

Cultural Transformation Processes in the Current Development of Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance

Muhammad Fazli Taib bin Saearani

Ph.D Candidate of Performing Arts, and Visual Arts Studies, Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia
fad1805@yahoo.com

Gabriel Lono Lastoro Simatupang

Head of Department Performing Arts and Visual Arts Studies, Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia

R.M. Soedarsono

Professor of Performing Arts Studies, Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia

A. M. Hermin Kusmayati

Professor of Faculty Performing Arts, Indonesian Institute of Arts Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Abstract

Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance plays an important role in the part of human-life values, both seen from the religious function and from the social function. From a comprehensive perspective, it is shown that the preservation related to the development of this type of dance occurs because each generation has its own soul of the era that encourages cultural creativity. Eventually, Yogyakarta-style classical dance transform both internally and externally. The interplay among different traditions may result in something new that constitutes an additional repertoire in addition to the existing traditions. This paper discusses how such transformational processes apply in Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance and what happens to the dance that belongs to the Palace of Yogyakarta and how their current development is. The processes of cultural transformation that have occurred to Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance (in conjunction with the performing arts) also lead to shifts in the functions of the performing arts in the environment of Yogyakarta Palace that initially tended to be sacred, with the advancement of the society's mindset, the functions get eroded and change into the profane ones or into a performance that the general public can learn.

Keywords – Cultural Transformation, Culture, Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance, Indonesia

1. Introduction

Cultural transformation involves two major basics words, namely “transformation” and “culture”, which refers to a long process that has resulted in vast impacts on human life. The emergence of cultural transformation is one of the unique effects with its interpretation of the exposure to the processes and the development seen from the perspective posed in the field of culture.

The origin for the formation of the word ‘transformation’ is a process of changes in the aspects of appearance, shape and nature while in terms of the language; it is defined as a process to change another grammatical structure by adding, omitting or rearranging constituents [1]. This process involves changes in shape, content (meaning), and function as well as background of something. Discussion on ‘culture’ also

perceives a civilization as having systems of technology, science, and art as well as the state system of advanced and complex urban societies. In so doing, both the aspects involving 'transformation' and 'culture' consist of interactions between the two root words that involve issues of changes in a cultural structure that can dive into the background of the life of a society both in terms of kinship relationship, economy, religion, art and any other activities or institutions.

The processes of cultural transformation have actually been proposed by Malinowski in the functional theory of culture that learning processes are in fact repetition of the reaction of an organism from the outside which occurs in such a way that one of the instinctive needs of that organism can be met [2]. Thus, the formation process of culture or cultural transfer is derived from the learning processes of an individual or a society as a form of adjustment to environmental conditions of the society that encounter changes. Because these changes indirectly require the ability of individuals or groups of people to maintain their existence. And in this case, it certainly can be done through certain process.

Cultural transformation or cultural changes refers to a dynamic process in which the life culture of the world is changing and adapting to an external or internal force. This process occurs in both 'western' and 'non-western' culture of world civilization and culture. The ideas that appear in the cultural changes are described as involving: (1) colonization, (2) globalization, (3) advancement in communication, (4) transportation and infrastructure improvements, and (5) military expansion.

Western scholars have proposed a theory of cultural transformation with a wide range of opinions; Thomas R. Rochon proposes a distinction among the three modes of cultural transformation; (1) conversion values - the replacement of the existing cultural values with the new ones, (2) value creation - the development of new ideas to be applied in new situations, (3) connection values - the development of a conceptual relationship between phenomena that are previously assumed to be unrelated or connected in different ways. These three modes constitute the dynamic cultural transformation that leads to changes in systems, patterns and functions in the cultural environment and in the society. It applies since the systems, patterns and functions in the cultural environment is not static in nature because there are interactions and communication in a certain change in behaviour and actions that make a pattern of balance in those cultural changes, for example transformation of a colonized society into an independent society making inappropriate norms replaced with the appropriate ones (the dynamic balance).

To observe Yogyakarta-style classical dance in these processes of cultural transformation, a cultural approach in which there are new influences and new internalization integrated and fused with the existing cultural values is more likely to use. These processes of change are likely to be resulted from: (1) any causes that originate from the community and the culture themselves, such as changes in the number and composition of the population; (2) any causes that originate from the natural and physical environment, for example, the society in touch with another society and culture tends to change more quickly; (3) changes due to another reason, such as cultural diffusion or new discoveries, especially in the field of technology.

