

LARAS IN GAMELAN MUSIC'S PLURALITY

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Abstract

Coercion, strife, contention, assault, and battle between individuals and groups today have never deserted from the news in mass media. The triggers are selfishness, feeling of self-righteous, overbearing, and a desire to be always comfortable and win, while neglecting differences had by one to another. It is pushed by unwillingness and inability to respect the differences as God's will and grace. Plurality as an inevitability cannot be ignored as well as rejected. Willy nilly, it has to be faced, accepted, and respected as it is. It also needs to be assembled in order to actualize harmony in togetherness as in diversity in the musical aspects of traditional Javanese karawitan in gending composition. This paper is a reflection result towards diversity in gending composition which raises beautiful musical alignment in order to reflect the plurality in life and to build harmony.

Keywords: laras; plurality; karawitan; gamelan

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, willingness and ability to appreciate and respect differences are strongly decreasing. Coercion, strife, contention, assault, and the battle between individuals and groups which are triggered by the selfishness, self-righteous, overbearing, wants to be always comfortable and win, while neglecting differences with others have never deserted from the news in mass media. Dissatisfaction over the law decision can end in strife and dissension. Security officers who are supposed to create a safe state for the people, even shooting one another instead of securing society just because of a small problem. Students of formal education institution as the next nation generation are often involved in fights between groups. Groups of people on be-

half of a particular belief seemed to be justified to attack another group and end up to have many casualties. Political nuances of particular religious ideology have become a covert movement that led to the imposition of the will towards homogeneity that refuses diversity. In addition to it, there are many other dreadful news that shows the spirit of hostility towards difference.

We need to take a look at the ancestral cultural heritage of the nation that has not completely disappeared from the records and memories. The ancestors had realized that diversity was natural reality given by God which was impossible to be rejected and avoided. Paku Buwana IV in the text of *Tembang Pangkur Wulangreh* said that:

*Sekar Pangkur kang winarna
Lelabuhan kang kanggo wong aurip*

*Ala lan becik puniku
Prayoga kawruhana
Adat waton punika dipun kadulu
Miwah ingkang tatakrama
Den kaesthi siyang ratri*

People as the superior human beings who have had thought and mind are having an obligation to *angrawuhi* or to understand differences, *ala lan becik* or bad and good, involving *adat waton* or human nature and habit with full manners in order to *mamayu hayuning bawana*, to maintain and enhance the degree of safety and beauty, and not to make excessive exploitation and even to destroy it.

The ancestors pass down *adi luhung* (wise) messages which are packaged in art works for us to respect diversity and create harmony. One of the artworks here is Javanese *karawitan*, the inherited traditional music of Java. From the point of view of materials, shapes, measurements, playing technique, nature and character, task, as well as musical function in Javanese *karawitan*, there are different *ricikan* and vocals. However, the difference is not creating disharmony. In fact, it creates a beautiful musical composition of Javanese *karawitan* which is well-known as *laras*. Learning from this Javanese *karawitan*, how beautiful it will be if every diversity aspect in this life is maintained in order to realize a beautiful and harmonious condition. This paper is an afterthought on how Javanese *karawitan* can be learned as the reflection of harmony in plurality. How is plurality in Javanese *karawitan* created in order to establish *laras*? This question will be briefly discussed in order to reveal and discover positive values in *laras* as the reflection sources in order to build harmony and diversity.

PLURALITY IN JAVANESE KARAWITAN

Plurality is derived from the word plural. It means more than one, compound, heterogenous (KBBI). A plurality means the situation where there are numerous people with much diversity, plu-

ralism, and heterogeneous (Echols & Shadily, 2010:435). Plurality is the reality of life. Millions of His creature are in different state. One of the type is human. Every human is different physically and psychically. Shape, measurement, skin colour, voice, walking style, talking style, hair type, and other physical aspects are different. For the non-physical aspects, such as: nature, desires, wants, needs, thoughts, beliefs, pleasures, abstinence, etc. are all different as well. Those differences are implicated to the diversity of human culture. Culture is a whole system of human ideas, actions, as well as art works which are obtained through the learning process. It is universally comprised of the aspects of language, knowledge system, social organization, technology, occupation, religion, as well as the arts. Each of the aspect is transformed into three forms of culture, there are (1) complexity of ideas and norms, (2) human activities, and also (3) human artefacts (Koentjaraningrat, 1980, p. 216).

