

Gambang Semarang Music as A Cultural Identity Of Semarang's Community

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Abstract—As a performing art “Gambang Semarang music” is part of gambang Semarang art that was created in form of complex performing arts consisting of Drama, Dance, and Music. Several efforts have been done by Semarang’s society to make it a cultural identity of Semarang. The purpose of this research was to know, to describe and to analyze the Semarang society’s participation in making Gambang Semarang music as a cultural identity of Semarang. The data obtained were qualitative that were from observations, document studies, and deep interviews with the informants. The results showed that Semarang society’s effort in realizing Gambang Semarang music as Semarang’s cultural identity was manifested in both formal and non formal education, festivals or competitions, workshop, discussions, and performances.

Keywords—*gambang semarang, music, cultural identity*

I. INTRODUCTION

The existence of art among society depends on society itself as supporters and preservers. Art as an element of culture is a creativity expression expressed in various arts. It also happens in the arts of Semarang. The society of Semarang is heterogeneous society, a society that consists of different ethnics, religions, customs, social status, and educational background. Besides that, Semarang is a city of migrants’ destination. It influences on socio cultural life.

“Gambang Semarang” art performance is a complete art performance because it contains elements of drama, dance, and music. In its journey, this kind of art undergoes ups and downs. Some even termed “hidup enggan mati tak mau” (reluctant both to live and to die). Historically, the existence of gambang Semarang was said as cultural acculturation. It can be described from the costume, musical instruments, and musical scale used. They rooted in Thionghoa cultural elements. While the other supporting elements, such as variety of dance movements, musical instruments are from Javanese culture. Some even said that gambang Semarang is originally from Betawi, it is Gambang Kromong.[1] [2]

Till now, the existence of gambang Semarang sebagai bagian dari kesenian gambang Semarang musical performance is continuously developed by Semarang’s community in order to make it as a cultural identity of Semarang. The researches done has more completed the literacy repertoire about gambang Semarang music. Danang Respati Pugh [3] in his grant research in 1999 strived to reconstruct gambang Semarang completely after its apparent death. Other researches from various disciplines about gambang Semarang have been done, such as photography,

law, broadcasting program, performance form, and culture [3]–[12]. However, the researches that exclusively discuss about gambang Semarang are form and function of performance [12] and the process of cultural hybridization [6]. Therefore, the researches discuss about the form of Semarang societies’ participation in supporting the process of making gambang Semarang music as one of cultural identity of this city.

II. METHODOLOGY

This research was done by mix method approach. The combination between qualitative and participatory approach was needed because the both approaches can complete each other in the process of research’s data taking and data collecting. The data collection was done by observation technique, literature review, document study, and interview [13]. Observation was done in institutions, places of performance and groups that have gambang Semarang music instruments. The the literatures review was done to study the articles relating to the research’s target. The document study was explored from individuals, private and government agencies, and educational institutions. The documents are in a form of articles, photos, pictures, and so on. The deep interview was especially intended to the selected informants (key informants) that was based on the assessment on informants’ candidate who know everything about symptoms studied, understood, and action done by the research’s subject, and everything related to the research’s object. The informants in this research were gambang semarang artists especially the music instrument players, art groups that incorporated with semarangan music community, art studio owners that still pursue gambang semarang, official government of Semarang, Headmasters, and Semarang society. Data analysis took place during the research process along with data collection. It was done by reduction, data presentation, verification, and conclusion as an interactive system [14].

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

According to Koentjaraningrat [15], culture in a society is divided into 3 (three) aspects, they are mentifacts, sociofacts, and artifacts. Mentifacts relates to the thought and basic philosophy of culture. While sociofacts relates to social behavior and real application of mentifacts in a life, and artifacts is a real production of a culture, such as things, dances, texts, or songs. The three aspects of culture

relate to each other and form a unity of culture because the usage and the production of artefacts needs a certain sociofacts with societies' mentifacts as a foundation. Therefore, it can be concluded that preservation of a culture can only be done by preserving the production's process and symbol's consumption in a society through the preservation of culture aspects' former in a society. By the development of producers and the change of consumers' taste, the process of culture's production and consumption can continue in the societies so that a culture will be sustainable. The culture's preservation in this way will keep its existence in a society, not freeze it in time. By this way, the coming generation, will enjoy culture as their identity, they not only enjoy the culture by ancient line of statues in a museum. Moreover, this kind of culture's preservation will support the humanists' creativity to produce new products if it is related to the local tourism.

The interest and enthusiasm of Semarang's society on performing art is very high, it is proven by their interest to hire performing art groups, such as puppet shadow (wayang orang), rebana, dangdut orchestra, band, campur sari, and gambang Semarang art as typical art from Semarang in the wedding party, circumcision's and birth's salvation. The audiences are quite a lot and watch the performance till the end, but some of them enjoy the performance just in a moment. The activity of performing art, both traditional and modern, is not only held in the central of Semarang, but also in the suburban area.

