

The Attractive and Adaptable Indonesia Traditional Performing Art

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Abstract: Traditional Performing Art is a part of Indonesian society life. It is attractive, lively, and beautiful. It is also flexible or adaptable. These both natures and the implication are analysed by using the ethno art approach, especially the performing art approach. The choice to this emic approach comes from the observation to the collective awareness of the people who support it. Performing art has the agility and the ability to charm us with its beauty depends on the purpose of the performance. Any kind of performance is expected to give satisfaction to the audience. In an occasion, the performing art can be used as a means and the legitimation of some ritual. The same performing art can be used by society as a means of communication too, especially for men and women. Performing art can adapt to different interests, although the form is not changed. The questions are how can the performing art be attractive and why and how can the performing art adapt to the needs of the society. In fact, these both abilities are going hand in hand. Attractive and adaptable comes from its various development components which show the closeness or even the same meaning.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Indonesia traditional performing art has been living and leading to fulfill people's wants or demands. The performing art here is the performing art which lives and developed outside the palace. This research is aimed for a particular performance originated and developed together in the society that has rooted in agriculture and fishing culture as Indonesian in general. The similar form of the performance is accompanied by various interests (Bouvier, 2002; Hastuti, 2013; Kusmayati, 2011 and 2014; Murgiyanto, 2003; Soedarsono, 2011; and Widyastutieningrum, 2007).

The various interests which is supported by one kind of performing art that has a similar or even the same form will be presented in this article as in the area of the East corner of Madura island including in Kabupaten Sumenep, where there is a performing art called Karawitan. Karawitan is a group of traditional musician who played a traditional music instrument called gamelan, generally uses slendro scale.

A Karawitan group consists of only women or men or both as the players. A female group write the group's name based on the player such as 'Karawitan Putri Sri Budoyo', 'Karawitan Putri Budoyo', 'Karawitan Putri Indah Famili', 'Karawitan Putri

Bunga Famili', 'Karawitan Putri Melati', 'Karawitan Putri Ken Dedes', etc.

A Karawitan performance is always completed by a *sindhèn*. *Sindhèn* is a woman who becomes the main player of the performance. The term *karawitan* and *sindhèn* refer to Javanese language. *Sindhèn* is a singer of *tembang* (Javanese) or *kèjjhung* (Madura language). It is also called *tandhâ* as the synonym of *tari* (dance) (both in Javanese and Madura language). *Tandhâ* is also understood as a dancer in the neighborhood.

Sindhèn as the performer (can be one person or more), *nandhâ* or dancing and *ngèjjhung* or singing a specific song with the local language. The movement follows the rhythm of gamelan and stress on a particular lyrics or the end of *kèjjhungan*. The *nandhâ* and *ngèjjhung* are alone or with the guests on the stage.

Beside *kèjjhungan* and *nandhâ*, *sindhèn* looks stand out in her costume. She wears a long batik cloth and *kebaya* (traditional female Javanese gown). She has a particular hair style, accessories, make-up, with a shawl on her shoulders. The female players wear a costume like the *sindhèn*, but without a shawl. The male players wear trousers, sometimes sarong, a shirt, and a hat called *odheng*.

A man or two men called *galandhâng* is presented in the performance. *Galandhâng* should be able to

ngèjjhung and *nandhâ'* rhythmically with the gamelan. Some lyrics to welcome, to thank and to praise the audience are inserted. He also should be able to create specific lyrics based on the purpose. He fetches the main guest from his or her seat and invites him/her to dance with *sindhèn* or with him. He also brings the guest back to his/her seat.

A dance arena is prepared in a *tèrob*. *Tèrob* is a impermanent building, built for some occasion especially for a wedding. *Tèrob* was built in the front yard of the main house and dismantled after the event finished. The arena is often higher for around 0,5 – 1 meter than the guests' seats. The width is relatively limited, for around 4 x 5 meter. A set of gamelan is organized at the back or next to the dance arena.

