

Yogyakarta Dance Tradition: The Challenges of Shared Heritage

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Abstract

This paper explores the process of reviving and revitalising Yogyanese Court Dance as a shared heritage, focusing on the significant role played by the *sanggar* (dance studio) in preserving and promoting this traditional art form. Drawing on ethnographic methods such as participant observation, interviews, and document analysis, the study delves into the strategies, experiences, and challenges encountered by dance practitioners, teachers, and stakeholders in breathing new life into Yogyanese Court Dance within the contemporary cultural landscape. By examining the practices and beliefs of individuals involved in the preservation and transmission of Yogyanese Court Dance, the research seeks to illuminate the cultural dynamics at play within the *sanggar*. Through the voices and narratives of dancers, teachers, and community members, the study explores the processes of knowledge exchange, skill development, and cultural adaptation taking place within the *sanggar*, while considering the evolving socio-cultural context. The study investigates the delicate balance between tradition and modernity faced by practitioners, as they navigate the demands of preserving the essence of Yogyanese Court Dance while responding to contemporary influences and audience expectations. It also examines the intergenerational dynamics within the *sanggar*, including the transmission of knowledge and the engagement of younger generations, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities arising from this interaction. Moreover, the research delves into the role of the *sanggar* as a catalyst for community building, cultural identity, and heritage appreciation. It explores how the revival efforts foster a sense of belonging among members and contribute to the wider society's understanding and appreciation of Yogyanese Court Dance as a living art form. The study also considers the potential for cultural exchange and cross-cultural dialogue facilitated by the revitalisation initiatives. By presenting rich qualitative data and narratives, this research offers insights into the socio-cultural dynamics surrounding Yogyanese Court Dance and the efforts to revive and revitalise it. The findings inform cultural policymakers, educators, and practitioners by providing valuable perspectives on effective strategies for preserving and promoting traditional dance forms within a contemporary context. The study emphasises the importance of honouring historical roots while embracing innovation to ensure the continued vibrancy and relevance of Yogyanese Court Dance as a cherished shared heritage.

Keywords: revitalizing, reviving, *sanggar*, shared heritage, Yogyanese court dance

Introduction

Traditionally, Javanese dance learning can be seen through direct practice between students and teachers in a studio. The imitation method is a practice method that is most often found inherited from Yogyakarta traditional dance in the process of learning dance in studios. This is actually a form of shared inheritance derived from the origins of classical dance at the Yogyakarta Palace. In the Yogyakarta Palace, the initial achievement aimed at the practice of imitation was a memorisation of the form of movement and the process of performing certain movements. The achievement of memorising movement forms can be demonstrated directly at that time by looking at the way the teacher gives examples. Likewise, in the performance of certain body movement processes, this can be observed directly by following the teacher's practice of giving examples of each body segment that moves according to the rhythm being carried out. The level of achievement of memorisation is the most elementary achievement of classical dance learning at the Yogyakarta Palace. This means that a student learning classical Javanese dance requires a level of memorisation first before moving on to the next level. Memorisation is the initial capital for a student to correctly imitate the form of movement and movement process as exemplified by a teacher. By imitating someone who studies classical dance, they also become an actor in the revitalisation of cultural identity and heritage appreciation. By examining the practices and beliefs of individuals involved in the preservation and transmission of Yogyanese Court Dance, this paper seeks to illuminate the cultural dynamics at play within the studio. Moreover, this paper delves into the role of the studio as a catalyst for community building, cultural identity, and heritage appreciation. It explores how the revival efforts foster a sense of belonging among members and contribute to the wider society's understanding and appreciation of Yogyanese Court Dance as a living art form.

