



INTERACTION OF FINE ARTS AND MUSICAL ARTS ON GONG INSTRUMENTS IN TRADITIONAL GAMELAN

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Abstract

Gong can be interpreted as a musical instrument made of bronze or other metal and has a flat round shape which is played by hitting it with a beater or percussion instrument (Javanese) in the pencu or middle part. This article discusses the interaction between fine arts and musical arts on the gong instrument in traditional gamelan. Gong, as one of the main instruments in gamelan, not only has a musical function but also stores rich visual beauty. This article aims to examine the beauty of the gong's form, including the ornamentation depicting the dragon, and how this visual beauty contributes to the musical experience produced when the gong is struck. The method used is a qualitative approach, the results of the study show that the beauty of the gong lies not only in its physical form, but also in the sound produced, which creates harmony between the visual and auditory. This article is expected to provide new insights into the importance of interaction between visual arts and musical arts in the context of traditional culture. In the context of gamelan, the gong composition form refers to a musical structure that is organized based on the use of gongs as markers of musical cycles or phrases. Gongs function to regulate rhythm, harmony and dynamics in traditional gamelan music, especially in marking gongan, which is a cycle or pattern of repeated melodies.

Keywords: *Gong, fine arts, musical arts, gamelan, beauty*

INTRODUCTION

Gong is a traditional musical instrument that has been rooted in the lives of most people in Indonesia and its existence has begun since the development of bronze culture (Wiyati et al., 2023). Gong can be interpreted as a musical instrument made of bronze or other metal and shaped like a flat circle that is played by hitting it using a beater or tabuh (Javanese) on the

pencu or center. Gamelan, which originates from Java and Bali, has instruments that are rich in aesthetic and musical value. One of the most striking instruments in gamelan is the gong. Gong not only functions as a musical instrument, but also as an art object that has a deep visual beauty. Gong has the largest size among other gamelan instruments, in the composition of gamelan there are actually several pieces with different sizes and

tones. The largest size is about 1m or more in diameter. The largest size is so that the gong can produce a big sound.

The beauty of gongs is often marked by intricate ornaments, such as dragon carvings that symbolize strength and elegance. (Kusrianto, 2024) However, although gongs have high aesthetic value, there is often a gap between what is idealized in fine art and the reality that exists in musical practice. This article aims to bridge this gap by exploring how the visual beauty of the gong contributes to the musical experience. Gamelan music serves not only as entertainment, but also as a means to convey the cultural and spiritual values of Javanese society.

The visual aspect of gamelan instruments, such as gongs, has received less attention in music studies, even though it has a significant contribution to the overall artistic experience. A similar study was conducted by (Sri Wiyati et al., 2023) entitled *Gong in Community Culture in Indonesia*, using library research methods and supported by interview and observation data. The focus of the discussion, gong can be interpreted as a musical instrument made of bronze or other metal and shaped like a flat circle that is played by hitting it using a beater or *tabuh* (Javanese) on the *pencu* or middle part. Furthermore, there is a study by Supriyadi (2020) entitled "The function of ornaments on gamelan instruments", through a qualitative analysis method, which emphasizes the interpretation of symbols and cultural aesthetics in gamelan. The focus of the discussion shows that the ornaments on gamelan instruments function not only as decoration but also as cultural symbols. In addition, research by Rahardjo (2021) entitled "The Importance of Sound in Creating Artistic Experiences", through autoethnographic methods. With a focus on emphasizing the importance of sound in creating a holistic artistic experience. This article will continue the discussion by focusing on the gong as a meeting point between fine arts and music. The

preservation of traditional arts is regulated in various articles related to culture, such as Law No. 5 of 2017 concerning the Advancement of Culture, which emphasizes the importance of maintaining and preserving cultural heritage. This article attempts to document and highlight the visual aesthetic value of gamelan instruments, especially gongs, as part of an effort to holistically preserve Javanese culture.

