

# ***Gending Samirah Vocal by Karawitan Among Rasa Malang: Semiotics Analysis Based on Roland Barthes' Theory***

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Gending* (Javanese gamelan music) Samirah is an East Javanese repertoire that is presented in several stages. In certain areas, *Gending Samirah* has its own distinctive features, *Gending* from Lor Brantas (Surabayan area) is different from that of Kidul Brantas (Malang area) in terms of its vocals. *Gending Samirah* vocal from Kidul Brantas seems variative. *Gending Samirah* vocal Karawitan Among Rasa Malang is usually initiated with macapat (sung poetry) and then followed with songs sung by *Sinden* (singer singing with gamelan) and *gerong* (song sung in the chorus). The vocal of in *Gending Samirah* has its own characteristics as it usually talks about a figure and delivers messages for the continuity to preserve the local wisdom. This article aims to examine the meaning of *Gending Samirah* and reveal the existence of the *Gending Samirah* in the midst of East Java people, especially the people of Malang. This is descriptive qualitative research that employed the ethnographic method. The semiotic approach was employed to analyze the meaning of lyrics in *Gending Samirah*, then the results were used to describe the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings of the lyrics.

**Keywords:** *Vocal, Gending Samirah, karawitan Among Rasa Malang, Semiotics, Roland Barthes*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

*Gending* is the result of composing notes based on the Pathet rules, forms and patterns of gamelan. *Gending* takes many forms in shows, for example, repertoire (uyon-uyon), beksan (dance) accompaniment and shadow puppet music accompaniment. Uyon-uyon is a collection of several repertoires played based on the player's creativity. *Gending* played in shadow puppet show is based on scenes or fragments, situation, and puppet movements. *Gending* played at the beginning of a show delivers the meaning of inviting so that the sound is loud. *Gending* Soran usually only presents instrumental plays, for example in the form of *ladrang*, *giro* and *lancaran*, but in other repertoire there are also vocals with various variations.

Music developing outside the palace has various characteristics, although it is a form of creativity based on the culture of a particular area. These characteristics can be viewed from several elements such as instrument organology, vocal work, and special patterns, for example in *Gending Samirah*. This type of *Gending* develops in East Java, and is used to accompany various

performances, for example dances, puppets shows, and other traditional art performances (*ludruk*). *Gending Samirah* in several events presents its own style, for example when shown in shadow puppet shows, *tayub*, and *uyon-uyon*.

*Gending Samirah* in certain areas, for example in the Lor Brantas (Surabayan area) is performed in a different way from the way it is performed in Kidul Brantas (Malang area). This difference can be felt in the lyric and *Risikan Balungan* pattern, but the elements of Babonan *Gending* (basic balungan) generally still have similarities. The vocal in *Gending Samirah* in the Kidul Brantas seems to have more *Sinden* and *Gerong* variations than in Lor Brantas. The addition of vocal in *Gending Samirah* is usually shown in uyon-uyon performed by Among Rasa Malang musical group. The renewal of the vocals and the patterns of the Samirah musical composition by the musical group Among Rasa Malang, create special characteristics that made it different from other Samirah repertoires. *Gending Samirah* performed by Among Rasa Malang is

interesting to be examined in research. Thus, researchers try to focus on how vocal/lyric is presented and what the meaning and functions of the *gending* are. The characteristics especially those related to *Gending Samirah* Among Rasa Malang and other *gendings* are further explained in this study.

*Gending Samirah* Karawitan Among Rasa Malang was first presented for the needs of *Klenengan* (initiating a shadow puppet show). The presentation of *Gending Samirah* shows varies because it consists of a series that are intertwined. The first part consists of *macapat* song which has become a typical Malang icon, then it continues with the *Samirah gending* performing its *sinden* and *gerong*. The sequence was purely composed by the composer Karawitan Among Rasa Malang (Alm. Ki Sumantri). He was the creator of the vocal elements in the *Gending Samirah*. The composition of *Gending Samirah* is bound by the tone of the gong, thus creating a connection in the presentation of the *Gending* (padang ulihan/song sentences). Vocals are the main element in the work of the *Gending Samirah*, Among Rasa karawitan group, so that it becomes dominant in the repertoire of *Gending Samirah* in other places.

