

The Tradition of Bejamu Saman as New Kinship Media in Gayo Lues, Aceh

Sabri Gusmail*, Fifie Febryanti Sukman, Prasika Dewi Nugra

Dance Study Program, Department of Performance Art

Institut Seni Budaya Indonesia Aceh

Aceh, Indonesia

*sabrigusmail@isbiaceh.ac.id

Abstract—This research aims to describe the new kinship system that exists in Bejamu Saman Tradition in Gayo Lues, Aceh province. A tradition held to celebrate post-harvest, Eid al-Fitr, or Eid Hajj. Saman is the main presentation in these activities and carried out to forge ties between the two villages. Making Bejamu Saman an object of research to answer the problem of the lack of information related to the presentation variant of Saman Dance, so that the public can distinguish the presentation of Saman Dance as a single spectacle and the dance as a series of cultural activities. Meanwhile, the focus of the problem in this research is the new kinship system produced in activities of *saman roa lo roa ingi*. This research is qualitative for describes the events of Bejamu Saman in narrative form. Data collection has been obtained using the method of observation, interviews, and literature study. The results of this study revealed that in the Bejamu Saman procession there were three stages of activity and performed the Saman Dance. Besides, in the Bejamu Saman procession, Saman Dance is also a means for the community in Gayo Lues to produce a new kinship system (*serinen*). Confirms that the Saman Dance variant is not only a single spectacle but also a part of cultural activities.

Keywords—*Bejamu Saman, kinship system, serinen, Gayo Lues*

I. INTRODUCTION

The *Bejamu Saman* cultural event is a hereditary activity carried out by the Gayo community as a reflection of the social interaction of the community with an assessment of kinship value in it. The series of activities that show *Bejamu Saman* activities are considered as opportunities to explore the potential for the richness of traditional arts contained in cultural events. The popularity of the *Saman* Dance as a single performance or "*saman show*" by the supporting community is feared to dissolve people's knowledge of the existence of this art in a cultural activity. Especially when the *Saman* dance is designated as an intangible culture heritage of the world. UNESCO has designated the dance as the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Human in the 6th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage in Bali, 24 November 2011 [1]. So that without realizing it, there will be a generalization of the definition of the presentation form of

Saman Dance. The existence and performance of *Saman* as part of the *Bejamu Saman* cultural event will disappear or in extreme conditions will not be known by the wider community or the supporting community. One of example in an article which states "*Saman* dance is generally only played by young people, but along with the development of the era, there are many *saman* dances come from women" [2]. Because *Saman* dance an affirmation of the national identity of Indonesia [3]. So, this research confirms that the *Saman* dance is only danced by men, there is no type of *Saman* dance that is danced by women.

Therefore, based on the problems above, the researchers made *Bejamu Saman* cultural events as a formal object in this study, by focusing on the kinship system resulting from two days and two nights of *saman* activities (*saman roa lo roa ingi*). This study involves the socio-cultural aspects of the community at Gayo Lues in the *Bejamu Saman* cultural event. This needs to be done to describe *saman roa lo roa ingi* and answer the problems in this study. The goal is that the public can obtain information and knowledge about the implementation structure of *Bejamu Saman* and the contextual content of these activities. The presentation variants of *Saman* Dance, including *Saman* as a single performance (*Saman show*) with *Saman* as a series of cultural activities (*saman roa lo roa ingi*). Regardless of the intended purpose, the specificity of the discussion in this article lies in the *serinen* (foster sibling) culture which is a new kinship system from the results of *Bejamu Saman Roa Lo Roa Ingi* cultural activities. Become part of the conservation of performing arts which includes the protection of the arts in research [4].

Some of the literature references in this study are the book "*Saman Aceh*" written by Imam Juaini and published by the Conservation Centre for Cultural Values in 2014. In chapter 3, this book discusses the issue of *Saman* Gayo and its relation to one of the activities in the form of a *tunang* (sparring) and does not clearly describe the *Bejamu Saman* activity. However, this book obtained data or information related to the presentation of the *saman* that commonly see (1 line) with *saman tunang*. So that the data can be used as initial reference material before obtaining data in the field.

