



Making Future of Bali: a leading destination for Medical Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Selonding is a part of Gamelan Tua, A rarely known musical instrument out of many Balinese gamelan. This sacred instrument can be found in several old villages in Karangasem regency, such as Bugbug, Prasi, Seraya, Tenganan Pegringsingan, Timbrah, Asak, Bungaya, Ngis, Bebandem, Besakih, Selat. However, some studies claimed that Gamelan Selonding today could only be seen in the Tenganan Pegringsingan and Bongaya villages. Selonding is the only type of iron-blade Balinese Gamelan. Low steel content on the iron ingot produces a softer sound texture than bronze gamelan, broadly used. The soft and rhythmic audio from Gamelan Selonding, according to the study, was said to reduce the elder's anxiety level from moderate to mild. Despite its high cultural value and vital for the Bali Aga ritual, low exposure and promotion about Selonding Gamelan were reasons for the low interest and concern of young people in Bali for their own culture. To promote Selonding among Balinese, various studies proposed many mediums to attract public interest, including the documentary film production about the ancient instruments, and introduce an android-based application to learn playing Gamelan Selonding from users' smartphones. Furthermore, today, *Sekaa* Selonding exists not only on Karangasem Regency but also in other parts of Bali since many Balinese youngsters outside Karangasem are interested in learning Gamelan Selonding.

Keywords: Gamelan, Selonding, Tenganan

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BACKGROUND

As one of the Balinese arts, *Balinese Gamelan* has distinguished characteristics compared to other Gamelan in Indonesia. It has a high-speed explosive playing pattern with dynamic characteristics in its song. According to the researcher, they classified Gamelan Bali based on their emergence period. Gamelan that emerged in the pre-Hindu-Javanese period (*Bali Aga*) was called *Gamelan Tua*, starting from the prehistoric period (2000 BC - VIII BC) to the reign of the ancient Balinese kings (IX XIV century). Then *Gamelan Madya* (XIV XIX Century) and *Gamelan Baru* (1846 to hitherto).¹ *Selonding* is a part of Gamelan Tua, A rarely known musical instrument out of many Balinese gamelan. This sacred instrument can be found in several old villages in Karangasem regency, such as Bugbug, Prasi, Seraya, Tenganan Pegringsingan, Timbrah, Asak, Bungaya, Ngis, Bebandem, Besakih, Selat. However, some studies claimed that Gamelan Selonding today could only be seen in the Tenganan Pegringsingan and

Bongaya villages.

Selonding has a vital role in their religious practice for the Indigenous community. They use these instruments to accompany their major religious ceremonies. As for the Bali Aga people who live in Tenganan Pegringsingan, the musical instrument accompanies *Abuang*, *Rejang*, and *Pandan War* (ASTI, 2000). Selonding is usually played to accompany sacred ceremonies with different types of *gending* (symphonies), such as *Gending Geguron* at sacred ceremonies, namely: *Ranggalatating*, *Kulkul Badung*, *Kebogerit*, *Blegude*, and *Ranggawuni*.² As time went by, the Gamelan Selonding faced the test of time. The number of instruments today has deteriorated, including its player. Albeit it has been introduced to the wider community, even international level, it seems the effort is inversely proportional to the low interest of the local to learn. Lack of information for the Balinese results in low interest and concern by youth to appreciate even preserve their heritage.

HOW IT WAS MADE

According to *Prekempa* manuscript, it was stated that gamelan were born from the sound of *Genta Pinara Pitu*, a true sound that comes from the voice of the universe (*bhuana*). It consists of seven voices, called *Sapta Suara*. These sounds include *Byomantara Gosa*, a voice from *akasa* (Sky). Then *Arnawa Srutti*, the sound from *Apah* (Water). Others are called *Agosa*, *Anugosa*, *Anumasika*. The last is *Bhuh Loko Srutti*, a voice from *Pertiwi* (Earth).³

These seven voices were then used as the sound principle, compiled by Bhagawan Wismakarma to invent *Dasa Suara*. *Dasa Suara*, or ten sounds later, inspired the invention of five notes scales. Five *Patut Pelog* scale as a symbol of *Sanghyang Panca Tirta*, and then five scales of *Patut Selendro* as the abode of *Sanghyang Hyang Panca Geni*. It is God's omnipotence that is manifested in a musical instrument which is now known as gamelan. Among the people of Tenganan Pegringsingan, gamelan Selonding is addressed as *Bhatara Bagus Selonding*. Selonding is allegedly



Figure 1. A Closer Look of Selonding's Blades⁴



Figure 2. Juru Gambel Selonding. To be a Juru Gambel, a person should master the Geguron song.⁸

derived from *Salon* and *Ning*, which means a holy place.

