

ALI MARKASA'S CONCEPT IN THE CREATION OF REMO JOMBANGAN DANCE

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ABSTRACT

Remo Jombang dance is one of the many styles of Remo dances in East Java, which has its own unique characteristics if compared with others. This dance was created by Ali Markasa who is a pengreman (remo dance performer) of Jombang. Ali Markasa created a unique pattern of dance movement in such a way that techniques producing attractive and dynamic movements are created in this Remo Jombang dance.

The objective of this research is to reveal Ali Markasa's concept in the creation of Remo Jombang dance. The method used in this research is descriptive, qualitative analysis by ethno-choreology approach.

The result of the research showed that Ali Markasa's idea of such Remo Dance creation was derived from his experience as pengreman (dance performer) of Ludruk show. He observed that Remo dance in general was just so so and lack of spirit, then came the idea of creating a more attractive and dynamic Remo dance, what is now called Remo Jombang dance. The characteristics of the dance were demonstrated in its sadukan sampur, tanjak, and ayam alas patterns of movement. Ali Markasa's techniques of creating such attractive and dynamic dance movements were so well-known that the whole dance performance of those movements was widely recognized with the term njangkrik upo due to the agility in the dance.

Keywords: Concept, Ali Markasa, Remo Jombang Dance

INTRODUCTION

Remo dance is a traditional dance in East Java, an inseperated part of *Ludruk Show*. The dance using propertie such as *gongseng* and *sampur* functions as the opening dance of the show of *Ludruk*. This is in line with what Supriyanto said that the show of *Ludruk* was started with Remo dance, dialog, conversation, *kidungan*³², and such things was presented in front of the audience. Charachter depicted in the dance was gallant. Dance movement consists of head movement (*gela-gelo*), and dynamic foot movement (*gedrag-gedrug*), from which acronym was Lodrog derived or written as *Ludruk* (Supriyanto, 1989: 6).

Remo dance is expression of character or style of each dancer. The individual' characteristic style is also linked to the area where the dancer come from. A group of *Remo* performers said that *Remo* dance of Surabaya style uses more *adeg* poses putting weight on both legs. *Remo Jombang* uses more *adeg* poses with the body leaning forward. *Remo Malang* positions the body leaning to the left. The movement elements of *Remo Jombang*, *Remo Surabaya*, and *Remo Madura* use *Pencak* (traditional martial art) elements, whereas *Remo Malang* uses more elements of the movement of *Tari Topeng* (Mask Dance) (Wibisono, 1981/1982: 15).

³²*Kidungan* is a folk song, poem depicting day-to-day life of people or expressing social criticism regarding injustice practices in society.

Seen from the shapes and styles of *Remo* dances in East Java, one of the works of *Remo Jombangan* dances, created by AliMarkasa has a level of complexity and movement characteristics dominated by *sampur* playing. *Sampur* is generally used as the property of dance that are explored and played by hand movements. Ali Markasa not only explores *the sampur* by hand,

but also uses footwork techniques -*sadukan sampur*-. Techniques of *sampur* playing by Ali Markasa produce a very dynamic, precise, expressive, characteristic, and attractive movement (Yanuartuti, 2009: 5). This is also confirmed by Wahyudianto that *Remo Jombangan* dance by Ali Markasa is a form of dance that has reached the best techniques, poses and quality of movements, that is, agile, fast, and precise in motion and a sense of rhythm. The techniques here are intended as a means of carrying out the movements of the dance appropriately so as to achieve the desired state of the art (Wahyudianto, 2008: 101).

Karawitan (the music) for *Remo Jombangan* dance is the same that for *Remo* dance in general using *gendhing*³³ *jula-juli*³⁴. The difference lies in the rhythm of the piece. *Remo* dances generally use the piece with a slow rhythm, while for *Remo Jombangan* dance by Ali Markasa the piece, its dynamics tend to be faster. This is what makes *Remo Jombangan* dance look more attractive and dynamic. All parts of the body should move with different movements and different rhythms. He not only processes the movement, but also combines it with the dance music in a fast tempo.

The creation of *Remo Jombangan* dance could not be separated from the role of the figure of Ali Markasa as choreographer. Ali Markasa is one of the art performers, who have been working in the performance art world since 1956 until now and in the village Ploso Jombang. Ali Markasa is a quite interesting figure to talk about related to his role in the longstanding tradition he has been involved. Ali Markasa's long engagement in the world of performance enable him make to become a professional performance artist in the field of dance. A professional dancing artist must not only have dancing skills, also be able to demonstrate specific characteristics of personality, able to realize what he wants as the typical characteris of his dance creation (Ward, 1984: 28).

