

Music in “Gobuk Melayu” Ritual Traditions: Study of Performance Aspects, Forms and Structures

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the form, structure, aspects of performances in the healing rituals of the Gobuk Melayu Dance on Bedagai Coast. The research methods used in this study is a qualitative method. The qualitative approach in this study consisted of two main methods - primary and secondary methods. The primary method is all information collected by the researchers first hand. In this study, data collection come from interviews, participant observation, and video recording. Whereas the secondary method is information obtained from books, journals, articles, conference papers, published dissertations, and other sources that support the study topic. The results showed that Gobuk is a ritual tradition of treatment that was built and developed in the Malay community on the coast of Bedagai, Serdang Bedagai Regency, North Sumatra. The musical instrument used is a percussion and blowing music instrument consisting of rhythmic and melodic music instruments, there are: 1) gubano drum, 2) tambourine, 3) talempong, (4) gong. The form of the Gobuk ritual performance begins with Vocal music in the form of Malay humming as an expression of the spells sung by Bomo or the ritual leader Shaman. After the humming vocal part is finished, it is immediately greeted with instrumental music by the two drums, sarunai, and gongs. Structurally, this instrumental part consists of 3 main structures there are Hontak Kudo, Magic, and Perang with changes in rhythm and tempo of each part.

Keywords: *Music; Ritual; Gobuk*

1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between healing rituals and art was discovered by many researchers in many areas especially in Southeast Asia. Trust in supernatural powers existed in ancient communities in this region. The people in Champa believe in certain spirits consisting of stones, trees, hills and spirits of their ancestors. In Payakumbuh, West Sumatra, a broken-hearted man will come to a magician (*sirompak*, shaman) to get supernatural aid (invisible things) because he was broken-hearted by a woman.

For this belief, ancient people always used art as a medium. Some of them are the *Gandang* Beating and the *Sumazau* Dance at the Monogit Ritual of Sabah, a magical ritual that plays *sirompak* music (*basirompak*) in Payakumbuh, West Sumatra, and Lukah Menari in Serdang, North Sumatra. For Cam people, music and ritual are connected to each other. Society, before the Hindu and Islamic periods, believed in certain spirits such as stones, trees, hills and the

spirits of their ancestors. They believe that spirits protect their lives. They will hold certain rituals accompanied by music to express their gratitude [1].

Hussin [2] conducted a study of the *Gandang* Beating and *Sumazau* Dance at the Monogit Ritual of Sabah. He discovered that the Sabah community had a belief in supernatural powers to heal the sick. They use music and dance as a ritual medium. The connection between humans and the supernatural world will occur after beats of gangs and gongs are played simultaneously. While Rahman [3] found that *Saba* is a ritual related to religious belief in Malays since the period of animism. This ritual is inspired by human belief in the world of metaphysics. Metaphysics is everything that happens outside the physical world. This is related to the worship of jinn (*mambang*). As a performance art, *saba* includes dance, music and songs, and drama as ritual components.

Talking about shamanistic rituals usually talk about trance conditions simultaneously. Miller and Shahriari [4] are interested in conducting research on the connectivity of music and trance in rituals. Ritual is one of the most important contexts for music. Regarding trance, the researchers argued, "Music instead acts to stimulate, regulate, or end trance conditions, which would not have been possible without training for and expectations of ownership. Music can be used in the ritual of ownership given to "summon the deities" but its function is to regulate trance"

Performing arts in Indonesia are closely related to many aspects, namely culture, social life, natural demographics, and even religion. Cubit and Scarlett [5] when conducting research on the drama of the Ramayana and Mahabharata dance in Bali found that aspects of performance were influenced by religion, especially Hindus and Muslims. The story of drama is influenced by the epic story of India. However, the dialogue was modified later after the Islamic period.

Because of this effect, many performing arts in Indonesia make continuous changes, forms or functions. Sedyawati [6] categorizes these changes for many aspects "1. Religion, for example Wali Songo uses gamelan to introduce Islam in Java. 2. Educational objectives. 3. Aesthetics, such as a performance by an artist. 4. Social structure, dance for Sultan in the Kingdom. 5. Economy, like music played by street musicians."

