



Emprak Mardi Laras Art Presentation Form with Menak Dance Movement Variety in Sleman Regency

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Abstract

The existence of traditional arts which is increasingly being displaced due to competition with modern arts has caused some traditional arts to approach extinction. This research was conducted to introduce the art presentation form of Emprak Mardi Laras which still survives in Sleman Regency. Researchers used a qualitative approach that focused on the form of presentation of Emprak art. Data was collected through interviews with artists, the founder of the Art group Emprak Mardi Laras, and art performers. Observations and literature studies were carried out to support the data obtained. Researchers perform data reduction, display data, and draw conclusions in checking the validity of the data. The art of Emprak Mardi Laras presents a story taken from the Ambiya Book. This art uses a variety of movements that are adapted from the dance moves of Yogyakarta Style Menak, accompanied by percussion instruments and Islamic songs. Make-up and clothing use the Stambulan Style, and are distinguished according to the character of the role they are playing. This art can be performed in a pavilion, an open arena, or a simple stage made to resemble a proscenium stage.

Keywords: *Form of Presentation; Emprak Art; Menak Dance*

Introduction

Culture that develops in Indonesian society includes seven interrelated elements, namely religion, language, art, science, technology, social system, and economic system. Art as one of the elements of culture is a unique part of the community environment of a region in Indonesia. The number of tribes, customs and cultures that are owned by Indonesia gives birth to various forms of art as well. Art belongs to the community, so that its disclosure is a reflection of the nature of the mind and the order of community life itself (Sedyawati, 1984:40). The embodiment of art can be in the form of art artifacts, including visual arts, music arts, theater arts, and dance arts.

The art of dance is a work of art that consists of elements of motion and directly uses the limbs as a medium. However, not all movements are called dance, because the motion in dance is not a realistic motion, but a motion that is given an expressive and aesthetic form (Hadi, 1983:2). The art of dance is the beauty of the motion of the human limbs that move, rhythmically and have a harmonious spirit. The art of dance that developed in Indonesia is divided into 2 types, namely traditional dance and new creation

dance. Traditional dances are all dances that have experienced a long history, and always rely on existing traditional patterns. Meanwhile, the new creation dance is a dance that leads to freedom in its expression, and does not rely on traditional patterns, but rather leads to the creativity of the creator. Traditional dances have developed from generation to generation, thus these dances have also been functioned by the community for various needs, such as entertainment needs, education, and needs related to religious activities or rituals.

During the spread of Islam in Indonesia, the Wali Songo used the media in the form of art that developed in the local community. This is done as an effort to approach the community which aims to make them interested in listening to religious symbols through the arts that already exist in the area. Emprak art, which was originally found in the Jepara area and has expanded to several surrounding areas, including the Sleman Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, is also used as a medium for the propagation of Islam. The connection of religious elements in this art lies in the theme of the story that is conveyed, to the lyrics of the songs accompanying the performance that describe invitations to worship and embrace Islam.

Emprak art in Sleman Regency is the result of the creativity of the people in Margoluwih Seyegan Village, which has been passed down from generation to generation since 1951. This art experienced its glory in the 80s, when in those years, Emprak art was often shown around from one village to another. In line with the development of modernization, Emprak art had experienced a setback, because people had started to leave traditional arts and switch to more modern art forms. Until now, there is only one Emprak art group that still survives, namely the Emprak Mardi Laras art group in Ngentak Hamlet, Margoluwih, Seyegan Sleman, under the leadership of Mardi Pratama.

To regenerate Emprak art, the Department of Culture and Tourism of Sleman Regency carried out a revitalization, namely by showing the Emprak traditional art again on January 6, 2006. The purpose of this revitalization is to make people know the existence of Emprak art. In addition, it is hoped that the Emprak Mardi Laras art group can be active again in doing its activities, so that the Emprak art continues to live and thrive in the community.

