



Analysis of the Movements in Sigeh Penguten Dance Using Labanotation: Benefits and Challenges in Documenting Traditional Dance

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the movements of the Sigeh Penguten Dance using Labanotation as an effort to document and preserve the traditional dance of Lampung. Labanotation, as a universal movement notation system, provides a structural approach to understanding the dynamics, directions, and qualities of movement in a dance. Through a qualitative descriptive method, this research observes the main movement patterns of the Sigeh Penguten Dance and translates them into Labanotation symbols. The results show that the use of Labanotation can provide a more systematic representation of the movement structure, floor patterns, and classification of dancers' body movements. The main benefits of applying this notation include ease of documentation, learning, and intergenerational knowledge transfer. However, the study also identifies several challenges, including the complexity of interpreting traditional movements rich in symbolic meaning into a Western notation system, limited understanding of notation symbols among dance practitioners, and the need for specialized training for researchers and dancers. Therefore, integrating Labanotation with contextual cultural understanding is essential to maintain the authenticity and meaning of dance movements. This research is expected to contribute to the development of more scientific and sustainable methods for analyzing and documenting Indonesian traditional dances.

Keywords: Sigeh Penguten Dance, Labanotation, Movement Analysis, Dance Documentation, Cultural Preservation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional dance is one of the cultural expressions that represents the values, norms, and identity of a community. As part of intangible cultural heritage, dance plays an important role in maintaining the continuity of tradition through the symbols, movements, and meanings embedded within it. One traditional dance that holds profound philosophical value is Sigeh Penguten dance, a welcoming dance of the Lampung people. This dance not only serves as a form of respect for guests but also represents the values of politeness, hospitality, and social harmony within Lampung society.

For the people of Lampung, guests hold a highly respected and honorable position. The presence of guests is believed to bring blessings and symbolizes the strengthening of social ties. Therefore, the Lampung community has a tradition of welcoming guests with great warmth and sincerity, reflected in various aspects of their social and cultural life. The guiding philosophy of the Lampung people, known as piil pesenggiri, forms the foundation of this attitude. Piil pesenggiri teaches the importance of maintaining the dignity of oneself, one's family, and the community through polite, friendly, and respectful behavior. In the context of hosting guests, values

such as *nemui nyimah* (hospitality in welcoming guests) and *nengah nyappur* (the ability to socialize and adapt well in society) serve as key principles. Through the Sigeh Penguten dance, these philosophies are manifested in movement and expression, illustrating how the Lampung people highly value respect and togetherness in every social encounter.

Sigeh Penguten dance continues to thrive across various regions of Lampung Province, from urban centers to coastal villages and inland communities, serving as an integral part of traditional ceremonies, official receptions, wedding celebrations, and cultural activities at both community and governmental levels. Its presence is not only seen in formal performances but also in everyday life—where children and adolescents learn basic movements from parents or cultural leaders, and where community elders or traditional institutions perform the dance to welcome important guests. In many areas, Sigeh Penguten functions in two ways: as a welcoming dance that embodies Lampung's social ethics and as a marker of regional identity that distinguishes local culture from other traditions in the archipelago. The dance's continued existence is supported by its flexibility; while preserving its movement sequences and symbolic meanings, various art studios and cultural groups make light

adaptations to musical arrangements or costumes to suit modern stages without compromising the core philosophy of *piil pesengiri*. Thus, *Sigeh Penguten* lives not merely as an artifact of the past but as a dynamic cultural practice—performed, taught, and showcased so that younger generations continue to recognize and appreciate it.

