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## **Government Strategy in Establishing Gambang Semarang as the Artistic Identity of Semarang City**

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### **Abstrack**

Law Number 5 of 2017 concerning Cultural Advancement is a reference for the Department of Culture and Tourism in forming Gambang Semarang as an art identity in the City of Semarang. Various efforts have been made by referring to the five strategies for advancing culture stated in the law, and 4 of the five strategies have started to run starting from efforts: 1) Preservation, 2) Development, 3) Utilization, and 4) Coaching. This study examines and describes the Semarang City government's strategy in implementing a cultural preservation strategy to preserve Gambang Semarang. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. Data collection in this study was obtained through observation, interview, and documentation techniques. Data was analyzed using interactive analysis techniques. The validity of the data was tested using source triangulation techniques, technical triangulation, and time triangulation. The results of the study indicate that Gambang Semarang needs to be endeavored so that it can be preserved sustainably from various aspects until the identity of Semarang is formed from the art of Gambang Semarang itself.

**Keywords:** Gambang Semarang, Cultural Preservation Strategy

## INTRODUCTION

Semarang City is one of the big cities with a great diversity of tribes, cultures, and customs that have existed since ancient times. Located on the north coast of Java, Semarang has functioned as an important port, making it a meeting point for various tribes, cultures, and customs for centuries. It is no wonder that Semarang City is a city that has so much ethnic diversity that lives mixed in its society. This diversity is not just a stopover but also begins to stick and become an acculturation that gradually becomes a characteristic of the region.

The people of Semarang began to know Gambang Semarang music in the 1930s through the figure of Lie Hoe Soen, who migrated to Semarang and aspired to introduce Gambang Semarang to the surrounding community (Mayasari, 2016). Kesenian Gambang Semarang merupakan perpaduan pertunjukan musik, tari dan komedi (lawakan). Gambang Semarang art combines music, dance, and comedy. This combination is a combination of Chinese and Javanese musical cultures that become one and grow and develop into Gambang Semarang music. As written in the article (Suciu & Dragulin, 2023) combining cultural elements in a traditional performance can educate about cultural values and, if preserved, can strengthen cultural identity.

The function of Gambang Semarang is explained in the research results (Mayasari, 2016) as a form of emotional expression, entertainment, communication, education, ritualism, and even in the economic sector. The presentation, packaged into a performance consisting of music and interspersed with comedy, made it a favorite among the community during its heyday. The development of Gambang Semarang music is also followed by innovation in the use of musical instruments used from one presentation to the next. These additional instruments include kecrek, saron, demung, peking, erhu, zhonghu, yangqin, and flute. Other complementary elements such as stage

layout, performance equipment, and the order of presentation are also made as flexible as possible so that they can adjust to stage conditions indoors and outdoors.

Another form of Gambang Semarang music presentation discussed in the study (Tristiani & Lanjari, 2018) is how the characteristics of the city of Semarang are also raised in dance accompaniment music. The musical instruments used include kendhang, bonang, gambang, kontra bass, gambang melodi, kecrek, demung, saron, peking, gong kempul, dizi, gu zheng, yangqin, erhu and chong hu. The combination of Javanese and Chinese musical instruments clearly illustrates the solid cultural acculturation inherent in Semarang. For this combination of musical instruments, diatonic scales are used so that they blend and become harmonious. The diatonic scale pattern is the most prominent in Western music, isomorphic to the standard rhythm pattern (Wen & Carol Lynne Krumhansl, 2019).

The role of the local government in making Gambang Semarang one of the identities of the city of Semarang is currently being intensively carried out continuously and sustainably. His research (Raharjo & Arsih, 2018) discussed the process of forming Gambang Semarang music as an identity for the city of Semarang. The formation of this identity is carried out through three media: 1) Education, both formally in schools under the direction of the Semarang Education Office and non-formally as implemented in Merby Semarang; 2) Gambang Semarang dance competitions and festivals organized by the Semarang City Government; 3) Gambang Semarang music performances by several groups in Semarang. The importance of awareness in every level of society is to consider the importance of local culture as the identity of the nation. In his article (Nahak, 2019), he hopes that the younger generation will want to continue to try to inherit local culture and be a strength for the culture itself.

