

The Symbolic Meaning of *Beksan Manunggal Jati* Akademi Komunitas Negeri Seni dan Budaya Yogyakarta

Yosef Adityanto Aji¹

Program Studi Teater Musikal, Fakultas Seni Pertunjukan
Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta

Wisnu Dermawan²

Program Studi Seni Tari
Akademi Komunitas Negeri Seni dan Budaya Yogyakarta

Abstract

Beksan Manunggal Jati is inspired by the idea of uniting the Yogyakarta Sultanate and the Pakualaman Temple. Yogyakarta court dance features several distinct forms. Beksan Manunggal Jati is a group dance performed by seven male dancers, with the concept of bedhayan as the foundation of the work. The unification of the Yogyakarta Sultanate and the Pura Pakualaman within the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY) reflects the spirit of unity and nationalism of these two traditional kingdoms in supporting Indonesia's independence. Contextually, the choreographic aspects of the Manunggal Jati beksan performance convey meaning, symbolic value, and philosophical insights into the spirituality and noble teachings of life embodied in the emblem of Akademi Komunitas Negeri Seni dan Budaya Yogyakarta. This Beksan adapts some of the essential concepts of Yogyakarta-style bedhaya and introduces new movement idioms into its presentation. The contextual characteristics of bedhaya dance are found in the meanings contained within the movements, floor patterns, costumes, songs or sekar (characters) in the accompaniment, and the means by which the narrative is conveyed.

Keyword: Beksan Manunggal Jati, Yogyakarta court dance, symbolic meaning

Introduction

Dance is essentially a medium of communication between members of a community or with other community groups, so it can also be likened to a language.³ In this case, the choreographer or dance composition team (sender) will send a communication message in the form of a dance composition to the audience (receiver) in the hope that the audience will receive, understand, and analyze its intent and meaning. Dance or *djoged* is understood as the movement of all parts of the body, in conjunction with the sound of the *gamelan* (Javanese musical instrument),

arranged according to the rhythm of the music or *gendhing*, the suitability of expression to the meaning of the dance being performed.⁴ The definition above contains three concepts: movement, musical accompaniment or *gendhing*, and the delivery of expression. These three concepts in Javanese dance are known as *wiraga*, *wirama*, and *wirasa*. *Beksan Manunggal Jati's* work is the embodiment of the expression of the concept of Javanese dance which contains elements of the principles of *djoged*.

In the Yogyakarta style of classical dance, there are several different forms of

¹ Alamat Korespondensi: Jalan parangtritis Km. 6.5 Sewon, Bantul, Yogyakarta 55188. Tlp. 081229020000, E-mail: adityanto.aji@isi.ac.id

³ Sumaryono. 2017. *Antropologi Tari dalam Perspektif Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: Media Kreativa. p. 32.

⁴ Y. Sumandiyo H. 2013. *Tari Klasik Gaya Yogyakarta, Legitimasi Warisan Budaya*. Yogyakarta: Lembah Manah. p. 16.

dance performances. When viewed from the perspective of the text of the formation, the various forms of classical dance performances in the Yogyakarta style include *Beksan Tunggal* (danced by 1 dancer), *Beksan Pethilan* (danced by 2 dancers), *Beksan Sekawanan* (danced by 4 dancers), *Serimpi* (danced by 4 dancers), and *Bedhaya* (generally danced by 9 dancers). The term *beksan* is used to refer to a dance in Javanese classical dance.¹ The word *beksan* according to the definition of KBBI means traditional Javanese dance. *Beksan* comes from the root word "beksa," meaning dance.² *Beksan Manunggal Jati* is a group dance performed by seven male dancers, with the concept of "bedhayan" as the foundation of the work.

