


The concept of Tritangtu at Tarawangsa music performance in Pasir Biru Village, Rancakalong, Sumedang

Konsep Tritangtu pada pertunjukan musik Tarawangsa di Desa Pasir Biru, Rencakalong, Sumedang

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Submitted: January 24, 2023; Accepted: August 25, 2023; Published: August 31, 2023

KEYWORDS

Tarawangsa, music, Tritangtu ritual, nature, goddess of fertility

ABSTRACT

This study aims to reveal the aesthetics of the concept of Tritangtu (the trinity) in the Tarawangsa music performance in Kampung Pasir Biru, Rancakalong, Sumedang. Tarawangsa is a ritual ceremony related to religious magic to honor Keursa Nyai (goddess of fertility). The music in this ritual is not just an accompaniment or ritual compliment but even deeper shows a strong connection with the concept of **Tritangtu**, namely the world of heaven, the human world, and the underworld. This study uses the ethnographic method, by performing an in-depth recording of the event. The recording is to find out in more detail why Tarawangsa music is played, in what context, and how do people believe in it. In addition, the concept of Tritangtu, belief in three main elements (metacosm, microcosm, and macrocosm) shows a thought of the Rancakalong people about the balance of human life with God and nature. The study results show that the cultural customs of the Pasirbiru community, in general, indicate how this balance is maintained. They believe there will be a significant impact if one of the Tritangtu elements is not fulfilled, and Tarawangsa's music is an essential element in this effort.

KATA KUNCI

Tarawangsa, musik, Tritangtu, ritual, alam, dewi kesuburan

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap estetika konsep Tritangtu (urutan tiga unsur) dalam pertunjukan musik Tarawangsa di Kampung Pasir Biru, Rancakalong, Sumedang. Tarawangsa adalah upacara ritual yang berhubungan dengan ritual keagamaan untuk menghormati Keursa Nyai (dewi kesuburan). Musik dalam ritual ini bukan sekedar pengiring atau pujian ritual, tetapi lebih dalam lagi menunjukkan keterkaitan yang kuat dengan konsep Tritangtu yaitu dunia surga, dunia manusia, dan dunia bawah. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode etnografi, dengan mencatat secara mendalam suatu peristiwa. Pencatatan itu untuk mengetahui lebih detail mengapa musik Tarawangsa dimainkan, dalam konteks apa, dan bagaimana masyarakat mempercayainya. Selain itu, konsep Tritangtu, kepercayaan pada tiga unsur utama (metakosmos, mikrokosmos, dan makrokosmos) menunjukkan pemikiran masyarakat Rancakalong tentang keseimbangan hidup manusia dengan Tuhan dan alam. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa adat budaya masyarakat Pasirbiru secara umum menunjukkan bagaimana keseimbangan itu dijaga. Mereka yakin akan ada dampak yang signifikan jika salah satu unsur Tritangtu tidak terpenuhi, dan musik Tarawangsa menjadi unsur penting dalam upaya tersebut.

How to cite this article:

Ferawati, S, R. Setiawan, A. (2023). The concept of Tritangtu at Tarawangsa music performance in Pasir Biru Village, Rancakalong, Sumedang. *Bahasa dan Seni: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni, dan Pengajarannya*, 51(2), 243–254.
<https://dx.doi.org/10.17977/um015v51i22023p243>

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Introduction

Tarawangsa is a fiddle-like musical instrument that has two strings. It is played by bowing a single string, and plucking the other with the index finger. Tarawangsa is played together with a seven-stringed instrument called Jentreng. While the name "Tarawangsa" refers to the music instrument itself, it can also refer to a ritual ceremony to honor Keursa Nyai (Cahripin, 2008). Tarawangsa is performed by the locals as a form of gratitude after a successful rice harvest.

From the perspective of performance, Tarawangsa is popularized by farmers (Sumartias et al., 2019). There are various factors that support this; (1) the music accompaniment of Tarawangsa tends to give the impression of subtlety as the dialogues built by the community when farming with the local languages; (2) there are particular songs in which each song has a specific symbol, whose values have been passed down from generation to generation by the community, and are often performed during the ritual; (3) there are dance movements which are an expression of the people's gratitude for all the products from the rice fields; (4) all the actors that participate in Tarawangsa performance use colorful costumes as a marker of character and a way of establishing communication with their ancestors, which is often called karuhun; (5) some offerings are offered for Keursa Nyai or the Goddess of Fertility.