Several literary facts have also been proven by other authors. Imitation as a form of shared heritage in classical dance education in the studio has a very important meaning (Damayanti et al., 2022). Apart from that, there is inheritance in building cultural identity within the studio (Ramdani & Restian, 2020) and instilling moral values (Rosala, 2016). On the other hand, by imitating the method, students in the studio can also gain a sense of self-confidence which is absorbed by the sense of sight (Putri & Desyandri, 2019). In the end, through imitation in practice in the studio, a student can also develop multiple intelligences (Putraningsih et al., 2019). Meanwhile, the social fact of the form of shared heritage in the reviving and revitalising model in Yogyakarta style classical dance studios is a breath that continues to breathe in society. The study emphasises the importance of honouring historical roots while embracing innovation to ensure the continued vibrancy and relevance of Yogyanese Court Dance as a cherished shared heritage.

A similar method has been proven by the writings of Qu and Zollet in observing the potential for cultural exchange and cross-cultural dialogue facilitated by the revitalisation initiatives of a festival event (Qu & Zollet, 2023). Apart from that, the aim of this article is to provide a perspective to examine how socially engaged Yogyanese Court dance can represent an effective tool for revitalising communities and strengthening their resilience. We examine the case of Yogyanese Court Dance

in the Sanggar of Yogyakarta.

Methodology

This article is a case study on the achievement of educational outcomes in studios by implementing performance practices on stage. The case study in this paper uses qualitative data. There are very varied types of case studies. The implications of the results of this paper show the importance of researchers' ability to understand how to approach case studies appropriately, how to determine cases and research limitations, and how to analyse data carefully (Nurrahma et al., 2021). This article was written using qualitative research methods. Data collection techniques are carried out using steps as stated in Ridwan's (2010) statement: the meaning of data collection techniques in qualitative research is often done in various ways. This article examines the intergenerational dynamics within the studio, including the transmission of knowledge and the engagement of younger generations, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities arising from this interaction. The study also considers the potential for cultural exchange and cross-cultural dialogue facilitated by the revitalisation initiatives. By presenting rich qualitative data and narratives, this research offers insights into the socio-cultural dynamics surrounding Yogyanese Court Dance and the efforts to revive and revitalise it. The findings inform cultural policymakers, educators, and practitioners by providing valuable perspectives on effective strategies for preserving and promoting traditional dance forms within a contemporary context. The study emphasises the importance of honouring historical roots while embracing innovation to ensure the continued vibrancy and relevance of Yogyanese Court Dance as a cherished shared heritage.

Results

Historically, there are only two studios that implement inheritance patterns in the form of non-formal dance education, namely the Among Beksa Student Foundation and the Pamulangan Beksa Sasminta Mardawa Foundation. The interesting thing is that both studios adapt their students through the experience of practising dance performances in several places. This effort is another way to revive and revitalise the Yogyakarta style dance material that is trained in each studio.

Dance education at the Among Beksa Student Foundation is currently the oldest in Yogyakarta. Founded in 1952, and it has more than 4000 alumni in various cities in Indonesia. The Siswa Among Beksa dance studio received a shared inheritance from Sultan Hamengku Buwana IX when he started establishing a Yogyakarta style dance school outside the walls of the Palace in 1952. This dance school model is similar to the method used by Sultan Hamengku Buwana VIII when, in 1918, he founded a dance school outside the palace called Krida Beksa Wirama. The joint inheritance model applied in the form of the non-formal dance school Sanggar Siswa Among Beksa is managed in a more modern way using a semester pattern for five semesters. Every semester, a level advancement exam is conducted for students. Then at the end of the semester, an exam is held to obtain a Dancer

Candidate certificate (Hermana and Putra Jalu, personal communication, October 12, 2023).

The semester-by-semester pattern with an increased exam model every semester is also carried out at the Pamulangan Beksa Sasmina Mardawa Foundation. The final semester exam pattern is also carried out to obtain a Dancer Candidate certificate (Rahma Indrasari, personal communication, October 24, 2023). Apart from the two studios in Yogyakarta using a non-formal educational basis, the Among Beksa Student Foundation and the Pamulangan Sasmina Mardawa Foundation also use dance performance events as a form of experience for students and alumni in front of an audience. The dance presentations are used in addition to fulfil educational materials; they also have revitalisation roles for traditional Yogyakarta style dance, which is rarely performed. Several performance stages were used as a medium for testing experiences and revival models for the two studios, Siswa Among Beksa Dance studio and Pamulangan Beksa Sasmina Mardawa dance studio.



