

Kraton Jogja and Covid-19: When Pandemic Brings Traditional Culture Closer to Millennials Around The World

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Received: November 23, 2022; Reviewed: December 11, 2022; Accepted: December 31, 2022

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Abstract

Karaton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat which now mostly recognized by the name Kraton Jogja in community, is the largest cultural-based institution in Yogyakarta. So, Kraton Jogja has duty to maintain, preserve, and develop traditional arts and culture. COVID-19 pandemic that has swept across the world, has forced many offline activities to be postponed or cancelled. Kawedanan Hageng Punakawan Kridhamardawa as the department tasked with preserving and developing Javanese arts was also affected. Their activities are limited even though they have to be present in society, that is now dominated by the millennial generation. By using the concepts of globalization and global village, this study aims to find out how the use of various digital media channels can be a solution in the midst of limitations. This research was conducted using qualitative methods through interviews, observation and literature study. The findings in this study explore a variety of content presentation innovations on the official social media of Kraton Jogja. The result shows that the use of digital media in the midst of a pandemic can actually cut through distance, space and time, so that traditional arts and culture can be enjoyed by audiences across generations from all over the world.

Keywords: Kraton Jogja; COVID-19; Arts And Culture; Globalization; Digital Media

How to Cite: Hakim, L.M., & Gondohutami, E.D. (2023). Kraton Jogja and Covid-19: When Pandemic Brings Traditional Culture Closer to Millennials Around The World, *Journal of Education, Humaniora and Social Sciences (JEHSS)*. 1 (3): 127-131.



INTRODUCTION

History recorded that the existence of Kasultanan Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat (Yogyakarta Sultanate) began after the Giyanti Treaty or “*Palihan Nagari*” signed on February 13, 1755. This treaty marked the division of the Mataram realm into two different kingdoms, namely Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat and Kasultanan Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat. The Giyanti Treaty was then followed by a meeting between the Sultan of Yogyakarta and the Sunan of Surakarta in Lebak, Jatisari on February 15, 1755 (Karaton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat, Tepas Tandha Yekti, n.d).

In this meeting, the arts and cultural anchor for each kingdom was negotiated. The result stipulated in a separate treaty, known as the Jatisari Treaty, addresses the different art and cultural identities of the two kingdoms. Discussions in this treaty include procedures for *busana* (attire), customs, language, *gamelan*, dances, and others. The Jatisari Treaty, specified that Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono I will continue and preserve the ancient cultural traditions of Mataram, while Susuhunan Pakubuwono III has agreed to invent or create new forms of art and culture. The Jatisari treaty was the starting point for the development of two different arts and culture between Yogyakarta and Surakarta (Karaton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat, Tepas Tandha Yekti, n.d).

The Sultanate of Yogyakarta with its centre the Palace of Yogyakarta is now mostly recognized by the name Kraton Jogja in the community. It remains to this day, the successor and heir to the ancient Mataram culture. Within the palace, *Kawedanan Hageng Punakawan (KHP) Kridhamardawa* is the mandated department tasked with the duty to preserve, protect, and develop the Mataram arts and culture. The department is in charge of various kinds of artistic and cultural activities ranging from dances, dance costumes (*pasedhahan/kagunan*), *karawitan* (gamelan playing), *sinden lebda* and *macapat*, *pedalangan* (shadow and wood puppetry), *bludir* (embroidery), *kemasan* (silver/gold smith), *gendhing/hinggil* (gamelan production and maintenance), *batik* making, *ngemit* (*blangkon* making), *mrannggi* (kris sheathings), and many others (interview with KPH Notonegoro, July 4th 2020).

Kraton Jogja as the biggest cultural-based institution in Yogyakarta and perhaps even in Indonesia, certainly has its own challenges in this millennial era. Globalization can be said to be the main cause of the challenges faced by Kraton Jogja in maintaining and spreading its traditional arts and culture to the wider community, especially to the millennial generation and generations below. Moreover, during this time Kraton Jogja tends to be an institution that seems old-fashioned and does not keep up with the times. In fact, Kraton Jogja is obliged to continue to maintain, preserve and develop its hereditary culture.