Plurality is an inevitability in life. Therefore, whether it is agreed or not, the plurality has to be faced, accepted, and respected as it is. It is impossible for us to avoid or reject its existence. One way to maintain diversity is to build a country organization and form a governmental system which is open for participation from any parties in order to develop togetherness. Throughout the historical memory, there had never been a state or government was built without mankind's intervention. The appearance of Hindu or Buddhist religion in *Nusantara* (Indonesia and its colonization area) bequeathed a royal power system. In this region once stood Buddhist kingdom of Srivijaya and Majapahit Hindu as the first and the second *Nusantara* empire. The advent of Islam affected to the establishment of the kingdom of Demak and Mataram (Islam), and the presence of the European nation with the Christian gospel, built a system of the Dutch East Indies.

The collapse of Srivijaya provided lessons for Majapahit in maintaining its political sovereignty. Disintegration

triggered by differences in beliefs, anticipated by uniting the differences. Hinduism allows for the slaughter of animals for ritual ceremonies, while the Buddha forbid it. Hindus believe that the Buddha is an avatar (incarnation) of Vishnu as Krishna Vasudeva, while the Buddha Dharma does not teach it. Hinduism teaches that the highest essence is the Atma, while the Buddha is without *Aku (sabbe sangkhara anatta)*. Interestingly, although some aspects of the conflicting teachings, but bloodshed between community groups on behalf of Hindu and Buddhist had never been heard. Both also employ similarities in the teachings of certain aspects such as karma, that good works will reap the happiness and evil deeds will earn suffering. Both realized that the teachings of *dharm*a can not be limited by the ability of human thought. People may differ in perceiving *dharm*a, but there are no two conflicting truths. There is only one truth, which is the truth itself. Buddhist poet, Mpu Tantular, in his work entitled *Negara Kertagama* delivers a slogan *Shiva-Buddha Bhinneka Tunggal Ika Tanhana Dharma Mangrwa*, which means although Hindu and Buddhist are different, however, there are in one unity since there is no ambiguous truth.

Diversity in *Nusantara* today is legally recognized, however, its management has not yet fully capable of ensuring all components of the nation's independence in carrying out their respective belief. Reality shows that community groups on behalf of a particular belief is still free to do the will of the coercive action by violent means. They perform their action when they consider that they have found the appropriate momentum. This shows that acceptance, respect, and respect for the differences have not been fully internalized and implemented by all elements of the nation. Therefore, countries need to constantly maintain in order to ensure that all elements of diversity are truly free without threats, coercion, and violence. The values of tolerance, harmonious, respectful, mutual assistance, *mad-sinamadan*, *daya-dinayan* which are rooted in the national cul-

ture should be developed in order to live together in a diversity can be lived in harmony like the beautiful knit of diversity in musical composition Javanese *karawitan*.

Martopangrawit in his writing entitled *Pengetahuan Karawitan (the Knowledge of Karawitan)* delivers that *karawitan* is the art of voice either vocal or instrumental which employs *slendro* and *pelog laras* (Widodo, 2010, p. 172). *Karawitan* is also known as *Gamelan* music. In Indonesia, the term *Gamelan* is used to address to a set of musical instruments (*ricikan*) which comprises *ricikan* of metal, wood, leather, wire or string, bamboo, or a mixture of two or three materials in either *laras pelog* or *slendro*. Whereas, *karawitan* refers to its musical and cultural system (Supanggih, 2002:12). The *Gamelan* was also previously known by *mrdangga*, which means *kendang*. The term was changed to *merdangga*, then *mradangga*, and finally *pradangga*. Another synonym is *gangsa*, it is an acronym of *tembaga* (copper) and *rejasa* (white tin) as the materials to make bronze. Bronze itself is well-known as the best metal to make a blade, *pencon*, disc, and the other *ricikan* which are made of metal. *Ricikan Gamelan* can also be made of iron and brass, however, the quality is far behind the bronze. The combination of final syllable *tembaga* and *rejasa*, *gasa*, which is merged into *gangsa*, turns into another term for *gamelan*. *Gasa* also refers to the dose size composition of copper and *rejasa*. Further, the best comparison for the combination of copper and *rejasa* in order to make bronze as the material instrument of *Gamelan* is *tiga-sedasa* or three to ten. Three for the *rejasa* and ten for the chopper.

