

The Creation of “LAKU” Multimedia Dance

Dwiyasmono

Department of Dance, Faculty of Performing Art, Indonesia Institute of the Arts Surakarta

Wahyu Novianto

Department of Theatre, Faculty of Performing Art, Indonesia Institute of the Arts Surakarta

Taufik Murtono

Department of Visual Communication Design, Faculty of Art and Design, Indonesia Institute of the Arts Surakarta

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Abstract

Every dance pattern was a symbol or parable which expressed certain meanings. In traditional dances the meaning expressed was not far from the relationship between humans and other humans, humans and nature, and humans with God. Javanese society believed that happiness in life would be obtained when humans could establish good relations among the three. As Javanese people believed, every human being had the same purpose in life that was to achieve bliss. To achieve bliss, every human being had their own *laku*. Every *laku* was driven by desire; every human being had their own desires, the desire to be in power, the desire to control wealth, and other desires. *Laku* dance creation showed the process that humans underwent in finding a way and living a life with the behavior they chose. Like the process that humans lived in achieving maturity, the journey to the perfection of life was also accompanied by challenges, obstacles, failures, and successes. In *Laku* dance work, the selection of motion was also based on harmony in the Javanese way of life. This work used the basic motions of traditional Javanese dance as described in Serat Wedhataya. This dance was created with a contemporary approach. Motion material used Javanese traditional dance but was juxtaposed with various visual installations and media technology. In this work, the role of multimedia was important. Multimedia was presented in the form of a video mapping that would blend with the dance choreography. The use of multimedia in this dance work, apart from being an expression requirement, was also intended to make this dance work accepted by today's audiences. Multimedia played a role as an intermediary so that traditional arts could stay connected with contemporary variations. In the end, art must be able to become a bridge in unifying differences and reducing gaps. Various artistic choices and media technology in this dance work were also placed on their respective *laku*. Various artistic elements presented were interwoven in one harmony.

Keywords: dance, laku, Java, multimedia

Introduction: “Laku” for the Javanese

Dance as well as other types of arts were manifestations of self-expression. The dancers' bodies moved gently and beautifully, sometimes also fast, even chaotic. The dancer's body language was able to explore without limits. Motion was like a word arranged into a structure of language. Every movement created words and made them sentences. The arrangement of motion was the way to show the contents, or ideas, and the messages to be communicated. Dance pattern was an aesthetic movement. This understanding made dance patterns different from realistic moves. Aesthetic pattern created certain metaphors, different from realistic move based on its special techniques to create it. Therefore, understanding dance patterns did not stop at sensory observation, but also based on the feeling attached to the motion.

Every dance pattern was a symbol or parable which expressed certain meanings. In traditional dances the meaning expressed was not far from the relationship between humans and other humans, humans and nature, and humans with God. Javanese society believed that happiness in life would be obtained when humans could establish good relations among the three. He, who lives in harmony with himself, will be in harmony with his society, and then live in harmony with his God (Mulder, 1984: 13). The harmony of these relationships in the Javanese philosophy was referred to as the vertical-horizontal relationship between the big universe (macrocosm) and the small universe (microcosm). Vertically regulates the relationship between our inner (microcosm) and God and horizontally regulates the relationship between our inner (microcosm) and the universe (macrocosm) (Dharsono, 2007: 30).

As Javanese people believed, every human being had the same purpose in life that was to achieve bliss. To achieve bliss, every human being had their own *laku*. *Laku* was an action or behavior carried out by someone. Related to behavior in Javanese culture, S. Tartono formulated it as followed.

Laku hambeging candra (acting with all the feelings like the moon) means as a human being, we should be able to give a bright and soothing light in the hearts of others. *Laku hambeging dahana* (acting with all feelings

like fire) means that humans must have a straightforward and disciplined attitude based on the established rules in society, like fire without hesitation. But this attitude must be based on common sense, so it is not emotional. *Laku hambeging kartika* (acting with all feelings like a star) means that humans should have a confident attitude, like little stars among other celestial bodies. *Laku hambeging kisma* (acting with all feelings like the ground) means that someone should have feelings of compassion for anyone indiscriminately, like land. *Laku hambeging samirana* (acting with all feelings like the wind) means that a human should be able to place himself wherever he is, or the board. *Laku hambeging samodra* (acting with all feelings like the ocean) means like an ocean, one should have a broad heart, a patient heart, and be forgiving. *Laku hambeging surya* (acting with all feelings like the sun) means that humans should resemble the sun which provides many benefits to humans. *Laku hambeging tirta* (acting with all feelings like water) means that humans should behave like water which is always able to adjust wherever it is, humans should be able to act fairly (2009: 350-353).