Recognizing the ever-evolving era, Kraton Jogja is also improving. Now, Kraton Jogja continues to study things that can be done to show its existence in the global world. Various performances in various locations including abroad, collaboration with various institutions, efforts to return palace manuscripts that had been looted, to holding an international symposium, are ways for the Kraton Jogja to continue taking care and disseminate Javanese cultural treasures, especially Yogyakarta to the public.

In this global era, the internet as a place to disseminate information, education, and entertainment easily, is like two blades for the existence of Kraton Jogja. On the one hand, the easy distribution of information on the internet allows the entry of various foreign cultures that have the potential to threaten the existence of Javanese culture which the Kraton Jogja must protect. The hectic circulation of information allows Kraton Jogja to be immersed in it and invisible to the public. But on the other hand, the internet can also be used by Kraton Jogja to introduce Javanese culture, especially Yogyakarta, to the wider community, even abroad. Of course, with a note, if Kraton Jogja can implement the right strategy in cyberspace.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, people have started to reduce their mobility. Likewise with the offline activities of KHP Kridhamardawa Karaton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat which had to be postponed or cancelled. This situation brings greater challenges for Kraton Jogja in maintaining its existence in public. However, it turns out that the COVID-19 pandemic has also changed the way people interact. When people can't meet face-to-face, the internet is becoming an increasingly crowded place to visit. Apparently this is again a challenge as well as an opportunity

for Kraton Jogja, especially KHP Kridhamardawa to present various noble arts to the community in difficult times.

Moreover, globalization as the key to connect to the world is already happening. Many scientists have put forward a definition of globalization. However, one definition that is quite good at describing the essence of globalization is presented by Held and McGrew. According to them, globalization is "the expanding scale, growing magnitude, speeding up and deepening impact of interregional flows and patterns of social interaction. It refers to a shift or transformation in the scale of human social organization that links distant communities and expands the reach of power relations across the world's major regions and continents" (Held and McGrew, 2004).

Held and McGrew in their definition of globalization focuses on shifting patterns of human social interaction. Globalization has shifted the pattern of interaction that was originally limited, only being able to talk to each other with fellow humans who are within the same area of coverage, now being able to cross regional boundaries. In simple language, globalization allows people who are far apart in space to be able to connect and interact with each other.

These 'globalization things' can't be separated from global village term. This term was coined by a communications scientist Marshall McLuhan in the 1960s. McLuhan (1962) in his book *Guttenberg Galaxy*, explained that the unprecedented phenomenon of electronic interdependence has re-created the world in an imaginary global village. The emergence of an oral society, a society that is dependent on the elements that make it up, is the result of a dialectic between cause and effect due to the dynamics within the interacting structure of society. These characteristics are considered to be the nature of a village community, which is also the nature of a global village community (McLuhan, 1962).

Both the definition of globalization put forward by Held and McGrew and the global village term presented by McLuhan emphasize the existence of power relations that cross the distance of space and time. Thus, both of them see that the 'best things' will always win in this global village and will form a new custom of the community. In other words, those who are superior will dominate the inferior and there will always be a struggle to be the most superior.

At this global village that happens because of the globalization, information can be spread very easily without any barriers in the form of space and time. Various information from every region around the world will scramble to fill the spaces in the global village. So does the entertainment as one of the products of culture.

Nowadays, people have many choices to enjoy and access what they want. Starting from news, important information, education, entertainment, and even sometimes personal information can be accessed with just few clicks. Various types of entertainment ranging from audio to visual, with different genres, and from various countries of origin, all available in their pocket with smartphone as the medium.

