

GENDANG GONG IN RIAU A REVIEW OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL VALUES

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Abstract

This article is the result of research conducted regarding Gendang Gong music in Riau today in the context of Malays in Riau. On the one hand, this music is very necessary in tradition, so this also makes it still exist, and on the other hand, this music is experiencing decline due to the decreasing number of players, so this also has an impact on regeneration which is increasingly worrying about its sustainability. In this regard, some people who care are trying to make this music more present, so that apart from being brought to life in traditional performances, it is also brought out of tradition, for example for artistic performances by certain groups at certain events. This acculturation shows that Gendang Gong music has social and cultural values. The *social value* is seen in relation to the owner of the culture, where this music has a social function and meaning, while *the cultural value* is seen in value based on its practical value/function in musical activities as a whole - both within custom and outside custom. This research method is a qualitative method, the data of which is obtained through observation, interviews, literature. The concept of value refers to 1) *social value* , which includes *social capital* , *public involvement* , and *identity* , *culture* , and the next one is related to 2) *cultural values* including four things, namely *musical creativity* , *cultural enthusiasm* , *talent development* and *opportunities/opportunities*.

Keywords: Gendang Gong; Social Values; Culture value

Introduction

Riau is a province in Indonesia, which is known as one of the Malay treasures which has a glorious history in the archipelago. The glory of the past cannot be continued for the next period, so there are periods that are considered to have experienced decline, and then several figures need to empower Malay culture. There have been attempts to fight for this culture, especially through identity politics around the end of the Soeharto regime, known as the New Order era (Rafi, et.al., 2020). Efforts during the New Order era had strong clashes related to regime power, so that this could actually be realized during the fall of Soeharto and his New Order.

The era of reform began, so freedom of opinion and action was opened, so that identity politics continued among people

in the regions. One of the related things that the people of Riau Province have done is to issue government programs and regulations in the Riau Vision 2020. This vision really provides a breath of fresh air for political, economic and cultural life which has long been suppressed by the Soeharto regime.

One of the most important things about this vision is that art and culture are important tools for the development of society in Riau, which states: *the realization of Riau Province as the center of the Malay economy and culture in a religious, physically and mentally prosperous society in Southeast Asia by 2020* (Tambak and Sukenti, 2017). At the same time, this vision has shown the existence of music in society, both modern and traditional, and at the same time shows the attitudes and actions (behavior) of society towards music in

Riau. In general, there is public awareness of the importance of music as part of culture, this is also proven by the presence of arts colleges since 2002 in Pekanbaru with the inclusion of several traditional music in the learning curriculum. The role of other institutions, including arts councils and art studios, also contributed to promoting Malay traditional music, so that its impact can still be felt today.

The reality is that traditional music still needs to be empowered and society also needs to encourage it again. Popular music seems to be surviving more strongly, so its frequency is quite stable, and popular music related to indigenous communities is increasingly experiencing decline. For example, this can be seen in Gendang Gong music (Refrianto, et.al., 2020), and even this is also mentioned in many other literatures, where one side is considered important as a part of culture in Riau, and on the other side it is experiencing decline, especially related to with regeneration and the number of perpetrators decreasing (Pratama, et.al., 2023). Indeed, performers of this music can still be found in villages and inland areas in particular, but they are very old, and their numbers are also getting smaller. In addition, in Riau there are no metal music makers, so this instrument is increasingly rarely owned by a tribe or even a village. It also hinders the learning process and even regeneration in the younger ones. The reality is that young people are increasingly nervous about facing existing changes, especially changes in the ecosystem, economy and culture, which also distances them from their native culture.

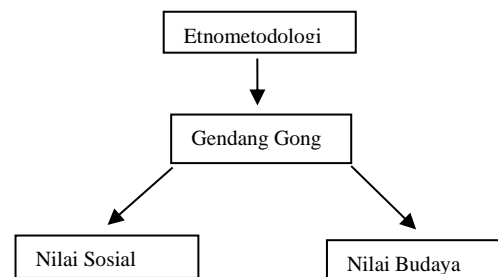
Nevertheless, there is awareness for others to promote and appreciate it both within the customary space itself and outside the customary space. This awareness comes with an effort to re-

learn traditional songs that are usually played during traditional prayers, then performed at weddings or other festivals. Meanwhile among young people, apart from the desire to be able to play it according to traditional needs, there are also efforts to explore it as part of musical creativity. In this regard, it appears that this music remains traditional music, but for others it is also taken out of tradition.

