



## Jarum Sikenang (Semarang Keroncong Musicians Network) 2022: A Program for Promoting Cultural Advancement In Semarang

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### Abstract

*Keroncong is a distinctive Indonesian music genre regarded as a cultural heritage that needs preservation. However, keroncong music faces the threat of extinction, a concern shared by musicians, music enthusiasts, cultural experts, and government officials. This study aimed to identify and explain the establishment of "JARUM SIKENANG" program as an effort to promote cultural advancement through the preservation of keroncong music to boost tourism in Semarang City. This study employed qualitative method, with data collected through document studies. The data analysis followed the stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings include expanding public access to keroncong music (development aspect), organizing workshops to improve the quality of keroncong musicians (mentoring aspect), promoting keroncong music to the wider community (protection aspect), involving keroncong musicians in various tourism events, and partnering with sponsors to improve the welfare of keroncong musicians in Semarang City (utilization aspect).*

## INTRODUCTION

Keroncong is a distinctive Indonesian music genre regarded as a cultural and artistic heritage that needs preservation. According to Zandra & Rustopo (as cited in Saputra & Haryono, 2021, p. 41) the term "keroncong" can be understood in several ways. First, keroncong can refer to a musical instrument similar to a small-stringed guitar. Second, it can be defined as a music genre. Third, keroncong may refer to the formation of a music group consisting of seven musicians. Fourth, it can be seen as a form of musical composition. In addition, Harmunah (2011, p. 52) explains that keroncong music is a type of traditional music that typically uses diatonic scales, although it often incorporates pentatonic scale patterns unique to certain regions, such as in Javanese langgam. The repertoire performed by these groups includes original keroncong, langgam keroncong, and Javanese langgam. Another perspective, provided by Soeharto (1996, p. 45), describes keroncong music as a traditional genre involving the use of diatonic scales and the accompaniment of several stringed instruments. In this music, the instruments are played according to specific rules that give keroncong its distinctive identity.

This music fulfills the community's needs for entertainment, education, communication, and self-expression. Keroncong features keroncong instruments, a flute, and a female singer. Originally, keroncong was derived from the Portuguese music called fado, introduced by sailors and merchant ship slaves in the 16th century (Darini, 2014). Although keroncong is an indigenous Indonesian music genre, the lack of public appreciation for it necessitates strategies to preserve it. The existence of keroncong music in Indonesia continues, despite concerns about the potential extinction of this music genre. These concerns mainly come from keroncong musicians, music enthusiasts, cultural experts, and the government, who consider keroncong a cultural heritage that needs to be preserved. The establishment of HAMKRI in 1975 was a concrete step toward preserving keroncong music. General Pirmgadie and the Director of Arts

Development at the Department of Education and Culture also issued statements urging the preservation of keroncong music. In the 1970s, keroncong was in need of preservation due to its declining popularity. Even since the Gambir Festival in the 1950s, keroncong has been popular only among the older generation, with keroncong festivals attended mostly by the participants' relatives (Ernst Heins, 1975, p. 21). Public interest and appreciation for keroncong have significantly diminished. Overall, keroncong is a distinctive Indonesian music genre that is crucial to preserve as cultural heritage. Despite facing challenges in increasing public appreciation, efforts are being made to save and develop keroncong music, particularly through HAMKRI and the involvement of keroncong enthusiasts.

Keroncong music has maintained a presence in the Indonesian archipelago, despite experiencing a decline due to the rise of modern music. Nevertheless, there are communities of keroncong music enthusiasts who strive to preserve and develop this traditional music. In addition, the continued relevance of keroncong music today can be attributed to its adaptability to various music genres and its potential to be combined with other instruments (Boediman, 1979). Keroncong music is associated with other instruments such as the guitar, ukulele (Cak and Cuk), cello, flute, violin, and bass; this ensemble constitutes the traditional keroncong instrumentation (Martopo, 2003; Budiman 1979; Soeharto, Achmad Soenardi, 1996).

The first keroncong brought from Europe was Keroncong Stambul. This genre is believed to have emerged after the arrival of the people from Gujarat in Indonesian waters. This type of instrumental music arrived in Jakarta before and during the early stages of World War I and was brought by a royal opera group known as Opera Jafar Turkey from Medan. The arrival of the Gujaratis to Indonesia garnered significant sympathy from the native population, especially those involved in Islamic parties. They felt a strong affinity towards the Turkish Empire and its capital, Istanbul (Beawita, 1991, p.

24). Consequently, the development of keroncong music in major cities like Ambon, Makassar, Bandung, and Semarang was influenced by traditional music (Harmunah, 1987, p. 10)

The perception of keroncong music among Indonesians varies. Some people enjoy this music, others are less interested, and some do not like it at all. Initially, the general understanding of keroncong music was limited to entertainment; however, this perception has evolved over time. In the modern era, people have come to view keroncong as an integral part of Indonesian culture that needs to be preserved (Ratna Sari, 2015, p. 140).