In creating *Remo Jombangan* dance, Ali Markasa not only naturally created such dance, but also got inspiration from Sastro Bolet Amenan. Bolet is *pengreman* (*Remo* dance performer) from Jombang, who was phenomenal within 1970s. The dance style by Ali Markasa was taken from what Bolet taught him (Nana, Yanuartuti, Divine, 2012: 497). Basic patterns of dance movement recommended by Bolet to be strengthened include *tanjak*, *sadukan sampur*, and *ayam alas*. Those patterns of movement are the basis of Ali Markasa's *Remo Jombangan* dance creation.

Based on this background, it is important to uncover Ali Markasa's concept in the creation of *Remo Jombangan* dance. The concept is able to bring the birth of the popular, attractive, and unique work named *Remo Jombangan*. This is what has made *Remo Jombangan* dance continually grow up until now. Based on this phenomenon, writing about Ali Markasa's concept in the creation of *Remo Jombangan* dance is important to do. The formulation of the problem of the study is how is Ali Markasa's concept in the creation of *Remo Jombangan*

³³*Gendhing* is a common term used to name musical composition of *karawitan Jawa*. It also applies in the context of *karawitan Jawa Timur*, *gending* an be perceived as accomplishment or sound output resulted from abstraction and cristalization of musicality in the mind of *pengrawit* (composer) expressed through *gamelan* (Supanggah, 1990:177).

³⁴*Jula-juli* is a noun derived from one's activity in producing certain sound by playing *gamelan* bound into one integrated pattern. Its result forms a kind of understanding of structured sounds. In short, it is understood as *gending* (a piece of music composition), so that it is commonly termed as *gendhing jula-juli*.

dance? The objective of this paper is to find out Ali Markasa's concept in the creation of *Remo Jombang* dance. The significance of this study may contribute knowledge about the diversity of styles of Remo dances in East Java, particularly in Jombang. The approach used is ethno-choreology approach. The method used is descriptive qualitative analysis.

Ali Markasa's Concept

Ali Markasa's concept is Ali Markasa's thought in creating *Ngremo Jombang* dance derived from his life journey of life and his long experience in performance art. Those experiences led to his being a *pengreman* or *Remo* dancer with his own characteristics. It also includes Ali Markasa's ideals or desires and motivation in performance art. Ali Markasa, in creating *Remo Jombang* dance, refers to the prior form of *Remo* dance, but enriched to suit his style.

Figure of Ali Markasa

Ali Markasa was born on July 19, 1942 in Jombang precisely at Jalan Protokol No. 18 Ploso Subdistrict, Jombang. He was the eldest of three children of the couple Kasemin and Kaini. His father worked as a village official and also a *Ludruk* musician who played *gambang* and *gender*. Ali Markasa's father passed away in 1960 at the age of 105 years. Ali Markasa lived in fairly prosperous family with his parents both as farmers and as a village official. At first the parents of Ali Markasa had hope for her three children to able to continue their study to a higher school. But it could not be realized by Ali Markasa. Ali Markasa was involved in performance art at the age of 14 years. Since then, Ali Markasa has not attended school. He stopped studying at the second grade of junior high school. He preferred to pursue in his career in the field of performance rather than to go to school. Ali Markasa more fun learning to dance rather than having to learn in formal schools. At the beginning it was opposed by both of his parents, but over period of time it was agreed with the support from his father. However, it could not weaken Ali Markasa's spirit to plunge into the world of performance art. The following is the picture of Ali Markasa who won Award as Maestro *Remo Jombang* dance.



Figure 1. Picture of Ali Markasa (Novianti's collecton, 2013)

Ali Markasa as *Ludruk* Actor

Art is the light over reality. This reality, which we value the ordinary and routine, is suddenly given a new light so that something appears, something that has never been seen so far. The reality looks new, clear, deep, and true. Art is the beginning of the meeting between truth and reality. That truth has been hidden behind reality. Each person may be able to experience such an event, but remain stored for himself. Artists, scientists, philosophers, theologians, can manifest in symbols. It requires technical skill and ingenuity to make them happen. If a person is skillful, trained, and intelligent, then he will quickly make it happen in the form of an object (Sumardjo, 2006: 92).

