

THE GALOMBANG OF INDONESIA: A CULTURAL DANCE TRANSITION IN PROCESS

GALOMBANG INDONESIA: PROSES TRANSISI TARIAN BUDAYA

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Abstract

The article is based on research towards realizing the first writer's PhD thesis on the subject of *Tarian Galombang Masyarakat Minangkabau: Kajian Kes di Kota Padang* (the Changing Galombang Dance of Minangkabau: Case of Kota Padang). The dance form is traditionally performed as an expressive medium in the investiture of a customary leader in Minangkabau society, as in respecting a *Penghulu*, a leader's family wedding, accompanying the act of customary bath rites, and *alek nagari*. Its execution involves upto 20 or more men performing the silat in a style referred to as *silek galombang*. This article investigates the changes in the dance choreography and function which seem to be bias to the succession into the form as medium for injecting interest in the tourism industri for the area. One very pertinent change is the inclusion of female dancers leading to process of changes in its creative form per movement, floor pattern, props as well as costumery and accessorizings. Yet the customary aesthetic symbolism of the dance form has been maintained in the process strengthening its position of cultural heritage. This paper seeks to enlighten readers on the textual and contextual impact of the changes that has occurred in the dance

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form pursuing the phenomenon in accordance with theory propounded by Maquet (1980) of art by destination and by metamorphosis and Soedarsono (1994) who has explained in general the concept of art form for tourism as minimum, not original, varied, non sacred and short in time execution of its performance.

Keywords: *Galombang*, Minangkabau, tourism industry.

Abstrak

Artikel ini adalah merupakan petikan dari Tesis Doktor Falsafah penulis pertama yang bertajuk: Tari Galombang di Era Perubahan Sosial Budaya Masyarakat Minangkabau: Kajian Kes di Kota Padang. Tari Galombang merupakan tari tradisional Minangkabau yang dipersembahkan sebagai tarian penyambutan tetamu dalam pelbagai upacara adat Minangkabau, seperti penobatan Penghulu (kepala suku), majlis perkahwinan, turun mandi, dan alek nagari. Iaitu ditarikan oleh sekitar 20 lelaki dengan bergaya pencak silat yang disebut juga silek galombang. Artikel menyiasat perubahan yang telah berlaku dalam koreografi tari tersebut dengan berlakunya fungsi terkini yang menekankan kepada bentuk itu sebagai satu daya tarikan pelancongan di Kota Padang. Perubahan yang amat ketara ialah penglibatan kaum wanita yang turut melibatkan proses perubahan kreativiti bentuk tarinya pada gerak, pola lantai, prop, kostum dan aksesori. Namun disebalik kreativiti baru tari galombang masih tetap menampilkan simbol-simbol estetika adat Minangkabau sehingga ianya kekal sebagai warisan leluhur budaya Minangkabau. Perubahan tari Galombang dari segi tekstual dan kontekstual merupakan impak daripada dunia pelancongan sesuai teori Maquet (1980) dan Soedarsono (1994). Maquet mengkategorikan 2 bentuk produksi seni iaitu 'art by destination' dan 'art by metamorfosis'. 'Art by destination' adalah tari Galombang asli, dan 'art by metamorfosis' adalah tari Galombang yang sudah berubah. Soedarsono pula menghuraikan konsep seni pelancongan adalah: bentuk mini, bentuk tiruan, penuh variasi, tidak sakral, dan singkat masa pelaksanaannya. Artikel akan mengenalpasti bentuk seperti yang dinyatakan oleh pendapat tersebut pada tari Galombang yang berkembang di Kota Padang.

Kata kunci: *Galombang*, Minangkabau, industri pelancongan.

Introduction

In Minangkabau matriarchal society that conforms to the *Adat Perpatih*, a proverb that goes by the saying *parik baga dalam nagari, tagak bakampuang, kampuang dibela* very aptly connotes the male youth of the society to those who chose to stay back in their villages in order to serve and protect their homeland. This proverb strengthen the choice of some male youths to not seek travel or adventure outside their fold which is the otherness of Minangkabau culture. The choice to remain as members within their society also mean that they must conform to the local leadership of the *Penghulu*, traditionally very revered and feared as their leader. The *Galombang* as a dance form has emerged as an expression of respect and reverence toward their *Penghulu*. Over the years the form has contributed to enhance and heighten the image of the *Penghulu* leadership. Its performance is a statement of public declaration of the legitimacy of the *Penghulu* as their social and customary leader.

