

# **THE NON-AESTHETIC ASPECT OF MANGKUNAGARAN-STYLE DANCE: STUDY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL CONTEXT**

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## **Abstract**

This study aims at analyzing the non-aesthetic aspect of Mangkunagaran-style dance from the perspective of its social context. The method employed in the study is interpretative-descriptive qualitative. The approach used social culture to analyze the perspectives. The research was conducted in Pura Mangkunagaran, with the focus of research lies on the non-aesthetic aspect of Mangkunagaran-style dance taken from the perspective of its social context. Techniques for collecting data was an observation, interview, and documentation study. The data validity mainly used data triangulation. Results show that from the perspective of social context, the Mangkunagaran-style dance is divided into four major social functions, i.e., the social order for integration, the function of expression, the function of entertainment, and the function of Psychiatric, Aesthetic, and Economic. These for main social functions are taken part in the existence of Mangkunagaran-style dance in Pura Mangkunagaran and wider communities.

**Keywords:** Mangkunagaran-style dance, non-aesthetic aspect, social context

## **INTRODUCTION**

Mangkunagaran-style dance is a form of Javanese dance. The Javanese dance itself is a unique world of art. The uniqueness of Javanese dance lies in many aspects, including the history behind the emergence of a dance. Different historical backgrounds give rise to different styles between one place to another. Many Javanese people actually have a variety of dance types, be it folk dance, populist dance, classical dance, or traditional dance, it has very specific features to its movement. The movement was originated from history of the place or palace.

Palace dance is a dance emerged and choreographed based on the story of the phenomena that happened in the palace. Mangkunagaran-style dance, which is discussed in this study, as a Javanese dance, cannot be separated from the palace of Surakarta, Yogyakarta and Mangkunagaran itself. In its history, this type of Mangkunagaran-style dance emerged or was created from the Surakarta, Yogyakarta, and Mangkunagaran Palace. The three Keratons or palaces reflected the three powers who were initially originated from one Keraton power, namely Keraton Mataram. The Mataram Palace became Kartasura Palace, then became the Surakarta Palace. After becoming

Surakarta Palace, power was divided into three, namely Kasunanan Surakarta, Yogyakarta, and Mangkunagaran or Surakarta, Yogyakarta, and Mangkunagaran palaces (Prabowo et al., 2007).

The existence of dance in the palace will affect and relate to the royal people's lives, and the society living around the neighborhood and larger communities. As a choreography set, a dance built based on a certain story or history felt by the choreographer, has typically two important aspects of being discussed and analyzed, namely the textual (aesthetic aspect) and contextual aspects (non-aesthetic aspect). While the first focuses on the dance movements, including head, neck, dance, and leg movements, the latter focuses more on the relation between the dance and the social environment affected by the dance existence. The aesthetic aspect is also related closely to the understanding of physical evaluation of the dance being observed (Jazuli, 2015).

The non-aesthetic aspect related to the social context is related closely to the social functions of dance. Royce (2007) states that a functional dance study is related to dances' contribution in a community where it is continuously preserved. Shay (1971) studied the functions of dance and categorized it into six: dance is used to illustrate social order, dance is as ritual media, dance is used as entertainment or recreational activity, dance is used as psychiatric media, dance is used as an aesthetic activity, and the last is dance is used as an economic activity. In its relation to the culture, Kaeppler (1992) suggests that a thorough study of a dance should be seen from the cultural aspect of the dance being researched because a dance is a product of culture and creativity of the community.

This research will tell the readers about the non-aesthetic aspect of Mangkunagaran-style dance, especially from a social context. Ahimsa-Putra (2002) and Sukatja (2004) mention that dance's contextual aspect is related to a wider world. Wider here remains connected with aspects of the text or aspects of the secularity, for example, the historical side of the dance creation, the socio-cultural environment of its creator (choreographer), the psychological condition of its creator (choreographer), the socio-cultural condition of its people, the natural physical environment of community, or the function or use of the dance in the community, especially in this context is Pura Mangkunagaran (The Mangkunagaran Palace). The state of the art of this paper lies in the idea of seeing Mangkunagaran-style dance from the non-aesthetic aspect, which is related closely with its social context in relation to Pura Mangkunagaran and the community. While other researchers had studied the aesthetic or historical aspects of Mangkunagaran-style dance (Putri et al., 2015; Suharji, 2009), this study will focus more on the analysis of the non-aesthetic aspect of Mangkunagaran-style dance, especially from the perspective of social context.