The guests who are dancing are mostly men. Sometimes several boys are dancing too, following the movements of the adults. The women guests are not dancing but they come to the dance arena to give money to the *sindhèn*. Some other guests not only give money the *sindhèn*, but also to the *galandhâng*, and a specific gamelan player in the arena.

The performance in an occasion is not only attended by the invited guests but also attended by many common citizens. Most of them are men, although there are few women and children. They come not only from the same village, but also from the neighboring villages. They sit or stand clustery outside the gate, blend in the crowded food and toy sellers.

They follow and watch the next performance, although the performance is the same as the previous one. The invited and the uninvited guests are laughing, complementing, or giving various comments to some action in the dance arena. The complements and comments are not only for the *sindhèn* and *galandhâng*, but also to the guests who are dancing with the dancers.

Most of the Karawitan group and *sindhèn* and *galandhâng* are *ètangghâ'* or are hired by the organizer of the wedding or circumcision. This event often combined with a ritual called Rokat. Rokat is a traditional ceremony, which has a purpose to avoid misfortune suffered by someone with a particular sign (Kusmayati and Sayuti, 2014). This ceremony is conducted for the safety of the village.

The ritual often completed by Karawitan performance with *sindhèn* and *galandhâng* to fulfill the vows. The ritual is organized when some family member is free from danger or free from a big problem. The ritual is also conducted when the family experiences some happiness or something expected is achieved.

Rokat, fulfilling some vows, and the others actually do not always use Karawitan as the media. Still in Sumenep area, the society uses traditional music ensemble called Saronèn. Several families conduct Topèng Dhâlâng for it. The oral literature performance called Mamaca in Kabupaten Pamekasan area often connected with Rokak, especially Rokak Pandhâbâ (Kusmayati and Sayuti, 2014; and Dana, Kusmayati, and Prasetya, 2017).

This Karawitan performance, which is supported by the music players, *sindhèn* and *galandhâng* as the players, is not only developed in the east side of Madura, but also spreaded to the islands around Madura like Talango, Gili Genting, Gili Raja, Kangean, and also Java island. This performing art was brought in by Madura community who live in that area.

2 RESEARCH METHOD AND APPROACH

According to Kaeppler (1993) as also emphasized by Simatupang (2013) and Murgiyanto (2015), it is very important to observe a performing art based on a point of view that can be comprehended by its society. The society's understanding tends to become not universal, but more specific, as the support of Karawitan performing art, which can be strange, unique or odd for common people.

Therefore, the concept and the impression of the observer are avoided, as that has been emphasized by those three researchers mentioned above (1993, 2013, and 2015). Kaeppler and the other, Ahimsa – Putra (2005) have agreed that when do some ethno research, in the context of this research, which is ethno performing art, should use the society's thoughts to observe as the point of view (emic) as what has been mentioned earlier. One of the ways to gain it is by following the society's behavior in their daily basis, especially for those who support Karawitan and performing art.

However, it is undeniable and become a necessity for the researcher to explain ethically that can be understood generally and universally. How is it possible not to use emic and ethic approach if the object explained is the uniqueness of the Karawitan performing art itself. The uniqueness is expected can be understood not only by its supporters.

This performing art could have attractiveness if the performance, which is performed almost during a year, is observed. The performance never loses its enthusiasts. The continuity of the performance, which

supports several people's interests, leads to several questions. First, what aspects that can be the attraction of Karawitan performing art and why and how that attraction can survive. Second, why and how can Karawitan as traditional performing art adapt to the needs of the society?

This research uses the data field and the literature review. The data field were obtained through observations, the researcher's experiences, and also obtained from the information from several *sindhèn*, *galandhâng*, karawitan group members, and the event organizers. The researcher also obtained the information from the audience, although it needed more time and patience because of the complexity of the data. Part of the information was taken from the resident's invitation, and the rest was taken from the researcher's initiative. Moreover, the information was also taken from various social stratum, age, etc. Once again, the observation and the analysis are endeavored to approach – although it is not precise – with the point of view and thoughts of the society.