The word *Galombang* in its daily understanding refers to the nature of the waves of the sea. Used as a dance form it refers to both the performance execution and the endless waves of invited guests patronising the *Penghulu*'s social function. In unison with the arrival of guests the dance serves as a welcoming and act of hospitality in ushering guests to their places. Likened to the provision of orderliness the dance has given rise to yet another proverb in the saying *samo naiek jo galombang, samo turun jo sipocong*⁴ (MID Jamal, 1982: 21), which also refers to the equally revered status of hosts and guests.

With its original predominantly male performers, the performance of dance was created from variations of *silat* movements choreographed to fit the rhythm, place and energy surrounding the purpose of performance. Its execution was to culminate in a fine unison of energetic dance dynamically carried out within a two row structure. Phrasing of the dance style is done in unison between the 20 odd dancers; together creating dance forms within format that include :

⁴ *samo naiek jo galombang, samo turun jo sipocong* – literally it means the waves (*galombang*) and the froth (*pocong*) above it rise and fall as one. Used as a proverb it gives a pictorial impression of guests coming in endless waves to honour their host whilst at the same time being continuously ushered in by the dance form of the *Galombang*.

- In two long rows facing the guests dancers stand erect and in slow measured movements poses with one leg in up position *tagak itiek*, bringing it slowly to the ground, and bows.
- In squatting pose and when tempo turns energetic, fast and loud, dancers execute a sharp jumping movement with effect of creating straight, crossed or curved lines in mid air. Movements formed may be created in movement sizes of large, medium or small dance effects.
- Regularly keeping the rhythm of movement of high and lows, strong and weak, straight and crossed or curved the dance form is like the waves one observe at sea.

The dance form of *Galombang* is a product of the Minangkabau social group of the western part of Sumatera, popularly known as Propinsi Sumatera Barat. This geographical significance is however lost in the inclusion of people of Minangkabau heritage to all of Sumatra (Mansoer, MD, 1970: 2). The form has evolved and prospered within Sumatra and outside Sumatra as long as there are communities of people from the Minangkabau origin. Within the area under study the form has grown in significance both as a tradition and as a creation.

The region of Kota Padang came about under the constitutional Indonesian law (No. 5/1979 and No. 17/1980). It comprises of 69896 sq. km. consisting of 11 *kecamatan*. Some *kecamatan* had earlier come under a bigger geo-political entiti of *kabupaten* like that of Kabupaten Padang Pariaman, which comprises of *kacamatan* of Nagari Pauh, Koto Tangah, Kuranji. Within its social milieu of Minangkabau origin the *Galombang* dance structure and format remained intact; but not for long.

The region of Kota Padang and the form of *Galombang* are going through a transition process in tune with the current world trend of urbanization. Within its wake is the changing elements of acculturation, diffusion, assimilation. The transition to urban life involves other factors of changing roles, changing lifestyles, organizational restructuring, changing cultural artifacts and symbolism. More importantly members of the society affected need to understand new meanings, new values within the urban framework (Evers & Korff, 2002: 354). The Minangkabau society in Kota Padang is no exception.

The knowledge that change augurs better living conditions can be seen being reflected in the *Galombang* dance form. Once the domain of Minangkabau men the form has since been enthusiastically embraced by Minangkabau women, giving rise to new creative trends suited to female representation. The old function of the dance as an expression of custom and tradition is given a new breath of freshness with choreographical restructuring enabling the form to open up to the requirement of the times as a mode of performance geared for tourism.

What was once a folk tradition stemming from the adage of *alam takambang jadi guru* wherein events and processes are weened from what society has held on to for centuries; the process of social, political and economic transformation of the current times and opening up of educational opportunities for everyone, offer new ideas yet changes made still conform to the socio-cultural context of the Minangkabau people. The Minangkabau social reality has accepted openly positive changes in tune with the philosophy to life they hold in the saying *Sakali aie gadang, sakali titian berubah* (each high tide, will create new steps). *Usang-usang dipaharui* (what is old need to be revitalized).

Changes occurring in terms of geographical and population composition are factors controlling the hybridity of cultural forms of Minangkabau people. Kota Padang, once only a small township of 33 sq. km, comprising of three *kecamatan*: West Padang, South Padang and East Padang (statistic 2006); has been exposed to Dutch influences in the era of colonization since 1800. Dutch rule has maintained local traditional elite society now referred to as Padang royalty (Mulyadi, 1994; Rusli Amran, 1981). These royalties going by the collective title of *angku* are however heterogenous in nature thus not creating any dominant cultural habits and customs of their own. They are also more preferring of the western form of entertainment embracing dance and music from the western tradition. It was easy to assimilate the western tradition of dance for the Minangkabau gentry are used to having their own version of dancing in pairs between man and woman with the *Minangkabau Gaya Melayu* dance as an act of recreation in their midst.

