

## The Existence of Palegongan Banjar Binoh Kaja's Style: Between History and Mythology

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### ABSTRACT

Banjar Binoh Kaja, Ubung Kaja Village, is one of the banjars in Denpasar City that is well-known for its rapid development in the arts, namely the art of palegongan, which has been passed down from generation to generation. The preservation of this palegongan art is closely related to religious activities, so that children in the Banjar Binoh Kaja area are required to learn karawitan and dance. The emergence of legong art in Binoh, now known as "Legong Keraton," experienced its heyday and peak around the 1920s, when Sekaa Palegongan Binoh was mentored by the late Guru Besar I Wayan Lotring from Banjar Tegal, Kuta -Badung and Ida Bagus Boda (deceased) from Banjar Kaliungu Denpasar. Then, in accordance with the ups and downs of life after experiencing glory, Sekaa Palegongan Binoh began to experience a decline with the emergence of a new art form, namely the Gong Kebyar gamelan. However, palegongan gamelan activities in Banjar Binoh Kaja continued because in Banjar Binoh Kaja itself there are 12 sacred buildings (Pura), where every 6 Balinese months (7 calendar months) they are assigned to accompany piodalan ceremonies at the Pura. The development of Legong Binoh Kaja in this era of modernization has also experienced a decline, largely due to the rapid advancement of technology, which inevitably leads to negative consequences such as gadget dependency activities in the fields of education, social and cultural affairs, as well as the talents possessed by the younger generation, have been neglected. This is a shared responsibility to begin directing the use of technology and gadgets towards more interaction with friends through activities organized by Sekaa Palegongan Binoh and Sanggar Tari Murda Sruti in Banjar Binoh Kaja.

### KEYWORDS

Existence, Palegongan Binoh Kaja, History, Mythology



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### Background

In this era of modernization, technological development is rapidly advancing, and it is naturally used to assist and support human activities. One technology that is widely used is the use of gadgets as a means of communication and information, and it is now available to all ages, from young to old. Humans feel greatly assisted by this technological advancement, and this can be seen in all fields, including education, social, and cultural spheres. It is undeniable that today's children are more interested in sophisticated technology and gadgets at a very young age. Some believe that this technological development certainly has a positive impact on children and keeps them

up to date. However, the negative impacts of children's preoccupation with and fascination with gadgets must also be considered. These negative impacts can be seen in health, the effects of social media, mental development, thought processes, and limited interaction.

The impact of technological sophistication and gadget dependence has resulted in activities in all areas of education, social, and culture, as well as the suppression of children's talents. This negative impact is a shared responsibility to guide children toward limiting their use of technology and gadgets and increasing interaction with their peers. One effort to address children's dependence on gadgets is to revive the role of the next generation in the arts through training at dance studios in each region.

Collective education/training and presentation of dance in this era of modernization are one way to foster interest among the younger generation in preserving traditional dance, particularly the Legong dance. Busy lives and a penchant for gadgets have led to a lack of interest among the younger generation in learning the Legong dance, as it has its own level of complexity that many find very difficult to perform. This is the main challenge following the formation of dance studios: the lack of interest and commitment among the next generation to learn Legong dance, ensuring that this art form does not become extinct.

Art is a skill acquired through learning and observation. Arts are also part of education, and in the plural sense, they include cultural knowledge, lessons, knowledge, and work that requires knowledge or skills (Bahari, 2008:62). Skills and knowledge in the arts must of course be based on training to hone these skills.

Arts training can be realized with the full support of the government, community, and family, to foster interest and motivate the next generation to love the arts and culture. Success in developing the nation's future leaders who appreciate traditional arts and culture passed down through generations depends on the full support of the surrounding environment. One area capable of supporting the preservation of traditional dance, particularly the Legong dance, is Banjar Binoh Kaja, Ubung Kaja Village, Denpasar.

Binoh Kaja, Ubung Kaja Village, is one of the hamlets in Denpasar City known for its rapid development in the arts, specifically palegongan, a dance and gamelan art form that has been passed down through generations. The existence of a palegongan group in Banjar Binoh Kaja will undoubtedly be supported by the Legong dance, accompanied by the palegongan group, ensuring the preservation of palegongan, a recognized icon of Banjar Binoh Kaja. In the Banjar dance industry, there is a studio called the Mudra Cruti studio. Established in 2002 and managed by STT BINEKA Banjar Binoh Kaja, this studio aims to preserve not only the Palegongan gamelan ensemble from generation to generation, but also the Legong dance.

