



Sufi Dance Performativity of Maulana Rumi Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta

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Abstract

Sufi dance is one of the dances that is considered the most Islamic and represents spiritual values. One of the Islamic boarding schools that is still developing Sufi dance is Maulana Rumi Islamic Boarding School, Yogyakarta. The method used is qualitative with a performance studies approach in Sufi dance. The collection techniques are observation, interviews, and documentation. Obtaining survey data uses a multidisciplinary approach; art-social science, and art-religion. While the data analysis technique uses the opinion of Milles & Huberman, namely data collection- data reduction- data presentation- conclusion. The results showed that the performance of Sufi dance at Maulana Rumi Islamic Boarding School are as follows: (1) Sufi dance performance is carried out routinely every selapanan night or once every 40 days at Maulana Rumi Islamic boarding school. Another event that is also regularly held is the Sufi dance performance in the study which is held at Basa Basi cafe in Yogyakarta every Wednesday from 20.00-22.00 WIB. Sufi dance performances are performed in between recitations of books both by Maulana Rumi and others, such as the book Ihya Ulumuddin by Imam Gozali, the book Nurudh Dholam by Syekh Muhammad Nawawi As-Syafi'ie, and the book Hidayatul Azkiya Ila Thariqil Auliya by Zeinuddin ibn Ali Al-Ma' Bari Al-Malibari. (2) There is a social interaction between dancers and study participants who are both present in the same space and time at the Maulana Rumi Islamic boarding school and the Basa Basi cafe, and (3) The Sufi dance performance events were manifested by an interrelationship between dancers and performers where the audience feels involved in spiritual events in the form of the Sufi dance.

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INTRODUCTION

Sufi dance is one of the dances that is considered the most Islamic dance. This dance comes from Turkey and was popularized by Maulana Jalaludin Rumi around the 13th century. The Sufi dance does not show many movements, it only rotates anticlockwise and focuses on going to one point, accompanied by shalawat burdah. Historically, the Sufi dance aims to get closer to Allah SWT and it is considered as a medium for a dialogue with Allah. The Sufi dance is called Sama' because this dance is identical to a mystical dance that opens the gates of heaven. Mystical is a human attitude that feels. One of the things making this Sufi dance mystical is because of the poetry of Maulana Rumi. The presence of the lover or the spirit is in the body. Sama' is the stairway to heaven because the universe is busy to fast spinning dance and stomping feet which are not limited by time. This dance is performed because of a deep sense of longing for loved ones and reaching for pure divine love (Schimmel, 2002).

The Sufi dance movement is an expression of the spiritual condition of the darwish/mawlawi. Body movement is a spontaneous effect of direct contact with certain objects. For example, when reading the Qur'an, sometimes a person sways to the right and left repeatedly because of the result of absorption and the presence of the heart when reading it (Mahendra, 2014). In Sufi dance performances and dance works, many people come and are involved in an event to declare themselves as part of a religious activity.

According to Lono Simatupang, it is an exchange of energy between the presenter and the audience. In this case, human transaction events occur where ideas and beliefs about human identity as individuals, citizens, and creations of Allah are dialogued through the presence of reality (Simatupang, 2013). The performance studies approach in this study leads to spirituality which will be studied in the text of Sufi dance as a performance. The analysis is based on the

researcher's observations both from pre, process, and after possession in Sufi dance which is internal to the dancer.

Performance studies is a scientific discipline that is a meeting between the arts (dance, theater, film, and others) and anthropology. The understanding of performance studies and better known as performances in the form of theater originates from social drama so humans experience dramatic situations for the first time which are then heightened into performances in the form of theatrical drama (Susandro & Taruan, 2021, p. 314). Performance studies pay attention to several parts including 1) as an object of study in the form of human behavior, 2) artistic work practices are the main part of the study, 3) field research is the same as anthropological research, and 4) always participates or actively involved in social life practices (Wibawanto, 2018, p. 71).

