

GAMELAN GONG KEBYAR AS COMMUNICATION MEDIA BETWEEN BALINESE AND SASAK ETHNICITIES IN LOMBOK

by I Gede Yudarta

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GAMELAN GONG KEBYAR AS COMMUNICATION MEDIA BETWEEN BALINESE AND SASAK ETHNICITIES IN LOMBOK (Lightning Paper)

I Gede Yudarta Indonesian Institute of the Arts, Indonesia

Gamelan gong kebyar is both a genre and ensemble in Balinese society that developed rapidly over the course of the 20th century. Its existence not only developed in Bali but also in several areas of Indonesia and even in numerous countries in the world. It serves as a communication media among ethnic groups in Indonesia, and also among nations that embrace cultural exchange. In this way, the gamelan gong kebyar has experienced relatively rapid growth even on the neighbouring island of Lombok. On this island, gamelan gong kebyar is owned and played by a diasporic Balinese society as well as Sasaks. This article observes that the recent surge of interest in gamelan gong kebyar in Lombok makes both a social and cultural impact. The social impact can be observed where gamelan gong kebyar serves the interests of each ethnicity as a liaison media allowing neutral ground for social interaction between ethnicities. This facilitates an intense affiliation that enables a communicative relationship between the Balinese and Sasak. While the cultural impact that arises is the emergence creative and artistic variations from performance artists reflect the identity of each ethnicity, it simultaneously is a collaboration between them.

Background

Kakebyaran art is one of the cultural works of the Balinese society in the field of music. It has not only developed and been popularized in Bali but has also developed in various areas in Indonesia. One of the locations or places of development under purview in this article is Lombok Island. The development of kakebyaran art in the area of Lombok Island originally began in 1923 when a group of artists came from Paketan Village, Singaraja held performances in Karang Jangu, Cakranegara in order to perform for a life cycle ritual ceremony called manusa yadnya. The host of the ceremony was very interested in the gamelan gong kebyar, and eventually purchased the gamelan brought from Paketan Village. This became the first gamelan gong kebyar in Lombok. The existence of kakebyaran art in Lombok has its

uniqueness where it is not only played by Balinese but also played by Sasak performing artists. This phenomenon is remarkable when considering Sasak Muslims are obedient to the teachings of the religion. It is noteworthy because Muslims participate actively in playing kakebyaran music which is associated with the culture created by the people of Bali. In the midst of problems and conflicts that may occur between multiple ethnicities and religious followers who occupy the same geographic space, the phenomenon that occurred in Lombok is telling evidences that the arts, especially traditional music, have become an important bridging media of culture. It is a medium to establish communication, cooperation, and tolerance between divergent groups in an effort to create harmony between people.

As Media Communication and Interaction

The use of gamelan gong kebyar in the cultural activities of Balinese and Sasak in Lombok became one of the causes of interaction and communication between these two ethnic groups. Jean Paule says communication is a transmission of information and transmission of understanding that use shared symbols (Liliweri, 2002, p. 7). If referring to that concept, communication within the cultural context also has a sense of the same linkage of information and understanding when there are two ethnicities with different cultural backgrounds using the same symbols. When these cultural symbols are used together, it is possible to interact or even have interaction happen between different ethnic groups. In Lombok, there are similar cultural elements between Balinese culture and Sasak society. One of them is the similarity in artistic life especially in playing kakebyaran. As a Balinese cultural products expressed in a diasporic community, in its spreading in Lombok, gong kebyar gamelan is not only used by the Balinese but also played by the Sasak people. Gong kebyar gamelan is used as one of the media in the cultural activities of the Sasak community and widely used in various types of Sasak arts such as dance

