

Musical Creations in a Historical Perspective using the Kulcapi Musical Instrument in the Karo Society

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Abstract

Indeed, there are many types of traditional Karo musical instruments that can produce melodies, but so far only one musical instrument has been used to imitate human or non-human sounds, and movements. This musical instrument is called kulcapi. The kulcapi musical instrument belongs to the lute group, which has a long neck and two strings. How to play this instrument is by using a plucked instrument which is called kuis-kuis. Playing the kulcapi musical instrument in Karo culture, studied from a historical perspective, we will find the development of changes in musical performances, changes in musical functions, and changes in musical composition. All of these developments were very useful in creating Karo's musical culture. One of the effects of this is that the kulcapi musical instrument is now very popular among young Karo musicians.

Keywords: *Musical creations, Historical perspective, Kulcapi musical instrument, Karo society.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Karo as one of the ethnic groups living in North Sumatra, Indonesia, there are significantly different cultural elements from other ethnic groups. The dominant cultural elements where differences can be directly seen are language, traditional clothing, traditional procedures, traditional houses, arts, and traditional beliefs.

It is fortunate for all ethnic groups living in North Sumatra, Indonesia, even though they live side by side, each ethnic group continues to practice their respective cultures in carrying out their daily lives. It is true that there are times when they influence each other, but strictly speaking this influence can still be realized and appreciated. This causes the lives of the people of various ethnicities in North Sumatra, Indonesia, to remain harmonious and peaceful.

However, in general, cultural elements within one ethnic group support each other and mix in life activities. In a sense, art definitely influences language, traditional clothing, customary procedures, traditional houses, and traditional beliefs. Likewise, language must influence procedures for carrying out traditional customs, traditional houses, arts, and traditional beliefs. However, each cultural element can be researched for in-depth analysis.

On this occasion we would like to describe an element of artistic culture, which is closely related to the creation of works of art in Karo culture. Seeing that the creation of art from

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the past to the present is still continuing, we believe that there is an influence of historical perspective in every event.

In Karo traditional art, the musical instrument that has been used to develop music creation with a perception of human and non-human behavior is the kulcapai musical instrument. This musical instrument is a type of long-necked lute chordophone that has two strings. The way to play it is by plucking the strings with a certain instrument called a kuis-kuis.

1.1 Research Problems

Research problem 1) How does the context of the performance of the kulcapai Karo musical instrument change from one era to the next

Research problem 2) How has the art creation function of the kulcapai Karo instrument changed today

Research problem 3) How does the structure of musical composition change in the kulcapai Karo musical instrument

1.2 Background of Arts In Karo Society

There is no term in the Karo language that expresses art as a whole. This means that each branch of art has a name. In this article, I divide the arts into 4 (four) branches, namely literary arts, crafts arts, dance, and music.

1) Literary arts

Several of art that can be classified as literary arts include:

- a. Bilang-bilang, which is a sad song performed by someone who is grieving.
- b. Didong doah, which is a kind of song by the sister of the bride's father during the party
- c. Ioio, which is a sad song that is presented by someone who is grieving because of love.
- d. Kuning kuning, which is a puzzle that is commonly used by children, young people, and parents, as a game to hone the brain.
- e. Mangmang, ersentabi (asking for permission), and erlebuh (calling) are spells uttered or chanted by a guru or guru sibaso or shaman to ask for permission and summon supernatural powers
- f. Ndung-dungen, namely utterances consisting of four sentences with the same final letter.
- g. Tabas or tabas-tabas, namely mantras spoken or chanted by a guru or guru sibaso or shaman to treat sick people.
- h. Turi-turin, is a story that contains various things such as actual events or legends about various things

2) Crafts arts

Several of art that can be classified as crafts arts include:

- a. Rambu-rambu, namely the work of making carvings
- b. Ertukang, namely work to make tools for certain purposes, such as building houses, agricultural tools, cooking tools, musical instruments
- c. Ertenun, namely the work of making cloth
- d. Embayu, namely the work of weaving mats

3) Dance arts

The dance of the Karo people is called landek. Dance in Karo society is presented in a traditional context, some is presented in the context of belief and some is presented in the context of entertainment. Dance in traditional contexts, such as in wedding ceremonies, ceremonies for entering a new house, and funeral ceremonies. Dance in the context of beliefs such as in erpangir kulau, which is a self-purification ceremony, and endilo wari udan, which is a ceremony to call for rain. Meanwhile in the context of entertainment, such as in the context of guro guro aron, namely dance and music performances carried out by the Karo community, and in the context of certain celebrations

