

Conference Report

New Research on Indonesian Traditional and Contemporary Arts: An Exchange Between Indonesian and Italian Perspectives

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As a part of efforts to improve our education quality, universities are collaborating in the forms of research, publications, seminars, exhibitions, performing, lecturer and student exchange. One of the collaborations has been successfully arranged between Indonesian Institute of the Arts Yogyakarta and La Sapienza Universita di Roma, Italy. La Sapienza Universita is a coeducational, autonomous state university in Rome, Italy. It is the largest European university by enrollment and the oldest of Rome's four state-funded universities. Sapienza is present in all major international university rankings. It is among the best Italian universities.

Sapienza University is regularly ranked first among Italian universities along with the University of Pisa. The value of arts higher education is often phrased in enrichment terms- helping scholars find their voices, and tapping into their undiscovered talents. This becomes an effective tool in the wide reform of the art higher institutions and in fixing some of biggest educational challenges.

Both institutions had signed an agreement to realize the collaborations, and two years ago, we conducted a joint international seminar at Sapienza, while at the same time ISI Yogyakarta held an Asia-Pacific conference on art studies. Scholars have opportunities to relate practical application of research with a theoretical base and thus complete a full picture about research processes and creative strategies which shape the potentials of the artistic studies. It means that art schools stand at the threshold of a multidisciplinary art research and an interdisciplinary art production- not just as one more theoretical seminar or multimedia studio among the stubborn, traditional courses or one more state-of-the-arts degree, but as the next wave of the cultural production. And we must try to understand these new patterns of creativity fully, in order to provide the nation with historical memory and real experimentations.

Several Italian scholars participated in the seminar to present their working papers on theatre and ethnomusicology and Indonesian scholars presented papers on ethnomusicology, music, visual and performing arts. The conference resulted in a peer-reviewed journal. We evaluated the programmes and concluded that the second international seminar was necessary, which was held on November 2014, by the Dipartimento di Scienze documentarie, linguistico-filologiche e geografiche, La Sapienza Università, Italy. The Department of documental, linguistic-philological and geographical sciences focuses on the studies of language, text, document and territory and its purpose is to investigate methods, languages, forms and environments of the transmission of cultural evidence. Its educational calling is mainly expressed in the fields of Linguistics, Philology, Literature, Geography, Archival Science and Library Science. (<http://www.dolinfige.uniroma1.it>).

All agenda of the seminar took place at the *Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale "Giuseppe Tucci"-Palazzo Brancaccio*, opened by the director and the vice chancellor for general affairs of La Sapienza University. The *Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale "Giuseppe Tucci"-Palazzo Brancaccio* or in English called The 'Giuseppe Tucci' National Museum of Oriental Art opened to the public in 1958 as a special Superintendence of national relevance under the Direction General for Fine Arts of the Ministry of Education; since its establishment in 1975 the Ministry of Cultural Heritage confirmed and reinforced the national relevance of the Museum, e.g. provider of guide lines and/or assistance on scientific study, filing, exhibit and conservation/restoration of oriental archaeological/art objects in Italy. In 1958 the main bulk of the items on display in the Museum consisted of the archaeological and art collections belonging to the Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East (IsMEO), whose president, prof. Giuseppe Tucci, the Italian scholar renowned worldwide, played a pivotal role in promoting the establishment of the Museum. (<http://www.museorientale.beniculturali.it/index.php?en/331/the-museum>).

The first day was opened with the museum's presentation about their time-spanning collections and conservations of oriental artifacts. The Museum, through the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, was able to acquire Asian archaeological and art objects on the Italian antiquarian market, relevant items and/or collections were donated by private individuals as well as by private and public Institutions, or acquired through pair-exchanges with Asian museums. The Museum also provides various services to scholars and general public, including a Library specialized in oriental art, a rich photographic archive, restoration/conservation laboratories, and a diagnostic section of optical and electronic microscopy. It also supervises the archive of the oriental art collections in Italy, that includes a very rich archive of images and scientific files.

Then, on the first session, an ethnomusicologist, Giovanni Giuriati, and the head of the graduate school of ISI Yogyakarta discussed about gamelan from different perspectives. Gamelan as a cultural product which is cannot be separated from its culture supporter, that is its own society as the owner. The product of culture namely gamelan is the form of an idea expression, or society attitude which is poured into

one of culture elements. Hence, the existence of gamelan cannot be separated from the existence and the attitude of artists include its listeners.