The latest studies related to the concept of "Tritangtu" in the Tarawangsa ritual were conducted by Supriatin (2017), Saringendyanti et al. (2018), and Desandra et al. (2020). Almost all of these studies discuss the evolution of the Tarawangsa ritual, particularly in the face of societal changes. Additionally, these studies delve into the relationship between Tarawangsa and the local culture context. The performers of Tarawangsa are consisting of youngsters and the elderly that had already lost their enthusiasm in continuing this ritual. This phenomenon is also interconnected with the supporting element of Tarawangsa, which is the music. There are a limited number of musician, since only the elderly can perform it well, and it does not being passed down to younger generations. As a result, it is possible that in the future, the Tarawangsa ritual will lose some of its essential elements, including its music. Previous studies have consistently focused on the relationship between Tarawangsa and the beliefs held by its community, with no writings specifically addressing its musical elements. This justifies the urgency and novelty of the research.

In the Tarawangsa ritual, there is a concept that is believed to be true, which is called Tritangtu. The concept of Tritangtu Sunda is the legacy of the Sundanese people in the past, which is a concept of paradoxical, contradictory trinity (Rusmana, 2018). Cosmologically, Tritangtu consists of three worlds, namely; *Buana Nyungcung* (the heavens), *Buana Larang* (the earth), and *Buana Pancatengah* (the humans). According to Heryana (2010), in order to establish a harmonious life, all paradoxical trinities must be unified with one another (Heryana, 2010). The unification occurred when Buana Nyungcung marries Buana Larang, and Buana Pancatengah is the one who unites them. Subsequently, fertility, growth, and life on the earth are formed (Nurmalinda, 2021). The rice fields shall thrive when the Heavens and the Earth are unified. At first, the sky is "wet" and the earth is "dry". To create life, the sky pours rain on dry lands. This principle is also interpreted in various ways. For example, according to Sumardjo

(2014), “wet” is the personification of women, and “dry” is the personification of men (Sumardjo, 2014, p. 198). The ideology still remains when the society starts to become farmers. It is a guidance towards a better life.

According to Pupung (Interview, October 23rd, 2021), Tarawangsa is a picture of Tritangtu and is even broader than the search for true identity. Even Pupung emphasized that every song, offerings, and process during the ritual symbolize Tritangtu. This is what underlies this research, to find out more clearly how the Tritangtu aesthetic is realized using Tarawangsa music.

Method

This study was qualitative. According to Rijali (2018), in-depth interviews are required in order to gain primary data in a qualitative research (Rijali, 2018). Secondary data subsequently complement these primary data through a literature review of previous research studies (Ciesielska, Boström, & Öhlander, 2018). This research studies Tritangtu aesthetics in the Tarawangsa music performance using the observation method (Baker, 2006). In addition, the researcher also use participatory observation method. This is done to obtain measurable primary data (Kawulich, 2005).

This research methodology used ethnographic methods, which involves a deep documentation of the event (Sharma & Sarkar, 2019). Ethnography is employed to provide a detailed description of the Tarawangsa ritual event. In this context, the researcher is present to observe, witness, and experience the event being studied (Humphreys & Watson, 2009). This engagement transforms the researcher's experiences into a data source that can be further analyzed and developed (Anggadi, 2019).

To examine the musical aesthetics of Tarawangsa, the concept of antagonistic dualism developed by Jakob Sumardjo is applied (Sumardjo, 2014). The theory of "antagonistic dualism" departs from the religious thought of the spiritual, mythic culture of the Sundanese and other ethnic groups in Indonesia. Based on the idea of spiritual, mythical culture, all "existence" always consists of two conflicting elements (Rosliani, 2013). The existence is related to "spiritual" and "material" existence. Both of them have different and contradictory characteristics. The Sundanese (primordial) people divide this "existence" into two categories, namely "The Upper World" and "The Underworld" (Sumardjo, 2003). Both must be united to nurture life. In the concept of Tritangtu, the marriage between the "Upper World" and the "Underworld" give birth to the "Middle World." The middle world represents the "offspring" or the continuity of life.