4) Music arts

Likewise, the actual fact is that music in the Karo tradition comes from vocals, musical instruments, and a combination of vocals and musical instruments. In the Karo tradition, vocal music is called ende-enden or songs which can be compared to singing. Songs in the Karo tradition can be divided into two, real songs and non-real son

Actual songs are for entertainment purposes. Meanwhile, vocals that are not actual singing are useful for the context of presentation and not for entertainment. Generally, the vocals are presented without musical instrument accompaniment. All of these types of vocals have been written as part of the above branch of literary art.

Karo traditional music that originates from musical instruments can be divided into two, musical instruments that can be used as solo instruments and musical instruments that must be used in an ensemble. In the beginning, the musical instruments were used as solo instruments are several types of surdam⁴.

Meanwhile, musical instruments used in ensembles include balobat, gendang anak and gendang indung, gung, keteng-keteng, mankok, panganak, and sarune. However, since 1958 the kulcapi musical instrument has been used as an ensemble which was initiated by the father of Tukang Ginting (a famous of Karo kulcapi player). Nowadays almost all Karo traditional musical instruments can be used as an ensemble. Nowadays, almost all Karo traditional musical instruments can be used as an ensemble, depending on the aesthetic needs and wishes of the musician.

Tarigan, K & Naiborhu, T(2022) the ensembles found in Karo musical culture were the gendang sarune, the gendang kulcapi, and the gendang mangkok. Gendang sarune, the composition of the musical instrument consists of one sarune, three drums, and two gongs. The gendang kulacapi consists of one kulcapi, two ketteng-ketteng and two gongs. The gendang mangkok, the composition of the musical instrument consists of one balobat, one ketteng-ketteng and one bowl. In this case, the use of a bowl as a musical instrument is only incidental.

Since 1991, Karo music culture has developed with the introduction of Western musical instruments, namely the organ or keyboard. This musical instrument was adopted so that it became part of Karo traditional music culture. The adoption period for Western organ musical instruments so that they are considered established as part of traditional Karo music is around three years. This ensemble or gendang is called the gendang kibot. Nowadays this ensemble is very popular in Karo music culture.

According to traditional Karo music players, there are five types of musical compositions found in Karo music. The three most important ones are the cakcak simelungen rayat, the cakcak odak odak and the cakcak patam-patam. Tarigan (2019) makes the cakcak simalungun rayat like Figure 1 below.

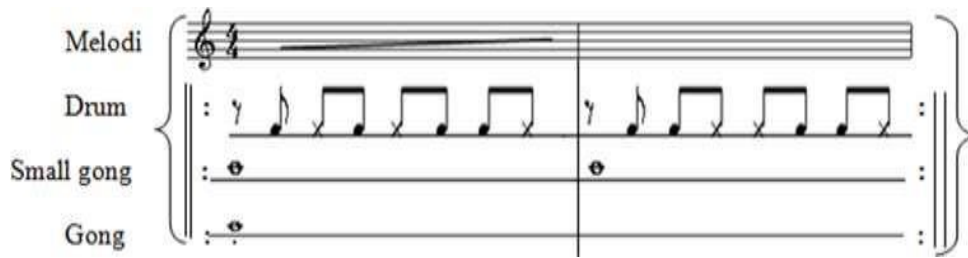


Figure 1. Cakcak simalungun rayat

Cakcak oak-odak like Figure 2 below



Figure 2. Cakcak odak-odak

Cakcak patam-patam like Figure 3 below



Figure 3. Cakcak patam-patam

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kahler (1975) stated that art is a "human activity which explores, and hereby creates new reality in a suprarational visional manner and presents it symbolically or metaphorically, as a microcosmic whole signifying a macrocosmic whole". Brade-Birks (1965) stated that art is "the exercise of the mind to produce work pleasant to the spirit of man." Humardani (1991) stated firmly that "the main area of art is spiritual life".

We emphasize that creating music means creating a composition, whether in the form of a melody, rhythm pattern, or a combination of both so that a form does not exist before. Musical composition is the act of conceiving a piece of music, the art of creating music, or the finished product. These meanings are interdependent and presume a tradition in which musical works exist as repeatable entities. In this sense, composition is necessarily distinct from improvisation.

