combine diatonic and pentatonic tones). Therefore, the necessary musical instruments were provided, such as *bedug* (traditional drums), *saron* (one of the melodic instruments in Gamelan), keyboard, drums, and vocals.

Before the performance began, offerings of roses, betel leaves, bananas, incense, etc., were placed on the stage. The scene began with the *Pambuka* (opening) song, with twelve female dancers. Typical *Angguk* songs such as *Jalan-Jalan*, *Saya Cari*, and *Ikan Cucut* were danced in groups. However, these dances did not show a group choreographic technique. There was solo and duet/pair choreography.



The *Angguk* dances were correlated with the songs played. During the song “Ikan Cucut”, the dancers extended the right hand straight from the shoulder, with the left hand in the middle of the chest. In the next verse, the left hand was aligned with the shoulder, with the right hand in front of the chest. Hence, the movement sequence was based on the title of the musical accompaniment. The song lyrics in *Angguk* dance were in the form of *pantun*, a Malayan form of repetitive poetry.

Ndadi* in *Angguk Sripanglaras

As part of *Angguk*, like other Javanese folk arts, a *ndadi* scene was performed. It came at the end of each sequence. *Angguk* itself consisted of three sequences, each with simultaneous movements, and ended with *ndadi*. The *ndadi* scene began when a dancer unexpectedly fell backward and was caught by the two dancers next to her. A white rope was fastened around one of the dancer’s wrists, and the responsibility for tending to the *ndadi* dancer’s requirements was divided between two dancers. The other nine dancers left the stage.

Figure 2 The dancer whom *Ndadi* prepared by other dancers before dancing



Noted. by Ribeth N., 2023.



A dancer in *ndadi* condition was led to the back center of the stage. The two dancers helped her choose sunglasses, provided her with drinking water, and wiped off the *ndadi* dancer's sweat. While the dancer was in the *ndadi* condition, they danced more vigorously and spontaneously than during the group dance, while adhering to the fundamental simultaneous movement patterns of the *Angguk* dance. However, the range of movement was broader and the dance was more intense. The dancers also jumped as part of their routines, either as part of the movement pattern or as a transition to the next movement. Jumping was not part of the group dance. There were alterations in the bodily and facial gestures of the dancers. While dancing in groups the dancers would smile, but during *ndadi* they sealed their mouths shut and their facial expressions and demeanor became ferocious. During breaks, the dancers ate certain unusual items, such as bananas with the peel or roses.

Discussion and Conclusions

Ndadi was a compulsory part of the series of *Angguk Sripanglaras* performances. *Ndadi*, in this context, is the fascinating part of the performance in which a dancer does extraordinary things. *Ndadi* in Indonesian folk art is often translated as “trance”. We found, however, in our field observations and interviews, that *ndadi* in *Angguk* performances takes various forms.

Firstly, according to Sri Wuryanti, the *ndadi* experience is due to the presence of *Angguk*'s ancestral spirits summoned by a song. The song became the distinctive song of every dancer who entered *ndadi*. Five songs were used to summon these spirits: *Kuning-kuning*, *Trisnawati*, *Sekar Mawar*, *Awang-awang*, and *Umar Maya*. Each dancer received only one summoning song. This song was performed both at the beginning and the end of *ndadi*, since it served as a means to summon and dismiss the spirit that possessed each dancer. Sri Wuryanti stated that the song used for each of these summons was determined by the dancer's individual character. For a dancer with a petite, slender,



and nimble physique, the suitable song was *Sekar Mawar*, while for a dancer with a tall, robust build and powerful demeanor, the recommended song was *Umar Maya*. This *Umar Maya* was always placed in the last (third) sequence.

According to their belief, the songs were selected by the *Angguk* spirit and communicated through the observation of Sri Wuryanti and Surajiyo. They are highly influential figures, who act as mediators with the spirits, with the ability to free the spirits that possess the dancers. The song is unique for each dancer and serves as her identification. If another dancer adopts that song, the previous dancer must retire. Sri Wuryanti experienced an oddity where she owned the *Kuning-kuning* song, yet ceased to dance. For a long while, no one dared to *ndadi* to this song. But at an *Angguk* performance on July 1st 2023, at Akademi Komunitas Negeri Seni Budaya (AKNSB) Yogyakarta (state campus in Yogyakarta, designated for artistic and cultural activities administered by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesian Republic) a young dancer went into *ndadi* with the song *Kuning-kuning*.

Sri Wuryanti said that when possessed, she felt like she had lost control over her body, which kept dancing along with the song. She possessed a clear understanding of her actions, her location, and the presence of the audience. Her senses were fully operational, yet she was not able to regulate her bodily movements. She claimed that this was only possible when she fully submitted to the spirit. In addition, she made a request to her *Angguk* dancers, specifically asking for their willingness and talents. This was necessary as some dancers were unwilling or fearful of participating in *ndadi*.

