

Anusaba Composition: Reconstructing *Bagarak* Environmental Sounds into a Hybrid Soundscape

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to reconstruct the environmental sound of bagarak as a cultural identity of Guguak Tinggi in a hybrid soundscape music composition. Bagarak is a profession that processes gold and silver raw materials into various jewelry with high aesthetic value. The artistic value of bagarak not only enriches art, but also flows the logic of art into people's thoughts, feelings, bodies and behavior in living life. Musically, bagarak plays an important role in the soundscape of Guguak Tinggi. Various sound elements from the community's social activities are present as a chain that continues to fill the flow of Guguak Tinggi's time and evolve with the times. This research uses ethnographic and historical methods. Data were obtained by diving into the lives of indigenous people sensitively and naturally, as well as through documentation. Data analysis was carried out qualitatively to understand the point of view of the culture owner, focusing on the identification of sound material and its meaning. The results show that the environmental sound of bagarak characterizes Guguak Tinggi, which has aesthetic value and reconstruction value.

Keywords: *Anusaba, Bagarak, Reconstruction, Hybrid Soundscape*

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INTRODUCTION

However, we must realize that the focus of earning or making craft art is not due to the diligent nature (as opposed to the lazy nature), but is born from the skillful nature or keprigelan of our hands. This skill is obtained by improving the way or technique of cultivation and deepening the quality of one's work which eventually has expertise, even proficiency in a particular profession (Kusnadi. 1983: 44). *Bagarak* is an activity that processes gold and silver raw materials into various kinds of jewelry in Jorong Guguak Tinggi Tabek Sarajo, Agam Regency. The community views gold and silver as symbols of social status, wealth, and prestige, but more deeply, it also implies an inheritance of ancestral traditions. *Bagarak* has coexisted with the people of Jorong Guguak Tinggi for decades, there is no exact information when the first *bagarak* existed in Guguak Tinggi, but based on

the information of elders who also pursue this profession, it explains that it has been around for a long time.

Bagarak has become a cultural identity that reflects strong aesthetic and symbolic values in people's lives. Culturally, this craft is inseparable from the social structures and customs that govern people's lives. *Bagarak* is often closely associated with important moments in a person's life, such as traditional ceremonies, and activities of a cultural nature. This confirms the role of jewelry as the element that bound these activities in the first place. Each piece of jewelry made is not just a commercial product, but a cultural artifact rich in social and symbolic meaning, as well as a manifestation of the cultural identity inherent in people's lives. Although the jewelry is made manually or handmade, the quality of the jewelry produced is good and perfect. It's just that the time needed to make one piece of jewelry is quite long according to the complexity of the jewelry itself (Suarpradana. 2021).

Nasir Yopi argues that craft products themselves in terms of function are divided into two parts, namely expression crafts and functional crafts (Yopi. 2013: 4). This profession is individualistic, evidenced by the tendency of people who *bagarak* do it in their respective homes. Socially, the community of Jorong Guguak Tinggi still adheres to the principle of gotong royong, both from social activities, religious practices, and traditional ceremonies. Since the mid-1990s until now, *bagarak* is only a symbol of the identity of the Guguak Tinggi community because the community's priorities began to shift to the business sector. The community began to focus on how to spread sales more rapidly in order to reach all levels of society in various cities and districts. This was influenced by the use of printing machines in producing various types of jewelry, and also the younger generation until now tends to choose to directly become jewelry sellers in shops in various regions.