These various concepts of behavior in Javanese culture, should be used as guides in living everyday life. Humans had to be able to control their actions, resisted the desires of lust that harm others.

Every *laku* was driven by desire; every human being had their own desires, the desire to be in power, the desire to control wealth, and other desires. When humans could not control their desires, their behavior would be dominated by lust. Humans became blindfolded; no longer cared about the *laku* of others, so there a collision among *lakus*. In a small scale this clash between *laku* occurred between people, but on a large scale it could occur between ethnic groups, races and religions. Various conflicts that occurred in the world today both on a small and large scale were not infrequently caused by collisions among *lakus*. Each person or group spoke in the name of truth, all of them were shouting and attacking each other, all of them were becoming violent; all of them were turning into animals.

In such world conditions, Javanese culture presented a solution. Javanese society emphasized the need for *narima* (following established rules), patience, vigilance (self-awareness), *andhap-asor* (humble), and *prasaja* (*sahaja*) (Mulder, 1984: 13). Javanese believed that they lived in a cultural bond, in which around them there were various other lives both visible and invisible which must also be maintained. For Javanese, this world was seen as a universe with various elements that were in a chaotic position, but could still be in a regular and maintained relationship. The attitude of the Javanese who were resigned, patient, introspective, humble, and unpretentious was what made life even chaotic, but still in a system of order. Each element was in its coordinate behavior, so it would not collide with the behavior of others in other coordinates.

Laku in the Javanese view became interesting to be studied in depth, and then presented in the form of dance performances. Especially now, that the Indonesian people and even the entire world population were rocked by terrorism and other barbaric acts. On this basis the creation of this dance work was initiated. Through this performance, it was expected that the behavior practiced by Javanese people could inspire the world community, so that it could reduce various acts of terrorism, conflict, and friction between *laku* both in small and large scope. Local Javanese wisdom eventually helped the situation. It became a solution for various problems of the Indonesian people and even the world.

The Creation of LAKU Dance

Laku dance creation showed the process that humans underwent in finding a way and living a life with the behavior they chose. Like the process that humans lived in achieving maturity, the journey to the perfection of life was also accompanied by challenges, obstacles, failures, and successes. In *Laku* dance work, it was shown that there were many things that affected the process of the trip. Humans presented emotions, desires, and passion to get something that was not yet owned. When someone was unable to control their emotions, desires, or passion, there would be collisions with other humans. Chaos caused an imbalance in human life which would interfere with the journey of achieving happiness.

The journey of human life was filled with intrigues that must always be controlled. As a way of living life, Javanese spiritual teachings became one of the guides in achieving life harmony. For Javanese mystics, the macrocosm appeared as a paradigm for the microcosm that was human (Mulder, 2001: 27). Javanese were aware that humans were in the macro and micro cosmic circles, so that harmony needed to be sought in every life. Life harmony was also reflected in traditional Javanese dance patterns. In this case Atmadibrata gave the following notes.

Didn't the original dance grow because of the human need to find harmony with the environment, in order to maintain the continuity of his life? Then the dance grew to link itself with supernatural powers that controlled the self and its environment. In Javanese, the concept of harmony is expressed by the word 'laras (harmony, Jv)'. (Brakel: 19).

According to *Wedhataya* the first step that must be performed by a dancer, after standing from a sitting position on the floor called *laras*. Dance had been able to represent human life with symbols of basic dance move about the harmony of life as a human goal.

In *Laku* dance work, the selection of motion was also based on harmony in the Javanese way of life. This

work used the basic motions of traditional Javanese dance as described in Serat Wedhataya (one of the early twentieth-century Javanese manuscripts on dance). Serat Wedhataya implied four main dance styles: *alus*, *branyak*, *bergas*, and *sereng-regu*. The four styles of dance described in the serat were related to four classes of society, namely the Brahmins, Knights, Vaishas, and Shudras in accordance with the teachings of Hindu-Buddhist philosophy of life (Brakel: 23). The essence of Serat Wedhataya had described four categories by mentioning four characteristics taught in the basic motions of Javanese dance. The use of the basic movements of traditional Javanese dance in this dance work is a human effort in achieving harmony in life. All values contained in the Javanese concept of life provided positive energy, so that the control of human behavior could be achieved towards perfection.