His statement above shows two things, namely music as a social part and music as cultural activity and creativity. This is discussed in two statements, namely: Gendang Gong music has social value, and; Gong drums have cultural value.

Methodology

This research method is a qualitative method, with an ethnomethodological approach. The research design is as follows.



This research was conducted in Riau by observing various Gendang Gong music activities in Pekanbaru, Kampar, Rokan and Kuantan. All of these areas represent the four major rivers in Riau where the indigenous people or Riau Malay people live. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, documents, the internet and literature.

Observations include all activities related to the presence of music, which includes performers or musicians, as well as the people involved and supporters of the music culture. Interviews are prioritized for musical actors or performers, inviters or people who facilitate Gendang Gong music, as well as the general public. As for documents, internet, libraries to strengthen the main data above.

The theory uses the concept of value presented by Bille (2023) that "the important value of art and culture is related to the impact it has on the individuals who participate and consume it." Throsby also conveyed this in relation to this, namely:

in terms of culture, value exists in certain properties of cultural phenomena, which can be expressed either in specific terms, such as the value of a musical note or the value of a color in a painting, or in general terms as an indication of the merit or value of a work, object, experience, or other cultural matters (Hoeven and Hitters, 2019).

In this regard, Kalmer (Hoeven and Hitters, 2019) further clarifies that there is a distinction between *social value* and *cultural value* of goods or art products. That *the social value* of art products concerns *a sense of belonging, identity and social difference*. This was finally clarified by Hoeven and Hitter (2019), that *cultural values* include: *social capital; public involvement and identity, differentiated by cultural values* namely: *musical creativity; cultural spirit, and; talent development*.

The value concept above, specifically related to what Hoeven and Hitter conveyed, is used in this article, then interpreted again to expand the criteria according to the Gendang Gong context observed so far. So here we add additional criteria, namely *social values*

related to *custom*, while *cultural values* are related to *opportunities* or *opportunities* in the sense of material and immaterial benefits.

Results and Discussion

Welcoming Guests and Silat Accompaniment

Gendang Gong music is actually music related to the Malay Keperpatihan tradition in Riau (Hukmi, 2022). Linguistically there are many dialects to refer to this ensemble, for example in Rokan some call it: *Gondang Ogong; Gondang Gong; Gondang Burogong*, or also; *Gondang Celempong*. In Kampar and Kuantan some call it: *Gondang Oguang, Gondang Buroguang*, or; *Gondang Calempong*. Even in Kuantan itself they also usually call it *Rarak*. In Siak it is also the same as in Rokan, but some people who use standard Malay will call it *Gendang Gong*. This article will use the designation according to standard Malay, namely Gendang Gong.

This music is usually useful for welcoming guests or important people or public figures, and this is usually at traditional events. This reception is usually also presented with silat (silat for welcoming guests), so this also shows that it is also used as an accompaniment to silat (Anwar and Abdullah, 2019). It is customary in every traditional event that there is someone who is special or venerated, whether it is a traditional leader or a guest from another tribe, whose presence is greeted with martial arts accompanied by Gendang Gong music.

In fact, there is no requirement for silat to be accompanied by this music, but this is considered an added value in tradition, especially as it is related to tribalism. This function is also what makes this music still survive, even

though there are also setbacks in regeneration.



Figure 1. Gendang Gong music at a wedding event in Pekanbaru, 2020.

Even though this music is closely related to tradition, some others take it outside of tradition, or for example is related to other artistic events. The most general aim is as a form of socialization or cultural appreciation for the public (Hukmi, 2022).



Figure 2. Pesilat accompanied by Gendang Gong music at an arts festival in Kampar, 2021.

Communication Media and Entertainment

Every event related to traditional communities is considered a traditional event. So wedding ceremonies, the coronation of traditional ancestors, or even holding celebrations for certain tribes, are all called traditional ceremonies. The most important thing regarding these events is their socialization, or being known by the public. Some people are able to present Gendang Gong, but many are not able to present it. People who have the ability and desire, then Gendang Gong music is

presented, as a sign that there is a celebration. Some even consider it a sign of the greatness (custom) of their family and tribe, so Gendang Gong music really needs to be presented (Interview, Darmiati 2023). With this musical beat, people can feel the excitement of the holiday, people can interact and communicate fluidly with full intimacy. So, the basic communication of this music is the function of showing the presence of the ritual, even as an unwritten invitation for the village audience who hears the music (Interview, Salman 2023). Of course, the element of communication in a symbolic sense will be even more visible by looking at other aspects, which are not part of this article.