Quoting the opinion expressed by Y. Sumandiyo Hadi, that dance as a visual art, from the beginning of the dance until it is finished, consists of a series of movements, both stationary movements, locomotor movements, and stillness or posing for a moment without moving.³ In general, the movement motifs in Yogyakarta-style *wayang wong* are not different from the movement motifs used in Yogyakarta-style *beksan*. Therefore, in categorizing the movement motifs of *Beksan Manunggal Jati*, they are divided into locomotor movements and stationary movements. By using the variety of movements of the *Putera Gagah* dance, the emergence of new movement varieties in *Beksan Manunggal Jati* is the result of recontextualization that departs from efforts to revitalize the varieties of past works that are presented in new forms that are in accordance with the developments of the times but without losing the spirit of tradition.⁴

Beksan Manunggal Jati is derived from the idea of the unification of the Yogyakarta Sultanate and the Pakualaman Palace in Yogyakarta. *Manunggal* comes from the

Javanese language and means "to unite" or "to unite." The term is often used in contexts that indicate unity, oneness, or integration of several elements into a unified whole. In everyday usage, *manunggal* can refer to the unity of individuals and society, spiritual unity, and political or social unity. Overall, *manunggal* emphasizes the concept of unity or harmonious union between various elements that were previously separate or different. The word *jati* in a more philosophical or abstract context, "*jati*" can mean "identity" or "essence." This term is used to refer to the true core or essence of something, for example, "*jati diri orang*" means the identity or fundamental characteristics that distinguish a person from others. Meanwhile, the word *Jati* in Javanese culture can refer to the concept of "*jati diri*" which is often associated with understanding oneself and the purpose of life. This includes a deep understanding of who a person is and what is their purpose or role in life. The idea ~~and~~ ~~concept~~ of uniting the Yogyakarta Sultanate and the Pakualaman Palace in Yogyakarta was taken into consideration by considering the long and important historical events in the context of Javanese history, especially in the formation and management of the Yogyakarta Special Region (DIY) in Indonesia. The unification of the Yogyakarta Sultanate and the Pakualaman Palace in DIY reflects the spirit of unity and nationalism of these two traditional kingdoms in supporting the establishment of Indonesia as an independent nation. To this day, the Special Region of Yogyakarta remains a well-established region, with the Sultan of Yogyakarta and the Duke of Pakualaman serving as constitutionally recognized regional leaders, symbolizing the continuity of tradition and modernity in Indonesia. This unity between the Yogyakarta Sultanate and the Pakualaman Temple serves as a powerful symbol of commitment to the integrity and unity of the

¹ Dikutip dari web: <https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/>

² Sudarmanto. 2012. *Kamus Lengkap Bahasa Jawa (Jawa-Indonesia, Indonesia-Jawa)*. Semarang: Widya Karya.

³ Y. Sumandiyo Hadi. 2003. *Aspek-Aspek Dasar Koreografi Kelompok*. Yogyakarta: Lembaga Kajian Pendidikan dan Humaniora Indonesia. P. 36.

⁴ Kuswarsantyo, 2023, "Intermedialitas dan Makna *Beksan Ajisaka* Karya Sri Sultan Hamengku Bawono Ka-10" disampaikan dalam Naskah Pidato Pengukuhan Guru Besar Bidang Ilmu Pengkajian Seni Tari di Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta pada 26 Agustus 2023. p. 17.

Republic of Indonesia, as well as respect for Yogyakarta's unique cultural and historical heritage.



Beksan Manunggal Jati was performed at the senate session during the graduation ceremony of the Yogyakarta State Arts and Culture Academy at the Widya Budaya Hall on September 5, 2024.

(Documentation: Y. Adityanto Aji, 2024)

Form is defined as the result of various dance elements: movement, space, and time, which collectively achieve aesthetic vitality.¹ Presentation, in the context of dance, is defined as the form present in the performance of a dance work, consisting of elements of choreography, floor design, musical design, dramatic design, dynamics, theme, movement, and supporting elements: costumes, props, and the performance space (stage space).²

A dance performance space is the place where dance performances take place. This space is designed to allow dancers to perform before an audience, taking into account several important elements such as lighting, sound, and stage design. Stages are typically designed with a flat, hard surface to support a variety of dance movements. The stage for the *Beksan Manunggal Jati* performance is located in the *Pendapa* (traditional hall). A *Pendapa* is a traditional building or open space often used for dance performances, particularly in Javanese and Balinese culture in Indonesia. It is an important part of traditional Indonesian architecture and shares several characteristics.

