

The Traditional Court Dances of Pura Pakualaman Facing the Era of Globalisationⁱ

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Abstract

The study discusses the traditional dances of Pura Pakualaman in the last two decades, by approaching qualitatively, with an intention of the facing the era of globalisation. Pura Pakualaman is one of the palaces in Java located in the Yogyakarta special region. In this palace, various dances are performed by men and women. Dances with gamelan are practiced in the afternoon every Monday and Thursday. There is no practice and performance during the fasting month. A dance is always performed in the coronation of Prince Paku Alam. Court dances are performed at least twice a year, i.e. on the birthday of Prince Paku Alam and during the Idul Fitri reception. Sometimes the dances are performed on the birthday celebration of Prophet Muhammad, during the wedding ceremonies of Pakualaman family members, and to entertain special guests in the palace. Although many modern and contemporary dances are rapidly developing outside the palace, the traditional court dances of Pura Pakualaman still continue to be performed. They do not 'give up' or 'lose' when challenged by modern and contemporary dances that utilise various technologies in their performances. Today, many young people still practice and perform the Pura Pakualaman dances.

Keywords: court dances, learning strategy, developing, sustainability

INTRODUCTION

As the common order of a palace, the life of Pura Pakualaman Palace involves various dances. The dance performances complete with their properties have been started since this palace has become social – political entity, and develops into social – cultural entity. The leaders, started from Prince Paku Alam I (enthroned 1813 – 1829) until Prince Paku Alam X (enthroned 2016 – now) keep continuing the dance performances that have been rooted long and deep.

Pura Pakualaman is a palace established on the second decade of the 19th century at Yogyakarta special region, in Java island, Indonesia. This palace is known as duchy and located in the same region as Yogyakarta Sultanate palace (*Keraton Yogyakarta*).

The first leader of Pura Pakualaman -who was entitled as *adipati* (duke)- until Prince Paku Alam VI are the ancestry of Sultan Hamengku Buwono I from Yogyakarta palace. In the first decade on the 20th century, Sri Paku Alam VII married to the princess from Surakarta palace. From that background, it is understood that culture, including traditional dances of Pura Pakualaman, shows the mixture of aspects came from the tradition of Yogyakarta and Surakarta palace. The blend of the aspects forms a style of traditional dance with its own character, which is different from its source.

These dances are usually performed in the main hall in Pura Pakualaman. In this place, Prince Paku Alam usually welcomes palace official guests and some dances are often performed to entertain them. Common people sometimes get the opportunity to be invited to the palace in some special occasions, like Idul Fitri reception, the commemoration of the birth of Pura Pakualaman palace, etc. They can watch the dances on the occasion.

Several noblemen conduct a wedding ceremony or other activity with these traditional dances outside the palace. Gradually, these dances are not only performed outside Yogyakarta, but also abroad. The performances especially follow some programs or government interests. Meanwhile, outside the palace, various dances have been developed, whether modern dances or contemporary dances. The performances

are often free of charge. The dances from outside Yogyakarta are also performed in Yogyakarta. The collaboration between traditional dances and some others are often performed too. Some of them are the participants of Pura Pakualaman dancers.

The objective of this study is to:

1. Analyze the existence of traditional dances of Pura Pakualaman palace in the last two decades. The two decades that are chosen were the end of the reign of Prince Paku Alam VIII, along the reign of Prince Paku Alam IX, and the beginning of Prince Paku Alam X's reign.
2. Analyze the strategy of Pura Pakualaman maintains the traditional dances.

Rehearsals

Dance and also the *karawitan* (traditional Javanese music) rehearsals in the palace are organized by *Langenpraja*. Anything deals with entertainment in this palace, especially dances and *karawitan*, are organized by *Langenpraja*. *Langenpraja* is below the big organisation named *Budaya lan Pariwisata Pura Pakualaman* (Culture and Tourism of Pura Pakualaman). *Langenpraja* holds the dance and *karawitan* activities every Monday and Thursday evening, from 16.00 – 18.00. *Langenpraja* also organize the performance.

The two representatives from a dance and two from *karawitan* group have been chosen by the head of *Langenpraja* as well as coach to each group. They are the lecturers of Dance Department and Karawitan Department Faculty of Performing Arts Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta. Those lecturers are in charge whether it is for learning, practicing, and performing.

In general, the rehearsals are held twice a week; on Mondays and Thursdays. Every Monday, the dance rehearsal is held for beginners – those who never learn (traditional) dance, which usually is attended by children and teenagers. Most of the participants are pre-school until senior high school students. However, adults are also welcomed to participate in the activity. The rehearsal focuses on fundamental learning traditional dance of Pura Pakualaman. This enables the participants to learn several aspects of the traditional dance; from story or meaning of specific dance, basic movements in the dance, and music that accompanies the dance. Today, they are taught the basic of female dance for female participants and basic of male dance for men participants.