Palegongan is a classical dance, having emerged during the kingdom era in the early 19th century in the Sukawati-Gianyar area. It possesses standardized movement patterns and structures. It remains a leading Balinese dance form to this day. Furthermore, Legong is a fundamental female dance form, boasting a comprehensive repertoire of movements (Arini, 2011:1). As a fundamental female dance, Legong has established rules that serve as a guideline for every movement, contributing to its continued popularity.

Legong dance, as a traditional female dance, naturally presents a level of technical difficulty. This has led to the younger generation feeling less capable of learning Legong. Consequently, the younger generation in Banjar Binoh Kaja has become less interested in learning Legong. The long duration of the dances has led to younger generations being reluctant to dance due to exhaustion.

The Banjar Binoh Kaja Palegongan Sekaa (Sekaa Palegongan) is quite busy every six months. In this regard, the temple plays a significant role in preserving the arts and culture of Banjar Binoh Kaja. Without the temple, the palegongan art form in Banjar Binoh Kaja would likely have become extinct. A similar situation could occur in other villages in Bali, and the Balinese arts and culture we see today are largely due to the temple's presence. Thus, the temple plays a crucial role in preserving Balinese arts, enabling the palegongan dance to survive in Banjar Binoh Kaja.

## **The Existence of Gamelan and Palegongan Dance in Banjar Binoh Kaja**

Etymologically, "existence" comes from the English word "excitence." From the Latin "existere," meaning to appear, to exist, to arise, to choose actual existence. The word "ex" means "out," and "sistere," meaning to appear or arise (Lorens, 2005:183). From this definition, it is clear that existence is actual existence, beginning with its emergence, existence, and development.

The preservation of palegongan art is closely linked to religious activities. Therefore, children in Banjar Binoh Kaja are required to learn gamelan and dance. The Banjar Binoh Kaja Palegongan Group (Sekaa Palegongan) is quite busy every six months. In this regard, the temple plays a significant role in preserving arts and culture in Banjar Binoh Kaja. Without the temple, palegongan art in Banjar Binoh Kaja would likely have become extinct.

### **1. The History of the Binoh Palegongan Gamelan**

Before learning about the development of the Banjar Binoh Kaja style of Legong dance, it's important to understand the history of the Banjar Binoh Kaja palegongan gamelan. The connection between the history of the Palegongan gamelan and the Legong dance, which has now become a regional style, is crucial. Based on historical data and accounts

from Banjar Binoh figures, the Binoh Palegongan Gamelan, Br. Binoh Kaja, is thought to have emerged after the Puputan Badung War of 1906, or around 1910. According to I Wayan Djiwa, this gamelan was purchased from the Pererenan area of Kuta District, Badung. A problem arose when the purchased gamelan consisted of only four hanging gangsa strings and a pair of jublags.

When the gamelan was to be transported from Pererenan to Binoh, the Pererenan community attempted to cancel the sale. However, thanks to the mediation of the community leaders of Jero Gede Petangan, Ubung Village at that time and King Pemecutan, the buying and selling process finally went smoothly, this was a tribute from King Pemecutan to the residents/krama binoh who daily served as the spearhead of guarding the northern border of the Badung Kingdom at that time with the Mengwi Kingdom. Another possibility is because previously in Binoh the arts of gambuh, gambang, and gender wayang had developed. Sekaa Gambuh Binoh often performed at Puri Denpasar and continued to fill events at Puri Satria. Gambuh Binoh figures at that time included I Aken (Pan Djiwa) and the brother/sister of PekaK Marsi. Gambuh musicians included I Aken (besides dancing also playing the rebab), Pekak Kamu and Pekak Kardji (flutes), Pekak Liger (male drums), Pekak Obleng (female drums). The forerunner of the palegongan binoh gamelan, when brought from Pererenan, the raw material for the players was only dagdag wood. Because the gamelan instruments were incomplete, they were gradually refined while practicing playing. Gradually, the palegongan Binoh gamelan ensemble was supplemented with a pair of gender rambat (gede), a pair of gender barangan (cenik), a pair of jegogan, a pair of palegongan drums, a bebarongan drum, cengceng, kajar, kemong, rebab, flute, and kempur.