3 DISCUSSION

The discussion of this research comes from various questions about Karawitan performing art that has been mentioned above. First, about the attractiveness of the performance. The ability of *nandhâ* and *ngèjjhung* for *sindhèn* and *galandhâng*, and the skill of the gamelan players are the main factors of the performance. As a performance, it is undeniable. They, especially the *sindhèn* and *galandhâng* spend time to find and practice their body's capability to fulfill the expectation of the supporters (Suhadiyah and Maryamah, 2019)

This behavior is suspected to be the beginning of human relationship with the world as quoted by (2013) from Leder (1990). Leder said that body is a media which is irreplaceable to experience and interact with the world. Still about body, Barba stated that body techniques which are used in performing art came from body techniques from outside (extra – daily). This statement is applicable to Karawitan performers, especially *sindhèn* and *galandhâng* when they sing and dance

Along with the body techniques, the performance's attraction from the performers is determined by the costume and the makeup. For *sindhèn*, the ability of *nandhâ* and *ngèjjhung* should be supported by balanced costume and makeup. It is similar for the female gamelan players. They are not only skillful in playing gamelan, but also skillful in *ngèjjhung*. They are also expected to perform

attractively in a costume and makeup. Suhadiyah, one of the senior *sindhèn* and also a star, often gives a strong suggestion for other *sindhèn* to change the costume for every performance. This suggestion is conveyed to karawitan female members, whether to her own group or other groups which accompany her.

At least three *sindhèn* have their own female karawitan group. The groups are 'Sri Budoyo' owned by Suhadiyah, 'Indah Famili' owned Hj. Ahwiyani, and 'Ken Dedes' owned by Suhartini. They also have a set of gamelan instrument which is used for the performance. Although they have their own karawitan group, these three women have never refused to perform accompanied by other karawitan group, male or female. These three groups try to perform based on their own attraction and ability.

Some attraction is also performed by *galandhâng*, not by the limited costume and makeup, but by the prime ability of *nandhâ* and *ngèjjhung*. The trousers/sarong, a suit, skullcap, and shawl, which are worn by a *galandhâng* cannot support him if he doesn't have enough ability of *nandhâ*, *ngèjjhung*, and ability to guide the performance.

The attractiveness of *galandhâng* is more on the honor to the guests through compliments. The compliments are given by the *galandhâng*. Beside for the *galandhâng* himself, he also gives a contribution in raising the *sindhèn*'s popularity (Suhadiyah and Maryamah, 2019). Therefore, it is understandable if *sindhèn* always shares her salary to her partner. She gives some amount of money to the *galandhâng* and to the gamelan players.

Galandhâng should be able to understand what the host's desire is. He is demanded to arrange the dance's order for the guests, especially the VIP guests. Generally, the order of the guests based on the level or the status of the guest in the society or in the government institution. The higher the level, the earlier he/she dances. The *galandhâng*'s mistake in this matter caused the decrease opportunity for the *galandhâng* to perform. Moreover, he should be ashamed for his lack of ability to organize the performance.

He should be able to compose lyrics according to the needs. It is for *sindhèn* as well. Through the speakers, the song is heard, contains praises (in formal Madura language), composed by the guide of the performance. One of them is as follow

Adhu alèk . . .
Pasèra sè gâgâ' semak kaula
Angèjjhung atangdhâng lèbur
Sobung sè angalaaghi
Èngghi panèka èngkang sakalangkong kaormatè
Bapak Kalebun Salopèng.

(Dear brother/sister . . .
 Who is the gentleman near me
 Sing and dance beautifully
 Nobody can compete him
 The honorable
 The Village Head of Salopeng).

Explicitly it is mentioned by the *galandhâng* in the lyrics above that the gentleman who is dancing /singing near him is the village head of Salopeng who is vary honorable. The honor is also presented through the formal language used by the *galandhâng*. The same lyrics are often used by *sindhèn*. Similarly, the lyrics used by *sindhèn* can be used by *galandhâng* as the lyrics below. In the lyrics, which was created in everyday language (same level of communication), contains the meaning of longing or expecting the presence of the guests.