Emprak art is a folk art with Islamic religion breath in the form of dance drama. The story is taken from the book of Qissay Emr Hamza (Babad Ambiya) or often called Serat Menak, which is a Persian literature that developed during the reign of Harun Al Rashid 766-809M (Yulianingsih, 2016). The book tells about Amir Ambyah's efforts to subdue kings who have not embraced the Abrahamic religion. In Emprak art, the story taken is the story about the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. On the island of Java, this art is also used by Sunan Kalijaga to invite people to embrace Islam, using the accompaniment of *Terbang* and Islamic poetry. Therefore, this art is called EMPRAK which comes from the word E-MEN-PERAK (e, let it be close) meaning that people can be closer to God.

The form of presentation of Emprak's art is in the form of a dance drama that uses a variety of popular dance movements that are adapted from a variety of classical Yogyakarta-style dance movements, such as *Impur*, and *Kalang Kinantang* for male figures. However, because the story is taken from Serat Menak which is often used in Wayang Golek performances, the movement in Emprak art is replaced with a variety that resembles the Menak dance variety, although it does not fully imitate the form of the Yogyakarta Style Menak dance variety created by Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwobo IX, which is a puppet show visualization.

Literature Review

1. Form of Presentation

Form is a system or arrangement (Alwi, 2003: 135). The form of presentation is a system or arrangement of devices or elements that support an appearance and make the appearance more attractive.

Basically, the presentation arrangement that supports a performance includes: motion, accompaniment, make-up and clothing as well as the venue.

a. Dance Movement

Motion is the basic substance and as a means of expression in dance, and is the process of moving the body from one position to the next. John Martin, a dance critic from the United States in his book "*The Modern Dance*" suggests that the raw substance of dance is motion (Soedarsono, 1978:1). This movement is a movement that has undergone a creative process so that it becomes an expressive and interesting movement. Expressive motion is a movement that is beautiful and can thrill human feelings. The beautiful motion is a stylized motion, which contains a certain rhythm (Sudarsono, 1978: 2).

In dance, there are two types of movement, namely meaningful movement and pure motion. What is meant by meaningful movement is movement that contains a clear meaning. Pure motion is a movement that is only done to get an artistic form and is not intended to describe something (Soedarsono, 1978:22-23).

b. Accompaniment or Dance Music

A dance presentation requires music as a complement to the presentation. There are three functions of music in the presentation of dance, namely as an accompaniment or motion partner, as an affirmation of motion, and as an illustration. Music as a partner of movement and affirmation of motion provides the basis for rhythm in motion. Music as illustration is music that serves to provide a choreographic atmosphere, so that the events described are able to awaken in the perception of the audience (Hidayat, 2005:53-54). In a story presentation, an atmosphere that is supported by accompaniment is very necessary in the dramatization of the delivered scene. Thus, the presentation of the dance will be weightier if it is supported by accompaniment that is in accordance with the theme.

c. Makeup and Clothing (Costume)

The perfection of the form of dance cannot be separated from the support of art which is included in make-up and clothing. Dance makeup helps to highlight the dancer's facial expressions (Garaha, 1983:51). Make-up is the art of using cosmetic ingredients to create facial features. From this description, makeup aims to change the natural face into a role face, so that dance makeup does not just help and make the dancer's face beautiful or handsome, but more importantly, it is in accordance with the character of the role to be played.

The use of make-up will be more interesting if it is assisted by the arrangement of dance clothes or what is often called dance costumes. Costumes function and aim to help bring character to life, show role characteristics, and provide facilities in the harmony of expressed movements (Garaha, 1983:51).

d. Stage or Theme of Performance

What is meant by the stage as a place of performance is a place for performing arts that uses humans (actors) as the main medium (Padmodarmaya, 1983:6). In general, the performance venue is a flat space that is easily accessible to the viewer's eyes, for example *pendhapa*, *proscenium*, or open arena. Mostly, theater performances or traditional arts such as *kethoprak* and *wayang wong* have used stages that have adopted the *proscenium*. Likewise, the Emprak art performer uses a simple stage set in such a way as to resemble a *proscenium*.

e. Floor Design

Floor design is the lines on the floor that a dancer passes or lines on the floor made by the formation of group dancers (Soedarsono, 1978:23). There are two basic line patterns on the floor pattern, namely straight line and curved lines patterns. The straight line pattern can be a line forward, backward, to the right or left side, and oblique or diagonal. The straight line pattern can also be further developed into a pattern of the letter T and the letter V, triangles, rectangles and zigzags. While the curved line

pattern can be made into a circle, semi-circle, spiral, and figure eight. Straight lines give a simple but strong impression, while curved lines give a soft but weak impression.

