

## The Patronage in Javanese Dance Performance Culture in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* by Ahmad Tohari



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**ABSTRACT:** Patron-client relationships exist in many sectors of society. However, few studies have investigated their role in performative Javanese dance culture. This study aims to explore the representation of a patron-client relationship in the context of traditional Javanese dance in a novel, *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, by Ahmad Tohari. Through literary analysis of narratives and dialogues, it elucidates the structure of the patron-client relationship, including the roles of the patron and the services the client provides. This analysis reveals that the patron-client relationship in the *ronggeng* tradition is shaped by a cultural context in which no party may unilaterally start a *ronggeng* group until an *indang* spirit reincarnates as a human girl. A *dukun ronggeng* may then play the role of patron, nurturing the gifted girl and raising her to be a *ronggeng*. He becomes, in effect, her foster parent and takes care of all her needs, including financing her beautification and dance education. He also takes on the responsibility of preparing all rituals and ceremonies required to legitimize a *ronggeng*. The *ronggeng*, in turn, must repay him for all these expenses, with interest, by selling her virginity and sexual services to whomever can pay the highest price, or by performing her *ronggeng* dance and passing all the tips she collects to the *dukun*. Clearly, the *dukun* functions as a classic patron, facilitating a young girl to become a *ronggeng*, and she, in turn, functions as a client, commodifying herself in order to repay and serve her patron.

**KEYWORDS:** ronggeng dancer, patron-client, traditional dance performance, Javanese cultural dance

### INTRODUCTION

*Patron* comes from the Latin word *patronas*, meaning “nobility”, while *client* comes from the word *client* which means “follower” (Jones, 2003). In Spanish, the term *patron* means “someone who has great power, status, authority, and influence.” The patron-client relationship was first described in anthropological research as a way to define interpersonal relationships in small groups and communities in which individuals are not equal in terms of status, power, and income, thus placing the client in a lower position (inferior) and the patron in the higher (superior). This type of relationship tends to occur spontaneously in contexts where wealth, power, or important commodities are distributed unequally and can potentially benefit all parties involved (Kopeček, 2019); (Gaffar, 1991).

Patronage relationships predated the Romans in many parts of the world. Weaker and more vulnerable parties, seeking protection, regularly entered into formal or ad hoc relationships with more powerful parties desirous of the services the weaker party could provide. Shadle (2002), added how male and female clients in South-West Kenya assisted in different ways. male clients strengthened a homestead's defenses, and female clients increased its capacity for reproduction. These Africans sought for new patrons, a function missionaries cheerfully (though not always deliberately) filled (White, 1987), as all clients assisted with agriculture, the surplus of which attracted and sustained yet more clients (Hakansson, 1988; Hakansson, 1994). In return, Missionaries provided food and shelter in South Kavirondo; one priest violently attacked men who tried to remove their sister from the mission station, and after some masses, priests killed bulls for feasts. The priests required labor and allegiance in exchange: converts mowed the lawn, built houses, and worked in the fields of the missions.

Many studies have documented patronage practices in various parts of the world, including Latin America (Lisoni, 2018); (Schluter M, 2020), the Caribbean and Pacific (Jack Corbet, 2020), Europe (Wouter, 2019); (Kolstø, 2020), the Persian Gulf (Ghaffar, 2014), Asia, and Indonesia (Setiawan, 2012); (Grydehoj & Nurliah, 2014); (Mansyur, 2019); (Annet, 2016); (Pelras, 2000); (Khidir M, 2017). Such institutions are widespread in Indonesia and can be found in East Java (Setiawan, 2012), Yogyakarta (Khidir M, 2017), Sulawesi (Grydehoj & Nurliah, 2014); (Mansyur, 2019); (Pelras, 2000); (Henley & Caldwell, 2019); Kalimantan (Annet, 2016).

