

# Visual Construction of Javanese Tradition in Langendrian Matah Ati Stage Performance

Sri Rachmayanti<sup>1</sup>, Imam Santosa<sup>2</sup>, Acep Iwan Saidi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Fakultas Seni Rupa dan Desain Institut Teknologi Bandung

<sup>1</sup> [srirachmayanti@yahoo.com](mailto:srirachmayanti@yahoo.com), <sup>2</sup> [imamz@fsrd.itb.ac.id](mailto:imamz@fsrd.itb.ac.id), <sup>3</sup> [acepiwansaidi@fsrd.itb.ac.id](mailto:acepiwansaidi@fsrd.itb.ac.id)

**Abstract:** Matah Ati is a traditional art performance, that also adopt newest technology and contemporary touch in their performance. The unique of this traditional value performance, considering of Indonesian tradition conservation. To prepared an attractive performance that has traditional value, and also to create a good stage design were a big challenge. This research is to discuss Javanese tradition visual construction in Langendrian Matah Ati performance. The problem statement of these research is how Javanese tradition construct in their stage design and art performance. This studies is the collaboration of some knowledge field, such as: art performance, stage design, lighting design, costume design, sound system, and special effect. The research using a qualitative method with interdisciplinary approaches by collecting literature data, from theater, art, culture and design. The purpose of this research is being able to identify how Javanese Tradition construct visually, especially in its stage design, also to find how all different knowledge field supported in Langendrian Matah Ati. At the other hand, this research purpose is to show how important of other supporting elements such as lighting, costumes, sound system, and special effect to construct a good performance. In discussing this studies, some theory such as Charles Jencks double coding theory used to analyzed Langendrian Matah Ati performance. The expected outcome of this research is to find and understand the combination of traditional value and modern technology in this performance.

**Keywords:** *Langendrian Matah Ati, visual construction, performance, traditional value*

## Introduction

Visual construction meaning is a series of visual displays that are communicated through the media (media in this studies is art performance). The visual appearance can be read by the sense of sight. Visual construction in performance art is a combination of various kind of art, which can be captured by the five senses. Visual construction in an art performance, arranged in parts by parts known as sequences, divided by scenes of acts. Each scene is arranged sequentially and related with one another becoming whole story intertwined.

Langendrian Matah Ati is a tradition dance performance from Central Java, Surakarta, Solo to be exact. Matah Ati story is taken from the historical story of a King from Mangkunegaran Ist (Raden Mas Said). The story content of his struggle to defend his country, love story when he meet with his wife to be Rubiyah who is Matah Ati. Rubiah's and her female special forces, and so on was played with Central Javanese dance and song accompanied by gamelan music.

Javanese tradition in Langendrian Matah Ati played quite strong in this show which lasts more than two hours. The purpose of this study is to find out how the Javanese Tradition is constructed visually in the Matah Ati performance. Based on the interview results with Mrs. Atilah, as the producer, story writer and director, this show was created also to introduce Indonesian cultural traditions to the young audience. Introducing Central Javanese culture to young audiences who are expected to maintain the tradition and preserve it.

Matah Ati performances can be grouped in traditional performances, because according to Wahyudi (2019) traditional theater categories are: 1) traditional forms of performance art that have been going on for decades – ten or hundreds of years, and passed down from one generation to the next. 2) The multidisciplinary character is quite dominant, not only involving movements with musical accompaniment, but also the pronunciation of dialogue or poetry, as

well as other dramatic expressions, whether based on grip, written play or just improvisation. 3) Rooted in – and cultivated cultural idioms and uses the language of local ethnic groups and is part of the process of citizen solidarity. 4) Related to the values and beliefs of the communities where the performing arts are present and growing. 5) Take place outdoor or in places that are temporary (not inside the buildings or buildings that are specifically designed). 6) Many theatrical traditions from an area depart from oral literature in the form of rhymes, poems, legends, fables, and local folklore.

