



## Effect of Gamelan Selonding Commodification on Balinese Society



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Manuscript submitted: 18 February 2020, Manuscript revised: 27 March 2020, Accepted for publication: 09 April 2020

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### Keywords

Balinese;  
commodification;  
expression;  
gamelan;  
selonding;

### Abstract

This paper aimed at answering the challenge to understand, provide an interpretation of the empirical phenomenon combined with logic systems, and truth values. The writing mechanism is to analyze the described text, used as a starting point to find out and understand the effect of *gamelan selonding* commodification on Balinese society. *Gamelan selonding* is a set of gamelan instruments whose blades all shaped. The blade material is made of iron. It is often referred to as *gamelan selonding wesi*. The slats are hung above the *pelawah* [paddle] following a predetermined row of tones. It is developed empowering the potential tradition in the formulation of modern performance art expressions. It has given more space to Balinese artists to produce new nuanced products by empowering their traditional conditions. The efforts of creativity and innovation carried out, in many ways affect the way of viewing and understanding of the *gamelan selonding* so that commodification is inevitable. Commodification is an effort to search for artists to realize new works with the dimensions of space and time, oriented to the present aesthetic and enlightenment to answer future challenges. In the present context, *gamelan selonding* does not limit itself to solidarity and small scope but widened to a wider entity. The commodification concept of *gamelan selonding* does not mean that *selonding* is free from religious goals, but wants to place functionally undergoes rational processes under the reality that is being faced by society. Selonding creativity is not only directed at religious goals but more as commercial creativity.

International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities © 2020.

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## 1 Introduction

Gamelan Selonding is a traditional Balinese orchestra that has a gentle temperament, dominated by percussion instruments, with a *pelog tujuh nada*, classified into a *barungan alit*, and some areas in Bali are highly sacred by the people. It was generally played in a sitting position facing the instrument, to accompany religious ritual activities, having a common way to play it by beating. Gamelan Selonding is physically dominated by bladed instruments, the instrument's shape is the same, except that there are differences in the size and blades, the number of blades, and the sequence of the notes in each instrument. The tools become the unit of *selonding barungan*, include: 1) a *tunggu paenem*, 2) a *tunggu patuduh*, 3) a *tunggu nyongnyong ageng*, 4) a *tunggu nyongnyong alit*, 5) a *tunggu gong ageng*, 6) a *tunggu gong alit*, 7) a *tunggu kempul ageng*, and 8) a *tunggu kempul alit*.

Gamelan Selonding is one of the Balinese gamelan which has quite a lot of enthusiasts. In the performing arts arena, Bali Selonding is not a 'new thing' anymore. It is even often a concern for art activists. Empowerment occurs in the *gamelan selonding* is more triggered by the artist's creativity spirit. In the realm of social practices such as musical activities cannot be separated from various interests with specific goals.



Figure 1. Selonding commodification, physical form, and instrumentation

Selonding was helpless to face the increasingly complex onslaught of change and development. An interesting phenomenon is *gamelan selonding* adapts in a more flexible physical form, musicality, and function by empowering its traditional conditions, therefore, it's experienced commodification. Ideology and the creative process arise commodification, creativity, and innovation to produce new nuanced products, which in many ways affect viewing way and *gamelan selonding* understanding. This paper examined the effect of *gamelan selonding* commodification on Balinese society (Suarbawa *et al.*, 2016; Sarwono, & Lam, 2002; Tsutomu *et al.*, 1995; Tjokronegoro *et al.*, 2015). It should be acknowledged that modernization in the arts has increasingly

given a large space to the Balinese society, especially, to artists to empower their art accompanied by efforts to art creativity.

## 2 Materials and Methods

The method is studying a way to be able to understand the object. It is the target of the chosen science on considering its suitability with the object being subjected to the analysis (Koentjaraningrat, 1991). The method is a systematic way or steps to find the truth, the answers to the formulated problems in a study. This paper is methodologically designed using a qualitative approach. The discussion is adjusted to the paradigm of cultural studies. The qualitative approach according to Denzin & Lincoln (2009), found to answer the challenge to understand, provide an interpretation of the phenomenon of empirical combined with logic systems and truth values and applied social contexts. The qualitative approach is implemented to record the various results of observing information and data, observing various cultural events, and various activities that utilize *gamelan selonding*. The collected data is abstracted in an article to illustrate the effect of *gamelan selonding* commodification on Balinese society (Deutsch, 1979; Wall, 1996; McCauley, 1988; Yudiantini & Jones, 2015).