It was unknown when the instrument was invented and who its inventor was. According to the ancient Tenganan society, Gamelan Selonding was related to popular folklore passed down from generation to generation. The myth says that in ancient times, the people of Tenganan Pegringsingan heard a thunderous waving roar from the sky. The first wave of the sound descended in the Bungaya area, located northeast of Tenganan. Then a second sound wave came and descended on Tenganan Pegringsingan. After the mysterious roar disappeared, residents

found three iron blades at the point where the sound was thought to have fallen. The blades were then taken and developed as the inspiration of the Gamelan Selonding.⁵

The characteristics of gamelan in the eastern part of Bali differ from those in southern and northern Bali. It was due to the strong influence of Bali aga culture in the eastern region, in contrast to the southern and northern regions that were influenced by the Javanese culture. Balinese Gamelan, which the Javanese influenced, is made of bronze, while Selonding, an old instrument from east Bali, is made of iron. Selonding Gamelan is the only type of Balinese Gamelan whose blades are iron.

Some suspected there was a wooden-blade Selonding. However, its existence so far has not been found.

The iron blades installation on the instrument's body is placed with sufficient lock mechanisms without adding bamboo blades as resonant, unlike the bronze-blade gamelan, which is usually hung by a twisted rope on the gamelan's body. As for the Iron material to make Selonding blades, it is specially picked. The iron ingot with low steel content is the most suitable material for making Selonding's blade. It will result in a softer sound texture. In addition, the iron is not directly tuned through the forging process since it will significantly impact the texture and quality of the sound. Therefore, Selonding has a unique sound color compared to bronze gamelan which is generally used.⁶ The sound produced by this instrument is on the notes scale of the Pelog Sapta Suara.⁷

SELONDING AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS

Each gamelan has a different instrument, form, function, repertoire, and supporting artists. Each village has differences in the use of gamelan instruments which at least function as complements (providers of a religious atmosphere) and sometimes become the main element in the implementation of the ceremony.⁹ In Karangasem, Gamelan Selonding has various distinctive styles based on its supporting community's influence. Despite having the same name, the musical instrument in each ancient village has different characteristics, such as the *Selonding Bebandem* and *Selonding Tenganan*. The difference between these two types of Selonding can be seen from the instruments' number, tone composition, playing technique, and repertoire.

Forexample, In Tenganan Pegringsingan village, gamelan Selonding Pegringsingan consists of forty blades. Six instruments or *tungguh*, each containing four blades and two instruments containing eight blades. Meanwhile, data from the Bali Karawitan Conservatory Survey Team noted that the instrumentation of the Selonding Gamelan in Tenganan included two gongs, two *kempul*, a *peenem*, a *petuduh*, a *nyongyong alit*, and a *nyongyong ageng*.¹⁰

The characteristics of each gamelan can be identified through physical or visual observation and non-physical or audio observation. Gamelan selonding can be identified through physical observation based on its components and building indicators. The components and indicators are seen from the material, manufacturing process, instrumentation, tone composition, and playing technique. Generally, the Gamelan Selonding consists of blades, *pelawah* (instrument's body), and *likah* (hitting stick) components. The blade is made of iron, the *pelawah* is made of wood, and the *likah* is made of bronze, *seseh, uyung, kayu*.

From Audio observation, the types of songs that are usually played at ceremonies have different *patet* or functions, which can be grouped as *Gending Geguron* (sacred ceremonial songs) with symphonies named: *Ranggatating, Kulkul Badung, Patet Puja Semara, Kebogerit, Dewa, Blegude* for Closing Ceremony, and *Ranggawuni*, when *Bhatara Bagus Selonding* is returned to its shrine. Then the *Pategak* songs (before the ceremony started) consisted of a symphony called *Tabuh Sekar Gadung, Nyangnyangan, Rejang Gucek, Rejang Ileh*. The music that accompanies *Rejang* and *Kare-karean* or *Pandan war dances* consists of *Gending Rejang, Rejang Dauh Tukad, Duren Ijo, Lente, Embung Kelor - Kare-kare*. Furthermore, there are songs which are thought to have originated from the Gamelan Gambang namely *Pamungkah, Selambur, Kesumba, Pangus, Malat, Puh Raras Tanjung, Puh Orangkamal*.

