

Liturgical Inculturation at Javanese Christian Church, Gondokusuman, Yogyakarta

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Abstract. This is a study of liturgical inculturation at Gondokusuman Javanese Christian Church that arose from the clash of two cultures, between the West and the East, in the context of Javanese Christian worship. The purpose of this study is to analyze the application of Javanese gamelan in their liturgy in order to revive the values of the local culture that was marginalized by false presumptions of Western missionaries in the past. This study uses qualitative research methods with ethnographic research design and interdisciplinary study approach. We found that the implementation of Javanese gamelan in their liturgy is able to raise cultural awareness and foster social and cultural values of spirituality, integrity, and aesthetics.

Keywords: Inculturation, Javanese gamelan, Liturgy.

1 Introduction

The process of inculturation has been an important subject of postcolonial studies both as a term and as a phenomenon. It has been used not only in ecclesiastical circles but also among music educators [1]. In fact, it has produced a large body of theological, cultural and musical studies. In order to analyze and interpret indigenous practices in Gondokusuman Javanese Christian Church [Gondokusuman Church] worship service, I propose to use this term as my main theoretical point of orientation.

In general, the process of inculturation has been hindered by ethnocentrism, prejudice and discrimination [2]. Historically the Gondokusuman Church initially struggled with the same problem in applying their indigenous artistic expression in their worship. On the one hand, there is a presumption that when church songs are accompanied by the organ the congregation feels sacred and holy. On the other, if the worship is accompanied by gamelan it becomes unholy and considered as profane [3]. The founders of Gondokusuman church perceive holiness subjectively and make a distance within themselves from the so-called worldly form of arts. As a result, there will be more and more Christians who block themselves and cover their eyes presumptively from things that are seen as 'worldly' in the social life.

Therefore, the application of indigenous artistic expression (gamelan) at the Gondokusuman Church worship service as a medium of inculturation is a unique phenomenon to be studied. Moreover, the implementation has been going on for more than 20 years, and it

does not only involve their adults, but also their next generation, youth and children as members of the gamelan teams.

Most of previous studies are focused on theological perspectives (e.g. Nyabwari and Katola [2] Nche [4]; Anthony [5]; Presmanes [6]; Gallagher [7]; Okigbo [8]; Amuah, Ocran and Acquah [9]. Other related research done by Kurgat [10] investigated the demand and relevance of inculturation for cultural development. The study indicated that for effective inculturation, facilitation of active local participation is to be motivated and controlled from the bottom-up. It has been crucial for a sustainable inculturation process.

Research done by Berinai [11] examined liturgical inculturation in light of spirituality of indigenous people. The goal of this research is to challenge the Anglican Church of Sabah to embrace indigenous Christian worship by implementing inculturation in light of spirituality of the indigenous people. A research on musicological perspective done by Kristanto [12], with the title of research, 'The Form of Javanese Gamelan in the Worship Liturgy in the Baptism Church Indonesia.' The study is limited to analyzing the musical form of gamelan in the worship based on musical composition, and has not not explored the issue I am writing about.

The present research discusses the application of Javanese gamelan in the Gondokusuman Javanese Christian church in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in relation to several factors: the history of the establishment of Gondokusuman Church, the theory and practice of inculturation and the issues of cultural and religious values which are examined in the perspective of arts education outside of school. It will be the novelty of this study.

2 Methods

This research uses an interdisciplinary approach, which is socio-cultural, historical, and musicological. The historical approach is used to explore roots of inculturation in the history of Gondokusuman Church. While the musicological approach is used to study the connection between the musical form, cultural aspects and religious values. The socio-cultural approach is used for studying the values and the meaning of inculturation within the perspective of arts education.

This study uses the qualitative method, with ethnographic design to obtain in-depth insight. Ethnographic method is chosen because this research is related to a cultural group that has been for a long time stuck together in one particular place, has developed values, and been using the same exact language.