Regular keroncong music performances are still held in several areas, such as Jogja, Surakarta, and Semarang. Just like the development of keroncong music in other cities such as Jakarta and Surakarta, keroncong in Semarang has also experienced a significant revival. This is evident from the high level of interest in keroncong music from various groups, not just the elderly, even as keroncong music undergoes changes and exploration in its form and instrumentation (Widjajadi, 2016). The journey of keroncong music in Semarang has seen ups and downs. However, keroncong music continues to develop and remains popular among the public, including the younger generation. The sound of keroncong music still resonates clearly in the city of Semarang. Certain communities regularly play keroncong music as part of regeneration efforts, to ensure that this heritage is not lost in its birthplace or in various cities across Indonesia (Arif Mika Alantaka, 2017). To further develop the presence of keroncong music, the city of Semarang, through the Department of Tourism and Culture of Semarang, has launched a program called "Jarum Sikenang," which stands for the network of keroncong musicians in Semarang. This program focuses on promoting keroncong music culture in Semarang and providing facilities and platforms for keroncong musicians in the city. This program helps identify the challenges faced by keroncong musicians and offers solutions to ensure the continued

existence of the keroncong music community in Semarang.

The purpose of this research is to identify and explain the establishment of the "JARUM SIKENANG" program as an effort to promote culture through the preservation of keroncong music to boost tourism in Semarang City. According to Supriono (2020, p. 71) cultural conservation involves actions to preserve and protect cultural heritage so that it continues to exist and adapts to changing times. In this context, cultural conservation refers to keroncong, an art form that must be preserved to prevent it from fading away as times change. Another effort undertaken is the dissemination of culture. As Oktavianus (2019, p. 20) explains, , cultural dissemination is the process of transferring ideas, concepts, and behavior patterns from one group of people to another. Lastly, cultural maintenance is another key effort. According to Assauri, as cited in Ardian (2018, p. 10), maintenance involves actions taken to keep and care for facilities or equipment and to make necessary repairs or replacements to ensure satisfactory operational conditions in line with the established plan.

The "Jarum Sikenang" program represents a concrete action in Semarang aimed at the development of keroncong music culture. This initiative is an interesting subject for research. Launched on July 6, 2022, the program was marked by the Keroncong Festival at the Sam Po Kong Temple in Semarang. This event was attended by various stakeholders who support the synergy of the its ecosystem, as reported by Suara Merdeka (Verdana, 2022). Designed to promote the welfare of keroncong musicians and preserve the music, the project aims to boost tourism in Semarang City.

## **METHOD**

The method used in this study was qualitative, where the findings were described and elaborated in words rather than numbers. As outlined by Moleong (2005, p. 4), a qualitative descriptive approach involves collecting data in the form of words, images, rather than

numbers. Data was collected using documentation study techniques, drawing from various documents or written sources. Data analysis was carried out through stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and then drawing conclusions.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the current era of globalization, people in Indonesia can easily listen to or view music from various parts of the world. This has contributed to a decline in interest in regional music genres like keroncong. In response to this phenomenon, the Semarang City government, along with keroncong musicians from across the city, established the "Jarum Sikenang" program, also known as the Semarang Keroncong Musicians Community Network. Through the program, the Semarang City government invites keroncong musicians from throughout the city to participate in advancing the culture of keroncong music. The program aims to preserve keroncong music, improve the welfare of keroncong musicians, and boost tourism in Semarang.

Referring to Law No. 5 of 2017 (pemajuankebudayaan.id, 2018), there are four key aspects in advancing culture that can be implemented: expanding public access to keroncong music (development), organizing workshops to improve the quality of keroncong musicians (training), promoting keroncong music to the entire community (protection), and involving keroncong musicians in various tourism events and partnering with sponsors to enhance the welfare of keroncong musicians in Semarang (utilization).

### 1. Expanding public access to understanding and appreciating keroncong music (Development)

Cultural advancement development refers to efforts aimed at enhancing and developing the cultural aspects of a society in a sustainable manner. The primary goal of cultural advancement development is to strengthen, preserve, and promote cultural heritage while appreciating the cultural

diversity within it. Dissemination development involves various efforts such as spreading cultural values abroad, engaging in cultural exchanges, organizing exhibitions, and holding festivals. Cultural development actions are regulated in Articles 30 and 31 of the Cultural Advancement Law.

In response, the Semarang City Government, together with keroncong musicians from around the city, has undertaken cultural advancement through the "Jarum Sikenang" program. This initiative includes organizing keroncong festivals and promoting the program with billboards at the Sam Po Kong Temple.



Figure 1. Socialization of the "Jarum Sikenang" program (Source: suaramerdeka.com, July 8, 2022)



Figure 2. Congrock 17 and Endah Laras musicians (Source: Semarang City Department of Culture and Tourism)

### 2. Organizing workshops to improve the quality of keroncong musicians (Mentoring)

To expand public participation and active initiatives in cultural advancement, steps are taken to increase the number and capacity of individuals, organizations, and cultural systems. The procedures for cultural development are outlined in Articles 39 and 40 of the Cultural Advancement Law.