## **METHODS**

The method implemented in this study was interpretive-descriptive qualitative research. While qualitative research consists of interpretative

material practices to describe a phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998), and interpretative study aims to discover and understand the phenomenon of the people involved in a certain community (Merriam, et al. 2002). The approach used social culture to analyze the perspectives. The study was conducted in Pura Mangkunagaran Surakarta with research subjects comprising individuals as interviewees who know about the Mangkunagaran-style dance history and its influence on the wider community.

The focus of the research was the non-aesthetic aspect of the dance comprising the social function of it. In collecting the data, researchers used observation, interview, and documentation study.

The data validity technique employed in this research was triangulation to match and compare data resulting from observation, interview, and documentation study. Here, the most important aspect is the interviewees. Interviewees in this study are the ones having a background in knowing the reality of Mangkunagaran-style dance in Mangkunagaran community. The validity here attempts to cross-check the information of interviewees with the data of observation and documentation study. Thus, information from interviewees is key to the success of the study.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

After collecting and analyzing data regarding the use of Mangkunagaran-style dance from the social context perspective, four main social functions of the dance are derived. It is the function of social order for integration, the function of expression, the function of entertainment, and the functions of psychiatric, aesthetic, and economic activities. In analyzing the Mangkunagaran-style dance social function, the data are seen from how a society use the Mangkunagaran-style dance in many community activities. In addition to the process of data analysis, the use of dance in many community activities is seen from the custom or cultural system in the Mangkunagaran society and how this dance has its role in preserving the culture.

### **The Function of Social Order for Integration**

The function of social order for integration here concerns how dance is used as a means to achieve goals set by Mangkunagaran as a palace or here we call Pura Mangkunagaran, which is to unite the intention, creativity, and taste which must be carried out harmoniously with the sense of togetherness. In this context, togetherness is another word for the form of integration among many elements towards one goal, namely the sense of shared ownership of Kamangkunagaranan.

Integration in the context of togetherness in custom governance concerns the complexity of ideas, values, norms, and regulations, which, according to Koentjaraningrat (1984), is a form of culture. Custom governance becomes a guideline or reference in the attitude and action taken by all citizens living in Mangkunagaran communities to achieve a shared goal. As a result, integration or togetherness to achieve the aimed shared goal can really be achieved.

The complexity of ideas, values, norms, and regulations will act as guidance to behave and take action for the Mangkunagaran communities in the form of the social system. The social system will always be linked to the

patterned actions of humans. This social system consists of human activities that interact and relate to one another at any time.

Related to the existence of the Mangkunagaran-style dance in the custom order or custom governance in the community of Mangkunagaran, it is related to how the Mangkunagaran-style dance functions in that particular custom order. This Mangkunagaran-style dance is a work of art. According to Budhisantoso (1994), as a work of art, the Mangkunagaran-style dance will not be separated from the statements and thought of the artists creating the artwork, so it can stimulate the sensitivity of community statements and cause emotional responses that can foster a sense of togetherness for the dance audiences, supporters, and admirers. The social order here can be seen on how custom governance is related to the customary arrangements to achieve integration or togetherness in the community's shared goals.

One of the manifestations of togetherness in the context of dance performance is to enjoy the performance of dance together. In its relation to the example of the dance performance in Pura Mangkunagaran is Golek Montro Dance which is used by Pura Mangkunagaran to entertain their guests. This dance tells the story of a growing teenage girl who is about to enter adulthood. Therefore, the dance movement is reflecting the action of a girl putting on some makeup on her face. There is also a certain nuance of excitement that depicts the girl's age who reaches adulthood and tends to be cheerful and happy to look charming. This dance by Pura Mangkunagaran is relatively often being presented to welcome guests at Pura Mangkunagaran as a tribute to humbly honoring the guests as well as being used to show the beautiful art of a dance which is highly valued and preserved by Mangkunagaran community as one of their cultural heritage.