¹ Y. Sumandiyo Hadi. 2007, *Kajian Tari Teks dan Konteks*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Book Publisher.p. 21-23.

The structure of a *Pendapa* is typically an open building without walls, supported by wooden pillars, and roofed with tiles or palm fiber. The roof often has a pyramid-shaped roof or *joglo* shape, which are characteristic of traditional Javanese architecture. The *Pendapa* is not only a performance venue, but also an important symbol of Indonesian culture and tradition, depicting simplicity, beauty, and connectedness to nature and society.



Pendapa Widya Budaya Akademi Komunitas Negeri Seni dan Budaya Yogyakarta

(Documentation: Y. Adityanto Aji, 2025)

The *Beksan Manunggal Jati* performance was performed at the Widya Budaya Hall of Akademi Komunitas Negeri Seni dan Budaya Yogyakarta, showcasing a classical Yogyakarta-style dance performance. Generally, the structure of classical Yogyakarta-style dance is highly structured and follows traditional patterns that have been passed down through generations. This performance involves several stages designed to transport the audience through a meaningful experience, both aesthetically and spiritually. The *Beksan Manunggal Jati* performance structure can be divided into three parts: *majeng beksa*, *inti beksa*, and *mundur beksa*. These three parts of the *beksan* structure represent each part of the vision, mission, symbol, and philosophy of Akademi Komunitas Negeri Seni dan Budaya Yogyakarta. The *Beksan Manunggal Jati* dance presentation structure reflects the depth of tradition, aesthetics, and spirituality that have become an integral part of Yogyakarta court culture. Each stage of the performance has its own function and meaning, which when combined create a rich and captivating dance experience.

² La Meri. 1986. *Elemen-Elemen Dasar Komposisi Tari*. Terj. Soedarsono. Yogyakarta: Lagaligo. p.p.19-110

Discussion

Charles Sander Peirce was one of the pioneers of pragmatism, writing in his book, *The*

Type of sign	The relationship between signs and reference source	Example
Icon	Signs designed to appeal to the five senses	- Dance movements - Costume and Make Up - Dance music
Index	A sign designed to indicate a source of reference or cause and effect	A combination of classical male dance from the Yogyakarta Sultanate style and the Yogyakarta Pakualaman Temple style at <i>Beksan Manunggal Jati</i> .
Symbol	Signs are designed through agreement	The choreography theme is a symbol that is used as a basis for the dancers.

Structure of the Sign Nation. According to Peirce, the study of semiotics is based on logic, studying how people reason. According to Peirce, reasoning is carried out through signs and signifiers (Charles Sander Peirce: 1839-1914). For Peirce, signs and meaning are not structures but rather processes oriented toward the ability to think, including intellectual abilities and problem-solving. According to him, humans are creatures constantly searching for meaning, which ultimately becomes a sign for themselves. Peirce defined this process as semiosis. Thus, this theory can open up and bridge the meaning of the sign system visualized through the meaning of the characters and the symbolization of the various movements in *Beksan Manunggal Jati*.

According to Peirce, semiosis is analyzed through three stages. The first is the absorption of the representational aspect of a sign through the five senses; the second is spontaneously linking it to the experiences and conditions of the person who interprets the representament (object); and the third stage is interpreting the object according to one's desires (interpretant). The meaning of a sign through representament and object is based on the idea that the object does not always correspond to the reality conveyed by the representament. Objects emerge from experiences that give meaning to signs. By collecting icons that become signs designed to

represent reference sources through simulation or similarity, meaning that reference sources can be seen, heard, and so on in various icons. This creates an index that connects references to facilitate grouping until a symbol is found that is agreed upon, thus giving birth to an interpretive meaning in understanding something that is a problem.