According to Sumardjo (2014, p. 64), the union of the sky (upper world) and the earth (lower world) can give rise to the middle world. This middle world is the universe inhabited by humans. The marriage of these paradoxical elements gives rise to liminality, a gray area, constant tension and release between one another, similar to the concept of a transcendent God and the tangible or visible realm of nature (earth, water) (Andrews & Roberts, 2015). Most Pasir Biru people work as farmers, believing that all existence is dualistic (Azis, 2022). However, all these dualistic things are binary positions, two pairs of opposites. The concept of the "trinity," which forms the basis of

the thinking of the people of Pasir Biru, is used to view the aesthetics of the Tarawangsa performance.

Discussion

The history of Tritangtu

According to the Parahiyangan story, the early culture of the Sundanese people began with a belief in *Sunda Wiwitan* (Wahid, 2012). *Wiwitan* means first steps, or the origin. The belief held by the people of Pasir Biru Rancakalong (the place where the Tarawangsa ritual is performed) are Indigenous Sundanese beliefs (Ekadjati, 2014, p. 62). The culture that has persisted to the present day among the Sundanese community is that of a farming society engaged in cultivation (*huma*), gardening, while some others engage in hunting animals in the forest as well as fishing in the rivers (Rosyadi, 2017). These lifestyle habits are only to meet the needs of everyday life.

The Sundanese concept of Tritangtu is a cultural heritage of the Sundanese people in the past, with the perspective of three conflicting worlds. As previously explained, cosmologically, Tritangtu consists of three divisions of the world, namely, *Buana Nyungcung* (heavens), *Buana Larang* (earth), and *Buana Pancatengah* (humans). In order to establish a harmonious life, all paradoxical trinities must be unified with one another. The unification was *Buana Nyungcung's* marriage to *Buana Larang*, and *Buana Pancatengah* was the one who united them. With actions like this, fertility, growth, and life on earth will be formed (Anoegrajekti et al., 2021). The rice fields shall thrive when the Heavens and the Earth are unified. At first, the sky is “wet” and the earth is “dry”. To create life, the sky pours rain on dry lands. This principle is also interpreted in various ways. For example, according to Sumardjo (2014), “wet” is the personification of women, and “dry” is the personification of men (Sumardjo, 2014, p. 198).

The Pasir Biru community, known as the Parahiyangan people in the past, are people who live in mountainous areas and live by farming. As time goes by, the people started to shift their farming system into paddy fields or plantations (Derik, 2019). As farmers, they have a view of these three essential worlds in this life. This view is that the sky gives rain, the land that grows plants, and humans unify them together (Ruslan, 2018). Its symbols are water (top), earth (bottom), and rock (middle). This Sundanese concept originates from the relationship between Rishi (water), Ratu (stone), People (land), women (sky/water), men (earth/dry), and the children (marriage between men and women). Another interpretation of this concept is passive (female), active (male), and passive-active (female-male) relationships (Sumardjo, 2014, p. 177).

Traditional Sundanese people interpret Tritangtu as a philosophy of a harmonious relationship between life and nature (Rusmana, 2018). The culture revolving around rice fields are extremely diversified and not just limited to farming activities. It includes various elements of art, as well as religious activities which grow to glorify and worship the Goddess of Life (Nastiti, 2020). The rice field culture, with time, gave birth to Tarawangsa, which is connected with the beliefs of the rice farming community (during the Hindu period until the 16th century) when they were still in the age of cultivation (*berhuma*) (Yulaeliah, 2012). The process of performing this Tarawangsa continued in

the rice field period when Islam entered the country (17th century). The farming community is very familiar with the Tarawangsa, a sacred ritual as a thanksgiving ceremony presented in the form of music and dance performances which are still preserved and adjusted based on the Islamic beliefs of the farmers in Pasir Biru.

Tarawangsa rituals

Tarawangsa existed around the 8th and 9th century, during the ancient Kingdom of Mataram (Supriatin, 2017). Based on a growing myth, retold by Abah Pupung (Interview, October 23rd, 2020), in ancient times, a disaster struck the Sundanese people that caused food shortages. The Kingdom of Sumedang then sent five people to look for the causes of this disaster by looking for rice seeds around Mataram. The five people are: Eyang Ratagama, Eyang Wirasuka, Eyang Wisanagara, Eyang Jati Kusumah and Nyai Sumedang. Before leaving, Eyang Jati Kusumah made two musical instruments, called rebab and Tarawangsa, which had a resonator hole at the bottom of the instrument, which would later be used to bring the rice seeds back to the kingdom.