Just as patronage relationships are not restricted to any particular geographic region, neither are they restricted to any particular social, economic, political, or cultural sector. Pelras (2000) documented patronage relationships in the traditional life of the Bugis and Makassar. Other studies have revealed how patronage relationships govern fisheries in South Sulawesi (Mansyur, 2019); (Grydehoj & Nurliah, 2014) and Berau, Kalimantan (Annet, 2016). A number of scholars have published on the role of

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patronage relationships in the politics of Indonesia (Pelras, 2000); (Henley & Caldwell, 2019); (Khidir M, 2017) and other countries (Lisoni, 2018); (Schluter M, 2020); (Jack Corbet, 2020); (Wouter, 2019); (Kolstø, 2020); (Ghaffar, 2014)). Political patronage often becomes entangled with economic patronage. It is not uncommon for powerful patrons to run for office in political democracies and rely on their clients to whip votes, spread propaganda, and generally tilt the political landscape in their favor (Annet, 2016); (Pelras, 2000); (Henley & Caldwell, 2019)). In other cases, the client may run for office with support from the patron and repay this support in cash (money politics) or by means of government projects and programs that benefit the patron (Khidir M, 2017); (Ghaffar, 2014); (Wouter, 2019); (Lisoni, 2018).

In cultural and historical context, Hashmi (2023) argued a prevalent belief that one of the factors contributing to Sanskrit's downfall during the rule of Muslim rulers or sultans was the language's lack of attention. There have been several academic articles written both in favor of and against this concept over time. Similar to this, Sultan Mahmood Shah I of Gujarat is the subject of numerous contradicting claims in historical texts. Several facts that contradict many of the claims made about Mahmud Shah I have been brought up in modern scholarship. He was a mentor of Sanskrit as well as a lover of the language and literature, and in his court, a Sanskrit poet had the status of Malek-ush. This is just one of the characteristics that have been highlighted. Arguably, patronage relationships inevitably form in the context of complex societies. Such institutions may even be prerequisites for certain cultural activities, like the performance arts *lengger* and *ronggeng*, which are native to Banyumas, the south-eastern part of Central Java, Indonesia, to arise and persist.

In Indonesia, patronage relationships govern many other sectors of society, not all of which have been well documented. To date, for example, few studies have addressed the role that patronage plays in Indonesia's cultural institutions. To address this deficit, this study investigates representations of patronage in the novel *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, by Ahmad Tohari, rendered in English by Rene T. Lysslof as *The Dancer*. Set in Banyumas, a small regency in southeastern central Java, *The Dancer* synthesizes fictional elements with the collective memory of the community (Khristianto & Nirmalawati, 2018) and documents local beliefs and practices surrounding a Javanese dance tradition. The novel therefore doubles as an ethnographic document. Through an investigation of this text, this study elucidates three central points: 1) how patron-client relationships are established and maintained in the *ronggeng* dance tradition, 2) the functional and cultural significance of patronage in this tradition, and 3) the nature of the services rendered by the dancer, as client, to the *ronggeng dukun* (shaman), as patron.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Patron-Client Relation

According to Scott (Putra, 1988), for patron-client relationships to arise and persist, several elements must be present. First, both parties must agree that whatever they exchange has value, whether it be goods, services, protection, or something else. Second, the gift from the patron must make the client feel obliged to act on the patron's behalf, either by inspiring reciprocity through positive feeling, or by intimidating the client into submitting to the patron's will lest the gift be taken away. Patronage relationships also need to be supported by societal norms so that clients can negotiate effectively with their prospective patrons, allowing either party, and not just the more powerful patron, to withdraw from the relationship if it no longer meets their needs (Putra, 1988). Patronage's fundamental component is trust. In different ways, it integrates with and transcends other selection criteria. Due to the asymmetrical power relationships between patron and appointee, appointments typically end when there is a breakdown in trust (Panizza, 2018). Hence, it can be concluded that patronage relationships will spontaneously emerge in circumstances where power and commodities are unequally distributed, where face-to-face meetings between patrons and clients are possible, and where societal norms enable clients to negotiate effectively and leave or alter the terms of the relationship when necessary (Scott, 1993).

According to Scott (1993), there are two types of patronage relationships: traditional and modern. Traditional patronage relationships tend to be particular, spread, and informal, whereas their modern counterparts tend to be universal, and contractual in nature. In traditional patronage relationships, patterns of exchange tend to be highly variable, reflecting the particular array of resources at each party's disposal as well as their individual personalities, desires, and needs. In traditional patronage relationships, patrons and clients negotiate their relationships ad hoc without any explicit working agreement (Scott, 1993); (Putra, 1988); (Bambang Santosa & Suci Prabawati, 2015).