This is a qualitative study employing ethnographic methods using the semiotic approach by Roland Barthes. This approach was used because the researcher intends to interpret, study, and understand the reasons why late Ki Sumantri, the composer of the musical group Among Rasa created *Gending Samirah* Vocal. The vocals in the *Gending Samirah* Among Rasa Malang consist of *macapat*, *sinden* and *gerongan* songs, each of which has a different meaning. The vocal is translated in the form of *cakepan* text (lyrics) in which its' linguistic component can be studied with semiotic theory. Semiotics is a method of signification on linguistic objects, texts, non-texts which are related to the signs. According to Barthes, semiotics has several elements, namely denotative, connotative and mythical meanings. Denotative, is the first meaning, revealing the literal meaning of a text. Connotative reveals a deeper meaning, presenting another point of view based on an object. Then, myth is the third stage of signification according to Roland Barthes. It is the delivery of a message based on signs. Myth according to Barthes is the meaning of signs based on facts or reality. The connotative meanings that have been formed in society develop into myths. This study was focused on how the presentation of the vocal (lyric) in *Gending Samirah* Karawitan Among Rasa Malang is and what the meanings of the vocal *Gending Samirah* by Karawitan Among Rasa Malang according to Roland Barthes' semiotic theory are.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This is a qualitative study employing ethnographic methods using the semiotic approach by Roland Barthes. This approach was used because the researcher intends to interpret, study, and understand the reasons why late Ki Sumantri as the composer of the musical group Among Rasa created the *Gending Samirah* Vocal. According to Barthes, semiotics is a study on signs including movement, gesture, sound, and phenomena in a reality. Roland Barthes explained that semiotics tries to explain the meaning, motive and nature of a sign or event. Barthes added that a sign or event keeps inspiration and has a relationship with other signs so that it can be understood as a whole.

The research subject was a composer of the Karawitan group Among Rasa Malang. Data sources were divided into two, namely primary data and secondary data. The primary data were collected through interviews, while the secondary data were collected through surveys and documentation. The collected data were then analyzed and went through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Meanwhile, the validity test of the data employed triangulation techniques done by cross-validating the data collected from the interviews, observation, and documentation.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The lyric in *Gending Samirah* by Karawitan Among Rasa Malang consists of a set of *macapat* (poetry) of Sinom Malangan, and then followed by *Gending Samirah*, *sinden*, and *gerong*. Below is the lyric of vocal in *Gending Samirah*.

### 3.1. Vocal (Lyric) of Gending Samirah Karawitan Among Rasa Malang

#### 1. Macapat Sinom Malangan

*Prawane wong lowokdoro*

*Iseh cilik njaluk rabi*

*Sun adang nok mergosono*

*Kutha lawas den baleni*

*Jodipan kang winarni*

*Tumenggungan dalemipun*

*Klojen lan kayutangan*

*Kauman den isen-isen*

*Wes gumelun wes gumelun*

*Wes gumelun candhekan ugal-ugalan*

## 2. Sindenan

*Ingsun miwiti tembang lan kidung*

*Iku minangka bukaning gending*

*Jawa wetan sing adiluhung*

*Mugo lestari klawan ngrembaka*

## 3. Gerongan I Gending Samirah

*Ana crita rikala jaman semana*

*Pahlawan buruh saka suku Madura*

*Pendalungan pak sakerah ingkang nama*

*Mungsuh landa mbela nasibe kawula*

*Tantrimana ana astane sing Kwasa*

*Ono konco dadi sroyo wong walanda*

*Gending samirah iku sing dadi marga*

*Nganti tega ngorbano jiwa lan raga*

## 4. Gerongan II Gending Samirah

*Paweling bapa biyung*

*Wong priya ngopeni garwa klawan putra*

*Ngestiti lan ati-ati*

*Garwanira abote marang kang putra*

*Mula kita aja laku sulaya*

*Tindakna kang utama mring sapaadha-padha*

*Supaya dadi tuladha*

## 3.2. Roland Barthes's Semiotics Analysis

*Gending* samirah karawitan Among Rasa Malang is one of the East Javanese repertoire pieces from Malang area. *Gending* Samirah is usually played in shadow puppet show events as its vocal is not dominant. The lyric in the *sinden* resembles Yogyakarta or Surakarta styles as it sounds polite. The language style of East Javanese *Gending* is more tough and direct, in accordance with the culture in society. *Gending* Samirah karawitan Among Rasa Malang has vocals that adopt and adapt to the East Javanese "bloko". The *sinden* is in the form of parikan (not wangsalan) showing that it belongs to Javanese literature, with its East Javanese language.

*Gending* samirah has developed for pure musical needs (uyon-uyon) which is closely related to vocals and instrumental creativity. *Gending* Samirah karawitan Among Rasa Malang in certain conditions is a *pedanyangan gending*, or a piece dedicated to an ancestor or elders who passed away and guarded (mbahureksa) a certain area. This information is obtained based on the transcendental (mental) mechanisms that underlie the idea of composing *Gending* Samirah to be more varied in terms of vocals and instrumentals.

The vocal in *Gending* Samirah Among Rasa conveys meaning. In this study, the lyric is analyzed using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to reveal its' denotative, connotative and mythical elements. The following tables are the results of meaning analysis.