2. Traditional Art

Art is the result of human work that creates beauty. Wisnoe Wardhana revealed that art is the fruit of human thought, the expression of beauty and overall values that serves as a carrier of balance between the physical and psychological cultural environment (Wardhana, 1990:58). Folk art or traditional art is community art in a form that can create a sense of beauty created by members of the community whose results are shared property (Alwi, 2003:1038). Traditional can be understood as a procedure that applies in a certain ethnic environment that is hereditary (Hidayat, 2005: 14). Thus the implementation of art carried out by an ethnic community is passed down from one generation to the next.

3. Golek Menak Dance

Golek Menak Dance is a type of Yogyakarta style classical dance that was adopted from the form of wayang golek. The Golek Menak dance, which was initiated by Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX, is a dance art based on Serat Menak which tells the heroic story of Wong Agung Menak "Jayeng Rono" (Murywati, tt: 88). The hallmark of Golek Menak Dance is the presence of a strong element of broken Yogyakarta style classical dance. As stated by Soedarsono (1988: 3), menak motion is a motion that is broken but not rigid. In terms of the Yogyakarta palace, *hanjoged menak*, which means to move flexibly despite the pressure of motion. The stylized broken motion is in line with the basic idea of Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX who tried to develop the movement to be more natural based on the elements of Tuo's pencak silat motion from Maninjau, West Sumatra (Suneko, 2018).

In the Golek Menak dance, there are ten characters created by Hamengku Buwono IX. The ten characters are Alus Luruh or Alus Impur, Alus Mbranyak, Putri Luruh, Putri Mbranyak, Gagah Kambang, Gagah Kalang Kinantang, Gagah Bapang, Kagok Impur, Gagah Gecul, and the typical movements of Putri Cina (Soedarsono, 1989: 55-56).

4. Emprak

Emprak traditional arts are folk arts in the form of dance dramas. Emprak is marked by a joint game by a group of male players, starting from reading Islamic texts to moving while sitting and then moving while standing together. Instrumental accompaniment is performed by *terbang* (Sedyawati, 1984: 32). The word Emprak comes from the word *E-Men-Perak*. *Perak* in Javanese means approaching. Thus, it is hoped that with the existence of this art, the community can be closer to God. This is in accordance with the purpose of holding the Emprak artistic activity that enable the community to deepen their knowledge of the teachings of Islam, so that they are able to get closer to God.

Another source states that the word Emprak comes from the word Ebrah which in Javanese means to move or dance (interview with Sancoko, January 10, 2022). The dance art itself is called Emprak, and the sound art is called Sholawatan Emprak. In his poems there are suggestions or invitations to convert to Islam, so that older people take the lead in carrying out Emprak art performances so that children and grandchildren and the community consciously embrace Islam. Here it is clear that there is an element of *da'wah*, although in its delivery to the public it takes the form of drama, dance and sound art (Kuntowijoyo, 1986: 33).

The art of Emprak Mardi Laras grew as the art of dance, sound art and drama, so that in the performances there are music as accompaniment, dance movements, and also stories or plays taken from the Ambiya Chronicle, which is a story about the history of the Prophet Muhammad (Hidayah, 2000): 16). Stories taken in this art are often referred to as Menak stories. The Menak story is a story that

describes events in Arabia before the appearance of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, with the main characters of this play are Jayengrana and his children (Soedarsono, 1999:31).

Research Methods

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach that focused on the uniqueness of the art presentation of Emprak Mardi Raras as a folk art. Qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behavior (Moleong, 2001: 3). Through this approach, the sources of data used in this study are informants, namely figures in the Emprak Mardi Laras art group, traditional arts artists from Sleman Regency, documents in the form of Emprak scripts and the results of previous research, CD recordings of performances, and data from observations collected by researchers.

