
Upholding the existence of gamad dance art and educational programs: Cultural significances, challenges, and preservation efforts

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Abstract

This research aimed to describe and analyze the existence of Gamad dance art in Kota Mukomuko district, Mukomuko Regency, Bengkulu Province. It used qualitative research with data collection techniques consisting of interviews, observation, and documentation. The research object was the Gamad dance art in Mukomuko. The research site was at the Gamad art studio in Ujung Padang Village, Kota Mukomuko. The research showed that the Gamad dance performance had even fewer dancers. Some dances contained in the Gamad dance art were *Sempaya*, *Bergerak Kasih*, *Pinang* Island or *Payung* dance, *Cis Marilom*, *Sakora*, and others. The dance movements use Malay movements that are dominant in footwork, steps, hand swings, and *silat* movements. The costumes and make-up used by female dancers are *baju kurung* or long *kebaya*, *songket* skirts, headscarves, and beautiful make-up. The male costume uses a Malay suit with a side of *songket* cloth and a *peci*. Dance properties include scarves, handkerchiefs, umbrellas, and others. Per the host's request, the performance time is day or night. 2) Gamad dance art still exists in the community. 3) The community preserves the Mukomuko Gamad dance art, inviting its dance group to various events.

Keywords

Existence, Gamad Mukomuko dance art, presentation form

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Introduction

Art is an integral part of human life. It is born and exists within society because humans create it. Thus, the development and preservation of art fall under the responsibility of social groups that represent the culture's progress or decline. Glaveanu (2017) emphasized that art is inseparable from society, stating that art never stands apart from society. Art, an integral component of culture, a manifestation of its inherent creativity. Thus, art also creates, provides space for movement, maintains, transmits, and develops to create a new culture. Traditional art is born from emotional encouragement based on the outlook on life and the community's interests, which support it from generation to generation. The concept of art that develops in society relates to issues of expression, beauty, entertainment, communication, skills, neatness, refinement, and cleanliness (Kariuki, 2015). The existence of traditional art is a significant concern for artists, especially considering the various modern art forms present today. If people no longer consider traditional art essential and it ceases to function, it could lose its position in people's lives. Canclini (2014) stated that, considering the importance of traditional art in people's lives, issues related to conventional art will not be free from our shared responsibility as successors to a cultured nation. Thus, preservation efforts are needed to ensure that traditional art is not lost and continues to grow within the community.

One of the areas that has traditional arts is Mukomuko. Mukomuko is in Mukomuko Regency, Bengkulu Province, which borders West Sumatra Province. Some conventional arts in Mukomuko include the Gamad, Gandai, Dapeang, Badendang, Badiki, and others. Based on an interview with Joni Andodi (July 17, 2023), it was explained that the Mukomuko Gamad dance is a traditional art that contains a dance and music package with the theme of youth socializing, consisting of several Malay dances that use shawl or handkerchief properties with the accompaniment of *kecapi*, *ketipung* and reciprocal rhymes sung by musicians and sometimes by the dancers themselves internally.

Furthermore, Joni Andodi explained that one series of Mukomuko Gamad dance art could consist of several series of dances according to the needs and requests of the audience. In its performance as an art, Mukomuko Gamad art has several parts consisting of opening, content, and closing. Of all the parts in the Mukomuko Gamad art performance, the most anticipated part is the closing part, where, at the closing of the art, the *Sakora* dance is danced, which is a joke where the dancers are men who act like women and are dressed as amusing as possible. The *Sakora* dance, as the closing dance, uses large props made of cement paper and a frame of bamboo shaped like an elephant, butterfly, fish, or others. Later, properties like this elephant will surprise the audience by suddenly chasing the audience and inviting the audience to dance together. This is where the uniqueness of the Mukomuko Gamad dance art lies. Joni Andodi said that the origin of the Gamad dance art is an art inherited from Brunei Darussalam traders, which was then adopted as a traditional art of the Mukomuko community that has been passed down from ancient times, long before independence, until now. The creation of Gamad dance art and its authorship are uncertain. Joni Andodi himself is the 12th generation successor of the Gamad art dancers who preserve this traditional art and the founder of the first Gamad studio in Ujung Padang Village, Kota Mukomuko district. The Mukomuko Gamad dance art has a function for entertainment.