The concept of soundscape, which has been widely used in various scientific contexts over the past few decades (Aletta. 2018), was originally introduced by Southworth in 1969 who studied the perception of urban acoustic environments. Southworth first defined soundscape as "the quality and type of sound and its arrangement in space and time" (Siemers. 2011). Barchiesi presents soundscape as the equivalent of "acoustic scene", which denotes the sound produced by the environment. In the context of acoustic scene classification, the acoustic scene moves away from Pijanowski's holistic soundscape and rather describes the sounds that reach the observer (Barchiesi. 2015). Celis-Murillo goes further and suggests that the recording contains all the information embedded in the soundscape (Buxton. 2017)

This work also reviews several works inspired by or related to soundscape, one of which is "Hutan Kampung" by Elizar in 2007. Through an interview with Elizar, this work was inspired by the awareness of time markers in nature (vulnerable time from morning to evening) by recognizing the sound signs that are a guideline for the Pitalah people, with the concept of working on the passage of time in the natural environment by recording various natural sounds that correlate with time, also recording various sounds of human and animal activities, with the method of collecting sound samples then processed in daw using cubase.

The sound sampling is arranged by considering the density of sound, tempo, dynamics following the flow of events and time.

The modern era has transformed art, which has high aesthetic value, into a means of entertainment and merchandise with economic value. "Modernization demands a straightforward (zakelijk), rational, and forward-looking life in development." (Agus Sachari, 2002). The above review makes the author aware that *bagarak* has changed in the process of working using a printing machine, on the other hand Guguak Tinggi as an area has also experienced modernization which changes the atmosphere of sound around the community. Wendri Sutan Malako, one of the active informants who since 2014 began to settle back in Guguak Tinggi has been pursuing *garak* for approximately 30 years and is still active until now. He explained that this condition made people who were still active in *bagarak* begin to work together in carrying out this profession.

RESEARCH METHODS

In this research using a qualitative approach. In this study, researchers used descriptive qualitative methods. Where this method is based on a theoretical perspective to conduct a study. According to Lexi J. Moeleong in the book "*Qualitative Research Methods*" states that what is meant by a qualitative approach is as a process that produces descriptive data in the form of written sentences from the observed subjects (Moleong, L.J, 2017. Page 4, Publisher: Remaja Rosdakarya).

In the initial stage, the author conducted an interview with an active *bagarak* actor who is also a village elder, *Angku Barain* (Interview, September 10, 2024, Guci, Guguak Tinggi). He explained how the initial period of *bagarak* became a cultural identity for approximately the past fifty years, he also explained how and what happened in that period. Then conducted interviews with Wendri Sutan Malako (Interview, September 2, 2024, Pisang, Guguak Tinggi) who is also an active *bagarak* actor who had undergone this profession overseas, and Rajif Rifaldo (Interview, October 7, 2024, Tanjung, Guguak Tinggi) who is one of the younger generation who directly became a jewelry seller in the shop.

The execution of research in the field, not only collects information by oral interview, but also implements the practice of soundwalk itself. Soundwalks are usually influenced by complex variables-such as seasonality (Liisa. 2016), visual environment (Ren and Kang, 2015), crowd activity and density (Meng and Kang, 2016), temperature, humidity, wind speed, and lighting (Thwaites. 2005). The journey taken by the artist in diving into the scattered sounds is always observed while recording the spontaneous sound moments that occur. This research also reviews and analyzes every sound that is present in the *bagarak* environment. *The* sounds that emerge from various social activities of the community are present like a chain that will continue to fill the time line of Guguak Tinggi and continue to follow the times.

Recording various selected sound materials with handy recorder recording media, taking pictures and videos using smart phones, which aims to explore and analyze directly how the *bagarak* environment sounds in the perspective of Guguak Tinggi's cultural identity. Soundwalk practice is the main execution in analyzing and observing the sounds