Arriving in Mataram, those five people started playing this instrument on the city while also collecting rice seeds, and this drives the attention of local musicians so they can get their own rice seeds to be planted. However, their efforts failed several times because the Mataram gatekeepers knew them. For the third time, a musician tried to bring rice seeds and hid them in the musical instrument he was carrying, which is Tarawangsa. His effort was successful, and since then, Pasir Biru has become one of the primary rice producers. Thus, to express their gratitude, the people of Rancakalong performed a ritual ceremony to honor Dewi Sri after each harvest, and Tarawangsa become the main musical performance being enjoyed.

The Tarawangsa performance ritual begins at around seven in the evening, which is started by *Wali Puhun* or *Saehu* while burning incense and reciting mantras. The contents of the chant are giving thanks to God Almighty, as well as to the *Prophets* and to the *Karuhun*, which always bring good omen towards humanity. According to Lukens-Bull (2008), the acculturation between Islam and local beliefs was experiencing zero to no issue at all (Lukens-Bull, 2008). Tarawangsa music starts from the beginning of the ritual using the *Pangembat* or opening song (Abah Pupung, Interview, October 23rd, 2020).



Figure 1. Several offerings (sesaji, persembahan) prepared for the ritual (Photo by Sri Rahayu, 2022)

Around 7.30pm, the Tarawangsa ritual performance begins with *tatabeuhan* (instrumental music). This is done in approximately 15-20 minutes. Furthermore, the opening, called *Ijab Kabul*, is led directly by the Saehu. The Saehu explained the purpose of the ritual, as well as some advisory session (called *pepeling*). The event lasted for about an hour.



Figure 2. Several offerings (*sesaji, persembahan*) prepared for the ritual (Photo by Sri Rahayu, 2022)

A few moments later, the Saehu came carrying *Keursa Nyai's* clothes with a *keris* while accompanied by a song called *Pamapag*.



Figure 3. Saehu Piramaan in the Tarawangsa ritual (Photo by Sri Rahayu, 2022)



Figure 4. Dance together in the Tarawangsa ritual (photo by Sri Rahayu, 2022)

The next event was the entertainment, started by the Saehu wearing full clothes such as; Pangsi clothes, Sinjang batik, wearing a headband (*iket*), and four strands of the shawl (red, yellow, green, and white), as the first dancer accompanied by the song *Lalayaran*. The other dancers followed behind when Saehu Paibuan and Saehu Piraman were dancing. It was held until two o'clock in the morning.

Towards the end of the ritual, the keris, which is considered sacred, is brought to dance by Saehu, and then the keris is crazed over the smoke of burning incense. Then the dancers bring Dewi Sri's clothes and other equipments. At the same time, they are dancing gracefully according to the rhythm of the accompanying music that. With the completion of the ritual, the ritual of thanksgiving or respect for Dewi Sri is complete, ended with a prayer by the Wali Puhun or Saehu. All people who take part in the ritual feel "relieved" and satisfied, because they have carried out their spiritual obligations (Abah Pupung, Interview, October 24th, 2020).

Tritangtu aesthetics in Tarawangsa music

Tarawangsa is a wooden chordophone instrument consisting of two parts. The cross-section of the string, or known as the fingerboard, and a box-shaped body with a resonator box. It has two strings played by the left arm and a bow played by the right hand (Yulaeliah, 2012). The one string that is closest to the player is played by bowing, and the other string were plucked with the index finger. The types of wood used to make Tarawangsa are candlenut, jengkol, dadap, and ylang wood. Tarawangsa music is an ensemble accompanied by another musical instrument called Jentreng. Jentreng is made of wood, has seven strings, and is played by plucking the strings. The music scales used in playing the Tarawangsa are *pelog* (each octave has five, six, or seven notes that are unequally spaced). They were adjusted to Jentreng's pelog tone (in the tone of Da-Mi-Na-Ti-La). The Tarawangsa and Jentreng music use a numeric notation system from 1 to 5. Daminatila's notation consists of 5 main notes (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) and 2 inset notes (3-, 5+) (Fausta, 2020). This insert tone is explicitly used for pelog tunings. The Daminatila series of 7 tones in 1 *gembyang* or octave is 1 (da), 2 (mi), 3- (ni), 3 (na), 4 (ti), 5 (la), 5+ (leu), 1 (da -low-).