*Sampèr sarong kabâbâna
 Mon ményak nompa kapelar
 Pèkèr kerrong karobâna
 Ènga' rassa ta' kellar*

(A long cloth with sarong underneath
 If some oil spilled, can't be hold
 Longing for his face
 It is unbearable).

Basically, the lyrics sung by *sindhèn* and *galandhâng* uses the pattern of *mamaca* (Madura) or *macapat* (Java). However, sometimes several deviations happen. For instance, the end of the lyrics should have a certain vocal, not always have to follow the standard guidance. Another deviation is the amount of syllables in every line is not suitable with rule of the lyrics. Besides, occasionally, there are some Indonesian vocabularies and Javanese vocabularies are included in the lyrics. However, the performer of the lyrics does not deviate from the meaning or purpose.

In the performance similar to Karawitan, R.M. Soedarsono has a particular view. He stated that a performance which is not prioritized the form, but more on its purpose, is the extension of the prehistoric root of tradition. Furthermore, the difference is not only on the aspects of one form of the performance, but also in the different kind of performance, which is performed for the same purpose (2011). The prehistoric background among others is recognized from the pilgrimage done right before the performance, especially the performers visit the cemetery to ask for blessing to the ancestors.

On its long journey and in time, the culture root found itself as some agent to serve the host's taste.

The elaboration to the deviated form is done to satisfy the host and also the audience. Besides, the desire of the hosts, audience and the performing art itself is tried to be fulfilled. (Kusmayati and Sayuti, 2014).

Barba's statement is in line with Gell's view. He said that the technique built in art has the meaning for enchantment. It appears because the technique has a specific level of difficulties, so it is indeed enchanting (in Simatupang 2013). Not many who is willing to become *sindhèn* and *galandhâng*. If he/she is capable to become *nandhâ'* and *ngèjjhung*, perhaps the power and courage to perform in front of the audience—especially as a *sindhèn*—needs a careful consideration. As stated by Suhadiyah, she planned to resign as a *sindhèn* in 1 – 2 years ahead. It is related to her appropriateness and duties as a moslem and due to her family problems. She also feels that she is not young anymore and she suffers some health issue. Her ups and downs for her achievement as a star will be put aside in accordance to the norm in the society. However, her experiences and her long journey as a star for more than 20 years make her pondering (2019).

Based on the explanation above, then it is understood that karawitan group—with *sindhèn* and *galandhâng* who has the ability above—is highly demanded by many hosts. The higher cost than the others must be spent by the host if the performer is a famous *sindhèn* and *galandhâng*. The host's prestige overwhelms the cost that should be spent. However, bargaining which leads to the agreement for both parties—as one of the characteristics of Indonesian—is applied here.

The invitation will be delivered to the guests. Several ways are used to invite them. Most of the ways is to send food and groceries. Whatever the form and the way, it conveys the specific performance, especially the karawitan group, *sindhèn*, and *galandhâng* orally or written.

Dry season after the harvest season, especially the harvest of rice and tobacco is the time to show off as a host. Wedding, circumcision, fulfill the vows are conducted by the society for the individual need. Although it is for the individual need, *jâk ajâk* or *jâk ngajâk*, which means inviting to help, is seen in the process of the occasion. This invitation occurs especially when some neighbor is seen holding some work (Rifai, 2007), as when conducting a wedding ceremony, circumcision, etc. Along with it is *upacara bersih desa* (clean the village together), sea harvest, and various *rokat*—they can be used together—is conducted by *jâk ajâk* or *jâk ngajâk*. The time and place are based on the agreement. Also

for the kind of performance and the cost, they are discussed together in advance.

When conducting a performing art, it appears that agriculture society, which is rooted from the tradition of togetherness in the rice field and the fishermen go to sea collectively, still continue the tradition in their daily life. Among them are known as *bâbbhu'* or *po seppo* or someone who is considered as an elder. *Bâbbhu'* or *po seppo* becomes a person to ask and as the balancer of life.