The initial development of palegongan Binoh took place around 1915 to 1925. The first instructor brought to Binoh was Ida Bagus Bode from Kaliungu, followed by I Wayan Lotring from Kuta. The first generation of Legong Binoh dancers to emerge at that time were Ni Mintar (Men Pintu) and Ni Sempok (Men Mudji). The first generation of musicians included the Rucing drums (Pan Pulu) and Pan Sebut, the gender rambat Wayan Rengga (Pan Meja) and Nyoman Tunas (Pan Kardji), the gender barangan Runeng (Pan Bunter) and Regeg (Pan Ramia). Besides their dedication to the palegongan gamelan, the members of the band spearhead the practice at Pura Dalem Penataran. The Ida Bhatara (the priest) at Pura Dalem usually performs the gamelan in the temple's inner courtyard every Rahina Kajeng Kliwon (the full moon). After the ceremony, the gamelan was not only housed in the Bale Banjar but also frequently moved. The palegongan gamelan has been housed the longest at Pura Buitan, where community activities have continued to increase to meet their daily needs. In the subsequent development of the gamelan palegongan binoh, it was inseparable from the influence of the political climate that developed at the national level which spread to the regions, leading up to the eruption of G.30.S./PKI in 1965. Previously, around 1964 in the courtyard of the Hyang Kawitan

Temple / Buitan Temple, coinciding with the piodalan, a physical clash almost occurred between the two local banjars which split into two opposing groups due to the political atmosphere of divide and rule that was not clearly understood so that it spread to the gamelan. Like a fire in the chaff, the peak occurred during the piodalan at the Hyang Ratu Gede Kawitan Temple (Buitan). Kukul bulus sounded so that residents of neighboring banjars came to find out what was really happening, which ultimately led to an agreement between the two parties with the term "save and use". This happened thanks to the alertness of the officers.

Then, the continuity of inheritance from the first generation and its successors reappeared, which was quite difficult. Even at the beginning of the return of the palegongan gamelan from Banjar Petangan to Banjar Binoh, it was used as a place to practice gong kebyar songs/gending. As a result, many gamelan bars broke, to avoid a more fatal incident, the binoh penglingsir borrowed the gong kebyar gamelan from Banjar Petangan and Banjar Dauh Kutuh for quite a long time to use it properly. The dynamics of society due to the strategic environment influence of the thundering influence of gong kebyar were extraordinary. Around 1967, the classical palegongan gamelan instruments that are now permanently located in Banjar Binoh Kaja almost disappeared. Because there was once a thought to merge them into a set of barungan gamelan gong kebyar which was very trendy at that time. Thanks to the role and advice of the young artist I Wayan Sinti at the time, the Binoh community ultimately abandoned their plan. This invaluable heritage was preserved and further developed from the palegongan gamelan into the semarpegulingan saih lima gamelan, with the addition of four Tungguh Gangsa Jongkok and Atungguh Trompong instruments. Eventually, slowly but surely, the palegongan and pegambuhan instruments were reorganized. The palegongan gamelan ensemble, which later became the semarapegulingan gamelan in Binoh, was supported by members of the sekaa (group) whose activities never waned, due to its close ties to religion and customs, coupled with various community activities related to the application of the three basic concepts of the Hindu religion.

## 2. Reconstruction Process



**Figure 1.** (The late) Ni Ketut Reneng trained the hamlet residents  
[Doc. Djesna]

According to Djesna Winada, a prominent artist in Banjar Binoh Kaja, the arrival of Richard Herman Waills in 1975, an American ethnomusicologist, who took a keen interest in the existence of "Legong" art in Banjar Binoh Kaja, led to the arrival of the Legong art form in Banjar Binoh Kaja. He who was conducting research on the life of Balinese cultural arts came to Banjar Binoh Kaja, and witnessed firsthand the existence



of palegongan art in Banjar Binoh Kaja. Based on the results of negotiations regarding the need to re-excavate this palegongan gamelan with Mr. Wayan Sinti (Alm) and the administrators and binoh conductors, Mr. Richard H. Wails then recommended the existence of Sekaa Palegongan Binoh to the Ford Foundation in Jakarta, so that assistance from the Ford Foundation was provided, assistance that was used to finance the development activities to excavate the almost extinct legong art in Banjar Binoh Kaja. Thus, the development was carried out for two years, namely from 1975 to 1977. During the development for the palegongan excavation process, I Wayan Lotering, I Gusti Putu Made Gria and Mrs. Ketut Reneng had the opportunity to directly develop the dance with the assistance of his students, namely Ni Ketut Arini, Gusti Ayu Raka Astuti, and Gusti Agung Mas Susilawati, with the percussion instructor being I Wayan Sinti. The number of dance students being trained is around 50 people, both from Banjar Binoh Kaja itself, and from outside the banjar, for example from Kokar and ASTI Denpasar.