In traditional patronage relationships, friendship or kinship terms are often invoked to lend structure to otherwise informal social dynamics. Patronage relationships in Indonesia, for instance, are commonly referred to as "father-son" relationships (Setiawan, 2012). Even in the absence of formal contracts, both parties have distinct roles and relationships that they must meet in order to further their mutual interests, and the relationship continues as long as both fulfill their obligations. The "father" (patron) must meet the needs of the "child" (client), whereas the "child" must be willing to carry out the orders of the "father," usually performing manual tasks or offering useful services.

These relationships may deteriorate for a variety of reasons. If a patron can no longer ensure the client's social, economic, or physical security, then the client may reconsider the value of the relationship with the patron (Scott J. C., 1972). The same thing can happen if the client manages to accumulate sufficient resources to achieve socioeconomic independence which means he no longer dependent on patrons.

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According to Scott (1993), patronage relationships can be divided into five basic categories depending on what types of goods or services are exchanged. These categories are as follows:

- a. Basic subsistence livelihood: In agrarian societies, patrons may give clients long-term guarantees of work, land, seeds, or equipment for farming, marketing services, technical advice, and others.
- b. Subsistence crisis guarantees: Patrons may support their clients when clients suffer illness, misfortune, or injury. For instance, if a client's crops fail, or if the client is unable to harvest those same crops because of infirmity, the patron may provide them with food to live and additional capital to plant a new crop the following year. The patron thus serves as the client's safety net in times of trouble.
- c. Protection: As was common throughout Feudal Europe, patrons may protect clients from personal harm (by bandits or personal enemies) or public harm (police forces, armies, courts, or tax collectors).
- d. Brokers and influencers: In addition to protecting clients from harm, patrons may use their power and influence to attract gifts on behalf of his client.
- e. Collective patron service: As a group, patrons may also perform their functions collectively. They may offer donations or subsidize aid to one another's clients, donate land to collectives, build public facilities such as roads, schools, community buildings, host visiting officials, sponsor public festivals, and so on.

The flow of goods and services from clients to patrons, on the other hand, generally takes the form of manual labor. Usually, the services provided by clients are basic work services such as agricultural labor, provision of water and firewood to the patron's households, private domestic services, and participation in local factions loyal to the patron.

One critical factor in determining the long-term stability of the patronage relationship, according to Scott, is whether it is collaborative or exploitative in nature. To evaluate this, one must compare the value of the services rendered by clients with those provided by the patrons. The greater the value of the patron's contribution compared to the client's, the more collaborative the patron-client bond. Another crucial factor is whether these exchange rates adhere to the established local norms. As long as exchange rates remain stable and patrons continue to provide subsistence and protection, patronage relationships tend to persist. However, even minor fluctuations in the standard exchange rate can trigger resistance if they reduce the farmer's profits.

Finally, Scott asserts that the basic purpose of the patron-client contract is to establish and maintain widespread social stability, subsistence, and security (Scott, 1993). Sometimes, these distributed benefits come at the concentrated cost of exploitative patron-client relationships, but under other conditions, relationships between patrons and clients can verge on truly equitable. When there is public land available for planting, and when farmers can rely on relatives for protection, or on moneylenders for loans, their dependence on patrons is dramatically reduced, and this in turn enables them to negotiate more favorable arrangements and play an active role in shaping the patronage relationships of which they are part.

## METHODOLOGY

This study takes a descriptive and qualitative approach. Its goal is to describe the existing reality using established concepts and categories. Qualitative methods are used commonly in the social sciences and humanities to analyze various issues such as democracy, race, gender, class, globalization, and freedom (N.K., 2016). This method allows researchers to collect information about a phenomenon in a comprehensive manner. In this case, the data are narrative summaries, expository quotes, and excerpted dialogue from the novel *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*. For the sake of practicality, all quotes have been taken from the English version, *The Dancer* (hereinafter referred to as TD), translated by Rene T.A. Lysloff. The selected sections portray the patron-client relationship between Srintil, female protagonist, and the shaman, her patron. These selections have been analyzed using the patron-client theory (Scott J. C., 1972) as a primary framework supported by findings from other relevant studies.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzes three central elements of the patron-client relationship in *ronggeng* culture: 1) how patron-client relationships are established and maintained, 2) the functional and cultural significance of patronage in this tradition, and 3) the nature of the services rendered by the dancer, as client, to the *ronggeng dukun* (shaman), as patron. These issues are explored based on the literary data derived from analysis of TD. Some scholars see this novel as an ethnographic work that accurately depicts its setting, including the cultural, historical, and political events in the narration.

