

# intangible cultural

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# The Intangible Cultural Capital of *Lengger* Banyumas in Post Pandemic Era

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**Abstract.** Cultural capital is an important factor of how *lengger* in Banyumas exists in this post-pandemic era. This capital gains significance in relation to the practice of *lengger* cultural politics. Therefore, this research is aimed at revealing the practice of intangible cultural capital of *lengger* Banyumas. The new ethnographic method is used to explore how cultural capital and the arena are important in determining the existence of the *lengger* Banyumas. The data are taken from the interview of *lenggers* in which it compared the traditional and contemporary *lengger* dancers. Further, the results of the interview are analyzed by relating it with the issue of the cultural capital by using Bourdieu's concept of arena and cultural capital. The results of this research indicate that the intangible cultural capital that determines the existence of a *lengger* comprise the access to information, educational background, heredity, *indhang*, and networking. *Lengger*, who is not technologically educated, is frequently missed various cultural grants information that are spread through social networks. Furthermore, a *lengger's* educational background influences how well they can develop *lengger* performance. Yet, heredity becomes a cultural capital that is equally crucial in assessing the level of one's talent and spread the mystical aura. It is also undeniable that having *indhang* demonstrates the strength of a *lengger's* pride. Finally, the convergence of cultural capital and the arena define the Banyumas *lengger's* existence in the post-pandemic era.

**Keywords:** *lengger* · cultural capital · arena · new-ethnography · *indhang*

## 1 Introduction

*Lengger* Banyumas has become less popular throughout the pandemic as they rarely perform on stage. However, the impact of the restriction of the crowd in the pandemic of COVID-19 lasted in the post-pandemic era. Indeed, the virtual shows are no longer mainly staged but live performances with some strict regulations are perpetually practiced. Thus, folk art appears in a more creative form and taste. At this point, Bourdieu [8] describes that art is something that is tied to 'taste' which justifies the privilege of a class and allows them to differentiate and distance themselves from the lower class. Indeed, it highlighted the fact that each particular group is engaged in a struggle to establish a class. Thus, in relation with class issue, *lengger* has established their presence among traditional performers through their creativity in the various performances.

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There were significant differences between the various *lengger* shows held in the post-pandemic era. This significant difference can be seen from the performances held after this pandemic era, such as the performance in *Peken Banyumas*, *Jagad Lengger*, and *Pagelaran Sura* in Banyumas areas. During the observation of the research on *lengger* performances, the researchers affirm that these three performances did succeed in drawing both a large number of dancers and viewers. Nevertheless, it is clear that each major event has its own style. Several performance events created by the *lengger* community, such as in the Banyumas pavilion, reveal that *lengger* dancers with broad access will be able to host the show, while those without access will be invited as guests to participate in the performance. This condition highlighted the notion of *lengger's* cultural capital. Bourdieu (2002 [1986]) in Quinn & Wilks, [11] stated that the concept of cultural capital positioned the individual at the core in which it links the volume of social capital possessed by a person as dependent, further it broaden the ideas on how the network of connections they can mobilise. Therefore, the cultural capital has a great relation with the arena or the social status of people. Arena is the field that represents the social arena within which people compete for resources (Bourdieu (1986) in [5].

In relation with the way they develop the dance and their activities, *lengger* Banyumas can be determined as traditional and contemporary *lengger*. Both of this kind of *lengger* is identified that they have a group or community, but with different characteristic of the community. Traditional *lengger* has traditional *lengger* group and calung, such as *lengger* Narsih with *Ngudi Laras*. At this point, the traditional *lengger* reveals that *lengger* become their primary source of income. Further, they usually perform in cultural events related to social activities such as *Pagelaran Sura*, *bersih desa*, independence celebrations, and other ceremonial activities.

On the other side, contemporary *lengger* also has *lengger* community such as *Rumah Lengger Banyumas* (Rianto) and the Otniel Dance Community (Otniel). The two communities led by Rianto and Otniel share the skill of being *lenggers* who can dance not only autodidact but also through formal education. As a result, in the sense of movement, these *lenggers* are more energetic and varied in their gesture composition. The choreography of their movements regularly implies a courtship of traditional and contemporary dance movements. This movement, however, cannot be separated from the essence of the traditional *lengger* dance.