The show, which is loaded with traditional values, is very unique, because this performance also uses latest technology and using minimalist stage. The combination of technology and minimalist stage according to attract younger audience. Theatre audience as identified by Goenawan Mohammad as overwhelmingly young, educated but not used to reading. They had been brought up in a post literate culture of radio, television and film, influenced in some ways, certainly in its group oriented entertainment habits, by the pre literate aural oral regional cultures of their parents (Hatley, 2009).

There are 2 contradictory things between tradition and contemporary. Two different things can be said having double coding. This study will be analyzed using double coding theory from Charles Jencks. Jencks's double coding theory says that the traditions of the past and the diversity of cultures need to be taken up for freedom to shape the future. Imagination, symbols, fiction and decoration need to be valued and reprocessed (Jencks, 1986).

Discussing about symbols, this paper also uses semiotics theory of C.S. Pierce. The main principles containing Pierce's theory are the human mind and sign boundaries, the three dimensional system triadic/ trichotomy (Yakin, Totu, 2014). The three dimensional system places the mark in trichotomy triangular relations. The trichotomy consists of interpretant (the meaning that is present in the mind of the appreciator), re-presentment (something concrete that represents something else) and object (the reality represented), (Saidi, 2017). The three-dimensional system taxonomies: icon, index and symbol. An icon is a sign that is similar to the object that it represents. Index is a sign that has cause and effect, for example smoke indicates the presence of fire. Sign symbol based on conventions, regulations, agreements.

Jencks discusses the new genre of architecture which he calls post-modern architecture. Postmodern architecture with double coding is that which combines modern techniques with something else (usually traditional buildings) so that architecture is able to communicate with the public who care or with other architectures (Jencks, 1986). Study about architecture closed to interior design, a product of contemporary context—but at the same time a construction that would have been impossible without the past self, the earlier works and interpretative practices (Kagaya, 2018). In *What is Postmodernism*, Jencks said that within the framework of double coding both directions are an attempt to communicate with people and minorities, which in modern times tend to be abandoned. Multiple coding is a communication strategy of popular and elitist signs to achieve different results (Jencks, 1986)

## **Method**

The method used is a qualitative, case study. Langendriyan Matah Ati is placed as a case / object study. As an object of research by focusing on visual construction. The method of collecting data is by observing objects, through documentation, literature from books, and the internet. In addition to literature observation, interviews were also conducted with several informants involved in the Matah Ati show production. Descriptive analysis method, by describing the visual construction seen in the two scenes in Matah Ati

## Results and Discussion

Matah Ati is a performance in the Langendriyan category. Langendriyan itself is a dance-drama form. During the performance the dialogue is sung in the form of Javanese songs (*tembang*). The characters in the langendriyan dialogues with songs. This song can be chanted by the main player alone, can also be chanted more than one person alternately. Langendriyan itself emerged from the Mangkunegaran Palace/ Temple.

The Matah Ati Manuscript tells a little historical story from Raden Mas Said who is first Mangkunegara King from Surakarta. Starting from the journey of Raden Mas Said found his love, his struggle against Dutch colonialism was supported by Rubiyah (Matah Ati) with her female army troops and the story ended with the great marriage of Raden Mas Said to Rubiyah.

Visual construction in Langendriyan Matah Ati, is everything that is seen in every frame of the scene. Visual construction is formed from the emergence of many elements of art. These art elements include; dance, music, dialogue sung, player costumes, lighting colors, and so on. Matah Ati performances are technically assisted with special effects such as smoke effects, flight effects, lighting effects and so on. An artwork is good or bad depending on whether it can fulfil its purpose (Zahradka, 2020). One purpose of this performance is to show traditional culture in contemporary way so younger audience accommodated.

