



GAMBUS PASER PERFORMANCE AS A CULTURAL LITERACY ENHANCEMENT OF PASER CULTURE FOR INDONESIAN CAPITAL RELOCATION TO EAST BORNEO

By

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ABSTRACT

Gambus Paser music is one among traditional performing arts belongs to Paser tribe. Contextually, gambus Paser performing art cannot be detached from its socio-cultural since it geographically affects the characteristic of that cultural music. Generally, the culture of Gambus Paser music has its various values according to its various geographical dispositions. Geographically varied characteristic of Gambus Paser music is reflected on the interpretation of the music especially on the style of pentengan (picking technique) and the lyric of Gambus song. Gambus Paser music is also characteristically identified by the use of that pentengan style. On the other hand, coastal area also affects Gambus Paser characteristic which tends to be expressive and dynamic. Conceptually speaking, this research is qualitative research with descriptive analytical method. This research focuses on Gambus Paser performing art as the cultural (music) literacy enhancement. The purpose is to analyze the form of Gambus Paser performance as Paser cultural literacy. The result shows that literature related to Paser art is still hardly found, while on the other hand, we have also found how potential this performance as sustainable literacy and identity enhancement for Paser community to welcome the Indonesian capital relocation to East Borneo. A concrete step which is taken is to documenting and disseminating the Gambus Paser performance to create a cultural literacy and a sustainable traditional art.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Gambus Paser, a traditional art from East Borneo, is an effective media of expression. Traditional art is in itself a cultural expression collectively and subjectively tied into its own cultural characteristic, so that it is bound within a particular identity, rule, value, custom, and wisdom [1]. Traditional art belongs to Paser tribe has a vast and complex concept of custom, value, and identity. That complexity can be observed within some art forms such as music, dance, and cultural ceremony. Some traditional art forms elevate the high traditional values and have a correlated function with customs. On the other hand, art might be degraded whenever its own community start to neglect the importance of traditional art inheritance. The life of traditional art is strongly depended on its function and how it gains its values within the development of the supporting community [2].

Nowadays, it has become an unquestionable fact that Gambus Paser has begun to face its own critical situation of neglectation. This traditional art is not too attractive anymore to many youngsters in East Borneo who lives today. This situation leads to the lack of cultural literacy and cultural knowledge in Paser. Presumably, it is due to the development of Paser community's lifestyle strongly affected by the globalization. The youngsters who live in this era are identified by their consumptive and individualistic lifestyle. It is a result of globalization phenomena that brings communities into a homogenizing process led to the cultural identity dispersion for the sake of what it is called as universality [3]. Cultural-based literacy process is urgently needed as a filter for those youngsters. However, this process does not mean to neglect the development brought by globalization. The cultural-based literacy teaching is in accordance with the concept of "locally globalized," instead.

In relation to the Indonesian capital relocation from Jakarta to Penajam district, North Paser, East Borneo, it is, of course, necessary to have every sector, including human resources, to be ready. Human resources readiness should be understood as a step in developing a communal awareness about the sustainable and transformative local wisdom. A competition among youngsters, especially young art practitioners, to face the relocation should be anticipated. They might face a harder challenge due to the new cultural domination within the facet of socio-cultural. Cultural domination leads to the lost of local culture. The possible scenario is traditional art would not anymore be considered within its own cultural value but merely through the lens of practical value (instant culture).

As a respond toward that significance problem, this research tries to consider the potentiality of Gambus Paser as a mean to enhance the cultural literacy within the relocation of Indonesian capital to East Borneo. It is begun from the reconfiguration of Gambus Paser, not solely as an entertainment, but as a sosio-cultural movement that is able to enhance the cultural literacy of Paser community. Cultural (music) literacy is understood as a concept and a knowledge which can give an impact to any adaptive, transformative, applicative, highly literated and sustainable form of art.

According to our field research findings, study literature of Gambus Paser hardly exists and thus gives a great impact into its own existence. We assume that society, either individual or group need to have a portion to play their role. It is related to traditional adagium well-known among Paser community, "*Namaksitaka isi asong*," which means "if it were not us, who will?" This adagium implies a message about the importance to build a communal awareness through the active involvement into traditional art and culture. It also implies that any practice of traditional art should consistently articulated through social conduct, both as a receiver (subjectively aesthetic subject) and a performer (objectively aesthetic). For Goffman (1956), any act done by anyone in front of many other people which has an impact to others is a performance [4]. As a performance, Gambus Paser is closely attached into a social behavior between the audiences (society) and the gambus singer as a symbolical interaction responded by each other.

