

The Aspects of Karo Dance that Need to Be Trained

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Abstract

Karo as a tribe living in North Sumatra considers that *ergendang* which means presenting traditional music and dancing in a social activity called ceremony is very important. But in reality the importance of dance in these activities is not accompanied by the seriousness of the supporters of the ceremony. That's why last year we tried to conduct training for students in a beauty salon. The results are very good, but very limited people who receive training. Therefore, we want to carry out training for Karo youth. The aspects that we train include the patterned Karo dance, the Karo dance with steps that have a structure and the free Karo dance.

Key word: style of dancing, traditional music, ceremony, trained

I. Introduction

Since the keyboard instrument, became the *gendang kibot* which part of the Karo musical culture in early 1992 has had many changes. The changes not only in the musical aspect but also in the dance aspect and other cultural elements. However, some changes are good and some are bad. From a good point of view, it really makes it easy to perform musical performances. But in terms of the less good there is more freedom in dancing. As a result, fewer girls are willing to take part in the *gendang guro-guro aron*, which is a musical and dance performance in Karo culture. It is at this time that a young man or woman practices dancing as an embodiment that they have grown up, and are ready to settle down by carrying out their customs as well as possible. But the fact that there are no more young people participating in dance training. This reality has an impact on the style of dancing in the context of various ceremonies, such as doing it less seriously. While on the one hand especially in the Karo culture, dancing is one of the most important aspects of the customs.

This article was written by paying attention to the dance performances of the Karo people for a long period of about fifteen years. With this attention, it can be seen that in the practice of performances there are still many people who do not pay attention to the accuracy and beauty of the dance performed. For this reason, it is necessary to invite the Karo people in general to dance attentively in every activity that requires interest. Thus there is a beautiful dance in every community activity. This is done by taking into account that dance is an important aspect in various activities of the Karo people, such as in various traditional ceremonies. In the Karo culture, dancing must be in a certain context. Without context, dance does not exist. On the other hand, the performing of dance presentation activities cannot be separated from the *adat enggeluh* (rules of life).

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The thought in the traditional philosophy of *adat enggeluh* is that every human being must undergo and follow customary rules from birth to death. The *adat enggeluh* is a rule that provides direction for all human activities, both as individuals and as members of society. Although in principle humans are born alone in the view of the *adat enggeluh*, they cannot be separated from relatives called *kade-kade*.

All relatives in the context of *adat* (costum) are called *sangkep enggeluh* or completeness of life. The relationship between relatives in the Karo tradition is regulated based on the *rakut sitelu* (tie which three). *Rakut si telu* consists of, 1) *senina* (one offspring) 2) *kalimbubu* (giver/wife) and 3) *anak beru* (receiver girl/wife). *Sangkep enggeluh* in the context of *adat* plays a role in three things. These are 1) *ndungi* (finishing), 2) *petungungken* (making good) and 3) *pehagaken* (glorify). Someone in every activity is called a *sukut*, always invites these three relatives.

The three roles of relatives are considered successful if some of them actively participate in traditional ceremonial activities. In the case that relatives actively participate in various activities, it is closely related to the elements that are needed and there are things that must be done. The elements needed are in the form of traditional objects such as traditional cloth and clothing as well as other life equipment such as rice, money, machetes, and others. Meanwhile, what must be done, such as participating in traditional deliberations, receiving or giving traditional objects and money, standing up to carry out traditional activities, dancing together and delivering speeches.

The presentation of the *gendang* or musical ensemble in a community activity is to accompany the *sukut* (people who hold the activity) dancing together with their relatives as a means of non-verbal communication in *adat*. Many times we saw that when the *sukut* danced with their relatives, many of the participants danced not so well, that's why we've done Karo dance training.

2. The Karo Dance Training That Has Been Done

In 2018 from June to October three of us, Kumalo Tarigan, Hanny Malayu and Lukas Tarigan tried to do dance training by prioritizing aesthetics to 20 people who were taking makeup training at the 'Linggata' beauty salon in Kabanjahe. The choice for people who are attending beauty makeup training because they are so close to the prospective bride and groom in the Karo society. Thus they can practice dance for the purposes of their wedding ceremony. The training is especially beneficial for the bride and groom, they have danced by paying attention to the beauty of their dance moves which increasingly show a good aesthetic.