The development of artistic creation requires the development of methods with a clear epistemological basis so that this discipline can develop with a solid foundation. The creation of art needs to receive attention with efforts to develop epistemological thinking as the main basis.

Some art creators have indeed developed paradigms with significant creation methodologies. This shows that there has been an effort to develop the epistemology of a small number of art creators. The development is purely for pragmatic purposes. They do not have access to understand the perspectives and thoughts of the creators who were

their predecessors, so generally, the followers never understand the basic beliefs, concepts, models, and methods of creating art which manifest from the creators' ideas into real works of art empirical and real.

Music production is the process by which music is created, manipulated, and preserved so that it can be distributed and enjoyed. All musical creations we know and love exist through the production process, no matter how famous or underground the recording is, and no matter how minimalist or maximal it sounds.

However, the creation of art cannot be separated from perception. In cognitive psychology, we refer to both the physical (external) world and the mental (internal) world. The link between external reality and the mental world is centered in the sensory system. Sensation refers to the early detection of energy from the physical world. Meanwhile, perception involves high-level cognition in the interpretation of sensory information. Basically, sensation refers to the early detection of stimuli; Perception refers to the interpretation of things that we sense (Solso, 2005). Perception is a constructive process by which we go beyond the stimuli that are presented to us and attempt to construct a meaningful situation Fieldman (1999). Perception refers to the way the work, sound, feel, taste, or smell. In other words, perception can be defined as whatever is experienced by a person Morgan (1987)

At the most basic level, creating a composition involves tone as a dimension of space and rhythm which is a time dimension. The relationship of tones in terms of high and low is called an interval; its specific occurrence in musical time is determined by rhythm, a concept that encompasses all aspects of musical duration. The rhythm in turn may be set by meter. In metrically organized rhythms, repeated patterns of accented and unaccented "beats" provide a substructure of definite duration. This influences all other elements of the composition, including the nature of the melody and rhythm pattern. However, rhythm is always present in all music because its patterns are largely analogous to life, such as the human body.

There are several writings that discuss the kulcapi Karo musical instrument, including some that write about the technique of playing the kulcapi, the position of playing the kulcapi, the fingering in the kulcapi, the tuning of the kulcapi, and the technique of closing the resonator holes in the kulcapi, how to learn the kulcapi, namely using the oral tradition method, the learning process is by seeing, hearing, memorizing and imitating (S.Riko, T. Kumalo, T. Perikuten, (2022).

Playing techniques include, 1) how to hold the kulcapi, 2) how to pluck the kulcapi strings, and 3) fingers on the kulcapi. The position of playing the kulcapi, the instrument is placed perpendicular to the body.

Fingering in the kulcapi, the left hand is positioned on the neck of the kulcapi, the fingers press the strings while the thumb presses the back of the kulcapi neck. The right-hand holds the body of the kulcapi, and the index finger and thumb of the right hand are used to hold the tips of the kecapi-picking tool. The stomach part of the kulcapi is attached to the player's stomach with the aim of keeping the kulcapi in a strong position.

The tuning of the kulcapi musical instrument is determined between string one at the bottom and string two at the top with a pure kwin interval. The technique of closing the resonator hole in the kulcapi is done by attaching the kulcapi musical instrument to the player's stomach. The way to learn kulcapi is done by oral tradition, the learning process is by seeing, hearing, memorizing, and imitating.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

Data collection for this article was prioritized through observations, interviews, and demonstrations from Karo kulcapi musical instrument players. Because the data in this

research is from the first source, it is primary data. Primary data is obtained directly from the first source. Some data like this have been obtained for a long time and some are new. Data that has long been obtained includes explanations from Karo kulcapi musicians, *Tukang Ginting* and *Waja Purba* in 1985. Newly obtained data includes all explanations and demonstrations from Karo kulcapi musician, *Ardi Gurusinga*, in September 2023.

This fact constitutes the main method of data collection, which proved to be an excellent basis for the preparation of this article. This is used to observe the natural behavior of traditional Karo musicians in various sessions in performing a musical composition that depicts one or several specific activities. This allows an important understanding of the events depicted with music. It shows various human or non-human behaviors that actually occur.

All of this is needed to describe the development of the presentation of the Karo kulcapi musical instrument from the past to the present

Ardi Gurusinga's determination as an informant was closely related to several things, such as his excellent ability to play the Karo kulcapi, mastering all the songs taught by his teacher, diligently studying *Bangun Tarigan*, and being able to imitate several legendary kulcapi players in the story. Karo community.