Figure 1. Prince Tejakusuma is teaching Krida Beksa Wirama students in the 1950s in the courtyard of Ndalem Tejakusuman (Photo of Krida Beksa Wirama archive document)

This paper is the effort to revive and revitalize it. The findings inform cultural policymakers, educators, and practitioners by providing valuable perspectives on effective strategies for preserving and promoting traditional dance forms within a contemporary context. The tabels below shows practical in dance education from the sanggar



Figure 2. The practice of male dance education at the Among Beksa Student Foundation (YSAB document photo, 2019)



Figure 3. Female dance exam at the 2019 Among Beksa Student Foundation (YSAB document photo, 2019)



Figure 4. Dance maestro of the Among Beksa Student Foundation R.M. Dinusatomo (YSAB document photo, 2015)



Figure 5. Practicing the Yogyakarta style of refined male dance using the Wejedan Method. (Yogyakarta Palace document photo, 2019)



Figure 6. Graduation of prospective dancers from the Among Beksa Student Foundation dance education (YSAB Document Photo, 2017)



Figure 7. Practice the Yogyakarta style of female dance using the Wejedan Method (Yogyakarta Palace document photo, 2015)



Figure 8. Practice of the refined male dance using the Wejedan Method at the Among Beksa Student Foundation (YSAB document photo, 2018)

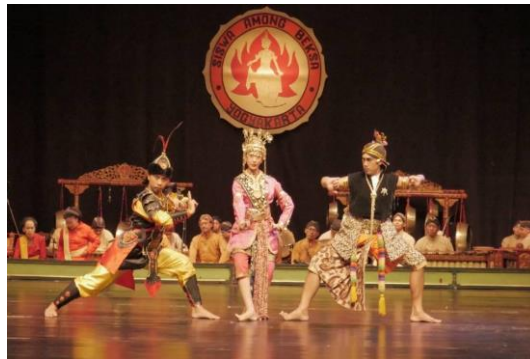


Figure 9. Reconstruction of ancient manuscripts by the Among Beksa Student Foundation (Photo of Yogyakarta Cultural Park Document, 2022)



Figure 10. Practical performance experience of students and alumni of the Among Beksa Student Foundation Wayang Wong dance drama (YSAB Document Photo, 2015)



Figure 11. Practical experiences of students and alumni from the Among Beksa Student Foundation in performing the Ramayana dance drama for tourists (YSAB Document Photo 2022)

Discussion

At the beginning of this discussion, it is necessary to recall David Parkin's question when he asked Hughes-Freeland (2003) about the importance of an explanation of the attainment of meaning in the performance of Yogyanese Court Dance. Parkin asked, "How far do we now view 'meaning' not as given to us by signs but as placed by ourselves on and through the objects and acts we see and experience?" The problem becomes clear that the meaning of the Yogyanese Court Dance performance is related to the dance artistry achievements of a dancer who performs the dance. This, then, becomes a value dimension of the inheritance of dance culture in the studio. In this context, Putraningsih (2015) states that studios or dance organisations also produce new generations who will maintain, preserve, and develop classical dances in the future. The answer to Parkin's question will be stronger by remembering a shared heritage value from the achievements of learning Yogyakarta style classical dancing in the form of character building. In this sense, the value of revival becomes the basis for remaining alive in the spirit of Yogyakarta dance tradition in the practice of performance experiences.

A statement also needs to be remembered from the writings of Prince Surjobrongto from the Yogyakarta Palace in seeing the relationship between dance as a cultural text and as strengthening character building. It was stated in his writings when he was still a teenager, he was reminded by Sultan Hamengku Buwana VIII (his father) that if someone could not dance, he was considered an under educated person (Surjobrongto; 1971, pp. 4-6). The assumption of this statement is that someone can be called educated or literate if they have experienced learning Javanese dance. This statement is very logical because the practice of imitation in studios currently still uses the *wejedan* method (Personal communication, November 4, 2023 with Putra Jalu, 29 years old). The *wejedan* method is a practice method with extra stressing by a teachers inherited from the Yogyakarta Palace. This expression is linked with the trend of ethnochoreology as the science of understanding humanity through the dance.¹