Material, type, shape, size, technique, play pattern, duties and musical functions of each *ricikan Gamelan* in Javanese *karawitan* are varied. Materials used to make *Gamelan* are: metal (bronze, iron, brass), wood, bamboo, leather, wire or string, as well as a combination between the previously mentioned materials. Metal made *ricikan* has various shape, there are: (1) *pencon*, it consists of two types: *pencon wadon* and *pencon lanang*, (2) *wilah* or bla-

de, it comprises of three types: *nggeger sapi* blade, *kruwingan* or *blimbingan*, and *nyigar penjalin*; (3) *piringan berpencu*; (4) bladderly *piringan* without *pincu*; (5) *ricikan* which shaped like a banana. *Nggeger Sapi* is a type of blade which shaped like a cow's back, *blimbingan* is a type of blade in which the surface is shaped like a star fruit, while *nyigar penjalin* shaped like split rattan.

Reckon made of wood, skin, and also wire also has a variety of shape and size, such as: cylinder, wood shells, membranous *bathokan*, stringed box, as well as a hollow bamboo. The size of each *ricikan* are varied depending on its name and type.

Every *ricikan gamelan* explained above is grouped according to the needs. *Gamelan* makers divided the *ricikan* into two groups, *pencon* and *wilah* in order to ease the production process as well as to determine the mold, size, type, dose, and the amount of material required. Other *ricikan* which are made of non-metallic materials are not taken into account because the manufacturing is done by other artists. Grouping is also made according to the playing technique, namely: *ricikan kosok* or stringed instrument which is *rebab*, *sebul* or wind instrument which is *suling*, plucked instrument which are *clempung* and *siter*, *kebuk* or *keplak* which is *kendang*, and percussion instruments which are *bonang penembung*, *bonang barung*, *bonang penerus*, *gendèr barung*, *gendèr penerus*, *slentem*, *demung*, *saron*, *peking*, *kenong*, *kethuk*, *kempyang*, *kempul*, *gong*, *kemanak*, *kecer*, *gambang*, *engkuk*, *kemong*, as well as *bedhug*.

Ricikan Gamelan classification is also done on the basis of duties and musical functions of the *gending* (Javanese songs or sounds) performance. There are two types: *ricikan pamurba* or the leader and *pamengku* or supporter. The task of *pamurba* is to lead the *gending*, whereas *pamengku* is to frame and follow the musical ideas which are given by *ricikan pamurba*. There are two types of *ricikan pamurba*, which are song *pamurba* which is *rebab* and *pamurba irama* that is *kendang*. Other *ricikan* that are having the task to lead the song are *bonang barung*, *gendèr barung*, *gendèr penerus*, *bonang ba-*

rung, *bonang penerus*, *gambang*, *clempung*, *siter*, *suling*, *slentem*, *demung*, *saron*, and *saron penerus*. Whereas, *ricikan* that are having the task to support the ryhtym are *kethuk*, *kempyang*, *kenong*, *kempul*, *gong*, *kecer*, dan *kemanak* (Martapangrawit, 1975, p. 3). Classification on the basis of the *ricikan* position that is closely related to the roles and level of difficulties in *gending* presentation are: (1) *ricikan ngajeng* (front *ricikan*). It consists of *rebab*, *gendèr barung*, *bonang barung*, and *pesindhèn*; (2) middle *ricikan* which consists of *slentem*, *demung*, *saron*, *saron penerus*, *gambang*, *kempul-gong*, *gérong*, *kenong*, *siter*; (3) *wingking* or back *ricikan* that consists of *bonang penerus*, *gendèr penerus*, *kethuk-kempyang*, and *suling*. It needs to be noted that this classification is not the fix arrangement or rule. It means that a *ricikan* can be moved to another group according to the purpose of the *karawitan* presentation. In *klenèngan*, *kempul* and *gong* are often categorized into *wingking* (back) group, however, in shadow puppet show, it is usually categorized into middle group. Fees and respect for the music players are central in determining the grouping type.

Supanggih (2002, p. 71) formulates the classification of *ricikan Gamelan* based on the musical role in *garap gending* (the performance). They are: (1) *ricikan balungan*, a group of *ricikan* in which the presentation is closed to *balungan gending*, it comprises *slentem*, *demung*, *saron*, *saron penerus*, and *bonang penembung*; (2) *ricikan garap*, a group of *ricikan* which plays *balungan gending* by interpreting, selecting, and implementing the technique of certain *céngkok* or *sekaran*, and *wilet* based on the character and purpose of the *gending* presentation. *Ricikan* which belongs to this group are *rebab*, *gendèr barung*, *gendèr penerus*, *bonang barung*, *bonang penerus*, *gambang*, *siter*, *clempung*, *suling*, and vocal (*sidhèn* dan *gérong*); (3) structural *ricikan*, a group of *ricikan* which the playing patterns are determined or determining the *gending* form. It comprises *kethuk*, *kenong*, *kempul*, *gong*, *engkuk*, *kemong*, *kemanak*, and *kecer*.