Obtaining symbolic meaning according to Peirce's theory involves searching for the icons in *Beksan Manunggal Jati*, including dance movements, dance music, floor patterns, and costumes. By viewing *Beksan Manunggal Jati* as a text, the search for the indexes in this *beksan* involves sorting or categorizing the icons found into specific indications. After categorization, interpretation is then carried out to find the symbolic meaning. Interpretation is carried out by examining the relationship between the existing indexes and the social conditions that occur in society.

Peirce used a system of identifying icons, indices, and symbols. This system is the essence of analysis, which seeks to discover the symbolic meaning of a research object. After analyzing each icon, index, and symbol, an interpretation of the symbolic meaning of *Beksan Manunggal Jati* can be found.

Contextually, the choreographic aspects of the *Manunggal Jati beksan* performance contain meaning, symbolic value, and philosophy about spirituality and the noble teachings of life contained in the symbol of Akademi Komunitas Negeri Seni dan Budaya Yogyakarta. This symbol contains several meanings, namely; a pair of wings symbolizes high ideals to be achieved. The *pakeliran* lamp or *bencong wayang purwa* where in the world of puppetry is the only source of light that gives light, just as the sun illuminates the universe or world. The *Golong Gilig* Monument, a hallmark of Yogyakarta, symbolizes the unity of the people and the God. Furthermore, there is the *Surya Sengkala (Sengkalan Lamba): Kartaning Janma Luhuring Panembah*, meaning that all human endeavors and works

have only one goal: to increase faith and devotion to the One Almighty God.¹

The foundation of *Beksan Manunggal Jati*'s work is the development of classical dance styles from the Yogyakarta Sultanate and the Pakualaman Palace in Yogyakarta. Classical dance from the Yogyakarta Sultanate has distinctive principles and is imbued with Javanese cultural values and philosophy. These principles reflect the refinement, elegance, and solemnity in every dance movement, as well as the influence of palace culture. The following are some of the main principles in classical dance from the Yogyakarta Sultanate: *Sawiji*, *Greget*, *Sungguh*, and *Ora Mingkuh*. These principles encompass four important aspects: *Sawiji*, meaning complete concentration and mindfulness in dancing. Dancers must focus and immerse themselves in the dance movements. "*Greget*" refers to the passion and strength within. Although the movements appear soft and smooth, there is a powerful energy within each one. "*Sungguh*" refers to self-confidence, yet humility. Dancers must perform with confidence without being arrogant. "*Ora Mingkuh*" refers to never giving up and remaining consistent in the movements and dance performance until the end.

Beksan Manunggal Jati adapted several essential concepts from the Yogyakarta-style *bedhaya* and introduced new movement idioms into its presentation. The contextual characteristics of *bedhaya* dance are found in the meanings contained within the movements, floor patterns, costumes, and the accompanying songs or *sekar*, which also serve as a means of conveying the narrative. Furthermore, *bedhaya* dance falls into the category of dramatic dance, which does not feature specific and striking characterizations. The characters featured are purely symbolic, lacking specific attire and characterization. As in *Beksan Manunggal Jati*, there are no specific characters, but the composition features two dancers as symbols of the strength and power of two palaces: the

Yogyakarta Sultanate and the Pakualaman Palace in the Special Region of Yogyakarta.

Every movement in classical Yogyakarta dance has deep symbolic meaning. For example, hand gestures, footwork, and facial expressions can depict spiritual values, moral teachings, or specific stories from Javanese tradition. The main movements used in *Beksan Manunggal Jati* are the *kambeng* and *kinantang* movements. *Kambeng* is characterized by strong, balanced, firm, steady, and grounded movements. *Kinantang*, on the other hand, is characterized by firm, jerky movements with a moderate (normal) tone, strong but not excessive. These two movements are combined into a complex whole, creating new nuances and characters.