The session ended with a presentation from the Association of Oral Tradition Studies, who represented by the ministry of education of Indonesia. On the second presentation, a researcher from Università di Napoli "L' Orientale" delivered a very interesting paper on oral tradition of Dayak Borneo and a young researcher from La Sapienza discussed his study on the Austronesian percussion music. The two papers were highly informative for Indonesian audiences, who had not heard or were not familiar with the subjects. The session was concluded with a Javanese dance performed with contemporary style by two Italians who learned traditional arts (dance and *karawitan*). As they learned Javanese dance movements they learned a Javanese way of seeing and understanding the world. Movement is embedded with cultural meaning.

The second day was opened by *Direttore del Dipartimento di Scienze documentarie, linguistico-filologiche e geografiche* and the *Responsabile Area internazionalizzazione* La Sapienza explained the activities of the research cooperation. The session was followed by Italian scholar of his studies on Javanese and Balinese theater in the 20th century. For the case study he spent quite a long time to meet and talk with Indonesian theatre artists. The second speaker, scholar of the graduate school of ISI Yogyakarta, offered an ethnographic perspective on the biases of photography. When objects of photography represented a certain demographic class or facets of social realities, they were often misunderstood as symbols of poverty or other social plights. Ethnographic photographs threaten to show too much and reveal other perspectives or material with the potential to deflate the pretense of the ethnographic present. The actual ethnographic situation that included subjects would challenge the grip of the ethnographic present, with presenting ethnographic factors out such complications. The first session was concluded with Marta de Falcos' (Università di Milano "Bicocca") examination of identities and femininity of Papuan women in the local handmade craft.

After the break, on the second session Naima Morelli, an independent researcher, gave a presentation on Indonesian contemporary visual arts. She gave a quite wide breadth of information on the contemporary arts although its whole existence was beyond her grasp, such as the omission of several prominent Indonesian artists from her list of informants. Before the lunch break, the activities concluded with a discussion on postmodern orientalism in the Italian contemporary fine arts. The paper attracted the audience's attention as evidenced by their discussion to compare different genres of art.

One of a young researcher based in Paris, in the final session presented his two years of ethnographic work on traditional music of Madura, which showed his strong data presentation and analysis. We then shifted our attention to Lorenzo Chiarofonte's research in the spiritual aspects of Burmese percussion. The topic had some resemblances with Indonesian music since both belonged to the South-East Asian countries. The final speaker spoke about the spirits of Javanese traditional female

singer. By the end of the seminar, it was evidenced that the anthropological streak of the presentation was dominant, although we can also see some critical sociological perspectives offered.

To conclude the two day seminar, all participants were entertained with a gamelan concert from the Indonesian Embassy in Vatican, whose musicians were all students of Universita La Sapienza. The concert was a result of two months rehearsals, led by a lecturer from the department of dance at ISI Yogyakarta. The cooperation will be further strengthened by La Sapienza's participation in the next 2015 conference in Yogyakarta.

Continuing to hold this conference will be such a perfect place to share ideas and knowledges, and this also becomes a fresh opportunity for both Institutions to fulfill its obligation of contributing to the world by pursuing high quality arts education and research environment that foster the intellectual courage needed to support our society in the future. In common sense, this is about facing the global market or maybe collective behavior within arts higher Institutions. But what about the concern of academician if we approve that one of the main goal in arts education according to the culture and heritage context is systematically discover and try to do a kind of revitalization, restructurization or maybe renewing the traditional arts.

At one side, there are a lot of inquiries that based on the scientific purposed to develop concept and theories in order to understanding the position and function of traditional arts. Of course one of the important thing is how all of the inquiries could be as an inspiration to create a modern arts. In other words that the scientific inquiry would become a basic of modern arts creation.

Even though in a beginning to realise an idea of exchange experiences and knowledges through east and west perspective seems as a common point of view, a greater investment in the arts is indeed becomes one of the effective ways to equip today's scholars with the skills they need to succeed in their future. Because the art higher institutions try to address the difficult challenge of how to get more arts into the institutions in various ways, a complex patchwork of arts education services with a mix of delivery models is resulted.

The inquiries of traditional arts have the logic consequence about conservation as one of the important aspect of the heritage value. Especially In the context of the existence of arts inquiries which hopefully could confer input to the government for the protection of tradition treasure with all of their aspects. One of an efforts that artist and academician could work together through the similar pint of view, concept, understanding, concern, passion, and awareness of their own culture. By the expectation of the sameness understanding then agreed if concern about herritage means face and regarding to the consciousness of present time and contextual.

La sapienza University and Indonesia Institute of the Arts Yogyakarta are indeed, we have something in common, we were founded to educate prospective artists at the

leading edge of their disciplines so that they can grow into professional artists and researchers. Fostering professional artists and researchers who will take the lead in the near future of culture with spirit of creativity. As a part of academic exercises between scholars, students, and lecturer in a term of collaborative works could be said that these kind of activities would bring a scientific benefit for both institutions in the future.