On the other hand there are still participants in the wedding ceremony who follow the dance without paying attention to their good movements. There is an impression in dancing only to fulfill traditional needs. A fact like this gives a bad impression on the dance, as if it can be done in a simple way. It's best not to be like that, even though dancing in the context of a wedding ceremony is quite natural if it is done with aesthetically pleasing movements. To change this view, however, takes a relatively long time, but must be done.

We believe that however to start learning of the Karo dance, it is better for young men and young women. because in general at a young age there is a performance in the Karo society called *guro-guro aron*. The *guro-guro aron* is a dance and music performance that is still based on traditional Karo arts. The dance movements in the *guro-guro aron* performances are very varied so that they have more movements when compared to the Karo dance in a traditional context. We do

this with the idea that if someone has done and trained dance deeply, no matter where they are, they will always get used to doing it well.

The training of the Karo dance for youth and women is carried out with two views, 1) the existence of dance in the Karo culture, and 2) the movements and the meaning of the Karo dance. We truly believe that by studying these three aspects, someone will be able to improve movements that give a sense of the beauty of a dance. The important movements in Karo dance such as 1) *pas endek* (right knee movement), 2) *lempir tan* (flexing all fingers), 3) *jemah tan* (whole hand movement side to side, up and down), 4) *jemole tan* (moving the hands gently), 5) *pengodak pengole* (gentle body movements to the rhythm of the music) 6) *jaga pengenen* (adjusting the gaze).

3. The Existence of Dance in the Karo Culture

Several definitions of dance have been written around Karo culture, such as, Ewidiani (2012) dance is a movement of the human body based on movements in the activities of daily human life in three parts, like playing, working, and art. Dwi Restika, Ahmad Syai, Nurlaili (2016), dance is one of the media statements about human activity in realizing values and as a whole through motion. Dance is an expression of human feelings through body movements. So the basic essence of dance is movement. Manalu (2017) dance is a rhythmic movement at a certain time and place for the purpose of expressing feelings, intentions, and thoughts. In fact, specifically in Karo culture, the definition of dance cannot be separated from customs.

Dance in the Karo people we believe is a non-verbal communication. This is a manifestation of the feeling of *ate keleng* (deep love) between one relative and another that cannot be expressed in words (*la terkatakan*) so that the *ipaluken gendang ras i endekken* (music is played and danced). Thus, it is believed that the sense of human affection between relatives can be channeled, which in the end can give satisfaction in the heart.

However, if we examine more in terms of what causes dance in the Karo people, it cannot be separated from legend. In short, the legend can be explained that in the human period there were already fifty people less than two people, one person died. So that the deceased person still knows his relatives, and his relatives are still alive still remember him too and if one day a relative dies, they will not get lost. For that purpose, it is necessary to play *gendang* or the Karo tradition music. So when music is played, it must also be danced. Thus, it is believed that both the dead and the living will still know each other so that no one gets lost.

Around the early 1930s, the dance was developed by the deceased Tipan br Sembiring with his deceased husband Sayang Barus. Tipan br Sembiring started dancing in the village of Rambe, STM Hilir District, Deli Serdang Regency. He was very well known throughout Tanah Karo during his time. She married the Sayang Barus, because she promised that Sayang Barus could beat her in a dance competition. When Sayang Barus was able to beat him in a dance competition, he finally kept his promise and got married in 1937. Since then dance has developed into a non-verbal communication of love.

Beginning with the mention of "*perkolong-kolong*" or singers and dancers in the Karo tradition. The name change was actually caused at the end of every song phrase there was the word '*era....la kolong-kolong.... ari turang..... era la kolong kolong*' Then there was a dance performance to the accompaniment of the *gendang* (the ensemble of traditional Karo music) which was named *guro-gura aron*. In the *guro-guro aron* as performances and dances, there were the *perkolong-kolong* which were known at that time such as, Sinek br Purba, Malem Bana Ginting.

Previously the names of singers, dancers, musicians, storytellers were called *permangga-mangga*. At that time was the beginning of dance as a performing art, because there were presenters and there were audiences. In according to Murgiyanto (1996) the presentation of an art can be said to be a performance if it fulfills elements such as the person who performs (the presenter), the person who witnesses (the audience), the message to be conveyed, and the method of delivering a distinctive message.

4. The Movement and Meaning of Karo Dance

The basic movement of the Karo dance related to music is *endek*. The sound of a musical instrument that is directly related to *endek* is the gong. In one cycle of gong sound is one *endek*. *Endek* is a knee movement down half-squat and then up again in one duration between one gong sound with the next gong sound. Therefore, one thing that is very very important in Karo dance practice is listening to accompaniment music.

