



The Creative Process of Creating the *Garudanesa* Dance as a Representation of Local and National Cultural Identity

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Abstract

This study examines the creative process underlying the development of the *Garudanesa Dance* as a representation of both local and national cultural identity. The work emphasizes the philosophical meaning of the Garuda bird as a symbol of Indonesian nationalism, embodying values of strength, unity, and wisdom. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the research was conducted through three stages: exploration, improvisation, and composition. The exploration stage involved literature reviews, field observations of East Javanese traditional dances, and interviews with prominent dance maestros. The improvisation stage generated innovative movement variations that integrated elements of Arek, Banyuwangi, and Ponorogo dance traditions, supported by the experimental development of musical accompaniment and costume design. The composition stage resulted in a choreographic structure that featured dynamic floor patterns, symbolic movement sequences, collaborative music, and Garuda-inspired costumes. The findings indicate that the *Garudanesa Dance* successfully synthesizes the symbolic value of the Garuda with the richness of local traditions, producing a harmonious artistic expression. The bold, expressive movements and visual elements not only reaffirm cultural identity but also embody the spirit of nationalism. Consequently, the *Garudanesa Dance* can be positioned as an educational medium for fostering nationalist values as well as a strategy for revitalizing traditional arts in the face of modernization.

Keywords: creative process, *Garudanesa* dance, nationalism, East Javanese culture, identity symbols

INTRODUCTION

The development of science and technology has brought significant changes to the lifestyles of modern society. One striking impact is the increasing intensity of cultural exchange through digital media, which indirectly influences the younger generation's perception of national identity and local cultural heritage. As stated by Rizqi & Sumarsono (2018), "the digital transformation in the performing arts has caused traditional arts to face existential challenges in maintaining a domestic audience that now increasingly consumes global cultural products" (Rizqi & Sumarsono, 2018, p. 2). This phenomenon raises concerns about the fading meaning of national symbols, pillars of national identity. The *Garuda*, as the symbol of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, holds profound philosophical value. It represents strength, wisdom, and unity in diversity. However, research by Rahardjo (2021) shows that "today's younger generation of Indonesians tends not to understand the comprehensive philosophical meaning of the *Garuda* symbol, so the symbol is perceived more as a mere visual ornament" (Rahardjo, 2021, p. 117). This situation reflects a serious challenge in instilling nationalistic values through media that adapts to changing times.

On the other hand, dance is an effective medium for conveying symbolic messages to the public. Hanna (2006) states that "dance is a primary modality of cultural expression that can serve as an educational and ideological instrument" (Hanna, 2006, p. 44). Through the creation of dance works that highlight national symbols, the process of internalizing national values can take place aesthetically and touch the affective aspects of the audience.

East Javanese traditional dances possess a rich variety of movements and strong philosophies. Widodo (2019) states that "the multiethnic dance styles in East Java represent the dynamics of inclusive community life, so that the creation of contemporary dances based on tradition allows for the birth of choreographic innovations that remain rooted in local culture" (Widodo, 2019, p. 70). In this context, the *Garudanesa* dance presents an effort to revitalize traditional dance with a contemporary creative approach. This work combines movements from the *Arek*, Banyuwangi, and Ponorogo sub-ethnic groups, known for their expressive, attractive, and symbolic dynamics.

The creative process of creating the *Garudanesa* dance was inspired by Alma Hawkins' (1991) approach, which emphasizes exploration, improvisation, and composition as the foundation for creating dance works of artistic and conceptual value. According to Hawkins, "the choreographic process is an imaginative inquiry into movement that can be structured to create a work that resonates with audiences culturally and emotionally" (Hawkins, 1991, p. 26). In addition, Soedarsono (1977) in his study of Indonesian dance emphasized the importance of maintaining philosophical values in dance works: "traditional dance is not merely an aesthetic body movement, but a manifestation of noble values that are an inseparable part of the nation's identity" (Soedarsono, 1977, p. 22). Therefore, the creation of the *Garudanesa* dance which elevates the *Garuda* symbol is not only a matter of aesthetics, but a cultural strategy to strengthen the sense of nationalism amidst the strong currents of globalization.