The authors choose the Sufi dance at the Maulana Rumi Islamic boarding school in Yogyakarta because of its existence and its persistence in strengthening its identity as an Islamic dance. The authors use performance analysis to see Sufi dance as a behavior that is finally assumed to show a spiritual practice. The purpose of this study is to find out how dance is used as a religious practice that is different from faith. In this case, it is the Islamic religion. There is the concept of emptying the mind, focusing on one point, and reaching the transcendent area. There is a similar process toward transcendence in both Sufi dance and other religious activities, such as prayer (salat) in Islam. In dance, conditioning occurs so the body, which is in the immanent area, is consciously suppressed and the transcendent is allowed to control the body. The expected finding in this study is a concept about the performance as behavior in Sufi dance texts

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in this study is qualitative with a performance studies approach related to spirituality. The data checking in the field using technical triangulation (interviews,

observations, and documentation) and sources (a leader and Sufi dancers at Pondok Maulana Rumi) to obtain the data validity. In addition, the researcher will also conduct the data validity by cross-checking the findings again in the form of a summary obtained from the comments of participants or resource persons.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dance art is a form of art that continues to develop and continues to be preserved by the community along with the current development that has the privilege and meaning contained in it (Afif et al., 2022, p. 7). Sufi dance is a form of expression of a servant's love for Allah SWT and Prophet Muhammad SAW through dhikr and the method of dhikr with rotating movements to create Sufi dance (Nugroho, 2021, p. 73).

According to Kristina (2019, p. 142, a Sufi dancer must be able to respond to the situation that not all that is bad will be bad and good doesn't always good because. When one thing is good in the eyes of humans but it is exactly not good for Allah SWT.

The Maulana Rumi Islamic Boarding School is located in Sewon Karang Hamlet 7th neighborhood, Timbulharjo urban village, Kapanewon Sewon, Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta. Maulana Rumi Islamic Boarding School was founded by Kyai Kuswaidi Syafi'ie in 2007.

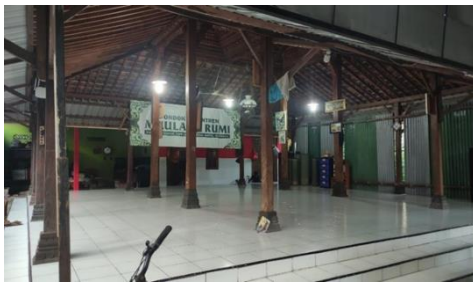


Figure 1. Hall or Pendhapa of Maulana Rumi Boarding School (Source: Wulandari, 2022)

Figure 1 shows the pendhapa where the training and recitations are held at the Maulana Rumi Islamic boarding school. The initial activity of this boarding school was the existence of several recitations which were carried out regularly for several years. The first recitation that was pioneered by Kiai Kuswaidi Syafi'ie took place in Balonglor Village, Baturetno. The book that was studied at that time was Tafsir Ibn 'Arabi, totaling 2 volumes, which contained discussions related to the deepest dimensions of the verses of the Qur'an. The learning tradition applied at the Sufi Islamic Boarding School introduces the esoteric aspect (tasawuf) of Islam not only as knowledge but also as a daily practice. Every recitation that is held there is always a space to ask questions for students who want to consult about the spiritual journey they are experiencing.

Forms and Philosophical Meanings of Sufi Dance

Art can be in the form of media with a role that is considered important as a medium to assist the process of religious implementation because of the high attractiveness so the appreciators become interested (Parhan et al., 2022, p. 81). In the mind of most people, Sufi dance is considered to be quite different from other dances, it is because the movements in Sufi dance seem monotonous with only spinning movements. However, because of that case, the Sufi Dance has become a dance that has its characteristics.

The Sufi dance also has its characteristics because this dance is part of the order initiated by Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, namely the Maulawiyah order. Therefore, the main function of the Sufi dance is as a means of dhikr for followers of the Maulawiyah order. However, with the development of the era, Sufi dance finally began to appear for various religious activities, in Islamic religious events or religious events of other religions, even in entertainment activities. However, it does not reduce the meanings contained in Sufi dance. The following are

the meanings contained in the dance of Sufi or Whirling Dervish:

Standing Position

This dance of Sufi or Maulawi or Whirling Dervish begins with a standing position, indicating that there is a salik (a person who takes the spiritual path) who must be alert in taking the spiritual path. In taking the spiritual path, a salik must have consistent persistence and discipline. A person's readiness determines how much a person gains in taking the spiritual path because the bounty that Allah gives is on the level of a person's readiness to receive the bounty, especially the spiritual bounty.