In addition to the Ford Foundation, the government, coincidentally, was implementing the Bali Cultural Center Project under the leadership of the late Drs. I Gusti Bagus Nyoman Panji, whose program similarly focused on exploring traditional classical arts, including the "Legong Kraton," also assisted in the program in Banjar Binoh Kaja. During the training, several types of legong dances were successfully explored, including: Legong Kuntul, Jobog, Gowak Macok, Kuntir, Smarandana, Pelayon, Condong, Ngalap Base, and the Legong Lasem dance. Many of the students under her guidance achieved considerable success and have participated in several Bali Arts Festivals at the Taman Budaya Arts Center in Denpasar.

Following the training, Banjar Binoh Kaja's Palegongan gamelan was widely recorded by the recording agencies Bali Record in Denpasar and Aneka Record in Tabanan. The Japanese recording agency King Records also recorded numerous Binoh-style palegongan pieces, complemented by recordings of Jobog and Smarandana legong. Reconstructing classical arts, particularly classical palegongan, is a source of pride for the Banjar Binoh Kaja community. The legong dance has been successfully explored, allowing it to develop within the community, as well as within KOKAR and ASTI Bali (now ISI Bali), and be studied by international visitors.

### 3. Banjar Binoh Kaja-Style Palegongan Dance

Dance, as an experiential art activity, emphasizes the importance of developing creativity, appreciation, and expression broadly. These three developments are integrative needs of every individual. Creative needs are reflected in activities that cultivate feelings, feelings, creativity, and exercise, which have implications for physical and spiritual health (Jazuli, 2008a). Developing creativity, appreciation, and expression in dance is a necessity aimed at achieving physical and spiritual health for both dancers and art lovers. Through this creativity, each artist's unique style and style emerges, marking the emergence and existence of the art form. The arts, particularly the performing arts, are rich in diverse styles. A dance style is highly dependent on the skills of its instructors. We believe that the Legong dance, for example, was initially created by a single individual. However, as it developed, students often modified the dance, applying their knowledge. In its development, movements were refined and reduced to enhance the structure and reflect the individual tastes and creativity of the creator and dancers who inherited the dance.



Figure 2. The coaching process of (the late) Ni Ketut Reneng  
[Doc. Djesna]

Creativity is a crucial part of the process of creating and performing a dance work. For choreographers, creativity is the primary tool for creation, while for dancers, creativity is the foundation for interpreting the characteristics, roles, meanings, and objectives of the dance (Jazuli, 2016:27). Creativity, as the primary tool of creation, provides interpretations of the characteristics of a dance, its choreographer, and its region or geographic location. Furthermore, other dance elements also contribute to the



development and characteristics of the dance, closely related to the accompanying percussion, thus creating an identity or style.

Contextually, style can be composed of symbols, forms, and the underlying values (traditions) underlying the dance (Royce, 1980). In the Banjar Binoh Kaja style of Palegongan dance, the harmonious symbols of the percussion accompaniment and the palegongan are a reflection of the tradition of I Wayan Lotring's palegongan style. The flowing and gentle melodies are the hallmark of Banjar Binoh Kaja palegongan. This harmony creates a bond of form that creates a distinctive identity, making Banjar Binoh Kaja style palegongan famous in its time and still remembered by art lovers today.

In Bali, there are known styles of Legong Peliatan, Legong Saba, Legong Binoh, and Andir, among others. According to Mr. Djesna, the late Mr. Wayan Sinti explained that all styles depend on the style of performance. According to I Gusti Agung Susilawati, the Legong Binoh style is characterized by *agem* and "graceful" movements, following the gamelan melody. This aligns with the definition of the word "legong" itself, which denotes graceful movements accompanied by gamelan gongs.