This research used primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through interviews with the chairman of the Gondokusuman Church cultural arts committee, gamelan teachers, gamelan musicians, and pastors of the church, also through observing the gamelan performance in the worship. While secondary data was obtained from books and related documents.

Data analysis was carried out by following Miles and Huberman's suggestions which quoted by Rohidi [13], namely interactive models through the process of collecting data, reducing data, presenting data and concluding. The research questions are: a) Why Javanese gamelan is applied in Gondokusuman Church worship? b) What is the purpose of applying inculturation in the worship? c) Is it true that Javanese culture is lower than Western culture?

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Historical Background

Historically, Gondokusuman Church was established by the pioneering efforts of missionaries from the Dutch Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands [3]. Dutch missionaries established and managed the Javanese church, in all aspects, almost resembled its mother church in the Netherlands. Congregations sing using diatonic scales and never opened any possibility of using Javanese songs [pentatonic scales] [3]. They tended to reject traditional customs, gamelan and dance and to exclude them from the Christian liturgy [1].

The Dutch ministers forbade Javanese Christians to get involved in Javanese cultural activities. This made Javanese Christians different from the society in general. They were even socially segregated from their own family members who were non-Christians. In fact, culture should inherit social and religious traditions. So it is not justified that religions should cause social separation and segregation among people in any culture. Religion should live well in the midst of a society along with other social and cultural phenomenon.

The implementation of Javanese gamelan in worship session expresses the re-acceptance of local culture in Christian worship. The implementation might actually encourage the congregation to comprehend the holistic concept of religion and culture, so that they can have a fair interpretation of it. Increased appreciation of Javanese gamelan will motivate the conservation of local culture.

In Javanese tradition, gamelan is told to have the effect of refining human character and mind. The sensitivity of the hearing and the sensitivity of the human five senses determine the delicacy of the human characteristics itself [14]. The five senses are the ways to connect the human soul within and the outside world. Arts is perceived by human through their five senses, especially through eyes (eyesight) and ears (hearing).

What human sees influence his mind, as well as what human hears influences their feelings and temperaments [14]. So the implementation of Javanese gamelan in the context of Javanese worship is highly significant. It helps to embody the balance of both internally within the congregation itself, as well as externally the congregation with the surrounding society.

3.2 Gamelan as a Form of Indigenous Artistic Expression

At present times, Western hymn songs are still sung in Gondokusuman Church worship with the organ as an accompaniment. The melody and the lyrics remain the same, only that they have been translated into Indonesian and Javanese languages. Gamelan is performed in the church worship session on the second week of every month. Gamelan is also performed on special holidays such as Christmas, Easter, and the Gondokusuman Church anniversary.

For its continuity, the Gondokusuman Church cultural arts commission has assembled several gamelan groups, namely: Woro Prastuti and Manggala Gita group. The Woro Prastuti group initially consisted of only female commissions, it was the first group established in Gondokusuman church 20 years ago. Additionally, they formed the Gita Nala group which consists of younger church members and a children's group. Each musical group has a regular practice schedule every week. They are trained by professional and highly experienced gamelan teachers.

Music plays an important part in Gondokusuman Church worship. Music is linked to religious and cultural experience and expression. In fact, music and singing provide an opportunity for people to participate emotionally and physically in their life. Music (singing) is

a mode of life, it is an artistic expression of the existential dimension of life [15]. Therefore, music and songs add richness and pleasure to all our lives including in Christian worship [16].

As the Christian church in Indonesia has become an indigenous and autonomous church, so Christian music has become a form of indigenous artistic expression [1]. The practice of Javanese gamelan within Gondokusuman Church is an example of such localized artistic expression which can strengthen the musical expression of congregations.

3.3 Inculturation as a Medium for Adaptation

Inculturation is a process of adaptation. Adaptation is the first step taken when one deals with different cultures where they are situated. Without adaptation, people will be isolated from others, have difficulties, and face obstacles in their interactions with others.