Meanwhile, Merriam (1974) sees the trend in ethnochoreology into three models, namely: (a) a model that discusses dance as body movement, (b) a model that discusses dance as behaviour, and (c) a model that connects dance studies with other studies (Merriam, 1974). If in the first model the subject of discussion is physical behaviour, then in the second model what is at issue is social behaviour, both from the dancer and the audience: what is their learning behaviour, what is their understanding behaviour, which underlies their attitudes and stance regarding dance. In the third model, dance is used to explain other problems, for example regarding the survival of innate culture in human groups that move from place to place.

In the model of ethnochoreology offered by Merriam, it seems that this second model is a major contribution to the study of dance to the social character of society. This is in line with measurements in looking at the influence of learning dance on people's behaviour, both for dance students or dancers, and dance audiences. What is measured in dance learning behaviour in any dance cultural domain in the archipelago will have an impact not only on aesthetic sensitivity, but also on the sensitivity of social behaviour and attitudes in our society. In the case of the Yogyakarta Palace classical dance, this expression almost resembles Surjobrongto's statement when looking at educated people, which can be indicated by the sensitivity of dance learners. This means that this comparison becomes the basis for exploring how the revival efforts foster a sense of belonging among members and contribute to the wider society's understanding and appreciation of Yogyanese Court Dance as a living art form. This is a special way to explore reviving, and revitalising in a shared heritage model of Yogyakarta style Javanese Palace dance. It is another way of exploring how revival efforts foster a sense of belonging among members and contribute to the wider community's understanding and appreciation of Yogyakarta Palace Dance as a living art form. The study also considers the potential for cultural exchange and cross-cultural dialogue facilitated by revitalisation initiatives.

This paper will specifically look at two important stages in the case of performance practice as a revitalisation initiative. First is the stage of the Yogyakarta Sono Culture Museum. This stage is managed by the Yogyakarta Government as a tourist attraction. Presentations in Yogyakarta style classical dance performances are presented in turn by several dance studios, including the Among Beksa Students Foundation and the Pamulangan Sasminta Mardawa Foundation. Interviews with dance performers at both studios show the contribution of the studios to revitalisation initiatives in several Yogyakarta style classical dance genres. This can be seen from the choice of the opening show repertoire which presents extra dance creations from each studio (Tetet Ragamulya, personal communication, October 7, 2023). Apart from that, according to other dance performers, with the availability of the Sono Budaya Museum stage, there is a new social relationship between the studios and the audience who come from various regions, including domestic tourists and from abroad (Personal communication with Hermawan, 33 years old, October 7, 2023).



Figure 12. Model reviving and revitalizing on the Sana Budaya Museum stage (Sana Budaya Museum Document Photo, 2023)



Figure 13. Practical experience of dance drama performance by Yayasan Pamulangan Sasminta Mardawa (Sana Budaya Museum Document Photo, 2022)

In addition to the stage provided by the Yogyakarta Government, the private sector also plays a major role in navigating the demands of preserving the essence of Yogya Palace Dance while responding to contemporary influences and audience expectations. Private contribution is the second stage besides the Government stage. An example that can be mentioned here is the Hamzah Batik Stage. The location of this stage is very strategic at the southern end of Malioboro, a famous street in Yogyakarta. The studio that is active in performances on the Hamzah Batik stage is the Among Beksa Student Foundation. This stage was originally the performance stage for Cabaret Hamzah. However, at the beginning or opening of the show, there is always space for Yogyakarta style classical dance from the Among Beksa Students Foundation to perform Yogyakarta style classical dance (Personal communication with Tetet Ragamulya, 43 years old, October 4, 2023). Even on Sundays, Yogyakarta

style dance is given the opportunity to perform more than one repertoire as a space for innovation and creativity for the studio.