Efforts to preserve *Sigeh Penguten* dance are carried out collaboratively by traditional communities, art studios, educational institutions, local governments, and cultural activists. At the grassroots level, many families and traditional dance practitioners pass down knowledge orally and through direct practice—transmitting movement techniques, costumes, symbolic meanings, and ceremonial protocols through routine training and community performances. Art studios and youth organizations conduct workshops, regular showcases, and training programs so that formal dance skills can be learned by anyone interested. Regional governments and cultural offices often support preservation through cultural festivals, funding for training activities, and by integrating traditional dance into school extracurricular programs so that children are introduced to dance from an early age. In the digital era, preservation efforts expand through audiovisual documentation, music recording, and the use of social media to share tutorials and performance recordings—broadening audience reach and fostering local pride. Additionally, cross-disciplinary collaboration among researchers, contemporary choreographers, and tourism practitioners helps maintain the relevance of *Sigeh Penguten*; they work carefully to promote this dance on national and international stages while respecting traditional rules, ensuring that *Sigeh Penguten* remains a preserved cultural heritage without losing its philosophical essence.

However, along with societal development and changing lifestyles, traditional dances face challenges in preservation and documentation. Many dance movements risk losing their meaning or disappearing altogether due to limited accurate documentation. Therefore, a systematic approach is needed to analyze and document dance movements, one of which is Laban notation. Developed by Rudolf Laban, this notation system provides an objective method for recording and interpreting movement based on space, time, and dynamics.

The use of Laban notation in analyzing *Sigeh Penguten* dance is expected to support the scientific and measurable preservation of movement forms. Beyond offering benefits in documentation, its application also presents challenges, particularly in translating the symbolic meanings of traditional dance movements into a universal notation system. (Astuti, 2012: 1-10) Therefore, this study focuses on identifying the benefits and challenges of applying Laban

notation in analyzing the movements of *Sigeh Penguten* dance as a step toward more systematic and sustainable documentation of traditional dance.

2. THEORY AND CONCEPTS

Fügedi (2016: 6) explains that Laban Kinetography is the most widely used dance literacy system in the world, functioning to document movement through a movement analysis approach. Its basic concept is grounded in the analysis of human motion, which is classified within a specific system of reference. The results of this analysis are then represented through abstract signs (notations) whose use is governed by a set of specialized rules. Thus, the system enables accurate and scientific writing and rereading of dance movements. The concept proposed by Fügedi provides an important foundation for understanding the basic principles of recording movement using formal symbols. Through this approach, every element of movement in traditional dance can be analyzed systematically and documented with high precision (or classify based on gesture work (Febrianti, 2021)), making it beneficial for preserving dance forms, teaching, and reconstructing works in the future.

Another work by Habsary, D.; Adzan, N.K.; and Bulan, I (2024) states that “Laban notation is one type of dance notation capable of representing movement as a process through symbolic forms. ... The research findings show that most students experience difficulties in writing dance movements in notation form. This is caused by ... the unavailability of textbooks in Indonesian (the available book is Hutchinson’s 1979 work, written in English) [and] the difficulty of memorizing Laban notation symbols.”

3. METHOD

This study is a qualitative descriptive research aimed at describing and analyzing the movements of the *Sigeh Penguten* dance through the application of the Laban notation system. This method was chosen because it allows the researcher to deeply understand the meaning behind each movement sequence and to portray cultural phenomena contextually. (Moleong, 2017:9) The research was conducted in Bandar Lampung, one of the cultural centers of the Lampung community. The research subjects include dancers and traditional Lampung dance instructors who are competent in *Sigeh Penguten*, as well as dance experts or academics knowledgeable about the application of Laban notation. The subjects were selected using purposive sampling, based on criteria related to their skills and experience relevant to the focus of the study.

The data collection techniques used include: first, direct observation, by observing performances and practice sessions of *Sigeh Penguten* to identify movement structure and spatial patterns. Second,

in-depth interviews with dancers, instructors, and dance experts to obtain information about movement meanings, philosophy, and perspectives on the application of Laban notation. Third, documentation study, involving the review of literature, photographs, and performance videos as supporting materials for the analysis process. (Moleong, 2017:168), (Sugiyono, 2019: 2-3)