studied, because in this practice there are two techniques for identifying sounds, namely soundmarks and sound objects. Soundmark means a sound that is indeed a sign or distinctiveness in a certain community group, in this case how the main sounds of *bagarak* activities become a distinctive sound in recognizing the cultural identity of Guguak Tinggi. The sound object is a step in defining the sound material that becomes a sign, as well as recognizing what are the supporting components in the scope of *bagarak* sound.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Bagarak is not only a profession for the people of Guguak Tinggi, An interview with the village elder commonly called Angku barain at September 10, 2024, he explained how the initial period of *bagarak* became a cultural identity for approximately the past fifty years, he also explained how and what happened in that period. Compositionally, the attitudes in this profession are manifested in how the *bagarak* performers work on each showcase of their work process, then also present a flow of changes in the structure of community habits that initially tended to work manually changing to a more practical stage of working using machines. In this soundscape music, the artist presents changes in the use of both conventional and non-conventional instrumentation, and the summarized sound material tends to be experimental, but still presents the common thread of *bagarak* as the cultural identity of Guguak Tinggi. This activity provides color and identity for the local community. The value of art in *bagarak* not only achieves the development of artistic enrichment, but also flows the logic of art in thoughts, feelings, bodies and behavior in the community living life. Musically, *bagarak* has an important role and meaning in the soundscape of Guguak Tinggi.

The creator knows a soundscape artist named Elizar, then has a discussion and reviews some of Elizar's works that are used as references in working on the soundscape music composition of the *bagarak* environmental sound. Some of the works reviewed by the artist include Hutan Kampung and Mencari Alternatif. "Hutan Kampung" (Elizar, 2007). This work is inspired by the awareness of time markers in nature (morning to evening time span) by recognizing sound signs that are guidelines for the Pitalah community, with the concept of working on the journey of time in the natural environment by recording various natural sounds that correlate with time, also recording various sounds of human activity, animals, with the method of collecting sound samples then processed in daw using cubase. Sound sampling is arranged by considering the density of sound, tempo, dynamics following the flow of events and time. The work "Mencari Alternatif" (Elizar, 1994). This work is inspired by Elizar's personal experience and the Pitalah community who repel pests such as squirrels, bats that eat fruits using zinc attached to a rope that is tied to a tree and then pulled. What is interesting for Elizar is how the sound produced is distant from the perpetrator. The concept of the work was worked on by reconstructing the outdoor acoustic space into an indoor acoustic space, using gong instruments, 5 Javanese gendings hung on the stage, then cans of various sizes were installed in each corner of the room using nylon strings that were centered towards the operator's room. This explanation provides

inspiration on how to recognize and understand the sounds in the surrounding environment living side by side with the passage of time and various human activities, as well as how to utilize non-conventional objects around as soundscape musical instruments, until the creator finds a strong influence on the use of sound sources around the bagarak environment. The creation carried out in reconstructing the environmental sound of *bagarak* in the perspective of the cultural identity of Guguak Tinggi has a process of stages including: initial stimulation, concept formulation, exploration, incubation, preparation, and formation.

DISCUSSION

Initial Stimulus

"Sounds are everywhere, some audible, some inaudible. Everything carries a message for those who care. Care for the environment, care for the earth." (Slamet Abdul Sjukur, 2014). When the author paid special attention to listening to the sounds in the Guguak Tinggi environment, the author realized that the sound that was originally considered not so important finally became a special concern because the appearance of the sound slowly began to disappear. This became the initial stimulus for the author to change the existing sound atmosphere. The sound of the *bagarak* environment in the perspective of Guguak Tinggi's cultural identity became a trigger for the artist as a form of effort to understand how these sound materials over time, then reconstructed into musical compositions.

Creation Concept

The author reconstructs the phenomenon that occurs by applying the concept of hybrid soundscape using two methods, namely soundwalk and sound collage. The use of the word hybrid refers to the way or effort in mixing and crossing natural and artificial sounds to present the construction of a new experience instrumentarium performance sourced from the sound of the *bagarak* environment in Guguak Tinggi into the composition of the work, then combined with the author's empirical experience in working on music composition. From a musicological point of view, soundscape refers to what can be perceived as an aesthetic unit in the sound environment. The soundwalking method explores, observes and analyzes and records the sound elements of the environment on foot using a handy recorder.