The *Garudanesa* dance also aligns with Kaeppler's (2007) perspective, which asserts that "dance can be a vehicle for constructing and expressing cultural identity, especially in times of cultural transformation" (Kaeppler, 2007, p. 30). This becomes relevant as modernization erodes society's ties to traditional symbols. Therefore, packaging the dance with contemporary innovation is expected to bridge the psychological distance between the younger generation and national symbols. Based on these considerations, the creation of the *Garudanesa* dance is important not only as an artistic product but also as a means of cultural education capable of touching the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of the younger generation. This research is expected to provide scientific and practical contributions in developing a model for creating dances based on national symbols that are contextual to the demands of the times.

The research problem is formulated based on the awareness of the younger generation's diminishing understanding of national symbols, particularly the *Garuda* bird symbol as a manifestation of nationalist values. Furthermore, the influence of globalization has weakened appreciation for traditional dance as part of Indonesia's cultural heritage. In this context, the creation of the *Garudanesa* dance is not merely an artistic process but also a cultural strategy with educational goals and the preservation of the nation's noble values. Based on this background, this research is specifically directed to answer the following questions. First, how are the stages of movement exploration carried out in the process of creating the *Garudanesa* dance work, starting from the search for sources of symbolic inspiration to the exploration of traditional East Javanese movement varieties? Second, how is the process of movement improvisation carried

out to create new variations that remain grounded in traditional roots, but are able to express the meaning of the *Garuda* symbol contextually? Third, how is the composition stage arranged to arrange movements, floor patterns, music, and other supporting elements to become a complete, communicative, and aesthetic dance choreography? Fourth, what are the symbols of artistic and cultural identity represented in the *Garudanesa* dance work, whether in the form of movement varieties, costumes, properties, or musical accompaniment? These questions are expected to frame the entire research process comprehensively so that it can explore the potential of the *Garudanesa* dance work as a medium for strengthening nationalist values as well as revitalizing traditional arts and culture.

This research aims to describe and analyze in depth the creative process of creating the *Garudanesa* dance, inspired by the *Garuda* bird symbol, the symbol of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. More specifically, this research aims to achieve four main objectives. First, this research aims to reveal the stages of exploration of ideas and movements that are the main foundation of the creation of dance works, by mapping the symbolic inspiration of *Garuda* and exploring the variety of traditional movements from various sub-ethnic groups in East Java. Second, this study aims to explain how the improvisation process is carried out intensively to create new movement variations that remain in harmony with the aesthetic characteristics of traditional East Javanese dance, but can provide a more contextual contemporary feel for today's audience. Third, this research aims to explain the process of composing dance compositions, starting from designing floor patterns, movement sequences, tempo dynamics, spatial arrangements, to the

integration of music, costumes, and properties, so that it becomes a complete, communicative choreography full of symbolic meaning. Fourth, this study aims to identify the symbols of artistic and cultural identity represented in the *Garudanesa* dance work, both those derived from the philosophical values of the *Garuda* bird and those taken from the aesthetics of local East Javanese traditions.

By achieving these objectives, this research is expected to provide academic contributions in the development of tradition-based dance arts science, as well as become a practical reference for the creation of works of art that support the strengthening of nationalist values in the era of globalization

Literature review

Creative Process of Dance

Alma Hawkins (1991) states that dance creation consists of three main stages: exploration, improvisation, and composition. The exploration stage focuses on exploring ideas and developing basic movement materials. Improvisation is used to develop innovative movements. Meanwhile, composition structures the work into a cohesive performance. This approach has been widely used in contemporary choreography research (Hawkins, 1991).

Symbolism and Cultural Identity

Hadi (1990) emphasized the importance of maintaining traditional elements in creating new works as an effort to maintain cultural identity. Soedarsono (1977) emphasized the philosophical value of traditional dance, which serves to strengthen nationalism. Rahardjo (2021) specifically highlighted the symbolism of the *Garuda* as a national symbol, explaining that

internalizing national symbols in works of art can serve as a medium for educating people about national values.