The article by Dimas Ardinata and Bukhari Yusuf in the Student Scientific Journal Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Syiah Kuala University in 2018 with the title "Entertainment Culture *Bejamu Saman* in the Gayo Lues Society". The article discusses the relationship between entertainment culture in *Bejamu Saman* and the occurrence of deviant behaviour by teenagers during *Bejamu Saman* events. This activity was used as an excuse for teenagers to be permitted to leave by their parents so that the *Bejamu Saman* activity was considered a place for teenagers to gather with friends or with a partner. The research to be carried out with this research both use *Bejamu Saman* as the object of research, but the research focus between the two is very different. The research that will be carried out focuses on the choreography study of *Bejamu Saman* implementation structure and the contextual content of the activity.

Saman was also discussed in an article entitled "Saman Dance of The Aceh People: Identity and Actualization" by Yusriz Heniwaty in the Journal of Community Research and Service (JCRS) Vol. 2, No. 1 in 2018. This study aims to analyse the *Saman* dance which focuses on its function which is the identity of the Gayo community. In her analysis, *Saman* has several values that make him the identity of the Acehnese people today and in the future. If in this study the *Saman* Dance analysed as a single performance (not part of cultural activities), then in this research the author focuses more on the *Saman* Dance which is part of *Bejamu Saman* cultural activities.

Margaret Kartomi in an article entitled Aceh's Body Percussion: From Ritual Devotionals to Global Niveau. Published in the Musike International Journal of Ethnomusicological Studies in 2006. This article tends to see the uniqueness of the *Saman* Dance as a dance that produces body percussion in ethnomusicological studies [5]. Although this article still describes the order in which the *Saman* Dance is presented, but not as a series of *Bejamu Saman*. Meanwhile, this research analyses *Saman* in *Bejamu Saman* activity in choreography study.

The research that researchers conducted in 2018 entitled "*Bejamu Saman* Cultural Events: Potential Objects for Choreographic Research in Aceh Province" was published in a book collection of articles entitled Para Penabuh Tubuh: Sehimpun Tulisan Perihal *Saman* Gayo pages 251-259. This mini research provides an overview shape of the *Bejamu Saman* event and asks questions about the possibility of conducting choreographic research to produce dance works or scientific papers.

Some of the studies that have been described above are very supportive as a comparison material for analysing *Saman* Dance on *Bejamu* cultural events. The discussion in this article refers to the choreography study in the book Study of the Text and Context of Dance by Y. Sumandiyo Hadi, 2007. The basic structure of the performance by Richard Schechner, written by Sal Murgiyanto in the book "Cultural Performance and Common Sense" in 2018. Using an anthropological approach

from the book "Introduction to Anthropology II" by Koentjaraningrat 2005 and Sociology from the book "Sociology of Dance" by Y. Sumandiyo Hadi in 2005.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach, namely narrating data about new kinship relationships in the *Bejamu Saman* incident. To obtain more in-depth data, ethical, and emic approaches were used. Data collection techniques used in the field to obtain the desired data are observation, interviews, literature study, and documentation study. Furthermore, the data that has been obtained will then be analysed. The stages in data analysis are data reduction. The data obtained that has been collected is analysed to allow temporary conclusions in the reduction process. The final stage in the data analysis stage is verification and concluding.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bejamu Saman is an artistic activity carried out to celebrate post-harvest or to welcome major Muslim religious events such as Eid al-Fitr or Eid al-Adha and has become a tradition carried out by the Gayo Lues community. The implementation of *Bejamu Saman* is carried out to establish a relationship between the two villages that have agreed to join *Bejamu Saman*. Besides that, *Bejamu Saman* is also done to get *serinen* or foster siblings. *Bejamu Saman* started from a conversation with *seberu sebujang* in a village. Then, the desire to held *Bejamu Saman* was conveyed to the community leaders in the village through consensus. If an agreement is reached, this is conveyed to all Gayo (guest and guest villages), and usually, they immediately carry out *saman* training to welcome their *serinen* [6].

The presence of the *Bejamu Saman* cultural event cannot be separated from the socio-cultural aspects of the Gayo Lues community. The wealth of traditional arts, namely *Saman*, is used as an intermediary for meetings between people in these cultural events. *Saman* is the main starting point so that *Bejamu Saman* can be carried out so that *Saman* can be classified into folklore, namely, a part of collective culture, which is spread and passed down from generation to generation, traditionally in different versions, both in oral form and examples accompanied by gestures or a reminder aid. The classification is because *saman* is part of the implementation of the *Bejamu Saman* culture and this activity has been passed down from generation to generation and the presentation is in the form of an oral accompanied by movement [7]. *Saman* dance is a form of expression of human feelings (Gayo Lues society) which is outlined in a patterned and orderly series of movements. In this section, the researcher will discuss the area of "human expression", namely the art of dance concerning society or how the symbol system and the system of Gayo Lues society are related.