Laku, as a contemporary work, was still followed the basic patterns of Javanese dance. The roots of tradition were chosen to maintain and as a trigger for creativity in today's art development efforts. As a contemporary work, *Laku* used symbolic motions by presenting a visual installation. The embodiment of the installation presented was a symbol of the victims of bloody conflict and theoretical actions. Some properties were used as symbols of various weapons used to fight over power, wealth, and women.

The Prologue began with one of the dancers singing the song *Dandanggula* (one of the *Macapat* - a Javanese poem). Here was the poem.

<i>Kawruhana wong urip puniki</i>	Please understand that people who lead lives
<i>Lamun benjang yen wus palastra</i>	If later they die
<i>Wong mati ngendi parane</i>	Dead people will leave
<i>Umpama peksi mabur</i>	Like a flying bird
<i>Mengsah saking kurungan neki</i>	Go to leave the nest
<i>Jiwa ninggal raga</i>	The soul leaves the body
<i>Bali mring ywang agung</i>	Return to the Lord Almighty
<i>Umpama wong lunga sanja</i>	Like someone who travels
<i>Wong lunga wajibe mulih</i>	People who travel have an obligation to go home
<i>Bali ngisor semboja</i>	Go back and lie under the frangipani tree / last berth

The *Dandanggula* above was an advice that people always remembered their origin, that human life was only temporary. Humans would later return to God the owner of life. The ultimate goal of human life was death. Like a flying bird that would always return to its nest. The song was sung by a dancer in a cross-legged position, a position called harmonious in the basic movements of dance. Then proceed with *alus* moves (basic motion of fine dance), this dance was calm, authoritative, and noble (Dwiyasmono, 2008: 193). In this embodiment, humans were represented with conditions that had not been disturbed by desire and passion. The condition of a pure human being with serenity when praying. Then in the course of life, humans began to think and meet with other humans. Influences from outside the human self resulted in the emergence of desire and passion.

The series of dance movements in the prologue showed depictions of people passing by, then squeezed, pressed, and increasingly pressed. This scene showed how humans lived in this world with great difficulty. Humans tried as calmly as they could to lead to the estuary of hope, the perfection of life. In achieving that perfection the Javanese realized that he was not the only creature in the world, but there were also other visible and invisible beings. That reality was not something that was just visible, but there was another reality behind the reality that appeared. Javanese were in the world of the threshold, namely the visible and the invisible world. In that mining position, various practices that were carried out were rational but also irrational.

Enter the first scene, describing human efforts to underwent *laku*. The human effort was full of twists in reaching the goals that were aspired. In this scene the dance move took the form of free symbolic patterns, but still showed the basic patterns of Javanese dance. Humans in living life were filled with winding roads full of conflict and intrigue. All humans went to the same point, namely safety and life balance. Each human took a different path to get to that one point. This was what often made human collisions unavoidable. If each person could live their lives by adjusting themselves (*empan papan*), then the collision could be avoided. *Empan papan* was the attitude of the Javanese that humans must put themselves correctly, according to the place he was at that time (Tartono, 2009: 187). So, when someone could put themselves, the road to goodness and perfection of life could be passed easily. Although there was no smooth road, all obstacles would be resolved. The way humans went through steep paths of life depended on their own attitude and behavior.

In the second scene, there were other interests in undergoing *laku*. Different purpose. Lustful *laku*. The influences that enter the journey of humans produced lust, such as sexual desire. The patterns were arranged from the basic movements of a strong dance, complete with wider leg and hand moves than previous moves. This pattern showed human nature that has lust, portrayed in pair dance patterns, male dancers and female dancers. Their patterns collided with each other, a little intimate with each other, from a calm, intimate condition, then moved slightly fierce. There were sections that used mattress properties, each female dancer danced on the bed. Mattresses became the strongest symbol in showing human sexual desire. Erotic symbols from the bed and

a choreography that showed the intimacy of a human couple depict lust-controlled humans.

Humans were created with passion which was equipped with thoughts. If you could not control them, then your soul and body would be controlled by lust like animals. A balance between lust and thought was needed, so that harmony in life could be realized. Unlike animals that only had lust, without the ability to think like humans. Javanese living were surrounded by norms and ethics, which were arranged into rules. This scene illustrated the paradoxical conditions of life, between good and evil. Human efforts to live life experienced contradictions with their instincts of desire. humans faced the choice between taking good or just choosing the path of evil.