Pocket entertainment may be the right term to describe how many types of entertainment that we can access with our gadgets. Even though we are currently in Indonesia, we can easily watch Hollywood movies from America, Korean dramas from South Korea, or anime from Japan, only with our gadgets in hand. Those various entertainment will try to fill the people's mind and make themselves as a top of mind. The more advance the technology, the more choices of content that can be enjoyed by the audience. This phenomenon has finally become like two blades, can be an advantage and opportunity as well as a threat to the existence of Kraton Jogja among the generations living in this era.

Several previous studies related to Kraton Jogja's social media usually focused on social media management strategies for the formation of a positive image (Putri, 2019), or social media management for the purpose of cultural preservation (Setyawan, 2022). In relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, a research entitled "Content Analysis of Instagram Account @kratonjogja as a Digital Marketing Media for Tourism During the Covid-19 Pandemic" was also found (Wijayanti, Damastuti & Zahra, 2022). However, the previous research mentioned only focuses on analyzing content from just one Instagram social media, and does not look at the whole process of the Kraton Jogja's communication strategy through various social media channels during the pandemic.



In this study, we will look at the steps taken and the various strategies used by Kraton Jogja, especially KHP Kridhamardawa to present Javanese traditional arts in the midst of millennial society. Including various innovations and improvisations that *KHP Kridhamardawa* had to do in presenting performances-before and while-Covid-19 pandemic hit. By using the concepts of globalization and global village, this study aims to find out how the use of various digital media channels can be a solution in the midst of limitations.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses qualitative research methods that could explore and understand the meaning derived from social or humanitarian problems and phenomenon (Iskandar, 2009). This research is using phenomenology approach, a form of qualitative research where the researchers attempt to understand how one or more individuals experience a phenomenon.

This qualitative research involves interviews and observation for the primary data, and also literature study as the secondary data. The researcher held interviews with GKR Hayu as the *penghageng* (chief) of Tepas Tandha Yekti and KPH Notonegoro as the *penghageng* (chief) of KHP Kridhamardawa Karaton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat. Researchers also observed the activities of KHP Kridhamardawa and Tepas Tandha Yekti both offline and online (through regular digital media monitoring).

As for completing this research, the researchers were also doing literature study to find the suitable theory and another supporting data about the online activities of Kraton Jogja through the books, journals and articles. Some of Kraton Jogja's official social media posts were also quoted as the secondary data. Primary and secondary data were further elaborated for triangulation. Descriptive analysis techniques were then used to analyze the results. The data is re-evaluated, then explained or interpreted to get a complete picture of the phenomenon under study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Maintaining Online Presence to Stay in Touch with the Millennials

Since 2012, Kraton Jogja began to realize the importance of online presence in the era of globalization. Thereafter, Tepas Tandha Yekti a special division that takes care of IT, documentation, and of course maintaining and developing the online presence of Kraton Jogja was established (interview with GKR Hayu, March 17th 2018). KHP Kridhamardawa in collaboration with Tepas Tandha Yekti took advantage of this situation, by augmenting the online presence of the Kraton Jogja's cultural heritage, and used this as an opportunity to spread the cultural resources widely throughout the world.

KHP Kridhamardawa, who currently has many *Abdi Dalem* (retinues) from the millennial generation, tried to bring this traditional arts and culture closer to the younger generation. One innovation was made by KHP Kridhamardawa at 2019 by making a Beksan Wanara flash mob which became viral in various social media platform and appreciated by various elements of society in Indonesia, and even abroad (interview with KPH Notonegoro, July 4th 2020).

Simply by typing "Jogja flashmob" in the search engine, many videos from official to amateur video, and mass media reviews about this flash mob will appear. This flash mob even becomes a flint stone for the emergence of other flash mob in various regions in Indonesia. Additionally, this flash mob has also encourage thousands of its audience to learn javanese dance (interview with KPH Notonegoro, July 4th 2020).