Performing with special effects, designed to help stimulate the audience's visual sensations. Special effects visual sensation can activates cells in the ear. Light from the lighting effect activates eye cells, as well as sounds from musical instruments and when messages from the five senses have reached the brain, the brain will interpret the sound and light. Visual perception is a conclusion made by combining all information collected by our five senses (Azif, 2017).

Matah Ati is divided into 17 scenes. This studies discussion only limited 2 scenes taken from Matah Ati. The first is the puppet scene (scene 10) and the second is the scene of the great marriage of Raden Mas Said with Rubiyah (scene 16). The reason for taking these two scenes is because they were best represent Javanese cultural traditions.



Figure 1. Wayang

This puppet scene begins with several people entering from the right and left of the stage. Then from the top down like a big horn with many legs in the middle of the puppet area. Some puppeteers hold puppets, the people as spectators arrive, the puppeteers come in carrying two mountains. Then the horn is raised, a thin curtain clings to the horn. From the back of the curtain highlighted by the lights, there is a picture of a puppet like silhouette from a puppet played by the puppeteer on the front of the screen. While the puppet scene in the back takes

place, there are male folk dancing, female folk sleeping on the stage, and one woman looking different. She is Matah Ati, she looks more radiant than other women. Prince Samber Nyowo who also watched the puppet, then covered the woman in his headband. Furthermore, the cast of Matah Ati was left on the stage alone, in the background of the wayang scene, the wayang continued to cuddle between male and female puppets. Before the scene ended, the cast of Matah Ati performed, hugging the headband left by Prince Samber Nyowo.



Figure 2. Wedding Procession

Scene 16, is the scene of the grand wedding of Prince Samber Nyowo and Rubiah. Beginning with several people preparing to install silver-colored *Janur* (as many as 6 pieces on the right and left). The lighting creates a silhouette effect with purple and yellow lighting.

The bride and groom came accompanied by female troops in red uniforms, the troops then entered. Followed by a stretcher symbol of fertility symbol: phallus and yoni carried by each of the 8 people's warriors. A large banner of the Mangkunegara royal emblem, bearing the 'M' logo, follows behind the stretcher. Next the stretcher was carried to the left and right sides of the stage, the procession of female dancers dressed in red, reentering the stage. There is a wedding dress down from above, and carried by 2 dancers into the tilted stage. Prince Samber Nyowo and Rubiyah's came out of the stage. Both of them dressed in *dodotan* traditional Javanese style brides costume, while in the back of the palace commander stood in a row with 7 tall spears in one hand.

Wedding blessing doing by Samber Nyowo's mother, she gave a robe to the bride who walked slowly forward with a red robe on the back. Red soldier, do the squat while carrying arrows, go down and enter the stage one by one. Rubiyah worshiped the Prince, all the other players slowly entered the stage through the right and left sides.

Analysis of the visual construction of the Javanese tradition in the two scenes above, will be divided based on the same points.

No	Visual Object	Wayang scene	Wedding scene
1	Costume and Accessories	Javanese tradition clothes	Javanese tradition clothes
2	Gamelan/ Music	Gamelan	Gamelan
3	Story and dialog	<i>Tembang</i> Javanese song	<i>Tembang</i> Javanese song
4	Symbol		Mangkunegaran Palace Logos. Lingga – Yoni symbols, spears.
5	Icon	Wayang puppet	Bride and Groom
6	Index	Prince headband	Wedding dress from above.
7	Lighting	Purple and blue color as night symbol	White & Red color, bright and fresh
8	Special effect	Horn down from above, Projector in wayang puppets show	Wedding dress from above.