The next is playing technique. The

playing technique deals with how to produce the sound of *ricikan*. *Ricikan* playing techniques can be classified into two types, namely general and specific techniques. The general technique comprises the way to swipe, pluck, *menggebuk* or *mengeplak* (to beat the musical instrument hard), blew, and beat as well as the way to close it in order to get quality sound according to the character of each *ricikan*. Special techniques contained in certain *ricikan*, the group of *ricikan balungan* has both *genjotan* and *kecekan* techniques. In addition, *rebab* has *ngicrik*, *kadhhal menek*, *sendal pancing*, and *plurutan*. While *gendèr barung* has the techniques of *gugukan*, *genukan*, *samparan*, *sarugan*, *pipilan*, *umbaran*, *pethetan*, *mbalung*, *ukelan*, etc.

Furthermore, the playing pattern is also well-known as *céngkok*, *sekarang*, or *kembangan*. Almost all *ricikan gamelan* as its own playing pattern. The playing pattern in *ricikan balungan* are *pinjалан*, *imbалан*, *cacahan*, *kintilan*. In *bonang barung*, the playing pattern comprise *milah*, *pipilan*, *gembyangan*, *klenangan*, and *imbal-sekarang*. In *gendèr barung* are *putut gelut*, *putut semedi*, *jarik kawung*, *kacaryan*, *ora butuh*, *gantungan*, *ayu kuning*, *ela-elo*, *dua lolo*, *tumurun*, *dhebyang-dhebyung*, *nduduk*, *rambatan*, *ya suraka*, etc. The previous brief illustration merely shows that in terms of material, shape, size, technique, pattern games, duties and musical function, the *ricikan gamelan* in Javanese *karawitan* are very diverse. Such diversity is a unifier element of the alignment of musical compositions in Javanese *karawitan* musicality. The following shows the musical diversity of *karawitan* from *garap gending* (song arrangement) point of view.

Garap literally means to make or to do certain goods, rice fields, arithmetic, houses, and other construction materials (Perlman, 1993, p. 163). Conceptually, *garap* is a system of creative work which consists of several stages, each of which support each other to produce a particular result. Supanggih (2009:3-4) states that *garap* in Javanese *karawitan* employs several aspects, which are: (1) material, in a form

of *gending* and *balungan gending*; (2) *penggarap*, they are *pengrawit*, *pesinden*, and *wiraswara* (the music player, the singer and backing vocal); (3) the tool or medium, in a form of *gamelan* instrument; (4) the devices, it is the technique and vocabulary mastery, comprises of *céngkok*, *wiled*, *irama* and *laya*, *laras*, *pathêt*, as well as dynamic; (5) determinant, it is signs which can affect *garap*, such as the authority, the social function as well as art services; (6) consideration, it is the accidental circumstances which affect the presenter in deciding the *garap*, like the internal physical and psychological condition of presenters as well as the external condition, such as the audience and presentation purposes. Waridi (2000: 2) adds that the ruler, taste, money, functionality, forums, figure, environment, oral and communal nature can be a motivating factor in the emergence of alternative *garap* on Javanese *karawitan*.

This part will only show one element of *garap* in Javanese *karawitan*, which is *gending*. *Gending* or *karawitan* is the composition of material, object, or event to work on for the artists of Javanese *karawitan* to make it into a wonderful musical performance. *Laras*, rhythm and *laya*, the musical form (*form of gending*), and *pathêt* are the main aspects inside *gending*. It also needs to be known that each aspect has its own diversity aspect.

Laras in this context means tone and scale. As the scale, *laras* is a system of frequency setting and tone interval in *karawitan*. *Laras* containing a row of seven and five tones that form a circle, starting with a certain tone (basic) and ends with that very same tone in higher or lower *gembyangan* (octave). In *gamelan*, this system is divided into two: *sléndro* and *pélog* (Martopangrawit, 1975:5; Sutton, 1991:28; Hastanto, 2009:23; Kusnadi, 2006:111-113). *Sléndro* occupies five tones in one octave with the relatively same interval, more or less 240 cents (Hardjito, 2001). However, the numbers are not the standard size. It can be slightly reduced or increased. In the context of *embat* or the variety of interval structure (*jangkah*), in the tone and scale

that determine the nature and characteristics of *gamelan* instrument, those numbers can be slightly reduced or increased. Although it has five tones formally, however, every tone in *laras sléndro* can be increased or decreased up to half tone or *wilah*.