Third scene, *laku* in order to get power. The scene began with the transition scene from the second scene to the third, a male dancer surrounded by other male dancers. A scene that showed a picture of a leader surrounded by his people. The scene continued and was manifested in a team dance pattern property in the form of catapults, as if going to war. Lively dancers welcomed the war in hopes of winning. The patterns that were chosen were strong, full of enthusiasm with wide hand and foot movements. A burning spirit was related to attitudes about human lust that have the desire to gain power. For the sake of power, humans were able to justify all means to achieve it. The authorities felt they had a sharper power to be stabbed to anyone who intended to obstruct. Weak people did not get away from the power of power-hungry people. The desire to hold power did not only occur outside of the human figure as a person, but also occurred between the human body and soul itself. Man who followed the lust for power, would ignore the good around him. In its journey, what happened was conflicts and inequalities among people who had lust for power.

The third scene was a description of Indonesia's social conditions, as well as current world conditions, terrorism was an example. Implicitly, terrorists burnt down people who were considered enemies to gain power and justification for themselves. This was a condition that caused fear and discomfort for the people. As a result, the people's life balance became disrupted because the terrorists prioritized their lust above the public's tranquility.

Furthermore, a scene of several dancers carrying mannequins was illustrated. Then the mannequins were placed in several parts of the stage. The mannequin bodies was rolled up in mats, so that only the red painted part of the legs were visible from the outside. The mats roll on the body of the mannequins was tied with pieces of white cloth. This was the way that Javanese people usually did to corpses. Then rice grains that had been painted red fall from the stage, showering the mannequins standing there. Thus, the mannequin bodies became a visual installation, a symbol of terrorism victims. Victims of conflicts in the name of ethnicity, race, and religion.

The scene ended with a group of dancers using a white mask appearing from the corner of the stage. They staggered, some of them fell, but continued to try to stand up, walking slowly towards one point. They were the ones who were raised from the dead. There was no more clash between *laku*. In fact, every *laku* that humans lived in their lifetime, must ultimately be accounted for before the Almighty. Human's *laku*, whether it was a *laku* when fighting over power, *laku* because of wealth, lustful *laku*, and other *laku* would be counted before Him.

This dance was created with a contemporary approach. Motion material used Javanese traditional dance but is juxtaposed with various visual installations and media technology. In this work, the role of multimedia is important. Multimedia is presented in the form of a video mapping that will blend with the choreography of dance. The video is also projected on the screen that is on the stage so that it becomes the background for each scene that is being displayed. The concept of the video is displayed through two approaches, namely realistic and symbolic. In each scene, the video begins by displaying the reality activities of everyday life, such as people who rush to walk, terrorist attacks, mass conflicts, and so on. Then the video switches to display symbolic images, for example only showing footprints, blood spots, and certain colors in abstract composition.

The use of multimedia in this dance work, apart from being an expression requirement, was also intended to make this dance work accepted by today's audiences. Multimedia played a role as an intermediary so that traditional arts could stay connected with contemporary variations. Today's society was a digital society. This dance work was not intended to change the existing traditional art, but instead tried to fuse traditional art presented in a modern way. In addition, through the presence of media technology, it was also a strategy to disseminate the philosophical values of Javanese culture, so that this work could be accepted by all people without any limitations.

Conclusion

Humans were defined as social beings who would always relate to other humans. For the sake of achieving a safe and harmonious life, the Javanese had the *tepa selira* teachings (tolerance). *Tepa selira* was another Javanese teaching, a tolerant attitude which was one way to overcome differences without chaos. The values of other Javanese teachings such as *empan papan* (being able to put yourself in the right position), *narima* (sincerely accepting what was owned), and *waskita* (wise), also accompany the attitude of tolerance as the teaching of the Javanese. These values could be a solution for the world community today. The condition of diminishing harmony as a result of uncontrolled human passions would be overcome by carrying out Javanese teachings.

Through art, the various teachings of the Javanese life deserved to be spread, not only locally but also globally. This effort would enable the wider community to understand the values contained in the teachings / concepts of Javanese life. Even though they came from various ethnic groups, races, religions, and different areas of residence, the values of Javanese teachings were still able to merge and be lived by anyone and anywhere.

Art must be able to become a bridge in unifying differences and reducing gaps. Various artistic choices and media technology in this dance work were also placed on their respective laku. Various artistic elements presented were interwoven in one harmony. Every laku from one of the artistic elements must not conflict with the laku of other artistic elements. When these laku do not collide, then harmonization, conformity and balance were created. That was life, as the Javanese aspired to. How beautiful life was, when humans could do their laku according to their respective coordinates. Through Javanese teachings, this chaotic world would remain in a system of harmony and constancy.

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