### The making of the patron-client relationship

In the *ronggeng* tradition, patronage functions rather differently than it does in many other sectors of society. In this tradition, only a *dukun*, or shaman, can serve as a patron. Likewise, only a *ronggeng* dancer can become a client. The instrumentalists, for example, cannot become clients; their relationships with the *dukun* are purely transactional, as they are paid for each performance. In the novel, Kartareja is the only shaman in the hamlet, and therefore the only eligible patron.

To become a *ronggeng* dancer, it is not enough for a girl to simply be trained by the shaman. A *ronggeng* candidate must be chosen by an *indang* spirit, who inhabits her, and her status is revealed to the community when she manifests certain skills without any teaching from others. Only one girl can become a *ronggeng* in a generation, for the spirit will not inhabit another girl

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until the current *ronggeng* dies. Nor will the spirit inhabit a new girl immediately; the shaman might have to wait for years for the new reincarnation. Srintil, the protagonist in *TD*, is chosen by the *indang* spirit after eleven years since the previous *ronggeng* died. It was eleven years since the last *ronggeng* dancer of Paruk had died (TD:13)

The *ronggeng* dancer plays a very important role in this culture. Without her, there can be no performances, and if too much time passes between incarnations, the cultural tradition may even die. Thus, as a client, the dancer is not inferior to the shaman, her patron. Their relationship is founded on mutualism: each needs the other, and each benefit from the other. The arrival of the *indang* is considered a blessing for everyone: the girl, the shaman, and the community at large. The communal significance of this event is revealed by the following passage:

"The bottom line is that Paruk Village will once again have a *ronggeng* dancer."

Kartareja sighed. "... Those of us in this hamlet who are elderly don't want to die before seeing Paruk return to what it once was... if I don't preserve the *ronggeng* tradition of this hamlet." (TD, 12)

"Paruk Village without a *ronggeng* dancer isn't Paruk Village. Srintil, my own granddaughter, will bring back the greatness of this village," said Sakarya to himself. (TD, 11).

The patronage relationship in the *ronggeng* tradition is primarily spiritual, cultural, and social in its orientation, as opposed to economic or political. Once identified, a *ronggeng* dancer receives support from all the community members. The shaman becomes responsible for the life of the *ronggeng* candidate and her development into a fully fledged *ronggeng* dancer. The following passage illustrates this transfer of responsibility from the *ronggeng* candidate's birth family to the *dukun*:

Thereafter, they decided that, on an auspicious day, Srintil would be presented by her grandfather to Kartareja. The custom in the village for handling a potential *ronggeng* dancer was for the family of the candidate to give her over to the *dukun* to become his adopted child (TD:13).

Sakarya, Srintil's grandfather, is obligated to "hand over" Srintil to the *ronggeng* shaman, Kartareja, and he does so readily, sacrificing his relationship with his granddaughter in order to perpetuate the *ronggeng* culture. In this way, legitimized by the consent of the *ronggeng* candidate's family and her community, the patronage relationship is formed.

### Patronage in traditional dance culture

In accord with Scott's (1993) schema, three categories of patronage are depicted in *The Dancer*: 1) fulfillment of basic necessities, 2) protection, and 3) crisis insurance. In this cultural context, "basic necessities" includes not only food and shelter, but also beautification, socialization, and rigorous dance training.

#### *Fulfillment of basic necessities*

The first step in forming the patronage relationship in the *ronggeng* tradition is for the candidate to be given by her birth family to the *dukun*. This step is taken after both Sakarya and Kartareja see Srintil dance. Both conclude that Srintil has been possessed by the *ronggeng* spirit and agree that she must be handed over to Kartareja, as illustrated below. As the *ronggeng dukun*, Kartareja becomes responsible for providing all her basic needs.

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In other sectors, patrons are usually only responsible for providing their clients with basic subsistence, but in the *ronggeng* tradition, necessities include luxury items such as jewelry and elaborate clothes. *Ronggeng* candidates are expected to maintain a higher standard of living than the other people in the hamlet, and anything less amounts to a failure on the part of the patron.