A literacy capability needs a range of competence support from society, community, cultural observer, art practitioner, governerment agency and, academic artist, especially who works in the field of ethnomusicology. A competence ethnomusicological study which may gain an impact toward cultural music (art) literacy in Indonesian capital relocation to East Borneo includes music contextualization, performance studies, music dissemination, music analysis and transcription. Based on Alan P. Meriam approach (1964), we can adopt three phases of music analysis, which are (1) *conceptualization about music*, (2) *behaviour in relation to music*, and (3) *music sound itself* [5]. Analytical theory concept is relevant to inquire Gambus Paser music within the conceptual range in relation to its cultural literacy articulation of the whole Gambus Paser performance as a cultural product.

This research background shows the importance of exposing the Gambus performance as a mean of cultural literacy empowerment in Indonesian capital relocation to East Borneo. The hardly existing Gambus Paser literacy also exalates the cruciality of this research.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is qualitative research with an analytical descriptive method. Data is collected by interviewing some key informants who has an empirical knowledge toward the study object such as traditional art practitioners and cultural observers. Some places which are observed include Tanah Grogot district, Paser Belengkong district, Suatang Ketebang village, and Longkali East Borneo district. Observation and direct interview data are gathered through audio record, photograph, and video documentation. Data process is completed by literature studies about Paser art forms, especially Gambus Paser art. Those works are relevant for ethnomusicologist as a mean to observe, to gather data, to plan a specific music analysis, and to find any knowledge and theory of music in accordance with the fieldwork [6]. For the next step, field data which has been gathered is evaluated in a category of (1) transcription; (2) interview; (3) audio record. Gathered data is the main analytical object to be analyzed from the simplest to the most complex patterns.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DISCUSSION

A developed traditional art signifies a communal awareness about the significance of a sustainable local art form. This sustainable process can be done through creative and innovative process. However, a solely creative and innovative process is not enough. Traditional art needs to have a consistent pattern of value which works as a society cultural identity. According to Ting-Toomey, cultural identity is a personal's emotional significance to have a sense of belonging or to affiliate with a particular culture [7]. Some inherent elements melt into a dynamic order, so that some kinds of continuity can be felt by its supporting community. Traditional art continuity is adapted into communal point of view through artistic arena. It means artistic arena can be a form of modification that can represent a particular traditional art as a collective and aesthetic-based universal performance. This universality indicates that the need of aesthetic expression is closely related to some fundamental human characteristics [8]. It is



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also said that this universal characteristic is given by a significance factor known as cultural pillar, such as a community where the form of art exists, both as a collective (community) and an individual (personal) [9].

The complexity of Gambus Paser music performance is not merely in a technical form of playing the gambus music, but also in its functional aspect. Gambus Paser performance can be both functioned as a solo gambus performance and gambus for dance accompaniment (entertainment). On the other hand, according to its social condition, Gambus Paser performance may also have a wider area of function, which are as local identity, character building, education, local culture literacy enhancement, and a form of environmental adaptivity. According to Turner, it is common fact applied in many places in the world, that art has a significance role in reflecting a wide range of phenomena existing within a society which works as a reminder, an initiator, and a tool of propaganda, based on its social function [10]. Stokes agrees with Turner to argue that music does not just exist within society, yet it goes far into a fact that the existence of social and cultural world cannot even be imagined without the existence of the music itself [11].

1. Gambus Paser Performance Contextualization

Art in a cultural context exposes a relation between human beings and art, religion, belief system and their environment. Koenjtaraningrat states that culture has three forms: (1) as an idea, concept, values, norm, and any other else, (2) as a patterned human activity in a particular community, (3) artwork made by human [12]. A reliable cultural literacy, then, will help youngsters, especially those who are involved in traditional art, to understand information both in oral and written forms [13]. It is relevant since cultural literacy of Gambus Paser music has a symbiosis relation into the realm of productivity and creativity. Productivity and creativity reflect an idea or notion of local community characteristic as the cultural literacy of Gambus Music Paser performance is.

