

# Jathilan Deconstruction to Face the Modern Age

Dr. Kuswarsantyo, M. Hum.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Yogyakarta State University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia*

*\*Corresponding author. Email: kuswarsantyo@uny.ac.id*

## ABSTRACT

Society's understanding of Jathilan art has not shifted from the roots of tradition. However, the fact nowadays is that Jathilan has developed rapidly with various types and styles of presentation and orientation. The diversity of the types of Jathilan created has the aim to provide attraction, so that the Millennial generation remains interested in traditional art, even though the choreography has been developed. The method used to provide an understanding of Derrida's deconstruction theory provides more opportunities for the development of art. Second, the atmosphere of the dance work that arouses from the Jathilan Gaul form emphasized the importance of innovation in art. These two theories were used as a means of proving whether the phenomenon of the deconstruction of the creation of Jathilan art can be accepted by society today, especially the millennial generation. The result of the concept of cultural deconstruction is the creation of several forms of innovative work in the world of Jathilan art. First, Jathilan Gaul arises because of the demands of the times. Secondly, it is due to the artist's anxiety over the stagnation of traditional art. Third, it is regarded as an effort to preserve the traditional arts of Jathilan; it is necessary to have alternative performances that are relevant to the time. Thus, the greater recognition of the Jathilan arts by the wider community will automatically realize the regeneration of Jathilan dancers in the future and motivate the rise of new forms of choreography that are more dynamic and varied.

**Keyword:** *jathilan, traditional arts, choreography, cultural deconstruction*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Along with the increasingly advanced era, the demands for being very varied in creating art performance are in place. The efforts to create innovative works relevant to the current development should be done without eliminating the traditional values in the art performance. Jathilan (a traditional Javanese dance depicting a group of horsemen) is one of the art performances that develop very rapidly. However, it experiences both deconstruction and desacralization in the aspect of the presentation. This arises because Jathilan are now performed in various ways. There are innovations in terms of choreography, themes, artistic values, music, and costumes.

Using the deconstruction theory proposed by Derrida, Jathilan is widely opened to be developed now. This theory is supported by Sal Murgiyanto. In his book, he explains that art performance is possible to be used as a means of cultural preservation. This needs to be understood well so that the concept of developing the art performance based on the deconstruction theory is considered accountable for Jathilan community and the public in general. □

In relation to the stated problems, other phenomena show that the globalization issues have made boundaries across the world disappear. The chance of introducing western art performance to the developing countries is more prominent in several traditional arts, one of which is Jathilan.

Then, there comes a question related to the local culture and its product in Indonesia in this globalization era. Evidence shows that cultural interaction is more intensifying. Thus, if it is not wisely controlled, there will be threats to cultural heritage. For this reason, strong cultural resilience is needed

[1]. Because work innovation based on traditional art is a necessity to answer the challenges in globalization, this study tries to investigate the deconstruction process existing in Jathilan traditional work so that this kind of art can be accepted by the millennial generation.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEWS

### 2.1 THE ART OF JATHILAN

Jathilan is a simple folk art popular in Indonesia. To perform Jathilan, kuda kepang (a horse made from woven bamboo) is used to perform simple and repetitive dances as well as the most awaited choreography in Jathilan, ndadi (a situation in which the dancers are put into a trance). In the aspects of theme and story, many versions are adopted by Jathilan communities in Indonesia. One of the many versions that mostly adopted is the popular story called Panji. Pigeaud (1934: 312) states that Jathilan is closely related to Panji story at the moment, so two Punokawan (Phanakavhan-the clown servants of the hero in Javanese mythology) figures are the characteristics of a Jathilan performance. Those Punokawan characters are Bancak and Doyok. They are the Kinasih Panji servants. When a Jathilan community does not put Panji character in a performance, these two Punokawan characters will always be in place taking the Penthul and Tembem (Bejer) names. This means that those characters are very important because beside being servants they fight in a war.