Galombang Dance as Minangkabau Customary Ritual

Traditional Minangkabau society adheres to the matrilineal sistem in the treatment of sons and daughters. Sons are encouraged to go out into the world to seek their fortune. To inculcate this from the age of seven mothers will not allow their sons to sleep in the family home but make them sleep at the village hall (*balai-balai*) with other sons of the community. The village hall, made of wood and very spacious, is provided for this specific purpose by the community. At the hall the sons of the community would be taught on the adat sistem during the day and art of self defense or *silat* in the night to equip them with enough knowledge to get by in the outside world. The village hall can also serve as the village *surau* for religious purposes. Village halls or *surau* would have a big open ground space called *sasaran* for *silat*, usually 8x8 meters. This provision of a base and informal learning methods prepares the village sons for adult life.

The space *sasaran silat* became the creative birthplace of the *Galombang* dance. Its form originated as styles of *silat* to give respect to the *silat* teachers and the village chieftain. Thus many styles emerged such as *Silek Galombang*, *Galombang Duo Baleh*, *Galombang Ragak*; and suchlike according to its choreography. *Silat* movement forms the basis of the *Galombang* dance. Naturally its dance form focuses on hand and leg positions, and terminologies of the dance movement emerged such as *kudo-kudo*, *gelek*, *siku-siku*, *ambek*, *tapuak* when referring to hand movements and *langkah duo*, *langkah tigo*, *langkah ampek* when referring to feet movements. The artistry of movement of the dance comes forth when executed by many performers dancing in unison. The *silat* movements need to be fast, precise, and Sharp, or, slow, calculated, and controlled. These characteristics when done while moving in an up, down, low or jumping moves and when executed in groups or processions as one unified movement forms a smooth flow of energy in waves, and thus the word *Galombang*, which simply means that, came about.

A. A. Navis in 1986 classified *Galombang* as a ritual dance performed for the installation of a chief or *Penghulu*. Important features of the performance is the formation of dancers in two rows led by an elder bearing the *aba-aba* or ceremonial flag. In accompaniment are music from membrano percussion calleed *telempong*, and wind called *puput batang*. The dance is composed of two groups – the heralding group who leads the chief in the procession and and the reception group

who awaits to receive them. The heralding group performs while the procession move to the reception area. At a distance of about 10 meters the reception dance group would commence their dance format in tandem with the heralding group. The research in 2007 was able to witness the same procedure in the dance as described by Navis. The place was Koto Tangah.

Galombang dance as a customary ritual in the installation of a chieftain has its social connotations. The extent and size of its performance shows the status of the chief as a *Penghulu Pucuk*. The dance is a symbolic acceptance and welcome of the people to their incoming chief. The dance form of *silat* movements when executed to perfection augurs well for the men and youth of the reception community for the *silat* form of the art of self defense is a required rite of passage for the sons of Minangkabau society. When their performance include deft handling of *keris* or knife while executing such moves like *ancang-ancang*, *kudo-kudo*, *langkah duo*, *langkah tigo* in the *pencak* it means they are willing to defend their community with their lives. The procession symbolizes the villagers protection of their chief. Yet other views also read the processional as a warning to the incoming chief to forget any bad thoughts or intentions he might be harbouring against them (Bahar Tanjung: Interview 17-2-2007).



Picture 1: The processional.



Picture 1: The heralding group.

Picture 1 & 2: The *Galombang* Receiving Group. (Source: MID Jamal, 1982/ Picture 1; Researcher Collection, 2008/ Picture 2).



Picture 3: *Silek Galombang* at Bukittinggi Occasion of Welcoming Athletes of Tour de Singkarak, 2013.

(Source : <http://www.baritominang.co.id/rombongan-atlit-pembalap-tds-salut-dengan-silek-galombang-panjang>), downloaded 31 Mei 2013.)

Galombang Evolves



Picture 4: The heralding group.



Picture 5: The reception group.

Picture 4 & 5: Galombang Performed by Females.
(Source: Nerosti Collection 1999).