A. Bejamu Saman Structure

As part of a cultural event carried out by the Gayo Lues community and in it contains performance elements, the *Saman Dance* at *Bejamu Saman Roa Lo Roa Ingi* is divided into 3 stages, namely preparation, implementation, and closing. This stage refers to the basic structure of the show put forward by Richard Schechner in Murgiyanto, namely: a show has a beginning, middle, and end [8]. In general, the structure of *Bejamu Saman* in Gayo Lues Regency can be described as follows:

1) *Bejamu Saman preparation*: Before holding the *Bejamu Saman* procession or event, several preparations must be made by the villager that will hold the event procession. The initial stage was to conduct *seberu sebujang* conversation which was held in a predetermined village. The determination of this activity was carried out by community leaders in the village and expressed their desire to do *Bejamu Saman*. If it has been agreed by both parties, the next step is to discuss the number of participants or guests who will visit the host village. The number of guests is adjusted to the number of people in the host village so that at the time of welcoming it does not cause embarrassment for the host, such as lack of facilities for future *serinen* or the mismatch from the number of dancers who will perform the *Saman Dance*. Therefore, at this stage, determining the number of guests is very important so that there is no misconception between the two parties. After this matter has been discussed and obtaining an agreement, it will be conveyed to the local youth host village community or *sebujang Gayo* to prepare *Saman* to be displayed at *Bejamu Saman* to welcome the *serinen*. The Performing Arts Event Cycle taking into account audiences, financial resources, available performance venues, and artistic inputs [9].

2) *Bejamu Saman procession*: The *Bejamu Saman* procession is carried out when the host village is ready to receive guests. It begins by welcoming the guest village. Welcoming guests only attended by *sebujang* and old men. The first procession is welcoming the guests which are performed by the host by putting a wreath of flower to one of the community leaders of the guest village. This procession is called *didong alo*. I. Tantawi in his journal *Didong Gayo Lues: Analisis Keindahan Bahasa dan Fungsi Sosial* states that in Gayo Lues, *didong* is divided into three, namely *didong alo*, *didong jalu*, and *didong niet*. *Didong alo* is a *didong* which functions to welcome guests which contains welcome greetings and thanks given to guests who have attended the event safely [10]. *Didong alo* was brought by both parties, namely the hosts and guests with approximately 10 people.



Fig. 1. The process of welcoming the youth leader, traditional leaders, and the guest village head.

After the process of welcoming guests with the *didong alo* procession, all guests are escorted to *bangsalan*. *Bangsalan* is a place resembling a *meunasah* (prayer room) or *bale* (hall) measuring 10 x 20 m (very varied and adjusted to the capacity of guests who will arrive). Some of the *bangsalan* are made of wooden planks which serve as a gathering place for guests for the distribution of *serinen* and *Bejamu Saman*. At this time, it is not uncommon for *bangsalan* to be made specifically to accommodate guests and audiences in *saman* performances. Usually, the host will put up a tent in a field and decorate the tent. The guests who have gathered in *bangsalan* will perform a *serinen* selection process with the host. The basis for selecting *serinen* at *Bejamu Saman* is influenced by several aspects, particularly age, position, or interest. The selection of *serinen* based on those aspects is intended so there is no discomfort between the guest and the host during the event. If all guests have received *serinen* with the host, the host will bring their *serinen* to their respective homes to be entertained and introduced by family members. *Serinen* will be treated as his own family so all *serinen* needs while in the village will be provided by the host *serinen*.



Fig. 2. Sample of *bangsalan* made especially for *Bejamu Saman*.

The *Besaman* process will begin when a *serinen* banquet in each house has been held and all parties from the host and guests have gathered to *bangsalan*. *Besaman* is performed by

both parties to compete, namely a movement match imitating the movement of the demonstration group or *mangka*. The *saman* displayed is *Saman roa lo roa ingi*. As the name implies, this *saman* is performed for two days and two nights, danced by two groups alternately. The demonstration group performs the movement first, after that the imitator or *engging* group must imitate the movement. *Bines* dancers are behind the host saman dancers.