Initially, KHP Kridhamardawa only wanted to provoke the curiosity and raise the awareness of the millennials who had been considered apathetic to traditional arts and

culture. At that time, Kraton Jogja was preparing a *wayang wong* performance “*Subali Lena*” to be performed one month after the flash mob. In the past, audience of such *wayang wong* performance would not reach more than 200 people and mostly are from older generation (interview with KPH Notonegoro, July 4th 2020).

Therefore, the flash mob was designed with the millennial generation and even Generation Z as the target, with the aim to make the performance as attractive as possible. The concept of flash mob was chosen as the most attractive package because it triggers a shock effect on the community, especially since its first appearance was carried out in the most famous public area in Yogyakarta, Malioboro Street (interview with KPH Notonegoro, July 4th 2020).

The flash mob dance choreography was taken from *wanara* (apes who helped Sri Rama in the Ramayana story) dance movements which is still sourced from the classical dance style of Yogyakarta. As for the *gendhing*, it was composed specifically for that dance choreography (interview with KPH Notonegoro, July 4th 2020).

The result of this flash mob promotion was beyond expectation. The videos shared on the internet reached one million viewers within one week. At the *wayang wong* performance one month later, around 2.500 audiences were registered in the venue while thousands others were watching through the live streaming. The *gendhing* composition (*Lancaran Bala Wanara*) has also become very famous among the karawitan enthusiasts in Yogyakarta and surrounding area (interview with KPH Notonegoro, July 4th 2020).

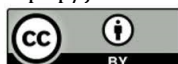
Kraton Jogja was flooded with the request for its notation, recordings and tutorials. For months after the flashmob went viral, Kraton Jogja received a lot of requests from the surrounding cities to send dance and *karawitan* instructors to teach the *gendhing* and the flash mob choreography. At one point, Kraton Jogja has no choice but to present the tutorial online in its Youtube Channel due to its high demand (interview with KPH Notonegoro, July 4th 2020).

Various digital media of Kraton Jogja were also flooded with netizens from various age groups who began to show interest in the classical performing arts of Yogyakarta. A lot of requests began to come in to review other types of art including various *gendhing* or *gamelan* music, *sekar macapat*, and other types of dance. As a need to stay in touch with the millennials, KHP Kridhamardawa Kraton Jogja finally began cater to this market demand by producing various content, such as the Beksan Menak flash mob and so on (interview with KPH Notonegoro, July 4th 2020).

Kraton Jogja and Performing Arts During Pandemic

From the beginning of 2020, KHP Kridhamardawa actually had a lot of agenda for performances both internal and external, as well as performances in the city, outside the city, even abroad. But since the Covid-19 pandemic has hit so many countries in the world, including Indonesia, many performances at Kraton Jogja have also had to be canceled. Not all of them were canceled, some performances related to rituals or performances that made it possible to perform live streaming, then modified while still following the health protocol.

In connection with the *Tingalan Jumenengan Dalem* or jubilee celebration of Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X in 2020, the Beksan Menak flash mob competition which should be held at the Pagelaran Kraton Jogja every weekend, was then modified to become a virtual dance competition of a new dance namely Beksan Nir Corona. Beksan Nir Corona with male and female versions were created to respond the pandemic situation, inspired by the hand washing movement as an initial step to prevent the spread of the virus. Just



like the Beksan Wanara and Beksan Menak flash mob, *gendhing* composition for Beksan Nir Corona was also newly composed by the *panata gendhing* in Kraton Jogja (interview with KPH Notonegoro, July 4th 2020).

In addition, during the “stay at home” period, KHP Kridhamardawa produced a lot of educational content on Kraton Jogja’s social media platform in accordance with the community’s request (interview with KPH Notonegoro, July 4th 2020). In 2020 and 2021, KHP Kridhamardawa producing various contents starting from the 6 types of Tayungan dance movements tutorial videos; tutorial videos and complete explanations of 11 *Sekar Macapat* in Javanese with Indonesian and English subtitles; tutorial videos of Yogyakarta traditional attire for children named *sabukwala* and *kencongan*; tutorial videos of *sulukan ringgit purwa*; to tutorial videos of special gamelan play in Kraton Jogja (Kraton Jogja, 2022).