This article is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the interaction between visual arts and musical arts in the context of traditional culture, especially through the gong instrument in gamelan. Through this research, it is also expected to open new insights regarding the importance of maintaining and preserving the aesthetic and philosophical values contained in gamelan as a cultural heritage of the nation. In addition, this research has benefits as a reference for further studies that focus on the relationship between visual and musical elements in traditional arts, as well as being a reference for efforts to preserve and develop gamelan as an integral part of the rich Indonesian culture. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between fine arts and musical arts as reflected in the gong instrument as part of the gamelan ensemble. Specifically, this article aims to examine how the visual elements of the gong, such as shape, carving, and color, not only have aesthetic value, but also become an integral part in creating a musical atmosphere and adding dimensions of experience for listeners and gamelan players. This article also attempts to reveal the role of gong as a rhythm determinant in gamelan music composition, while highlighting the interaction between visual and sound aspects in forming a rich cultural harmony. In addition, this article invites readers to understand how this interaction reflects beauty and philosophy in the context of Javanese or Balinese culture that gave birth to gamelan.

METHOD

This article uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method as a data collection technique. According to (Sulistiyo & others, 2023), qualitative research has the characteristics of a natural setting (conditions as they are), focusing on descriptions, researchers as the main research tool, purposive sampling, meaning as the main concern of the research, and so on. The main data sources are scientific journals, books, and related literature that discuss the interaction of fine arts and music, especially on gong instruments in the context of traditional gamelan, by referring to these sources, researchers can build a strong conceptual foundation and gain diverse perspectives on the interaction of fine arts and music.

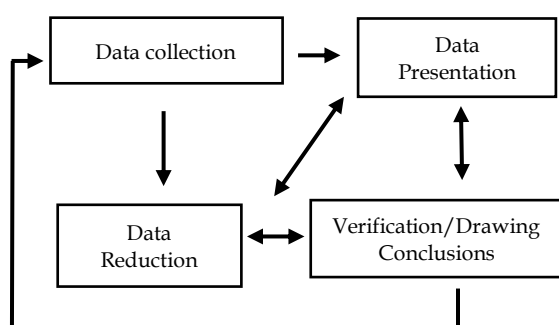


Figure 1: Interactive Data Analysis Model

According to Sugiyono (2015: 308) data collection techniques are the most important step in research, because the main purpose of research is to obtain data. Without knowing the data collection techniques, the author will not obtain data that meets the established data standards. Second, data reduction is a summary or selecting things that are considered important so that they can provide a clearer picture and make it easier for researchers to collect further data, so as not to complicate the subsequent data analysis process. Third, data presentation, namely after the results of data reduction that have been arranged, data display in qualitative research can be done in the form of tables, graphs, pie chart, pictograms and the like. The presentation of the data, then the data is organized, arranged in a

relationship pattern, so that it is easy to understand. Fourth, drawing conclusions or verification is the third step in qualitative data analysis. The conclusions obtained are still temporary, and it is possible that they will change if no strong evidence is found, and which supports the next stage of data collection. In qualitative research, conclusions can answer the problem formulation that the researcher will formulate from the start, but may also not be able to answer the problem formulation, because as has been stated, the problems and problem formulation in qualitative research are still temporary and will develop after the researcher is in the field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gong is the largest gamelan instrument, and its size is determined based on the diameter which in the gamelan makers in Surakarta is called a roundabout. Tracing the history of the distribution of gongs certainly requires special research and a lot of time. However, several studies by experts on the history of bronze culture are expected to be very helpful in tracing gongs in Indonesian. In the 3rd century BC it was known as the era of the entry of bronze culture into the Indonesian region which spread due to the massive migration wave from the Asian mainland which was introduced to several Neolithic tribes indicating that these objects came from the Dongson cultural period. The discovery of moko or nekara (bronze drums in the eastern Indonesian archipelago indicates that there has been a spread of bronze culture brought by immigrants from the South China mainland and Central Asia as a legacy of the Dongson culture. Bronze casting techniques have of course long been introduced by the Chinese people, shown in several types of bronze bell musical instruments known as bian zhong (China) or bonshou (Japan). However, both types of bronze musical instruments in the form of bells and nekara were not very well

developed in the Indonesian archipelago. The bronze gong musical instrument seemed to attract more interest from the people of the Indonesian archipelago at that time, because the gong not only functioned as a musical instrument but was considered as one of the objects that had religious value that was inseparable from their ritual activities, such as respect for the spirits of their ancestors. The belief of the people in the spirits of their ancestors and the use of gongs as a medium of communication may have been inherited from the shamanism that developed in Siberia and Central Asia. The legacy of shamanism can still be found in several traditional communities such as: in Kalimantan, Java, Sunda, Bali, NTT, Sulawesi and so on.