Secondly, Lia, an *Angguk* dancer, openly acknowledged that she has never experienced the sensation of being controlled by a specific spirit. However, she was previously informed by an audience member, who claimed to have a sixth sense, that a spectre trailed her while she performed her dance. Lia also claimed that there were resemblances in the forms and traits of the supernatural



beings described by the individuals who shared their stories with her. While Lia did not experience being controlled by an external entity, she did have an experience comparable to her mother's, Sri Wuryanti, during *ndadi*. Her physical coordination deteriorated as the *Sekar Mawar* song was played on a loop. She had her eyes shut and lacked control over her bodily motions. On one occasion, she performed a dance on a scorching asphalt road without experiencing any sensation of heat on her feet, though her feet were only covered by the red socks. As the music played, she experienced a sense of disorientation, akin to being in a state of slumber, oblivious to her surroundings. She regained full awareness when *Sekar Mawar* was played again. Lia said that the experience was like being in a state of slumber and then being abruptly roused by another individual. According to her, she experiences this state exclusively during periods of significant difficulties and depression. She also felt both fatigue and a sense of relief as she entered *ndadi*. This occurred only while performing *Angguk*, and not during other forms of dancing. This was because Lia was acquainted with *Angguk* from a young age.

Conversely, it has been argued that the *ndadi* in *Angguk* performances is frequently a deliberate action performed by the dancers themselves, who simply imitate behaviour like that of a possessed person, or the usual movements of dancers in a state of *ndadi*. Dancers experienced a heightened level of consciousness and mastery over their own personalities and physical forms. Lia also mentioned that in a condition of happiness and emotional stability, she was unable to perceive the possessed situation. She executed vigorous and dynamic dancing moves, with a range of constantly shifting movements. She seized this opportunity to astonish the audience with her expertise, occasionally eating flowers. She entered a state of possession where she completely lost control of her body. She describes it in javanese language as “*kaya sak-sake kae lho le nari*” which signifies that she was simply dancing without any intention to impress the audience, devoid of strength and concern.



Based on these three situations, we thought the *ndadi* scenes in *Angguk* performances were diverse, because each dancer experienced different situations at different times. The researchers considered *ndadi* in *Angguk* as a “trance.” Suryati (2013) mentioned that in *Angguk Sri Lestari* there were scenes of possession or trance. Suryati further explained that when in a trance, dancers performed spontaneously and followed only the rhythm of the music. However, she also said that when in trance dancers could be possessed by the *Umar Maya* spirit, and the dancers’ consciousness returned when the *Umar Maya* song was played again. Gombloh (2002) also described *ndadi* as a trance where dancers’ movements suddenly became uncontrollable. There was a wild energy that entered the dancer that caused the uncontrollable movements and behavior. According to Merriam-Webster, trance is a sleeplike state (as of deep hypnosis) usually characterized by partly suspended animation with diminished or absent sensory and motor activity (Merriam-Webster, 2024). The trance also had an element of possession. Possession means being influenced or controlled by something (such as an evil spirit, desire, or idea). According to Hammons in his research on *jathilan*, dancers who were possessed by a spirit could perform extraordinary attractions.

Based on the preliminary findings, *ndadi* in *Angguk Sripanglaras* was a state that included trance, possession, and sometimes both or neither. During Lia’s condition of unconsciousness or *ndadi*, we did observe a trance-like phenomenon. Although she lacked control over her actions, she did not experience any feeling of spiritual possession. Physically, she was able to move, but the quality of her movement was reduced, as compared to when she was fully conscious and in control of her body. On the other hand, Sri Wuryanti experienced a sensation of being controlled or inhabited by supernatural beings or entities during the state of trance and possession. Consequently, despite her awareness of the situation, she experienced a loss of bodily control. *Ndadi*, a state distinct from both trance and possession, occurs when the dancer is fully conscious and capable of exerting control over her mind



and body. This condition was seen by others as feigned. Nevertheless, this was incorporated into the performance with a clear and purposeful intention. Lia stated that her mother, Sri Wuryanti, publicly expressed her intention to portray this circumstance, to act it out, as a personal precautionary measure during the *ndadi* scene. The objective was to lessen the dancers' susceptibility to spiritual possession. They believed that individuals who had experienced spirit possession were susceptible to future possessions in other times and places. Hence, *ndadi* moments frequently occur in traditional Javanese folk performances, like *Jathilan*, *Sintren*, and *Angguk*. *Angguk* is a typical form of traditional art commonly found in Kulon Progo. An *Angguk* performance consists of three distinct sequences. Each sequence has a synchronized group movement and a solo dance performance known as a *ndadi* scene. *Ndadi*, in this context, denotes a segment of a performance (scene) and specific actions executed by the dancer.

Ndadi became part of *Angguk* performances, especially by the *Sripanglaras* group, at the end of each sequence. Each *ndadi* scene had only one dancer who danced and wore sunglasses. If there was a dancer who was learning *ndadi*, he or she entered after the main dancer had danced half the performance. The new dancer entered after the fourth song, for example, so the next 3-4 songs would have two dancers. In the case study of *Angguk Sripanglaras*, *ndadi* could not simply be interpreted or translated as "a trance" or "possession" as stated in previous research. Our research showed that there in every performance, dancers would experience a variety of states. In this case, we categorized them into three scenes, which were obtained from observations and interviews with *Angguk* dancers. From these three scenes, it seemed that *ndadi* could include trance, spirit possession, and sometimes both and sometimes neither of these states.



Suggestions

Further research might 1) examine *ndadi* in the light of neuroscience, 2) examine the correlation between *ndadi* and harmonization of human relations with ancestors, 3) show how *ndadi* constructs society on the existence of spirits or supernatural entities, and 4) illustrate the presence of the sacred in profane performances.

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