The Mukomuko Gamad dance used to be likened to buskers who came from house to house without an invitation. This art is performed explicitly during the second and third Eid each year. The Gamad dance used to be one of the complementary arts in a series of traditional wedding ceremonies, besides the Gandai and Badendang dances, which functioned as entertainment. Its role as a complement, indeed its position, is not too absolute in the traditional event that is carried out, meaning that without the art of Gamad dance, the traditional wedding event can still be carried out. Currently, Gamad dance is no longer performed on Eid. Gamad art is currently only performed in traditional ceremonies such as weddings, *akikah*, circumcisions, and celebrations of the anniversary of Mukomuko Regency or other events if invited. The audience is enthusiastic about enjoying this Gamad dance performance, as evidenced by the many residents who gather when this Gamad art is performed.

The duration of each performance cannot be ascertained because the audience's request determines the duration of the performance. Sometimes, the audience dances together with the dancers. Sedyawati (2002) stated that several dances are a means of social unity and do not recognize the difference between dancers and audience: young men and women dance together in the arena, such as in Malay jogged and Pajogeq dances (South Sulawesi). Therefore, the performance will continue if the audience or the host still asks for a dance. In the past, in traditional wedding ceremonies, Gamad art performances could last from 8 pm to 4 am. However, in its development, this Gamad art performance now only lasts until midnight due to the youth policy.

Along with the development of the times, more modern arts are growing and developing in people's lives, such as solo organs, which threaten traditional arts. Joni Andodi (interview, July 17) stated that Gamad art still exists in society, as evidenced by the many requests for performances from the community in traditional wedding events, requests for performances from the government in celebration of the anniversary of Mukomuko Regency, and various other events. Joni Andodi added that even during the coronavirus pandemic, some still ask for Gamad groups to provide entertainment in traditional wedding ceremonies. This indicates that the community holds this art in high regard and enjoys it.

Daryusti (2010) revealed that if traditional dance grows from the community's emotions, the dependence on dance's growth and development will continue. For this reason, the presence of the community as supporters of the arts and the artists themselves significantly influences the growth and development of the Mukomuko Gamad dance art. Aprideni Puspita (interview, July 11, 2023) stated that the community misses the performance of Gamad arts, particularly the *Sakora* dance, which serves as the closing performance. However, the obstacles in the last few years have been the business of the dancers and several other factors, so sometimes, many requests are not accepted. This means that the Mukomuko Gamad dance art has problems in terms of regeneration. The phenomenon demonstrates that the Mukomuko Gamad dance continues to thrive in the community, with great anticipation for its presence. For this reason, the preservation of Gamad arts is essential to maintain the existence of Gamad dance arts in the Kota Mukomuko district so that this traditional art continues to grow and develop among its supporting community and does not just disappear; immediate regeneration is needed.

Literature Review

Gamad dance is a traditional art form that holds significant cultural value in various regions of Indonesia, particularly in Bengkulu. Its unique movements and costumes characterize this dance, and it is often performed during cultural festivities and ceremonies. In Kota Mukomuko, the existence and practice of Gamad dance reflect the local community's heritage and identity, showcasing the interplay between tradition and modernity. Mukomuko has various art forms, including the Gandai dance, Palito dance, and Gamad art (Prasaja et al., 2024).

Historical context

The cultural influences that have shaped Mukomuko over the centuries have intertwined with the history of the Gamad dance. Historical accounts suggest that the dance originated from indigenous practices, later absorbing elements from Islamic and colonial influences. This blend has resulted in a distinctive form of Gamad that resonates with the local populace. Understanding this historical context is crucial for appreciating the dance's evolution and role in contemporary society. *Kecapi Sokora* is another example of traditional performing arts in Mukomuko, which has absorbed cultural assimilation from Gujarat/India (Parmidi & Muktadir, 2023).