Solo Organ, band, dan orkes melayu belong to modern performing art that is often performed from suburban area to the central city of Semarang as the easiest held alternative entertainment in personal's or agencies' events. While puppet shadow, qasidah group, campursari are traditional art that is still enjoyed by the traditional art's lovers as the most populist entertainment, and they are usually performed in a suburban area or coastal area.

The question is what about gambang Semarang that is clearly used the word "Semarang" (drama, dance, and music). A group of people named Komunitas Gambang Semarang (gambang Semarang community) is one of the several groups that want this kind of art to always grow and develop in Semarang, this art is gambang Semarang that there is gambang Semarang music in it. Several efforts have been taken to maintain, to develop, and to preserve. In line with the problem of this research, the following descriptions are the explanation of data, facts, and theoretical review about the form of societies' participation to support and to make gambang Semarang music as a cultural identity of Semarang.

The definition of cultural identity is an inherent character in a culture so that it can be differentiated between one culture to another. Therefore, in order for the character of Semarang's societies to be attached in gambang Semarang music, it needs the process of identity formation as stated by Stuart Hall that cultural identity or we can call as an ethnical identity, at least, can be seen from two point of views they are cultural identity as being and cultural identity as becoming [16].

A. Gambang Semarang music as A Cultural Identity of Being

In reality, there are 6 (six) groups of gambang Semarang art that still exist now, they are *Gambang Semarang Art*

Company (GSAC), Nempirogo, Nang-Nok, Komunitas Gambang Semarang (KGS), Karang Turi, and Balemong. Those six groups have similarity and difference from musical instrument used, musical arrangement played, and the pitch height produced from the main musical instruments in *gambang Semarang* (*gambang* [1] [4] [17], *bonang*, *kempul*, *demung* and *gong*). According to Azis Toyo, the leader of *Nempirogo* group said that one day when collaboration among all of gambang Semarang groups will be held, it was found that the level of pitch height among the groups is different. The average difference is quarter cent so that it will be difficult to unite them in a musical arrangement like in a musical western orchestra. This becomes a special challenge to arrangers to collaborate with *gambang Semarang* music.

The similarity of those six groups is from the main musical instruments used (*gambang*, *bonang*, *kempul*, *demung*, and *gong*), while the differences are on the: 1) pitch; 2) addition of musical instruments, such as, flute, saxophone, *violin*, *tehyang*, *kongahyan*, *suling*, and 3) musical arrangement played, because it depends on the arrangers' musicalization and the music players of each gambang Semarang group.

Gambang Semarang music as a typical cultural product of Semarang in its development has an entity although it is part of complex cultural products, i.e., Gambang Semarang art. The form of Gambang Semarang music performance is ansamble because it is played together [12]. The followings are the detail the explanation about the entity's description of gambang Semarang music the original structure of gambang Semarang instruments are *gambang*, *kendhang*, *bonang*, *kempul*, and *gong*. They are Javanese musical instrument. Then musical instruments from thionghoa culture are *tehyang*, *kongahyan*, *sukong*, dan *suling* Cina. Moreover, in its development, there are additional music instruments, such as *peking*, *kecrek*, *demung*, and *saron* that are rooted in Javanese culture. Because old version Chinese musical instruments are difficult to get, then they are replaced with *erhu*, *zhonghu*, *yangqin*, *suling* Cina instrument is replaced with flute, even one group replaced it with the violin. Although some musical instruments are originally from Javanese culture, but the sounds are different from *Gamelan Jawa*, because the musical scale of these instruments' sounds has been adjusted with Chinese pentatonic musical scale. It is analogized with western musical scale, such as D, E, Fis, A, B or do, re, mi, sol, la in 2 sharp major musical scales. This is very impactful to the tonality of additional musical instrument used.

The presentation of gambang Semarang music is instrumental music (without lyrics) and with a song sung. Because of the sounds produced from gambang Semarang musical instrument uses a basic tone of sharp major 2 in the western musical scale, automatically the additional musical adjusts so that the singers sing with D mayor basic tone. And in a certain condition, singers can also sing a song with G mayor basic tone or 1 krois musical scale in the western musical scale. Therefore, these 2 (two) musical scales are often used as a reference to accompany a singer in singing a song. The songs sung by the singers uses Javanese language in Semarang dialect mixed with Bahasa (Indonesian). The sequences of songs sung are *Gambang Semarang* or *Ampat*

penari, Gado-gado Semarang, Semarang tempo dulu, Semarang kota Atlas, Simpang Lima, Goyang Semarang, Tanjung Emas, Titanium, and campur sari song and *langgam Jawa*.

