

## Haro Hara Song: History of Protest Music in Aceh 2000-2003

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### ABSTRACT

*The song Haro Hara is one of the protest songs whose lyrics contain four bloody events during the 1998 conflict or after the revocation of the Military Operations Area (DOM) status in Aceh. This study aims to examine the development, social and political influences, and the phases of the ban on the protest song Haro Hara during the armed social conflict in Aceh. This study uses a qualitative approach based on archives, employing netnography techniques that emphasize the search for online data, archives, and interviews. The primary data sources are musical artifacts in the form of physical cassette tape releases of the Nyawöung album and several related Acehnese music albums, as well as digital files of related songs on YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. This study found that the song Haro Hara is considered a product of journalism in the form of music that tells and records four conflict events that claimed civilian casualties in Aceh. The song is considered to contain propaganda and is included in the list of “banned songs” that were once censored along with other Acehnese songs with protest and political nuances. The song Haro Hara was removed from the second album released by Nyawöung in 2004 because it was considered by the Regional Military Emergency Authority (PDM) of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (NAD) to be provocative and to stir up the spirit of resistance among the Acehnese people who wanted independence and were considered to be siding with the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). Furthermore, the musical concepts championed by the Nyawöung band—including in the song Haro Hara—have had a significant impact on the dynamics of music and local politics in Aceh during the conflict and up to the present day.*

### KEYWORDS

Haro Hara Song  
Historiography  
Protest Music  
Aceh

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### INTRODUCTION

“Haro hara” in the Acehnese language means “chaos.” The song Haro Hara in this article has two definitions. First, it is a term for songs that tell stories and document situations of unrest, as well as songs with themes of protest and social criticism during the conflict in Aceh. This terminology will later be used as a discourse to construct a concept of resistance and a depiction of the conflict situation and series of bloody events documented in these songs. In addition, songs that record events and are considered to be associated with armed conflict. Second, as one of the songs in the 2000 album Nyawöung entitled “Haro Hara” -

which became one of the popular songs besides “Saleum”, ‘Dododaidi’, and “Panglima Prang” - which was often played after its initial release, as well as the object of study in this paper. The song Haro Hara tells the story of four humanitarian tragedies in Aceh, three of which occurred consecutively in 1999.

After President BJ Habibie revoked the Military Operations Area (DOM) status in Aceh on August 7, 1998, at least four bloody incidents occurred in several areas of Aceh. The Arakundoe tragedy on February 3, 1999, Simpang KKA (May 1999), the Tengku Bantaqiah incident (July 1999), and Rumoh Geudong. These four events inspired several Acehnese musicians to create songs in the regional pop genre during that era. The Nyawöung community—originally named Kelompok Etnis Ujung Barat—in Jakarta even created a contemporary (ethnic-modern) music project by forming a music group of the same name and recording an album titled Nyawöung. The album contains 10 heroic-themed songs, some of which depict the tragic stories of the Acehnese people while recounting a series of bloody events and their emotional wounds during the social conflict of that time.

The songs that record events that claimed the lives of civilians are also proof that the people of Aceh are very skilled at recounting specific events in works of art, especially oral art. This is strongly suggested by the tradition of storytelling that has been honed over a long period of time as part of their oral history. This can also be observed in the Hikayat Prang Sabee (Prang Sabi), Hikayat Prang Sigli, Hikayat Prang Geudong, and Hikayat Prang Kompeuni. These stories are manuscripts containing epics about wars and heroic tales of the Acehnese people fighting against colonialism several centuries ago. In addition, the emergence of several songs with conflict themes also served as reminders and encouragement to rise from a state of despair. This was marked by the popularity of Nyawöung songs among the Acehnese people and the explosion in sales of the band's album after its release in August 2000, which was estimated to be the most massive sales at that time. “It is astonishing that the Nyawöung album sold approximately 30,000 copies in Aceh out of 45,000 copies within six months. This is a sales achievement that is difficult to match in the history of the Aceh regional music industry (Agustin. 2007).”

The popularity of the Nyawöung album, performed by two Acehnese vocal artists, Muckhlis and Cut Aja Rizka, caused most areas in Aceh to experience “Nyawöung fever” at that time. Their songs were enjoyed by various groups of people and played in homes and public places, especially the song Haro-hara. “When it was released, the songs on the Nyawöung album were played in almost every home and in public facilities and transportation, including on special regional music programs on several private radio stations” (Agustin. 2007). Along with the rapid sales of the Nyawöung album cassette and the high level of public consumption, the number of listeners and fans of protest songs increased. even some of the songs in the Nyawöung album that were frequently played were suspected by the government and military institutions of reigniting the spirit of resistance for Aceh's independence and were considered propaganda for the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). Finally, the physical release of the Nyawöung album was banned and withdrawn from the market in several areas in Aceh. Evidence of this can be seen in several areas such as Pidie, Bireun, Central Aceh, North Aceh, and Langsa, where the military raided cassette stores selling regional (language) music cassettes in Aceh, including the Nyawöung album. The military authorities considered Nyawöung's songs to be more than just entertainment, but rather a medium for protest and even propaganda, because the lyrics implicitly and explicitly expressed sarcasm about the violence perpetrated by the Indonesian military in Aceh. Of course, this crackdown reinforced the notion that songs with social criticism themes were seen as a threat to the ruling authorities.

