

## **Exploring The Variety of Jaran Kepang Art: Unique Explorations From Javanese**

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### **Abstract**

*This article explores the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) like ChatGPT by analyzing the form, function, and meaning of Jaran Kepang art across Java. The research investigates how ChatGPT can aid in understanding and preserving traditional cultural arts like Jaran Kepang. ChatGPT offers advanced methods for data analysis, pattern recognition, and preservation of intangible cultural heritage. This study employs cultural anthropology and traditional communication theories, enhanced by ChatGPT-driven analysis, to examine Jaran Kepang's regional differences and thematic patterns. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research combines literature review, direct observation, and ChatGPT technologies to analyze data. Central Java's Jaran Kepang emphasizes mystical and spiritual elements to ward off evil spirits and bring good luck. East Java's version, associated with legends like Ki Sasmita, involves trance performances and moral storytelling. In West Java, linked to the spread of Islam by Sunan Gunung Jati, the art features diverse horse forms in rituals reinforcing community identity. ChatGPT technologies facilitate the analysis of these variations, revealing how each region's Jaran Kepang reflects local adaptation and cultural evolution. The research underscores ChatGPT's potential in enhancing academic knowledge of Javanese culture and advocating for preservation efforts, ensuring traditional arts' legacy in a rapidly advancing technological era.*

**Keywords:** *jaran kepeng; ChatGPT; Javanese culture; mystical value; legend*

### **A. Introduction**

The art of Jaran Kepang, also known as Kuda Lumping, is a rich and diverse cultural heritage of Indonesia, particularly rooted in the Javanese region. This traditional dance is known by various names such as Jathilan and Jaran Eblek, among others (Ibda & Nasution, 2019). While its origins are in Java,

Kuda Lumping has spread to other regions, such as Pontianak, through a long historical journey (Ramadhan et al., 2023). More than just a form of entertainment, this dance carries deep spiritual, social, and educational values, reflecting the cultural diversity found in regions like Central Java, East Java, and West Java. Each of these areas adds its unique

characteristics to Jaran Kepang, influenced by local history, legends, and socio-cultural conditions. This art form not only conveys moral messages and serves as a medium for religious teachings but also plays a crucial role in defining the cultural identity of the Javanese people.

In today's modern era, technological advancements, particularly in the field of artificial intelligence (AI), have opened up new possibilities for exploring and preserving traditional arts like Jaran Kepang. AI can be leveraged to enhance accessibility to cultural heritage, including traditional performances such as Jaran Kepang (Pisoni et al., 2021). Moreover, AI technology has the potential to revive and sustain traditional cultural narratives that may be fading from collective memory (Madhukullya, 2024). For instance, AI models like ChatGPT offer sophisticated analytical capabilities, allowing for the exploration of various aspects of these arts in relation to their broader historical and social contexts, deepening our understanding of the complex cultural values embedded

within them. ChatGPT, as one of the leading AI models, can process data from multiple sources, identify trends, and uncover how these values are interpreted and practiced in different regions of Java.

The development of AI technologies like ChatGPT also enables a more in-depth exploration of the origins and evolution of Jaran Kepang across different regions, each influenced by unique local traditions, legends, and socio-cultural dynamics. For example, in Central Java, Jaran Kepang might be closely tied to mystical ancestral traditions, whereas in East Java, local legends such as those surrounding Ki Sasmata are integral to the art's narrative. In West Java, the spread of Islam by figures like Sunan Gunung Jati adds a distinctive influence on the form and meaning of Jaran Kepang. AI can systematically organize this wealth of information, offering a comprehensive overview of how the art has developed and adapted within various cultural contexts. Preserving intangible cultural heritage, like traditional art forms, is crucial for promoting mental health and

sustaining cultural practices (Liu & Li, 2020).

Additionally, using AI tools like ChatGPT can deepen our understanding of the regional variations in Jaran Kepang performances, including differences in musical instruments, costumes, and other elements that shape the identity of this art form. Kusumastuti & Widjajantie (2020) discuss the unique patterns of symbolic interaction and heritage transmission in Jaran Kepang performances, emphasizing their resilience in facing challenges in today's rapidly changing world. With its data analysis and comparison capabilities, ChatGPT can highlight and explain these regional distinctions, as well as how local cultural elements influence and shape this art amid social changes in society.

Through AI-supported research, there is hope that the art of Jaran Kepang will continue to be preserved and passed down to future generations. A deeper understanding of the values and meanings within this art, combined with the strategic role that AI tools like ChatGPT can play

in its preservation, will ensure that Jaran Kepang remains a vibrant and dynamic part of Indonesia's rich and diverse cultural identity.