Similarly, Ali Markasa who kept trying to train his ability in the field of performance art starting in the year of 1956. Ali Markasa went into the performance art world when he was 14 years old. He preferred dancing rather to formal schooling. Initially he was a *Remo* dancer of the *Ludruk* show. Ali Markasa joined one *Ludruk* group one to another *Ludruk* group. The following are the *Ludruk* groups Ali Markasa has ever joined:

- In 1956 he joined *Ludruk Margo Rukun* in the village of Dukuh Arum, Megaluh, Jombang.
- In 1959 he joined *Ludruk Margo Utomo* in Ngogri, Megaluh Jombang.
- In 1962 he became a member and a *pengreman* of *Ludruk Sinar Budaya* in Lamongan.
- In 1965 he became a member and a *pengreman* of *Ludruk Bhiana Mayangkara*, Jombang.
- In 1971 he became a member and a *pengreman* of *Ludruk Gema Budaya*, Jombang.
- In 1975 he joined *Ludruk Baru Muncul* in Jember.
- In 1976 he became a member and a *pengreman* of *Ludruk Asmara Murni*, Jombang.
- In 1983 he joined *Ludruk Gajah Mada*, Kediri.
- In 1984 he became a member and a *pengreman* of *Ludruk Kopasgat*, Madiun.
- In 1985 he joined *Ludruk Panca Marga*, Nganjuk.
- In 1991 he became a member and a *pengreman* of *Ludruk Sari Murni*, Jombang.
- In 1995 he became a member and a *pengreman* of *Ludruk Budi Jaya*, Jombang.
- In 1997 he joined *Ludruk Arsedha*, Malang.
- In 1998 he joined *Ludruk Armada*, Malang.
- In 2006 he became a member and a *pengreman* of *Ludruk Mustika Jaya*, Jombang.
- In 2013 he joined *Ludruk Lintas Generasi*.

Ali Markasa's experiences gained from on *Ludruk* group to another brought him to be a famous and professional *ludruk* artist in his time. Ali's presence in the show of *Ludruk Markasa* was able to attract people to watch *Ludruk* show. No wonder there were so many spectators present when the performer of *Remo* dance at the opening *Ludruk* show was Ali Markasa. Ali Markasa was able to perform both the dance and the *kidungan* that attract the audience's attention. The creativity of Ali Markasa by displaying new things on stage made

her performance was not monotonous and the viewers felt excited and satisfied. They were willing to jostle to see Ali Markasa performing *Remo* dance. According to Ali's wife, Winarsih Markasa, many sellers were around for *Ludruk* show and as spectators who willingly gave what they sold to Ali Markasa for free because of being so pleased with his dancing performance (Winarsih, August 2, 2014 interview). This did not make Ali Markasa arrogant, in fact he was even proud of the positive response of the public pleased with the work of his dance creation. Here is a picture of Ali Markasa when giving an example of *Remo* Jombang dance during the *Ludruk* show some time ago.



Figure 2. Ali Markasa as *Ludruk* Actor (Novianti's collection, 2013)

Ali Markasa as Remo Dancer

Each choreographer is a seeker of movement. He gathered the treasures of movements, then they are selected, processed, and organized in accordance with the concept of work planned (Ellfeldt, 1977: 14). The task of a dancer as an artist is to form movements in such a way that it becomes a form that can speak with the power to create the desired illusion and conveys the essence of the human experience.

The success of a professional artist, according to Awuy, is determined by the mastery of some basic components of the artistic matters such as technique, sensitivity of feeling, intelligence (the ability to understand), and creativity. Technical skills include movement technique and choreography techniques. A dancer must be able to move in accordance with the aesthetic demands of dance and choreography techniques. If he is also a choreographer or dance maker, he also must have the ability to assemble and fuse movements with a variety of other supporting elements of art: music, costumes, makeup, setting, and lighting.

The second component is sensitivity of feeling. The sensitivity of feeling includes sensitivity of movement sense, aesthetic sense, intuition, and sense of humanity. The first two sensitivities are not too difficult to master, but the last two namely intuition (ability to quickly grasp something / events without conscious thought processes), and sense of humanity - sensitivity or ability to come to feel (empathy) in depth toward what is experienced by human beings or any living creature is possessed only by certain artists.

The third component is creativity. Creativity competence is required to provide individual interpretation (for a dancer or art performer) and to create (for a choreographer). Creative

competence is the ability to create, provide interpretation, realize ideas, initiative and experiences into an art form with high imagination and innovation. The fourth component is intelligent or ability to learn and understand or deal with new things or challenging situations. That is, critical thinking skills or reasoning skills (Awuy, 2005: 33).

Based on the basic components of professional artists as described above, the four components have been owned by Ali Markasa. As both a dancer and choreographer of *Remo Jombang* dance, Ali Markasa has movement techniques able to bring the presence of a dynamic and attractive *Remo Jombang* dance. Techniques are ways or methods organized and systematically arranged, used in expressing an idea or thought.