Laras is a sequence or interval of tones arranged and determined by pitch between each note (Prasetya, 2012). In pentatonic music culture, especially Sundanese karawitan, there are four scales: *Salendro* scale, *Madenda* scale, *Degung* scale, and *Pelog* scale (Saepudin, 2016). The Tarawangsa used in the thanksgiving ritual usually used a seven-tone Pelog scale, including the inset tone or middle note. The seven-tone Pelog scale are used because the accompanying music uses more tones than the usual, which are, 1, 2, 3-, 3, 4, 5, 5+. In contrast, the Jentreng only uses a 5-tone Pelog scale without the inset tones (3-, 5+). This is because the Jentreng is the rhythmical instrument, which can be played only with a 5-tone Pelog tuning (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). The reason why Pelog is used for the thanksgiving ritual is that it has been carried out for generations by the people of Rancakalong (Abah Pupung, Interview, October 24th, 2021). The pelog tune, which has a calm character (Supandi & Atmadibrata, 1983: 36), follows ceremonies or rituals requiring a peaceful and solemn atmosphere.

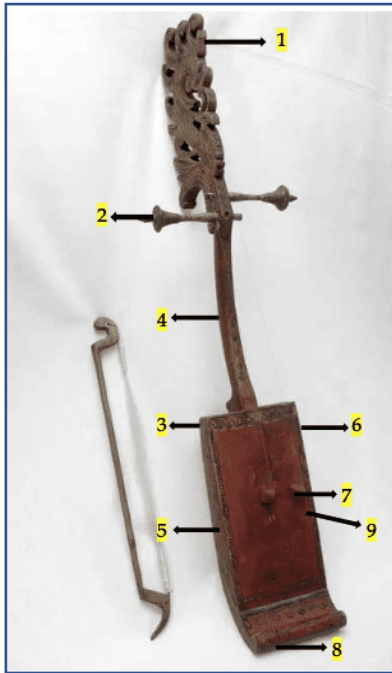


Figure 5. Tarawangsa Instrument (photo by Sri Rahayu, 2022)

Tarawangsa symbolizes the human body. Description of the image above based on the Tritangtu concept: 1) *Pucuk* is a symbol of the head, 2) *Pureut* is a symbol of ears, 3) *Bobokong* are a symbol of the back, 4) *Tihang* is a symbol of the body, 5) *Parungpung* is a symbol of the stomach, 6) *Raray* is a symbol of advance, 7) *Inang* and *Awak* are symbols of breasts and hair, 8) *Suku* is a symbol of the feet, 9) *Udel* is a symbol of the navel. The music of Tarawangsa and Jentreg is an instrumental music that are divided into three parts (opening, body, and closing). Inside it presents the main piece, while the free music (entertainment) is played outside the ritual ceremony. The main songs in the thanksgiving ritual are arranged according to a sequence of patterns that seem to form a storyline, which is opened with the songs *Saur* or *Tangis Pohaci*, *Pangapungan*, *Pamapag*, *Gelar Mataraman*, *Tongeret*, and as the closing songs are *Bangun* and *Pangbalikan*. In the opening part or at the start of the ritual, a song is always played with the title *Saur* or *Tangis Pohaci*. This song describes crying in the sense that humans will be held accountable for their actions while in the world (Abah Pupung, Interview, October 24th, 2020). Therefore, *Tangis Pohaci* is interpreted as a cry to reflect on human actions during life. The song *Saur* or *Tangis Pohaci* is also used to summon ancestral spirits. It was followed by the songs *Pangapungan* and *Pamapag*, which were played in a solemn atmosphere. Still, in this part, many ritual participants spontaneously moved their bodies or danced to the songs sung by Tarawangsa and Jentreg.

Laras : Degung

Transkriptor : Yayan.S

Surupan : 1=T

03	53 4 5434 43	23 43 5 i
	5434 4 5434 43	23 43 5 i
	5434 4 5454 2	.3 21 51 11
	5 .21 51 1	54 54 54 45
	54 543 4545 112	2.3 21 51 121