Data analysis was conducted in three stages. First, data reduction, carried out by sorting and grouping movement variations relevant for analysis using Laban notation. Second, data presentation, in the form of descriptions and notation symbols to illustrate movement dynamics, directions, and qualities. Lastly, conclusion drawing, through identifying the benefits and challenges in applying Laban notation to the Sigh Penguten dance. Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation, so that the research results achieved a high level of accuracy and reliability. (Creswell, J. W., 2014: 195-200).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The structure and movement characteristics of Tari Sigh Penguten are arranged systematically. The structure consists of an opening section, a core section, and a closing section. Each section presents coordinated movements of the hands, feet, and head that reflect gentleness and politeness—two of the key values embodied in this dance. Based on observations, the dominant movements in this dance include sembah, sembak samber melayang, and jong simpuh. These movements, aside from their aesthetic function, serve as signature characteristics of the dance. Each movement carries symbolic meaning related to respect and hospitality toward guests.

4.1. Movement Analysis Using Laban Notation

The application of Laban notation in Tari Sigh Penguten allows for a more structured form of movement documentation (Fügedi, 2016: 6-7). Through a symbolic system that represents direction, level, and dynamics, Laban notation helps break down every movement element in detail. (ICKL, 2017: 9-10) The findings show that the use of this notation can objectively depict the movement characteristics of Sigh Penguten, thus facilitating documentation and learning for future generations.

Applying Laban-based movement analysis provides a deeper analytical foundation for understanding the structure of dance movements. Through a symbolic system capable of representing space, dynamics, and movement quality in a structured manner, researchers and practitioners can observe how each movement is constructed and interconnected. For instance, the relationship between transitional and primary movements can be understood through directional patterns or body levels recorded precisely in the notation. In this regard, Laban notation functions not only as a mnemonic device but also as a scientific instrument

that reveals the choreographic logic behind the Sigh Penguten sequence. This approach ensures that the essence and logic of movement remain intact when the dance is transmitted across different educational settings or artistic communities.

Furthermore, the use of Laban notation allows for a more reflective and systematic learning process. Dancers are not merely imitating movements from instructors; instead, they gain an understanding of the structure and qualities of the movements they perform through symbols showing direction, level, tension, duration, and body dynamics. This facilitates the identification of technical errors, improves movement accuracy, and strengthens dancers' kinesthetic awareness. Laban notation becomes an effective tool for deeper understanding of the aesthetic values of Sigh Penguten, which emphasizes delicacy, harmony, and rhythmic precision. Instructors can also develop training methods based on notation analysis, transforming knowledge transmission from an oral tradition into one that is structured and aligned with modern pedagogical standards.

In addition, the use of Laban notation provides opportunities for creating documentation that can be easily integrated into various contemporary learning media. Codified notation can be developed into digital modules, movement animations, or interactive movement libraries, allowing younger generations to learn without spatial or temporal limitations. Such accurate documentation is essential for preserving the authenticity of Sigh Penguten, especially amid rapid cultural change and globalization. Beyond ensuring cultural continuity, the integration of Laban notation also expands appreciation for Lampung traditional dance in academic contexts and in national and international cultural exchanges. Thus, Laban notation supports not only preservation but also the development and dissemination of Sigh Penguten globally.

4.2. Benefits of Applying Laban Notation

The benefits include systematic documentation, enabling each movement to be recorded scientifically without relying on memory or subjective interpretations. For knowledge transmission, the notation results can be used as learning material in dance education. It also supports the preservation of original movement structures, enabling more accurate reconstruction of dance sequences. Additionally, Laban notation opens opportunities for cross-cultural research, where Indonesian traditional dances can be compared with movement systems from around the world.

The application of Laban notation as a movement documentation tool offers significant benefits for the development, preservation, and study of Tari Sigh Penguten as well as other traditional dances. With its systematic symbolic approach, each movement can be recorded in detail based on spatial, dynamic, and qualitative

aspects. (LaMer, 2005: 45-58) This allows documentation to be not merely descriptive but also analytical, reducing reliance on dancers' memory or subjective interpretations. Through accurate notation, dance archives can be stored in a structured form and studied by future generations without losing their technical essence. This ensures consistency in movements, especially for dances with deep cultural and symbolic meaning such as Tari SigeH Penguten.