Figure 2: Gong Gede

<https://images.app.goo.gl/DEJUALkLrg3hfCX96>

Visual and Auditory Aesthetic Interaction in Gong

Gongs in gamelan are not only judged by their sound quality, but also by their aesthetic value, including their shape, carvings, and the fineness of their workmanship. This visual aesthetic includes the round shape of the gong which is considered to symbolize perfection or eternity in traditional culture, while the sound produced is believed to have magical or symbolic powers that are used in ritual and social contexts. Auditory, the gong sound has a distinctive characteristic that resonates for a long time and sounds deep. The sound provides a

rhythmic layer that strengthens the overall structure of the gamelan music, while at the same time, this instrument serves as a marker in various parts of the gamelan composition.

The interaction of visual and auditory aesthetics in this gong instrument creates a unique blend in gamelan, where each visual and sound element has its own role in strengthening the symbolic and aesthetic meaning in traditional culture, besides gongs which are usually played colotomically as in gamelan ensembles in Java, Sunda, Bali, and Lombok, there is also a type of melodic gong known as gong chime. This melodic gong has a diameter of about 18 cm to 25 cm and is arranged in rows on a wooden board according to the order of different notes in each region of origin. This instrument is arranged in a horizontal position, which is a characteristic of musical instruments in Indonesia and several neighboring countries such as Malaysia, Brunei, and the Philippines. Meanwhile, the semi-circular or horseshoe arrangement is more common in the northern part of Southeast Asia, such as in Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand.

Structure and Process of Making Gongs in Traditional Gamelan

Gong is the largest gamelan instrument compared to other instruments. (Ariawarman, 2017). The shape of the gong has a slightly tapered shoulder and a protrusion at the front, which is the striking point when played. Unlike other gamelan instruments, the gong is hung on a goal-shaped pole made of beautifully carved wood. Its position is slightly tilted and tied with a large rope as a hanger, so that to sound it, the gong is hit by swinging it to the side, not downward. The gong beater has a wooden handle, with a round tip made of coconut fiber or thick rope, covered with cloth to make it feel soft when hitting. Sometimes, the cloth that wraps the beater is also woven with small ropes to make it stronger and not easily loose. The large size of the gong and the sound it

produces make it stand out compared to other gamelan instruments. Because of its large size, the materials used to make the gong are also more than other instruments. Gong making is done manually or forged by hand, a technique passed down from generation to generation by craftsmen to ensure good sound quality. In addition, to obtain good gong making results, a processing place is also needed to produce good gongs, which is called *besalen*. Brass, bronze, and iron are some types of metals used in making gongs, each with its own characteristics and advantages. Brass, which has a yellow color, is used to make lighter gongs than bronze gongs. However, the lightness makes brass gongs less durable (Ariawarman, 2017). Bronze, on the other hand, is a copper-based alloy that has long been used for various purposes, including making gamelan musical instruments. Bronze is known to have good quality so it is often used for household products, accessories, and machine components (Grafika & Yogyakarta, 2017). Meanwhile, gongs made of iron, like brass, are also lighter than bronze, but their durability is low and their prices are cheaper. In the manufacturing process, iron for gongs is usually in the form of iron plates that are formed, forged, and welded to obtain the desired shape, without going through a firing process. With lower quality, gongs made of iron and brass are considered to be below the bronze gong class (Ariawarman, 2017). The selection of bronze as the primary material for high-quality gamelan gongs is closely related to its superior acoustic properties. Bronze produces a richer, more resonant sound with longer sustain, which is highly valued in traditional gamelan music for creating harmonious and immersive tones. This distinctive sound quality, combined with its durability and resistance to corrosion, makes bronze the preferred choice among craftsmen and musicians, despite its higher cost and more complex manufacturing process compared to iron or brass.



Figure 3: Gong

<https://images.app.goo.gl/QPPkwLyRelvmhsGA9>

Gong Aesthetic Value Analyzed Using Micro, Macro, and Meta Frameworks

At the micro level, the beauty of the gong lies in the visual details such as ornamental carvings, the fineness of the surface workmanship, and the perfection of its shape. Typical ornaments such as dragons, flowers, or natural symbols reflect detailed and unique aesthetic values. As explained by Arya Dwi Jayanta (2021), each ornament on the gong not only functions as decoration but also contains deep symbolic meaning. At the macro level, the aesthetic value of the gong is seen in its role as an integral part of the gamelan ensemble. Gong serves to create a balance in musical structure through the interaction of sound with other instruments. Meanwhile, at the meta level, the aesthetic value of the gong reflects deep philosophical symbolism in traditional culture. The gong is not only seen as a musical instrument, but also as a representation of cosmic and spiritual harmony. The interaction between the micro, macro, and meta dimensions creates a holistic beauty that makes the gong more than just a musical instrument, but a cultural symbol full of aesthetic value.