The need for preservation activities is one of the efforts that can be carried out

continuously, directed, and integrated to respond to the impact of the development of the era on local arts or culture, which are increasingly eroded. Adjusting the situation to the existing conditions is undoubtedly necessary in order to estimate the right strategy for the preservation activities that will be carried out. According to Widjaja in Ranjabar in 2006, as quoted (Nahak, 2019), two ways can be done in an effort to maintain the local culture, namely 1) Culture Experience, which is done by directly participating in a cultural experience. For example, in this case, we can directly participate in the Gambang Semarang training process in theory and practice. 2) Cultural knowledge, namely making the preserved culture into an information centre that can be used in many forms. The purpose is none other than education or government interests in developing a culture or exploring tourism potential.

Koentjaraningrat, a famous Indonesian anthropologist, in his book *Introduction to Cultural Anthropology* (1993:57) as quoted by (Wirdanengsih, 2019) divides the definition of culture into two primary schools, namely positivism and interpretivism. This division is based on different paradigms and methodologies used to understand culture. Positivism views culture as an objective phenomenon that can be measured and analyzed scientifically. This paradigm emphasizes observable facts and causal relationships between various elements of culture.

The interpretivism views culture as a subjective phenomenon that needs to be understood based on the meaning and interpretation given by its actors. This paradigm emphasizes a deep understanding of the views and experiences of individuals and groups in a culture. The division of culture based on the positivism and interpretivism schools helps us understand the various perspectives in defining and studying culture. Each school has advantages and disadvantages; combining these two schools can provide a

richer and more complex understanding of culture.

Before discussing the context of Gambang Semarang, it is essential to understand the concept of cultural division according to Koentjaraningrat. Koentjaraningrat divides culture into seven elements (Koentjaraningrat, 2010), namely elements of kinship, social organization, livelihood system, religion, art, knowledge, and technology. Gambang Semarang is a traditional Javanese musical art rich in cultural values. By analyzing various aspects of Gambang Semarang, we can find representations of Koentjaraningrat's cultural elements. 1) Kinship System: Gambang Semarang is often performed at family and community events, strengthening family relationships and values; 2) Social Organization: Gambang Semarang performances involve musicians, dancers, and singers, demonstrating the social structure and roles in society; 3) Livelihood System: Gambang Semarang played by professional artists is a reflection of their livelihood and expertise; 4) Religion: The lyrics of songs and stories accompanied by Gambang Semarang often contain religious and spiritual values; 5) Art: Gambang Semarang itself is a beautiful and meaningful form of musical art; 6) Knowledge: Gambang Semarang combines knowledge of Javanese music, history, and culture; 7) Technology: Gambang Semarang instruments and playing techniques reflect traditional Javanese music technology.

The cultural elements in Gambang Semarang do not stand alone; they are interrelated and influence each other. For example, kinship and religious systems are often interwoven in the oral traditions and stories accompanied by Gambang Semarang. The musical expertise and cultural knowledge of Gambang Semarang performers are passed down through the livelihood systems and social organizations in their communities. Gambang Semarang is a musical performance and a reflection of the rich and complex Javanese culture. By understanding Koentjaraningrat's

division of culture and analyzing Gambang Semarang, we can gain deeper insight into Javanese values, traditions, and cultural identity.

The culture that has taken root in society will indirectly be passed down from generation to generation to our children and grandchildren. Cultural heritage here means a legacy from ancestors that needs to be maintained and preserved by the younger generation. In this preservation effort, many parties directly or indirectly participate, both morally and materially. In this case, community artists are actors who directly carry out preservation activities, and residents and the government indirectly help in the preservation process with their respective roles.

The role of the government is inseparable from efforts to preserve national culture. One of the preservation efforts carried out is to support activities carried out by artists whose objectives refer to Law Number 5 of 2017 concerning the Advancement of Culture concerning the management of culture in Indonesia. The website for the advancement of culture explains that when the 1945 Constitution was amended at the beginning of the reform, culture was a priority and needed to be further emphasized. Article 32 of the 1945 Constitution states that 'The state advances Indonesian national culture in the midst of world civilization by guaranteeing the freedom of society to maintain and develop its cultural values'.