Figure 3. Pangean Silat Festival held at Ngori Pangean, Kuantan Singingi, 2023.

Gendang Gong musical performances are musical or instrumental performances only. There is no singing, although each beat has a name. On average, only musicians know the name of the song, and even then they don't always know the meaning verbally. Of course, most people don't know the name of the musical beat song, so of course they don't know the verbal meaning of the song.

The entertainment element of this music cannot necessarily be equated with entertaining people with singing as in Western Pop music. This entertainment is due to the enjoyment of musical activities, namely playing,

watching, and gathering in social unity. This indicates that the entertainment element of this music is not seen in understanding the distributed meaning, because it does not accommodate the listener's melancholic or sentimental feelings. However, this music can provide a spectacle for the public, some even record it to take home and watch and listen to again.



Figure 4. Playing and listening to music during Helat *Bakhatik*, namely the socialization of *Eid al-Fitr* preachers by the *Mundiliong* Tribe in Kampar, 2024.

The events related to the social functions above can provide a glimpse of *the social* and *cultural values* related to Gendang Gong music. This includes events within customs and also outside customs as per existing observations.

Social Values ***Social capital***

The original function of Gendang Gong music is closely related to the interaction and integrity of Malay society, especially the Malay Keperpatihan tradition. This function is of course also supported by traditional performances, so that it becomes one unit with the music.

The interaction between the players can be seen in the communication between them, in between conversations. Interaction with the audience is also shown, because playing this music does not require seriousness with the game per se but rather there is fluidity between

individuals, so that the players and the audience are not distant.

Integrity is also demonstrated, namely to strengthen the sense of social unity. The existence of Gendang Gong music also means raising the dance, raising the community, raising the tribe and raising the village.



Figure 5. Community presence when Gendang Gong music is played during the event.

Events that show social ties with music are not only in rural areas, but are also seen in big cities in Riau. For example, in Pekanbaru City (the provincial capital) where the society is more plural, they display their identity with Gendang Gong music, as traditional people (Interview, Bakhtarim, 2023).



Figure 6. The Gendang Gong group in Pekanbaru City (as a large city in Riau) is preparing their musical instruments.

Public Engagement

Usually in traditional prayers only one Gendang Gong Music group is needed. Wedding ceremonies are considered simple ceremonies, so the presence of Gendang Gong music does not require a lot of technical matters. Even if there is a larger performance, for example related to tribal or *nagari performance*, it also does not require a lot of technical things to present the music.

Even if not much is done, the role of the community or its involvement is very important. Internally there must be support from the family, tribe or tribal permission. Another thing, for example, is that neighbors provide space for parking vehicles.

If music is played in the yard, then it requires a place, namely a base and a roof for protection. This is usually done by nephews from this family or from the tribe. Usually neighbors also involve themselves to make the music easier.



Figure 7. Vehicles are placed on roads and in the yards of residents or neighbors who have vehicles.

When the music is played, the host provides food and drink, including the musicians' cigarettes. This dish can be enjoyed at any time, or even during breaks between musicians.



Figure 8. The host serves the dish.

This dish is not only enjoyed by the musicians, but also by several people around the event. Traditionally, public involvement starts from contributing energy, morals, and also being involved in enjoying music and food.



Figure 9. Musicians and audience enjoying the food served.

Even if there is a bigger event, there will be more people involved. This can be seen, for example, in music festivals which are implemented with more complex techniques and mechanisms. This is no longer a traditional event.



Figure 10. Involvement of young people in a festival related to Gendang Gong music in Lipat Kain, Kampar.

Identity

Music has a social background, so it also shows ownership or identity related to music. Gendang Gong music belongs to the Malay community of Riau, and is spread throughout the mainland of Riau, especially in the upper reaches of every major river in Riau. This music is identical to the Malay customs of the Keperpatihan tradition and is traditionally associated with traditional events or rituals.



Figure 11. Music is playing, the martial artist is preparing to perform, and observing upcoming guests. A typical Malay welcome is based on the traditional Keperpatihan tradition

Apart from identity, it can be seen sociologically, as well as musicologically. That instrumentally it is only for the Gendang Gong ensemble, namely: Gong (1 or 2); Drum (2), and; 1 set of piping (5 or 6 notes for one set). This does not belong to the traditional Malay Ketemenggungan which is generally on the coast or islands in Riau. The drum acts as a rhythm controller, the gong plays the same role as *the bass*, and the celempung plays the melody. As for the Malays on the coast and islands, their melodic instruments are the violin/fiddle, accordion, harp, and trumpet. This means that they do not use melodic instruments made of bronze or pipples. Typical of this celempung, it is played *interlocking*, especially with two players for the celempung, while the

trumpet or melodic instrument on the coast is not like that.