According to (Brandon LaBelle, 2019), the sounds in people's neighborhoods are constantly moving, and interacting with their lives. Every gap in the space between people presents an abstract soundscape. Sound collage is a way of processing recorded and manipulated pieces of environmental sound elements to create a meaningful auditory experience. "Brandon LaBelle explains how the presence of sound affects our experience of physical space, especially in the neighborhoods of a community group, not only about hearing sound, but also about how sound creates perceptions of space, identity, and social interaction." (Brandon LaBelle, 2019)

According to (Bambang Sugiharto, 2013) "The way we apply the word 'music' is often arbitrary. The tendency is that some musical elements are not categorized as music,

unless there is a deliberate intention to include them as musical elements by the composer. Certain societies consider the sounds of the forest, the various animals that are there (forest), the wind, waterfalls and so on to be very musical. So it remains difficult to define the boundaries of musical territory exclusively and firmly. Furthermore, Cathleen Marie Higgins says that loosely and openly music can be understood as an intensionally produced auditory phenomenon. How the form of appreciation that is born to music depends on the listener's interpretation of music. (Higgins in (Bambang Sugiharto, 2013).

The exploration of all auditory and conceptual gestures for research is to elucidate a position that is also not yet attuned to the material and paradigmatic energies found in sound, this weaving of intensity and transience. A lively flexibility and charged spatiality, and which situates the act of listening as an act of agency and organization. The temporal and disappearing nature of sound gives great flexibility, and uncertainty to the stability of space. Sound ignores specific visual and material depictions.

(Bambang Sugiharto, 2013)said: "It is often unnoticed that music infiltrates, shapes, and even controls human behavior in almost all areas of life. Music is something that is spun in experience, which is one of the crucial entrances to understanding the phenomenon of music." The above observation became an idea for the author to work on in a music composition entitled *Anusaba*.

Exploration

Anusaba is the result of the author's absorption of *bagarak*, which is now only a symbol of Guguak Tinggi's identity. *Anu* is a word that is often spoken and heard in the environment around the author to express an intention that has been forgotten or missed. *Saba* is the Minang word for patience, which means calmness, control, restraint with full awareness of certain situations. In this case *Anusaba* contains the tendency of how the condition of *bagarak* as a cultural identity of Guguak Tinggi today, where the *bagarak* profession has begun to be less attractive to the next generation. *Anusaba* is an attempt for the author to collect *bagarak* sound materials and the sounds of the natural environment and the sounds of the activities of the Guguak Tinggi community which tend to be taken for granted and not noticed.

These sound elements are arranged and combined with external materials to create a listening experience that reflects the dynamics, rhythms and emotions that are grounded in the *bagarak* perspective. This process not only involved the use of digital recording and manipulation technology, but also involved an in-depth analysis of the sound patterns and rhythmic structures that exist within the culture of the community. How each spontaneous sound coexists with the people of Guguak Tinggi in their daily lives. The creation of soundscape music using the soundwalking and sound collage methods is based on the interpretation of the people of Guguak Tinggi who perform *bagarak* activities that have significant artistic, cultural and scientific values. From an artistic point of view, this work can enrich the realm of contemporary music by bringing elements of local tradition and culture into a more modern and experimental format.

From a cultural perspective, maintaining and preserving Indonesian culture can be done in various ways. There are two ways that people, especially the younger generation,

can support cultural preservation and participate in maintaining local culture (Sendjaja, 1994: 286). This design helps to capture and elevate voices from everyday life that may go unnoticed, but have deep meaning in the social and cultural context of the Guguak Tinggi community. This work aims to make a musical cultural contribution especially in exploring the relationship between environmental sounds, work, and cultural expression in traditional societies. In addition to the beauty of the jewelry resulting from *bagarak* activities that can be seen, the sounds in the *bagarak* process convey how the stages of this process are so detailed in each part of the process.