Data collection was carried out by direct observation at the location where the Emprak Mardi Laras art group was founded, related to the players' training process, preparation for performances to observing various properties, musical instruments and so on. Furthermore, in-depth interviews were conducted with the management leaders of the Emprak arts group, several players and musicians, and traditional arts artists from Sleman Regency. In addition, literature study was also conducted for data collection. In this case, the researcher conducted a study on Emprak art manuscripts that had been staged, documentation in the form of recordings of performances, as well as previous research documents on Emprak art.

Data analysis is a process of organizing and sorting data into patterns, categories, and basic descriptions, so that themes can be found and working hypotheses can be formulated as suggested by the data (Moleong, 2001: 103). In this case, the researcher conducted data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and checking the validity of the data.

Results and Discussion

1. History of the Development of the Emprak Mardi Laras Art Group

The majority of the population in Margoluwih Village, Kapanewon Seyegan adheres to Islam, and they are quite active in carrying out religious activities. One of these activities is joining the Emprak arts group. Emprak art is a form of populist art with Islamic religious breath. Emprak art began to be known during the spread of Islam, namely after the establishment of the Demak Kingdom which was introduced by the Wali. At the beginning of its creation, this art was a collection of sholawat that used flying accompaniment. This art was created with the aim of broadcasting Islam to people who still adhere to the belief.

In 1951-1979, Emprak art was centered in Kotagede, then this art developed rapidly and spread throughout the region to Sleman Regency. This year, the Emprak Arts Group was established together with the Emprak arts groups in several areas such as Jethak, Kluwih, and Krandon. In the 1960s several other traditional art groups emerged, such as Srandul, Kethoprak and so on. The emergence of various other traditional arts, has caused Emprak art to begin to shift from the public's attention so that over time Emprak art is less attractive, in fact it is never performed again.

In 1980, the Emprak Mardi Laras Art Group was founded under the leadership of Mardi Pranata. This group was formed as one of the initiatives of the previous Emprak group members who wanted to regenerate the forgotten Emprak art. The establishment of this group also provides an update on the form of presentation of Emprak's art. The story or play that is presented is a story about the birth of the Prophet

Muhammad SAW which was adapted from Kitab Ambiya (Babad Ambiya) or Serat Menak. Basically, the Ambiya Book and Serat Menak are a play that tells about the spread of Islam. The difference is, in the Ambiya Book it tells the whole story of the Prophet, while Serat Menak only tells the spread of Islam by Jayengrana or Amir Ambyah.

2. Background of the Development of Emprak Art Presentation

The fading of public interest in traditional arts caused by the emergence of various modern arts and the development of increasingly sophisticated technology, making people prefer to enjoy more practical entertainment from the results of these technologies. Traditional arts that cannot survive the competition are feared to be in decline, maybe even extinct. Various ways are taken by traditional artists to defend themselves. Their efforts include innovating or creating new forms of traditional arts, as well as trying to gather young people to join in preserving these arts.

The Emprak Mardi Laras Art Group, tries to package the Emprak art to make it more interesting and unique, among others by changing the pattern of the presentation of the Emprak art. The developments made did not completely change, but only developed several supporting elements such as movement, make-up and clothing, venues for performances, and floor patterns.

The rationale for cultivating the new form of Emprak art presentation is based on the source of Emprak's art, namely Babad Ambiya/Serat Menak. In general, Menak stories are used in *Wayang Thengul* or *Wayang Golek*. Therefore, both the variety of dances and fashions in Emprak art are worked out to resemble the various dances and costumes in Golek Menak Dance, although they are done very simply.

3. The form of presentation of Emprak Mardi Laras

The form of presentation of Emprak art has its own characteristics and style. The presentation of this art is in the form of half *Wayang Wong*, half *Kethoprak*. This art is called half *Wayang Wong*, because the style of the performance resembles that of *Wayang Wong*, where players enter the stage by dancing while moving from place to place to their respective positions according to the specified floor pattern. In addition, if this art is performed in *pendhopo*, the floor pattern is similar to the *Wayang Wong*, namely the role of the King is on the right side (from the audience) and the soldier is on the left side. Meanwhile, the similarity with *Kethoprak* can be seen from the dialogue between players who use Javanese language.