For the second component, the feeling sensitivity or appreciation of Ali Markasa to the dance he performs was indicated from his facial expressions while he was dancing. Ali Markasa is also considered as a person who has a high sense of empathy toward others in a day-to-day life. He likes helping people in distress, even accepting someone he does not know to live and serve in his house. Until now that person is considered to be a part of a family and be a foster child of Ali Markasa.

The third component owned by Ali Markasa is creativity. Without creativity, an art in this case *Remo* dance will seem monotonous and boring. Ali Markasa always creates new things different in the dance work. He always gives variations of the new movement in addition to the basic movement to fresh *Remo* dance so as not to seem monotonous and usual. For the last component of intelligence, Ali Markasa is also considered as a person who always thinks critically about the performance art world. He always sees opportunities to keep developing his dance. Aided by the adopted son and manager, he keeps trying to introduce her dance work to the public, especially people in Jombang. This is done by setting up a studio and holding seminars and workshops on *Remo Jombang* in Jombang and outside Jombang.

Ali Markasa's purpose to introduce *Remo Jombang* dance is beside to preserve the work of his dance, to seek for new cadets that will be able to continue his struggle to keep maintaining and reviving *Remo Jombang* dance. *Remo Jombang* dance is an asset of local arts having high value and required to be preserved and developed to avoid its extinction. It will be very unfortunate if the dance work should go extinct after the death of its creator someday because of no successors. Therefore, Ali Markasa teaches *Remo Jombang* dance to children of elementary schools or of kindergarten up to adults. The goal is to ensure that his dance work can continue to live and survive in line with the development resulting in increasingly varied art.

Ali Markasa's dancing ability also brought him to be a winner at festivals of *Remo Dance* organized by the government of East Java Province. As for the accomplishments he has achieved, among others, are as follows:

1. The Best Remo Dancer in East Java on Genteng Kali Surabaya in 1981.
2. The Second Best Remo Dancer in East Java in Surabaya Brawijaya Regional Military Command in 1994.
3. The Second Best Remo Dancer in East Java in Krida Budaya Malang 1995.

Due to his ability in the field of dance, especially *Remo* dance, Ali Markasa was honored as Maestro of *Remo Jombang* dance on December 5, 2012 by the Jakarta Arts Council held at Graha Bhakti Budaya, Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta. Maestro is a tribute to a person considered to have expertise, competence or significant expertise and a form of appreciation to a dancer having fidelity to tradition. Ali Markasa received an award from the Jakarta Arts Council for his bravery loyal to the relic and efforts to revive the important values

continuously. Ali Markasa is also categorized as artists who participated in the preservation of traditional arts. This was expressed also by Mardimin.

"Preservation of traditional arts does not call for obligation to maintain things as before, change as trend direction does not mean remodeling, but rather fix one or more sections deemed not to meet the taste of today" (Mardimin, 1994: 146).

Ali Markasa as a preserver of tradition of *Remo* dance also made an innovation to create a form of *Remo* dance packaging tailored to the needs of community and to the development of the era. The innovation made by Ali Markasa produced creative works of dance, that is, *Remo Jombangan* dance. *Remo Jombangan* dance was registered into the Ministry of Law and Human Rights in 2009 and was patented on 21 April 2010. In addition to *Remo Jombangan* dance, Ali Markasa also created *Remo Bolet* dance (Novianti, 2013: 45).

The Concept in the Creation of Remo Jombangan Dance

Ali Markasa is a creative and professional artist. This is evident in the work of *Remo* dance creation. He is capable of processing movement and rhythm in a way that raises very attractive and dynamic techniques. This is the characteristics of the work of *Remo* dance created by Ali Markasa and distinguished from other *Remo* dance styles. The dances created Ali Markasa are *Remo Jombangan* and *Remo Bolet*.

Remo Bolet dance of Ali Markasa creation is the development of *Remo Bolet* dance style in accordance with Ali Markasa's creativity. The techniques used in the dance movements applied the movement techniques of *Remo Jombangan* dance. The typical characteristics of the movement of *Remo Jombangan* dance lie on *tanjakan*, *sadukan sampur* and *ayam alas*. The difference between *Remo Jombangan* dance and *Remo Bolet* of Ali Markasa's creation lies on the *karawitan* music piece and costume. The dance *karawitan* used for *Remo Bolet* dance by Ali Markasa uses *gendhing krucilan*, *gendhing walang kekek*, *gendhing walang kekek sodron* and *gendhing srampat*. Makeup and costume for *Remo Bolet* dance created by Ali Markasa tend to be *nnglgo* or not wearing a top.