The work is divided into two parts, *Salingka Lewa* and *Galimang Kancah*. *Salingka Lewa* is taken from the Minang language which means circling around. It aims to pick up, identify and collect sound materials recorded with a handy recorder. The activities in *Salingka Lewa* are realized using the soundwalk method. Soundwalks are identified by soundmarks and sound objects. Soundmarks refer to sounds that exist in a community that contain a certain quality that is highly valued, thus making the acoustic life of the community environment unique. ((Schafer, 1977)).

Sound objects are of interest as the smallest particle of soundscape practice whose appearance has a beginning and an end. For example, the sound of *tokok* in *bagarak* activities can be examined by paying attention to amplitude settings in the form of pressure, resistance, temporary, loss, freedom. (Schafer, 1977) In this section, the sound elements sourced from various activities of the Guguak Tinggi community are recorded and then reconstructed into the performative body which is presented through the body parts such as the mouth, hands, and feet which are paired with various unconventional instruments such as rubber toys, zinc plates, *tangkelek*, plastic bags, and several other additions. The selection of unconventional instruments is intended as an effort to create a hybrid in reconstructing the sound of the Guguak Tinggi environment. The supporters of the work in this section use costumes in the form of people's daily clothes when doing certain activities.

This section begins with one performer who has stood in the center of the stage exploring vocal sounds as a form of exploration. Players in other costumes appear by walking from various sides towards the one player who is already in the center of the stage. Each player conducts dialog between players by issuing exploratory sounds inspired by the sounds of the Guguak Tinggi environment. Players with midi controllers connected to daw laptops play sound recordings of *bagarak* activities that have been processed as a marker for the players in the center to start taking dispersed positions to reconstruct and represent the activities of the Guguak Tinggi community in the sound space of the performance stage. Each player on stage began to respond to the sound coming from the midi controller as a form of realization of the connection between humans, the environment (hybrid), and technology.



Figure 1

Player with midi controller and electric guitar

Galimang Kancah is a part that emphasizes the use of the sound collage method. This practice is an effort for the author to curate each selected sound both in texture and meaning. This method is also reinforced by manipulating various natural sounds that are born through the performative body and digital sounds that are born through selected supporting instruments in the form of konyo, harp, oud, electric guitar with multi-effects, and midi controller devices operated through daw on a laptop. This aims to create a hybrid experience that reconstructs the environmental sounds of *bagarak* as the cultural identity of Guguak Tinggi.



Figure 2

Electric guitar player



Figure 3

Oud players and unconventional instrument players

The composer considers the creation of temporal and spatial aspects of narration as a form and manifestation of how the crossover and transition between natural and artificial sound elements can reconstruct the sound phenomenon that occurs. In this section, the author aims to describe the current situation of Guguak Tinggi combined with the empirical experience of the work in working on music composition. This section begins with players partly walking towards the side of the stage, and partly running towards the other side, while the recorded sound that has been processed slowly gets stronger. The guitar player plays ambience exploratively as a sign for other players to prepare. Slowly, a combination of processed sounds sourced from *bagarak* sound material and other activities of the Guguak Tinggi community are heard again.

Incubation

In the incubation stage, the artist analyzes and settles the material that has been explored for some time. This is so that the artist can evaluate and review the relationship between the textual material that has been explored and the context presented in the concept of creation. Evaluation is also carried out on the correlation of each explored material that has been arranged in parts of the work.