The form of presentation of Emprak art is a combination of several art forms, namely the art of movement/dance, the art of music, and the art of drama. The art of dance in Emprak is seen in the movements performed by the players on the stage. The element of musical art is found in the accompaniment that accompanies the performance, both as an accompaniment to dance movements, as well as illustrations of the atmosphere in the story scenes that are played. Meanwhile, drama in this art is found in the characterizations, and the storyline that is delivered, with dramatic elements presented in it. Each character/player who enters the stage performs precepts and *worships jengkeng* first, like the *Wayang Wong*, then the player performs *dances*, dialogues and so on. Likewise, when players leave the stage, they have to make offerings again. In addition, in the art scene, Emprak also recognizes the *Jejer*, such as the one in *Wayang Wong*.

a. Movements

The basic movements of dance in this art use a variety of simple popular movements. The hallmark of the movement in Emprak art is the movement of the ukel hands and the *gedrug-gedrug*, while the movement of the head turns to the right and left according to the accompaniment. The form of movement of each character is distinguished according to the character of the role. Unlike the *Wayang Wong*, which dances in a complete variety of movements, in this Emprak art, players only do *tayungan* or

dance while walking or moving to their position. The distribution of the types of variance is presented in the following table.

Table 1. The distribution of the types of variety according to the character of the character

No.	Names of Variety	of Characters who use
1.	<i>Impur</i>	Figures sons of princes and ksatriyas
2.	<i>Kalang Kinantang</i>	Figures of dukes and
3.	<i>Bapang Engkrang</i>	Figures of dukes, queens, sultans of sabrangan (i.e. dukes, queens and sultans from outside the Kingdom of Mecca)
4.	<i>Kambeng</i>	Figures senopati and warriors
5.	<i>Grodha Putri</i>	figures

The above variety names adopt the names of the variations in Yogyakarta Style Classical Dance, but the movements are not the same. This happened because when the various movements in the Emprak art were created, people only knew the names of the classical dance variations through Wayang Wong, but they did not know the detailed dance forms.

Variety of *Impur*, used by the character of the prince's son and ksatriya with the protagonist character. The shape of the motion is smooth, with a low hand position, limited to the hips and soft hand movements and turns. This variety is usually used by the figure of Abdul Muntholib. This character is rarely shown, because not all Emprak art manuscripts feature stories involving Abdul Muntholib.

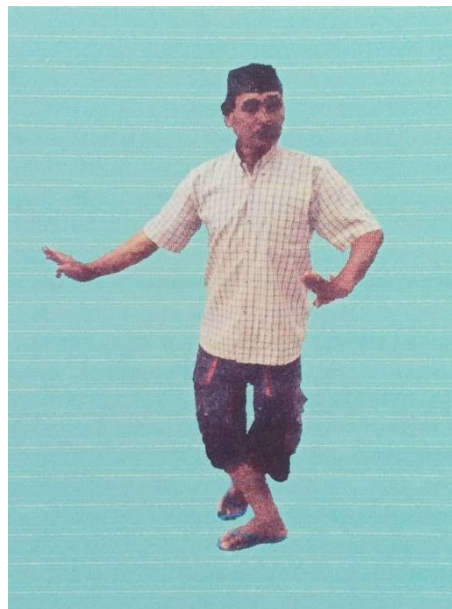


Figure 1. *Impur* (Photo: Doc. Rini 2007)

Variety *Kalang Kinantang*, used by characters with more or more violent characters than the previous character. The movement form of *Kalang Kinantang* uses a higher hand force, which is at shoulder height. The movement of the left hand is static, while the movement of the right hand and head follows the footsteps. This variety is commonly used by the figures of Abraha and Umarmaya.