Fig. 3. The position of the performance of *saman roa lo roa ingi*

3) *Closing*: The closing was carried out as a form of a farewell procession between the guest saman group and the host saman group, which followed not only by the host saman group but also the entire community and family members of the host saman group were also present to witness the release of guests. Each of the hosts will usually prepare a gift (*selepah*) as a souvenir to be brought by the respective *serinen*. Previously, *selepah* was in the form of food supplies for guests on their way back to the village, then at this time, it was very varied, adjusting the taste of the host *serinen* and the factors of economic capability. It is not uncommon *selepah* given to each *serinen* to be used as a competition for prestige between host *serinen*. Although *selepah* is usually wrapped in wrapping paper or wrapped in cloth, fellow hosts know what is being given to each other.

After a series of farewells and guests returned to the village. The entire host community will evaluate *Bejamu Saman* implementation and work together to clean up all facilities. At this stage, *bangsalan* will be demolished (the place for the *besaman* performance) if *bangsalan* is made specifically for this activity.



Fig. 4. *Saman* group guests bring *selepah* in the farewell process.

B. *Serinen as The Context for Bejamu Saman*

Based on the *Saman* performance structure in *Bejamu Saman Roa Lo Roa Ingi* activities and various related activities, it is concluded that the *Saman* dance is the main art object in the implementation of *Bejamu Saman*. Meanwhile, the main essence of organizing *Bejamu Saman* is the process of establishing new kinship called *serinen* (brothers). *Serinen* is used as a context in the *Bejamu Saman* cultural event at Gayo Lues and the *saman* and *bines* performances are part of the activity text. Back to Y. Sumandiyo Hadi's opinion on the question of significant social behaviour (significant symbols) present in the socio-cultural system consisting of a group of people [11]. Therefore, *Bejamu Saman* becomes a form of social action that has been patterned by the Gayo Lues community and seeks to create a collective agreement to give meaning to this collective action. Patterned actions are performed in preparation, organizing, until the closing of *Bejamu Saman*. The result of this patterned action created a new kinship system, namely *serinen*.

After understanding the presence of performing arts texts in the context of substantial formation, it cannot be separated from the paradigm of its content context. In understanding the projection aspect of performing arts and the audience community, which is related to the art and social paradigm, the context of this content will be related to the concept of function which includes various kinds of meanings, values, and certain messages [12]. The function concept is not just used but always understands a role or importance. The function concept is not just a custom but always understands a role or importance. Therefore, if we observe the cultural events of *Bejamu Saman*, we will not only see *Saman* art performances in the aesthetic of the text (formation), but we will also see the content of the kinship system built between 2 villages through the *Serinen* tradition. Some *serinen* terms in the social activities of the Gayo Lues community.

Bejamu Saman is a medium for the realization of a new kinship system between individuals, families, and two villages. *Saman* is the main object in performed these cultural events. Muksin Putra Hafid in an article entitled "*Reactualization of Cultural Values in Saman: Character Education Based on Local Wisdom*" mentioned that *Saman* for the Gayo Lues community is a spirit for the community, especially in holding the traditional *Bejamu Saman roa lo roa ingi* (two days and two nights), *sara lo sara ingi* (one day and one night), or even three days and three nights [13]. This is in line with Samsul Bahry's statement, that "before *Bejamu Saman* event, the host village must conduct detailed village discussions". The point is to measure the host's ability to accommodate guests from the village to be invited. These capacities include the total number of men who will become *serinen* and the willingness of each family to accommodate guests for two days and two nights". Based on this capacity, the host who will hold *Bejamu Saman* looks for potential guests from other villages that match this capacity. It is strongly discouraged or usually avoided by inviting guests with total *Saman* groups or men more than the host. Because if guests who come are not served or are not

treated well, then this will be a disgrace to the organizing village.

Avoiding disgrace and maintaining the village's spirit, all elements of the *Bejamu Saman* community supporter will prepare the best possible activities. Society and the spirit of discussion are of the utmost importance. In the book *Introduction to Anthropology II*, Koentjaraningrat writes that discussion as a social element is distinguished between two things, specifically 1) Discussion as a way of holding meetings, and 2) discussion as a spirit that animates all culture and society [14]. The *Bejamu Saman* implementation accommodates discussion as a social element on the two things that have been mentioned by Koentjaraningrat. First, all village meeting discussions always involve the village head, traditional leaders, youth leaders, and senior *pesaman* as figures who help the discussion process from accommodating various kinds of opinions from meeting participants until getting results that can be mutually agreed upon. So that the results of the meeting can be ascertained as a result of discussion to reach a consensus. Second, the entire series of discussions that have been performed in the implementation of *Bejamu Saman* shows the spirit of cooperation of all elements of village society in the social order of life. The whole community will contribute their thoughts, energy, and assets so the implementation of *Bejamu Saman* in their village will run successfully without significant difficulties.

