

Solving Problems in Understanding Banjarsari Dance Through Musical Elements of Karawitan

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Abstract: The classical dances originated from Pakualaman Palace Yogyakarta were created by combining the elements of movement, outfit, storyline, and musical accompaniment; each of which is full of meanings. Similar to those dances, lelangen beksan Banjaransari that was based on Babad Segaluh (Segaluh Chronicle) also has those meaningful elements. Based on the writer's observation, most of the society has difficulties in understanding the meaning lies behind the dance. This research's findings show that the society does not readily acquire their knowledge of both music and language. This paper is therefore to address the problem from both musical and non-musical karawitan.

1 INTRODUCTION

One aspect of karawitan or Javanese traditional music that is interesting to be discussed is that of related to its function to accompany other art forms. Supanggah stated that the existence of karawitan cannot be restrained as its sole function as musical accompaniment (2007: 263). In a performance of traditional classical dance of Yogyakarta, karawitan is considered to resemble the soul of the dance, namely, its expressing strength. The fact also support such argument as it shows the significance of karawitan within a classical dance performance. Every single activity, effort, as well as competence expressed its players (pengrawit) and its lead vocal (pesindhen or penggerong) contributes to build the atmosphere of the performance, to enliven the dancers or characters' expressions, to emphasize every detail in their movement or even a gesture. In other words, music has a very important function within a performance. It is similar to what happen in the performance of lelangen beksan Banjaransari from Pakualaman palace Yogyakarta, a dance revealed from Babad Segaluh.

On the other hand, the society has difficulties in understanding and appreciating the dance though it has been clearly expressed through its musical accompaniment. The role and function of karawitan in a dance performance are more often considered as a mere illustration. This fact shows an indication that

the problem lies on the society's lack of knowledge on karawitan as a dance musical accompaniment (karawitan tari).

To solve this problem, it can be accomplished by educating the society. By giving them information and understanding, the society can be expected to have adequate understanding of the function and role of karawitan as a musical accompaniment in a dance performance.

2 DISCUSSION

As a product of musical creativity, karawitan can be a single performance, or is called as uyon-uyon (Atmadja, 2011: 52 -53). Supanggah also argues that uyon-uyon is an independent musical performance that cannot be related to other art forms (2007: 109). Meanwhile, Trustho mentions that karawitan can be performed as an accompaniment for performances of dance, wayang kulit (shadow puppet), and ketoprak (Javanese traditional play). Its accentuated existence is due to its contribution in filling an empty space within a performance, for building dramatic atmosphere, and by giving emphasis on certain movements (2005: 16).

This paper, therefore, is to address the role of karawitan as a musical accompaniment of a dance, that is as a product of musical creativity expressed by ricikan (musical instrument) of Javanese gamelan and

vocal lead. Specifically, it is known as 'karawitan tari'. Gendhon's argument as cited by Roestopo remarks that a dance expression is supported, and often substituted by its musical accompaniment (1991: 10). It means that karawitan tari has an important role – similar to the dance itself.

2.1 Gendhing/Gamelan Piece Form and Structure

Conventionally, the form of gending is composed and arranged in symmetrical metrics (Kriswanto, 2008: 91). Every part is written in musical notes of balungan gending by using numbers or certain symbols. The names of the gending composition, from the smallest structure respectively are lancaran, ketawang, ladrang; while gending or music composition with alit (small), tengahan (medium), and ageng (large) sizes yet unstructured are playon, sampak, srepegan, kemuda, and ayak-ayak.

The lancaran structure can be categorized as the smallest music composition. Each gongan (a whole round of gong) consists of of eight sabetans (beats) on ricikan balungan (e.g. slentem or saron). The cholotomic of ricikan shows hard – light beats and pauses between the main rhythms. The arrangement of every ricikan while being played sounds as a cyclic meter. The following scheme illustrates the form and structure of lancaran music composition.