In accordance with this expectation, Srintil is served meals of rice and vegetables, chicken, meats, and fruits. At that time, even rice was considered a luxury item, for most people ate only tapioca gruel and corn rice. The food was not only provided by the shaman family, but also by other members of the community, who collectively subsidized Srintil's *ronggeng* candidacy with "physical capital," i.e. donations that promoted her physical and spiritual beauty. "In the space of a month," writes Tohari, "Srintil had visibly changed" (TD: 34).

#### *Beauty as a basic necessity*

The beauty of a *ronggeng* dancer has two aspects: physical and spiritual. Physical beauty is achieved by applying traditional herbs to enhance her appearance. Turmeric powder gives her skin a yellow tinge, and betel reddens her lips. Her eyebrows are blackened with root resin. This procedure is performed every time as she performs a traditional dance. The following passage illustrates her transformation:

Her skin glowed from the application of a mixture of powder and turmeric water. The wife of the *dukun* had ordered Srintil to chew betel, and her young lips had turned bright red. (TD:14)

The fine hairs behind her cheeks near her ears became more apparent after Srintil was powdered. Her thin eyebrows were thickened with a mixture of root and papaya resin, making her look like a doll. (TD:14)

Srintil's teeth are also filled and covered with a golden layer. All of these cosmetics are provided by her patron. I saw that her teeth had been filed (TD:35).



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When Srintil smiled, a soft ray of light reflected from one of her front teeth that had been capped with gold (TD:35).

Besides beautifies Srintil's body, the patron is also responsible for training Srintil as a dancer. Though her skill is divinely gifted to her, a dancer still needs further guide from her patron, the shaman. As true ronggeng dancer, Srintil's dancing should provoke any adult male who saw her.

Vague feelings of lust and desire, always engendered by true ronggeng dancers, were aroused in her young audience by Srintil while she danced. The sweep of her neck, the glance of her eyes, even the way she swayed her shoulders would have mesmerized any adult male that saw her (TD:8).

In addition to physical beautification, supernatural procedures are also performed to enhance the *ronggeng* dancer's spiritual beauty. These include "black magic, love charms, ...talismans" (TD:12). As indicated in the following passage, these procedures are believed to make her much more beautiful.

To make her even more desirable, Mrs. Kartareja had also inserted several gold talismans under Srintil's skin (TD:15).

It is a love charm, used as a talisman by ronggeng dancers in the past (TD:42).

For Javanese culture, inserting gold talisman is a common practice to gain power. In Srintil case, the power means charms to mesmerized adult male. As suggested by Anderson regarding power in Javanese culture, power is physical. This is the fundamental tenet of Javanese culture political analysis. Power exists regardless of whether it is achievable users. It is an existential reality rather than a theoretical premise. Power is that elusive, enigmatic, and heavenly energy that creates the universe's life. Universe is expressed in stones, trees, clouds, and fire, yet it is fundamental. Traditional Javanese thought does not make clear distinctions organic and inorganic matter because everything is sustained by the same unobservable force. This idea that the whole due to the cosmos being infused with a formless, perpetually creating force, the fundamental connection between the 'animism' of Javanese communities, and the sophisticated pantheism found in urban areas. (Anderson, 1972). According to Anderson's theory, the ronggeng shaman's actions make logic and are thought to be able to enhance the ronggeng dancer's beauty and charisma.

### Ritual preparations

In addition to beautification and training, the *ronggeng* candidate must complete a series of rituals in order to become a *ronggeng* dancer. These include dance performances, beginning with her first initiation, an introduction to the ancestors, and finally the *bukak klambu*, during which the dancer's virginity is auctioned off to the highest bidder. The shaman, as patron, is responsible for ensuring that all these rituals are fulfilled. All, especially the *bukak klambu*, require significant financial expenditures, as depicted in the following passage:

Kartareja himself was required to spend money for the event. He sold three goats at the market, and with the money bought a new bed for her, complete with mattress, pillow and mosquito net. In this bed, Srintil would be deflowered by the man who won the contest (TD:52).

