

From Palace to Communities: A Case Study of the Classical Court Dance Inheritance in Yogyakarta City

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Abstract--- *This article will discuss the development of the Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta from its days of sole ownership by Keraton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat to the spreading of the art among common people. From the historical perspective, the impact of World War II was huge in the development of Classical Court Dance in Yogyakarta as it stopped all forms of an art from being actively performed. Therefore, the Keraton decided to move all its arts activities to Ndalem Purwadiningratan, a community that consisted of both nobility and commoners. Such action by the Keraton had changed the status of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta from belonging exclusively belonging only to the Keraton to also being part of the community outside of its walls including the commoners. Throughout the years, the Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta has been preserved and now further flourishes amongst the members of the community. This article will explain: (1) How such the changes occurred; (2) How the dance was transformed during the shift; (3) Which communities helped preserve the Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta today, and (4) Is there an impact to the people of Keraton, the original owners of this court dance?. Therefore, this article shows that the dialectics that occur between the two entities, namely the palace and the community have resulted in the inheritance of the classical dance of Yogyakarta which is distinguished in two ways; traditional and non-traditional, according to the context of the era. This also relates to their respective strategies both in formal and non-formal institutions in holding the greatness of Yogyakarta artistic identity through classical dance style of Yogyakarta.*

Keywords--- *dance communities, dance inheritance, Javanese Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta, Indonesian Dance*

I. INTRODUCTION

The existence of a kingdom creates its own dilemma for a presidential democratic state. Indonesia address this issue by making the status of these kingdoms within its territory as cultural centres for the people who hold fast to the culture associated with those respective kingdom. This step provides satisfactory results since so far the discourse in which kingdoms serve as a traditional ruler in the field of culture still resonates and becomes part of the identity of Indonesian people [1].

Keraton Yogyakarta or the Royal Palace of Yogyakarta (*Keraton* is a Javanese word for a royal palace) is the biggest kingdom in Indonesia with cultural areas that cover the whole area of one province with a status of the Special Region (*Daerah Istimewa*). The acceptance of Keraton Yogyakarta in relation to the country's presidential democratic system is reflected in the visions of this royal palace to preserve and encourage its own culture based on the values Islamic teachings with the aim of transforming itself into a cultural center that reflects the values of *hamengku* (to protect and to be fair), *hamangku* (to be generous and to keep his/her own word), and *hamengkoni* (to be responsible for the actions and decisions taken), in order to encourage the spirit of patriotism for social welfare and culture of both the society and the state.

One of the cultural objects that Keraton Yogyakarta is trying to preserve and further is the Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta (Indonesian: Tari Klasik Gaya Yogyakarta). Preservation and furtherance of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta are not a 'natural' continuation of the previous tradition. These constitute an ongoing reconstruction effort in the political climate that surrounds Keraton Yogyakarta [2]. This type of dance was created, used as an identity, preserved by the palace and finally passed down to the community, in line with the socio-political changes of the status of Keraton Yogyakarta.

Based on this background, my interested in conducting a study that seeks to answer the following questions: (1) How did the status of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta change as socio-political changes occurred in the status of Keraton Yogyakarta? (2) How did Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta change following its status change? (3) How does the community assist in preserving Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta after it was transferred from the palace to the public? and (4) What is the impacts of this public assistance to the palace itself?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

Institutions are ways that allow people to articulate and live their own selves [3]. These can take either an abstract and institutionalized form such as languages or an institutionalized form based on the socio-historical context. Institutions in the socio-political context include political or art institution. It is institutionalized within the palace and encounters changes based on its socio-historical context.

Institutions can be short-lived or last for a long time, depending on the view given when the institutions are established. The longer an institution lasts, the more competitions and conflicts that this institution creates. This is consistent with the increasing number of agents with egotistical interests aside from the altruistic interests. The institution becomes increasingly unstable and likely to separate. However, each agent will declare himself as the true heir to the institution [4]. Therefore, a long-lived institution is a heterogeneous institution that full of diversity. This diversity encourages survival of the cultural objects that this institution brings. However, on the other hand, it raises competition from cultural object versions that emerge [5].