The tradition of *serinen* in the *Bejamu Saman* event was part of the efforts between villages to establish hospitality. The series of activities performed for two days, and two nights reflects the closeness of the brotherhood. Although the *Saman* performance was done in a competitive format, basically there were no winning groups and no losing groups because there was no jury who specifically assessed it, but the audience as the audience of the dish. They gather solely to celebrate togetherness and kinship. Before the start of the *besaman* activity, there is always *keketar* (words of advice) from traditional leaders as a form of appeal for all the guests and the audience who witnessed it. This shows that the *Bejamu Saman* cultural event is a form of friendship and cannot be separated from customary rules and laws that all elements of society should agree.

Serinen division in *Bejamu Saman* is also not arbitrary, the process is performed in a strict and measured manner. The procedure division for *serinen* is carried out based on the social structure of the habitual community, commonly known as the *Jema Opat*, whose functions are like government at the village level. If the guests who will come are traditional leaders, the host *serinen* will also be traditional leaders, religious scholars also with religious scholars, youth leaders and youth leaders, to the division of *serinen* based on equal age. This is done so that there is no inequality in status or age between *serinens*, so that the activities carried out for two days and two nights will be harmonious. The structure of *Jema Opat* in a village consists of: 1) *Reje* or *Penguunte*, commonly called the village head; 2) *Imem* or *pegawe*, figures of scholars or experts in religion; 3) *Petue* or *urang tue*, which means elder person; and 4) the

people or *sudere*, ordinary people. For ordinary people or *sudere*, they are usually equated based on the criteria of age, rank, and position. The same applies, the division of *serinen* for the *saman*, based on the position of the participant or the position of the *saman* player, namely; lifter, clamp, clip, and support.

IV. CONCLUSION

Saman dance is a dance that only danced by male dancers. If someone says that the *Saman* Dance can be danced by women, then this dance can be called as another variant of the Aceh dance which is performed in a sitting format and is not called the *Saman* Dance. The differences in the presentation of the *saman* dances in a single performance with the *Bejamu Saman* activities are: the *saman* is performed by two groups in a competing format and performed in a parallel floor pattern facing each other. In the shows we usually see, there are 11-15 *saman* dancers, but in *Bejamu Saman* activities the number of dancers can reach 25 people in one group of *pesaman*. The *saman* performance at *Bejamu Saman* is between 20-30 minutes, while in a single performance the *saman* dance tends to only be performed in 5-8 minutes. The *Saman* dance in a single performance is packaged briefly thus it is not monotonous and the movements shown tend to move quickly (heroic symbols) so that there are not too many poetic messages. There are many song variations (movements) in *Bejamu Saman*, it allows many messages to be conveyed in poetry and contains a lot of oral literature. Dance movements have their meaning in each movement [15].

As part of a cultural event performed by the Gayo community and containing performance elements, the *Saman* Dance at *Bejamu Saman Roa Lo Roa Ingi* is divided into 3 stages, namely preparation, implementation, and closing. Based on the structure of the *Saman* performance in *Bejamu Saman Roa Lo Roa Ingi* activities and various related activities, it is concluded that the *Saman* dance is the main art object in organizing *Bejamu Saman*. Meanwhile, the main essence of the implementation of *Bejamu Saman* is the process of creating a new kinship called *beserinen* (brothers). *Serinen* was used as a context in the *Bejamu Saman* cultural event at Gayo Lues and the *saman* and *bines* performances became part of the text (formation) of these activities. So *Bejamu Saman* becomes a form of social action that has been patterned by the Gayo Lues community and seeks to create a collective agreement to give meaning to this action. Patterned actions are carried out both in preparation, organizing, until the closing of *Bejamu Saman*. Stabilized in terms of its social action and purpose on the overall organizational pattern to produce performing arts [16]. The result of this patterned action creates a new kinship system, namely *serinen* (brothers). A bloodless bond that was born from the tradition was related to the *Bejamu Saman* cultural event. This kinship system is a distinctive characteristic, how the people in Gayo Lues carry out patterned social actions to produce a new kinship bond, namely *serinen* *besaman* (foster siblings), whose synergistic activity can

manifest like siblings and be carried out for life whose brothers may be inherited to posterity.

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