Based on those causes of transformation processes being discussed, to understand phenomena related to the transformation processes of Yogyakarta-style classical dance, one can make observations related to the development of those dance activities starting from a point where they were simply a performance displayed only in the walls of the palace and now dance organizations and dance-education institutions also maintain and develop these Yogyakarta-style classical dance, dance which at some point in past were magnificent and fancy dance.

Dance seen from the phenomenological philosophy is defined as support to the statements expressed by the dance experts at the Yogyakarta palace, saying that to be a good Javanese dancer, it is necessary to seriously master 'pathokan baku' (the dance standards) or principal technical requirements as well as to inspire the Yogyakarta-style dance known as Joged Mataram or Beksan Mataram [3]. These guidelines include complete descriptions of the fonts, spacing, and related information for producing your proceedings manuscripts.

2. Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance in the Process of Cultural Transformation

According Soedarsono, a dance is defined a form of moving art that Sheets defines as form-in-the-making in which the dance seems as if it is being performed and exhibited [4]. A dance is perceived as an artistic phenomenon that is formed and also defended; the dance as both a formed and performed art. A dance as a symbolic form has qualities that are associated with tensional, linear, areal, and projection power. For a dancer, to realize the dance as a unique form of communication, the dancer is required not to ignore doing exercises related to techniques highly necessary for the preparation of the dance. Still, the greatest attention should be put on the dance phenomenon, meaning that its realization must give the greatest portion to the dance phenomenon, namely the realization and inspiration of the dance, and not only to the physical phenomenon itself [5].

This phenomenon is seen to have objectives and relationships on how to make Yogyakarta-style classical dance can be formed by specific processes. These processes are associated with how the communications of feelings through symbolic forms of the dancers who have social responsibilities, i.e. to make their form of expression clear so that the dance they are performing can convey meaning to the audience or others. It can be suggested that there may be a system or a process used to form the foundation for the development of Yogyakarta-style classical dance, which require certain quality during their teaching and learning processes.

If seen, educational processes do not lag far behind and these educational processes are also inter-related to the occurrence of those transformation processes. There are two processes both for formal and non-formal education. Through the formal term of dance education, the discipline of dance education shows some scopes such as teaching and learning to build toward the intact form of education through its educational nature. Dance education can be defined as the process of teaching through the medium of dance, the formation of dance and the appreciation of dance [6].

Kraus believes that dance education have eight objectives, namely (1) to improve the level of health; (2) to develop personal creativity; (3) to establish one's self to be an open-minded individual through the experience of beauty; (4) to provide an integrative medium rich with cultural background; (5) to improve social life; (6) to use dance as the form of entertainment to gather people; (7) to be consider as career choices; and (8) to make dance as a form of gymnastic movements [7]. These objectives form a basis for the needs of planning the best educational processes for learners to study dance more efficiently. Characteristics of formal dance education tend to move towards curriculum development, dance pedagogy has its own implementation system which may differ from the non-formal dance education.

Non-formal education that exists within and outside educational institutions is intended to meet the needs of all levels of ages. Depending on the country context, perhaps the development of educational programming aims to deliver literacy instruction of letters and languages to adults, basic education for children, self-personality, skills and general culture. Characteristics of non-formal education are that it provides the needs for activities able to provide knowledge to the public so that they can gain experience, skills and knowledge useful to meet the needs of strengthening the performance and development of self-confidence.

Non-formal education is a pathway outside the formal education that can be implemented in a structured and gradual manner. The results of non-formal education can consider equivalent to those of formal education programs after undergoing assessment process by an agency appointed by the Government or the Local Government with reference to the national standards of education.

Targets of the organized non-formal education consist of any citizens requiring educational services that serve to replace, enhance, and/or complement formal education in support of lifelong education. Non-formal

education serves to develop learners' potentials with an emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge and functional skills as well as professional personality and attitude development.

The structure of non-formal education is very tightly linked to the development of the processes of culture and arts intended to strengthen national culture. It is because through such a medium of education educational achievement is not attained through a detailed educational system, rather it is formed through the knowledge that may be acquired by anyone interested.

Thus, non-formal education actually plays a very important role in cultural inheritance to the surrounding community by explaining the three essential elements. First, culture is transferred from one generation to another generation, in this case culture is perceived as a heritage or social tradition. Second, culture is studied, not diverted from the human physical conditions that are genetic in nature and third, culture is mutually internalized and owned by all members of the community upholding the culture.