Hartanto's [4] research on *lengger* examines the gender perspective on *lengger lanang* Banyumas. Other studies on habitus and arena have been conducted by Fatmawaty *et al.* [3], who examine the type of interconnection between habitus, capital, and arena in only one *lengger lanang* community, namely *Lengger Lanang Langgeng Sari*. This study seeks to examine *lengger* from a critical standpoint by comparing several *lengger* communities: traditional *lengger* and contemporary *lengger*, and how the existence of *lengger* in this pandemic era is supported by the cultural capital owned and the arena that becomes the social circle of the individual *lengger*.

## 2 Method

The research of *Lengger Banyumasan* belongs to the scope of literature and cultural studies. The goal of this study is to identify how the relationship between capital and arena affects the existence of *lengger* in Banyumas. Based on these objectives, the new ethnographic method is the most appropriate method for achieving the research goals. The new ethnographic method focuses on the community in collecting data about the community. Malinowski [1] stated that the new ethnography shows how culture, social structure, and sense are represented in the activities of the subject or person being studied or community groups. Denzin [1] also emphasized that new ethnography is a problem-solving method that produces texts whose information is created by the author in accordance with the subject's information. At this point, this method become crucial in this research in defining the data on how culture is represented on *lengger's* activity as subject.

The steps in doing this method is relatively similar to Spradley [12] in conducting the interview such as: identifying the object/subject of the research as informants, (2) formulating questions for the interview, (3) conducting interviews with informants, and (4) writing the ethnography based on the interview and analyzing interview results. The informants of this research are the *lengger* dancers such as Narsih, Rianto, and Otniel. The observation of this research is done by joining their events, following with the interviews of the dancers. The interview were conducted in the dancers community with some questions that related to their efforts to exist in this post-pandemic era. The results of the interviews then coded into some ethnography writing. The final step of this research is analyzing the result of the interview by relating it to Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and arena.

## 3 Result and Discussion

This research uses Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital and arena. These two main points are intriguing because they may play a role in the emergence of many gaps between each *lengger* in Banyumas. The key factors that affect the existence of *lengger* in the post-pandemic are cultural capitals. Limitations in accessing various information make the gap clearer between those who have cultural capital and a wide arena or not. In addition, the educational background, although it does not determine the movement skills of a *lengger* dancer, becomes dominant in relation to the existence of the *lengger*. The heredity determines a *lengger's* position among the other Banyumas performers. Furthermore, having *indhang* is believed to be one of the facts in figuring out the existence of a *lengger*. This shows the importance of cultural capital and how it affects the existence of *lengger* Banyumas.

### A. The Cultural Capital of *Lengger* Banyumas in Post Pandemic Era

Due to the diverse backgrounds of these *lenggers*, it is evident that the *lenggers* of Banyumas have various cultural capitals. Comparing *Lengger* Rianto and *Lengger* Narsih, the significant difference that appears on both is not in the quality of the dance



movement. The difference, however, is in the cultural capital associated with one's status or prestige. As stated by [8], cultural capital is linked to the possession of an aesthetic disposition towards 'high' cultural forms which grants individuals status or prestige and, in this way, is implicated in relations of social inequity. In terms of social status, performance that *lengger* Narsih, Rianto, and Otniel have done show an achievement that is recognized in Banyumas. This is strongly intertwined with efforts to give them a distinctive identity. In relation to cultural capital, this can be related to the possession of an aesthetic disposition to see social inequalities.

*Lengger* Banyumas are known for having an artistic community, which makes them capable to become the leader of a community. This sends a message that they already have the cultural capital to act as the community's leaders. *Lengger* performance organized by the *lengger* community "Rumah *Lengger* Banyumas" and the Otniel Dance Community at the Banyumas Sipanji Hall, such as the *Jagad Lengger Festival* and *Peken Banyumasan* invited traditional *lengger* to collaborate and perform on the stage. Narsih's *lengger*, for example, was only present as the guests to perform the *lengger* in the show. Narsih stated that she was rarely invited to perform *lengger* with her group. Thus, she would happily join for any invitation as the guest star such as in the event of *Jagad Lengger*. It represents the power relation, in which the organizer has the authority to decide who is allowed to perform in the show. Indeed, a special segment has been created to allow the audience to recognize traditional *lengger*. However, this also can be seen as positioning themselves higher than the traditional *lengger*.