East Javanese Dance Style

East Javanese dance styles encompass various sub-ethnic groups with unique characteristics. The *Arek* sub-ethnic group is known for its dynamic and expressive movements, Banyuwangi emphasizes attractive movements, and Ponorogo emphasizes strength. Widodo (2019) states that combining multi-ethnic dance styles in a single choreography is an innovative strategy in creating contemporary dance based on local traditions.

Preservation of Traditional Arts in the Context of Modernization

Rizqi and Sumarsono (2018) explain that preserving traditional arts requires a creative and adaptive approach, including packaging them in forms relevant to the younger generation. Digital media and contemporary performances can be effective tools for maintaining the existence of local cultural values in the era of globalization.

METHODS

This research uses an artistic research approach, focusing on the creative process of choreography as both a scientific method and a medium of expression. This approach draws on the concept developed by Alma Hawkins (1991), namely a framework for dance creation consisting of three main stages: exploration, improvisation, and composition. Each stage has its own procedural characteristics and conceptual contributions to the formation of the *Garudanesa* dance work as a whole. This research method is descriptive



qualitative, as the data collected primarily consists of process descriptions, interpretations of movement meanings, and narratives of the creative experiences of the researcher and the creative team. This approach is relevant to the nature of performing arts research, which aims not only to produce a work but also to document the conceptual, aesthetic, and technical journeys involved in creation. Broadly speaking, the research process is divided into three stages:

1. Exploration Stage

The first stage is the phase of exploring and formulating the basic ideas for the *Garudanesa* dance. At this stage, the researcher carried out the following series of activities:

a. Identifying Conceptual Inspiration. Researchers examined the symbolism of the *Garuda* bird as the main idea of the dance work. The *Garuda* bird is interpreted as a symbol of strength, wisdom, and unity of the Indonesian nation. This symbolic concept is then mapped into movement themes that can be processed into choreography.

b. Literature Study. The researchers studied academic literature related to traditional dance symbolism (Rahardjo, 2021; Soedarsono, 1977), choreographic approaches (Hawkins, 1991), and East Javanese dance styles (Widodo, 2019). This literature review provided a theoretical framework and artistic inspiration that served as a reference in developing the movements.

c. Traditional Movement Observation. Observation fields were conducted by attending traditional dance performances from the *Arek*, Banyuwangi, and Ponorogo sub-ethnic groups. This activity aimed to document the variety of

movements, floor patterns, and expressive characteristics unique to each region.

d. Interview with Dance Maestro. In-depth interviews were conducted with several senior dance artists to explore movement philosophy, cultural context, and relevant traditional techniques. Interview data was confirmed with observational notes and previously reviewed literature.

The output of the exploration stage is a collection of movement motifs, symbolic ideas, and initial sketches of floor patterns that will be developed further.

2. Improvisation Stage

The second stage aims to transform the exploration material into new, creative, and innovative movement patterns. The improvisation process takes place in stages through several activities:

a. Motion Experiment. Researchers and dancers experimented with various combinations of traditional movements with varying tempo, intensity, and direction. The experimentation process was repeated to find a movement formula that represented the meaning of *Garuda's* strength, unity, and wisdom.

b. Development of Accompanying Music. Traditional East Javanese music is combined with contemporary elements to create a dramatic atmosphere that supports the symbolic themes. Accompaniment experiments were conducted with the music composers involved in the research team.

c. Costume Design and Dance Properties.

Improvisation also includes the development of dance costumes featuring local motifs with a touch of modern aesthetics. The dance props used are selected according to the dramaturgical needs of the performance.

d. Documentation Process. The entire improvisation process was documented in the form of video recordings, photos, and narrative notes, so that the creative process could be reconstructed as part of the research data.

The improvisation stage produces variations in movement, costume designs, properties, and prototypes of musical accompaniment patterns that are ready to be arranged into a complete work.

3. Composition Stage

The composition stage is the phase of developing the final structure of the *Garudanesa* dance work. Core activities at this stage include:

a. Choreography Arrangement. Researchers arrange the series of movements that have been developed into dramatic acts, determine the transitions between parts, and regulate the intensity of the performance dynamics.

b. Floor Pattern Arrangement. The floor pattern is arranged according to the symbolic theme of *Garuda*, so that the dancers' formations can create visuals that support the movement narrative.

c. Performance Practice and Trial. Trials were conducted in several practice sessions involving dance students as dancers. This process was crucial for assessing the suitability of the

choreography to the dancers' abilities and evaluating the performance's artistic strength.

d. Evaluation and Revision. Researchers invited dance experts and arts practitioners to provide input. Based on the evaluation, the dance work was refined in aspects of movement, music, costume, and floor patterns.