There are five types of rhythmic colotomic gongs in the composition of dance accompaniment in the Karo music culture.

- a. The very slow tempo (*cak-cak mulih-mulih*) is 32 beats in one gong cycle with a tempo of about 68 MM. This musical composition can only accompany one song, namely *mulih-mulih*. Now it doesn't seem so interesting anymore. We think that not only is because difficult to dance but also very tired and boring. This accompaniment music is only used to accompany the *aron* dance with structured steps, namely the *telu serang* dance.
- b. The slow tempo (*cak-cak simalungun rayat*) is 16 beats in one gong cycle with a tempo of about 68 MM. The composition of this music very much can accompany the song so that the dance is very much. This musical composition can accompany many songs so the dance is very much. can be danced with a pattern, has a certain step or with a free dance.
- c. The middle tempo (*cak-cak mari-mari*) eight beats in a cycle with a tempo of about 96 MM. This musical composition can only accompany one song, namely *mari-mari*. At first very widely used in the purposes of shaman dances. But since 1967 it has become part of the performing arts. At that time around 1967-1986 was very popular with dancers in the *guro-guro aron*
- d. The fast tempo (*cak-cak odak-odak*) is four beats in a cycle with a tempo of about 96 MM. This musical composition can accompany many songs so the dance is very much. Accompanied songs can be danced with patterns, have certain steps or with free dances
- e. The very fast tempo (*cak-cak patam-patam*) is two beats in one gong cycle with a tempo of about 96 MM. This musical composition can accompany many songs so the dance is very much. Accompanied songs can be danced with have certain steps and with free dances but mostly only free dance.

At *guro-guro aron* performance, the dance is developed by making different presentations. In this case, the *aron* is a group of young men and women who actively participate in the *guro-guro aron* performance. In general, the performance is called the *aron* dance, which can be divided into the *aron* dance with a pattern, the *aron* dance with structured steps, and the free *aron*. dance it may also be called a special dance which is a new creation dance, is a dance performed by improvisation.

4.1 The Dance of Aron With Pattern

The regular *aron* dance with a certain pattern there are only a few types. We chose two types, namely dance movement patterns at a slow tempo and fast tempo. Basically, these two patterns have

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something in common, the difference is the speed of movement and the number of *endaksin* one position. In front of the dancers in these two patterns, there are two, namely leaning or oblique towards the right and leaning or oblique towards the left side.

Each of these patterns is called the *endek 2-2* and the *endek 3-3*. The *endek 2-2* means doing two *endek* or two cycles of gongs, then turning to the next position, such as from leaning or oblique right to leaning or oblique left. This movement is in the composition of slow-tempo dance accompaniment music or (*cak-cak simalungun rayat*). While the movements in the composition of the dance accompaniment of medium and fast tempo are carried out three times, then move to another position, like in the *cak-cak mari-mari* and the *cak-cak odak-odak*.

There are differences in the hand movements between male and female dancers in the regular *aron* dance with a pattern.

4.1.1 The movement on the male *aron* dance:

1) The front of the right oblique, the right hand is slightly below the waist while the left hand is above the shoulder.
2) The front of the left oblique both palms facing the chest (like hugging) by flexing the fingers
Some of the meanings that can be perceived in the movement on the male *aron* dance, in movement 1 are:

- a. We come with great respect.
- b. We came with nothing.
- c. If we are married we are able to work hard

Some of the meanings that can be perceived in movement 2 are:

- a. We come with a clean heart.
- b. If we are married we are very responsible

4.1.2 The movement on the women *aron* dance:

- 1) The front of the right oblique, the right hand is curves to the right from below the waist, the left hand is placed on the waist by straightening the fingers down.
- 2) The front fo the left oblique , the movement is constant, only the right hand is curvesto the right slightly up.
- 3-7) The movement is the same, only the right hand is to curves the right, rising little by little, until the 7th cycle is parallel to or slightly above the head.
- 8) The *metik* or *mucuk*, the right hand curved to the right, flexing the fingers and bringing the index and thumb together, pointing to the forehead.
- 9-11) The *nimbang*, put the right hand above the shoulder.
- 12) Lower the right hand through the middle of the chest towards the waist until the fingers are straight down, and simultaneously the left hand curves towards the left starting from the bottom.
- 13) Reverse of number 2.
- 14-18) Reverse of number. 3-7.
- 19) Exactly the same as number 1.