The Beauty of Gong Visualization

Reading from various sources, these results show that the visual beauty of the gong contributes to a deep musical

experience. When the audience sees a gong decorated with beautiful ornaments, they not only hear the sound, but also feel the beauty that radiates from its shape and design. This creates a holistic experience, where fine art and musical art complement each other. Gongs are usually made of metal, with a round shape and a smooth surface (Arya Dwi Jayanta, 2021). One of the beauties that stands out on the gong is the ornaments that adorn its surface. Many gongs are decorated with motifs inspired by nature, such as dragons, flowers, and other cultural symbols. The dragon motif, for example, symbolizes strength and courage in Javanese culture. This ornament not only functions as decoration, but also reflects deep symbolic values. The visual beauty of the gong decorated with the dragon motif provides its own appeal, creating a majestic and graceful impression. This ornament also serves to strengthen cultural identity and give more meaning to the instrument.

The following are the parts of the gong's visual aesthetics as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Parts of the Gong's

Proportion	Gongs have distinctive proportions, with diameters varying depending on the type of gamelan. These proportions contribute to the resonance of the sound produced.
Ornaments	Ornaments on gongs often reflect the cultural and aesthetic values of Javanese society. The carving motifs used on gongs include geometric and floral motifs that are rich in meaning.
Material	Traditional gongs are usually made of a mixture of metals, such as bronze, which gives them a distinctive sound quality. This material also affects the durability and visual beauty of the gong.
Color Composition	The color of the gong, which is usually golden or bronze, gives an elegant and classy impression, which also

	functions as a visual element in the performance.
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The interaction between fine arts and musical arts in the context of gamelan is reflected through the function of the gong which is divided into three types of ricikan: rhythmic, melodic, and structural. As a rhythmic ricikan, the gong functions as a rhythm marker, providing structure and maintaining continuity in gamelan performances. In addition, although better known as a rhythmic instrument, some variations of the gong are also able to produce melodic tones that enrich the overall harmony of the music. In structural aspects, gongs play an important role in building the musical framework, with their strategic placement and use to create a harmonious and orderly gamelan composition as shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Analysis of the Visual Beauty and Sound of Gong

Element	Visual Description	Sound Description
Form	Round, symmetrical	Deep resonance
Ornaments	Dragon Carving, Geometric	Clear and harmonious sound
Material	Bronze Metal	Has long sustain
Color	Bronze with gold engraving	A sound rich in atmosphere

The interaction between fine arts and musical arts on gong instruments in traditional gamelan not only creates a rich aesthetic experience, but also reflects deep cultural values. (Wicaksono & Mariasa, 2024) This article shows that gongs not only function as musical instruments, but also as works of art that have high aesthetic value. The ornaments and proportions of the gong reflect the craftsmanship and

traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation. This discussion also shows that there is a contribution to the development of traditional art theory by integrating visual and auditory elements. Gongs have important values in music and culture, encompassing aspects of sound, visual-auditory interaction, and cultural and historical context. The deep and resonant sound of the gong creates its own beauty, ranging from soft to thunderous tones, with frequencies ranging from 100 Hz to 300 Hz, providing a profound musical experience. The beauty of this sound combines with the visuals of the gong decorated with ornaments, creating a perfect harmony between fine art and musical art. This interaction presents a holistic artistic experience, where the sound of the gong seems to bring the existing ornaments to life. In addition, gongs also have an important role in Javanese cultural traditions, used in various ceremonies such as weddings, religious rituals, and cultural celebrations, showing the importance of this instrument in the history of gamelan (Gita & Ayundasari, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Gongs in traditional gamelan reflect the close interaction between fine arts and musical arts, where visual and sonic beauty complement each other. Gong ornaments, such as dragon motifs, not only enrich the aesthetic value but also enhance the immersive musical experience. As the main instrument in gamelan, gongs play an important role both musically and visually, creating harmony that enriches the overall artistic experience. This study confirms that the beauty of gongs lies not only in their sound, but also in their physical form which contributes significantly to the artistic value of gamelan. By understanding the aesthetic value and its role, the preservation of gongs as part of traditional culture becomes increasingly important.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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