## 3 Results and Discussions

### 3.1 *Gamelan Selonding in global society dynamics*

The current of globalization is increasingly pressing and reaching the foundations of life, giving an unfavorable effect on the values of wisdom that have taken root in society. Efforts to maintain traditional values become a challenge in preserving culture, due to the effects of globalization cannot be avoided. Titib (1996) (in Triguna, 2000), stated globalization was marked by the loss of national or cultural boundaries of a nation. Modern Western culture will be easily absorbed by Eastern nations that are developing towards the modernization stage. The touch of global culture causes an imbalance or loss of orientation, society tends to be commercially oriented because money is used as a benchmark of life.

Piliang (2005), explained entering the third millennium, the globalization development and mass culture have shifted the existence of various local art forms, including traditional performing arts. Furthermore, Piliang (1999), mentioned the current globalization confronts various future panoramas that promise optimism. This optimism arises, because globalization can widen the cultural and artistic horizons, which now live in a global association, so that, opportunities for the various forms of creation, ideas, cultural and artistic ideas are richer, and more valuable to life itself.

Traditional art as a part of the culture is not immune to the effects of globalization. The existence of traditional art experiences various challenges and pressures, both from outside influences and from within. External pressure can be seen from the influence of various popular works of art and also more modern works of art. Meanwhile, as part of global civilization, it would be difficult for people to break away from the current cultural transformation. According to Geriya (2000), the consequence of cultural transformation is the shift in values that have a great effect on various aspects of life. The shift in culture and values distorts the mindset and behavior of the people which affects the artistic expression of its traditional arts.

### 3.2 *Selonding is welcome to change*

A change is a phenomenon that always colors the journey in the arts. Selonding as a cultural heritage and as one form of artistic expression, in a fairly long period, has undergone various changes. The changes experienced regarding the content, form, and presentation procedure is one way to make Selonding continue to survive and be able to meet the emotion of the social era. As an expression of traditional musical art, *gamelan selonding* is open to change. It can accept, absorb, and adjust to the current conditions that cause it to develop, and its functions become diverse.

It should be recognized that *gamelan selonding* has undergone changes and developments. Change and development in the global context is a form of cultural repositioning at empowering the potential of traditional arts in the formulation of modern performance art expressions. Selonding brings strengthening to traditional performing arts has shown the ability to adapt to the dynamics of society and the development of globalized life. The uniqueness of *gamelan selonding* is deeply based in the social midst is accepted as a local spectacle that has competitiveness amid global culture.

As a *barungan* owned by Balinese people, *gamelan selonding* is then developed. Its development is no longer in a religious social context, but as a musical medium with diverse functions outside the original context. Art activities with *gamelan selonding* media have shown more flexible characteristics. It is indicated the occurrence of a dynamic in interpreting the existence of *gamelan selonding* in adapting to developments.

### 3.3 Selonding Gamelan commodification

Commodification is a process refers to the organization and conceptualization of the production, distribution, and consumption of commodities (Fairlough, 1995). According to Piliang (2011), commodification is everything that tends to try looking for scientific legitimacy and market legitimacy, to become a world of images that are packaged in such a way as commodities. While commodification according to Barker (2014), is a process that is closely associated with capitalism where objects, qualities, and signs are converted into commodities. A commodity is understood as an item whose primary purpose for existence is to sell.

Burns (2013) opinion (in Sariada 2016), commodification is a change that uses elements of the original culture for the benefit of tourism, which is born due to the phenomenon of modification of various forms that have the whole idea of its structure to fulfill new functions. What is enjoyed for the tourists is something distinctive and authentic, including traditional ones. This will stimulate local people to maintain the typical and original to be exhibited to tourists. People often fabricate events that are presented as something traditional.