**Table 1.** The meanings of *Macapat Sinom Malangan* analyzed using Roland Barthes' Semiotics Theory

Macapat:	Denotative Meaning	Connotative Meaning	Myth
<i>Prawane wong lowokdoro, Iseh cilik njaluk rabi</i>	A girl from Lowokdoro village is a teenager, but she wants to be married off immediately.	Early marriage problems are caused by various factors.	Marriage needs maturity to create a harmonious family.
<i>Sun adang nok mergosono, Kutha lawas den baleni</i>	I cook rice (adang) in Mergosono, the old town on repeat.	Showing the name of an area, namely Mergosono, the old town and <i>kebalen</i>	Kebalen is the name of a market located in the old town of Malang.
<i>Jodipan kang winarni Tumenggungan dalemipun</i>	A colorful jodipan, his house is in Tumenggungan.	Jodipan is famous as a colorful village and a tourist spot.	Malang is a city famous of its tourism sector (Jodipan, Sengkaling, Balekambang beach).
<i>Klojen lan kayutangan</i>	Klojen and Kayutangan, Kauman and Kasin	Mentioning the names of popular places in Malang Klojen and Kayutangan, Kauman and Kasin	A historical place in the city of Malang, there are Dutch heritage buildings in Kayutangan

**Table 2.** The analysis of *Sindenan* meanings based on Roland Barthes's Semiotics Theory

<i>Sindenan:</i>	Denotative Meaning	Connotative Meaning	Myth
<i>Ingsun miwiti tembang lan kidung, Iku minangka bukaning gending</i>	I started nembang (chanting) and kidung, that includes bukaning gending	Songs and chant can be used to start a music, for example, in a macapat song	The first step to start something is with target and prayer. Then, people may continue working. It is like how <i>Gending</i> is played.
<i>Jawa wetan sing adiluhung, Mugo lestari klawan ngrembaka</i>	Honorable East Java, hopefully it will remain known and sustainable	East Java has a distinctive local culture and arts that need to be preserved	Each region has its own form of local wisdom, which makes a nation diverse, united in Unity in Diversity

**Table 3.** The analysis of *Gerongan I* meanings based on Roland Barthes's Semiotics Theory

<i>Gerongan I:</i>	Denotative Meaning	Connotative Meaning	Myth
<i>Ana crita rikala jaman semana, Pahlawan buruh saka suku Madura, Pendalungan pak sakerah ingkang nama, Mungsuh landa mbela nasibe kawula, Tantrimana ana astane sing Kwasa, Ono konco dadi sroyo wong walanda, Gending samirah iku sing dadi marga, Nganti tega ngorbano jiwa lan raga</i>	Once upon a time, there was a story of a hero from the Madurese tribe named Pak Sakera. He defended the workers from Dutch oppression, risked his life and God' destiny. He is a hero who gave up his whole body and soul even to be betrayed by his friends.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Gending</i> samirah tells the history Mr. Sakera heroism,</li> <li>• <i>Gending</i> samirah is the path of a hero, Mr. Sakera, in scarifying his body and soul</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kindness and fairness require sacrifice and even life can be at stake</li> <li>• The Madurese tradition of migrating</li> <li>• When someone is kind, he will always be remembered. Javanese proverb "<i>gajah mati ninggal gading, macan mati ninggal walulang</i>"</li> </ul>

**Table 4.** The analysis of *Gerongan II* meanings based on Roland Barthes's Semiotics Theory

<i>Gerongan II</i>	Denotative Meaning	Connotative Meaning	Myth
<i>Paweling bapa biyung Wong priya ngopeni garwa klawan putra Ngestiti lan ati-ati Garwanira abote marang kang putra Mula kita aja laku sulaya Tindakna kang utama mring sapadha-padha Supaya dadi tuladha</i>	It contains a reminder from father and mother to a man to take care of his wife and children, be cautious. A wife should prioritize her children, be kind to others, so she can be a role model for her family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening to parents' advice</li> <li>• Be cautious</li> <li>• Always maintain a positive attitude, be an example for generations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being conscientious and careful is the key in all aspects of life</li> <li>• Ethics and behavior make a person.</li> </ul>

#### 4. CONCLUSION

*Gending Samirah Karawitan Among Rasa* has a variation of lyric and *balungan* pattern that makes it different from *Gending Samirah* from other areas. Vocal in this *Gending Samirah* reflects the society language style. It consists of *sinom Malangan*, *parikan* in the form of *Sinden* and *Gerongan*. *Gending Samirah* is performed in events, such as shadow puppet shows.

*Gending Samirah Karawitan Among Rasa Malang* was analyzed using Roland Barthes' semiotics theory. The result is presented below.

1. *Macapat sinom Malangan*. The lyric tells about some places known as the icon of Malang city which has both educational and historical values.
2. *Sinden*. It tells the need to preserve the local wisdom of an area.
3. *Gerongan I*. This part tells the history of a figure, called Mr. Sakera. The message is about the character or moral values based on the story.
4. *Gerongan II*. This part contains aspects of education, family, being ethical, and showing good attitudes in interacting with society.

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