Local identity is understood as a mean to forge the youth awareness through a direct involvement. Those youths are not only audiences but also art performers. Those youths, then, can achieve their most significant social role in their cultural context through their position (as a performer). This social and cultural relation is called as “modal framework,” in which, if its contexts can be preserved optimally, it can give a positive contribution to cultural music literacy that is important in welcoming Indonesian capital relocation to East Borneo. Modal framework is tool of propaganda to identify the relation between art and its society through a sustainable social and cultural identity approach.

A music performance exists because of a particular condition between the society and the practitioner. Both (society and art practitioner) are involved as a cultural practitioner. It is also said that among other art forms, music more vividly describes traditional culture impact to determine the individual and social standard in case of what is wanted and approved [8]. Strongerly argued that art works are affected by cultural patterns existing in a society and thus they never become personal art works, but always become whole cultural art works, instead [8]. Gambus Paser music performance is that cultural performance which can reflect its social condition. This cultural performance can be explained further within two categories; (1) Cultural performance as an ideal study since it refers and synthesize any information related to where the culture is developed, (2) Cultural message that is more accessible through (a repetitive behavior) performance and thus is specifically divided and compared [14]. On the other hand, a chance of collaboration between individuals from various professions, such as music and education, is supported but is hardly recorded into a research-based literature [15].

2. The Form of Gambus Paser Performance

Gambus Paser performance can be divided into two forms of performances, solo Gambus performance and Gambus for dance accompaniment performance. Both models are still referred as cultural and literal knowledge of Paser music culture. This condition implies that the community has already formed an enduring cultural knowledge, based on a comprehensive approach focusing on their very own local live and their environment (Mancacaritadipura & Wirakartakusumah). This cultural knowledge is Paser cultural music ecosystem that needs to be disseminated as a literal knowledge together with its development to be a new Indonesian capital. The literature of those both Gambus Paser performance can be explained into the following description.

a. Solo Gambus Performance

Solo Gambus Paser performance is well known as a folk performance. It is considered as a folk performance as it is grown and developed within the life of Paser community. The role and function of Solo Gambus Paser performance must be preserved for the future generation of its supporting community. Solo Gambus Paser is a simple performance with a piece of Gambus, vocal, and *gendang* (traditional drum). However simple it is, it strengthens the identity of Paser traditional art as a unique music culture. Its unique is not merely on its music instrument complexity but within the *pentengan* (picking technique) of the Gambus Paser rhythm which is different compared to other traditional rhythm patterns. This performance can be both performed individually and in group (without dance). Any individual who is musically trained surpasses anyone who is not musically trained in a test of individual memory standard, phonology, and executive [17].

This far, Gambus Paser performance was accommodated in the arena of Festival Pentengan Gambus held by the office of Culture, Tourism, Youth, and Sport of Paser Regency 2007 and the office of Culture and Education Paser Regency 2009 that was followed by youngsters and old participants. Every participant both individual and

group has their own unique Gambus *pentengan*. A good Gambus player is not only good at *pentengan* but is also able to skillfully sing the lyric. The Gambus song is not textually limited but is freely developed based on the singer interpretation skill. Lyric development resembles *pantun*. Braginsky argues that *pantun* is close to poem as it has at least a four rhythmical verses. *Pantun* has a textual structure as a poem has its rhyme, lyric, and content [18].

Another uniqueness of Gambus Paser performance is on its singing style which is characterized by its *cempren* (high tone) vocal. *Pentengan* Gambus Paser is also highly varied, it is flexibly able to accommodate various rhythm of song. The pattern of *pantun* in the Gambus Paser performance is characterized by its unique lyric and the form of song which has no reff. Its melodic pattern tends to have a repetitive motif following the lyric of the *pantun*. Once of our correspondent states that:

“If the song contains four words, such as aa and bb, one line must be consisting only those four words, more or less would not be sufficient.”

According to that interview, it can be said that Gambus Paser song can be categorized as a song of *pantun* without reff—unlike a common form of a song. However simple it is, the rhythm of Gambus Paser music is far from monotonous because it consists of various *pentengan* Gambus. It is proofed by our correspondent respond who states that the rhythm of a Gambus consists of so many different rhythms. Our record finds at least nine forms of *pentengan* Gambus rhythm; (1) *Ronggeng*; (2) *Jepen* (common pattern); (3) *Jepen Tirik*; (4) *Tingkilan* (*tingkilan* 1 dan *tingkilan* 2); (5) *Kapal Larut*; (6) *Minum Kopi*; (7) *Sirih Kuning*; (8) *Kota Baru*; (9) *Muara Adang*. Another correspondent adds (1) *Rindu Dendam*; (2) *Tengah Malam*; (3) *Irama Pampang*; and (4) *Irama Seratai* (*minum kopi*) rhythms. A form of *pentengan* Gambus melody in the song of “*Ronggeng Paser*” is commonly played in a repetitional form, consisting of some melodies and bars. The song notation and its *pentengan* Gambus is transcribed below.