The sense of togetherness is not only reflected in the audience but also from the dance supporters. The term supporter in this context is defined as all people involved in the dance performance for the dance's success. There are the dancers themselves, costume designers, music/ gamelan players, event organizers, and all other parties supporting the event of dance performance. Besides, the venue where the dance is also performed closely related to the existence of Mangkunagaran-style dance

The building of Pura Mangkunagaran, especially the building's architectural design, also supports the dance performance. It can make the dance feels alive. This, however, is the special rights for the descendants of Pura Mangkunagaran to decide which dance can be performed or can only be performed at Pura Mangkunagaran. In other words, each different Mangkunagaran-style dance has its own purpose which then causing the differences in value and resulted in the rule attaching to where and when each dance can be performed. Therefore, outside the dance, supporters are facilities and stakeholders of Pura Mangkunagaran, which also have their own roles affecting the social order function of the Mangkunagaran-style dance. All parties are then integrated and together are being responsible in preserving Mangkunagaran-style dance throughout the era.

Furthermore, from the perspective of the organizational structure in Pura Mangkunagaran, there are various kinds of structures and sub-structures that all directly or indirectly contribute to the togetherness in supporting the Mangkunagaran-style dance culture as an art that is

respected and highly valued by the communities. The Mangkunagaran community has Pura Mangkunagaran organizational structure which is grouped into four different sections. The four are the Secretariat, the Mandrapura Regency, the Reksa Budaya Office, and the Satria Kawedanan Office. Each section integratedly supports each other to make sure that Mangkunagaran culture has a shared goal for preserving Mangkunagaran existence.

For example, the secretariat is led by a coordinator and assisted by the heads of the technical/ non-technical planning, the head of finance, the head of human resource division, and the head of public relations/ protocol. The secretariat, in its daily duties, is responsible for reporting all daily activities to Sri Paduka Mangkoenagoro IX. The main duty of the secretariate is to create an official letter, save the archives and manage all the official documents of Sri Paduka Mangkoenagoro IX, besides also to prepare and record all decree archives. The coordinator acts as a liaison between Sri Paduka Mangkoenagoro IX with all parties.

Even though the secretariat duties are described as an official task and do not seem related directly to the Mangkunagaran-style dance, the secretariat is part of a bigger Mangkunagaran community also has its own role in preserving the Mangkunagaran-style dance. Therefore, the secretariat also belongs to the supporting aspect of dance preservation. As a communicator between the King and all parties in Pura Mangkunagaran, the stake holders inside the secretariat also employs the sense of belonging when they have to deal with Mangkunagaran-style dance; for example, by giving the stage for Mangkunagaran-style dance to be performed in welcoming the King's guests instead of using other dances. Therefore, each Mangkunagaran style dance performance's success is always fully supported by participation of all stakeholders, which has successfully built a sense of togetherness for the sake of Mangkunagaran-style dance to be known and recognized by larger community outside Pura Mangkunagaran.

### **The Function of Expressions**

The existence of Mangkunagaran-style dance as an art that exists and held highly by the Mangkunagaran community is also used as a medium for expression by the community. Expressions can be related to secular or worldly purposes but can also be related to religious purposes. For the Mangkunagaran-style dance, the expression is more cultural. As mentioned by Kim and Lausberg (2019), different dance styles have been developed in different cultures to provide emotional as well as aesthetic expressions. In other words, for Mangkunagaran-style dance, the expressions inserted in its practice of arts are more to the cultural expressions or worldly expressions in nature. Gambyong, Golek, Retna Pramudya, Mandra Rini, Mandra Retna, and Menak Koncar dances are examples of worldly dance types. Meanwhile, Bedaya and Srimpi dances are an example of sacred dances in Pura Mangkunagaran which contains expressions of religion.

Whether people are aware or not, dancing is related to the sharing expressions, even though the people are actively performed as a dancer or passively enjoyed the dance as the audience. It is no matter whether the dance itself is a worldly or religious type one; both the dancers and audiences are

using the dance as their medium of expression. Even during the rehearsal, the act of dancers trying to live in the dance of the audience's attempt in understanding the dance is the manifestation of expression itself.

Expression of art in the form of dance does play an important role since the first establishment of Mangkunagaran government until now. The nuances of conflict or war and every single event and incident in the history of Pura Mangkunagaran are drawn beautifully and reflected nicely in the dance so it can be felt and learned by the dancers and audiences. The atmosphere of the situation is all built and nicely composed in the dance movements as it is expressed by the dancers. Specifically, for Mangkunagaran-style dance, the dance is used as a medium to express and reflect the incidents that occurred during the war and conflicts in the old era of Mangkunagaran when friction happened between Mangkunagaran and Kasunanan Surakarta (The Palace of Surakarta). In addition, it is not only the conflict and the feeling of sadness and restlessness which are expressed through the dance, but also the hope of the society reflected in the dance.