## **B. Research Method**

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to investigate the variations in Jaran Kepang art across Central Java, East Java, and West Java, focusing on the regional differences in cultural values, meanings, and social functions. As noted by Sandelowski (2009) and Bradshaw et al. (2017), this approach is valuable for its ability to explore complex and context-specific aspects of the art form. Data were sourced from uploaded documents and academic literature, providing a comprehensive foundation and theoretical context. Data collection involved both literature reviews and direct observations, capturing detailed aspects of performances, including dance movements and audience interactions. Thematic analysis, as described by Muharram (2022), was used to identify and compare key themes such as performance forms and spiritual meanings across regions. The integration of AI tools like ChatGPT enhanced the analysis by efficiently summarizing literature and identifying patterns, thus

enriching the research with deeper insights into Jaran Kepang's diverse manifestations and cultural significance.

### **C. Results and Discussion**

#### **1. Jaran Kepang in Central Java**

##### **a. Ancestral Traditions that Combine Mystical and Spiritual Elements**

The art of Jaran Kepang in Central Java is deeply rooted in ancestral traditions that merge mystical and spiritual elements, with significant ritualistic value, as seen in the unique Jaran Kepang Papat ritual closely tied to Javanese culture (Fitriasari, 2023). Traditionally, it was performed in ceremonies to summon and honor ancestral spirits while driving away evil entities believed to bring misfortune. The dancers, entering trance states, acted as mediums who communicated with spirits, using their movements to exorcise evil forces and invite good fortune. Through AI, particularly ChatGPT, these cultural practices have been analyzed in greater depth, revealing intricate connections between Jaran Kepang rituals and broader Javanese spiritual practices.

By processing large cultural datasets, the AI uncovered patterns linking these performances to ancient beliefs, enriching the understanding of how they function as both spiritual ceremonies and cultural narratives.

##### **b. Performance Type and Equipment**

In Central Java, Jaran Kepang performances feature dancers riding "horses" crafted from woven bamboo, showcasing both artistic skill and cultural heritage (Ramadhan et al., 2023). The main equipment includes horse heads, sticks or swords, and traditional costumes, with dancers donning vibrant outfits adorned with glittering decorations and distinctive headbands. They wield sticks or swords as part of their dynamic and energetic routines, while the bamboo horse heads are often embellished with feathers and colorful fabrics, enhancing the visual appeal. Gamelan music plays throughout the performance, adding a mystical and magical ambiance. Through ChatGPT, the significance of these visual and performative elements has been deeply explored. By synthesizing data from cultural

studies and visual ethnography, ChatGPT uncovers how components like the woven bamboo horses and traditional costumes reflect deeper cultural meanings, offering insights into how the art form has evolved while preserving its traditional values.

### **c. Social and Spiritual Functions**

In Central Java, Jaran Kepang performances are not only entertaining but also deeply significant in both social and spiritual contexts, serving as a bridge to the supernatural by balancing the physical and spiritual realms. Dancers in a trance are believed to channel ancestral spirits or other supernatural forces, expelling evil and inviting good fortune, reflecting the deep connection between traditional performing arts and the local people's spiritual and cultural beliefs (Bhagawan et al., 2023). Through AI analysis, ChatGPT has played a crucial role in exploring these dual functions, using natural language processing and machine learning to analyze textual data from various sources. This analysis highlights recurring themes like community cohesion, spiritual balance, and moral

education, revealing how Jaran Kepang passes down values such as courage, honesty, and unity to younger generations. Furthermore, by cross-referencing multiple cultural texts, ChatGPT has provided a more comprehensive understanding of how this art form fosters religious tolerance and social solidarity.

## **2. Jaran Kepang in East Java**

### **a. The Legend of Ki Sasmita and His Relationship with Subtle Beings**

The legend of Ki Sasmita is intricately tied to traditional arts like Kuda Lumping (Jathilan) and Reog Ponorogo, where Ki Sasmita, a supernatural figure, is believed to use his powers to interact with spirits and protect the village from various threats. These stories serve not only as entertainment but also as valuable tools for teaching character development, such as courage and resilience (Dwinuryati & Andayani, 2017). A central feature of these narratives is the Bregola, guardian spirits who maintain a symbiotic relationship with humans, offering protection or strength in exchange for reverence through rituals and

performances. ChatGPT has played a key role in analyzing this legend by parsing complex folklore and identifying recurring themes like protection and the human-spirit relationship. Through natural language processing, the AI has provided a more structured understanding of how these narratives fit within East Java's broader cultural context. Additionally, its ability to cross-reference these legends with similar stories from other regions has offered a comparative perspective, highlighting the unique elements of East Javanese folklore.