In the global era, commodities are not only limited to goods, services, and labor but extend to anything that is not properly commodified as a commodity, for the sake of capitalist needs, for example, education, culture, religion, body, desire, even death (Piliang, 2005). Human needs are increasingly complex, even exceeding human moral boundaries (hyperreality) so that the concept of commodity develops and changes.

*Gamelan selonding* commodification refers to Fairlough (1995), opinion, production is intended as an effort to transform cultural heritage at imitating the *gamelan selonding* form into a new form, the creativity of artists and *pande gamelan*. Distribution is the process of socializing the form and musicality of *gamelan selonding* with appropriate techniques, through certain events. Therefore, they arrive and are accepted by consumers. Meanwhile, the consumer is a person, group of people, traditional organizations or social groups who use the *gamelan selonding* as a medium in the arts.

### 3.4 Effect of commodification

The results of observations and studies of the *gamelan selonding* commodification on Balinese society have had quite complex effects, not only related to cultural changes but also to society's behavior and environment (Cole, 2007; Connell, 2013; Mitchell, 1998). Important effects arising are 1) preservation of cultural heritage; 2) strengthen Balinese cultural identity; 3) increase the artist's creativity; 4) presenting a moment of Balinese *gamelan selonding*; 5) Selonding as a tourist performance; and 6) new *barungan* types are created.

#### a) Preserving cultural heritage

The *gamelan selonding* commodification, whatever its form has become a powerful medium for strengthening the resilience of Balinese culture. Through *gamelan selonding* activities media, the cultural and cultural heritage is currently vibrantly competed with the development of other types of Balinese *gamelan*, so that Selonding can be preserved and created following the aesthetic social demands. Through the Selonding activity as a gamelan '*barungan alit*' which was previously less desirable and tends to be abandoned, is current increasingly noticed, interested even many who studied, both physically and musically.

The development of *sanggar* and *sekaa* that use *gamelan selonding* indicated more social members learning it. The results are used to participate in the religious rituals context. A sense of devotion accompanied by the intention of *ngayah* provides its enjoyment which is indirect as a form of spiritual charity. Establishing *gamelan selonding* in the context of religious ceremonies can provide appreciation and understanding of cultural values to society, especially, to the younger generation. The development and spread of *gamelan selonding* which is almost evenly distributed in all regions of Bali show the lively activity of *gamelan selonding*, in reality, has helped to strengthen the joints of artistic traditions in the preserving Balinese cultural heritage. The joints in question are the strengthening of traditional institutions in the form of *sekaa*, social solidarity through the *ngayah* tradition, and preserving Balinese musical art, one of which is *gamelan selonding*.

b) *Strengthening Balinese cultural identity*

Identity in the cultural context can be understood as a breakdown of cultural characteristics that is owned by a group of society whose limits we know when it is compared to the cultural characteristics of others. Burke (1970) in Liliwari (2003), explained to determine cultural identity is highly dependent on 'language' (language as an element of non-material culture), how language representation explains a reality of all identities detailed then compared.

Rutherford (1997) in Pilliang (2004), explained identity is a link that connects the socio-cultural values of the past to the present. Identity is an endeavor from the past, which shapes the present and maybe the future. Whereas in a social context, identity is something that is shared by a particular society or social group, which at the same time distinguishes them from other communities or groups. Various life activities characterize their identities such as in social life, cultural traditions, religion, and several other aspects.

Balinese society has a strong character when dealing with foreign cultures so that the existence of local culture can still be maintained. The ability of local culture to deal with outside cultures is what according to Magetsari (1996) is known as the *local genius*. The cultural resilience through artistic activities, it will become proud of its '*kebalian*' identity, when interacting with outside cultures.

*Gamelan Selonding* is a valuable work that is maintained to strengthen identity in the arts. *Gamelan selonding* is built, maintained, preserved, and developed to be applied in various aspects of life. It has the characteristics of tradition which is one form of Balinese culture. There are issues related to the identity of art, regional identity, and cultural identity. It is the artistic identity of the Karangasem region, and in a broader scope is one of the Balinese cultural identities.