Every Thursday, the rehearsal is held only for group who already able to dance, especially Pura Pakualaman's tradition. The participants of this activity usually are teenagers who are already familiar with Javanese traditional dances or university students majoring in dance –either traditional or contemporary, or both. Modern and contemporary dances together with traditional dances from various palaces and regions in Indonesia are obligatory courses in college curriculum of performing art. They also perform it to university or another purposes.

Thursday's dancing group is trained movements of complex dance compared to Monday's dancing group. Among the Monday's groups, they are allowed to move to Thursday's groups if they already skilled. They can join Thursday's dancing group after it is discussed with the coaches.

The learning besides imitating movement, it is also taught with counting the movement, which is done in rhythm with *gamelan* sound. Along with the permission of the head of *Langenpraja*, in 2010 some dancing movements are arranged by the representatives and taught or coached to the participants, and also performed. The representatives are not only arrange the dance movements, but also choreograph 'new' dances and revitalize the old dances, which have been rarely staged. The duration for the choreographies, which are created in 2010 was shorter than the previous dances.

Learning activity and dance rehearsal is held in a sort of terrace area of the main hall. The dancers dance facing the north direction, it towards the main building of the palace. Female and men are learning and practicing alternately, sometimes together, and mostly accompanied by live *gamelan* music. Some members of the royal family are also learning or rehearsal, both within the group on Monday and Thursday.

The female participants wear long cloth batik, *setagen* or bodice, and a dance scarf. These costumes are furnished *kebaya*, which is worn during the dress rehearsal. All men participants wear special knee-length pants, long cloth batik, *setagen*, belt and a dance scarf.ⁱⁱ Head cover called *iket* or *blangkon* not be worn when learning or rehearsal, but should be used as a dress rehearsal.

At that time, Prince Paku Alam VIII is very concerned with the development of dance in his palace. As someone who ever learned to dance and perform it, he sometimes corrects or provides hints about the technique of male dance movement to men dancers. Other aspects did not escape from his attention. Certain dance, were allowed to be taught and performed outside the palace. He was pleased to come to the Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta and give examples of male dance movements, which were done by him self. His arrival to the university was followed by his two sons, who also practiced dance.ⁱⁱⁱ

Like his father, Prince Paku Alam IX gives special attention to the dance. Several times he invites the representatives of the dance. "He provides examples of male dance techniques" (Mardjijo, 2012, p. 355). They are encouraged to open old manuscripts that are kept in the library to know better about Pura Pakualaman traditional dances. As his father, he spends his time, sitting in a chair in the main hall to watch the learning and rehearsal.

Although, Prince Paku Alam X not learns to dance, it does not mean he does not pay attention to the dance. Through his Queen,^{iv} allowed the representatives to create 'new' dances, which were still rooted in tradition.

Perfomance

A dance performance in the palace in general is for benefit of the palace. However, performance in the palace also could be the benefit of the Government of Yogyakarta Special Region, since Prince Paku Alam VIII until Prince Paku Alam X is the Deputy Governor of Yogyakarta. The guests of the Government of Yogyakarta Special Region were accepted in Deputy Governor place and were treated with traditional dances.

At the palace, the dancers who are chosen for important feast and a state selected from Thursday's dancing group. Dancers who have good quality get the opportunity to become *abdi dalem*.^v Dancers from Monday's group are performed for a Pura Pakualaman's family gathering only. Performance in the palace; both are done by the Thursday and Monday's groups that always accompanied by the *karawitan*, which are played by about 25 – 30 *pengrawit*.

Pura Pakualaman performs its traditional dances two times a year in the Festival Kraton Nusantara. The event is always moving from one palace to another palace around Indonesia. Similar to the Festival Kraton Nusantara but in a smaller scale is held every year. Annual performances also have done by four Javanese palaces: Kasultanan Yogyakarta, Kasunanan Surakarta, Kadipaten Mangkunagaran, and Pura Pakualaman. The performances, are held by the courtier it self, and also the people who live outside the palace.

Since 1995 the Government of Yogyakarta special region has an annual agenda, which held Kasultanan Yogyakarta and Pura Pakualaman dances. The place of the performance is taking turn every year between these two palaces. In the last two years the Government also has another program. The purpose of this program is to socialize the palace's culture to the society who is living in five districts in Yogyakarta. Each districts, is visited by Kasultanan Yogyakarta and Pura Pakualaman and performed court dances. The event followed by dialogues among the local society and the two palaces' representatives about each tradition.

Since some of the nobilities who live outside the palace perform these traditional dances, common people begin to have imitating performances of these palace's traditional dances. The dances are usually performed in certain occasions such as wedding receptions, Anniversary of Independence Day of Republic Indonesia, and certain official ceremony. Mostly, the dancers are the participants of Pura Pakualaman who practice every Thursday and also students of university of arts who study the dances. The dance performance is held in order to fulfill society's request.