Civilized

Malay people highly value customs. There is a very radical expression related to this, namely, *let the child die as long as the custom does not die* (Budiawan, 2021). This is certainly a metaphor that provides an understanding of: even though life's challenges are tough in changing times, traditions continue to be held firmly.

Based on the criteria for custom, the most fundamental custom that cannot be changed is *the true custom*, namely the Islamic religion, as the first criterion. The second is *customary customs*, namely customs inherited from traditional leaders or traditional datuks. These are, for example, tribal systems, traditional and nagari leaders, and procedures for administering customs. The third criterion is *customary practice*, namely the technical aspects of traditional procedures. The fourth criterion is *customs*, namely daily matters related to politeness in greeting, rules in farming, and so on. Gendang Gong music can be in the second criteria and can also be in the third criteria, and it depends on the customs of each village or nagari to place it. What is important here is that Gendang Gong music has great traditional value, so that when a people is able to present it in performances, the more it is considered traditional (Interview, Nurjanah, 2023). This function also seems to be able to maintain the existence of the music. Even though Malays are very Islamically conservative, their views on music - in the context of Gendang Gong - have never been clashed with the views of jurisprudence which reject music. This is more because this music is able to show the nobility of activities that do not conflict with religious norms and

customs. So it is also understood that the Malay expression *lives with reason, dies with rhymes; life is conceived, death is contained in the land* (Thamrin, 2018).

Culture value

Musical creativity

Creativity in industrial music may be easier to identify, because its existence is more dynamic and the motivation for innovation is relatively more visible. For some communities, tradition is considered sacred, or authenticity is considered a fundamental identity, so some communities do not want to make changes. This is even more so that music in certain ethnicities is closely related to functional matters, especially customs. This can also be seen in Gendang Gong music as traditional music and related to Riau Malay customs. Related to this, looking at the creative side of this music is not looking at the standards of innovation in Western popular music or also the avant-garde music of contemporary musicians.

While observing Gendang Gong in Riau, there is something unique musically so that it is more archaic than Malay music found on the coast or in the islands. This is most visible in notes that are arranged in five or six notes (tonic, second, tert, quart, quint, and sept). In terms of sensation, this cannot be properly equated with the Western concept of diatonic tone. The approach that can be most captured is the melody of songs in the Malay tradition on land or upstream in *koba* (songs for oral literature). Meanwhile, the tones used in coastal and island Malay tend to be influenced by major cultures such as Arabic, European or Indian which are common in chanting of Syair, Malay Ronggeng, and Gurindam.

The authenticity or uniqueness of Gendang Gong has not been abandoned even by more innovative musicians.

What can be done for the sake of performing arts (appreciation purposes) is to collaborate with dance and traditional singing (because this music was originally without singing).



Figure 12. Gendang Gong performance with dance by artist Darus from Sakai Mandiangin Siak.

More exploratory courage is limited to collaborating with songs in a typical local/traditional language or dialect, which seems to be a strategy to maintain the purity/identical color of tradition. Meanwhile, in the context of music as a language of expression (in the avangard sense) it is still not visible.



Figure 13. A musician from an academic background is playing the music he created using Gendang Gong Kampar.

Cultural Spirit

The cultural spirit through music is basically visible in the social capital and creativity with the music. What is even clearer is that this music can be used as an opportunity to show how society can do things that are more urban as a cultural event, which is not only limited

to the scope of adat and nagari, but also with a more technically modern packaging that characterizes the work of urban society. .

They are supported by government agencies, both local and national. Usually this support is facilitated by state cultural institutions or it takes the form of support for government programs such as the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Tourism.



Figure 14. People gather in a National Helat accompanied by Gendang Gong music in Rokan Hulu.

These events are usually also attended by several other branches of art, whether in the form of dance, singing, children's games, or literary recitations. Events that are quite large, for example in folding cloth, are *the Gondang Oguang Art Festival I 2018* and the second in 2021. Another event such as in Bangkinang related to Gendang Gong is *the Canang Wolrd Music Festival 2022* .

These events require more modern systems and mechanisms, so they involve many people and organized work. This is also a learning opportunity for beginners in organizing and managing events, both those with secondary or tertiary education backgrounds in Riau.