Not only that, people in KHP Kridhamardawa realize that officially releasing Kraton Jogja *gendhing* to be enjoyed by the community is important. So, Kraton Jogja has also released *Gendhing Sekaten* (16 *gendhing*), *Gendhing Kurmat Dalem* (4 *gendhing*), *Gendhing Pahargyan* (13 *gendhing*), *Gendhing Gati* Album Volume 1 and Volume 2 (with 35 *gendhing* in total), *Gendhing Soran* (11 *gendhing*), and *Mandalasana* Album Volume 1 and Volume 2 (with 16 songs in total) on Kraton Jogja’s Youtube Channel (Kraton Jogja, 2022). Each of these *gendhing* styles are very iconic to Kraton Jogja and rarely performed outside the palace (interview with KPH Notonegoro, July 4th 2020).. But now, all of those *gendhing* and songs also can be enjoyed through the digital platform such as iTunes and Spotify.

Seeing the high traffic of viewers accessing the Youtube platform during the pandemic, KHP Kridhamardawa also took advantage of it by creating a variety of content that was packaged more casual. They’re also collaborating with other content creators. One that can be example is the *Uyon-Uyon Hadiluhung*, a monthly event held by KHP Kridhamardawa, which before the pandemic could be watched by the public directly.

The pandemic forced KHP Kridhamardawa to organize *Uyon-Uyon Hadiluhung* completely online with live streaming. However, so that people can still feel the added value of the show, in 2020 they made series of pre-event vlogs. The vlogs explain various health protocols that are carried out before the show, stories from dances that will be performed, reviews of the gendings that will be performed, to behind-the-scenes on the day of the performance (Kraton Jogja, 2022).

In one of the performances of *Uyon-Uyon Hadiluhung*, the pre-event vlogs were also collaborating with another Youtube content creator, namely Kisah Tanah Jawa. At Bedhaya Sapta’s performance at *Uyon-Uyon Hadiluhung* in October 2020, the vlog in collaboration with Kisah Tanah Jawa earned around 185.000 viewers (Kraton Jogja, 2022). This then leads the *Uyon-Uyon Hadiluhung* performance on October 19, 2020 to be the *Uyon-Uyon* performance with the highest viewers in 2020 (around 187.000 viewers) (Kraton Jogja, 2020).

Still in the example of the *Uyon-Uyon Hadiluhung* performances, in 2020 Kraton Jogja also released a short film entitled “Marak: Mresani Beksan Panji Sekar”. Beksan Panji Sekar itself is a dance that was performed at *Uyon-Uyon Hadiluhung* in November 2020. The short film “Marak: Mresani Beksan Panji Sekar” featured Siti Fauziah Saekhoni and Briliana Arfira, two actresses who were at that time went viral for starring in a short film called “Tilik”. “Marak”, which was uploaded on the Kraton Jogja Youtube channel, earned 1.5 million viewers (Kraton Jogja, 2022).

As for another example, at the end of 2021 KHP Kridhamardawa collaborated with a German violinist Iskandar Widjaja in the Yogyakarta Royal Orchestra Year-End Concert

(Youtube Kraton Jogja, 2021). Not only performing as a soloist in the concert, Iskandar Widjaja together with Kraton Jogja made a music video for the Lir Ilir song, which showcases the various beauties of tourism destinations in Yogyakarta. Starting from the natural beauty in the Imogiri Pine Forest area, the Palace of Yogyakarta, site of Pesanggrahan Ambarrukmo, to the site of Pesanggrahan Warungboto (Kraton Jogja, 2022).