Figure 2. Standing Position of the Sufi Dance (Source: Wulandari, 2022)

The Right Foot Suppresses the Thumb of the Left Foot

The thumb position of the right foot suppresses the thumb of the left foot means that passion must be controlled by the mind and the spirit. By controlling one's passions, people will avoid deviant behaviors. Every action or behavior that is controlled by passion will give a negative impact, both for the individual and others.



Figure 3. The Thumb Position of the Right Foot Suppressing the Thumb of the Left Foot (Source: Fatih, 2022)

Crossing Arms and Bowing

The position of crossing hands and the bowing indicate the readiness of the salik to enter the new mother's womb. The word womb is connotative or has a symbolic meaning. Entering the new mother's womb means entering the spiritual womb then standing up and being spiritually reborn. This case is marked by the love for Allah Ta'ala which resounds and then creates love and compassion for His creatures. A lover will always be on the side of his beloved. "Every action taken out of sheer love is a form of partiality for the Most Beloved, who is none other than Allah SWT" (Interview with Syaf'ie on May 09th, 2022, permitted to quote).



Figure 4. The Position of Crossing Arms and Bowing (Source: Wulandari, 2022)

Spinning Movement to the Left

This Maulawi Dance movement or Sufi Dance is a spinning movement to the left. This movement is the same as the movement of people doing tawaf or it is also the same as the rotational movement

of the universe, which is rotating to the left. Of course, it is not done without a certain reason. Why the rotation is done to the left because the human heart or qalb is also on the left side of the chest. The definition of the heart, in this case, is not the organ of the liver as the understanding of the medical world that is explained by Apriyanti in the book *Teori Anatomi Tubuh Manusia* as follows "The liver is the largest organ of the body after the skin, is located in the abdominal organs under the diaphragm with a weight of 2 kg and it is reddish in color" (Apriyanti, Eka, et al, 2021: 65). However, the heart in the Sufistic paradigm leads to the heart which is in the chest cavity on the left. Regarding the meaning of the heart in the Sufistic paradigm, Imam Ghozali divides the heart (qalb) into two meanings. The first meaning is that the liver is flesh in the shape of a pine tree which is located on the left side of the chest in which there is a cavity filled with black blood. It is the source and center of the spirit. The heart also exists in the bodies of animals and people who have died (pointing to the shallowness of meaning). The second meaning is that the heart is soft (*latifah*), divine (*Rabbaniyah*), and spiritual (*rohaniah*) which has a relationship with the flesh (heart) in the first explanation above but the relationship between both cannot be explained in words. Because it resides in one's personal feelings, soft-hearted is the essence of human beings. It recognizes, knows, and rules. The heart in this explanation knows Allah SWT and grasps something that imagination cannot grasp (Al-Ghozali, 1993: 582).

The heart is a reflection of every human behavior in living life. When a person's heart is good, then his behavior will be nuanced good. However, on the contrary, if a person's heart is bad, a person's behavior and speech will only be bad. The meaning of this spinning motion to the left is for a salik to process his heart to have purity of heart. To have the purity of heart is not an easy thing to do. The human heart is like a wave, always changing according to their piety. The

heart is called qalb because it is easy to experience agitating, turning, and oscillating. Therefore, to achieve purity of heart, it takes sincerity and continuous effort to process it for the better. The left-spinning movement in this Sufi dance also has an assimilative correlation with the arrival of Islamic esoteric culture (the Sufi dance) so this Sufi Dance is destined to be in the marriage of civilization over philosophy among the Javanese people. It is said to be matched because both of them have the same concept of thought, which is related to rotation to the left. The *cokro manggilingan* idiom refers to the rotation of the universe that is counterclockwise, while the Sufi dance refers to the rotation of the people doing tawaf and also the rotation of the universe. Both of them have the same rotation, namely rotation to the left/counterclockwise rotation.

The *cokro manggilingan* idiom means that life is dynamic like a spinning wheel so you need a strong mentality. Therefore, you don't feel snobby when you are praised and you don't fall when you are abused. The essence of the meaning of *cokro manggilingan* is a combination of the struggle meaning and humble character. In this regard, both the Sufi dance and the local wisdom of the *cokro manggilingan* have similarities as a guide for humans to do good things in their lives.