From the perspective of history, it can be seen that non-formal education is highly inter-related to the development of classical dance at the Palace of Yogyakarta in the past, i.e. through the presence of dance education for the sons of daughters of sultans and the royal family who have a deep background. In accordance with the history, Yogyakarta-style classical dance do not only serve as a performance but they also contain extensive character education through a system of a specific process of exercises. In addition, although they have done the exercises, the dancers are required to wear quite artistic costumes during the exercises, although the costumes are simple. In so doing, the moment the dancers do the exercises has actually composed part of the performance. The sons and daughters of sultans as well as the royal family always practice dancing every day except on Thursday Night, Friday, and during Ramadan, although they do not do the same thing for performance preparation. Male dancers practice wayang wong (human puppet), beksan Lawung or Lawung dance and other dance, while the female dancers practice Bedhaya and Srimpi dance. These daily exercises also contain noble character education and manners.

Based on this perspective, it can be seen how a palace serves as an agent who provides foundation in terms of entire processes of character education. It can be inferred from the responsibilities of the sons and daughters of sultans to study about arts and science. Even, for the sake of science, sultans organize a sort of private courses in the palace for their sons and daughters, and the sons and daughters of sultans are also required to attend school outside the palace. Meanwhile, to learn to dance at the Palace, an excellent forum has been founded. During the regime of Sultan Hamengku Buwana VIII, dance educators at the palace had been arranged in such a way that it was similar to the way used by King Louis XIV in France who in the 17th century had established a dance academy called Royale De Dance Academy in the attempts to produce professional dancers of Mataram.

Dance exercises at the Palace of Yogyakarta at the regime of Sultan Hamengku Buwana VIII were divided into several stages, namely the beginning stage that put an emphasis on body movements known as tayungan, exercises of wayang wong, dance, as well as special exercises of Bedhaya and Srimpi for sultan's daughters. Elementary exercises called tayungan were done for about an hour, i.e. at 9.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. When the elementary exercises had completed, the exercise of wayang wong or dance began and lasted until 3.00 p.m. or 4.00 p.m. At night, the exercises of wayang wong were not done because it was the time to perform dance to the guests of the Palace. Exercises for dancers were held at night from 7.00 a.m. until 12.00 p.m.

With continuous exercises done on a daily basis, it was not surprising that the Palace of Yogyakarta generate extremely great professional dancers, both in terms of their technique mastery and inspiration. The minor objective of dance education held at the Palace intended to instil a deep sense of chivalry for the sons and daughters of sultans, is a good physical education. Palace dancers who always practice every day can have the finest physical conditions. Almost all the sons and daughters of sultans have a good posture.

In addition to the transformational processes in the field of education, Yogyakarta-style classical dance also undergo transformational processes in terms of the dissemination of dance outside the Palace walls. There are a few historical records saying that Prince Suryadiningrat and Prince Tejakusuma met with dance artists and

karawitan artists of Yogyakarta Palace, and many of those who approved the noble intention and purpose of establishing an organization of Yogyakarta-style dance and karawitan (gamelan traditional music instrument) outside the Palace. Even, Sultan Hamengku Buwana VII totally supported all these intention and purpose, he also provided full support in terms of teaching personnel and finance before the organization finally could stand on its own. After Sultan's approval had been obtained, an organization that concerned with Yogyakarta-style dance and karawitan was founded on 17 August 1918 under the name of Kridha Beksa Wirama. The name reflects the purpose of the organization, which is to perform the activities of actions (kridha), dance (beksa) and gamelan orchestra (wirama).

The establishment processes of Kridha Beksa Wirama Organization resulted in a flood of school students learning to dance and to play gamelan. Male students learn about wayang wong, while female students learn about Bedhaya and Srimpi dance. During the first years, the teaching systems remained using the traditional system of the palace. But, as the time passed, since they who study in this organization consisted of school students, the teaching system was then changed, by systematically dividing the course programs into classes. The site used to conduct such activities of Kridha Beksa Wirama is a pendhapa (a large open pavilion) owned by Prince Tejakusuma, who has voluntarily lent a dance practice room along with a make-up room and the gamelan instruments since 1918 up to this present.

Since the learners consist of school children, the practice is given only on Saturday Night and Sunday Morning. Male students do the practice on Saturday Night, from 7.00 p.m. until 9.00 p.m., while female and male students do the practice on Sunday Morning from 8.30 a.m. to 12.00 a.m. The teaching personnel is composed of teachers/ instructors of the palace. Thus, Kridha Beksa Wirama is really a forum for dancing activities of Yogyakarta Palace presented by young students.