Theoretically, Prier [17] mentioned this area of inculturation as the result of negotiation and transformation. It is called the in-between area or the transformation area. Bhabha [18] calls the area of inculturation as the third space, as the result of hybrid process (cross-breeding). The third space still inherits the characteristics of each culture that is met. So we can safely conclude that inculturation is a dialogical and transformational process, not a coercion. This process is not a racial 'javanization' process, but a dynamic process carried out continuously to lead people to life as religious people who possess cultural awareness.

Mostly gamelan artists whom I interviewed and worked with during my research explain that, the use of gamelan is not only for the sake of its own splendor (fine arts), but for worship and reviving indigenous cultural values. Gondokusuman Church practice inculturation worship with the motto, "God worshipping while preserving own culture. The use of gamelan in the worship session is one form of cultural awareness, which later becomes one of the church's strategies to proceed with their mission as part of the wider community. The mission of the church is to build togetherness and develop solidarity in a pluralistic society based on the biblical and cultural values. To build togetherness with residents around the church, Gondokusuman Church holds an annual arts performance. It is attended by people who live around the church and is usually held before the church's anniversary celebration. The activity can also be interpreted as the church's participation in preserving its own local culture.

3.4 Inculturation as a Medium for Planting Values

Performed in church, the indigenous music teaches church members to live as Christian believers, respecting the Christian values as well as their own culture, reinforced through these songs [19]. The practice of gamelan is a result of historical processes as well as naturally owning their creativity and conscious effort to develop a distinct indigenous Christian identity and to actualize contextual worship [1]. In the worship, gamelan is an instrument of corporate devotion. In education the congregational songs is a means for Christian instruction, and in ministry the songs as an inspiration for social service [20].

Worshipping is a religious phenomenon that inherits certain values, including: social, cultural and religious values. The links between cultural, religious and educational values in the phenomenon of inculturation can be explained as follows: a) Culture is inherited and inherits social and religious traditions, b) Culture is learned (because it is not genetic), and c) Culture is owned and expressed in group by the supported community, as a result of education [21]. So whether it is engineered or not, inculturation practiced in the worship sessions opens opportunities for inheriting socio-cultural and religious traditions. This is the process of cultivating values taking place, when Javanese culture is re-studied in a social and religious

atmosphere. Through the inculturation worship the congregation is invited to live the faith and actualize its existence. Thus, the inculturation is the process of cultivating values, in which people are revived as religious beings who also possess cultural awareness.

Culture and religion are the results of education that is passed from generation to generation. As stated by Rohidi [21], education is a cultural process, which has two functions, preserving and developing culture in accordance to the need. The social and cultural contexts of musical actions are integral to musical meaning and cannot be ignored or minimized in music education [22]. A cultural process is strongly related to the social paradigms of thinking, reflecting, behaving, and acting towards others. Furthermore, educators need to provide the support and encouragement to their students so they might meet the ever-increasing demands placed on them in their own culture [23]. Therefore, religion should not be confronted with or separated from culture, because it would separate the soul existence of church itself and the surrounding society.

4 Conclusion

Gamelan is a part of the arts that can function as a connecting tool between Javanese community and their own culture. Gamelan can be used as a medium for inculturation. Therefore liturgical inculturation through Javanese gamelan is a medium for comprehending and instilling values, both religious and cultural. This is a process of bringing back the value of Javanese culture in line with the Western culture. So that the presumption that Javanese culture is placed lower than Western culture in status level is not proven true. Both Javanese and Western cultures can both be used to build conducive religious climate. The application of the Javanese gamelan in the church worship sessions is aimed to encourage as well as enrich the sense of musical expression of the congregation in worshipping God. It has become a divergent but integrated way of worshipping God, reflecting personal faith. In the end, the use of Javanese gamelan in the scope of worship can be seen as a dynamic process of value cultivation that needs to be perpetually carried out in order to preserve the existence of Javanese society as religious human beings who possess social and cultural awareness, as well as high integrity.

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