The Right Hand Facing up and the Left Hand Facing Down



Figure 5. The Position of the Right Hand Facing up and the Left Hand Facing Down (Source: Wulandari, 2022)

The right hand facing up has the meaning of pointing to the Majesty of Allah and asking for mercy from Him. The left hand facing down has the meaning of giving affection to others. Therefore, in the teachings of Islam, there must be a balance between *hablum minallah* and *hablum minannas*. These two things cannot be separated from one another and also cannot be chosen between these two things. When a person's relationship with God is good but his relationship with others is not good, so his good relationship with God is considered invalid. On the contrary, when a person's relationship with others is good, while his relationship with God is not good, so his good relationship with others becomes worthless. Thus, we know that Sufi dance not only teaches us to be kind to others but we are also taught the importance of creating a good relationship with Allah SWT.

Sufi Dance Performativity

It is known that in the Indonesian language, performance has the meaning of showing, implementing, an act of organizing, and staging. Performativity comes from performative. John L Austin introduced the term "performative" derived from the word "perform". It shows that uttering a speech is acting (Virawati et al., 2021, p. 171).

Performance studies is a multidisciplinary approach that looks at an art or performance phenomenon that is studied or explored more deeply with a dramaturgical approach analysis and it is complemented by theories and concepts from philosophical disciplines and meaning (Setyawati et al., 2019, p. 98).

Based on the Sufi tradition, both songs and music have an important position. One of the Sufi figures who settled song, music, and dance in religious practices is Jalaluddin Rumi. The appearance of the Sufi dance which was carried out in spinning did not make the dancers dizzy because the Sufi dancers did not only dhikr and remember Allah SWT but manage their breath. Therefore, they don't get dizzy (Saifuddin, 2019, p. 217).

The Sufi dance aims to get closer to the Almighty Creator as a creature of His creation. Further discussion related to the performativity of Sufi dance is as follows.

The Sufi Dance Performance

The Sufi dance is one of the dances that is considered the most Islamic. This dance originates from Turkey and was popularized by Maulana Jalaludin Rumi around the 13th century. The Sufi dance does not present many movements, it only spins counterclockwise and focuses on going to one point, accompanied by shalawat burdah. Historically, Sufi dance aims to get closer to Allah SWT and it is considered as a medium for dialogue with Allah. The Sufi dance is called Sama' because this dance is identical to a mystical dance that opens the gates of heaven. Mystical is a human attitude that feels. One of the things making this Sufi dance mystical is because of the poetry of Maulana Rumi. The presence of the lover or the spirit is in the body. Sama' is the stairway to heaven because the universe is busy to fast spinning dance and stomping feet which are not limited by time. This dance is performed out of a deep sense of longing for loved ones and reaching for pure divine love. The Sufi dance movement is an expression of the spiritual condition of the darwish/mawlawi.



Figure 6. The Sufi Dance in the Implementation of *Selapanan* Activities Studying the Book of *Diwan Syamsi Tabriz* (Source: Apek, 2022).

The Sufi dancers from the Maulana Rumi boarding school perform their dances regularly every 40 days in the boarding school by conducting a tafsir study of Maulana Rumi's book. Another

performance was also performed at the Basa Basi cafe with the same study group in the area. The movement or floor pattern of the Sufi dance is centered on the same point according to the initial position where the dancer starts the dance. The facing direction of the Sufi Dance moves by rotating counterclockwise or spinning to the left. The meaning of this circling movement to the left is because the location of the human heart is on the left side of the chest with the aim that a salik processes his heart to achieve heart purity. In addition, the rotation to the left also has an assimilative correlation between the arrival of Islamic esoteric culture (the Sufi dance) and the presence of local wisdom, *cokro manggilingan*. Both of them have the same concept of thought, which is related to rotation to the left. The *cokro manggilingan* idiom refers to the rotation of the universe which is counterclockwise, while the Sufi dance refers to the rotation of the people making tawaf and also the rotation of the universe which rotates to the left.