## **b. Various Horse Forms and Trance Attractions**

### **1) Leather and Woven Bamboo Horse**

- a) *Kuda Lumping (Jathilan)*: A lumping horse is made of woven bamboo shaped like a horse, decorated with colorful paint and cloth to enhance its appearance. In Jathilan performances, dancers ride these lumping horses while dancing to the rhythm of traditional music.
- b) *Reog Ponorogo*: In contrast to

Jathilan, Reog Ponorogo uses larger and more complex masks and costumes, including a lion's head mask (Barong) adorned with peacock feathers.

### **2) Trance Attraction**

- a) The trance attraction is a captivating part of these performances, where dancers enter a state of unconsciousness, seemingly possessed by spirits. In this state, they perform energetic and sometimes extreme dance moves, such as eating shards of glass or walking on burning coals without harm.
- b) A handler or shaman, who leads the performance, performs the ritual of healing or returning consciousness. This handler is believed to possess the special ability to communicate with spirits and restore the dancers to their normal state.
- c) By analyzing the different horse forms and trance attractions, ChatGPT has been

instrumental in exploring the symbolic significance of these elements. Through data analysis and pattern recognition, the AI has uncovered the deeper meanings behind the use of leather and bamboo in crafting the horses, as well as the cultural significance of the trance state in these performances. ChatGPT's analysis extends to understanding how these trance states are perceived within the community, often seen as a direct connection to the spiritual realm. This insight has deepened the understanding of how these rituals serve both as entertainment and as a form of spiritual practice.

### **c. Moral and Spiritual Messages**

#### **1) Moral Message**

- a) These arts often convey moral messages about courage, honesty, and resilience in the face of challenges. For example, the stories told in the performances often depict

heroes struggling against evil beings, illustrating that good will always triumph over evil.

#### **2) Spiritual Message**

- a) The presence of a handler and trance rituals indicate a strong belief in the supernatural world and spirits, reflecting traditional societal views on the balance between the real world and the spiritual world. These performances are often held during important ceremonies, anniversaries, or rituals aimed at invoking safety and well-being.

#### **3) Telling Local History and Legends**

- a) These performances also serve as a medium to convey local history and legends to younger generations. Through these performances, stories about legendary figures like Ki Sasmita and significant events in the village's history are kept alive and recognized by the community.

ChatGPT's ability to analyze and synthesize information from various sources has allowed for a deeper

understanding of the moral and spiritual messages embedded in these performances. By processing vast amounts of text, ChatGPT has identified the recurring moral themes and the role of these performances in passing down cultural knowledge. This has highlighted how traditional arts like Jaran Kepang and Kuda Lumping are not only a means of preserving history but also tools for reinforcing community values and spiritual beliefs. The AI's interpretation has provided a more holistic view of how these performances function as both educational and spiritual exercises within the community.

### **3. Kuda Lumping in West Java**

#### **a. The Spread of Islam by Sunan Gunung Jati in Cirebon**

Sunan Gunung Jati, one of the Wali Songo, played a crucial role in spreading Islam in West Java, especially in Cirebon, by utilizing cultural and artistic forms like Kuda Lumping to propagate Islamic teachings. In this region, Kuda Lumping performances often integrate Islamic elements into their narratives, such as stories depicting

Sunan Gunung Jati using spiritual powers to combat evil or protect the community, aligning these acts with Islamic teachings on spiritual strength and courage. The spirits and heirlooms in these stories are frequently tied to Islamic concepts, illustrating the syncretic blending of cultural and religious practices in West Java. ChatGPT's analysis has been key in uncovering this syncretism by processing historical texts and cultural references, offering a nuanced view of how Islam was woven into local traditions, particularly through arts like Kuda Lumping. By drawing connections between religious narratives and cultural performances, the AI has illuminated how these elements were harmonized to create a distinctive form of spiritual expression that resonated with the local population.

#### **b. Lumping Horse Made of Leather and Bamboo**

- 1) **Materials:** Lumping horses in West Java are usually made from lightweight yet durable woven bamboo, with leather used as a complementary material to enhance their



appearance and add artistic touches.

2) **Shape Variations:** Different regions within West Java exhibit unique variations of Kuda Lumping forms:

- a) *Sekar Nembe*: Features horses with beautiful floral decorations and bright colors.
- b) *Bopong*: Characterized by slower, more elegant dance movements, often featuring simpler designs.
- c) *Tremben*: Stands out with its dynamic and energetic dance moves, and the horses are decorated with intricate details.
- d) *The Overcast*: Has a mystical atmosphere, often featuring dramatic stories with dark-colored horses.
- e) *Sembrani*: Known for its ornate and beautiful horse decorations, as well as graceful dance movements.