These events are not only able to revive the various types of art that exist,

but also revive the historical and cultural icons found in each city, so that they are increasingly remembered and inherited. For example, the use of urban forests, historical sites and other cultural activities.



Figure 15. City forest where one of the events is *the Canang World Music festival 2022* in Kampar.



Figure 16. The unification of culture and history, at *the 2022 Seven Layer Fortress Festival* in Rokan Hulu.

Talent Development

Usually in psychology concepts distinguish between interest and talent. In this context, this is not seen as an inseparable thing, because what is observed is more about musical activity as a form of talent development. This is most visible in children.

Children's love of music has been empowered for several groups of musical activities, this is also related to Gendang Gong in Riau. This development starts from the rehearsal process to performances carried out in various places. This development does not limit gender, although the emphasis is more on children and adolescents.



Figure 17. A Gendang Gong musician is training elementary school age children in Rokan Hulu, 2024.

Development through training is carried out periodically, although it also depends on the situation or opportunities for the teacher and students. It is also common for teachers to train when there is a request by a village or school for an arts performance event. However, there are also exercises that are purely for sharpening skills, and this is for several institutionalized studio groups.



Figure 18. Atmosphere of the Gendang Gong Learning Process at Sanggar Sendayung in Kampar (quoted from YouTube, May 2022).

After the training process, when there is a request or art event, the results of the training are displayed to the public. This is not only limited to the cities of each group but also across cities in Riau.



Figure 19. Children who will appear are practicing their game while they are about to appear at a cultural event in Rengat.



Figure 20. Children showing their skills playing Gendang Gong music in Rengat.

Beauty and Opportunity within Crowd

For the purposes of this article, *the crowd* here is not to be differentiated from the term *crowd* in a sociological context, because this only takes the similarity, that there is a gathering of many people at a certain moment. The crowd at an event involving Gendang Gong in adat will be different from outside adat, although outside adat it is not as complex as the actual crowd in a more urban context. Crowds or even crowds have symbolic functions and meanings (Geertz, 1973).

The identification of this helat is: *first*, that gathering in helat is a gathering of people who are called family, and this is

most visible in the nuclear family, close relatives, even distant relatives. *Second*, the gathering and meeting of people in clan or tribal relationships, and this is very important for the Malay matrilineal system of Keperpatihan tradition. *Third*, gathering or meeting new people, and this is very beneficial, for example for young people to explore their soul mate. *Fourth*, gathering also in the process allows people to meet people they don't know or don't know at all, for example traders, parking attendants, people in road traffic, people around the event. These encounters are not only socially significant, but also psychologically, in that many people enjoy the crowd as a part of self-catharsis to get out of boredom. So people feel it as beauty in the sense of experience, and that charm wants to be kept and will be repeated.

The illustration above wants to ensure that in the crowd of events and festivals related to Gendang Gong music, it certainly presents the beauty of nature and people, so you want to see it again. Apart from that, those who came had the same goal as the purpose of the event, but there were also those who only took advantage of the moment for other purposes than the event. This is for example traders selling their goods. They range from food sellers, accessories, to children's toys.



Figure 21. Crowds at the event that presents Gendang Gong in Pangean, Kuantan 2023.

The description above shows that the crowd at a musical performance shows its beautiful side, both by the music itself

and the social atmosphere that surrounds it. Furthermore, there are some who take advantage of this moment as an economic opportunity, so that sometimes it seems like a shame, but on a human level it is also beautiful. So crowds have function and meaning, and also have cultural value.



Figure 22. Narrow space used by traders at a festival in Pangean, Kuantan 2023.

Conclusion

Gendang Gong music is Malay music from the Keperpatihan tradition in Riau. The owners of this culture are spread across four large rivers in Riau, especially those in the upper reaches of the river or on land and inland of Riau. This music is basically music related to customs, namely welcoming guests and accompanying silat.

It is known that this music has experienced setbacks, especially the limited number of performers, as well as regeneration that is not sustainable properly, so that the number of performers is decreasing. There is awareness to bring it to life, then this music is not only present in traditional performances but is also taken out of tradition and displayed at arts and cultural events in Riau.

Regarding its current existence, the context of the presence of Gendang Gong music shows two values, namely *social values* and *cultural values*. The *social value* contains several values, namely: *social capital*; *public*

involvement; identity, and; civilized. The cultural values include: musical creativity, cultural enthusiasm, talent development and opportunities.

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