To complete the informant's information, secondary data is still needed in the form of writings about Karo kulcapi, all of which have been written in the bibliography.

4. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The Karo kulcapi is a stringed musical instrument found in the Karo tribe which is classified as a chordophone (two-fret necked harp) or a necked harp that has frets and two strings. The body of the kulcapi can be made from jackfruit wood or hard wood.

In Karo society, kulcapi strings are called *dekung*. Originally it was made from palm tree roots but nowadays it is made from metal, like guitar strings.

Explanation by *Tukang Ginting* in May 1985 that the kulcapi Karo musical instrument was played in ensemble form in 1958 by his own father. The musical performance takes place during the *erpangir ku lau* ceremony, which is a ceremony for self-purification. At that time, the composition of musical instruments consisted of one kulcapi, two *ketteng-ketteng* musical instruments, and one *mangkok*. Since then, this ensemble has become important because it is always used in *epangir kulau* ritual ceremonies and *raleng tendi* ritual ceremonies or summoning human spirits.

Before that, the kulcapi musical instrument was known to only be played for personal entertainment by shepherds while herding livestock and as entertainment for groups of people in the evening after dinner and before bed.

According to *Bangun Tarigan*, this kulcapi composition was played at night when the Karo people had finished their activities. In ancient times, because entertainment was still very minimal, kulcapi was played as entertainment. There is no concept or preparation made by the kulcapi in playing the kulcapi.

A kulcapi player has an idea for a story or *turi-turin* composition for playing the kulcapi solo on the instrument, often spontaneously. In presenting stories or *turi-turin* performed by *perkulcapi* (kulcapi player) the pattern of the game or story comes from the *perkulcapi's* own expressions or ideas/according to the *perkulcapi's* own feelings or desires.

In this solo performance, *perkulcapi* (kulcapi player) will tell the story or composition he will play and then play it to the kulcapi melody. For example, *perkulcapi* tells about *turi-turin* or a story which uses humans or animals as the main actors in the story, then

perkulcapi will explain the nature of humans or animals in the form of stories or turi-turin along with kulcapi plays. In the turi-turin perkabang enggurisa there are several parts. Perkabang enggurisa is a story of bird life starting from the mating season, egg-laying season, brooding season, baby-rearing season, and the season of flying away from the cage.

Furthermore, the mating season can still be divided into several parts, one of which is the dating period. This is illustrated with a kulcapi melody like Example 15



Example 1. The melody that describes birds in are dating period

The melody describes having fun like Example 2.



Example 2. The Melody that describes birds are having fun

The melody depicting birds mating season like Example 3



Example 3. The Melody describes birds are mating season

The melody describes the birds' nesting season like Example 4



Example 4. The Melody that describes birds's nesting season

The melody describes the season of brooding birds like Example 5



Example 5. The melody that describes birds's nesting season

The melody describes the season of parenting Example 6



Example 6. Melody describes the season of parenting

The melody describes the season of flying away from its nest Example 7



Example 7. The melody describes the season of flying away from its nest

The Karo kulcapi performance plays several musical compositions that depict stories more or less as described above. Each composition may have variations by adding ornamental tones or by repeating certain parts. It all really depends on the kulcapi player. Tukang Ginting further explained that in mid-October 1975 there was a record producer who wanted to record kulcapi music for commercial purposes, namely Remaja Rekord in the Berastagi and in the end an agreement was reached and the music recording took place. In the commercial recording, the musical composition consists of a kulcapi as the melody, two keteng-keteng as rhythm variations and two gongs, the gung and the penganak or small gong as the colotomis. Since then, kulcapi music on cassette tape recordings has been widely circulated and is widely used by perdiul-diul groups, a group of Karo people who practice Karo traditional rituals.

In February 1980, for the first time, a versatile musician, Jasa Tarigan, used a kulcapi ensemble to accompany the guro-guro aron performance in Batu Karang. Guro-guro aron is a music and dance performance found in the Karo community for the purpose of public entertainment. At that time, Jasa Tarigan created an ensemble composition consisting of a kulcapi, gendang indung or a main drum, a set of gendang anak or child drums, and two gongs, namely the gung and the penganak or small gung.

