

Women's Randai of Sirabuang Ameh the Alternative Development for Minangkabau Folk Theater

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Abstract—This article aimed to discuss the model of women's randai development which promotes the community of Minangkabau folk theatre. This research used product-based method. The efforts on randai's theoretical comprehension and technical development are currently brightened up, both by the Minangkabau artists or cultural experts, or even non-Minangkabau artists. Creativity is a must if randai wants to be preserved within the always-developing Minangkabau society. Nowadays, the performance of randai in Minangkabau is only suitable for men and considered not appropriate for women. As the consequence, Minangkabau artists and cultural experts do not justify the women to be involved as randai performer, especially as the galombang player. Addressing to this issue, the development of women's randai was seen to be important by exploring all artistic aspects of randai that are suitable for Minangkabau women. This randai development used the concept of art as the valuable experience that came from creative imagination. This new model is expected to be suitable and appropriate with the nature and characteristics of Minangkabau women.

Keywords: strategic efforts, women's randai, performance model

I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, Randai, Minangkabau folk theatre from West Sumatra is not only growing within the traditional society, but it has developed among the urban society, schools and even universities [1]. Randai was initially created and performed by men in *sasaran*, which is a silat school for Minangkabau men. Since randai was born in a silat school for men, then it is reasonable if the randai is performed by men using silat moves. If a randai requires the role of a woman, then a man will dress like woman, because women were considered as inappropriate to do art activities or to learn silat with men in *sasaran* at that time. In the end of 1970s, women singers were involved in randai, but in some village's women were still not involved in randai and men used to play all women's roles [2].

In 1984, randai became a compulsory subject at Akademi Seni Karawitan Indonesia (ASKI) of Padang Panjang. The subject, taught by Zulkifli, taught randai for the students of Dance Department, without distinguishing the teaching materials for men and women [1]. Female students were also involved in learning randai's *galombang* move which was based on silat styles. When the randai was performed before the Minangkabau society, it had a positive response and it was

even registered for the randai festival of West Sumatra, Cultural Week in 1987. The randai, namely Palimo Gaga, which was the result of the university class, won the first place. In 2008, new paradigms arose among Minangkabau randai curators and cultural experts, which considered that women were not suitable for performing randai's *galombang*. Other than its moves that are harsh, taking big space, jumping, rolling, and straddling, women who performed galombang wore men's clothes, which is forbidden according to Islam as the basic teaching of Minangkabau people. As a result, women were no longer allowed to participate in randai, especially the *galombang* role. This problem disappointed the women, because they had a big enthusiasm to participate in randai. This problem is what will be discussed in this article, by describing the opportunity and change of Minangkabau women to be able to participate in randai art.

II. METHOD

Women's randai is a representation of an art created from the idea that is based on the observation on Minangkabau cultural ethic. This research of randai changes and development in Minangkabau becomes a conceptual basis to determine the women's randai embodiment.

Reviewing randai from the sociocultural context, it refers to two aspects of problem. First, the aspect of randai existence and development as an artwork. Second, the sociocultural aspect of its supporting society which is always changing. The study on these two aspects required multi-layered approaches as required by the cultural art study [3]. Multi-layered approach was really useful to study randai as an expression of culture and a reflection of beauty, because various life dimensions which backgrounds the development of randai will be clearly revealed.

In the concept of women's randai creation as an artwork refers to the opinion of Alma M. Hawkins [4] which stated that the creation of an art starts from experiencing, expressing, seeing, feeling, imagining, materializing and creating. This process was adopted within this women's randai development.

III. DISCUSSION

Randai is a type of theatre that is pretty famous in Minangkabau, West Sumatra, which is the combination of dance (*galombang*), music (*gurindam*), martial art, and dialog.

Randai is the folk theatre of Minangkabau. It is called as a folk theatre because it was born from, from and to the people of Minangkabau [5]. The presentation of the randai story is conducted in two types: first, dialogue and acting; and second, singing (*gurindam*). Therefore, randai is the combination of music, singing, storytelling, dancing, martial art and acting [6].

At the beginning period of randai development, all the players were men. If the role of women was required, then men would dress as women. That was because Islam, as the basis of Minangkabau teaching, prohibits men to dress and act like women [7]. Therefore, for the next development, the role of women in randai will be performed by the actual women.

This thinking opened a new opportunity for the women of Minangkabau to actively participate in randai art. In the next development of randai, women will not perform the women roles only, but also participate as the *galombang* player, to move and dress like men [7]. This creativity became a new highlight for the Minangkabau artists and cultural experts, this the Minangkabau women were not allowed to perform randai (acting as the *galombang* player). This prohibition, did not fully close the opportunity for Minangkabau women to participate in randai, yet it only prohibited women to play the role of or do any randai performance which are not suitable for women based on the perspective of the cultural custom.

The aforementioned problem motivated the author to develop a randai specifically made for women, made the author to think of any alternatives that are suitable for the Minangkabau women to be participated in randai art. That effort referred to the study on randai art in various aspects, including textual study, norm and nature of randai that are relevant with the cultural ethic and courtesy of Minangkabau women.

The main elements of randai are: story (*kaba*), dialogue and acting, *gurindam* (storytelling through music/song) and *galombang* (movement in circular formation). These main elements must be preserved in women's randai. Reducing one of them may create a new art that cannot be called as randai. These four elements of randai do not violate the women's courtesy as long as the movement, dialogue, acting, and costume are adjusted with the Minangkabau women's norms or courtesy.

The effort on understanding and seeking the compatibility of randai artistic elements treatment on the cultural ethic of Minangkabau women required several renewals and transformations in randai art. If randai was all performed by women who wore the dress of *baju taluak balango*, *celana galembong*, *destar* and *sisampiang*; women's randai is performed by women who wore the clothes of *baju kurung*, *kodek*, *tingkuluak*, and *stoka*. The movements in women's randai also did not use the silat style that us commonly used by men, but the yused dance styles that are relevant with the

characteristics of Minangkabau women. *Tepuk celana galembong* is a typicality and uniqueness of *tepkuk* (clapping) game in men's *galombang*. It is transformed and developed into a new *tepkuk gendang*, called as "Tungkahan". In the life of the traditional Minangkabau people, *tungkahan* is a piece of wood used for sitting and chopping in the kitchen by women. *Tungkahan*, other than functioning to enrich the clapping sound, it is also used by the female *galombang* players to sit on during dialogue session.

The story in women's randai should present a conflict in the life of Minangkabau women. Several conflicts in women life can become the theme or the main story for a women randai, but technically, the performers shall be dominated by women, two or three men is enough if their roles are necessary. If more, then the number of randai performer will be too many and it will become ineffective. That is because the male performers in women's randai cannot be acting as the *galombang* players. It is different if the performers are women, they can play double role: as the actor as well as the *galombang* player. This research and study on the characteristics and nature of the randai became the thinking and creativity framework within the development of women's randai titled "Sirabuang Ameh".

IV. CONCLUSION

Sirabuang Ameh Randai is a model of women's randai, a strategy of randai development as a folk theatre of Minangkabau people. Textually, women's randai of Sirabuang Ameh is different to the common randai that is performed by men. If the *galombang* players in the common randai is played by men, moved and dressed as men; all Sirabuang Ameh performers are women, moved and dressed as Minangkabau women.

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