The Law on the Advancement of Culture discusses the form of a visible form of culture, such as the physical form in general, and its cultural products and practices (Cultural Advancement, 2018). Gambang Semarang is one of the cultural potentials that can be preserved and developed sustainably and continuously to implement policies that are aimed at preserving the culture by referring to Law No. 5 of 2017 concerning Cultural Progress, which emphasizes four critical points, namely protection, development, and utilization which aim to strengthen the cultural ecosystem and foster and increase the capacity

of human resources in supporting the cultural ecosystem.

Efforts to preserve Gambang Semarang align with the academic and professional discourse on tourism and the preservation of currently developing resources. In various countries, cultural heritage is recognized as an essential tourism component (Ejikeme et al., 2020). This is because cultural heritage offers a unique and authentic tourism experience that cannot be found anywhere else. Gambang Semarang, with its unique music and culture, has great potential to become a tourist attraction in Semarang. Efforts to preserve it not only preserve local traditions but can also increase the economic and social value of the community. Thus, the preservation of Gambang Semarang not only preserves cultural heritage but also provides economic and social benefits to the community.

It is important to remember that the preservation of Gambang Semarang must be carried out sustainably. This means that preservation efforts must consider the needs and interests of the local community and the preservation of the natural environment. As quoted from (Setiyowati & Wiyoso, 2023) preservation can only be carried out effectively when the objects or values being preserved are still used and still exist to be implemented. With a comprehensive and sustainable approach, the preservation of Gambang Semarang can be an effective model for preserving local culture and, at the same time, improving community welfare. The tourism industry is like a double-edged sword for the survival of traditional arts. On the one hand, the tourism industry offers opportunities for traditional arts to survive by making them a tourist attraction. However, economically, the lives of traditional artists have yet to show significant progress along with the development of the tourism industry. The tourism industry only provides funds for traditional arts to survive, and artists must be willing to be "dwarfed" for the sake of tourists (Alobiedat, 2018).

Traditional arts, including Gambang Semarang, are not accessible from the influence

of external factors, such as changes in the political and economic situation as one of the challenges. This, as expressed by (Hasana et al., 2022), can cause changes in the tastes of art lovers. This can affect the decline in the number of Gambang Semarang players and enthusiasts, the difficulty of finding regeneration to continue the Gambang Semarang tradition, and the decreasing interest of the community in studying and preserving Gambang Semarang. However, changes in the tastes of art lovers can also be an opportunity to develop more creative and innovative Gambang Semarang performances to attract the interest of the younger generation; besides that, technology can also be utilized to introduce Gambang Semarang to the public. One of the factors that can support the success of Gambang Semarang preservation efforts that is currently easiest to highlight is in promotional media, either carried out by musicians directly or by the government. In addition to promotion, new technologies such as music streaming and social media can be used by musicians and the government to reach a wider audience (Kim & Kang, 2022). An effective strategy to encourage innovation in the cultural industry must consider the dynamic relationship between digital technology and cultural resources themselves (Wang & Huang, 2024).

## METHODS

The focus of the study in this writing is the government's strategy in establishing Gambang Semarang as the artistic identity of Semarang City with a qualitative approach. This research was conducted at the Semarang City Culture and Tourism Office. Pemuda street No. 175, Sekayu, Semarang Tengah District, Semarang City. This research was conducted from December 2023 to June 2024. The data collection techniques used were observation, interview, and document study. In the observation technique, the researcher observed the conditions of the Gambang Semarang performance and various discussion

forums that discussed the preservation of culture, especially Gambang Semarang.