Traditional *lengger* who focus on individuals or groups of *lengger* dancers are still very conventional in their preservation. It may make them possibly lose the 'privilege' mentioned by Bourdieu. Privileges here include access to financial support from the local government, access to information about various funds from agencies, and the ability to persevere in enhancing *lengger* in an assault of negative stigma from the surrounding community. Kamphuis, et al. [6] argued cultural capital is not owned by everyone, however, cultural capital functions like other capital (e.g., monetary assets) which is a source of money to obtain other resources. As a result, having certain cultural capital can affect obtaining and gaining capital or other aspects. Accessibility and technological literacy are cultural assets that traditional *lengger* are not familiar with. This keeps them trapped in a limit that prevents them from enhancing *lengger*.

*Lengger* Narsih is well-known for her dancing, *nyinden*, and witty ability to criticize in every performance. Her *nyinden* skill is the main attraction because not all *lengger* are capable. Narsih, a member of the *Ngudi Luwesing Salira* arts group, is frequently invited to participate in the performances of a puppeteer who is already well-known in the national puppetry show. Even though she only completed the fourth grade of elementary school, Narsih never felt inferior. Being a Banyumas citizen with the nature of *thok melong* or "just the way we are" becomes a cultural capital. Narsih becomes a legendary *lengger* with her *ngapak* accent. Bourdieu [8] asserts that the working class's culture will limit the fate of their own class. Bourdieu's statement shows the significance of cultural capital for every artist's ability to survive and preserve their art.

In comparison to Othniel and Rianto. These two maestro *lengger* Banyumas completed their university education at ISI Surakarta, both at the undergraduate and master's levels. It is evident in how these two *lenggers* attempt to enrich their cultural capital as

*lenggers* with formal education. They are also equipped with the ability for contemporary dances, but they still use the *lengger* dance as the starting point for creating the dance. Cultural capital is a disposition that allows a person to benefit from the aesthetic value that culture or formal education offer. Those who lack cultural capital will only do *lengger* as a way of survival; in fact, they do not even thrive and have no idea how to bring the *lengger* into existence. This will be very distinct from contemporary *lengger*, who has a lot of cultural capital. Since they have sufficient capital, contemporary *lengger* will easily obtain these privileges. As said by Bourdieu [13], people with privileges will always develop higher and further, and many new experiences will be passed exclusively. They will always know how to preserve *lengger* around the world.

These three maestro *lengger* are able to show *lengger* in a variety of tastes. If their ancestors were traced back, they came from a family of artists. Even though they are not direct descendants, their ancestors have a close relationship. This also shows how their cultural capital, such as natural talent, is rooted and a gift from their ancestors. This can be highlighted as a given cultural capital that allows these dancers to have dancing abilities.

Additionally, *indhing* is a terminology that, in this *lengger*, differentiates it from other arts and dancers. In Pagelaran Banyumas, *indhing* is a spiritual power that they believe gives them the ability and aura of attractive dancers. As *lengger*, they usually get this *indhing* before being crowned as *lengger*. Obtaining and maintaining the *indhing* is a hard process for the *lengger*. This becomes interesting when the three *lenggers* state that they already have *indhing* since they first danced. Unintentionally, the *lenggers* are trying to show that they are the 'selected ones' by the *indhing* to become *lengger*. They must be morally upright and have good self-control by doing things like fasting or eating tasteless food to maintain this *indhing*. At this point, *indhing* can be positioned as embodied cultural capital as similarly stated by [2] that it used to conceptualize the enduring dispositions of the mind and body, including the cultural attitudes, preferences, and practices legitimated within a given field. Therefore, in the cultural context of Banyumas, *indhing* is merely essential as the expression of cultural attitude.

Seeing how this maestro *lengger* still exists by utilizing social media means that the media is one of the cultural capitals owned by *lengger*. As a result of digitization, certain generations have a gift of technological literacy. *Lengger* Narsih and *lengger* Rianto or Otniel are two contrasting groups in this case, and it is clear how drastically different they are from one another. Narsih, who is half a century old, belongs to a generation that does not fully utilize technology. She only uses her phone to communicate through WhatsApp and receive event calls. In contrast, Otniel and Rianto make the best use of social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter. Of course, their social circle is also interconnected to this. The existence of *lenggers* is dependent on their broad networking as an arena.