As it is one form of Balinese art, *gamelan selonding* has its own identity to distinguish a *barungan* type from another type of *barungan Balinese gamelan*. Some characteristics of the tradition are to show their identity 1) *plawah* is not high, played in a sitting position at the bottom, 2) all the instruments are made of metal in the form of keys, 3) the barrel used is a *laras pelog tujuh nada*, and 4) the number of instruments is not more than eight *tungguh*. *Gamelan selonding* activity is one of the Balinese cultural expressions that has been passed down for generations. The patterns of presentation express the Balinese cultural identity, which is different from the presenting patterns of *gong kebyar*, *semara pagulingan*, *gender wayang*, and other types of Balinese gamelan.

c) *Enhancing artist creativity*

The *selonding gamelan* modification having an effect on culture, as well as, on Balinese society, especially on the creative artists. The fact shows the existence of *gamelan selonding* spreading throughout Bali, both as private property, belonging to *sekaa*, *sanggar*, *duwe pura*, *banjar*, and *desa adat*. Making *gamelan selonding* as a creative medium whose activities are not only in the context of the ritual but also have developed in the wider social sphere.

*Gamelan selonding* creativity with various dimensions began to grow and develop spur high aesthetic power so that it continues to develop over time. It's enthusiasts and players of all ages, from children, adolescents, adults, parents, and even women from adolescents to adults. The social attitude in viewing *gamelan selonding* activities began to change, tending to provide an appreciation of a presentation as well as emerging creative awareness of placing *Selonding* in a strategic position, especially its function in the context of religious rituals.

Many artists have created Selonding tones as an expression of freer creativity. In this context, it still conceptually treats Selonding as a source of the sound, but the search effort is explored through sound exploration which is slightly loose from its grip. The artists offer new nuances and breaths that are more individual, even the rules of tradition do not have to be taboo but rather something must be developed. In reality open spaces for more free movement in the creation of contemporary Selonding movements. The artists must be able to place their compositions in any form by paying attention to the connotation and implications of the elements processed in Selonding. Sedyawati & Damono (1983), stated creativity should not only be entrenched in modern works because innovation in the performing arts is the result of creation that responds to new phenomena. Thus, new works, variations of new styles, new themes can always be created within the limits of the acceptance of the rules, which can be felt by generally traditional supporters.

d) *Presenting creative Balinese gamelan selonding*

The emergence of Selonding as a form of performance art with 'its novelty' apparently had a positive effect on *selonding* development. As a *barungan* that is classified as old, the existence of Selonding is still recognized by society. Although it is still based on elements of tradition, the selection of new motives have been conducted, have given the impression. There is a structuring towards the fulfillment of aesthetic pleasure to be presented as a purely instrumental form.

*Selonding gending* [tones] is often an inspiration for artists in working on new creations in other *barungan*, which are quite numerous. Many *selonding gending* motifs that influence and even just adopted to produce creations nuanced contemporary. Even more interesting are the techniques and patterns of play originating from Selonding, which are now widely absorbed by musicians and composers to enrich and 'innovation' other Balinese gamelan playing techniques.

The instrument's function development from its original function as a conventional instrument towards multi-function, complex melodic melodies, dynamics, and varied song structures is certainly due to development of the composer's aesthetic value demands and also the aesthetic demands and demands of its supporters, in the dialectics is adapted to the development of values and times.



Figure 2. Presenting *selonding* in *gamelan* concert

It is very true what is often touted by Balinese musical experts. Balinese gamelan in its function as an art of spectacle is a performance that is not only pleasant to hear but also pleasant to see. This will require a gamelan player to be skilled in mastering playing techniques. Bandem (1993), stated a good idea without the mastery of techniques and solid skills, will not produce a good song composition. Conversely, mastering the technique will at least produce a composition that is pleasant to hear.

The above statement is quite ironic and intriguing because only with a solid technique and skill will produce a composition that is pleasant to hear, not a composition that is pleasing to the eye. In addition to a solid technique that also requires a steady appearance, to be able to display a composition that is pleasant to hear and also pleasing to the eye. This is one of the requirements that must be met as an art of viewing.

In 1990, the student's courage of ISI Denpasar as a prerequisite for the final project exam raised the uniqueness of Selonding, creating a work entitled *kembang pegringsingan*, was 'a new chapter' for the existence of the *selonding gamelan*. '*kembang pegringsingan*' is a new composition by adopting

unsettled motives found in Tenganan Pegringsingan Village. Existing motifs are developed as needed, and even integrated with motifs found in other gambelan, such as *gong luang* and *gambang* (Darmayasa, 1990).