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accompaniment, dance drama and as a new medium of creativity among Sasak artists. The use of kakebyaran by both ethnic Balinese and Sasak signifies the use of the same symbol in two related cultural activities. The togetherness of ethnic Sasak playing gong kebyar orchestra and kakebyaran music is reflected in the ceremony held at Lingsar Temple, West Lombok. As this tradition has been inherited since the reign of the Kingdom of Karangasem (Bali) in Lombok, Lingsar Temple is a sacred place that is jointly shared between the Sasak ethnic community and ethnic Balinese. In addition, there is Gaduh Temple which is a place of worship for Hindus. There is also a place of worship for the Sasak ethnic community called Kemaliq, which is an integral part of the structure of the temple building as a

whole. As a sacred place that is shared together, the execution of various types of ceremonial processions and rituals is always carried out simultaneously. In the execution of ceremonial ritual processions at Lingsar Temple, the presentation of traditional music is mandatory. Various types of traditional Balinese and Sasak musical instruments are played which are related to the procession being carried out. Among the Sasak, there is one of group called Seka Gong Mekar Jaya, from Montor village of the Narmada sub-district which has always played and accompanied the ceremonial procession at Lingsar Temple. For the people of Montor village, especially among artists, accompanying the ceremonial procession in Lingsar Temple is an inherited obligation carried out for generations. In carrying out these obligations there is often communication and interaction with Balinese artists who also play traditional musical instruments. In the Sasak group there are often artists from Balinese ethnic groups who help to play some repertoire. Both ethnic groups can interact because the repertoire played is kakebyaran music that has become very popular and well known between them. Intense communication and interaction between these two ethnic groups indicates that the art of kakebyaran becomes a very important media in helping to establish more harmonious relations between ethnic groups. In a broader perspective, shared performative culture contributes to connecting people in tangible and meaningful ways.

Social Impact

Since the 1960s, the Sasak ethnic community has been interested in the art of kakebyaran. The government in power in the era of the 1960s often used gong kebyar gamelan and kakebyaran music and dances to entertain official guests and invitations who visited the region. With the use of kakebyaran, this indicates that the art gets a very high appreciation from the government. As noted in the book *West Nusa Tenggara Regional Monograph II* (1977), in 1963 the West Lombok Culture Office carried out on mass Balinese dance rehearsals. From this program, kakebyaran dances became more popular among elementary school (SD) and junior high school (SLTP) children in the regions of Cakra, Mataram and Ampenan. This 1960s program made kakebyaran art more widespread among the Sasak community. Various activities related to Sasak traditional ceremony were regularly presented using kakebyaran. It is assumed that presenting the art of kakebyaran in Sasak traditional ceremony activities raised the degree of the ceremony held. The high social and economic value of gamelan gong kebyar among the Sasak ethnic community saw many ethnic Balinese buy gong kebyar instruments to form gamelan groups as well. Some of these groups or sekaa have been around since the 1960s. In the city of Mataram, there was once a very famous group called "Seka Gong Lalu Bayaq." This sekaa was pioneered by a Sasak nobleman named Lalu Bayaq. To manifest this group, the nobleman invited several artists who were mostly selected artists from the Balinese community to join in the sekaa he founded. This group was well known for its presentation of works by I Wayan Berata's compositional works for gamelan (Palguna Warsa, Kosala Arini, Purwa Pascima, Swabhuana Paksa, Gesuri) so that these works seemed to be the hallmark of this sekaa. Besides Lalu Bayaq many groups today have members or artists of Sasak ethnicity such as the Mekar Jaya group from Dasan Montor village in Narmada sub-

district and Mekar Budaya of Bongor village, Gerung District which is currently the leading group within the ethnic Sasak circle. Their technical abilities are not inferior to Balinese artists. Similarly, the Mekar Jaya group has a large kakebyaran repertoire in the form of extended instrumental compositions called *lelambatan*, new creations and various types of dance accompaniment. The emergence of gamelan groups among the Sasak ethnic community further strengthens the relationship between the Sasak ethnic community and ethnic Balinese. To improve the performance or presentation, several groups often invite Balinese artists to provide training. Sometimes a sense of togetherness is created when Sasak and Balinese perform in the same ensemble. Borrowing each other's

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musicians or artists between both ethnic groups is something very common. The occurrence of intense communication and interaction in artistic activities especially in playing kakebyaran gives a very positive social impact on harmonization of relations between these two ethnic groups.