Gambus Ronggeng

Transkrip : Asril Gunawan, 2021
Cipt. N N

♩ = 90

Teks Lagu

Assa la mu ai lai kum san da ra ke si hen mu la nya ka ta

Un tuk mem bu ka un tuk mem bu ka sa yang

nang me em bu u ka mem bu ka la gu

Notation of *Pentengan* Gambus *Ronggeng* Paser
 (Transcribed by Asril Gunawan, 2021)

There might be many other forms of *pentengan* Gambus that has not been recorded yet due to the uninherited patterns to the recent generations, many of old Gambus master who has passed away, lack of literature and documentation, and the vast distribution of Gambus Paser patterns to the various remote areas. That condition requires the need of a comprehensive literacy movement through traditional music research, workshop, and documentation as a part of sustainable traditional art and culture enhancement. Art and culture are a solution for foreseeable problems of urbanization [10]. This statement shows how effective art as a cultural literacy enhancement, and as an identity and knowledge for the society.



Picture. Practice of *Pentengan* Gambus Paser Rhythm
(Taken by Asril Gunawan, September 2021)

b. Gambus Performance: *Ronggeng* Paser Accompaniment

While Gambus Paser performance is a music performance, *Ronggeng* Paser is a dance. However, both can accommodate each other to form one single performing art. The wholeness of the performance is reflected on the structure of the music rhythm and the dance movement which is tied in the same beat of Gambus Paser rhythm. This show is popular to the Paser community, from kid, youngster, to the old ones. This popularity signifies the position of *Ronggeng Paser* performance as a social dance that can entertain the public. *Ronggeng Paser* is commonly performed in a special occasion such as, the rite of initiation, wedding, local art festival, or even in the annual celebration of Paser regency. Contextually, this dance is offered as a welcoming dance to honourable guests who visit Paser, such as the magistrates, the village chief, and others. As a welcoming dance, *Ronggeng Paser* must be danced by a grown girls who are perfectly trained in dancing. Those professional dancers must have a gentle foot movement based on the movement of *Limbai*. “A technical form of dance” is an important part of dance as a performing art. Technique, in this context, is understood as a method to perform every process and it is formed by any instrument of body which is needed [19].

Dance and music must be fully connected; the gentle swing of the dancers' feet and their soft body movements must always be in harmony with the beat of *Gendang* and *pentengan* Gambus. The coastal characteristic of Gambus Paser rhythm is perfectly combined with the movement of *Ronggeng* Paser dance. Music has its own special position because it can adjust its role through its expansion from its extrinsic value (Santosa, Aton R. Mulyana, 2007). Beside of that, Gambus Paser music gives a valuable contribution to shape the identity and to reflect the cultural life of Paser community.

4. CONCLUSION

Gambus Paser performing art as cultural (music) literacy enhancement in Paser, East Borneo is an important part known as local wisdom. This traditional art is a cultural literacy that is expected to be adaptive and transformative to its surrounding. Along with the capital relocation to East Borneo, any literacy related to traditional art and culture needs to be preserved and developed by any necessary means such as documentation, research, workshop and practice of value, and by enlivening the traditional art through education. As explained, Gambus Paser has a significance role to support Paser communal identity.

Gambus Paser performance is musically rich as it consists of various *pentengan* (picking technique) closely related to its social values. It is related to the development and application of the office of Culture and Education of Paser Regency's vision and mission; Mission: A qualified and prevalent education for Paser Regency that is advance, independent, prosperous, and just; Vision: (1) Develop access to the prevalent and qualified education; (2) Develop education quality and competitiveness; (3) Develop quality of education service system that is transparent and accountable; and (4) Develop local custom and culture. Along with the agenda of capital relocation to East Borneo, music Gambus Paser, then, is urgently needed to be preserved in order to build the sustainable cultural music literacy especially for the youngsters and the wide community of Paser.

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