Pélog comprises seven tones in one scale (*gembyong*). The names and symbols are *panunggul* (1), *gulu* (2), *dhadha* (3), *pélog* (4), *lima* (5), *nem*(6), and *barang* (7). The pronunciation is the same as the tones in *sléndro*, which is to be pronounced *ji*, 2 *ro*, 3 *lu*, 4 *pat*, 5 *ma*, 6 *nem*, and 7 *pi*. In particular, for 7, it is not pronounced as *tu* but *pi* under ethical and aesthetical consideration. The tone 7 in *karawitan* can be followed by the tone 5,6, and 2. If 7 is pronounced *tu*, therefore, the combination pronunciations are *tu-ma*, *tu-nem*, and *tu-ro* respectively. *Tuma* is actually the *Javanese* word for lice while *turo* (*k*) is women's vagina. Therefore, in order to not to create negative impression, the tone 7 is pronounced *pi*.

Rhythm or *wirama* in *Javanese* term is another important musical element in *karawitan* besides *laras*. Martapangrawit (1975:1) states that rhythm is widening and narrowing *gatra* (line) with multiple or two ratios. The presentation *Javanese gending* itself can be done in a gradual or terraced tempo which creates distance consequences which is well-known as widen *sabetan balungan* or vice versa, so that, some of *ricikan* in the group of *garap* have to fill the gap by playing the instruments in two beats. The slower of *sabetan balungan* is played as a result of tempo gradation, the gap is also wider, and vice versa. The gap has to be filled with *ricikan* played in two beats (Supangah, 2007:76).

Javanese karawitan has five gradations of rhythm (*irama*), there are: *lancar*, *tanggung*, *dados*, *wiled*, and *rangkep*. Martopangrawit (1975:1) identifies the gradations on the basis of the numbers of sound *saron penerus* in every *sabetan balungan gending*. The slower one *sabetan balungan gending* leading to the another sound of *sabetan balungan gending*, *saron penerus* has space and time to multiply its beat, and vice versa. If at any *sabetan balungan*, *saron penerus*

is only "able" to play one beat, so that, the rhythm is called *lancar* (1/1). If the total beat is twice in each play, it is called *irama tanggung* (1/2). Further, if the total beat is four times in each play, it is called *irama dadi/ dados* (1/4). The last, if the total beat is eight times in each play, it is called *irama wiled*. In *Javanese karawitan* is also known *irama rangkep*, *laya* which is in certain *irama* is slowed. So that, in certain limitation, *saron penerus* keeps multiply its beat counts.

Most of *Javanese karawitan* musicians are often employed the term *irama siji* or I, *irama loro* or II, and *irama telu* or III. The substance of *irama siji* is equal to *irama lancar* and *tanggung*, *irama loro* is equal to *irama dados* and *wilet*, and *irama telu* is identical to *rangkep*. A certain *irama* is called *siji* if (started from the opening till the certain part of the music) it plays *irama lancar* to *tanggung*. It is called *irama II* if the music has already established (*dados*) and is placed in *irama dados* or *wiled* gradation. Lastly, if the rhythm is double, therefore, the gradation is called *irama telu* or III.

The term *laya* is borrowed from *Indian* music terminology to refer to the rhythm aspect which is closely related to the time or tempo of the *gending* (Supangah, 2002, p. 127). *Laya* is the speed *gending* in the same rhythm gradation. *Javanese karawitan* do not have an exact tempo measurement as in western music, as for using the metaphor *adante* (motion), *marche* (line up), or second unit size and metronome. The speed of *gending* is determined by the speed of *kendang*. *Javanese karawitan* musician is usually called the tempo of *gending* with the specific tem *tamban* or *alon*, *langsam*, *nglentreh* for the slow tempo, *sedheng* or medium tempo, and *seseg*, *cepat*, or fast tempo.

Each *kendang* player has their own habit in playing the *gending* tempo. The tempo is varied. There are fast, medium, and slow. The tempo can be influenced by internal factor, like, the condition of emotion, character, and capacity of the player. There are also external factors, for instance, the atmosphere around the venue, time of presentation, and the request of

the other parties. The unstable emotion of the *kendang* player can affect the tempo of *kendang* becomes unstable also, so does for the careless one, and if the *kendang* player is a newbie. The *gending* performance in a night fair tends to have fast tempo. It is different to the performance held in governmental place to the appreciation need. Request from the other parties to speed up or slow down the tempo of the musical performance has an obvious effect on the *laya* in *gending* performance.