Wahyudiyanto called *Remo Bolet* dance of Ali Markasa's creation as *Remo Teropan* dance. It is called *teropan* because the dance is closer to people, familiar, and *gecul* or funny which is characteristic for the show at the entertainment level of people who have a celebration for either wedding or circumcision, *kaulan*, *tingkepan*, earth thanksgiving, village anniversary, or other types of people celebration. *Remo Bolet* dance of Ali Markasa's creation looks cheerful and lively, although it sometimes demonstrates an old man's behavior with slow motion, and bows. This demonstrates a contrast of motion in an attempt to show an optimal agility.

Based on the technique and characteristics of the movement patterns of *Remo Jombangan* dance *Remo Bolet* of Ali Markasa's creation, it can be concluded that the concept of *Remo* dance creation by Ali Markasa is known as *Remo njangkrik upo*. This is also confirmed by Wahyudiyanto, that *Remo* dance created by Markasa Ali also has a complicated characteristic movement, which are so agile and quick that it is recognized as *Remo njangkrik upo*. The term *njangkrik upo* is used as unique marker and distinctive to this Ali Markasa *Remo* dance (Wahyudiyanto, 2008: 102).

The following are the photo of Ali Markasa when ready to perform *Remo Jombangan* dance and the photo of *Remo Bolet* dance by Ali Markasa.

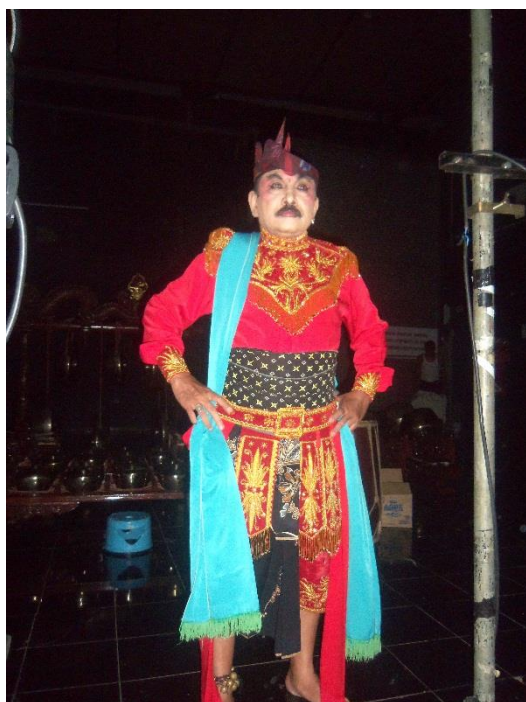


Figure 3. Ali Markasa when ready perform *Remo Jombang* dance (Novianti's collecton, 2013)

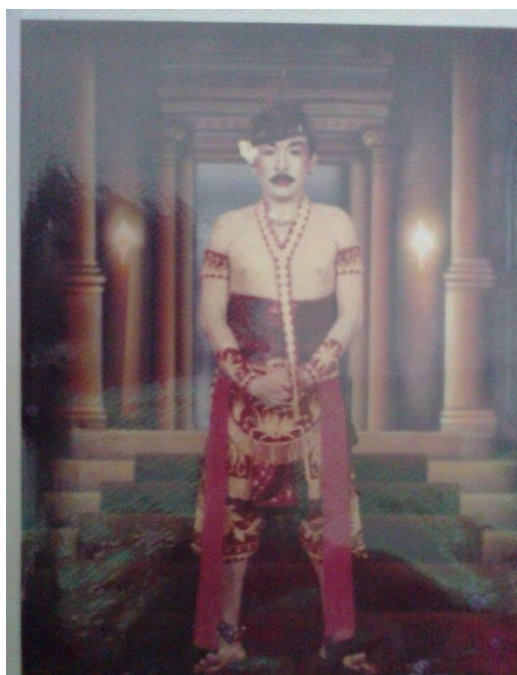


Figure 4. *Remo Bolet* dance by Ali Markasa (Novianti's collecton, 2004)

CONCLUSION

Ali Markasa's creativity in the creation of *Remo Jombang* dance appears due to seeing just-so-so Remo dance with unattractive dance movement. Therefore, Ali Tari Markasa created Remo dance using his own style. The dance concept of Ali Markasa was born from his experiences acting in *Ludruk* show and performing the opening dance in the *Ludruk* show. Ali Markasa also inherited artistic talent from his father, a *gamelan* player of *Ludruk*. The results of the Ali Markasa's dance concept led to the birth of the work of *Remo* dance with character *Njangkrik Upo*.

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