### **The Function of Entertainment**

Mangkunagaran-style dance of Pura Mangkunagaran is also used for entertainment and recreation. This can be seen from how the entire community, especially the Mangkunagaran community living in and around Pura Mangkunagaran, also supporters and audiences always welcome every dance performance in Pura Mangkunagaran in excitement and happiness.

Shinozaki, et al. (2006) said that entertainment could be classified into two categories, a real-time and non-real-time type. The real-time type is when the audiences see and enjoy the performance face to face. All audiences of Mangkunagaran and outside community seem to enjoy the dance rehearsal and performance in Pura Mangkunagaran. They appreciate the performance even though they realize that what they see is actually the dance training only and not the actual performance. In seeing the dancers practice, the audiences seemed to like, appreciate, and enjoy the dance.

Many visitors come to Pura Mangkunagaran each day to see how the building looks and how history has brought all cultures together. With the dances performed to welcome the visitors, the feeling of happiness and joy is felt by the visitors. They are entertained by seeing the dances. Even for formal occasions, the guests feel welcomed and relax when enjoying the dance performance usually performed before the formal event started. Mangkunagaran-style dance becomes a medium that can bring a very special atmosphere in the heart of the visitors.

The visitors can consciously or subconsciously felt the feeling of being entertained. When visitors have a chance to see the performance, their gestures will show how the dances have been successfully entertained them. The gestures are clapping hands, nodding, smiling, even taking or recording pictures.

### **The Functions of Psychiatric, Aesthetic, and Economic**

The Mangkunagaran-style dance role in Pura Mangkunagaran can be seen from previous explanations (number 1 until 3 in the Findings and Discussion section). Even so, there are still a few more functions of the dance,

i.e., the function of the psychiatric, aesthetic, and economical. Mangkunagaran is an institution that maintains and develops institutional life, which is expected to be useful for the resilience and development of past cultures for present and future life.

The economic activities are related closely to the tourism activities in and around Pura Mangkunagaran. In fact, tourism activity by Mangkunagaran has become the main concern of Pura Mangkunagaran's management. The reason is that this tourism activity when it is viewed from the economic aspect is far more profitable when compared to the other sectors. In other words, the existence of Mangkunagaran-style dance is related to many factors. The dance still survives and touches the economic aspects that cannot be separated from the world of tourism.

The survival of Mangkunagaran-style dance is due to many factors related to the functions, as stated earlier. Besides economic function, this dance is also used for many parties' psychiatric and aesthetic activities inside and outside the Mangkunagaran community. Even parties outside the Mangkunagaran community usually have a big hand in terms of Mangkunagaran-style dance preservation. According to Jazuli (2008; 1993), when people outside the community are inseparable from the wider community's appreciation and creation activities.

The ability of Mangkunagaran party to save the existence of the Mangkunagaran style dance is limited to the continuity of the dance through the learning and training process. However, it is the people outside Mangkunagaran who give appreciation by enjoying the performance in relation to the existence of this dance. Thus, there is reciprocity from both parties, namely the Mangkunagaran itself as the owner of the arts and the outside community as supporters.

Structurally, the Mangkunagaran-style dance's survival to this day because it has been preserved mainly through the Langen Praja sub-organization under the Reksa Budaya organization. Reksa Budaya is in charge with Mangkunagaran-style dance. Reksa Budaya is led by an advisor, assisted by a representative, expert staff, treasurer, and secretary. In carrying out their daily duties, Reksa Budaya is directly responsible for Sri Paduka Mangkoenagoro IX. The main task of the Reksa Budaya Office is to make sure that Pura Mangkuagaran can become the center of Mangkunagaran culture development. In carrying out their daily tasks, they are assisted by Reksa Pustaka, Langen Praja, and Barawiyata.

In detail, the tasks of each section are first, the Reksa Pustaka. The Reksa Pustaka's main task is to explore, develop, inventory, translate, maintain the library books, and organize the archive of letters. Secondly, to organize and manage the subpart of Reksa Budaya, which is the dance community inside Pura Mangkunagaran, namely Langen Praja. The main task of Langen Praja is to carry out dance rehearsal, dance performance, *gamelan* performance, and be responsible for the regeneration of dancers and other cultural actors.