If a person doesn't want to be preceded by others, that person, who wants to hold an event with karawitan performance, should prepare the event well in advance. The host chooses a popular karawitan group. The prestige, which is reflected through the performing art, does not only occur from the host, but also from the guests and the karawitan performer.

In her research in Indramayu West Java, Hastuti stated that the prestige in some hosts becomes the actualization or pride for someone or family through a certain performing art by honoring important symbols in it (2006). In Sumenep, a medium which carry the important symbols chosen by the society is karawitan group with its performers. A prestige that is related to the pride in Sumenep, even along Madura, appears in the circle of race cow owners. They make some effort in any ways to win the cow race, which is called Karapan Sapi. It is similar to the host of karawitan performance. The realization of the prestige is more prominent than the cost that should be spent as the consequence to be in the circle of that activity.

During harvest time is also understood as the time to earn money for the gamelan players, *sindhèn*, and *galandhâng*. During that time, in *tèrob-tèrob*, from the performance, a voice's chant was heard, graceful movement of the *sindhèn* was seen, especially Suhadiyah and Suhartini. Both of them are favorite *sindhèn* nowadays. Their beautiful voice and movement accompanied by one or two among Mohammad Halqi, H. Abdulrachman, and Mohammad Hasan. These names are the more skillful *galandhâng* compared to the others.

Although she is no longer showing her beautiful dance, Hj. Ahwiyani is also the most wanted *sindhèn*. Her limited vision, which has been suffered for about 5 years, reinforces her to choose to become *sindhèn*, that accentuates her *ngèjjhung* ability with her golden voice. She's not only praise the guests or the host, but also gives some advice through the existed traditional song lyrics or through her own creation. The lyrics are as follows:

*Kabânjirân sagârâ maddhu, kanak
Bâddhâ sagârâ cellot, jâ' kalopaèn*

*Mon ta' namen, ta' anyè,
Jâ' ngala' karebbâ dibbhi', kanak.*

(Flooded by the sea of honey [happiness], child
There is the sea of mud [difficulties], do not forget
No grow, no reap
Don't just do what you want, child).

The lyrics above present some wisdom to the agricultural societies who know honey, mud, and the relation between growing and reaping or harvesting. The emphasize on the word 'child' at the beginning and at the end of the lyrics shows to whom the lyrics is pointed to, adolescent. Besides, Ahwiyani puts herself as an older person who should give some advice. With her condition, she is hired by many hosts as a *sindhèn* who has a particular purpose. Although her amount of her performance is less than the two *sindhèn* who has been mentioned above, she continues to do so today. (Suhadiyah and Marzuki, March 2019).

The feeling and act, which become the expression of prestige, also appear from part of the guests. Part of the guests who can *nandhâ* and *ngèjjhung* will make some effort to do it and use longer time than the others. These guests will also request a certain song to the karawitan group by giving more money. The money given to the *sindhèn*, *galandhâng*, and the karawitan members, is hold or shown in their hands while *nandhâ* and *ngèjjhung* when they are in the performance arena. The giving is the expression of gratitude and also to show the pride of the giver in front of the audience.

Sindhèn, *galandhâng*, and the gamelan player as the performer accompany the act with their own ways as what has been mentioned earlier. The attraction is maintained continually. As the performer, technology of enchantment actually attached to the performer him/herself. This technique based on the concept that stated that work of art basically is an artificial beauty. It was created by art performers by implementing a set of particular techniques through some aesthetic experiences gained which is different with natural beauty. Technology of enchantment can also be said as a strategy implemented by art performers to create a particular attractiveness for their work of art. (Simatupang, 2013). Part of the karawitan performers are aware of it, moreover if the performer has performed in a long period of time. Experiences become the learning which is very useful to continue the journey of the art.