CLASSICAL COURT DANCE INHERITANCE

Keraton Ngayogyakarta is one of the two palaces inherited from *Kesultanan Mataram* or the Sultanate of Mataram (Java) which were separated due to the 1755 Giyanti Treaty. Since the establishment of Keraton Ngayogyakarta, Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta has become part of the palace to distinguish it from its relative, *Keraton Surakarta* or the Royal Palace of Surakarta. Sultan Hamengku Buwono I (HB I) was a dancer and a dance creator. However, the genealogy of the dances that existed during his regime was taken from the regime of Sultan Agung (1613-1646), a great sultan of Mataram with a well-known reputation as a result of the great war he campaigned against the VOC (the Dutch company took a role as the government ruling Indonesia at that time). Moreover, dances such as *Srimpi* and *Bedhaya* were associated with the Javanese mystical ruler, *Kangjeng Ratu Kidul* (the Queen of the South Sea), which has been believed to take control of the South Sea (Indian Ocean).

Therefore, Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta legitimizes the inheritance of Keraton Ngayogyakarta towards the domination the area of Java, both its land and sea. Nowadays, until the regime of HB IV, Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta has a status as an identity dance. This is in line with the efforts to distinguish Keraton Ngayogyakarta from Surakarta Keraton as another heir of the Sultanate of Mataram.

CLASSICAL COURT DANCE OF YOGYAKARTA AS A MEDIUM OF SOCIAL CRITICISM

An addition to the status of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta occurred during the regime of HB V (1823-1855). Immediately after Sultan HB V began ruling, the Java War (Diponegoro War) broke out between Java to the Dutch

colonials. In this war, Java suffered a major defeat while the Dutch colonials took over to control the area of Javanese Sultanate, including Ngayogyakarta. This Dutch domination made the palace lost its authority over the public that became more compliant to the Dutch colonials.

The defeat in this war can be blamed on the authorities under the sultan's ruling, because when the war happened, HB V was only a 5 years old kid and the war ended five years later. When the sultan had grown older, this defeat brought out Sultan's criticism related to the life within the palace. Therefore, Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta no longer had the status as an identity, but as a medium of criticism. Sultan created the *Srimpi Kandha* dance which criticizes the endogamy behaviour among the nobility of the palace. It made the line between the palace and the lower-class society disconnected because of the social status that was impossible to reach by the lower-class society without marriage [6].

A status as a medium of criticism does not mean removing its status as an identity. This status was reinforced during the regime of HB V through a narration that was no longer done in spoken, but documented in writing [7]. The initial writing was very simple but it became increasingly complex as the time passed. The identity status became stronger with the existence of a textual basis of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta as a legacy from Keraton Ngayogyakarta.

CLASSICAL COURT DANCE OF YOGYAKARTA AS THE COMMUNITIES IDENTITY

Decisions of various organizations and kingdoms in Indonesia in the era before the World War II to join the fight against the Dutch Colonialization cooperatively provided an opportunity for the Sultanate of Ngayogyakarta to regain its legitimacy in Yogyakarta, especially after Indonesia managed to unite fighting against the Dutch Colonialization and gained a status as a fully sovereign country [8]. After this recognition, the ruling government immediately provided the status of Special Region for the regions under the control of Keraton Ngayogyakarta and acknowledged the legitimacy of Sultan as the ruler of the region. Nevertheless, as a newly-established country, Indonesia should adopt a model of democratic governance, and so does Keraton Ngayogyakarta. The Palace must keep its status as a monarchy in Yogyakarta clear and therefore it must have as much as possible the sympathy of the people. Thus, duplications of monarchy symbols from Keraton Yogyakarta to the public began, including Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta. It is no longer the identity of the palace, but it has become the identity of the communities.

Soon after that, the state established a variety of formal educational institutions to preserve cultural objects in Indonesia, including the cultural objects in Keraton Ngayogyakarta. In Yogyakarta, institutions for pure dance art were established such dance conservatories such as *Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan 1 Kasihan, Bantul* (in the same level as Senior High Schools) and *Institut Seni Indonesia, Yogyakarta* (a college to study dance), while to provide education for the dance art teachers, *Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta* or the Teachers' Training College was established. Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta was immediately included into the curriculum in these formal institutions and studied not only by the people of Yogyakarta, but also by the people from other regions and from abroad.

TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE CLASSICAL COURT DANCE

The transformations of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta did not really follow its changes in status. The changes occurred only in terms of the content to be delivered rather than on the type of dance. Only after the status of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta changed into the community identity, Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta underwent a major transformation. Nevertheless, this is not a radical transformation since there were fixed standards to be followed to have a dance obtain a status as a Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta.

The transformation occurred at the level of the teaching method. In the past, it was done in a hard and repetitive manner and was done in a long time. One needed to learn since she/ he was a kid as well as passed strict training and a long period to continue to the next level. The dance begins with *tayungan* (foot movement), followed by the movement of the hands and the neck and ended with coordination [9]. To be a master with this *tayungan* technique, one must spend three

years learning it. In modern times, the teaching becomes more adaptive and short, using non-traditional methods developed by formal educational institutions.

THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITIES THROUGH DANCE INHERITANCE

Dichotomy of the Palace and the commoners does not apply in Keraton Ngayogyakarta. There are three types of social stratification within the sultanate environment, namely *priyayi* or the aristocracy (Sultan and his family), *abdi dalem* or courtiers (servants of the palace), and *kawula* (the general people). When talking about the community's role in inheritance, the courtiers' role as a bridge between the palace and the community should also be included. In the past, the status of these courtiers was more equal to the aristocracy than *kawula* or the general people. This was due to the closed environment of the palace making the courtiers almost fully interacted with the aristocracy. At present, what occurs is the opposite. Courtiers are closer to the community and have a more materialistic orientation [10]. Most of them even live outside the palace. Courtiers who wholly devote themselves to the palace are known as *Punokawan*, which are much smaller in number than *Kaprajan*, courtiers who tend to serve the community with the status as a civil servant (PNS).

Courtiers played a role in the creation of dance because, although Sultan is the one to whom the status as creator was given, Sultan however simply gave the basic idea and at the operational stage, the design of the dance was in the hands of these courtiers. The members of the aristocracy and the courtiers then brought Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta from the palace to the public through their engagement both in formal and non-formal educational institutions.

Immediately after the dissemination process was conducted, the issue on how the inheritance would be carried out at the level of education emerged. Since the regime of VOC, Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta has been well known both in the Homeland and in Europe. It is inevitable that it is not only the people of Yogyakarta themselves who wish to learn Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta, but people from outside Yogyakarta and from Western countries and their neighbours are also willing to learn Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta. Social stratification of learners studying Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta was then established in formal educational institutions, especially in universities. This stratification consisted of three layers: (1) students groups of SMKI (senior High Schools of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta) have a basic in Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta; (2) students from Java who do not have a Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta background, and (3) students from outside Java [8]. These three layers were associated with different dance learning competencies. There were two different strategies employed, namely (1) forming two different classes: the Java class and the outside-Java class, and (2) forming dancing groups with the alumni of SMKI leading each dancing group and teaching dance to group members who came from outside Java or who came from Java but not an alumnus of SMKI. These strategies were expected to provide individualized instruction to students so that students from outside SMKI still could obtain a better focus and could learn without having to lag behind SMKI students who already had the initial competence.

Sanggar or studios (non-formal educational institutions) have a stronger association with the palace. The members of aristocracy and courtiers have the opportunity to build their own studio and make the community in general, regardless of origin, as their students. Initially, these studios had social stratification that reflected the social stratification in society of Yogyakarta (members of the aristocracy, courtiers, and *kawula* or the community). However, because these three social classes had been put together in one studio and the type of stratification given more emphasis was the one based on expertise, this social stratification soon disappeared. Soon, more and more community members joined with the studio and some of them were students of formal educational institutions. They joined with this studio either on their own initiative or assigned by their respective institution improve their skills. These changes were also characterized with the shifting in the practice site where the practice was formerly carried out in the palace and now it is performed in special buildings. Only on special occasions these studios perform in the palace area such as *Pentas Paket Wisata Keraton* (Tourism Package Performance in the Palace), taking turns with formal educational institutions.