Javanese *karawitan* musical compositions have a variety of forms. The meaning of shape in this case is similar to the shape in general music as well as language. Shape or the form of music is a set of tone that contains the rhythm, melody and structure. If the smallest unit of language is letter, then, the smallest unit of music is tone. The letters in the language arranged into words, words into phrases or sentences, sentences into paragraphs, and paragraphs into discourse, and the tone of the music arranged into patterns, motifs into phrases, phrases into a song. The letters in the language are arranged into words, words into phrases or sentences, sentences into paragraphs, and paragraphs into discourse, and the tones of the music are arranged into motifs, motifs into phrases, and phrases into a song. In Javanese *karawitan*, tones are arranged into *gatra*, *gatra* into *kenongan*, *kenongan* into *gongan*, and the arrangement of *gongan* into *gending*. *Kenongan* is a song sentence which is ended by *kenong*, *gongan*, and *gong*.

The form of *gending* has its own format and name. The large format of *gending* is called *gending ageng*, the medium one is called *gending sedheng*, and the small one is called *gending alit*. Format size of the *gending* is determined by the amount of *sabetan balungan* in each *gongan*. The greater the number of *sabetan balungan*, therefore, the *gending* format is bigger, and vice versa. The *gending* form is also determined or determining the play pattern of the structural *ricikan*. The rhythm pattern of the song is characterizing the *gending* form. Some of the *gending* form in Javanese *karawitan* are:

(1) *gending alit*, as follows: *sampak*, *srepeg*, *lancaran*, *gangsaran*, *ayak-ayak*, *kemuda*, *ketaawang*, *ladrang*, dan *jineman*; (2) *gending sedheng*, there are: *ketawang-gending* and *gending kethuk 2 kerep*; (3) *gending ageng*, it is *kethuk 2 arang*, *kethuk 4 kerep*, *kethuk 4 arang*, *kethuk 8 kerep* and *kethuk 16 kerep*; and (4) *gending pamijen* (Supanggah, 2009, p. 126).

The concept of *pathêt* in *karawitan* is interpreted variously by the experts, among them are as follows: (1) *pathêt* as the theory of tone *gong*, (2) *pathêt* as the melody theme development; (3) *pathêt* as the combination of contour, tone and position; (4) *pathêt* as the concept which concepts that manage the duties and functions of the tone; (5) *pathêt* which is related to *garap*; and (6) *pathêt* which is an atmospheric sense of *sèlèh*. Either *laras sléndro* or *pélog*, each has *gending* or musical composition, which are: (1) *laras sléndro*, *gending-gending pathêt nem*, *gending-gending pathêt sanga*, and *gending-gending pathêt manyura*; and (2) *laras pélog*, which is *gending-gending in pathêt lima*, *gending-gending in pathêt nem*, *bem*, or *nyamat*, and *gending-gending in pathêt barang*. *Gending-gending in laras sléndro* also have variants of *pathêt* which is called *miring* and is marked as *garap miring*. *Rebab* and vocal in certain parts of *gending* have to be increased a half *wilah*. Each *pathêt* in *gending* repertoire of either *laras sléndro* or *pélog* has different *garap* consequences.

LARAS AS BEAUTIFUL SENSE

Laras is a fundamental principle for Javanese people as a foundation and the intended direction in the act to achieve the perfect balance point. Javanese community uses it in the twelve context of usage implicitly and explicitly, there are: (1) *laras* in *samadi* or meditation; (2) *laras* in *klenèngan murya laras* and *mahas ing raras*; (3) *laras* in social intercommunication; (4) *laras* in *ginem raras bawa raos*; (5) *laras* in *panglaras* (moderator); (6) *laras* in *nglaras*, the beauty of nature and a relaxed art to loosen the nerve; (7) *laras* in *nglaras rasa*, a sense of inner processing to attain a higher degree of spiritual maturity; (8) *laras* as the name of a person, organization, and certain goods or

belongings based on the concept of *asma kinarya japa*; (9) *laras* as the scale designation of *sléndro* dan *pélog*; (10) *laras* refers to tones in *sléndro* and *pélog*; (11) *laras* in *nglaras gamelan*, the *laras* manufacture or repair in *gamelan*; (12) *laras* in *leres*, *rempeg*, and *laras* as the parameter to measure the sense quality of *karawitan* which is developed in *garap* and *gending* performance.

Laras in this context means the type of sense, atmosphere, conditon, or impression of beauty which is deep and touching and is arised after accomplishing a perfect balance point in a "pull and push" interaction (Suharto, 1992, p. 20-31). The balance illustration can be see from the swing movement in children swing, that is the extreme position in the outer pole will create balance after it is released naturally. A pole will be strongly moving back to its origin if another side of the outer pole is swinging strongly, so that the distance from the axis is becoming further (Syafie, 2011: 3-4).