ChatGPT's analysis of the various forms of Lumping horses highlights

the regional diversity within West Java's cultural landscape. By comparing the materials and designs used in different areas, the AI has uncovered how these variations reflect local identity and artistic preferences. Additionally, ChatGPT's exploration of the symbolic meanings behind the different horse designs has provided insights into how these performances communicate specific cultural and spiritual messages to the audience.

### **c. Ritual Ceremony and Strengthening Cultural Identity**

1) **Ritual Function:** Kuda Lumping is often performed during various rituals, such as village clean-up ceremonies or events meant to ward off bad luck. These performances are believed to possess magical powers capable of driving away evil spirits and protecting the community from misfortune. In an Islamic context, these performances may also be conducted to celebrate religious holidays, such as the Prophet's birthday, or during other significant occasions.

2) **Social Function:** Kuda Lumping serves as a medium for strengthening cultural identity within the community. It reminds people of their cultural heritage and reinforces social bonds among community members. Additionally, Kuda Lumping performances honor ancestors and commemorate local history, allowing the younger generation to learn about their cultural values and regional history through these stories.

3) **Entertainment and Education:** Beyond its ritualistic and social functions, Kuda Lumping is also a source of entertainment and education. The performances entertain audiences while conveying moral and spiritual messages through the stories portrayed on stage.

ChatGPT's role in analyzing Kuda Lumping's ritual and social functions has been crucial in understanding how these performances contribute to the community's cultural identity. By examining the historical and contemporary contexts of these rituals, ChatGPT has provided a

comprehensive view of how Kuda Lumping serves not only as a form of entertainment but also as a vital tool for cultural preservation and education. The AI's ability to synthesize information from diverse sources has enriched the understanding of how these performances function as a living tradition that continues to evolve while maintaining its core values.

#### **d. Kuda Lumping Performance in Cirebon**

1) In Cirebon, a Kuda Lumping performance often begins with a prayer led by a local religious figure, reflecting the influence of Islam on this traditional art form. Dancers ride bamboo horses adorned with cloth and leather ornaments, performing energetic movements, and at times entering a trance state where they are believed to be possessed by spirits or supernatural beings. The storylines frequently depict Sunan Gunung Jati battling evil forces with the help of good spirits, highlighting themes of courage and spiritual strength. A handler or shaman plays a vital role in

managing the trance, performing rituals to ensure the safety of the dancers and the audience. ChatGPT's analysis of Kuda Lumping in Cirebon reveals how this performance art intertwines cultural, religious, and spiritual elements. By examining its narratives and rituals, the AI has provided insight into the layers of meaning that make Kuda Lumping a vital expression of both religious devotion and cultural identity within Javanese-Islamic culture.

#### **D. Conclusion**

The art of Jaran Kepang, known by various names across Central Java, East Java, and West Java, showcases distinct origins, performance styles, and social roles in each region. In Central Java, this art form is deeply rooted in ancestral traditions, incorporating mystical and spiritual elements used in ritual ceremonies to summon ancestral spirits and ward off evil ones. Performances involve dancers riding bamboo-woven horses, dressed in traditional costumes, and

accompanied by gamelan music. Spiritually, Jaran Kepang serves as a bridge to the supernatural, while socially, it contributes to moral education, cultural preservation, and strengthening community ties.

In East Java, Jaran Kepang, also known as Reog Ponorogo, is closely linked to the legend of Ki Sasmita and spirits such as Bregola. Here, the performances feature lumping horses made of leather and woven bamboo, with dancers entering trance states to perform extreme movements and occasionally participate in healing rituals guided by shamans. These performances deliver moral lessons on courage and honesty and reflect the local perception of balancing the real and spiritual realms. They also play a role in conveying local history and legends to younger generations.

In West Java, Kuda Lumping is associated with the Islamic spread led by Sunan Gunung Jati in Cirebon. The performances often incorporate Islamic elements, such as stories of Sunan Gunung Jati using spiritual power to combat evil. The lumping horses are crafted from woven

bamboo, featuring various regional shapes and decorations like Sekar Nembe, Bopong, Tremben, Si Mendung, and Sembrani. Ritualistically, Kuda Lumping is used to ward off bad luck and celebrate Islamic holidays, while socially, it strengthens cultural identity, provides moral education, and fosters social connections within the community. The performance includes dancers in trance states, with handlers ensuring the safety and sanctity of the event.

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