As a performance art, the development experienced by *Selonding* is largely determined by the artist's role in terms of preservation, development, and originator of new ideas. The creativity development and increased creativity of Balinese artists, many gave arise to new forms. The emergence of dance and wayang accompanied by *selonding* had a broad effect on several activities that involved the role of *Selonding*, both organized by formal and informal institutions.

Present *Selonding* currently is a new chapter of the creative moment of the Balinese gamelan. A creative moment that then develops quickly gets a very enthusiastic welcome from society. On the more artistic arrangement of *Selonding* occupied a more dominant proportion, so it became a complete and independent form of performing art. It plays a flexible role following the circumstances and demands. The worldwide art approach through *Selonding* is a natural alternative in the Balinese context to save the young generation as a human resource for the nation's future.

#### e) *Selonding* as tourism show

Traditional art as a cultural expression is an inseparable part of the globalization dynamics. Contact with foreign cultures provides important input for the changes and developments in social values and perceptions. *Selonding* has an identity and uniqueness is also not immune from the influence of foreign cultures, especially the effect of tourism as an extension of that global culture. Therefore, to make adjustments on changes, developments are needed, that is still characterized by local identity.

Tourism is a social phenomenon, which involves humans, society, groups, organizations, culture, and so on. Tourism always brings together two or more different cultures, has differences in norms, values, beliefs, habits, and so on. Human or society encounters with different socio-cultural backgrounds will result in various processes of acculturation, domination, assimilation, adoption, and adaptation, related to intercultural relations (Pitana & Gayatri, 2005).

Tourism is one of the global cultural phenomena that can be seen as a system. It is essentially a human experience, something that is enjoyed, anticipated, and remembered throughout their life (Ardika, 2007). Tourism with the global cultural currents that cooperates with according to Hoed (2011), is a dominant factor triggering change and it cannot be denied that its presence can have a wide effect on changes in art.

*Selonding* as a touring show has a significant effect on its preservation, renewal, and development. Referring to Soedarsono (1999), tourism has a positive effect on the development of the performing arts, which is causing *revitalism* (new passion) in the arts. Actually what is experienced by the *gamelan selonding* is almost the same as other types of Balinese art. Tourism has a significant effect on changes in Balinese art, including the *gamelan selonding*, namely changes with the renewal of the elements of art owned, and the creation of new works that are still rooted in traditional roots.

Development should be observed is *gamelan selonding* commodification, which was introduced into the hotel by I Nyoman Partha Gunawan (late) since 1995, under the Guna Winangun studio. The hotel which is the venue for the inaugural stage is Amankila Hotel, Manggis, Karangasem, and until now the regular stage is scheduled every Wednesday and Saturday. It is important to note that the *selonding gamelan* began to enter the commercial realm as a tourism treat (Sudiarsa, 2013).

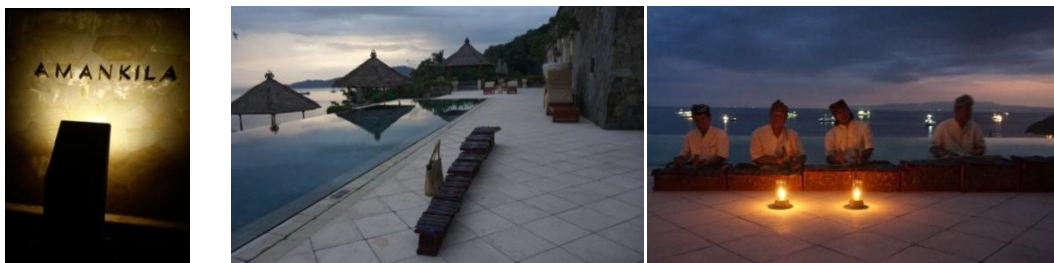


Figure 3. Presenting *selonding* at Amankila Hotel

Selonding is as a tourist performance refers to Soedarsono (1998), stated it has the following artistic characteristics 1) an original imitation, 2) a short or concise version, 3) omitted sacred, magical and symbolic values, 4) fully variety, 5) interestingly presented, and 6) cheap price for the size of a tourist pocket. Selonding, known as 'minimalist music' for tourism purposes, has characteristics.

f) *Created a new barungan type*

Discussing on gamelan, in Bali 2014 a new form of *barungan* was created by I Wayan Arik Wirawan, a prolific artist from Denpasar who was given the gamelan name 'Pesel', which began in 2011. It is a new era that presents the new face of Balinese music on combining two *barungan* different, namely *semara pagulingan* and *selonding gamelan*. Using old elements, both existing and newly excavated from various latest and saves.