Understanding this historical context is essential for appreciating the dance's evolution and significance in contemporary society. *Kecapi Sokora* is another example of traditional performing arts in Mukomuko that has similarly absorbed cultural influences, particularly from Gujarat, India. Such cultural assimilations highlight the dynamic nature of Mukomuko's artistic expressions, demonstrating how traditions evolve while still retaining their essence. This rich tapestry of history reinforces the importance of preserving these art forms, as they offer details about the region's past and continue to shape its cultural identity today.

Cultural significance

The Gamad dance serves as a form of entertainment and a medium for social cohesion within the Mukomuko community. It is often performed during critical events such as weddings, religious ceremonies, and community festivals (Barendregt, 2002). The dance acts as a vehicle for storytelling, conveying moral lessons and cultural values to younger generations. This aspect emphasizes the importance of preserving such art forms, which are integral to maintaining cultural identity and heritage. Gandai dance, for example, is always performed at wedding parties (timbang), and at state events such as welcoming essential guests who come to Mukomuko (Barendregt, 2002).

Additionally, the communal participation in Gamad dance fosters a sense of belonging and unity among residents, reinforcing social ties and shared cultural narratives. For instance, Gandai dance is consistently featured at wedding parties and state events, such as welcoming important guests to Mukomuko. These performances celebrate significant life milestones and

serve to honor the community's traditions, ensuring that they remain vibrant and relevant today.

Challenges and preservation efforts

Despite its cultural significance, Gamad dance faces challenges, including declining interest among the youth and competition from modern entertainment forms. Bengkulu's traditional arts gradually fade into obscurity. Efforts to preserve this art include community workshops, cultural festivals, and collaboration with local educational institutions. The government organizes festivals, performances, and educational programs to promote dances like the Andun dance, while schools incorporate them into extracurricular activities (La'biran, 2024). These initiatives aim to engage younger audiences and instill a sense of pride in their cultural heritage, ensuring that Gamad dance remains a vibrant part of Mukomuko's cultural landscape.

The existence of Gamad dance in Kota Mukomuko district is a testament to the rich cultural tapestry of Bengkulu Province. By examining its historical roots, cultural significance, and current challenges, it becomes evident that preserving this traditional art form is essential for the community's identity. Continued efforts to promote and revitalize Gamad dance will safeguard its legacy and enhance the cultural vibrancy of Mukomuko for future generations.

Methodology

This type of research is descriptive qualitative. The data collected are words and pictures, not numbers. Qualitative research intends to understand phenomena about perception, motivation, actions, and others holistically using description in words and language, in a specific natural context, and by utilizing natural methods (Moleong, 2006). The research instrument is the researcher himself and is assisted by supporting instruments such as cameras and stationery. The data collection techniques and tools are observation, interview, documentation, and literature review. The steps for analyzing data are data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and verification or conclusion (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

This research uses triangulation techniques to ensure the validity of the data obtained. According to Moleong (2006), the source triangulation technique can be achieved by comparing data obtained through different times and tools, namely: 1) Conducting a comparison between observation data and interview results 2) Comparing data on what informants say in public with what they say in private 3) Comparing what sources say when researchers conduct research over time 4) Comparing the circumstances and perspectives of people with various opinions and views of people, such as ordinary people, officials, and people with secondary or higher education 5) Comparing interview results with the contents of related documents.

Findings and Discussion

Presentation form of Gamad Mukomuko dance art

According to Jazuli (2008), traditional art is born, grows, and develops in a society; it is then passed down or inherited continuously from generation to generation. One of the

traditional arts of the Mukomuko community is Gamad dance art. Gamad dance art is a conventional Mukomuko art consisting of Malay dances accompanied by *kecapi* and *ketipung* musical instruments, and vocal songs containing *pantun*. The basis of the Mukomuko Gamad dance art movement is silat movements, Malay swaying and swaying movements, steps, and a combination of beautiful dance movements. The types of dances presented are traditional dances such as *Sempaya* dance, *Mak Inang* island, *Pinang shawl*, *Mak Inang*, *Cik Siting*, *Cis Marilom*, *Becerai Kasih*, *Mak Inang Kampai* island, *Wali-wali Gajah*, and *Sakora*.