During the pandemic period in 2020 and 2021 which is full of tides, activities at KHP Kridhamardawa related to the performing arts did not necessarily stop. They continue to interact and engage with millennials through social media Twitter on @kratonjogja, Instagram on @kratonjogja and @kratonjogja.event, Facebook on Kraton Jogja, and also YouTube Channel Kraton Jogja. In the future, KHP Kridhamardawa Kraton Jogja will also present various gamelan notations, dance scripts, and more articles about arts and culture on the website kratonjogja.id and kapustakan.kratonjogja.id with the hope that these will be accessible to all people from all over the world (interview with KPH Notonegoro, July 4th 2020).

The Initial Result: More Appreciation for The Culture and Arts of Kraton Jogja

The pandemic period actually opens up opportunities to spread the Javanese arts and culture more widely through digital media channels. As a result, people are increasingly interested in getting to know Javanese culture, especially Yogyakarta. In fact, not only local people, the international community show interest and give more appreciation to Javanese arts and culture.

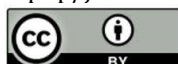
As the example, series of tutorial videos and complete explanations of *Sekar Macapat* volume 1, got the appreciation and special review on BALUNGAN, an international journal that presents both scholarly and artistic perspectives on Indonesian and international gamelan music and related performing arts, published by American Gamelan Institute (Diamond, 2020). The 5-page review in the journal discusses *Sekar Macapat*, a traditional poem that KHP Kridhamardawa reintroduced to the public with rewritten lyrics inspired by the COVID-19 pandemic (Diamond, 2020, p.49).

For another example, the short movie "Marak: Mresani Beksan Panji Sekar" also went viral through the internet and caught the attention of Indonesian diaspora abroad. Thus, the Indonesian Embassy in London, United Kingdom, in collaboration with KHP Kridhamardawa held an online "Marak" movie screening via Zoom. The "Marak" movie screening was held on February 13, 2021 (Indonesian London Embassy, 2021). Participants in this movie screening consisted of people who learn Bahasa Indonesia in UK, the Indonesian diaspora in the United Kingdom and around, as well as several non-Indonesian citizens who were interested in watching and listening to the discussion regarding this short movie.

CONCLUSION

The various digital media channels owned by the Kraton Jogja actually helped to present the existence of the palace in the midst of society, even though it was hampered by various restrictions during the pandemic. The contents presented on Kraton Jogja's social media, both on YouTube and other social media channels such as Instagram or Twitter, is able to make people feel the presence of the palace. The presence of the palace in cyberspace also invites interaction from the public.

Appreciation from various layers of society, both from the millennial generation, as well as the generations above and below, from within and outside the country continues to come. Although it doesn't automatically become a big wave, the public's interest in the arts and culture of Yogyakarta presented by Kraton Jogja is gradually showing its form. The pandemic, which was



previously a threat to the holding of various staging activities aimed at cultural broadcasts, has actually become an opportunity to disseminate it further through digital media.

Although globalization causes the thinning of the boundaries of distance, space, and time between world communities such as the concept of the global village expressed by McLuhan and seems to accelerate the spread of foreign cultures and other things that seem negative, such as a pandemic. In fact, globalization is also an opportunity for local culture and positive things to spread quickly as well.

From the pandemic, we learn that empathy and sympathy are now also easily transmitted through digital media. Creating content that touches the hearts of the audience based on local culture can be one way to participate in the euphoria of the global village that is starting to be created. Enlivening the digital world with a variety of content that elevates local culture so that it can become an entertainment option that can be found in your pocket and hand is a necessity.

Local culture, in this case Javanese culture, does not have to be a minority who is oppressed by more popular cultures. As long as Kraton Jogja maintain their presence in the digital realm, we are optimistic that the continuity of arts and culture that has been passed down through generations will always be maintained. Traditional arts and culture presented by Kraton Jogja through digital media will have their own place in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the world community.

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