People, in general, see that the Langen Praja is inseparable from the existence of Mangkunagaran-style dance. Therefore, Langen Praja carries out all of these tasks as well as possible since the Mangkunagaran-style dance is the palace's icon. Furthermore, another section related to the existence of

Mangkunagaran-style dance is Barawiyata. Barawiyata must maintain and strive for educational institutions' life, both general education and special education, related to arts and culture in Pura Mangkunagaran. Therefore, both sections' tasks are closely related and inseparable since the implementation of education and learning in the context of inheritance and regeneration for the continuation of the Mangkunagaran-style dance is indeed possible to be successful if it is carried out together and complement each other. Malarsih (2005) mentions that preserving Mangkunagaran-style dance was made by Pura Mangkunagaran by making sure that each section is responsible for their own duties in relation to Mangkunagaran-style dance, i.e., dance rehearsal by Langen Praja and performance documentation by the secretariat and Rekza Pustaka.

Another section that is responsible with the existence of Mangkunagaran-style dance is Kawedanan Satria section. In its daily tasks, the Kawedanan Satria section is led by an advisor who is assisted by a deputy pengageng, treasurer, and secretary. In carrying the tasks, this section is responsible directly to Sri Paduka Mangkoenagoro IX. The task of Satria Kawedanan Office is exploring and maintain the procedures of dress code, ceremony, and custom of Mangkunagaran stakeholders in general and Pura Mangkunagaran official member and family in particular. Therefore, all sections are interrelated and can not be separated in carrying out the tasks and duties, especially when all of these sections are directly responsible with the continuation of Mangkunagaran-style dance, the pride of Pura Mangkunagaran.

The entire description of each section's various functions in supporting Mangkunagaran-style dance in Pura Mangkunagaran can be seen from Radcliffe-Brown functionalism theory as used by Hinkle, Turner and Maryanski (1981) about analyzing social life and organic life. Basically, the theory of functionalism from Radcliffe-Brown describes the equivalence between social and organic life. The main difference between social and organic life, as stated by Hinkle, Turner, and Maryanski is that in organic life, there is the possibility of observing the organic structure to some degree regardless of its function. Whereas in human society, social structure as a whole can only be observed from the perspective of its function. This condition can be used precisely to see the existence of the Mangkunagaran-style dance in Mangkunagaran in terms of its function, which is one of its principal functions is to show the existence of Mangkunagaran.

In a firmer understanding, it can be understood that even though the life of social structure and organic life in many respects has many elements in common, there are still differences when looking at the functional side of a system that exists in the life of social structure and organic life. Strictly speaking, social structure can always be seen and understood by referring to the real interaction process where individuals are involved and form social relationships. Therefore, the concept of function is actually related to the contribution made by a partial activity to the whole activity, which becomes the main part of the partial activity.

If you look at the functions of Mangkunagaran-style dance in the custom order of Pura Mangkunagaran, it proves that the Mangkunagaran-style dance has a real contribution. The real contribution here is a tangible



contribution that can be seen to fulfill the need for an important condition for the existence of the whole society that must be fulfilled by social activity. The most important condition, according to Radcliffe-Brown, is the integration of all activities towards the desired goal. Related to the existence of the Mangkunagaran-style dance in the customary arrangement of Pura Mangkunagaran, all activities are carried out in the Pura Mangkunagaran are in a form of joint activity with the same purpose to maintain the existence of the Mangkunagaran-style dance that still exists which is seen from its functional side as a solid support for the existence of Mangkunagaran.

## **CONCLUSION**

Every dance can be analyzed from its textual and contextual aspects. This study attempts to focus the analysis on the non-aesthetic or contextual aspect of the dance from the perspective of social contexts. Using interviews, observation, and study documentation to collect the data, the study's findings found out four important social use or social function of the dance for the Pura Mangkunagaran and wider community involved. There are the functions of social order for integration which is related to how dance is used to unite the intention, and creativity in the sense of togetherness, function of expressions which is related to how Mangkunagaran-style dance used as a means to express cultural feelings of its supporters, function of entertainment which is related to how Mangkunagaran-style dance gives happiness to the audience inside and outside Mangkunagaran community, and the function of psychiatric, aesthetic, and economical which deals with how Mangkunagaran-style dance gives lives to its supporters and how the relations between each section in Pura Mangkunagaran matters. All four social functions are linked one to another and the cohesiveness makes Mangkunagaran-style dance an important part of preserving the culture of Pura Mangkunagaran.

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