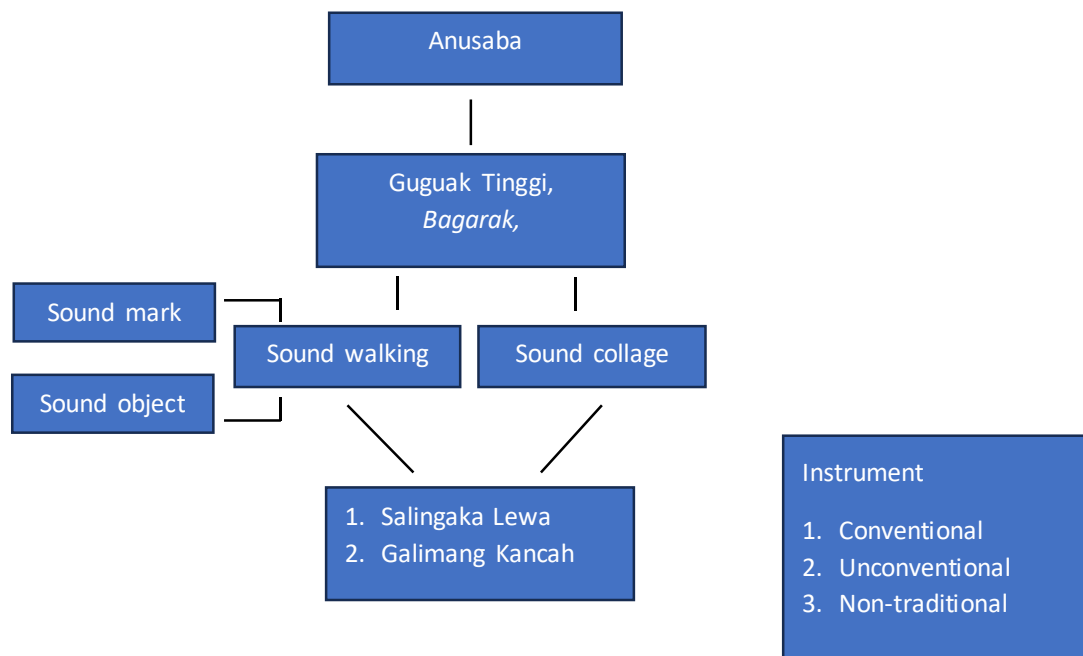
Compilation of

After the artist evaluates the material that has been explored and compiled, the artist moves to the stage of composing the work. The author composes by constructing a new form of space for the depiction of natural and artificial sounds, both digital and non-digital, as a new perspective on the sound of the *bagarak* environment in the perspective of Guguak Tinggi's cultural identity. In realization, the work in the *Salingka Lewa* section provides an exploratory point of view of identifying the awareness of the acoustic environment that has been contaminated with existing sounds. How each variant of instrument playing by musicians is collaborated with the performative body that applies a *call and response* structure between one another. While in the *Galimang Kancah* section,

sound materials that have been curated in texture and meaning are also manipulated to provide a hybrid experience in understanding the soundscape of Guguak Tinggi.

Establishment

The composer assembles and organizes all parts of the work into a complete performance flow. Reconstruction on the aspects of performative position, stage technique, is also carefully considered so that everything presented is in line with the concept that has been prepared. The performance was held indoors with a stage layout using several places such as the left and right main stage wings, left and right front stage wings, and several places close to the audience seats as a novelty effort in the reconstruction of the work. The arrangement of light, the selection of clothing is harmonized to strengthen the meaning of the work concept.



Summary

The development of the times encourages patterns of survival towards a more practical way, on the one hand this greatly encourages aspects of creativity in activities, but on the other hand this has an impact on the tendency to leave the essence of noble cultural values. Therefore, a relevant strategy or effort is needed so that the values of *bagarak* activities are not eroded by the times. Through a hybrid soundscape approach, the musical aspects of *bagarak* and the sounds of the environment can serve as a reminder of the importance of *bagarak* activities for the people of Guguak Tinggi.

The diversity of cultural values that exist can be used as a trigger for inspiration and ideas in the creation of works of art. One of them is how the sound of *bagarak* activities that have existed for decades has become the identity of a community group. The concept is realized by applying various methods and stages carried out in the process of creating artworks such as exploration, incubation, preparation, and formation. The hybrid soundscape

performance is presented as a form of reminder of the current condition of the Guguk Tinggi community from the point of view of music composition.

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