The data analysis technique in this study used three methods. They were the first to compare observation data with interview data. They were second, comparing interview results with what was carried out during the observation of the research process. Third, interview results should be compared with document contents.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Government Strategy in Establishing Gambang Semarang as the Artistic Identity of Semarang City

The Semarang City Culture and Tourism Office refers to Law Number 5 of 2017 concerning the Advancement of Culture, namely laws and regulations governing Indonesian culture's preservation, development, utilization, and development. This law came into effect on May 29, 2017, which aims to advance Indonesian National Culture in world civilization and make it an investment to build the future and civilization of the nation. In this law, ten objects of cultural advancement are determined, namely: 1) Oral Tradition; 2) Manuscripts; 3) Customs; 4) Folk Games; 5) Traditional Sports; 6) Traditional Knowledge; 7) Traditional Technology; 8) Art; 9) Language; and 10) Rites (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017). In this study, Gambang Semarang refers explicitly to the law on advancing culture in art objects, namely performing arts. According to (Carrillo et al., 2020) in their article, before evaluating the degree of preservation of cultural heritage that characterizes the cities analyzed, it is necessary to explain the legal framework currently regulating it. If related to this study, the author would like to convey that the law on the Advancement of Culture provides a basis for efforts to preserve Gambang Semarang by establishing clear principles, mechanisms, and responsibilities.

This law on the advancement of culture also establishes five strategies for the

advancement of culture, namely: 1) Preservation, 2) Development, 3) Utilization, 4) Fostering, and 5) Advancement of Culture Abroad. In the final report of 2022, the Semarang City Culture and Tourism Office stated that Gambang Semarang Art is a typical Semarang art consisting of Dance, Music (Vocal), and Comedy elements. However, in its development, the dance element is very developed (marked by the number of dance studios and participants participating in Semarang dance competitions) rather than music and comedy. The musical elements of Gambang Semarang in the report are found in several locations, including the Merby Club (Nang Nok), Gambang Semarang Art Company (GSAC) UNDIP, SMP Karangturi (Extracurricular), Gambang Semarang Music Community (KMGS), and Semarang State University (Central et al.). Meanwhile, the comedy element is only found in one location, namely the Gambang Semarang Art Company (GSAC) at UNDIP, which still consistently maintains the complete form of Gambang Semarang art.

In the 2022 final report, the Semarang City Culture and Tourism Office stated that the Semarang City Government, through the Culture and Tourism Office, held a festival event to promote the traditional arts of Semarang City, festival data inputted from 2011 to 2021 in various series of events but still with the same spirit of event content, namely in order to preserve and develop Semarang art. The following is data on the Semarang Arts Festival from 2011 to 2021:

**Table 1.** Semarang Arts Festival Data from 2011-2021. (Source: 2022 Year-End Report of the Semarang City Culture and Tourism Office).

Tahun	Judul Acara	Tanggal Pelaksanaan
2011	Festival Tari Semarangan	
2012	Lomba Tari Semarangan	15/09/2012

Tahun	Judul Acara	Tanggal Pelaksanaan
2013	Lomba Tari Semarangan	30/08/2013
2014	Festival Gambang Semarang	26/08/2014
2015	Festival Gambang Semarang	25/08/2015
2016	Festival Gambang Semarang	23/08/2016
2017	Festival Gambang Semarang	29/08/2017
2018	-	-
2019	Traditional Dance Competition	15/12/2019
2020	Festival Tari Semarangan	25/10/2020
2021	Festival Tari Kreasi Semarangan	1/05/2021

In this case, the Semarang City Culture and Tourism Office conducted a study on Semarang Gambang Art to explore the potential of developing Semarang Gambang art through training that will be scheduled as an annual routine agenda. In planning this agenda, the first Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was held on Thursday, June 30, 2022, at the Oudetrap Old City of Semarang. This first FGD discussed the phenomenon and condition of Semarang Gambang Art and how far it has developed in the community. The conclusion that can be drawn from this first FGD activity is that Semarang Gambang Art is in a state of stagnation and needs to develop in the community. So, special attention is needed to maintain and strive for this art to develop in Semarang City. The existence of elements of diversity from various ethnicities in Semarang City gives Semarang Gambang Art characteristics that are expected to become the identity of Semarang City.

The second Focus Group Discussion was held at the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Languages and Arts, Semarang State University on Wednesday, September 28, 2022.