According to Saearani & Rahim [11] continuity in non-formal educational institutions did not run as smoothly as in formal institutions. While formal institutions continue to grow, several non-formal institutions became inactive and some of them were reborn. This is in line with the changes in the tie between the palace and the studios. The studios that were initially established by the palace began to shift deeper into the community, including in terms of funding. Most studios even have a special division in charge of raising funds from various parties to conduct a performance, workshops, or education [12]. This is because of the non-profit orientation upheld by non-formal institutions. As an extension of the palace's hand, old non-formal institutions should maintain the image that this is a gift from a very rich sultan for his people. It would make Sultan's dignity lowered if non-formal institutions ask the society to provide large sums of money for dancing activities that they teach. Therefore, the cost spent to study Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta in any non-formal institutions in Yogyakarta is much cheaper than in other non-formal institutions [8]. Performances to show the skills of the students are not supported by collecting dues, but by submitting proposals or conducting collective effort among the administrators, students, and parents. This step might feel hard, but at the same time, it strengthens the sense of togetherness among non-formal institutions as an organization with students and the community as their customers. It can be concluded that studios have managed to unite the people and courtiers as well as Sultan and his people.

Funding issues are strongly associated with the economic welfare of the community. Inheritance of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta brought to the community and carried out by the community has consequences on the erosion of the philosophical values of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta. It may occur since the values of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta are attached to the palace and relatively elite rather than practical. The community are more interested in learning Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta practically without having to go further to know the implicit meanings that each movement of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta contains. The type of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta that has successfully developed within the society is the practical one, not the philosophical one. Formal institutions make more attempts than non-formal institutions to pass down the philosophical values of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta. In fact, these efforts have to deal with time constraints and the high number of diversion from the modern life. The important task that now should be done by the community themselves is how to implement the philosophical aspect of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta in education and in everyday life.

FROM COMMUNITIES TO THE PALACE

In addition to inheritance, there is another phenomenon raised by the community when they learn the palace's Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta, which is development. The number of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta variations become huge and each institution, both formal and non-formal, develops its own distinctive Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta, either on behalf of individuals or on behalf of the institution. The Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta is performed in various festivals and competitions as well as ceremonies held by governmental agencies, the private sectors, and the royal family as well as the individual community. The Palace sees how this development reaffirms its existence as the ruler of Yogyakarta and proudly invites studios and formal institutions to perform at the palace, watched by local and foreign tourists [8]. Diversity created by this Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta ensures that this dance will never be lost just like the biodiversity that allows living creatures live sustainably in this world.

III. CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE CASE STUDY

This is consistent with the theory of institutional changes that old institutions will tend to break up and be diverse. Nevertheless, it is also important to note that no parties claim their own version of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta as the most original one. The Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta still belongs to sultan although it has been 400 years old.

There are two explanations that can be regarding the case Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta when compared with the theory of institutional changes. First, the age of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta is actually still young. Over the last 350 years, the dance was in the hands of a sole agent that was the Palace and therefore the process of inheritance was not started. The inheritance process to the community began in the last 50 years and only after that the number of agents becomes quite huge. The second explanation is the theory of institutional changes that are not universal. It is quite possible that the theory was originated from oral cultures, rather than the written cultures or the modern cultures. In oral cultures, the main discourse is not imitation but interpretation [13], including interpretation of the origin. It is this type of interpretation which makes origin blurred and mystical and each party can claim their own wolves as the original one. This has been justified by the fact that the origin of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta becomes unclear after Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta is brought back to era before the regime of HB V, coinciding with the oral period. If only during the regime of HB V the oral tradition in the documentation of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta were not initiated, the current fate of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta would be the same as what is the theory of institutional changes has been predicted. Therefore, further research on the theory of institutional changes is necessary, especially in the inheritance of dance in oral cultures and in written culture.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this article suggests that the status of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta since the regime of the first sultan has encountered three status changes: as the Keraton's identity, as social criticism, and as the community's identity. The viewed from its form, Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta itself has not changed much, except in the level of inheritance methods, from traditional methods that are relatively slow to modern methods that are faster. The community help preserve Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta by establishing both formal and non-formal institutions. This institutional development is accompanied by the development of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta itself which makes this dance more able to survive in a globalization climate. The Keraton becomes proud and confident with its status as the ruler of the area after considering the passing down and development of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta among the community. The next duty is how to make these values of Classical Court Dance of Yogyakarta can also be absorbed philosophically by the community. In addition, a theoretical duty also appears regarding the validity of the statements related to the nature of the long -term inheritance conducted by a social institution.

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