## B. The Arena of *Lengger* Banyumas in Post Pandemic Era

The events of *Jagad Lengger* and *Peken Banyumas* show, the presence of high-ranking governments such as the Regent, Deputy Regent, Head of Bank Indonesia, Head of the Prosecutor's Office, and several heads of important institutions in Banyumas indicate the important roles of *lengger* in the cultural politics in Banyumas. In contrast,



the traditional *lengger* performance is attended only by local residents and a few village governments. It proves how the arena of *lengger* impacts the popularity of a show. Each of these performances reflects the arena, which is strongly linked to cultural capital. These two factors are closely connected in identifying the presence of *lengger* in Banyumas. Arena refers to historical sequences that are based on particular forms of power and are driven by their habit of competing for specific values [9]. In this case, the arena is also used as a place for artist competitions. The arena is transformed into a battleground where position and power are up for grabs. These findings show that the arena is a component of cultural capital, even though Bourdieu views cultural capital as distinct from the arena. However, according to Lubis [9], the arena is the social world (a place) of its members' battle for survival. This is done in order to be a sign of a symbolic power in order to achieve further success (Bourdieu in [9]). Therefore, all of the *lengger* and other Banyumas performer usually struggle to obtain the cultural capital and other resources to maintain the arena's dominance.

The differences mentioned above depend on who is the show's organizer. In a broader sense, the organizers are linked to the circle they have. This circle is known as an arena in Bourdieu's concept. The *lengger* arena can also be categorized as a cultural capital. In addition to cultural capital, the *lengger* arena could be a determinant to artist inequality. The existence of the concept of traditional *lengger*, which lacks cultural capital, and contemporary *lengger*, which has enough cultural capital, reflects a gap. Those with sufficient cultural capital will either master the arena or easily adapt to the existing arena. According to Bourdieu [10], the arena is an objective role concept that defines the social space in which the habitus operates. Rianto is a *lengger* who lives in Japan with his Japanese wife. This indirectly roles him as a dancer with a broader arena trajectory than traditional *lengger* dancers in the Banyumas area. Otniel acquired *lengger* while living in Solo. Rianto and Otniel have appeared in several films directed by Garin Nugroho, including *Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku* and *Hijra'*. Rianto and Othniel's arena grew significantly since they played roles in Garin's works and performances across the country. Garin Nugroho is a senior filmmaker who has won numerous awards for his films. On a national scale, this has an indirect impact on the arena trajectory of the two *lenggers*.

A number of factors, such as the participation in numerous festivals held in various nations and regions of the continent, can be used to highlight Rianto's arena in national and international contexts. Furthermore, Rianto is invited by universities from all over the world, including Japan, Australia, Germany, and the Netherlands. While Rianto has traveled to many countries and has become an educational expert at various universities, Otniel appears to be more focused on the private sector. This September, Othniel was seen in Korea working on dances for various events. Otniel does not appear to be attending a specific university, but he appears to be focused on developing more private institutions such as *sanggar* or dance studios. Traditional *lenggers* with arenas in the Banyumas district or sub-district level usually participate on a local scale. They do not have a particularly large arena. The guests who attended their performances were only limited to village governments. The arena is a part of a self-sufficient power that contains the struggle for a powerful position [7]. As a consequence, people with sufficient cultural capital will be able to more easily occupy and dominate the arena, which is the social

space in which their dominance is challenged. If all *lenggers* have enough cultural capital and a large enough arena, their existence is guaranteed well in the future as well.

#### 4 Conclusion

*Lengger* is an intangible heritage that has been recognized as one of Banyumas' identities. Therefore, the existence of *lengger* needs attention to ensure that it won't be extinct. The *lengger* dancers who are still trying to survive during this pandemic shows how this is actually related to cultural capital and the *lengger* arena. It surely requires a lot of effort to survive after a pandemic. *Lengger's* diverse performances represent the essential notion of cultural capital and arena in defining the position. At this point, the *lengger* arena that determines the existence of *lengger* in the post-pandemic era is an important part of the cultural capital of a *lengger*. The accessibility background, which includes technology skills, educational background, heredity, and *indhang*, embodies the cultural capital of *lengger*. From the previous explanation, it can be highlighted that the arena and cultural capital are closely linked, in which the arena could be a cultural capital that benefits *lengger*.

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