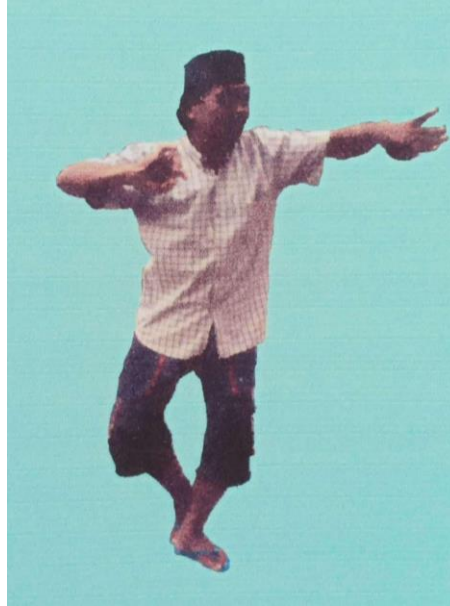


Figure 2. *Kalang Kinantang*(Photo: Doc. Rini 2007)

Variety of *Bapang Engkrang*, used by the king of sabrangan with an antagonistic character. The volume of this motion is wider than the previous two varieties. In addition, hands up to ear level. Dynamic right and left hand movements, following the direction of the footsteps. The character who uses the *Bapang Engkrang* is Panglima Judas.



Figure 3. *Bapang Engkrang*(Photo: Doc. Rini 2007)

Variety of *Kembeng*, used by kings and senopati figures. The hallmark of this variety lies in the symmetrical shape between the right and left hands, giving the impression of being simple, sturdy, and calm. The position of the hands in the *Kembeng* similar to the *Kalang Kinantang*, but the hand pose *sloppy*. The characters who use this variety are Captain Badrun and Kapirento.

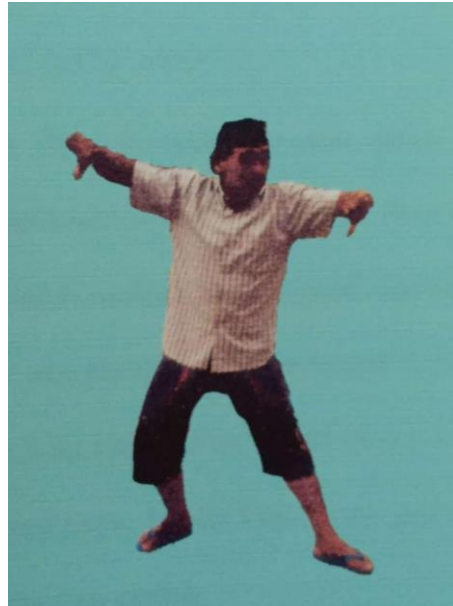


Figure 4. The Kembang Movement Pose (Photo: Doc. Rini 2007)

The variety of *Grodha*, used by female characters. In general, the form of movement is similar to the Impur variety, the difference is *Grodha* performed by women, and uses the *sampur*. The female figures who are often displayed in Emprak art are Dewi Gestabun, Siti Aminah, and Dewi Sapurah.



Figure 5. *Grodha's* (Photo: Doc. Ekwan 2007) Accompaniment

b. Accompaniment

The presentation of Emprak's art uses a *terbang* accompaniment, namely with percussion instruments or musical instruments that are played rhythmically. Most of the accompaniment in Emprak's art performances uses non-pitched percussion instruments, such as drums, *terbang*, *kecer*, *kenthing*, and several other supporting musical instruments. These musical instruments have different functions. In general, the function of accompaniment here is as a rhythm holder, both to accompany the dance, as well as an illustration and as a supporter of taste to explore the characters being played.

In addition to using the above musical instruments, Emprak art is also supported by chanting Islamic poems containing advice about the teachings of Islam, an invitation to embrace Islam and praise to Allah SWT. The verse was sung by all the musicians and several singers led by a person called *Bawa Swara*. The songs sung are *macapat*, and several self-composed songs, while the lyrics are taken from the Holy Qur'an.

c. Make-up and Clothing

Make-up for each character is done differently, according to the character being played. Pencil scratches on the shape of the eyebrows, mustache, and sideburns are one of the things that distinguish the character. For characters with a subtle character, they use medium brow strokes, a thin mustache, and no sideburns. As for the characters with rough characters, they use thick eyebrow strokes, large transverse mustaches and thick sideburns, and the basic color of the face is reddish.