The output of the composition stage is a *Garudanesa* dance work that is ready to be performed and documented as a result of artistic research.

Data Collection Technique

Data is collected through:

1. Observation: observing traditional dance performances and the *Garudanesa* dance practice process
2. In-depth interview: with dance maestros, professional dancers, music composers
3. Literature study: using books, journal articles, dance work documentation.
4. Visual documentation: video recording, photos, floor pattern sketches

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out descriptively and qualitatively through the following steps:



1. Data Reduction: selecting data relevant to exploration, improvisation, and composition.
2. Display Data: visualize movement patterns, floor patterns, and supporting components of dance in the form of matrices and images.
3. Data Verification: ensure validity through triangulation (observation, interviews, documentation).
4. Interpretation: to conclude the symbolic meaning, movement innovation, and potential of the work as a medium for nationalist education.

This analysis is expected to be able to explore the conceptual and artistic strength of the *Garudanesa* dance work as a representation of Indonesian cultural arts identity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research, which involves compiling a *Garudanesa* dance product, is currently in the process of exploring movement, dance accompaniment, and dance costumes. The exploration process is as follows.

Dance Movement Exploration

The process of exploring the *Garudanesa* dance movements, which stems from the idea of the *Garuda* bird as the symbol of the Indonesian nation, begins with a deep understanding of the symbolic meaning of *Garuda* in the context of nationality. Before exploring the movements, an understanding of the *Garuda* symbolizing strength, courage, and wisdom as a representation of the spirit of unity and

steadfastness of the nation is instilled in the pouring of movement ideas. The movement exploration focuses on finding movement motifs that reflect the physical character and also the philosophy of *Garuda*. The basis for the exploration of dance movements, outlined from observations of traditional East Javanese dance movements, is as follows.

Table 1. Basic Exploration of *Garudanesa* Dance Movements

Movement	Basic Concepts of Dance Movement
Hand Gestures	The dancer's hands, besides functioning to develop movement symbols, are also used to bring out the strong character of the <i>Garuda</i> bird with its wings.
Eye gaze	The character of the <i>Garuda</i> bird, which is gallant, dignified, graceful and always alert, is displayed through the gaze of the eyes as an expression in conveying the impression of the dance movements.
Body Posture	The upright and dashing body posture in expressing dance movements with dynamic movements gives an impression of elegance and wisdom but remains authoritative.
Footwork	The footwork of the <i>Trisik</i> Steps resembles a <i>Garuda</i> bird flying majestically. The <i>Adeg</i> footwork with <i>Tanjak</i> in the <i>Sekaran</i> movement is performed with firm strength, sometimes gently with a <i>gejug</i> , embodying the dynamism of the dance movement.

The basic movements then become the basis for the exploration process of *Garudanesa* dance movements which involve improvisation of movements from various sources, both traditional dance movements and development of movements towards contemporary dance, to obtain original movement forms but still have symbolic meaning. The concept of the structure

of the variety of *Garudanesa* dance movements as the basis for exploration is as follows.

Table 2. Concept of *Garudanesa* Dance Movement Structure

No	Movement	Information
1.	Opening	<i>Garuda</i> flies by moving its wings energetically and firmly accompanied by dynamic and rhythmic dance music.
2.	Worship	The opening movement includes prayer as a symbol of respect.
3.	Variety of flowers	Hand development movements with a variety of traditional movements that have been developed, with <i>lombo</i> and <i>rangkep</i> movements followed by foot movements. The movement of developing strength and agility through wing movements is a symbol of courage and decisiveness through flapping wings showing strength. The <i>Kembangan</i> partner movement embodies dynamic movements with symbols of cooperation, tolerance, and protection which are explored with hand and foot movements.
4.	Variety of climaxes - endings	The flying movement symbolizes agility and control of territory which is carried out gallantly and at any time the movement firmly stops to observe the situation and is always ready in various situations.