Sumardjo [7] add, the relationship between art and religion in Indonesia resses, that religious rituals are a medium that connects humans with gods, and art is used for this purpose. Performing arts that are usually used are theater, music, dance, art, and linguistics. For example in the theater of Wayang Java, *Topeng* dance in Cirebon, Sundanese poetry, Java music that is *seblang* or *sintren*.

Indonesian-Malay music culture is entirely shamanistic. Shamanic music is characterized by acceleration or percussion instruments: drums, gongs and rattles are played to accompany rituals and dances in the shadows of ancestors [8].

Many cultures in Indonesia are connected with writing shamanism for some researchers in literature. Marzam [9] discusses the magical ritual that plays *sirompak* music (*basirompak*) in the Taeh Baruah community, Payakumbuh, West Sumatra. He explained that this ritual was based on the phenomenon when a man who was broken-hearted due to disappearing by a woman. When that happens, he will come to the magician (*sirompak*, shaman) to get help from the unseen creation. The magician and his assistant will play music to call ghosts. Then, the instruments, which consist of *saluang sirompak*, *gasisiang tangkurak*, and a social worker will be played to make the woman love him.

Still in Sumatra but in the North, the ancient Malays in this place also believe that music has magical powers. Basarsyah [10] discusses Ritual Music in Serdang, a former Malay sultanate in North Sumatra, which is "dance or dance" or "pick up the spirit". This art performance is led by a shaman, in Malay called *pawang* or sometimes a *bomo*. Shamans recite the incantation

(ritual text) in the style of *Hummed* (Malay vocal technique). He also explained that music for the Malay community in North Sumatra is not only for entertainment purposes, but also has a relationship with culture, social life, natural demographics, and religion.

In the Mandailing tradition, according to Nasution [11], shamanic music, that is *gordang* sideline, is played by a compilation of *huta* or *banua* to correct infectious disease outbreaks. This ritual ceremony is called *Paturun Sibaso* or *Pasusur Begu*. Through the intermediary of a character (shaman) called *sibaso*, a *datu* (spiritual leader as the leader of the rite) communicates with *sibaso* to look for the causes of the disaster and find a solution.

The presence of rituals in North Sumatra coastal Malay community is a necessity. The close relationship between human life and nature in the past creates deep interactions. For coastal Malay communities, the sea is more than just nature, the more remote the sea is the source of life, a place to make a living, and provides many benefits. This belief is the basis for the creation of rituals as a way to convey his feelings of gratitude to the sea. Typically, this ritual medium is expressed through art, both music and dance.

In the Malay culture known music and songs related to the sea such as humming to call fish, music to call the wind, humming to calm the waves, as well as ritual treatment of diseases related to the supernatural power of the sea. One of the sea rituals is the *Gobuk* ritual on the coast of Bedagai, North Sumatra, which was the object of this study. Although there have been many previous studies on ritual music from the archipelago, the academic study of *Gobuk* ritual music is still very little in existence. So this study needs to be written academically as a treasury of knowledge, especially for art audiences.

2. METHOD

The qualitative approach in this study is consisted of two main methods - primary and secondary methods. The main method is all information collected by the researcher first hand. In this study, data collection came from interviews, participant observation, and video recording. Whereas the secondary method is information obtained from books, journals, articles, conference papers, published dissertations, and other sources that support the research topic. The process of tracing data and information is carried out to find out the original form of ritual dance accompaniment in the Malay coastal regions of North Sumatra. The data collected came from the interview method with the performers of ritual arts and data documentation in the form of audio and video performances of the Sumut Malay ritual dance in full. Completeness needed is a video camera, photo and audio recording tool that is useful for documenting data. The selection of informants is based on the grouping of key informants that includes music artists and Sumut Malay ritual dance artists. The number of informants is unlimited as long as the data needed is still needed to answer the purpose of this study.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. *Gobuk* Ritual Music

Gobuk is a ritual tradition of medicine that was born and developed in the Malay community on the coast of Bedagai, Serdang Bedagai Regency, North Sumatra. This Bedagai coast is dominated by ethnic Malays. Its geographical position close to the sea makes the majority of people depend on the sea, working as fishermen. So, people here believe that the sea has a big contribution to their lives.

Rituals are intended to treat sick people. According to Aziz [12], in 1895, one of the daughter of *Penghulu* (village chief) was seriously ill. Various attempts have been made to treat

it, but never succeeded. Belief in supernatural forces led villagers to conclude that the girl's illness was a result of the disruption of *Puako* (sea genie). So the *Penghulu* took the initiative to meet *Bomo* (Shaman) to ask for help. The shaman was ordered to hold a banquet for the sea genie.