Semiotically, the two Punokawan characters in black and white masks are the symbols of the good (white) and bad (black). Therefore, Jathilan performance should not misplace both characters. Penthul wears a white mask and is on the good side, while Tembem (Bejer) wears the black mask and is the antagonist and furious character. □

Another version of Jathilan takes the historical setting. For example, the Majapahit story which takes place in Mount Bromo (shown by properties used during the performance). It is possible that Jathilan was created to entertain the exhausted and hungry warriors in remote villages. This dance was probably performed at a party after the warriors hunted for animals. Then, after they returned from the battlefield, they longed for entertainment. This performance was then created and presented in a residential area (Prakosa, 2006: 78-82). □ Besides the stated theme, the music used in the performance really determines the expression in Jathilan dance. Although Jathilan relies on traditional instruments, such as bendhe, kecer, kendhang and angklung, it attracts so many audiences. As for makeup and costumes, they tend to be natural but still show the sacred impressions especially when performed in an events, such as Merti Desa (a village ceremony). This is what makes Jathilan very popular for lower and higher class people and even for people abroad.

## **2.2 DERRIDA'S DECONSTRUCTION THEORY**

Various versions of Jathilan develops along with its popularity. It is none other than the effect of globalization in Indonesia. Using the deconstruction theory, this paper reveals how deconstruction in Jathilan takes place and adds more creation of Jathilan versions.

The main idea of Derrida deconstruction theory is the strategy in reading literary texts. They involve (1) difference, (2) traction, (3) supplementation, (4) text, (5) iterability, (6) absence of decisions, and (7) dissemination. As a reading strategy, deconstruction is based on the basic assumption that language is labeled with instability. There is no method to interpret a text completely and no limitless in possibilities from the texts. The least pattern of deconstruction stages is (1) reconstruction, (2) deconstruction, and (3) reinscription. Possible results of reading deconstruction can be either (1) invention, (2) "other", or (3) deconstructing text itself. □

Having analogous with literature, Jathilan mentioned here is a complete performance. The performance is then presented in a new text with a different presentation. To analyze the deconstruction process, the following procedures need to be well implemented. □

- 2.2.1 The idea of deconstruction is that every text has exclusion points and undecidability which betray any stability of meaning that might be intended by the author in the text created.
- 2.2.2 The process of writing always reveals previously muted things, conceals those expressed, and more generally breaks through oppositions that are thought to be sustainable. This is why Derrida's "philosophy" is so based on the text, and why the key terms always change. It always depends on who or what to deconstruct. Thus, the point of circumvention is always in different places. This is

intended to make sure that each effort to explain what deconstruction is should be carried out carefully (Derrida, 1954:21).

However, there is a paradox in the effort to limit the deconstruction in a comprehensive meaning. Deconstruction is based on the desire to expose a new artwork in order to open up to various alternative chances. The characteristic of deconstructive reading, which in the subsequent process makes it very philosophically charged, is that the elements that it traces to dismantle are not merely logical inconsistencies, weak arguments, or inaccurate premises contained in the text similar to that of modernism thought usually presented.

The new Jathilan performance namely Jathilan Gaul should become the material object that needs to be observed comprehensively as the results of deconstructive thinking carried out by the choreographer. Thus, in the deconstruction method or specifically deconstructive reading, philosophy is in a piece of writing so that it never be in the form of explicit expression of thought. Every thought needs to be expressed in symbols with material characters either in graphs or sounds. The system is not always implemented for the sake of philosophical purposes. □

The stages for conducting deconstruction research by Barthes (1983) are presented below. □

- 2.2.3 Base all elements (structure) contained in the text and put all these elements in the same position.
- 2.2.4 The elements that have been understood are associated with other elements to find out whether these elements are interrelated (correlation X and Y) □

Jathilan is understood not only through structure but also through codes outside the texts. In relation to this, watching a Jathilan performance is a paradox activity. This means that the audiences may recreate something from what they see to make it more popular. Roland Barthes (Pradopo, 1991:78) argues that literary texts have a double meaning. In his essay entitled "The Pleasure of the Text", Barthes defines pleasure as bliss. □

According to Derrida in Culler (1981: 90), deconstructing an opposition is reversing a hierarchy. However, this only in the first step since in the next step, the reversal should cover the whole system in which the opposition takes part.