In July 1986 Jasa Tarigan moved to Medan and lived around the North Sumatra University campus and all the time played the Karo kulcapi musical instrument. This makes kulcapi's musical compositions increasingly popular with the public.

We have noticed that the development of the kulcapi musical instrument has become increasingly popular in the last ten years. That's because the kulcapi Karo musical instrument is often used as a supporting musical instrument for the gendang kibot. Gendang kibot is an ensemble of organ musical instruments that has succeeded in imitating the composition of traditional Karo musical ensembles. This development began in 199, and accelerated in 1993 with the production of the Technics KN 2000 Keyboard. Jasa Tarigan has been able to program various traditional Karo music compositions or dalam gendang with keyboard style. All the sound compositions are very similar to traditional Karo music compositions, such as sarune sound (cone-shaped double reed aerophone), gendang anak (single head, combination of cone and barrel drum-shaped), gendang indung (single head, a combination of cone-shaped drum and barrel), penganak (small one gong) and gung (large gong). In this way, the musical composition can be accepted by the Karo people.

Nowadays there are very many players of the kulcapi musical instrument in the younger generation. They are generally already adept at playing songs, especially playing popular songs among the Karo people in support of the gendang kibot.

Paying attention to the description above, we can see that the context of the performance of the Karo kulcapi musical instrument has changed from time to time. Initially as personal entertainment, then developed into group entertainment. Next, it develops into a ritual performance context. The next development was to enter the world of commercial recording, playing a role in entertainment and use in ritual ceremonies. The further development of kulcapi music became social entertainment in Karo society.

This change also occurred in the function of music. Initially, the function was only as emotional expression and communication, but the composition function developed into various functions. It turns out that it not only functions as entertainment but also as a validation of ritual ceremonies, physical reactions, and communication between the human world and the unseen world. In this way, the more we study the creation of musical compositions from the kulcapi musical instrument, it will be possible to understand it more deeply.

The structure of the musical composition on the Karo kulcapi musical instrument has also undergone changes, starting from a solo instrument and then developing into an ensemble. As a solo instrument, however, kulcapi often works on free-meter melodies. Meanwhile, in an ensemble, of course, it has to be metered.

5. CONCLUSION

Even though in reality the younger generation of Indonesian society in general, and the Karo people in particular, tend to admire the development of Korean music, there are still those who really care about Indonesian traditional music, such as Karo traditional music. This is indicated by the large number of kulcapi musical instrument players among the younger generation in Karo society. They are generally adept at playing songs popular among the Karo people who support gendang kibot as a commercial performance.

The context of Karo kulcapi musical instrument performances has changed from time to time in line with the interests of the supporting community. Initially as personal entertainment when a kulcapi player grazed his livestock. In the evening he told a story while asking me to speak so that several people were interested in listening. It is understandable that at that time in one village there was no electricity and there was no entertainment at night before going to bed.

In 1958, the development of kulcapi musical instrument performances became very important because it became an ensemble. The change in the status of the kulcapi from a solo instrument to an ensemble certainly had a huge impact on the development of Karo's

musical culture at that time. This also adds to the context of the performance of musical compositions from kulcapi which are all entertainment as part of ritual ceremonies. The next development was to enter the world of commercial recording. The next development was that kulcapi musical compositions became social entertainment for the Karo people.

This development also occurs in the function of music. Initially, its function was only as an expression of emotion and communication, but the composition function developed into various functions. If the composition of various turi-turin or cheerful stories initially only functioned as fine arts, today it turns out to be a valuable lesson. A person who diligently studies the various turi-turin becomes more and more proficient and the more he masters the techniques of playing the kulcapi. This allows the development of musical composition structures on Karo kulcapi musical instruments. As we do today, we are developing the creation of kulcapi music compositions based on the themes of traditional attractions found in the Karo community

There are three traditional attractions of the Karo people that become motifs in the musical creation of kulcapi Karo compositions, namely erbuat, nuan, and rani

1) erbuat, make or cultivate land or rice fields to grow rice; 2) nuan or planting rice, there are two ways to plant rice, namely merdang and neldek. Merdang means planting rice directly with the seeds planted in the ground. While neldek means rice shoots that are planted in the ground; 3) rani or rice harvest. Which consists of the nabi, cutting the rice stalks, ngerik, or removing the rice from the cloth and ngangin, or cleaning the rice from dirt such as leaves.

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Declarations

Author declares that all works are original and this manuscript has not been published in any other journal.

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