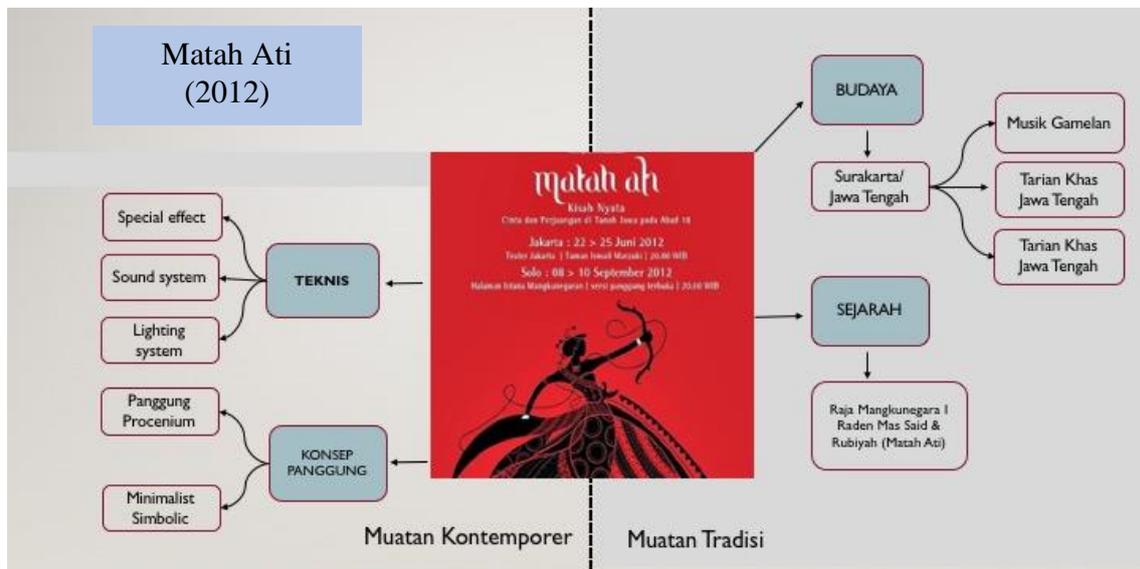


Figure 3. Javanese tradition and contemporary items in Matah Ati

Matah Ati have tradition and contemporary items. Contemporary items are in stage design and technical area in applied of special effect, sound system, lighting system. Traditional items are in the content. Javanese Surakarta culture applied in dialog, song, instrument and costumes. The story of Matah Ati was historical of the first prince from Mangkunegaran – Surakarta.

**Conclusion**

Visual construction in the Matah Ati performance is a combination of various arts, among others: dance, drama, graphic arts, music (gamelan), sound art, fashion design, stage art and so on. More specifically the traditional Javanese visual construction in the Matah Ati langendriyan can be described in two large groups, namely those which are loaded with tradition and those that are contemporary

The visual construction with Javanese tradition from the grand wedding scene of Raden Mas Said and Rubiah is: Costumes: typical of Javanese tradition seen in wedding dresses, as well as

other players' clothes. Music: Javanese gamelan with accents of modern musical instruments such as violin, trumpet. Dialogue sung in Javanese. The use of the symbol of the kingdom of Mangkunegara. Lingga-Yoni's fertility symbol and the spear symbol carried by the 7 knights. The wedding dress that came down from above symbolized the match made from above, from God. Brightly colored lighting game for the majestic scene of the king's grand wedding.

Visual construction with Javanese tradition from the Wayang kulit scene is: Costumes: typical of Javanese traditions seen in the clothes of the players. Music: Javanese gamelan with accents of modern music instruments. Dialogue sung in Javanese. The use of shadow puppet forms which is a Javanese tradition. Headband that was entrusted, a symbol of love entrusted to Matah Ati. Special effects horns are lowered from the top using a wire sling, the projector that highlights the puppet play from backstage. Purple and yellow lighting games symbolize the atmosphere of the night.

Visual construction with Javanese tradition in the whole Langendriyan Matah Ati performance arranged with various elements of art. In addition to elements of Javanese tradition, the use of contemporary technology is also found in the form of stage, lighting arrangement, sound system, proscenium stage form, special effects. In the Matah Ati show, it is proven to have double coding, that the traditions of the past and the diversity of cultures need to be taken up for freedom to shape the future.

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