The exploration of dance movements has been carried out by exploring the basic principles of the *Garudanesa* dance with opening movements and worship movements.



Figure 1. Variety of Opening Movements with Flying *Garuda*

The opening movements involve rotating the feet in a figure-eight, with the arms held out as if they were the wings of a *Garuda* bird in flight. Occasionally, the feet are stopped at an angle and the feet are raised, observing the surroundings, illustrating the *Garuda's* agility in

various situations. The movements are followed by a prayer as a sign of respect.



Figure 2. Various Prayer Movements

In exploring the various movements of worship as a symbol of respect, it is done with a *tanjak* position with both hands held together, with the head folded and the wings closed, followed by opening the wings wide. This movement is done with East Javanese musical accompaniment enhances the expressive movements. This is followed by the *Kembangan* movement, which consists of hand movements with *lombo* and *rangkep* movements, wing movements with prominent wing movements, and partner movements as a form of cooperation and protection.

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figure 3. Exploration of Early Movement Development

At the exploration stage, it is still limited to the basic exploration of opening movements, offerings and initial developments. After developing various movements, the next stage was selecting and arranging them to form a cohesive and communicative dance structure. The movements chosen aligned with the creative concept, which emphasized East Javanese traditional identity. Other supporting elements,

such as dance costumes and musical accompaniment, were also explored.

The dance costume exploration began with the color concept that would be used in designing the *Garudanesa* dance costume, taking into account the characteristics of the *Garuda* bird. The colors chosen have strong symbolic meaning and also reinforce the artistic impression, character, and values of the *Garudanesa* dance. These colors are: red, black, blue, and gold.



Table 3. *Garudanesa* Dance Costume Colors and Their Meanings

Color	Color Impression
Red	Symbolizing passion, courage, and zest for life. The color red emphasizes energy, bravery, and the <i>Garuda</i> 's heroic image. Furthermore, red also evokes dynamism, vitality, and enlivens the dance movements.
Black	The meaning of the symbol of strength, steadfastness and authority. The black color creates an impression of elegance and strength so that the character of the <i>Garuda</i> bird provides a solid, firm and majestic basis as a guard and protector.

Blue	Symbolic meaning of peace, tranquility and spirituality. The color blue evokes balance and majesty. The <i>Garuda</i> , a mythological bird, evokes the sky or celestial sphere, emphasizing its identity as a soaring bird.
Gold	Symbolic meaning of glory, majesty and spiritual wealth. The impression of gold adds an impression of luxury, sacredness and authority. In the <i>Garudanesa</i> dance costume, gold is used to emphasize the color and accessories to highlight its majestic aspect.

The combination of black, red, blue, and gold in the *Garudanesa* dance costume creates a powerful, symbolic and visual appearance. The initial design for the *Garudanesa* dance costume is as follows.

Figure 4. *Garudanesa* Dance Costume Design with Red, Black, Blue and Gold Colors

The combination of colors resulting from the exploration of *Garudanesa* dance costume design with a combination of black, red, blue and gold creates a strong appearance that is both symbolic and heroic. The majesty of *Garuda*, its authority and cultural greatness are displayed in the aesthetics of the *Garudanesa* dance costumes. In addition to exploring dance movements, the *Garudanesa* dance accompaniment was also explored. The accompaniment is based on traditional East Javanese dance, emphasizing the strength of its rhythm, rhythmic play, and dynamism. The exploration of the accompaniment is divided into four sections, consistent with the *Garudanesa* dance's structural concept.



CONCLUSION

The creation of the *Garudanesa* Dance demonstrates how traditional cultural values can be revitalized through contemporary choreographic processes while remaining rooted in philosophical symbolism. By adopting the three stages of exploration, improvisation, and composition, this research successfully integrated the symbolic meaning of the *Garuda* as a representation of national identity with the richness of East Javanese traditional dances. The resulting work presents movements, costumes, and musical accompaniments that not only reflect aesthetic innovation but also serve as a medium of nationalist education. Ultimately, the *Garudanesa* Dance proves that traditional arts can adapt to the dynamics of modernization while maintaining their cultural significance and contributing to strengthening national pride and identity.

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