Today, the total expenses for this ritual alone would come to approximately IDR 10 million. However, the dukun does not hesitate to sell his property to raise the necessary funds, not just to fulfill his obligation to the community, but also to make Srintil eligible to serve as a *ronggeng* dancer and rake in profits in the future, an arrangement from which he will benefit directly.

### The services of the dancer to the patron

The services rendered to the shaman by the *ronggeng* dancer are very different than those rendered by clients in other types of patronage relationships. She does not serve the shaman directly by performing manual labor. Instead, she gives public dance performances and works as a prostitute, and he collects the proceeds. There are three distinct channels through which the dancer earns money on behalf of her patron: the *bukak klambu* ritual, public dances performances, and other community services. The shaman, for his part, serves alternately as an agent, manager, and pimp for his client, depending on which service she is rendering at any given time. This, combined with his having sponsored her training and induction, gives the shaman a great deal of power and control over the dancer's daily life as well as her financial resources. This dynamic is made explicit in the following dialogue:

"Yeah. A ronggeng trainer usually wants to take care of every aspect of her charge's life, often even wishing to control her possessions."

"I've heard that. I know that a ronggeng is often considered prime livestock by her guardian. Think of all the times people hold rituals or during the harvest season: a ronggeng has to perform every night. During the day she has to service the men. And the person handling her affairs, especially those involving money, is the dukun. You can't help but feel sorry for Srintil, can you? On the other hand, Mr. and Mrs. Kartareja have become fairly wealthy out of it, haven't they?" (TD: 133)

In a patron-client relationship, the client is required to repay the patron for all the services they have provided. Srintil, though, provides more as a client than Kartareja does as a patron. It appears as though the dukun ronggeng have taken advantage of Srintil and exploit her in the name of ronggeng culture. Srintil, however, asserts that what Kartareja did was truly her responsibility to repay the favor to the ronggeng shaman who had made her a well-known ronggeng and that, in fact, that was the duty that a ronggeng dancer was required to carry out.

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### *The virginy auction*

The *bukak klambu*, or “opening of the mosquito net,” is a type of competition, open to all men who can pay amount of money determined by the dancer’s trainer. This ritual also functions as a rite of passage, inaugurating the *ronggeng* candidate as a full-fledged *ronggeng* dancer. The *bukak klambu* ritual synthesizes all three elements of her role—dancer, prostitute, and public service provider—in a single event, which only further demonstrates her patron’s power over her body and her life.

The *bukak klambu* formalizes the shaman’s right to exploit and profit off of Srintil’s labor. As a client, Srintil has few choices. Kartareja has already “invested” his resources in her, creating a sense of obligation. This obligation is further enforced by social attitudes and tradition. The entire community expects her to provide the public services her patron has sponsored and produce good returns on investment for him. This communal attitude is made explicit in the following passage:

“I have decided that the time will be next Saturday,” said Kartareja, addressing a large group of men at the market.

“And you want a gold piece?”

“That’s right. I believe it’s a fair price,” answered Kartareja

The man who asked the question gasped. (TD:52)

From a capitalist economic perspective, the *bukak klambu* is not just an auction, but also an investor’s meeting whereby the shaman attempts to raise present and future capital. The higher the price paid for Srintil’s virginity, the greater her “prestige,” and by extension the shaman’s and the whole Dukuh Paruk communities. This will also enable Kartareja to charge more for her services in the future. After the *bukak klambu*, the *ronggeng* dancer transforms into a reliable source of capital for the shaman and his family.

### *The price of dance performances*

The first channel by which the *ronggeng* dancer generates income for her patron is through public dance performances. The *ronggeng* shaman organizes these performances at the request of community members and takes the biggest cut of the profit.

On the other hand, Mr. and Mrs. Kartareja, as the shamanistic practitioners of *ronggeng*, knew all the details related to the world of *ronggeng*, knew all the details related to the world of *ronggeng*, and used this knowledge and their status as the basis of their livelihood. They took percentage of Srintil performance fee that was often more than that which Srintil herself received. Their cut was even larger when they acted as procurers. (TD:149-150)

It is common in Java for the profits from public performances to go to the organizers, but generally, the organizers are also the performers. This is the case, for example, in *kuda lumping*, or puppet shows. *Ronggeng* performances are distinct insofar as the stage belongs to the dancer, not the shaman, during the performance itself, but ultimate control of the profits lies with the patron. The wives of Dukuh Paruk even actively encourage their husbands to tip more so they can have sex with the *ronggeng* dancer, and that this act bestows prestige on the entire household.