The participants of this FGD were diverse, ranging from Academics (Sendratasik lecturers of FBS UNNES and Lecturers the Faculty of Cultural Sciences UNDIP), Arts and Culture Teachers, Gambang Semarang Practitioners, and the Semarang City Culture and Tourism Office. This second FGD was more directed at the collaboration of the two agencies for the interests and advancement of the arts, especially in Semarang. Furthermore, Dr. Widodo, a karawitan lecturer and karawitan practitioner, revealed three main elements in the sustainability of the arts: 1) Seeds, from artists; 2) Land, in the form of studios or art pockets; 3) Climate, from the government side. These three elements greatly influence and can determine the sustainability of art, so synergy is needed, which is mutually involved between one and the other in supporting the preservation of Gambang Semarang. In addition, product development efforts are also carried out through the recording process to the development of work, which is expected to create opportunities for collaboration of traditional instruments from various ethnicities that grow and develop in Semarang. With the existence of the law on the Advancement of Culture, the Department of Culture and Tourism of Semarang City has formulated a strategy to preserve Gambang Semarang as follows:

**Table 2.** Gambang Semarang preservation strategy. (Source: Semarang City Culture and Tourism Office).

Strategic Steps	Recommendations for the Study of Gambang Semarang Art
Preservation	Conducting an inventory of both song works and historical data about Gambang Semarang. Efforts to secure Gambang Semarang art through the Copyright of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights.

Strategic Steps	Recommendations for the Study of Gambang Semarang Art  Carrying out physical and non-physical maintenance of Gambang Semarang art.  Carrying out the rescue of Gambang Semarang art so that it can continue and develop in the City of Semarang. Media facilities for publication related to Gambang Semarang Art or through social media are often introduced to the general public.
Development	Dissemination of Gambang Semarang art to all sub-districts and villages in Semarang City.  The results of the study of Gambang Semarang art are published or printed in book format so that they can be read by the general public and used as a basis for literacy in Gambang Semarang art.  Develop more colorful musical works by combining cultural elements that exist in Semarang City, such as Java, China, Europe, Arabia, and India.
Utilization	Empowerment of public spaces by providing facilities to art pockets as an effort by the government to provide economic contributions to

Strategic Steps	Recommendations for the Study of Gambang Semarang Art
	Gambang Semarang artists.
Coaching	Holding a Gambang Semarang art workshop for Artists, Musicians, and Students in Semarang City. Improving the governance of institutions, both the Studio and the Gambang Semarang Art Community.

The results of the author's interview with Mrs. Deasy Ismalia, SE. as the Head of the Arts Division of the Semarang City Culture and Tourism Office in June 2024 concluded that until now, the Semarang government has continued to strive to ensure that Gambang Semarang does not become extinct. In the interview, Mrs. Deasy stated that when there was a request to perform at several essential events in Semarang City and Central Java Province, she tried to present Gambang Semarang as Semarang's artistic identity. Not only in Semarang City; she also said that she wanted Gambang Semarang to be known at the national level because by reaching the national level, it is hoped that more requests for Gambang Semarang performances can be fulfilled so that the dissemination of information or promotional media for Gambang Semarang can be more optimal.

In addition to these activities, the Semarang City Culture and Tourism Office also plans to include Gambang Semarang music learning for children from elementary to junior high school levels. Research (Connerton, 2019) states that developing educational programs can be one effort to increase public awareness and appreciation of cultural memory. For the elementary school level, it is planned first to provide an introduction to Gambang Semarang. At the junior high school

level, they will be introduced to and given practice learning Gambang Semarang music after they are familiar with Javanese Gamelan or games. The plan has been prepared and planned to be implemented in the new school year in mid-2024. As a supporting media in the Gambang Semarang music learning process that will be implemented in schools, two sets of Gambang Semarang gamelan have been prepared and are currently placed in the Raden Salah Semarang Cultural Park (TBRS). Regarding tourism, Gambang Semarang has also begun to be introduced to the public. In her interview, Mrs. Deasy said that she had started playing Semarangan music in several hotels in Semarang City during breakfast time, at the station, the airport, and several essential places considered one of the promotional media for Gambang Semarang.