B. Gambang Semarang Music "as A Process of Becoming" Cultural Identity of Semarangan

To explain *identity as becoming* at gambang Semarang music, it is the same with describing the role and participation of the society in preserving the aspects of Semarangan culture's former or the other word, it is from, by, and for Semarang society. To see the change, development, a variation of musical instrument types, and the songs are sung in gambang Semarang music performance, it is not impossible if it is an interfere of previous artists as a form of their participation. Studying about participation is something that plays a role in an activity. Janabrota Bhattacharya[18] defines participation as a part taking in joint activities. Mubyarto [19] defines it as a willingness to help others' program based on their capability without sacrifice self's interest. Participation is also defined as one's or group's involvement in an activity voluntarily.

Participation is one's or a group of society's role in a process of development in a form of statement, thought, energy, time, expertise, capital and or material, and take the advantage and enjoy the results of development. Participation is an openness to perception and other parties' feeling. Participation means deep attention to a difference or change that will be produced in development in relation to society's life. It also happens to the development of art and culture, especially Semarangan art and culture [20]. Furthermore, Slamet [21] states that participation, Valderama in Arsito, records that there are 3 (three) traditions of participation concept especially if it is related to the development of democratic society: 1) political participation; 2) social participation; 3) citizen's participation/citizenship.

In accordance with obtained data from the research results of role and participation of a society on gambang Semarang music, it can be categorized as follows:

1. Education

Efforts to make gambang Semarang music as one of Semarangan cultural identity have been done through educational sector, although it is still partially. It has been done both formally and nonformally. Semarang local government through the education office has instructed the elementary through middle education unit in Semarang to teach gambang Semarang art in extracurricular or intracurricular activity. Besides that, the Department of Music Education of Semarang State University where the art teachers educated here is also taught gambang Semarang music in Local Music subject. By transferring them a knowledge about how to play Semarang music instruments, it is hoped that it can give an expertise to the prospective teaching staffs at school.

The formal school that has always developed gambang Semarang music till now is Karang Turi Foundation Semarang. A set of complete gambang Semarang instruments owned by the school and used as music instruments in extracurricular and intracurricular activity. According to Andreas Inu as music teacher at Karang Turi Junior High School Semarang, the teaching materials given to the students about gambang Semarang in intra activity

discuss about the basic competence of local music. While in the extracurricular activity, gambang Semarang lesson is given to prepare the students to play some songs to accompany Semarangan dances that also a collaboration between music and dance extracurricular activity at school. Besides that, based on the researcher's observation, Karangturi's students are mostly Chinese whose the origin of gambang Semarang belongs to.

The learning of gambang Semarang music through nonformal education is in Klub Merby Semarang. With the motto of improving the nation's intelligence, Klub Merby Semarang has a mission to provide means to practice and create for the nation's children in Knowledge and Arts that can support their future to realize qualified human resources. Many pieces of training from various knowledge and arts are presented like available menus in fast food restaurant.

One of the subjects of music learning is gambang Semarang. There is no charge for this learning for the students who join the course in Klub Merby. The learning is held on Saturday at a bigger room provided with musical instruments of gambang Semarang. The trainer is an expert in gambang Semarang music. He/she masters all the instruments both melodic and rhythmic music.



Fig. 1. Training of Gambang Semarang Music in Klub Merby Semarang

2. Festival and Competition

Gambang Semarang Festival is a routine activity that is held by Semarang local government annually. This event commemorates Semarang's anniversary and also liven up Indonesia independence day's anniversary. In 2018, it is not less than 50 participants, children to adults, join the festival. The event that is held by Semarang's tourism office is still limited to Semarangan dance, but in reality, the implementation does not separate from the involvement of gambang Semarang music that has an important role to the participants. Almost all the participants are accompanied by musical instrument of gambang Semarang. They present Semarangan's songs, such as *gado-gado Semarang, gambang Semarang, Semarang kota Atlas*.

According to Dyah, a member of the organizing committee, by handling gambang Semarang festival it is hoped that new creations of Semarang style dancing in order to preserve typical culture of Semarang. The bigger hope is that gambang Semarang music is more recognized as cultural identity of Semarang.

Besides gambang Semarang festival as an annual agenda, the commemoration of Semarang's anniversary also enlivens with dance parade performance that is accompanied by typical Semarangan gamelan or more popular with gambang Semarang. Situated in Klenteng *Tay Kak Sie*, a group of people that are concerned with Semarangan typical art calls themselves as gambang Semarang community that become an initiator of this activity. A number of people gather in front of the yard of *klenteng Tay Kak Sie*, the seats provided by the committee are not enough to load the audiences. The sounds of Gendang that is mixed with typical gamelan of Semarang increase the excitement of the atmosphere of Klenteng's yard. The music instrument players and dancers from various universities and Senior High School in Semarang look so excited in colorful stage lights. The later the time, the more spectators watched the performance. They were not only from public society or students but also children.