Moreover, Laban notation contributes significantly to knowledge transmission in arts education. The notation can serve as teaching material to introduce structured movement concepts to students, helping them go beyond visual imitation to understand movement structure through symbol reading. This approach enhances students' cognitive and analytical skills, as they can trace details of movement sequences comprehensively. Learning modules based on notation also help instructors create systematic curricula, especially when teaching complex dances with many movement variations. Thus, the transmission of dance becomes more effective and consistent, reducing the risk of movement distortion commonly found in oral or demonstrative teaching traditions.

Laban notation also plays an important role in preserving original movement forms by enabling high-precision reconstruction (complexity) (Barbacci, 2002: 1-11). In cultural preservation contexts, this is especially relevant for dances with historical and ritual value. Symbol-based documentation allows researchers or practitioners to track movement changes over time and distinguish between innovation and distortion. Reconstruction based on notation ensures that performances remain faithful to their original character, even when learned by younger generations who may no longer be immersed in the cultural context of the dance. Therefore, Laban notation acts as a protective tool for traditional dance forms, ensuring the preservation of aesthetic and symbolic values in performance practices.

Furthermore, the application of Laban notation opens broad opportunities for cross-cultural research. With universal symbols, researchers can compare the movement patterns of Indonesian traditional dances with those from other cultures. This reveals similarities or differences in movement structures, body dynamics, or spatial patterns, providing insights into cultural relationships, historical influences, and the unique characteristics of each tradition. Such studies enrich global dance scholarship and strengthen the position of Indonesian dance in international academic discussions.

4.3. Challenges in Applying Laban Notation

Despite its many benefits, the application of Laban notation faces several challenges. First, the complexity of the symbols often poses difficulties for traditional dancers unfamiliar with the system. Second, cultural differences mean that some symbolic movements are difficult to fully represent

in a universal notation. Third, there is a shortage of human resources proficient in Laban notation, limiting its implementation within traditional arts education.

The use of Laban notation must therefore be balanced with contextual approaches that consider local cultural values. (Wibowo, D.E., Silalahi, M.L., & Sagala, J.M., 2019: 227-237) Integrating modern analytical systems with traditional understanding is key to ensuring that documentation remains technically accurate while still preserving the soul and meaning of the dance.

Additionally, the complexity of Laban notation requires a gradual adaptation process, especially for instructors and practitioners accustomed to demonstrative teaching methods. Transitioning from oral and visual methods to a detailed symbolic system takes time to develop notation literacy. This challenge is compounded by the limited availability of formal training in Laban notation within traditional arts institutions, resulting in insufficient expertise to interpret and translate symbols into practical movements.

Another challenge arises from the systematic nature of Laban notation, which sometimes struggles to capture the emotional nuances and cultural characteristics embedded in traditional dances like Tari SigeH Penguten. Movements with symbolic and spiritual meaning often require interpretation beyond physical description. (Soedarsono, 1999: 115-119) In the Lampung cultural context, certain movements convey social messages, respect, and community identity—elements that are not easily captured through mechanical representation.

Furthermore, the translation of flexible and improvisational traditional movements into an exact symbolic system can be difficult. Senior dancers often have personal stylistic variations inherited from previous teachers, and these variations cannot always be easily formalized. When fluid movement patterns are forced into rigid symbolic systems, expressive richness may be lost.

5. CONCLUSION OF THE DISCUSSION

Thus, the application of Laban notation in Tari SigeH Penguten must be built through a holistic approach that integrates technical precision with cultural sensitivity. Collaboration between notation experts, traditional choreographers, academics, and cultural leaders is essential to ensure that the resulting documentation is both structurally accurate and culturally meaningful. Integrated training, context-based guidelines, and culturally grounded learning resources can help bridge the gap between modern notation systems and traditional oral practices. With strong synergy, Laban notation can become a preservation tool that is not only technical but also capable of maintaining the integrity and identity of SigeH Penguten dance.

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