The positive response from the community can be seen from their enthusiasm for attending performances, learning musical instruments, and getting involved in other preservation activities. Factors that drive this positive response include 1) Awareness of cultural values: the community is increasingly recognizing the cultural value of Gambang Semarang as a unique and essential part of their cultural heritage; 2) Pride and identity: the community is proud of Gambang Semarang and wants to preserve it as their identity; 3) Active involvement: preservation efforts actively involve the community in various activities, such as performances, workshops, and research. However, preservation efforts have several challenges, such as the need for more interest from the younger generation because they are more interested in popular culture and less interested in traditional culture. Limited resources, infrastructure, and teaching staff are some of the obstacles to preservation efforts.

Gambang Semarang continues to adapt to social and cultural changes to ensure its sustainability. This adaptation includes adjusting music and performances. Gambang Semarang music and performances have been adapted to be more attractive to the younger



generation and are based on current developments. Digital technology is also used to document and disseminate information and promote Gambang Semarang. Collaboration with various parties, such as the government, educational institutions, and other arts communities, is carried out to expand the reach and increase the effectiveness of preservation efforts. As quoted from the article (Kristiani & Kasiyan, 2024) education not only strengthens individual potential but also functions as a foundation for forming the identity of a nation.

Gambang Semarang needs to be preserved sustainably. This can be done by building cultural resilience. They were increasing public awareness of the cultural value of Gambang Semarang, encouraging their active participation in preservation efforts, and developing an innovative preservation model by seeking creative and innovative solutions to overcome preservation challenges, such as utilizing technology and collaborating with various parties. Schutzian phenomenology (Pratt, 2017) focuses on subjective experiences and how individuals construct meaning from the world around them. In the context of cultural heritage, it is explained that cultural heritage forms identity and community: Cultural heritage can be a source of meaning and identity for individuals and indigenous community groups. With the support and commitment of the government in the form of policies, funding, and infrastructure, as well as positive responses from the community, appropriate adaptation to change, and commitment to building cultural resilience, Gambang Semarang can be preserved and developed in the long term, and continue to function as an essential part of the culture and identity of the community.

As stated (Floriana, 2018) in her article, the development of culture in society and a region's future economic development can significantly impact the country's economic growth. The preservation and promotion of Gambang Semarang can contribute to the development of culture and economic growth both in the city of Semarang itself and for

Indonesia as a whole. Cultural tourism driven by Gambang Semarang can generate income for local businesses, including hotels, restaurants, and souvenir shops. The creation of programs and workshops in the educational world related to Gambang Semarang can provide job opportunities and promote cultural entrepreneurship to the point where the main point regarding the recognition of Gambang Semarang as an intangible cultural heritage can improve the overall image of Semarang and Indonesia in order to attract international recognition and investment.

## CONCLUSION

Public awareness of the importance of culture is a significant factor in preserving the arts. A society aware of its cultural values will be more motivated to consciously carry out the preservation process and continue to develop over time. In addition to the community, the role of cultural institutions such as art studios and cultural communities is also needed, which play an essential role in preserving culture by practicing art, documenting ongoing art activities, researching and disseminating information or publishing about a culture that we want to continue to maintain. It is important to remember that cultural preservation is our shared responsibility. Every individual, community, and institution has a role in preserving and preserving the nation's culture.

The government's strategies for preserving a culture that has been running until now include 1) Preservation, 2) Development, 3) Utilization, and 4) Guidance. This strategy is implemented as a policy, funding process, provision of infrastructure, and cultural preservation programs, which are no less important. The government can work with the community and cultural institutions to preserve the culture. In this study, the role of the Semarang City government in preserving Gambang Semarang and making it the identity of Semarang can be seen from the various agendas that have been prepared around the study of Gambang Semarang, several

discussion groups about culture and how the recorded products of Gambang Semarang music are played in several public facilities and several places that are tourist destinations for tourists visiting Semarang City.

Not only through various art activities that adults can access, in this case, the Semarang City Culture and Tourism Office also reaches out to the world of education by including Gambang Semarang music material in learning in schools from elementary to junior high schools throughout the Semarang City area. This school's Gambang Semarang music learning program is planned to start in the new school year in mid-2024.

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