The form of the Gamad dance performance is dancing several dances according to the request of the person invited to the audience. In the past, the form of the Gamad dance art used properties such as large elephants or large fish whose frames were made of bamboo and wrapped in cement cloth to resemble real animals. Two or more people carried the large property. There were properties, such as houses, that were lifted so that later, the dancers would come out of the houses and dance the dance requested by the audience. In the past, the Gamad dance art contained many amusing elements called jokes. These jokes originated from the amusing male dancers dressed as women, wearing women's *baju kurung* or *daster*, applying white rice powder and red lipstick, and covering their heads or necks with red scarves. The series of dances usually closed with the *Sakora* dance, and the elephant, controlled by a shawl, would suddenly attack the audience, which caused the audience to be hysterical.

However, the form of presentation of Gamad dance art was previously described only with stories or writings because the performers of Gamad dance art had no documentation. Gamad dance art used to have a unique form of performance, but over time, the form of presentation of this Gamad dance art changed due to several factors. Namely, the limited supporting equipment caused some dances to no longer exist.

Musdodi (interview, July 19, 2023) explained that Gamad dance art rarely or no longer uses properties such as elephants or big ones. This is because there are no funds to make these large properties. The lack of use of these properties has led to the discontinuation of several dances, including the *Sakora* dance. Around 2012, the *Sakora* dance last featured large properties. Even if there is a request from the public for the performance of the *Sakora* dance, we ask for a hefty fee for making the props, and the public cannot afford the price. Therefore, the dances performed in the Gamad dance art utilize simple props like scarves, handkerchiefs, and umbrellas.

Musdodi's explanation above is the cause of the change in the form of presentation of the Mukomuko Gamad dance art today. Today, the presentation of the Mukomuko Gamad dance remains the same in terms of movement and music. Namely, it is a series of dance movements accompanied by *kecapi* and *ketipung* music. Instruments and *pantun* vocal songs accompany the dance. Today, some of the most frequently performed dances include the *Sempaya* dance, the umbrella dance, the *Selendang Mak Inang* dance, the divorced love dance; occasionally, a plate dance is also featured.

Hendra (2018) revealed that the form of presentation is the entire form of presentation of a performance in which basic elements are arranged in such a way that they have high aesthetic value. Each component serves to support the others in a dance performance. The form of Gamad dance art presentation can be seen from the main elements, namely movement and supporting elements in the form of dancers, accompanying music, makeup and costumes, properties, time, and place of performance. In one series of Gamad dance art, there are several

dances: *Sempaya* dance, *Pinang* Island, *Cis Marilom*, *Sakora*, and others. The researchers examined the divorced love dance and the *Pinang* Island dance (umbrella dance) in this research. The form of performance of this Gamad dance art is a paired dance. The dancers in each performance are in even numbers, which can be 2, 4, 6, 8, or more, according to the request of the event owner. Based on the two dances in the Mukomuko Gamad dance art that the researchers studied, the dominant dance movement is the footwork of steps with swinging and swaying hands. The dance movements in this Gamad dance art are relatively easy to learn because there are few movement motifs. In the *Beverai Kasih* dance, there are four types of movements, namely 1) forward and backward step movements, 2) rotating step movements in place, 3) swinging the shawl left and right, and 4) forward and backward step movements. The four types of movements are repeated 4 times until the accompanying music is finished.