In general, the duration of traditional dances that is held outside the palace is shorter than the original duration. Even though the duration is shortened, it does not change the meaning and purpose of the dances. This tradition has happened since 1980s.

Discussion

It is a responsibility for the Pura Pakualaman ruler to give interest to the traditional dances. Lickona says that responsibility contains obligation (2013, p. 55, 61 – 66). Three generations: Prince Paku Alam VIII, Prince Paku Alam IX, and Prince Paku Alam X express their responsibility to 'their possession' differently on their own way. Prince Paku Alam VIII and Prince Paku Alam IX give the example of male dance movement and witness the learning process and dance rehearsal. Prince Paku Alam X continues and develops these traditional dances as a responsibility and obligation to the existence of culture heritage in the palace.

Culture (dance) in palace with the ruler as the sponsor is expected to maintain authority, prestige, and legitimize the ruler's authority. Even though today's century is no longer feudalism, culture (dance) still a symbol of ethics and aesthetics in palace community (Jazuli, 2014, p. 35 – 36). Moreover, Government also gives interest by getting involved in an event and being the financial support. This kind of responsibility, that the government get involved is considered as obligation by Lickona (2013, p. 55, 61 – 66).

The dancers are also *abdi dalem* in the palace. The *abdi dalem* status is an attraction and or idealism for someone to learn and have dance rehearsal in the palace. Besides, the pride as *abdi dalem* that not everyone can has is also become one of the attractions. Devoted your life to king sincerely is the idealism of *abdidaalem* Kasultanan Yogyakarta (Kompas, 2014) as well as *abdi dalem* Pura Pakualaman. The dancers do their obligation sincerely as the result of the interest, which is given by the royal family.

The existence of these traditional dances is also depends on the learning strategy and the rehearsal strategy.^{vi} Generally, the learning or rehearsal activities of traditional dances or classic dances of Yogyakarta based on the gender is held in non-formal institution in Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta (Taib Saearani, 2014, p. 47). Likewise, in Pura Pakualaman Female dance is performed by female dancers and male dance is performed by male dancers is not more complex if it is done with mix gender. The non-formal institution also modify the dances itself such as shorten the duration of dance performance, also being discuss with the society (Taib Saearani, 2014, p. 49) as well as in the palace.

The learning and rehearsal activity that use live music performance also become the attraction. Besides, basic dance movements that have been taught can also being modified, change the systematic dance movements and shorten the duration, make the learning and rehearsal activity and dance performance become very interesting, so that the audience and dancers enjoy the performance. Prince Paku Alam IX conveyed about this dance strategies to the dance representatives several times (Mardjijo, 2012, p. 10 – 13, 355). The dance representatives applied the strategies in the learning process, rehearsal activity, and dance performance.

The palace courtiers allow the common people to perform the traditional dances outside the palace. They are proud to be able to perform and witness the palace's traditional dances. By doing these activities, they also take action to maintain the existence of these traditional dances in competing with other new dances. It is very beneficial towards each other. The developing of the traditional dances in the common people can be the strong factor to maintain the existence of the dances.

Conclusion

Pura Pakualaman's traditional dances live and develop side by side with other traditional dances at the same time. The existence of the traditional dances in this global era is the result of applying strategies in the learning, rehearsal, and performance, which consists of:

- a) Prince Paku Alam VIII, Prince Paku Alam IX, and Prince Paku Alam X give special interest to the dances and dancers.
- b) Pura Pakualaman allows common people to learn, perform, and have dialogues about the dances.
- c) Many basic and kind of dances, that are taught, besides shorten the dance duration.
- d) Learning and rehearsal by having live music.
- e) The dancers have 'freedom' that 'limited' to express the dance movements outside Pura Pakualaman palace.
- f) The learning activity and rehearsal in the palace is free, no charge.

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ⁱⁱ Among participants, who cannot wear a costume, especially in the Monday's group are helped by other participants, who are already skilled or their parents who come and wait.

ⁱⁱⁱ One of them replaces their father in 1998 as Prince Paku Alam IX.

^{iv} The Queen studied about batik of this palace, which is used as Royal attires, dance costumes, and *Langenpraja* uniforms.

^v *Abdidalem* is the designation for palace official, such as some of the dancers and *pengrawit* of Pura Pakualaman. They receive this title, name, and salary based on the governance structure of palace.

^{vi} Muhammad Fazli Taib Bin Saearani through his Ph. D. disertation said, that the development of Yogyakarta classical dance cannot be seperated from the role of Kasultanan Yogyakarta and formal also non-formal institutions. Meanwhile, this research shows the development of Pura Pakualaman court dances, which more depends on the learning, rehearsal, and performance strategies.



The gate of Pura Pakualaman palace (above)
The female dance (left bellow) and the male dance (right bellow)