According Soedarsono, a major change that Kridha Beksa Wirama has made in the world of Yogyakarta-style wayang wong is its pioneering to feature female dancers to perform a role as a sultan's daughter [8]. Initially, the role of a princess of Yogyakarta Palace had always been performed by male adolescent dancers who are diminutive and beautiful-looking. Kridha Beksa Wirama which members consist of school students began to remodel this palace tradition by featuring female dancers. Kridha Beksa Wirama which once encountered a very great development is still alive today, although the number of the demands is just a few.

During the time Kridha Beksa Wirama was actively developing the arts of dance of Yogyakarta Palace, a formal educational institution with a national concept established by Ki Hajar Dewantara, i.e. Taman Siswa (literally 'the Garden of Students') began to direct its attention to the growing organization of Yogyakarta-style dance. In 1931, Taman Siswa asked teachers from Kridha Beksa Wirama to teach those dance of Yogyakarta palace to its students. It means that it was not only Kridha Beksa Wirama which accommodate the interest of the students, both the ones who came from Yogyakarta and from abroad, but Taman Siswa also began to actively teach its students Yogyakarta-style dance. Initially, it was only female dance taught to the students. Later, male dancers (wayang wong) were also introduced to the students.

The discussion on the characteristics of Bedhaya and Srimpi dance that are quiet, smooth and full of self-control must be accompanied with harmonious and orderly movement arrangements. Each movement arrangement of Bedhaya and Srimpi dance should always consider the factor of pancat, which is a sustainability pattern among the movements of the dance. In so doing, the arrangement of the dance will always reflect lulutam properties (the properties of dance-movement series that always look as if they are flowing and unbroken) and flexibility (appropriate, harmonious and balanced). To realize a better pancat in Bedhaya dance, there are minimally three types of requirements that have to be considered, namely (1) the harmonious relationship between the patterns and the dance motions, (2) the harmonious relationship between the previous pattern of dance motions and the design of the following pattern of dance motions, and (3) the harmonious relationship between the motion patterns and the facing direction [9].

In this case, it is confirmed that the aesthetics of Bedhaya dance, besides being defined based on its visual phenomena, i.e. the structure and form factors of the dance, are also conceptually defined based on its association with philosophical perspectives and a system of cultural values that apply in the life of Javanese nobility [10]. When associated with the current values of women buzzing about gender equality, the values contained in Yogyakarta-style classic female dance are still relevant. Seen from the two basic motions of female dance exemplified above, it can be concluded that the point is that Javanese women should always be calm, controlled and orderly.

In the earlier times, palace dancers lived in a keputren (a special flat for females) making their life must be in accordance with the values of the palace, starting from wearing traditional costumes, the way they sit, the way they speak and the way they behave. This habit can form lithe dancers, but which tend to be able to only imitate and obey the prevailing norms. Meanwhile, their knowledge about things other than the palace lacks. However, the palace dancers today do not live in a keputren so that they have greater opportunities to access information and events that exist outside the palace making them have sharper analytical skills. It is part of the transformation processes and thus the resulted negative impact is that today palace dancers are not as lithe as previous palace dancers; it is still acceptable since the habit to obey the values of the palace is not implemented in their daily life [11].

3. Aspects of Philosophical-Practical Development of Yogyakarta-Style Classical Court Dance

Both formal and non-formal institutions make serious efforts to realize ideal Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance in the background of globalization which leads to an imbalance of the two elements. Both formal and non-formal institutions expect that dancers are skilful in dancing and applying cultural values that the dance contains. Based on the discussion in the previous section, it can be seen that it is a difficult effort that will always be confronted with problems, as long as philosophical aspects remain attached to the practice of Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance. The cognitive capacity of the dancers is limited and they also have goals that focus more on the practical aspects than the philosophical aspects. Eventually, all the constructions that have been established may be collapsed at once and need to be rebuilt. Historical records such as the event of the financial crisis in the late New Order period or the event of Yogyakarta earthquakes which destroyed pendopo and infrastructure buildings of Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance are examples of events that disturb the preservation attempts of Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance if the dance is based only on practical aspects, without any embedded philosophical values.

Cultural transformation processes of Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance that facilitates both philosophical and practical aspects as well as the role of Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance institutions can be very helpful for efforts to preserve Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance since each interested institution can see where the weaknesses of Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance are at a time and immediately repair those weaknesses. Formal institutions are more oriented to the bottom (developmental and philosophical orientation) while non-formal institutions are more oriented to the top (practical and philosophical orientation). It is the support provided by the sense of handarbeni (a sense of belonging) embedded in formal and non-formal institutions, the palace, and abdi dalem (the royal courtiers). Without this sense, philosophical Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance and open Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance will be destroyed soon, leaving only the practical aspects and the standards (the essentials of Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance).