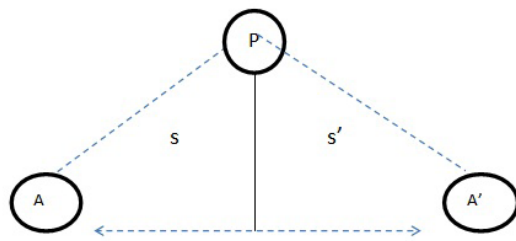


Figure 1. The illustration of balance in children's swing

Note:

P: Axis, A: The outer side of the pole 1, A': the outer side point 2,

S : The distance between the outer points,

S': Th distance side of the point 2.

Balance of the swing above can be used as a modality of two opposing nature or circumstances, large-small, healthy-ill, high-low, rich-poor, strong-weak, happy-sad, optimistic-pessimistic, satisfied-disappointed, stabil- unstable, fast-slow, hard-weak, sweet-bitter, and others. If the state at one pole of love, then *penyeimbangnya* grief, healthy *penyeimbangnya* sick, and so on. If the state at one pole is happy, then the balancing state is sad,

healthy with sick, and so on. It is necessary to find the balance point of two opposing circumstances, so that people will not easily *ngresula* or complain, *kaget* or surprised, and *gumun* or wonder, but, tough, calm, strong, and fair in experiencing any circumstances. *Ngono ya ngono ning aja ngono*, a Javanese idiom, it means that we have to be always act fair and proper, and not to be overreacting, or *sak madya*. *Urip sak madya* means to live our life based on its proportion and balance, not to be too ambitious. Another Javanese idiom to illustrate this is *aja rumangsa bisa ning bisoa rumangsa*. It means that there is no truth, goodness, excellence, strength, greatness, beauty, and absolute beauty. Another one is *bener ning ora pener* means that if something is true for one person, it does not mean that it is appropriate or suitable for another person or group (Endraswara, 2010, p. 49-51).

A situation can sometimes be turned into another state. It is in contrast with the condition which is currently happening. Therefore, we need to be conscious and alert or *éling lan waspada*. *Éling lan waspada* asks us to be cautious in every spoken word, act, and behavior in order to strong, stable, and not to be easily shaken when facing change in life. When people are not aware with the surrounding and also only depend on their *aji mumpung*, then, one day someone will receive the impact or punishment, *ngundhuh wohing pakarti*. *Aji* literally means weapon, while *mumpung* means when they are currently (Widodo, Suwadji, dkk, 2000, p. 526). Words following *mumpung* are: rich, powerful, beautiful, poor, low, etc. *Aji mumpung* means using the opportunity in order to get one's own benefit while one is rich, powerful, rich, beautiful, etc.

Supardi (2009, p. 93-95) says that *Gusti Ora Saré*, that God never sleeps, thus, *sapa nandur bakal ngundhuh*, whoever plants the trees, they will reap the harvest. *Sapa nyilih mbalekake*, whoever borrows someone's belonging, they have to return it. *Sapa nggawe bakal nganggo*, whoever makes they will uses it. Lastly, *sapa sing mbibiti ala wahyune bakal sirna*, that whoever does

something evil, they will lose their luck. Besides the idioms mentioned above, there are still other idioms that illustrate the importance of having a balance life, such as: *Sepi jroning rame* means in a lonely state, there is a crowd; *susah jroning bungah*, inside the sadness there is happiness; *peteng jroning padhang*, in every darkness, there is a light; *becik jroning ala*, there is goodness in every bad things. The meaning behind the revious explanation is that in every condition there will be always another condition. These conditions can happened alternately at anytime. Balance is *laras* determinants. It is a wonderful, deep, and thorough sense of intrinsic. The schematic illustration of the conception of *laras*, along with the forming elements as well as the factors causing the manifestation to happen, is presented in the following scheme:



Figure 3. *Laras*, the aspects, and factors that cause its manifestations

Note: 1 enak, 2 kepenak, 3 éndah, 4 betah, 5 adhem, 6 ayem, 7 sengsem, 6 tentrem, 9 merdika