Figure 6. Pamapag's song in the tarawangsa performance

The content section is carried out after the opening. The main song played is the *Gelar Mataraman*. The people believe Mataram has a philosophy of the *mata* (eye, sense of sight) and *ram* (from the word bureum) in that all desires must be adjusted to abilities, and there must be compatibility between the body and mind. This *Mataraman* song is used in the rituals lead by *Ibing Paibuan* and *Ibing Piramaan*. In the end, the ritual is closed by playing the *Tongeret* song. *Tongeret* has a philosophy of *tong* (don't), while *ngeret* (see) means don't look at the past. In other words, learn from the past to do better in the future. This *Tongeret* song is used in the rituals lead by *Ibing Paibuan* and *Ibing Piramaan*, which means that humans must be grateful for the pleasures given by God or Keursa Nyai (Goddess of Fertility). It is followed by the song *Bangun*, which is interpreted as a human being who must develop physically and mentally to become a better person. The song *Bangun* is usually used as a form of gratitude because Keursa Nyai and other spirits have received the offerings made. In other words, God has blessed all the produce of the earth or the results of human efforts. While the song *Pangbalikan*, is interpreted as delivering Keursa Nyai or other spirits back to their world, namely *Buana Nyuncung* (heavens). Another meaning is that every human in this world will die, reduced to a mere soil, and shall make their journey into the afterlife.

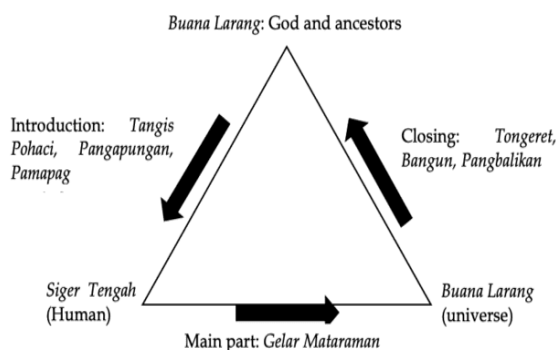


Figure 7. Tritangtu concept in Tarawangsa song

Based on Figure 7 above, it appears that every song performed in Tarawangsa music has a different position from one another. The songs play an essential role in the success of the ritual (Heimarck, 2022). Therefore, the order in which the songs are performed cannot be reversed or sung carelessly because the local community believes there will be dire consequences if the ritual is not carried out seriously. The songs in Tarawangsa are not only enjoyed aesthetically but also become a catalyst that connects humans with nature and their gods. This music is not only limited to sounds but goes beyond those boundaries (Kraus & Slater, 2016).

Conclusions

Tarawangsa's performance in ritual is a part of the culture of the Pasir Biru people, which is still prospering until today. They believe that the ritual with the presence of Tarawangsa music brings a prosperous and harmonious life. Therefore, the implementation involves many people and elements and even involves two worlds (the natural and the metaphysical). Tarawangsa performances are supported by ritual elements such as spells, dance, offerings, and Tarawangsa music. All of that becomes an essential part of its implementation. The function and role of the ritual imply symbolic meanings, which are interrelated with each other so that the entire device becomes an absolute requirement and must be present. Then as a whole, the supporting elements of the Tarawangsa ritual have a very significant role, especially the presentation of Tarawangsa music. The performance of Tarawangsa music largely determines the ritual's success. Therefore, the position of Tarawangsa music is essential and is performed seriously by the musicians who own it, with songs passed down between generations. The aesthetics of Tarawangsa music reside in its capacity to effectively evoke a "sacral" atmosphere, not striving to be the center of attention but solely supporting the success of a ritual. In this context, the function of music for the ritual event is not for a "watched event"; music is played but not entirely meant to be actively listened to and enjoyed. The aesthetics of music are situated "in a liminal space," where musical compositions are performed with seriousness and devotion, not meant for spectacle, but only as a small part of a more significant cultural event. Tarawangsa music, although a crucial component of the Tarawangsa Ritual, cannot stand alone; it is consistently intertwined with other elements. Therefore, the aesthetics of Tarawangsa music reside not in its composition but in its fusion with various elements to shape a grand and sacred ritual. This diverges from the usual nature of music, which is meant to be enjoyed and actively listened to, whereas Tarawangsa music is actually "heard without being entirely heard." The forthcoming challenges concerning the existence of the Tarawangsa ritual and its music revolve around the transmission to younger generations. There is a lack of interest among the younger generation in continuing the Tarawangsa tradition (both its ritual and its music) for various reasons, one of which is that it is perceived as outdated and no longer significant to uphold. They often perceive such traditions as products of the past that no longer align with the present time. Therefore, there is a need to actualize the Tarawangsa ritual, conveying the positive messages it contains, to reinforce the identity of the Pasir Biru community in Rencakkalong. Similarly, music's presence goes beyond mere sound production and encompasses numerous values for achieving harmonious life balance.

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