The cultural transformation processes cannot go hand in hand with a cultural transmission which is a behavioral transmission among individuals and generations through non-DNA devices, for examples verbally, in writing and many more. The effectiveness of cultural transmission is influenced by a number of factors such

as the discount factor (advantages of learning through transmission compared to learning from the beginning), the emphasis on the importance of education, interrelationship between the consumption patterns and the production of an agent, and the relevance of ethnic and religious values with the current life.

According to Sperber, the process of preservation as a cultural transmission can take place in two ways: intra-subjective and inter-subjective [12]. Intra-subjectively, the transmission is transmitted through memories and thoughts. Inter-subjectively, the transmission is transmitted through imitation and communication. Preservation processes, however, cannot walk perfectly well because basically both the intra-subjective and inter-subjective mode are a limited mode. Human memory is limited, their memory is changeable, imitation cannot be perfect, and communication can be distorted. As a result, transformation remains occurring, although it is not expected by agents. This transformation, when recognized and given a positive meaning, will constitute a progress. It is a constructive process directed towards the novelty, as opposed to the preservation which refers to the process of maintaining relative stability of Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance.

Based on the above explanation, Sperber inserts the factor of retention power of both the intra-subjective and inter-subjective transmission as one of the factors that influences the transmission of culture [13]. Therefore, although the modern society of Yogyakarta Special Region realize that they have reputable figures of Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance, realize that it is important to teach Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance for the survival of the dance, enjoy the dance, and assume that the dance' values are relevant to their day-to-day life, the preservation is still confronted with the power of memory, thoughts, imitation, and communication related to the Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance.

The perspective of cultural transformation clearly indicates the presence of a progressive process that is 'cyclical' (following a cycle) in nature. When it is described, this process will resemble 'whorls' rooted from the framework of the system development and cultural functions in which a society interacts. When it takes place, a mechanism of cultural transformation is formed that leads to its development that applies from every single cultural element. Issues on cultural transformation are as old as the civilization itself because since its emergence in the development of Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance, no culture does not undergo of culture transformation.

Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance may undergo some changes, a transformation that has its own implications, including: (1) familiarity of the public to have a contact with the culture owned by the Palace of Yogyakarta; (2) the strong view of life and cultural values of the palace making the society able to follow them; (3) the structural pattern of the local society (either authoritarian or democratic); (4) the presence or absence of cultural elements that form the basis for the acceptance of new cultural elements; (5) benefits for the concerned society; (6) the presence of interested and appreciative attitude towards the arts of Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance; (7) general assessment that the effects of the transformation will lead to progress; (8) the existence of a progressive education system; (9) the presence of significantly aberrant tolerance attitude; and (10) the growth of social institutions that alters the structure of the organizations to positively follow the external culture for the attainment of discipline and progress in the organization of those respective institutions regarding the preservation of Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance.

3. Conclusion

This paper presents a brief overview of some cultural transformation processes of Yogyakarta-style classical dance. There are several forms of transformation that can be described, namely transformation through non-formal educational institutions, arts activities in the Palace of Yogyakarta and arts activities outside the walls of the Yogyakarta Palace and character transformation of Yogyakarta-style female classical dance. These transformational processes can be traced to the development of the dance themselves where new demands emerge in which the society requires that the arts of dance, which formerly can only be studied and enjoyed by the members of the Palace, can also be enjoyed by the surrounding society.

Yogyakarta-style classical dance actually do not merely mean ancestral cultural heritage that should be preserved, they also have something to do with the lives of several groups of people who depend their lives on the dance. Here, it can also be concluded that at the Palace of Yogyakarta, dance basically has a very important position with a very deep philosophical content of life used as a reference source for the dance arrangement. Hence, it is necessary to avoid Yogyakarta-style classical dance from the danger of extinction. Although the age factor is increasingly changing with different forms of art medium with their own style, but attempts to preserve Yogyakarta-style classical dance are still done by the supporters and artists here with various approaches in order that dance performances can turn into cultural products enjoyed by every single segment of the society watching the performances. Seen from the above-mentioned processes of cultural transformation, they refers to a long process which have resulted in such a broad impact to the life. This impact is quite unique refracted from culture and arts such as Yogyakarta-Style Classical Dance. However, the society perceives it as new culture considered to fit with the existing context of situations. It is evident from the interpretation of global products in the local context made by the society in various cultural areas.

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