Figure 4. *Laras* in mutual attraction interaction between two elements

Note: A and B are elements of mutual attraction

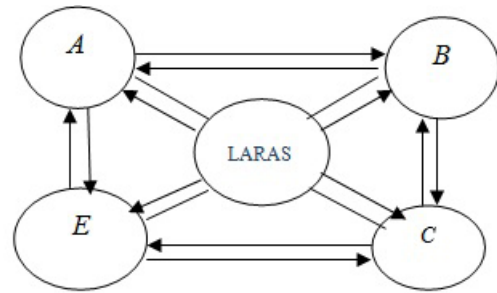


Figure 5. *Laras* in mutual attraction interaction between many elements

Note: A, B, C, and D are elements of mutual attraction

Common people often say that the sound of Javanese *gending* (songs) are less passionate and causing drowsiness. Statements are often given in negative connotation, that Javanese songs and sounds are no more than bedtime songs. However, for the people who love Javanese *karawitan*, they can feel the meaning of the songs and sounds wholeheartedly. The process of absorbing the meaning of the sounds and songs are best to be done while the eyes are closed. For the performers themselves, they often perform the Javanese *karawitan* while closing their eyes. They do it in order to feel the meaning behind the sounds. Further, in this state, they can concentrate to their performance better while attempting to also connect their instrument sounds with other aspects of the performance.

Buka is to start the *gending* performance by playing certain *ricikan* (instrument) or vocal. It needs to be responded by other *ricikan* (instruments) based on the desired *gending* composition. If the response towards *buka* is not appropriate to the desired *gending* composition, then, the performance will be ruined. The worst part is when *buka* is never responded, therefore, *gending* will never be performed. Musical interaction between *ricikan* and vocal as well as vocal and *ricikan* in Javanese *gending* performance is conducted almost during the whole performance. Certain musical code which is given by *kendang* player needs to be responded by *gong* or *ricikan*

balungan, and in another part needs to be responded by *ricikan* and vocal. Similarly, musical decoys from *rebab* needs to be responded by *gendèr barung*, the vocal musical code needs to be responded by *bonang barung*, etc. In order to make the musical interaction to run well, therefore, all performers need to have competence and full concentration along with the *gending* performance.

An offer to perform *gending garap sirep, udhar, seseg, mandheg, suwuk*, to move on to another *gending* which is pioneered by *kendang* also needs to be responded by all *ricikan* based on their own musical task. Because of the decoys are all musical, therefore, all of performers have to understand all the musical codes. By understanding and paying attention to each other while performing *gending*, thus, the musical interaction between performer will run well. If one of the performer does not pay their attention to the musical codes given, then, the musical interaction will be disturbed. Therefore, in performing *gending*, the performers have to give their full concentration to their own *ricikan* and vocal as well as to listen well to other plays in order to run the *gending* performance well. The concentration usually can be maintained while closing the eyes. This is when common people often misinterpret the situation by thinking that the performers are sleepy.

The performance of Javanese *gending* is conducted as if people are doing discussions with a considerable number of questions and answers. If the questions and answers in discussion are conducted verbally, then, in *karawitan* it employs the sounds of *ricikan* and vocal. If the questions in discussion are answered verbally by the presenters, then, the questions of musical code are answered musically by *ricikan* and vocal. Discussion can take place dynamically, beautifully, comfortably, happily, and fulfilling when the material quality and delivery of the questions and answers are done with mutual respect and appreciation, and so does with the *gending* performance. A beautiful musical dynamics will be built up when the musical in-

teraction can take place properly. In order to create a series of qualified questions and answers, all participants or those who attended the discussion need to concentrate, pay attention, and respect each other. Similarly, in the *gending* performance, all performers must concentrate, pay attention, and give respect, so that the decoys and musical responses can run properly.

CLOSING

The above explanation is aiming at showing that *gending* performance applies the value of respect, harmonious, mutual cooperation, *mad-sinamadandaya dinayan*, and togetherness. Each *ricikan* and vocal with its own character and musical task composes the musical composition of Javanese *karawitan*, so that, the musical sound of *gending* is created. If one of *ricikan* or vocal is not presented, therefore, the beauty of the musical composition will be reduced. On the other hand, the more types of *ricikan* and vocal are involved, then, the composition sound of Javanese *karawitan* will be more beautiful as well. When the *gending* is performed by one outstanding performer, then, the sound of *rebab* will be heard beautifully, and so does with *gendèr*. However, it needs to be noted that the sound of *rebab* and *gendèr* are different. It will be impossible to produce the same sounds of the two very different instruments. The tone can be the same, but the sound colours are different. Differences in *karawitan* are intentionally created in order to establish musical conformity. If natural plurality and Nusantara culture are assembled as in the musical composition of Javanese *karawitan*, then, the beauty of its composition will be amazingly beautiful, or in another word, *laras*.

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