Figure 14. Reviving and revitalizing model in the Hamzah Batik Stage (YSAB Document Photo, 2023)



Figure 15. Practical experience of men's dance performances on the Hamzah Batik stage (YSAB Document Photo, 2022)

The phenomenon of reviving and revitalizing has also been discussed by several authors in different studies. Several articles can be used as a source of comparison in exploring revitalizing construction using the shared heritage model. This can be seen in constructing alternative learning in an innovation strategy of art education of drama, dance, and music (Bramantyo & Tjaroko, 2022) and Mai's writing which questions How to learn and feel the dance culture? (Mai, 2022). Or what is more comprehensive is shown by Pyne. In his writing, Pyne looks at the issues faced by these heritage resources and offers recommendations for enhancing community engagement, initiating co-management and developing common goals among contemporary communities in the Calcutta region (Pyne, 2021). It also appears that innovative strategies are needed in responding to reviving and revitalizing

patterns in the shared heritage model (Zhang et al., 2022). On the other hand, a critical view is also needed in looking at the position of classical dance studios, most of which are located in urban areas (Fathinnaufal & Hidayati, 2020). There is a risk of reduced inheritance that occurs in the process of learning classical dance in urban areas. This is also a difficult challenge for the life of the Sanggar which is just recovering from the pandemic (Yuliati et al., 2023). All Sanggar experienced how the existence of Javanese Court Dance was worrisome when the Covid-19 pandemic emerged that restricted people's movement throughout the world.

Conclusion

This study ultimately looks at the delicate balance between tradition and modernity faced by practitioners. Apart from that, this paper also examines intergenerational dynamics in studios, including the transmission of knowledge and involvement of the younger generation, as well as highlighting the challenges and opportunities that arise from the inter-relationship between educational practices and performance experience practices. With dance education based, studios that produce graduates who are prospective dancers are challenged to survive in Yogyakarta Style dance as a living tradition in the contemporary era. This paper also looks at the studio's role as a catalyst for community development, cultural identity and appreciation of cultural heritage.

By taking the case of the stage owned by the Yogyakarta Government, Sana Budaya Museum and Hamzah Batik, this paper also looks at the challenges of how dance studios respond to accepting a shared heritage. Large dance studios such as the Among Beksa Student Foundation and the Pamulangan Sasminta Mardawa Foundation are taking an important role in exploring how revival efforts foster a sense of belonging among members and contribute to the wider community's understanding and appreciation of Yogyakarta Palace Dance as a living art form.

Notes

¹ See more at <https://educationireland.wordpress.com/2015/04/30/ethnochoreology-understanding-humanity-through-dance-ul/>

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Biography

R. M. Pramutomo, born in Yogyakarta in 1968, earned a bachelor's degree in dance at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts (ISI) Yogyakarta in 1992 and later pursued a master's degree in humanities in the Performing Arts Studies program at the Graduate School of Gadjah Mada University (UGM) Yogyakarta, completing it in 2001. Subsequently, he participated in the Culture and Performance Studies program at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in 2001-2002, ultimately obtaining his doctoral degree in Performing Arts Studies at UGM Yogyakarta in 2008. In 2009 and 2010, he took part in the Senior Lecturer Fellowship Program of Academic Recharge (PAR) at Leiden University, Netherlands. Concurrently, he served as the Chair of the Expert Council of the Study Center, the Center of Arts Archives and Documents Studies KRT Wiroguno, which he founded in 2006 and is based in Yogyakarta. He has taken part in and conducted workshops at dance festivals in Asia, America, Europe, and Australia. He is also the chairman of the Among Beksa Student Foundation, the oldest non-formal dance school in Yogyakarta. Dr. Pramutomo is a prolific author, having written many books on dance and performing arts. His dedication to academia is evident through his research and community service, along with the publication of scientific articles in various national and international journals. He has held leadership roles at ISI Surakarta, including serving as Chair of the Research Institute from 2013 to 2017 and Deputy Chancellor III for Student Affairs and Cooperation from 2017 to 2021. Dr. Pramutomo is currently a permanent lecturer at the Faculty of Performing Arts and the postgraduate program at ISI Surakarta.