As a result, the Semarang Keroncong Musicians Community Network, commonly known as "Jarum Sikenang," in collaboration with the Semarang City Government, organized workshops and training sessions to enhance both the soft and hard skills of keroncong musicians in the city.



Figure 3. Keroncong music workshop (Source: Semarang City Department of Culture and Tourism)

### 3. Promoting keroncong music to the wider public (Protection)

Protective measures involve a series of steps to ensure the sustainability of culture as a legacy for future generations and the world. These steps include inventorying, safeguarding, maintaining, rescuing, and publicizing cultural heritage. The provisions for cultural protection are outlined in Articles 16 to 29 of the Cultural Advancement Act.

Referring to the previous statement, publication is one of the measures already implemented by the Semarang City Government and "Jarum Sikenang." The news website suaramerdeka.com has participated in publicizing the launch of the program. In addition to suaramerdeka.com, the program has been promoted through billboards at the Semarang City Hall.



Figure 4. Media publications (Source: suaramerdeka.com, July 8, 2022)



Figure 5. Billboard advertisement at the Semarang City Hall (Source: Semarang City Department of Culture and Tourism)

### 4. Involving keroncong musicians in various tourism events and partnering with sponsors to improve the welfare of keroncong musicians in Semarang City (Utilization)

Cultural utilization involves a series of steps aimed at optimizing the use of Cultural Advancement Objects to strengthen ideology, politics, economy, social structures, culture, defense, and security in achieving national goals. One key focus of this effort is improving community welfare with an emphasis on a robust and resilient economy. Cultural Advancement Objects are utilized through processes such as industrial production,

trade, and tourism. During these processes, it is essential to preserve and respect the aesthetic values and wisdom of the cultural elements involved. In addition, to maintain the sustainability of the cultural ecosystem, the government must ensure that large industries or foreign entities benefiting from Cultural Advancement Objects share the profits with the local community. Private or foreign entities wishing to utilize Cultural Advancement Objects must obtain permission from the Ministry of Education and Culture. Provisions for cultural utilization are outlined in Articles 32 to 38 of the Cultural Advancement Act.

One example of utilizing efforts to improve the welfare of keroncong musicians is the collaboration between the Semarang City Government and several institutions, such as BPJS Employment and Bank Mandiri, to support the 'Jarum Sikenang' program. In addition to welfare initiatives, utilization is also applied in the tourism sector by organizing keroncong music performances at various tourist attractions in Semarang.



Figure 6. Coordination with the Head of Bank Mandiri Semarang City (Source: Semarang City Department of Culture and Tourism)



Figure 7. Coordination with BPJS Employment Semarang City (Source:

Semarang City Department of Culture and Tourism)



Figure 8. Live keroncong music at Taman Lele Tourism Site, Semarang (Source: Semarang City Department of Culture and Tourism)



Figure 9. Live keroncong music at Taman Lele Tourism Site, Semarang (Source: Semarang City Department of Culture and Tourism)

The 'Jarum Sikenang' program, established by the Semarang City Government and keroncong musicians from across the city, aims to preserve keroncong music, improve the welfare of keroncong musicians, and boost tourism in Semarang. This program encompasses four aspects of cultural advancement: development, mentoring, protection, and utilization.

Cultural development is achieved through efforts such as spreading cultural values internationally, cultural exchanges, organizing exhibitions, and festivals. The Semarang City Government has also advanced cultural initiatives by hosting

keroncong festivals and promoting the program through billboards at the Sam Po Kong Temple in Semarang.

Mentoring is carried out through workshops and training sessions to enhance the skills of keroncong musicians in Semarang. This aims to involve more people in active roles and initiatives to advance the culture.

Protection and maintenance are undertaken to safeguard keroncong music, including inventorying and rescuing it. The Semarang City Government and "Jarum Sikenang" have publicized this program through media and billboards, while also considering the aesthetic value and cultural wisdom of related elements.

The utilization of keroncong music aims to optimize its role in strengthening ideology, politics, economics, social aspects, culture, defense, and security. The Semarang City Government has collaborated with institutions such as BPJS Employment and Bank Mandiri to support the program. In addition, keroncong music is utilized in the tourism sector by hosting performances at tourist attractions in Semarang.

Thus, the "Jarum Sikenang" program is a concrete effort to advance and preserve keroncong music, while improving the welfare of keroncong musicians, by engaging various aspects of cultural advancement.

## CONCLUSION

The 'Jarum Sikenang' program, established by the Semarang City Government and keroncong musicians from across the city, aims to preserve keroncong music, improve the welfare of keroncong musicians, and boost tourism in Semarang. This program encompasses four aspects of cultural advancement: development, mentoring, protection, and utilization.

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