“The *ronggeng*’s choice will be the man that gives her the most money. And in this regard, my husband is unbeatable.”

“Well, don’t get too cocky. I could sell a goat so that my husband has enough money. I still believe that my husband will be the man who first kisses Srintil.” (TD:36-37)

On top of the cost of entry, additional revenue is made in the form of tips given by male audience members, of *saweran*, who join the dancer onstage. Often, they insert these tips into one of the dancer’s orifices while dancing alongside her, touching parts of her body, and kissing her. The women of Dukuh Paruk will never feel jealous of Srintil; on the contrary, they will feel the opposite. Their wives feel prouder of their husbands the more they dance with her. The public would consider her husband to be powerful due to both his wealth and his sexual skills.

### *The payment of a cultural prostitute services*

The *ronggeng* dancer’s sexualized performances are complemented by her work as a prostitute. During the period when *The Dancer* is set, the profession was legal in Java and carried no negative connotations. Completing her training and “graduating” by undergoing the *bukak klambu* ceremony formalizes the *ronggeng* dancer’s her role as a high-class prostitute. For this service, naturally, only those who have money can pay. The following quotations shows that *ronggeng* services are very expensive.

“I also know that there’s a regional administrator who’s sleeping with her.. ”

“...It’s only been a few months... already she’s wearing a gold necklace. Her pendant is also made of gold,” ....

“... but I bet you don’t know who gave Srintil her necklace,” replied another woman.

“That adulterous headman from Pecikalan?”

“No, he replaced the grass roof of Sakarya’s house with zinc sheeting... ”

“So, who did?”

“Le Hian! The Chinese man .... Just you watch, soon Srintil will be wearing gold bangles or maybe even diamond earrings.” (TD:84)

In addition to dancing at night, the *ronggeng* dancer functions as a commodity during the day, too, servicing VIP clients who can afford to purchase special privileges such as private sessions. Such clients also receive special treatment from the shaman’s family to ensure that he keeps coming back. The VIP client, for his part, might maintain this status by paying in cash, or by other means such as giving the *ronggeng* dancer jewelry or even rendering services to the shaman such as financing the renovation of his home. All three types of transaction are depicted in *The Dancer* novel.

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In sum, the *ronggeng* dancer functions as a golden swan for the shaman's household. After making an initial investment, the patron can expect to benefit handsomely from the arrangement. In *The Dancer*, Srintil fully repays what Kertareja spent on her virginity contest with the two silver coins, the gold coin, and the big water buffalo. From that point on, she ceases to represent an expense and instead becomes a gold mine from which the shaman reaps abundant rewards.

Unbalanced though this patron-client relationship is, it is reinforced by a cultural context in which the *ronggeng* tradition constitutes the pride of the community. In the novel, at least, the *ronggeng* dancer does not seem to feel that the arrangement is unfair. Srintil realized that what he was doing was an act of gratitude for the favor of making him a *ronggeng*.

### CONCLUSION

Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that patron-client relationships are present in Javanese performing arts culture, particularly in the *ronggeng* tradition, though certain features set them apart from other types of patronage relationships. These relationships involve the exchange of cultural and spiritual, as well as economic, goods and are sanctioned by divine right and by the community at large. Moreover, there can only be one patron and one client at any given time. With her singularity, the client is very special, and the patron endeavors to meet all her needs, though it is the community, not the client herself, who determines what those needs are. These include physical physical and spiritual beauty as well as sustenance and shelter. The patron is also responsible for preparing all the rituals required to make the candidate a true *ronggeng* dancer. These are expensive and labor-intensive, but after the *ronggeng* dancer's virginity is auctioned off, as part of her rite of passage to become a *ronggeng* dancer—the shaman begins to benefit from his investments. He collects the income that she earns as a dancer and as a culturally sanctioned prostitute. Unlike the clients in most other types of patronage relationships, then, the *ronggeng* dancer does not render services directly to her patron, but rather functions as a longterm investment, not unlike the proverbial golden swan, elevating the social and financial status of the patron and his family and permanently transforming them into leaders and power brokers in the community.

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