The ritual is designed like a party for *Puako* (genie). Consisting of music, dance, and led by a shaman. The location of the ritual was arranged like a garden with Coconut as decoration in hopes that *Puako* would be interested to attend and play in the garden so that he would later treat the girl's illness. Named *Gobuk* ritual because in this garden 7 pieces of *gobuk* were arranged where dancers and *Puako* danced together. *Gobuk* is a type of jug made from dry soil.

Gobuk rituals spend all night long. Starting from the preparation of the area, dancing, calling *Puako*, until the final process of drifting sassy (miniature sampans made from banana stems).

In some areas, the sound produced by certain instruments is believed to have magical powers. Therefore, such an instrument is used as a means of community custom activities. Likewise with the music that is played in the *gobuk* dance art. The sounds produced are believed by the local community as a means to summon *Puako*.

3.2. Study on the Form and Structure of the *Gobuk* Ritual Music

Music in the Malay *Gobuk* acts as a major component of the healing process. Music in the Malay *Gobuk* is categorized as "Original Music". "Original music is a song played by a shaman or "handler" in healing rituals such as *Nobat Diraja* [13]. There are two main musical components in *Gobuk*: instrument and vocal.

Gobuk musical instruments consist of percussion and melodic music. Then grouped again into *membranophone* and *idiophone* classes. Included in the *membranophone* is the Long Drum. This long drum is made of leather on both sides. Two pieces are always played, the big one is called the "main drum" and the smaller one is called the "children's drum". An average length of 21 inches is made of hard and durable *merbau* wood. One side is smaller than the other side. Children's drum is made of goat skin and the parent drum is made of buffalo skin. The skin that is located on both sides is tied with a twisted rattan [14].

While those included in the *idiophone* group consisted of *Canang* and Gong. *Canang* in Malay, in both form and sound, looks like *Canang* elsewhere because of cross-culture and mutual influence. "For example *Canang* (small gong) is also in Thailand called "*Khong Wong Yai*", in Burma and in the *kulintang* music of Sabah. Whereas Gong, according to Basarsyah [15] explains this instrument as follows: In the East Sumatran Malay, a kind of gong with a thick side called *tetawak* is used to accompany the *Ronggeng* entertainment dance. In traditional music, accompanying traditional Malay theaters such as *Makyong*, *Mendu*, *Menora* and *Wayang Kulit Melayu* 2 pieces of gong are used, the mains are pitched C and the gong is pitched with G.

The instrument that functions as a melody carrier is *Serunai* or *Sarunai*. This is categorized as an *aero phone* class. This instrument does not use a melodic system like Western music (*sol mi sa si*) but is played as a long-high note. High and small (high-pitched) chime tone. Nasuruddin [16] says that cone-shaped chunks have seven holes above and one below. The player squeezed and released a continuous flutter without stopping to take a breath.

The vocal singing style in *Gobuk* Melayu is hummed. The humming melody is full of Twisted and Grenek. Siagian [17], said that "*Cengkok* and *Grenek* are ornamental or ornamental tones as a general feature of Malay music, functioning to beautify the melody played by melodic instruments or singers"

Cengkok adds notation as ornament before heading to the main notation. Whereas *grenek* sounds like trilling in Western music techniques. For example, in the first beat of bar 2 we can

see the *grenak* shape in a series of melodies that are played with only two 1/32 notes (F and E) that are repeated up and down continuously. Then, in bar 3 shows an example of the melody in the form of a quintole (with the number 5 on it).

This form of melody is called *Cengkok* in Malay music. Melody movements are usually step-down with a jumping tone (see notation). In notation it can be seen that tone B goes down to note A, but before getting note A it jumps forward to note C then goes down to A, then goes back to tone B and goes down to *Gis* tone down again to note a. *Cengkok* like this movement is mostly found at the end of melody in Malay music.

The text of the *gobuk* dance song is "Spell". The text of the Spell is written in the form "Pantun". Initially, rhymes are delivered verbally. Rhymes are delivered by singing or singing, so that rhymes cannot be separated from poetry.