The adaptation of the essence of *bedhaya* to the concept of *bedhayan Beksan Manunggal Jati* is also manifested in the makeup and costumes. The costumes worn by the dancers in *Beksan Manunggal Jati* have the same shape. The same form of makeup and clothing is a characteristic of *bedhaya* dance. The costumes worn in this *beksaan* are inspired by the attire of state events or ritual ceremonies at the Yogyakarta Palace, also taking elements of classical dance costumes in the Yogyakarta style. *Beksan Manunggal Jati* dancers use the same form of clothing, namely a long, shaped cloth, commonly called a *kampung*. Yogyakarta-style classical dance accompaniment plays a crucial role in supporting and enhancing the atmosphere, meaning, and rhythm of each dance movement. The accompanying music used in *Beksan Manunggal Jati* is *Gamelan* in the *Slendro* scale.² *Gamelan* regulates the tempo and rhythm of the dance, requiring dancers to be highly synchronized with the rhythm. *Gamelan* elements include *gendhing* (a musical instrument). *Gendhing* is a term used to refer to compositions or songs played by gamelan, particularly in Javanese and Balinese musical traditions. In the context of *gamelan*, "*gendhing*" refers not only to the melody but

¹ Dikutip dari web:

<https://aknyogya.ac.id/read/profile>

² Laras dalam musik gamelan mengacu pada sistem tangga nada yang digunakan untuk menyusun melodi. Dalam tradisi gamelan Jawa dan

Bali terdapat dua laras utama yang dikenal, yaitu *slendro* dan *pelog*. Kedua laras ini memiliki karakteristik yang berbeda dan digunakan untuk menciptakan suasana musik yang unik dalam berbagai komposisi *gendhing*.

also to the structure, form, and layout of the musical composition itself. Each *gendhing* has a specific structure, melody, and rhythm, often tailored to the type of dance and the atmosphere it creates. The *gendhing* in *Beksan Manunggal Jati*, for example, has unique characteristics, such as slow or fast rhythms, as well as solemn, festive, or dramatic atmospheres.

There is a very close communication between the dancers and the *gamelan* players, this allows each element of the accompaniment to harmoniously support the dancers' movements and expressions, creating a unified unity between music and dance. Therefore, it can be concluded that the accompaniment of classical Yogyakarta-style dance not only functions as a musical background, but also as a guide that directs the dancers and strengthens the meaning and emotion of each movement. The combination of *gamelan* elements and various other elements makes this musical accompaniment an inseparable part of the *Beksan Manunggal Jati* experience.

A dance theme can be understood as the core meaning of a problem, containing a specific meaning and motivation expressed in the dance.¹ Themes in dance can be categorized as themes that originate from the context of the story (literal) and individual themes that are not related to the story (non-literal). According to Y. Sumandiyo Hadi, dance themes can be analyzed based on the theme of the movement, the theme of the story being told, or the themes of the symbols in the dance.¹² The theme of *Beksan Manunggal Jati* is a non-literal theme with a dramatic type.

Conclusion

The results of the data summarized in this paper indicate a relationship and interaction between the icons, indexes, and symbols found. In the semiotic process, the use of movement, costumes, makeup, accompaniment, and themes as symbols used by the dancers have interconnected meanings. Meanwhile, in the semiotic trichotomy of representation, object, and interpretant, the use of color, accompaniment, props, movement

symbols, and the symbols of each dancer are symbols that generate meaning in society.

The context of *Beksan Manunggal Jati*'s creation is inextricably linked to two things: innovation and diffusion. Innovation speaks to the emergence of newness, while diffusion is how the spread of these new elements can be utilized to embody the intended vision and mission. Both are the foundation and direction of creation, inseparable. In the creation process, *Beksan Manunggal Jati* has adapted new cultures to old ones as the basis for its choreography.

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¹ Y. Sumandiyo Hadi.2014. *Koreografi Bentuk-Teknik-Isi*. Yogyakarta: Cipta Media. p. 59.

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