Fig. 2. Semarangan Dance Festival in Mall Ciputra

3. Workshop and Discussion

One more the form of concern showed by gambang Semarang community was by handling a program called *#Asli Gambang Semarang*. This activity began from 15 to 19 August 2018 in Kota Lama Semarang (old city) in 5 days. Various activities dealt with gambang Semarang was well presented. The movie, collaboration performance, cultural workshop, and exhibition held in Oudetrapp Theater. The enthusiasm of spectators, exhibition observer, the workshop's participants are very abundant and always crowd the place.

Before the sequence of activities held, the discussion was previously held in the Faculty of Culture Diponegoro University Semarang on 26 July 2018. It discussed gambang Semarang. The researchers, observers, and doers came to this event as interviewees. Besides students, public societies, doers, high school students, beaurecrats came as participants of the discussion. The interesting discussion was when Dr. Dhanang Respati Puguh discussed how his effort as an academician and a researcher reconstructs gambang Semarang that experiences up and down in its development. The results that he obtained are the complexity of gambang Semarang performance, such as, the songs' presentation, dancings, jokes, and back to songs' presentation. Seeing this case, the presentation of music is a performance that has an important role in gambang Semarang art if it is presented in full. But, a duration of the

performance is too long for the public because of its variety of presented performances in gambang Semarang art.



Fig. 3. The group of Gambang Semarang Nangnok at a workshop in oudetrapp Old City Semarang

4. Performances

An effort to always present gambang Semarang music in various events regionally and nationally, or even internationally is always encouraged. It is hoped that the society knows gambang Semarang music is one of the presentations of gambang Semarang art show as a cultural identity of Semarang. The following explanation will discuss the performances of gambang Semarang music that were held by gambang Semarang groups.

"Nempirogo" is one of gambang Semarang music group. Its member is the students of the Music Department of Semarang State University. It consists of 8 members; 7 music players and 1 singer. This group combines gambang Semarang music with modern instruments, such as percussion, violin, saxophone, electrical bass, and keyboard so that the performance sounds lively. The musical arrangement that emphasizes syncopation makes Semarang typical songs more live, energetic, and enjoyable. That is why gambang Semarang music group "nempirogo" is invited to many events in Semarang state university or in some places in Semarang.

The group of gambang Semarang music formed in Klub Merby Semarang is called "nangnok". The name of nangnok is an acronym from *kenang* and *denok*. Its name is from which the Semarang's people called a boy and a girl in Semarang language. According to Grace Sutanto, the leader of the group and also the owner of Klub Merby Semarang, this group also collaborates with gambang Semarang community that also performs in some areas in Semarang with other groups. Besides playing Semarangan music and songs, "nangnok" group is often asked to accompany Semarangan dances because klub merby also has Semarangan dancers. Like in the following picture when the group performed at *#Asli Gambang Semarang* event in oudetrapp Old City area, Semarang.



Fig. 4. The team of Gambang Semarang collaboration after performed #Asli Gambang Semarang

IV. CONCLUSION

Seen from its form, gambang Semarang music is a traditional art form. It means that gambang Semarang music has historical-cultural root from generation to generation. This can be seen from the time that Gambang Semarang music seems to be apparent death. It is because of halted regeneration and less of socialization from Semarang local government and also the complexity of performances. The society as user and consumer also can not make gambang Semarang be an identity of Semarang. So, to accommodate the interest of gambang Semarang music, the groups of gambang Semarang community were established. Because of the above facts, gambang Semarang music is still in the process of Semarangan cultural identity forming although it is partially done.

An endeavor a process of gambang Semarang music forming was done in 3 (three) media: 1) Education, both formal and non formal education. In formal education, gambang Semarang music becomes a lesson's material in an extracurricular activity of elementary and high school's students based on the instruction of Semarang Educational Office. Besides that, tis materialis also given to the students of Semarang state university, while in the non formal education, it is given by merby Semarang; 2) festivals and competitions of Semarangan dances held by Semarang local government, schools, and Gambang Semarang community; 3) the gambang semarang musical performances held by gambang Semarang groups that grow in Semarang.

Related to the results above, the suggestions are: 1) the head of educational Office of Semarang instructs the teachers in every educational unit to use gambang semarang as a structured extracurricular activity; 2) the head of cultural and tourism of Semarang holds a competition of song's composing based on the pitch gambang Semarang music.

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