Furthermore, in the *Pinang* Island dance (umbrella dance), there are four types of movements, namely: 1) right and left side step movements, 2) umbrella movement 1, 3) right and left step movements, 2 (changing positions between male and female dancers), 4) umbrella movement 2. The four types are repeated until the accompanying music runs out. The accompanying music for the dance is traditional *Kecapi* and *Ketipung* music, and vocal accompaniment is in the form of *pantun* in the Mukomuko language. Only three musicians usually accompany the accompanying music in this Gamad dance art. The characteristic of the accompanying music for this Gamad dance art lies in the musicians' beautiful rhythm in the *Kecapi*. The lute's rhythm excites the audience, and they dance along with the dancers on stage.

The costumes and makeup used by the Gamad dancers are in the form of Malay clothing, namely:

1. Female dancers wear *baju kurung*/long kebaya, *songket* skirts, and headscarves. The makeup is simple.
2. Male dancers wear Malay clothing suits, using a side cloth as a *songket* and a *peci* as a head decoration. However, they often wear a white *koko* shirt and long black pants, a *peci* head covering, and a folded sarong on the shoulder.

The costumes and makeup above are used in the current performance of Gamad dance art. Traditionally, all Gamad dancers were men, dressed as women in *baju kurung* or *daster* and a head-covering scarf. These male dancers are decorated in such a way using white rice powder and red lipstick. As a result, the male dancers appear as women, creating a humorous impression during their performances.

In the past, the concept of this Gamad dance art contained jokes that functioned as entertainment. Furthermore, the properties used in the Mukomuko Gamad dance art are scarves, handkerchiefs, umbrellas, and plates. However, the dominant ones used in various dances in the Gamad dance art are scarves and handkerchiefs. In the past, other properties used were elephants, butterflies, and fish made from bamboo frames wrapped in cement paper to resemble giant animals. Two people carry this property, while a single shaman controls it. Later, with this vast property, the audience is suddenly attacked as if this animal is going berserk, making the audience enthusiastic. However, due to a lack of funds for maintenance, the large property has been unavailable for use in recent years. Musdodi (interview, July 19, 2023) said that the last time he saw and used the large property was in 2012. The time and place of the Gamad dance art performance are carried out day and night, depending on the event. Suppose the invitation to the Gamad dance performance is for entertainment to

complement a traditional wedding event. In that case, the Gamad dance performance is performed at night from 20.00 WIB until midnight and sometimes until dawn, according to the host's request. For other events, this Gamad dance is performed according to the requested time, either during the day or at night. The stage or stage often used is the arena stage, namely in the house's yard, whose floor is covered with a tarpaulin or a large carpet. In addition to the yard, the Gamad dance is also danced on a stage provided by the host or the event owner. Therefore, the event owner adjusts the time and place of the performance to suit the event, and the stage provided.

The existence of the Gamad dance in Kota Mukomuko district

The existence of dance in society is concerned with the growth and development of dance art. How does it survive, whether it develops and is accepted in society? The usefulness and function in people's lives also indicate its existence. Based on information from sources Musdodi and Joni Andodi, the Mukomuko Gamad dance art, primarily the Gamad art studio managed by Joni Andodi, still exists among the community as evidenced by the many requests for performances from the community but is constrained by the limited equipment and dancers supporting the art. Many other Gamad art studios exist in the Mukomuko Gamad dance art. According to information from Mrs. Yeni Murti, a member of the Mukomuko community who is currently starting to actively become a Gamad dance dancer who is a member of the Gamad Saiyo Community (interview, July 20, 2023), the Gamad dance art is currently very often performed to entertain the Mukomuko community in various traditional events, such as complementary entertainment for conventional wedding events, welcoming government guests, entertainment for big day celebrations, entertainment for government events, and other events. Even government officials often join in dancing with the dancers in the arena.

The existence of the Gamad dance art has increased recently. Usually, the dance art that exists as complementary traditional entertainment in wedding events is the Gandai dance; only a few from certain circles know the Gamad dance art. Young people primarily know the Gandai dance art, also referred to as Malam Bagandai, from attending various Mukomuko wedding events. However, Gamad dance art is no less popular among young people.