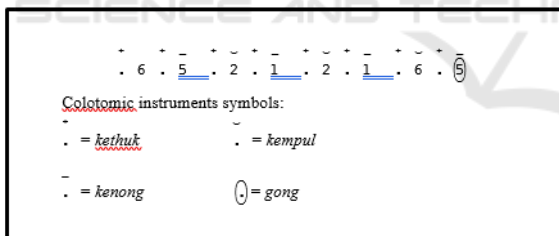


Figure 1: Form of lancaran.

Figure 1 shows a musical creativity pattern in arranging numbers of beatings, gatra (group of four notes) and improvisation on its cholotomic instruments (ricikan). Lancaran, thus, becomes the simplest composition and the basis to develop other larger compositions by multiplying the numbers of beatings and prolong the pauses or duration. Creativities in creating larger composition, therefore, can be achieved by multiplying the hitting by 64, 128, 256, and 516 beats in each gong cycle.

The composition for accompaniment of lelangen beksan Banjarsari begins with gending Runtut. It consists of 64 beats on balungan (skeleton) notation

composed in gatra forms of 4 beats; so, there are 16 gatras altogether.

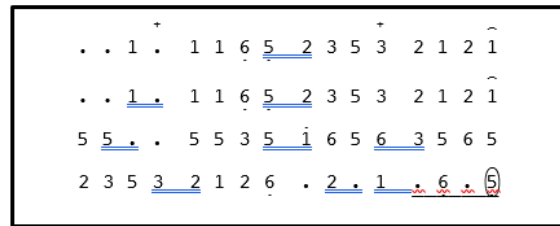


Figure 2: Gending Runtut form.

The next part of the composition is ladrang. The ladrang composition is performed without any vocal, and consists of 32 beats in a gong cycle.

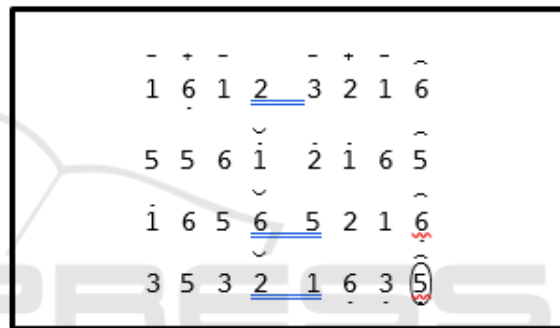


Figure 3: Ladrang form.

The next gending or composition is in form of ketawang, entitled Mijil. According to its type, can be categorized into gending sekar (song composition) developed from macapat Mijil. One gong cycle consists of 16 beats, divided into 4 gatras.

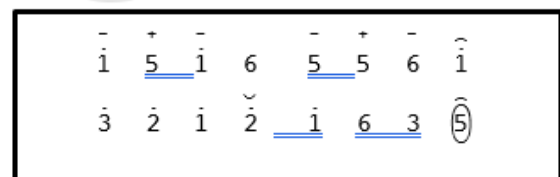


Figure 4: Ketawang form.

2.2 Cakepan (Lyric) and Arrangement of Gending Performance

Cakepan or song lyric in a karawitan tari is the second element after its musical element expressed through its gamelan. Some information can be gathered by listening to its lyric. Based on the writer's observation, there are several difficulties for the

society to understand the theme, storyline, as well as the meaning of a dance through its lyric.

The first problem arises from the absence of time or opportunity to listen the lyric thoroughly. It happens because the society is no longer accustomed to listen and scrutinize the lyric sung by vocal technique in karawitan tradition. It results from a fact that female vocalists, especially, use nasalized vocal technique and produce voice on standard and higher registers. Secondly, the problem may appear because listeners do not understand meanings in the language used in the lyric. Thirdly, there is a tendency to enjoy the feel of gending or the melody of the instruments or the vocal instead of paying attention on its lyric. And finally, it may also be caused by the poor acoustic quality of the room

The atmosphere of the initial part is built by using pathetan. It is an instrumentalia played by certain instruments; rebab, gender, gambang, and suling. The next part is bawa, or solo vocal sung by a singer or pesindhen. The lyric note and melody are as follow.