Cultural Impact

The existence of kakebyaran among the Sasak ethnic community contributes to the excavation, preservation and development of Sasak arts. Gandrung art that had experienced a period of decline and almost became extinct was successfully reconstructed in 1990. Similarly, the Cupak Gerantang dance drama which became rare, until now can still be presented in the midst of society. The success of maintaining art forms is closely related to the flexibility of kakebyaran. By using the gong kebyar gamelan, the Gandrung dance and Cupak Gerantang dance drama have been successfully maintained. Even the Gandrung Dance is currently an icon of Sasak dance. In addition to playing a major role in the excavation and preservation of Sasak arts, the existence of gong kebyar gamelan is also a medium of artistic creativity among artists in Lombok. Collaborations between gong kebyar gamelan with vocal music have given birth to several works such as *Gugur Mayang*, *Kidung Dalem*, *Pemban Seleparang*, and some vocal music which is commonly known as *Pasasakan* songs that are very popular. In the field of dance arts, the results of creativity appear in several dances such as: *Kembang Sembah Dance*, *Bala Anjani Dance*, *Briuk Tinjal Dance*, *Dare Ngindang Dance*, *Gagak Mandiq Dance* among others.

Figure 1. Kembang Sembah Dance. (Photo by I Gede Yudarta)

Of the above phenomenon, a very important observation is the emergence of new variants of kakebyaran music as David Harnish (2005) says:

Lombok Balinese music styles can be seen as being one of three types: 1) those with antecedents in Bali, 2) those with antecedents from the Sasak majority of Lombok and 3) those co-created with the Sasak. The first type comprises the majority of traditions, including the most popular gamelan in both Bali and Lombok, the gamelan gong kebyar. Gong kebyar exploded on the artistic scene in Bali in the 1920s and 1930s; it had a similar impact in Lombok during the 1950s. This form has linked Lombok Balinese to Bali and inspired people to greater artistic involvement on both islands. The vast majority of 20th-century dance and theatre innovations employs gong kebyar and form part of the kebyar movement. (p. 10)

The statement provides an overview of the existence of gong kebyar gamelan and kakebyaran style that has existed in Lombok and is one style of kakebyaran besides the style of North Bali and South Bali style. This style is a cultural configuration of the local culture of Sasak with immigrant culture (Bali) which is thoroughly assimilated and forms a new style. Pasasakan style emerged from the adoption and processing of form and musicality so that it gave birth to kebyar musicality nuanced by Sasak culture.

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Kakebyaran Nuanced Sasak Music

The two cultural communications between ethnic Sasak and Balinese also gave birth to a new creativity in Sasak music. The immense popularity of kakebyaran music among the Sasak community raised a strong desire to be able to present the repertoire. One of the creative efforts is to play kebyar music

using traditional Sasak musical instruments which distinguishes it from its Balinese predecessors. Creativity increasingly evidences kebyar music flexibility. Kakebyaran music not only can be played using gong kebyar gamelan but can also be played with other instruments. Some of the songs in the form of instrumental music and dance accompaniment have been transferred to Sasak musical instruments such as Klentang and Rebana Gending.

Figure 2. The Gamelan Klentang. (Photo by I Gede Yudarta)

Conclusion

After observing the above case study, it can be concluded that kakebyaran is a cultural work of Balinese society but has an important role in connecting two ethnic groups namely Sasak and ethnic Balinese in Lombok. This flexible and adaptive art form contributes greatly to the development of harmonious communication and interaction amidst the inter-ethnic differences and feuds that often arise today. In addition, the existence of kakebyaran music in Lombok makes an impact both socially and culturally because ethnic Sasak gong kebyar gamelan has become a prestigious icon for Sasak ritual ceremonies lifting the prestige of the ritual. The art of kakebyaran has become social capital in raising the distinction, prestige and dignity of artists. The cultural impact sees the existence of kakebyaran utilized in the excavation, preservation and cultural development of Sasak culture as instrumental to strengthening traditional Sasak arts.

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