Besides maintaining the quality of the voice, the female performers should cultivate their body and make it beautiful in such a way without ignoring the politeness (Suhadiyah and Maryamah, 2019). The

beauty created is not apart from society's term, which is related to performing art, that is '*lèbur*'. Someone, who is watching or has just finished watching a performance, can share it with another friend who is also watching it. *Lèbur* means good, fun, entertaining. Specifically, *lèbur*' is a positive response to the performing art when it is performed (Bouvier, 2002). An entertainment, which brings out the feeling of *lèbur* or fun because it is beautiful and good (Bouvier, 2002), is expected by all society.

They also understand that they should compete to get the opportunity to perform. The competition is not only in the same form of performing art, but also in the different form of art. The quantity of the performance between karawitan group with *sindhèn* and *galandhâng* and Topèng Dhâlâng, Saronèn, and Mamaca is chasing each other. This competition is clearly seen between Karawitan and Topèng Dhâlâng from the schedule of the performances in a month. There are more than 75% performances for various occasion performed by both of them with the equal amount of performances. The rest have become part of other performing arts. In a decade, before and after 2000's, the performance's and Topèng Dhâlâng's schedule sometimes more than days in a month. In a day, especially on Sunday, they can perform more than one (Suhadiyah and Marzuki, 2019).

There is no difference in the performance whether it is for Rokot or for some entertainment. Even many gamelan players do not know about the purpose of the performance. For them, the most important thing is they can perform according to the lead of their group leader and of course to get payment. They do it to help and to fulfill their family needs. (Suhadiyah, Maryamah, Marzuki, and Suparno, 2019).

The *Sindhèn* as the performer, *galandhâng*, and the karawitan group are ready to across the border of Kabupaten Sumenep and Pulau Madura. They are invited to perform away from their family and the various purposes become wider. The purpose of the performance including wedding ceremony, circumcision, national big day or religious day celebration. The performance is not always related to *Rokat* or to fulfill some vows.

In regards to Shills' view, who stated that the life sustainability of a traditional society has never stopped (1981), it can be said that one of the pillars of the sustainability is traditional performing art of the society itself. Karawitan with its supporters in Sumenep is limited only as a traditional performing art. There is a big possibility that traditional performing art also occurs in other form of performing art, that is developed in other regions.

4 DISCUSSION

Indonesia traditional performing art shows the dynamic of its development for its supporter's interest. The various interests among others can be performed by a form of performing art called Karawitan in Kabupaten Sumenep, Madura.

This performing art, with its aspects, has a strong attractiveness. The attractiveness is organized or developed by emphasizing the ability to *ngèjjhung* and *nandhâ*'. The ability to perform through movement and voice from the body, which go hand in hand with the appearance of costume and accessories, is maintained by the karawitan performers. They continue to compete with other karawitan groups and other form of performing art. The target of the continuity leads to the continuity to earn money. The competition does not only occur in the performing art, but also among its performers.

In one side, some attraction is raised by a karawitan group to encourage future hosts to hire them or *nangghâ*'. On the other side, the attraction is aimed to invite guests. Two purposes above are realized by both parties. Alongside the effort to earn money, the performance is the realization of the prestige of the performers, the host, and the guests who are invited to dance in the arena.

Karawitan as a traditional performing art follows the interest of the society. Various interests can be accommodated by this performing art. A request to perform with a purpose that related to some rituals, has never been refused. A performance for a wedding ceremony or circumcision, with or without *Rokat* is often conducted. The performance is often conducted as an entertainment as written in the invitation card. The society also needs Karawitan to support spiritual value as sung by Hj. Ahwiyani.

The performing art can support three interests of the people who come to the performance. First, it is a means of the ceremony for the host or the organizer. Second, the performing art can become a means of communication and entertainment. They take the opportunity to show their skill and ability and also to entertain themselves. Many guests feel entertained with the performance. A strong root that performing art, whatever the form, is a means for various interests, is maintained and preserved until today.

5 DISCUSSION

Thank you for our fellow *sindhèn*, *galandhâng*, and Karawitan group, especially the woman who accepted our visit again after more than three years. The same

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