Impetus from the Tourism Industry

The years 1960-1966 has been referred to as the “stepping stone” period for Indonesia’s involvement in the tourism industry. It was marked by the official opening of the first international level hotel in Jakarta, Hotel Indonesia, in August 1962 on the occasion of the Fourth Asian Games (www.bappenas.go.id). Since then all 27 provinces of Indonesia like Bali, Yogyakarta, Bandung, Medan, Padang, Sulawesi and others, became actively involved in this sector of the economy. In 1986 the Ministry of Tourism, Indonesia likened the phenomenon to a gold mine that must need be explored. Such was the impetus given and responded upon that soon this sector of the economy was the most vibrant for the country (Soedarsono, 1999: 16). The Governor of Sumatera Barat publicly announced that Sumatera Barat will emerge second after Bali as a major tourist region of Indonesia. The ruling committee was fully backed by Minangkabau businessmen all over Indonesia. Successful Minangkabauans based in Jakarta were very receptive to developing the infrastructure of their province of origin. They upheld the principle of *hidup banagari*. One such person was Nasrul Chas and his contribution was in reconstructing a *rumah gadang* at Payakumbuh in 1996, giving it the name of Minangkabau Cultural Centre (see Picture 6).

The *Rumah Gadang*, built on an outstretch of padilind with a designated area of 3 hectares, was completely furnished in the traditional style of the province. The middle area of the building proudly exhibits stately Minangkabau dias usually designated for leaders in customary rituals. There were also places for the traditional game of congkak and performance area for music and dance. The spaces around the Rumah Gadang comes equipped with sections for exhibiting local crafts like weaving, local foodstalls, and exhibits of utensils like *lesung* and *kincir* (footmill). In front of the Rumah Gadang is allocated ample space area for *medan nan bapaneh* as an open space specially constructed for performing arts and traditional games like *randai*, *sepak rago*, *main tali*, *pacu itik*, even showing *beruk memanjat kelapa* as monkeys were traditionally used to collect coconuts. (Nerosti,1998).



Picture 6: Rumah Gadang at Sungai Baringin Payakumbuh Sumatera Barat (Source: Nerosti, 1996).

Nasrul Chas is a Minangkabau in the hotel industry and he includes a trip to the Rumah Gadang for hotel guests. The rumah gadang management offers performance based on shows in Regular and Complete packages. On a daily basis tourists are charged US10.00, enabling them to get to see the inside of the house. Regular shows at a rate of US60.00 are put on every Saturday and Sunday with performances of music and dance and traditional games. Complete Shows is the ultimate package which also include customary rituals and performances such as wedding performances or customary bathing rituals with a feast called *makan bajamba* at the close of the performances for guests. Naturally the *Galombang* performance is presented at the start of the customary performance rituals. The complete package costs US110.00.



Picture 7: *Makan bajamba* (Source: Nerosti, 1996).

The three packages offered fulfill the concept of cultural tourism mentioned by Maquet as art by destination created by local communities, and art by metamorphosis refers to the art forms that has changed for a wider audience via tourism. Soedarsono (1994) expounded on five categories of art products that can be benefitted to tourism. They are best utilized in mini formats, with duplication and variation as well as non sacral and short in time framing per performance.

The objective of tourism attraction has taken up the reconstruction of Minangkabau culture and cultural pastimes in a big way. Another sample of individual contribution is that of Bustanil Arifin who contributed in the development of a *Pusat Dokumentasi Minangkabau* at Padangpanjang while he served as the Minister of *Koperasi* and *Kesejahteraan Rakyat* (*Menkokestra*).



Pictures 8: Pusat Dokumentasi Minangkabau at Padangpanjang (Source: Nerosti, 1996).



Pictures 9: Tourists from Malaysia in Minangkabau costumery having group photo in front of the Pusat Dokumentasi Minangkabau (Source: Nerosti, 1996).

Creative *Galombang* Dance and its Potential for the Tourism Industry

The *galombang* dance form presented to tourists and guests are a creative construct and greatly differs from the original version of the dance. A major difference is that the performers are now females. As such the masculine silat movements are no more proper as its main choreographed movement. Instead the urban lifestyle nurtures the artistic text of glamour, beauty and grace. The demand of tourism encourages the choreographer to follow current trends and creativity became more focussed on the audience taste as perceived. More and more the factor of acculturation via the art of *galombang* dance occur with contact between locals to the outside world.

Female dancers soon emerged as the icon favoured by the dance form. The writer found this new demand when she was serving as the entertainment sector of the *Tari Jurusan sendratasik UNP* between 2000 to 2004. Any requests made to facilitate special functions with the dance form would require that the dancers be beautiful and young. Such fulfillment is also rewarded with good monetary motivation from the hiring bodies. Damsar (2006:34) mentioned this stating that the monetary expression is not just reflective of the performers being females, young and pretty but also as reflective of the hiring bodies social, cultural and political status.