## **3. DISCUSSION**

### **DECONSTRUCTION PROCESS: TRADITIONAL JATHILAN TURNS INTO JATHILAN GAUL □**

Jathilan Gaul is a new format of Jathilan. This new format emphasizes on the innovation for making people more interested. Jathilan Gaul performs a simple concept with five dancers and one tamer (the representation of Penthul/Punokawan) or servant. Moreover, it focuses on soldiers like a presentation in which the substantial is presenting Rampokan Wayang Kulit (Marching Army in Shadow Puppet show). This performance is created by Satriya Ayodya (an alumnus of Yogyakarta Indonesian Institute of Arts) □

The composition of space and motion is very much different from those of traditional Jathilan, especially in music. Jathilan Gaul uses Hip Hop and Rap vocals. There is no

ndadi performance since it is relatively short, performed for only six minutes.

There are four principles of deconstruction of the traditional Jathilan dance and Jathilan Gaul. First, there exists a cultural adaptation of the situation in which Jathilan Gaul is created and performed. Second, creative ideas coming up during the creation can be clearly seen by all parties, both dancers and audience. Third, the millennial generation is motivated to be trained to become Jathilan dancers since Jathilan Gaul has left the standards of Jathilan as performed in many regions in Indonesia.

In the process of deconstructing Jathilan, there is an emerging element of creativity. These innovative ideas are the factors determining how the deconstruction process takes place. In relation to the innovation process, Robertson in Nugroho (2003: 395) explains that one of the forms of motivation is recreating a product, not creating a new product. The innovation does not affect the established behavioral patterns because Jathilan that was once a simple performance remains the same. It can be seen from the establishment of Jathilan Gaul which is no longer simple in terms of choreography.

The process of cultural adaptation carried out by a choreographer aims to break the old standard and turn it into a new one in terms of movement, music, and costume. Although there are much adjustment and adaptation, the spirit of Jathilan is retained by instilling macapat along with hip hop songs. The jathil movement also remains although it is performed in a different way in order to emphasize that the performance is adopted from the popular traditional Jathilan. Below is the chart presenting the deconstruction process of traditional Jathilan into Jathilan Gaul.

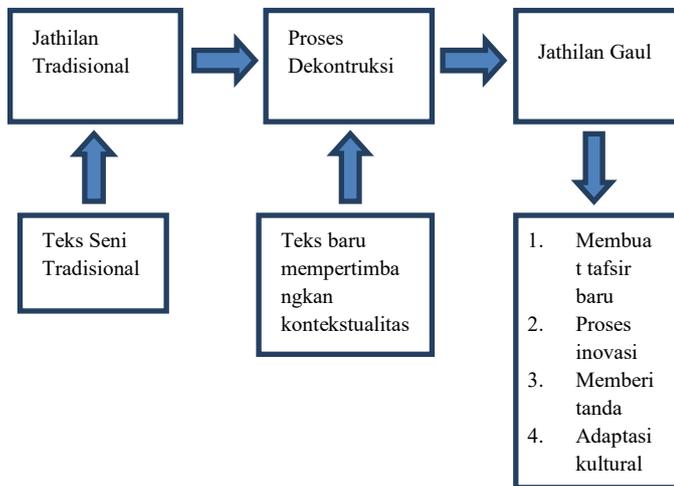


Figure 1. The Deconstruction Process of Traditional Jathilan into Jathilan Gaul

- Jathilan Tradisional= Traditional Jathilan
- Proses dekontruksi= Deconstruction Process
- Teks Seni Tradisional= Traditional Art Texts
- Teks baru mempertimbangkan kontekstualitas= New texts based on the contexts
- Membuat tafsir baru= Making a interpretation
- Proses inovasi= innovation process
- Memberi tanda=marking
- Adaptasi kultural= Cultural adaptitation

The process on how deconstruction affects the Jathilan in the aspects of visual, movement, costume, and music.