Selonding's music is a piece of traditional Balinese music often used at *Manusa Yadnya* or *Dewa Yadnya* ceremonies. Its sound is a symbol of *Pranava*, a soul that breathes life to every being. The symphony has a soft rhythmic characteristic of Balinese instrumentals that can trigger a pensive and calm mood for its listener if they enjoy the music. The soft and rhythmic audio from Gamelan Selonding, according to the study, was said to reduce the anxiety level of the elderly from moderate to mild levels. The published study in the *Journal of Nursing and Health* 2020 said that the elderly anxiety level decreased or improved after being intervened with music. The body more easily accepts music with a regular

and calm rhythm. Light music rhythms provide movement of sound that can adjust the reception of waves to the ear. The calm atmosphere of this music will stimulate the five senses of hearing, which is transmitted by the thalamus to the limbic system. The sensation continued to the hippocampus, amygdala, then to the hypothalamus. As the main regulator of the endocrine system, the hypothalamus stimulates the release of endorphins and pineal hormones from the body. It reduces the production of epinephrine and cortisol from the adrenal glands. Regulation by these hormones resulted in calm and pleasant moods for the elder, thus resulting in a significant decrease in their anxiety level.¹¹

FIGHT FOR EXISTENCE

Selonding is vital for the traditional procession in the Bali Aga village (ancient Balinese village), Karangasem. Albeit most Balinese societies today use *Gamelan Kebyar*, a modern gamelan instrument, it turns out that ancient gamelan such as Gambang and Selonding are still utilized in every traditional procession in the old villages. The cultural continuity of the supporting community is the reason for the existence of the Selonding Gamelan in the Karangasem area.

With its distinctive sound, Selonding has accompanied *Rejang* dancers on

numerous *yadnya* ceremonies in old villages such as Tenganan, Bugbug, Asak and several villages in the eastern part of the island of Bali. Another uniqueness of the Selonding Gamelan is its limitations in the subject that plays it. Gamelan Selonding can only be played by the people of Tenganan Pegringsingan village, who are known as the *Juru Gambel*. This limitation aims to maintain the sacredness of the Selonding Gamelan. To be a *Juru Gambel*, a person should master the *Geguron* song, a sacred song used as the opening for every traditional ceremonial activity in the village of Tenganan Pegringsingan.¹²

Modernization, foreign culture invasion with its various things to offer are often accused as the cause of decreasing interest of younger generation in continuing their traditions and culture. In the perspective of *Juru Gambel* regeneration, low exposure and promotion about Selonding Gamelan were reasons for low interest and concern of young people in Bali for their own culture.

If traced back, Selonding was previously only studied by the people of the old village area in Karangasem. Today, it has been studied broadly by the Balinese people outside the Bali Aga village. It could be seen from the existence of *Sekaa Selonding Gumang* and *Selonding Parwati*. In the article written by Ekajaya Suputra, the *Sekaa Selonding Gumang* under the



Figure 3. A Set of Gamelan Kebyar.¹¹

train of I Wayan Sarya and I Ketut Tak, diligently practiced with a set of rented gamelan from Krama Purantara Ngis in Denpasar. They learn various symphonies; thus, later, they can perform as a symbol of *ngayah* (service) for ceremonial activities in the Bugbug Traditional Village.

The spirit of preservation was also sounded by Sekaa Selonding Parwati in Banjar Taman, Sanur Village, Denpasar. One of the art communities that invites young people to learn Selonding, founded in 2017 by I Wayan Merta in Banjar Taman, Sanur Village, Denpasar. Not only as a place to train, but Sekaa Selonding Parwati is also often asked to perform in ritual ceremonies, *Metatah*, *Dewa Yadnya*, and other ceremonies.¹³

Various studies offered different campaigns to spark local interest in learning Gamelan Selonding. Such a documentary film was represented at the *Usaba Sambah* ceremony in 2014 at Tenganan Pegringsingan Village. The film aimed to raise awareness for the general audience. Thus, they can witness the shape and hear the sound of the Gamelan Selonding. It was also expected to increase the spirit and tenacity of the Tenganan Pegringsingan's people in maintaining and preserving its cultural heritage.¹⁴ Furthermore, an Android-Based Gamelan Selonding application was introduced as an innovation to learn the musical instrument from a smartphone. The features provided by this application are in the form of virtual Selonding instruments, learning to play one of the basic selonding percussions, as well as tutorial videos on how to play the real Selonding instruments.¹⁵

CONCLUSION

Selonding is the only type of iron-blade Balinese Gamelan. Low steel content on

the iron ingot produces a softer sound texture than bronze gamelan, which is broadly used. The soft and rhythmic audio from Gamelan Selonding, according to the study, was said to reduce the elder's anxiety level from moderate to mild. Despite its high cultural value and vital for the Bali Aga ritual, low exposure and promotion about Selonding Gamelan were reasons for low interest and concern of young people in Bali for their own culture. To promote Selonding among Balinese, various studies proposed many mediums to attract public interest, including the production of documentary film about the ancient instruments, and introduce an android-based application to learn playing Gamelan Selonding from users' smartphones. Furthermore, today, *Sekaa Selonding* exists not only on Karangasem Regency but also in other parts of Bali since many Balinese youngsters outside Karangasem are interested in learning Gamelan Selonding.

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