Picture 10: Tourist guides in *Tari Galombang* costume welcoming guests at Sikuai Island (Documentor: Johannes Bakhir, 2010)

Pretty female performers would be donned in the *anak daro* costumes of brides complete with head gear accessory and sequined clothes. True to the rich costumes the choreography of the dance has new variations suited to the dancers. *Tari Minangkabau* that is dominated by such performers has been categorized by Sal Murgiyanto as *Tari Minang Molek* (Nerosti: 2000) The dance form is feminine and graceful and is well received by the townfolks.



Picture 11: Creative Tari Galombang of Kota Padang (Documentor: Ainil Mardiah, 2010)



Picture 12: Creative Tari Galombang of Kota Padang (Documentor: Ainil Mardiah, 2010)

The Galombang creative performance can be described as such:

Dancers are composed of 5 groups, 4 male *silat* martial arts performers, 10 female Galombang dancers, 4 female *jamba* dancers, 4 female *tari piring* dancers, and 4 female executing the reception dance of *sekapur sirih* (see sample in picture 14).

Dances are accompanied by the music of *gendang* and *tasa* supported by percussion ensemble music of *talempong* dan wind instrument of *sarunai*.

As in a procession the choreography of the dance is executed first by the four female *sekapur sirih* dancers. This is followed by the four *silat* performers stationed behind the *sekapur sirih* dancers. The male dancers form two rows and execute the *pencak silat* dance movement in unison with the accompaniment of exclamations and clapping of the hands. As the *silat* dance exponents perform in unison exclamations of “ap...” and suchlike while executing clapping of the hands would be heard and seen. Using choreographed formats of three-stepping movements (*langkah satu, langkah duo, langkah tigo*), they would either move forward or turn to the accompaniment of hand gestures of *silat* in *menyiku* and *menusuk*, within the martial arts movement variations of *menyerang, menangkis, menyepak* and *menerjang*, before culminating in movement closure of *sambah* signifying paying homage to the honoured guests. The male *silat* exponents employs the sharp, precise and collected movements found in the original form of the *Silat Minangkabau*. The next wave of the dance formation would be the 10 female dancers, still keeping to the floor pattern of two rows, they would execute a supple arm movements to their left and right sides with slow and feminine movement of *tanang* and *simpie* while dancing on the spot. Then they proceed to move forward in fast small movements of *anak main, lapieh jarami*. and *lenggang karaie* (see picture 11 and 12). Behind them the four female *jamba* dancers would carry *jamba* trays on their heads moving gracefully to the music and proceeding to move towards the front of the whole group (see picture 13). While moving the dancers would move the *jamba* up and down, left and right as of creating movements of semi circles in the air with the tray. Directly behind them the next wave is composed of four female *piring* dancers. Their movements provide contrast to the *jamba* dance moves. Theirs’ is a dynamic and fast movement yet choreographed to harmonise with the rest.

Thus the *Galombang* dance is created with the variation of slow supple movements to fast sharp moves. The end of the row of dancers would be composed of the three female *carano* dancers replete with fine costumes fitted to the occasion bearing the *carano* containing *sekapur sirih* welcome for the guests.

Such dance format as described above, is a creation composed of female majority dancers. This dance format has become a tradition of Kota Padang in welcoming and receiving guests; and used in reception of tourist groups, VIP guests during wedding ceremonies, chieftains and presidential leaders included. With the dance is the characteristic of its professional choreographic style rendering an overall esthetic visual display of grace, power and pride (*genssi*) to the community presenting it.



Picture 13: Tari Galombang performed on the occasion of receiving the VVIP (Duli Yang Maha Mulia Raja Permaisuri Perak Darul Ridzuan Tuanku Bainun) on the occasion of Opening Ceremony of Muzium Pendidikan UPSI (2012). (Source: Nerosti 2012)



Picture 14: The dance motif of *Carano*, is a finale of the Galombang dance. (Source: Nerosti 2012)

Conclusion

The form started as a customary dance ritual for the Minangkabau “*penobatan penghulu*” (investiture of a chieftain) for which it serve as a symbol for recognition of one’s social status via the arts classified by Maquet (1980) as art by destination. However with the blooming of the tourism industry it was seen as a good potential to generate the form as a means of projecting the dynamism of Minangkabau society. Thus the *Tari Galombang* has evolved within the tourism industry to become art by metamorphosis, by virtue of conditions controlling its choreographic style to changes to reason of performance. The dance choreographer becomes an agent both for the creative process and social conditioning to facilitate the new functions of the dance form. Perhaps the most significant symbol in the dance is the replacement of the male icon to the female icon in the expression of the dance form; which in the performance reinstate the role of projecting women as customary custodians of Kota Padang’s Minangkabau society.

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