Translation:

Being caught in a war, The Banjaransari
Against Rayungwulan
They had a fight, and used their mighty powers
Until during the fight
A sympathy arose, The Handsome then
Approached the Beautiful Princess
Saying his love, and it was accepted by the Beautiful
Princess
They finally live together
(translated by Raharja)

The bawa vocal part can be considered as a prologue, and also an abstract of the whole story. The lyric of the bawa part tells a story of the meeting of two figures, Raden Banjaransari and Dewi Rayungwulan. Their meeting created a fight and dispute. Such information can be obtained from the first and second lines. The next line (gatra) tells about the Raden Banjaransari's compassion when fighting against Rayungwulan.

The gerongan vocal on the merong part of Runtut gending is a different type of bawa, both of its form and performance. The part is sung by all male and female vocalists in unison. The lyric and its explanation will be provided below.

Translation:

The beginning was
A long time ago there was an occurrence
During the Mataram time
That of the heir of Maja Agung Noble
When the Handsome prince wandered

Doing ascetic pray
Gaining life glory
When in disaster
Sent by God
He would suffer
It was told, then,
Upon receiving God's guide
His path became clear
With the help of a guru
(translated by Raharja)

According to those lines, it can be comprehended that the part tells about Raden Banjaransari's life story. The second part of gending Runtut is called as inggah accompanied by a choir part. The next part is an inggah with gerongan lyric and its explanation as follow.

Translation:

His name is Jatiraga
A clever priest
Who thoroughly explained
That life glory could be found
By defeating the enemy
Lived in a demon kingdom
The devil to the world
It was the Kingdom of Segaluh

The ruler, of course,
Dewi Rayungwulan
Was infuriated
She recklessly seeing
Banjaransari
Interrupted his ascetic pray
Grew into a dispute
Then became a fight
(translated by Raharja)

The lyric on the first ulihan (cycle) reveals the meeting between Raden Banjaransari and his teacher, Begawan Jatiraga who was holy and intelligent. Raden Banjaransari was suggested to fight against his enemy who came from the Kingdom of Segaluh. It was a demon kingdom ruled by Dewi Rayungwulan. The second part tells about Dewi Rayungwulan's anger who felt, that her peacefulness was interrupted by the aura resulted from the ascetic pray of Raden Banjaransari. Dewi Rayungwulan, then, came to him and interrupted his ritual process.

Their meeting was, then, followed by a dispute causing a fight. This part was accompanied by an instrumentalia in form of ladrang played in soran (loud piece) as a transition and also for changing the dynamic. Any information about the storyline,

nevertheless, is absent because the lacking of vocal accompanying the music.

The last part of the gending is a ketawang consisting of 16 sabetans (hittings) in one gong cycle. The beat is slow and calm. Its lyric consists of two parts as follow.

Translation:

O dear Princess

A truly beautiful princess

Once you appeared

Your (fighting) mastery amazed me

I wish you were my destiny

Though I have one wish

For you to answer my riddle

Two of them

Were deeply in love

Their love story

Was like that of Kamajaya Ratih (a Javanese legendary love story)

They built their love relationship

Even soon building a country

A very great country

(Translated by Raharja)

The lines of the first part tell a story about Raden Banjaransari's love to Dewi Rayungwulan. He was, then, eager to propose her as his wife. Dewi Rayungwulan, nonetheless, would accept his proposal in one condition, that the Prince or Raden Banjaransari was able to answer her riddle. The second part tells about how both of them were in love. Their romantic relationship eventually developed into a dream of building a great country.

Based on those explanations, it can be seen that there are some problems in understanding a dance through its musical accompaniment. In other words, the problems appear in appreciating the karawitan of Yogyakarta classical dance repertoire.

3 CONCLUSIONS

Based on those phenomena, problems, possible solution, and a number of analysis provided previously, it can be concluded that problems or failures in understanding a dance performance through its musical composition occur due to some factors. First, related to the complexity of the materials performed in a dance and its musical accompaniment, human's brain has some restraint in understanding a thing simultaneously. Second, it is due to the fact that the society lacks of both musical

and linguistic knowledge to reveal the theme, meaning, and storyline of a dance.

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