In accordance with the mission of Emprak's performing arts, which is to convey the message of Islam through art, the make-up and clothing is done using a style they call *Stambulan* style, which is clothing that resembles the style of Aladin (a cartoon character from the Middle East), in the form of trousers with wrinkles underneath, a headdress using *ubel* or a turban that is given *lancur* or using *udeng*.

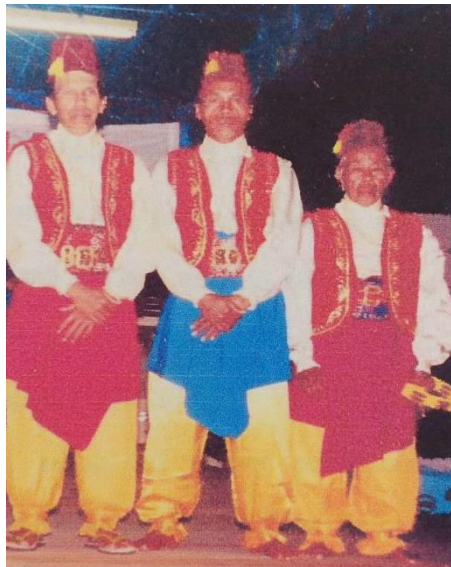


Figure 6. Make-up and Dress Style *for the* Accompaniment (Photo: Doc. Disbudpar 2006)



Figure 7. Make-up and Clothing for Emprak Players (Photo: Doc. Disbudpar 2006)

d. The Place for Performances and Floor Patterns

The Emprak Arts does not have a specific theme for holding performances. This art can be performed in any stage arena according to the situation and conditions. If conditions permit, this art is usually staged with players facing west. The floor pattern of the Emprak art is called the *Jajar Timun* floor pattern, where all players place themselves in rows, facing each other, with one king, or leader, in the middle between the right and left rows. In addition to the *Jajar Timun* floor pattern, Emprak art also uses a pyramid floor pattern or the letter "V", this is so that all players can be clearly seen by the audience when documented. The exit and entry of players are on the right and left sides, so it can be distinguished between protagonists and antagonists.

Previously, Emprak art always used offerings in every performance. The intended offerings are placed on the table, in the middle of the stage. However, in subsequent developments, the existence of offerings is no longer a requirement, so the offering table does not interfere with the layout of the player's floor. Meanwhile, the placement of instruments/ musical instruments on the stage may vary according to the stage conditions used. The instruments *Kendhang*, *Terbang*, and *Kenthing* are always placed close together, so that the three can complement each other to create a harmonious blend of accompaniment.

Conclusion

The Emprak Mardi Laras Art Group is one of the efforts of artists and folk art observers to maintain the existence of Emprak art in the community, due to competition between traditional arts in Sleman Regency. The form of presentation of Emprak Art is quite unique, by adapting the pattern of Wayang Wong performances on the shape of the floor pattern and the scene, as well as the form of movement that uses the various movements of the Menak Dance. This variety of Menak dance movements makes Emprak's art different from other traditional arts. This is because the Menak Dance variety is only owned by Yogyakarta Style Classical Dance.

Emprak's artistic accompaniment uses non-pitched percussion instruments/ musicals, with song lyrics containing an invitation to worship and draw closer to God Almighty. Therefore, this art is called Emprak, from the word *E-Men Perak*, which means approaching. Another form of presentation that supports is the arrangement of make-up and clothing that is distinguished based on the character of each character. The placement of the floor pattern and the direction in and out of the player are also adjusted to the character of the character.

Emprak art can be performed anywhere, it can be in a *pendhopo*, an open arena, a simple stage, or a proscenium stage. The location of the performance will not change the shape of the floor pattern that will be played, because this Emprak art uses the East Jajar floor pattern and the letter "V" so that it can be applied to various types of stage arenas.

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