It is no exaggeration to say, that the *barungan pesel* emergence seems to be able to revive the *barrel system*, *patet system*, and the *anchors* that we already have. *Barungan pesel* can also prove that Balinese gamelan has polyphonic characteristics, which according to Western experts are commonly classified into polyrhythmic music with a wealth of expression, dynamics, and tempo playing. It is an advantage and uniqueness that is owned by *gamelan pesel*, grouped into the Balinese gamelan 'new group' which still originates from itself.



Figure 4. *Barungan gamelan 'Pesel'*

Gamelan Pesel is not the result of a scientific problem or the result of a literature study based on reading sources, but rather a continuous appreciation and a personal appreciation who is always creative in the world of musical art. It is inevitable that musical activities in Bali, which are an integral part of 21<sup>st</sup> century art phenomena, are inseparable from the problems and turmoil they face, certainly with the hope of stimulating awareness and artistic creativity in Indonesia's cultural horizons.

Rogers (1986) (in Munandar, 1999), three internal conditions of the creative person are 1) openness to experience; 2) the ability to assess situations according to one's standard (*internal locus of evaluation*); and 3) the ability to experiment, play with concepts. People who have these three characteristics have excellent psychological health. This person can function fully, produce creative works, and live creatively. Three characteristics or conditions are also an internal press for creativity.

Creativity in its various dimensions develops and stretches to stimulate high aesthetic power so that the Balinese gamelan continues to develop over time. Creativity is all the characteristics and era symptoms that seem to succeed in a period. This issue is important to be raised because it forms the basis of traditional art interpretations. Traditional arts live because of the potential for creativity at all times, even though the form and results of creativity are often different, due to the element of cultural change in itself. Therefore, gamelan Pesel by Arik Wirawan is one of the newest Balinese gamelan barriers, which is a hallmark in the development of Balinese art today.

The gamelan Pesel emergence is a development and a form of renewal, which in quantity adds to the *gamelan selonding* treasury in enlivening the development of the musical world in Bali. It is an innovation resulting from the creativity of young artists with quite mature calculations. Its presence arguably can revive the work habits that have been outlined for a long period, of course, the hope is to enrich the creativity and musical nuances of *Balinese karawitan*.



## 4 Conclusion

Gamelan Selonding as a past legacy certainly not allowed to live as it is. Their creativity capital is every generation strives to actualize and give a new touch to the art they have. Especially, the artists who consciously, creatively, and selectively always try to provide new ideas as a fresh breeze that can encourage the rise of the past art to be passed on to the next generation and bring the art closer to the social development. The development of art and culture is a process. The concept of an art form not only refers horizontally but also leads to vertical development. This means that quality is also the goal. The stage of development and conditions experienced by Selonding are used as capital, so that commodification occurs. The commodification of *gamelan selonding*, it is hoped achieving quality goals will certainly be more open.

The *gamelan selonding* commodification is a clear manifestation of Balinese cultural openness. Commodification is the result of artistic creativity that tries to lift the value of tradition into something that is not static. Dynamizing the value of tradition into something flexible according to the progress demands. Cultural work will encounter difficulties if society is not creative about tradition. Tradition is not something that dies, it should be something that grows and develops the following life. The Balinese are indeed flexible in accepting elements of renewal. They always believe that everything can be processed to make something else. In everyday life, they judge that nothing can be stated to stop, everything has a process, everything moves. Its dynamics, the Balinese show greatness, togetherness, and excellence. Through the *gamelan selonding* commodification, togetherness, the meaning of harmony, balance, harmony, being lived out and practiced.

### *Acknowledgments*



We are grateful to two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on the earlier version of this paper.

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