Efforts to preserve the Gamad Mukomuko dance art

Several preservation efforts have been made to maintain the existence of the Gamad dance art. Daryusti (2010) explained that in efforts to preserve the arts, it is inseparable from the local community's role, local choreographers and composers, supporters of the arts, including dancers, musicians, art elders, or art managers who manage the arts, and the government. Efforts to preserve the Gamad Mukomuko dance art are made by those mentioned above.

Community, the Mukomuko community has actively engaged in preservation efforts for Gamad dance art by frequently inviting local dance groups to perform at significant events. These occasions include weddings, circumcisions, and community festivals, where the dance serves as entertainment and a vital expression of cultural identity. By incorporating Gamad

dance into these celebrations, the community fosters a deeper appreciation for its traditions, ensuring that younger generations and newcomers experience this vibrant art form. This practice reinforces social bonds within the community and highlights the importance of cultural heritage, making Gamad dance an integral part of Mukomuko's social fabric. The community demonstrates its commitment to keeping the tradition alive and relevant in contemporary society through these consistent performances.

Artists are all parties involved in an art performance, including dance elders, dancers, musicians, choreographers, and composers. One of the efforts was by the Gamad art studio in Ujung Padang Village, chaired by Joni Andodi. This studio regenerates dancers and musicians of the Gamad dance art. Specifically, the studio recruits dancers and musicians from young people, particularly schoolchildren. Regeneration is carried out by opening registration for anyone who wants to join the studio. Joni Andodi does routine practice twice a week. All trainers are former members of the Gamad art studio and belong to Joni Andodi's extended family. He emphasized (interview, July 17, 2023) that the dances taught are original, traditional movements without changing the old ones. The Gamad Ujung Padang art studio has made innovations in more attractive costumes and make-up, namely, using more contemporary dance costumes to look fresh and not dull. Joni Andodi also added (interview, July 17, 2023) that recruiting school children will invite more enthusiastic interest from parents. Because parents like to see their children perform, the public demand for the appearance of Gamad dance art will increase. With the availability of dancers from children, it will also give a new color in the form of choices for the host who wants to invite a Gamad dance performance, because they can choose whether the host wants to ask a junior dancer group (children) or a senior group (old dancers).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the analysis of Gamad dance art, it is evident that this traditional performance embodies a rich cultural heritage characterized by its paired dance format. The even number of dancers—whether 2, 4, 6, or more—enhances the performance's visual harmony, promoting participants' cooperation. Various forms of Gamad dance, including the *Sempaya* dance, *Pinang* Island dance, *Cis Marilom* dance, and *Sakora* dance, showcase the diversity within this art form, each adding unique narratives and cultural significance. The movements in Gamad dance are rooted in simplicity, predominantly featuring Malay footwork, hand swings, and *silat*-inspired motions that make the dance accessible and engaging for both dancers and audiences. The repetitive nature of the movements reinforces the dance's rhythm and helps convey its thematic elements effectively.

Costuming plays a crucial role in the visual appeal of the performance, with female dancers donning traditional *baju kurung* or *kebaya* paired with *songket* skirts and hijabs. In contrast, male dancers are attired in Malay suits complemented by *songket* cloth and caps. This attention to traditional attire enhances the aesthetic quality of the performance and serves as a testament to the cultural identity of the Mukomuko community. Performance settings are flexible, accommodating daytime and nighttime events, allowing for various celebratory contexts, from intimate gatherings to larger public festivities. The use of props like scarves,

handkerchiefs, umbrellas, and traditional animal icons enriches the performance, adding layers of symbolism and engagement.

In conclusion, Gamad dance art is not merely a performance but a vibrant expression of cultural identity that encapsulates the historical and social fabric of Mukomuko. Its preservation and promotion are essential for sustaining the community's cultural heritage, encouraging a sense of pride among the younger generation, and ensuring that this traditional art form continues to thrive in an increasingly modern world. Future efforts should focus on encouraging participation, enhancing visibility, and integrating Gamad dance into educational programs to ensure its legacy endures for generations to come.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Use of AI Statement

The authors declared that they had not used any AI tools in their manuscript preparation and submission.

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