Sufi dance performances and dance works involve many people who come and are involved in an event to express themselves as part of religious activity. Lono Simatupang describes this case as an exchange of energy between the presenter and the audience. In this case, human transaction events occur where ideas and beliefs about human identity as individuals, citizens, and creations of Allah are dialogued through the presence of reality (Simatupang, 2013).

The presence of the dancers and the audience in the same space can convey a positive energy, which in this case is spirituality appearing with dhikr together. The dhikr in question is the dhikr of rotating motion and it is performed by the Sufi dancers. Even though the audience doesn't move, they also feel the solemnity shown by the dancers by rotating with the same axis without falling. It is inseparable from the concentration and maintenance of the *tawadhu'* experienced by the dancers. The simplicity of Sufi dance movements does not reduce the spiritual

attraction between the dancers and the audience.

Research related to Sufi dance is written by Latif Abdullah who researched the Sufi tariqa that uses music and dance as a means of dhikr. This Sufi dance is known as *sama'*. In *sama'*, there are many symbols that remind humans of their Creator (Abdullah, 2019, p. 48). Furthermore, Razqan emphasizes that he researches the Sufi dance semiotically based on Charles Sander Peirce's theory (Mahendra, 2014). Meanwhile, in terms of Sufi dance choreography, Safran Rosmala, and Setya Widayawati have also studied the movements, music, costumes, and functions of the Sufi dance (Rusmalla & Widayawati, 2019). There are the spiritual values of the Sufi dance. The Islamic values of the Sufi dance can be seen through visual aspects including movements, make-up, fashion, property, and venues. In addition, the auditive aspects consist of musical instruments and poetry (Opsantini, 2014). The history of the Sufi dance as the Islamic dance is in harmony with other dance works that have developed in Indonesia. Furthermore, in the Iranian region, there is research on the form of the Sufi dance which is in the form of an Iranian spiral art miniature called Arabesque (Islamic art) involving the development of movement and rotation of the dancers seen in the Sufi dances. The dancers dance around their mentor. In this way, they represent particles associated with movement throughout the world. This finding is in line with findings in Physics (Koutanaei, 2015). Meanwhile, in Pakistan, there is also a Sufi dance that is performed every year and has an interesting meaning and origin (Khan, 2015). In 2021, research will be carried out on the inner subjective experiences of Sufi whirling dervishes (SWDs) to understand clients' experiences of expressing themselves through free spinning and the cultural competence of dance movement therapists and psychotherapists (Harel et al., 2021).

Dance works in various regions of the archipelago have historical meanings related to Islam and its values in it. The

understanding of Islamic dance is emphasized by Siswantari that Islamic dance is not only marked by Islamic costumes and movements but the dance that can convey discourse about life values based on values in Islamic religious teachings (Siswantari, 2020, p. 21). Another view is elaborated by Tri Yuliana who sees that the Islamic civilization with its various forms including the art of dances composed of the elements of tawhid that are interrelated and continuous. They can be *ilahiyah* values (*rububiyah*; *uluhiyah*; or tawhid asma' wa-sifat) as the foundation normative ethics, *insaniyah* values (anthropo-sociological), and *alamiyah* values (cosmological) as the operational praxis basis. Thus, one of the dances that depict Islam is the zapin dance (Wijayanti, 2019, p. 56). Aesthetics in Islamic dance also appears in every Islamic university in various forms which are a combination of Islam, dance, and education (Siswantari & Setyaningrum, 2019, p. 250).

CONCLUSION

The performativity of the Sufi dance at the Maulana Rumi Islamic Boarding School is demonstrated by routine performances which are held every 40 days (*selapanan*) and routine studies at the Basa Basi cafe. In his performance, it can be seen that the dancers make spinning movements counterclockwise and focus on one point accompanied by shalawat burdah. Even though the dancers only make circular movements, they are not dizzy because they have controlled their breath and still remember the Creator. The creation of the Sufi dance is an effort to get closer to Allah SWT and a form of love and affection for the Creator and the Prophet Muhammad SAW. There is a strong interrelationship between the dancers and the audience. They both feel the presence of the serenity and oneness of Allah when the Sufi dances are performed. The events of the Sufi dance performances that are shown can affect the audience who are present as a form of spirituality in the form of the movement dhikr.

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