Then the movement is the same as number 2 to number 9.

The dance movement is maintained like number 9 until the dance ends. So the changes only in front of the dancers.

Some of the meanings that can be perceived in the movement on the women *aron* dance, in the movement 1-7 are:

- a. Don't get too close if you just come
- b. Don't say anything before getting acquainted
- c. We are patiently waiting until we get to know you well

Some of the meanings that can be perceived in movement 8 are:

- a. Think carefully
- b. Put things on the head means being able to work hard

Some of the meanings that can be perceived in movement 9-11 are:

- a. Weigh in determining the best.
- b. If needed can put things on the shoulders

4.2 The Dance of Aron With Structured Steps

Since around 1965 there has been a Karo dance which is arranged in certain steps, namely, the *telu serangke* dance and the *lima serangke* dance. *Telu* means three, *serangke* means one unit, so *telu serangke* means three in one unit. In one composition, this dance consists of three songs, namely the *mulih-mulih* song, the *morah-morah* song, and the *perakut* song. These three songs are only instrumental. There are three songs so this dance also consists of three parts in one dance composition. Furthermore, *lima* means five, *serangke* means one unit, so *lima serangke* means five in one unit. In one composition, this dance consists of five songs, namely the *morah-morah* song, the *perakut* song, the *patam-patam sereng* song, the *sipajok* song and the *kabang kiung* song. There are five songs so this dance also consists of five parts in one dance composition. At that time these two dances were considered very important, because they became a measuring tool in determining the ability of a young man or woman in dancing.

Furthermore, around 1972 there was an addition of dances, which not only used instrumental music, but songs that were allowed to be sung because they had texts, namely the *piso surit* dance, the *terang bulandance*, and the *roti manis* dance. These dances at that time were called a special dance, this dance was made with certain steps. Observing the steps of the three dances above, in 1982-1987, I created several dances to enliven the *guro-guro aron* performance and certain performances because I was a dance coach at that time. Among them, the *rudang mayang* dance, *pecat-pecat seberaya* dance, *mejuah-juah* dance, *patam-patam* dance. In fact, the addition of this special dance was at the request of the *aronas* members who participated in the show. However, the more members there are as dancers, the more successful the show is and the more profitable it is for the organizers, so they can also pay more for the dance coach.

At that time it was a matter of pride for an *aronas* member to be one of the dancers of one or two special dances. This view among the youth of the Karo society until the end of 1991. Such views on Karo dance occurred among the youth and women of the Karo society until the end of 1991. Really changed since early 1992 with the inclusion of keyboards as part of the music traditional of Karo. One of the significant changes in dancing is that there is a greater sense of freedom in dancing with an individual style.

4.3 The Free Dance of Aron.

The feet step to the rhythm of the music (especially the sound of gong) and move the hands somewhat freely. There are so many variations. Like starting by spinning in place, then *asak*, *keleuti*, *kusiki*, *petar*, *suruti*.

Asak, a male dancer comes to his partner, it means, want to get acquainted

Keleuti, male dancer surround the couple, the meaning, pay attention from all sides

Kusiki, a male dancer invites his partner to squat and rotate, the meaning, asking for willingness to work together and become a life partner

Petar, male dancers lead their partners in the *itatah* and *ilawak* ways.

Itatah, male dancers lead their partners by make movements such as lifting repeatedly, it means to keep the partner good in all circumstances

Ilawak, male dancers lead their partners byseduce by making movements such as herding to the right or left, it means, to invite the partner to play with love

Suruti, male dancers stay away from their partners, it means, to give time to the partner to release from the pressure

The above movements are carried out alternately freely so that one dance composition is complete. If the male dancer is not active, the female dancer may take the role

5. Conclusion

Based on our experience as Karo dance trainers from 1980 to 1990, dancers will be proficient within one month. by practicing twelve to sixteen times with about 2 hours in one exercise.

The importance of Karo dance training, because dance has an important role in the life of the Karo people, including:

- 1) Every community activity uses dance as a nonverbal communication between human relationships.
- 2) Dance in the Karo society is very important as a cultural preservation.
- 3) In Karo dance, there are several Karo world views that can be understood.
- 4) Dance in the Karo society shows one's ability as a member of the community.
- 5) The sustainability of the Karo dance shows that the Karo people still exist
- 6) Dance as an art which is a local wisdom.

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