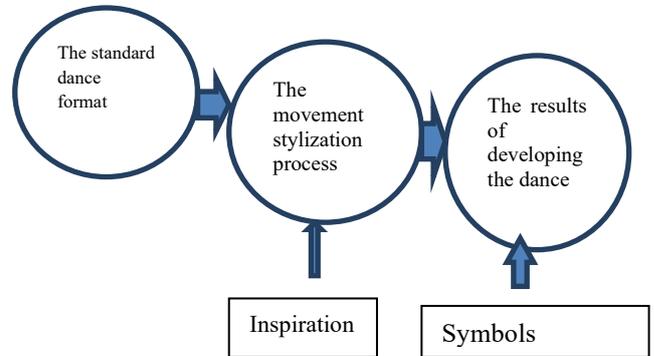


Figure 2. The deconstruction process affecting the dance format, costume design, and music



Figure 2. Basic Jathilan dance

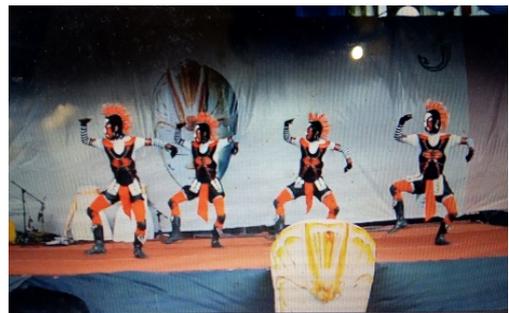


Figure 3. The modern Jathilan dance



Figure 5. The comparison of traditional Jathilan and Jathilan Gaul



Figure 4. The deconstruction of traditional Jathilan into the modern and innovative dance movement

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The results of the deconstruction process of the Jathilan are very clear that the establishment of this traditional art is undeniable. Traditional art can develop dynamically with the times. This is what must be put forward to maintain the existence of traditional art in the midst of globalization. However, there is a need to refer to the Jathilan communities

since these young choreographers should create a product that can be accepted by the public. □

Regardless the results of this study, Jathilan will develop and be sustainable. Whatever the forms of Jathilan are, this artwork should always refer to the concept of harmony in Javanese “jumbuh antaraning wirama, wiraga, wirasa, lan caritane”.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and difference*. University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- [2] Haryono, Timbul, 2008. *Seni Pertunjukan dalam dimensi Ruang dan Waktu [Performing Arts in the dimension of Space and Time]*. Yogyakarta : ISI Surakarta
- [3] Khadavi, M. Jadid. "Dekonstruksi musik pop Indonesia dalam perspektif industri budaya [Deconstruction of Indonesian Pop Music in the Culture Industry Perspective].." *Jurnal Humanity* 9.2 (2015). <http://ejournal.umm.ac.id/index.php/humanity/article/view/2392>
- [4] Kuswarsantyo, 2014. *Perkembangan Kesenian Jathilan DIY di Era Industri Pariwisata [The Development of DIY's Jathilan in the Era of the Tourism Industry]*. Yogyakarta: Disertasi UGM
- [5] Ungkang, Marcelus. "Dekonstruksi Jaques Derrida sebagai strategi pembacaan teks sastra [Jaques Derrida's Deconstruction as a Literature Text Reading Strategy]." *Jurnal Pendidikan Humaniora* 1.1 (2013): 30-37 <http://journal.um.ac.id/index.php/jph/article/view/3919>