There are many traditions in Malay that use rhyme as a calling of enthusiasm. In agrarian societies, rhymes are used to grow rice or other crops as well as catches of hunted animals and to take honey bees. Whereas in marine society, rhyme is used to call fish or call the wind. In both maritime and agrarian societies, *pantun* is also always used as a spell in traditional medicine as well as efforts to expel gnome, *mambang*, or other spirits [18]

Meanwhile, the humter in the *Gobuk* ritual is the ritual leader or *Bomo*. "Malay people on the Peninsula often use different names for witches. In Perak and Kelantan, witches are called as handlers while shamans are called *belian*, while in other Malay areas there are also those who call shamans as *bomo* [19] [20].

The structure of the ritual music of *Gobuk* Music begins with Vocal music. The Vocal music here is in the form of Malay humming as an expression of the spells sung by the ritual leader Shaman or *Bomo*. The text pieces of the mantra include the following:

Oiiiiiii./ *Batanglah tuan batang cendano/Batangnyo tumbuh dengan baiknyo/
Datanglah tuan jang oii datanglah nyawo / Datanglah dengan budi baiknyo / Hai
mambang tanah, mambang aer, mambang angin / Mambang di Pauh si jenggi / Anak
cucu datang memanggil*

This humming spell is intended to invite *Puako* or Sea geniewhich is believed to treat the sick. The phrase *Datanglah Tuan Datanglah Nyawo* is a substitute term for not mentioning Jin directly which is replaced by the terms " *Tuan* " and "Nyawo" (soul). This humming is played around the first 10 minutes where Bomo or shaman hums while burning incense and preparing offerings.

After the humming vocal part is finished, it is immediately greeted with instrumental music by the two drums, sarunai, and gongs. This music is monotonal with only one main motive that is repeated in each part with an improvised style of the player. Music here has 2 main functions namely as accompaniment of motion and magical functions. This monotonal concept has a trance effect or possession. Structurally, this instrumental part consists of 3 main structures namely Music in the gobuk ritual consists of 3 major parts. *Hontak Kudo*, Magic, and *Perang* with changes in rhythm and tempo in each part. The first part is the opening part, called *Hontak Kudo* and *Senandong*, played in a medium tempo. The second part is the core part called magic, played in fast tempo. While the third part is the final or closing part or climax, referred to as porang music or war, played in a very fast tempo.

Hontak Kudo is derived from the word Horse strokes which represent the dancer's movements whose footsteps resemble the beat of a horse's foot. This part is played in a medium tempo. Consists of 1 rhythmic pattern and sarunai melody motifs that are played repeatedly

according to the number of dance movements. The rhythm pattern of the long drum and the gong are as follows:



Figure 4. Pukulan *Hontak Kudo* Hitting Patterns

Magic is the second part that is played in a fast tempo. This is the part to invite *Puako* (Jin) to come to the *Gobuk* park that has been prepared. Consists of 1 rhythmic pattern and sarunai melody motifs that are played repeatedly according to the number of dance movements. The long drum and gong rhythm patterns for the Magic section are as follows:



Figure 5. Magic Hitting Pattern

Porang or War is the climax or the highlight of the dance. Where in this section *Puako* (Jin) was invited to dance together across (walking) on 7 pieces of *gonduk* and ended with treating the sick. The music is very fast tempo in monotonous pattern of rhythm and melody. The long drum and gong rhythm patterns for the *Porang* section are as follows:



Figure 6. *Perang* Hitting Patterns

It can be concluded that in this part of instrumental music the tempo of the music is getting faster and faster than the first, second, and third parts to show dramatic performances.

4. CONCLUSION

Gobuk is a ritual tradition of medicine that was built and developed in the Malay community on the coast of Bedagai, Serdang Bedagai Regency, North Sumatra. This Bedagai coast is dominated by ethnic Malays. The instrument used is a percussion and wind instrument consisting of rhythmic and melodic music instruments, namely: 1) *gubano* drum, 2) tambourine, 3) *talempong*, (4) *gong*. The form of the *Gobuk* ritual performance begins with Vocal music in the form of Malay humming as an expression of the spells sung by *Bomo* or the ritual leader Shaman. After the humming vocal part is finished, it is immediately greeted with instrumental music by the two drums, sarunai, and gongs. Structurally, this instrumental part consists of 3 main structures namely *Hontak Kudo*, *Magic*, and *Perang* with changes in rhythm and tempo of each part.

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