It's important to note that stylistic differences also exist in other art forms, such as gambuh, semar pegulingan, angklung, gong kebyar, wayang, barong, janger, gandrung, and others. The most striking stylistic differences occur in the gamelan tuning. In Bali, no two Balinese gamelan instruments are alike, whether within the palegongan itself or within the Semar Pegulingan, Gong Gede, Angklung, Gong Kebyar, Angklung, Gambuh, and other instruments. Each Balinese gamelan orchestra has its own unique characteristics that are unique to other orchestras. In the arts, Balinese artists have the freedom to develop their creativity as long as their creativity does not violate the rules or conventions established by their predecessors. Therefore, this is not absolute freedom, but rather a freedom that adheres to existing rules. Therefore, each style must be maintained, adapting to the tastes of each region, its artists, and its audience. This creates a variety of variations, all enriching the treasure trove of Balinese art and culture, which respects differences and maintains its sustainability.

#### **4. Mythology of the Banjar Binoh Kaja Palegongan Dance**

The existence of the Banjar Binoh Kaja Palegongan Style dance is inseparable from the history and mythology that developed in the region. According to Harsojo, mythology is a belief system held by a group of people, based on a foundation that explains sacred stories from the past (1988). The people of Banjar Binoh Kaja believe in sacred artistic elements in the Legong dance performance, which includes seven sacred coils that are purified and placed in a sacred place. The Legong, sacred to the local village, is believed to possess a soul, thus contributing to its enduring fame. Before the performance, the Legong coils must be taken to the Banjar temple where they are

purified. Furthermore, before the performance, the dancers must undergo a sacredization ceremony with communal prayers and use cleansing water, or *tirta*, to instill the sacred power of the temple. This procession is believed to invoke permission to awaken positive energy from the coils that will be used by the dancers, thus creating a *metaksu* (a form of spiritual power) and granting safety during the performance.

According to Djesna Winada, an arts figure in the village, the first *gelungan* (traditional dance) was found in the Buitan temple. It consisted of two sacred pieces and had to be performed there at specific times, according to the predetermined omens (*pawisik*). After the re-excavation of the *legong* dance, five more *gelungan* were created and placed in the Banjar Binoh Kaja temple. They remain preserved and performed on special occasions, including during the Banjar's *Piodalan* (anniversary celebration) which falls on the *Tumpek Wayang* holiday.

Banjar Binoh Kaja, Ubung Kaja Village, North Denpasar District, Denpasar, is one of the centers of classical *legong* art in the city of Denpasar. According to our previous artists, during the kingdom era, the *gambuh* art form flourished in Banjar Binoh Kaja, with several "*ngayah*" performances at Puri Denpasar and Puri Satria. However, with the emergence of the *Legong* art form, the existence of *Gambuh* gradually declined and was eventually lost to time.

The *Legong* art form in Binoh experienced its peak of success around the 1920s, when the *Sekaa Palegongan Binoh* was led by the late I Wayan Lotring from Banjar Tegal, Kuta-Badung, and the late Ida Bagus Boda from Banjar Kaliungu, Denpasar. The dancers at that time included Ni Sempok (Men Muji) and Ni Mintar (Men Pintu). Following its rise and fall, the *Sekaa Palegongan Binoh* began to decline, especially with the emergence of a new art form, the *Gong Kebyar gamelan*. However, the *Palegongan gamelan* activity in Banjar Binoh Kaja continued, as the *Sekaa Palegongan* was tasked with accompanying the *Piodalan* (*piodalan*) ceremonies at the 12 temples within the Banjar, every six months. So that the Banjar Binoh Kaja *palegongan gamelan* activities continue, in addition to the *ngayah*'s duties to accompany the ceremony.

## Conclusion

Maintaining, fostering, and developing regional cultural heritage as a bulwark of national resilience is the determination of the *Palegongan Binoh Dance Group* of Banjar Binoh Kaja to preserve the *Palegongan Dance* style of Banjar Binoh Kaja. This cultural heritage is tailored to a scale accessible to the group's members, who are farmers, laborers, and carpenters. The culture of the group's members, along with the Pura and Bale Banjar, is also synonymous with preserving this heritage, including continuing to revitalize the value and potential of the legendary *Palegongan Binoh gamelan*.

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