In general, the dynamics of protest music in Aceh since before and after the revocation of the Military Operations Area (DOM) status in 1998 until the re-establishment of the same status by President Megawati in 2003 – is represented by several genres in regional pop music and world music, better known as ethnic pop. Several regional pop songs with nuances of kasidah, dangdut, and house music include Arakundou and Nanggroe Merdeka (Yusbi Yusuf), Misteri Rumoh Geudong (Sabirin Lamno), Musibah Beutong (Nurhayati & Ari Rama), Rumoh Geudong, Freedom, and Haba Referendum (Bob Rezal), Peristiwa Simpang KKA (A Bakar Ar & Armawati Ar), Referendum (M. Yacob Tailah), and others. Regional pop songs with touches of world music, alternative rock, and ethnic jazz are represented by several songs on the album Nyawöung, especially the song Hora Hara. This study aims to observe the dynamics of protest-themed songs during the Aceh conflict, found in pop singles and albums produced during the history of the popular music industry in Aceh during the conflict, using a historiographical approach that focuses on studying historical archives of the development of this music.

This research was conducted as an effort to observe the history of protest songs in Aceh amid the history and dynamics of the development of protest music in Aceh, which is believed to be intertwined with the situation of armed social conflict since decades ago, especially the song Haro Hara. In addition, this study fills a gap in the literature on popular music in the field of ethnomusicology, especially regarding the topic of protest music during the armed conflict in Aceh. Similar studies on popular music in Aceh in general have not been conducted frequently by music researchers, especially those related to music and songs with protest themes, particularly in the regional pop music industry.

## METHOD

Research on Haro Hara Songs: Historiography of Protest Music in Aceh 2000-2003, using qualitative research methods with a phenomenological approach. “Qualitative methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written words from the speech and behavior of the people being observed” (Bogdan and Taylor in Moleong, 2014). “Basically, the theoretical basis of qualitative research is fundamentally based on phenomenology” (Moleong, 2014). The qualitative method was chosen to obtain holistic data from the research phenomenon used in relation to the topic of the Haro Hara song, a historiography study of protest music in Aceh from 2000 to 2003. This approach is supported by in-depth interview techniques with all selected informants and the distribution of questionnaires to several selected participants who are listeners of Haro Hara songs from across generations.

The netnographic approach, involving online data searches and physical archive collection, was one of the data collection techniques used during this study. Netnography was also used to examine the influence and use of Haro Hara's songs and several other protest-themed songs in the digital era. This approach was supported by online data searches to compile and collect digital data related to the research through various platforms, namely Google search engine, YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and online buying and selling platforms. Several of these e-commerce platforms became media for searching and collecting physical archives in the form of cassette tapes, which were one of the primary sources in this study. The search was also conducted by tracking the availability of Nyawöung cassette albums sold by online music store accounts, as well as accounts belonging to cassette tape collectors on various social media platforms, including Instagram and Facebook.

Online data searches using a netnographic approach were also used extensively in this study to collect data related to the development and evolution of Haro Hara songs as the main object. As is well known in today's digital society, social media is one of the most important forms of media in searching for data available online. The media chosen by the author to examine this was TikTok and YouTube. The YouTube platform was used to search for digital data on Acehese protest songs, some of which had been re-uploaded by several citizen accounts and official accounts of music groups, musicians, and even record labels as digital archives in the form of video clips and MP3s. Meanwhile, the author uses the TikTok platform as a medium for searching for data related to the song Haro Hara, which is used as background music or sound for videos with various themes, especially videos related to the memorabilia of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and videos of campaigns by former GAM combatants who are running for legislative or regional head positions. On this platform, the author discovered new data related to the evolution and changing interpretations of the use of the song Haro Hara within society.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Protest music refers to songs whose lyrics contain messages that oppose a policy or action taken by the authorities or a group as an institution (Redman, in Alexander & Sugiono, 2021). Protest music in social practice has become part of the resistance to civil rights issues around the world (Street, in Alexander & Sugiono, 2021). This music has become part of the social movement... (Weij & Berkers in Alexander & Sugiono, 2021). In addition, according to Lidskog, protest music can be a medium for raising awareness of various issues, including social injustice or marginalization of certain groups in society (Alexander & Sugiono, 2021). Dave Laing defines "protest music" as the target of the protest being a crucial element for a song to have the potential for pragmatic impact (Triantoro, 2022).

In Indonesia, protest music developed due to resistance against political domination by minority or subordinate groups (Alexander & Sugiono, 2021). Dave (1999) further distinguishes between protest music and resistance music. Protest music is described as an open statement that highlights a specific issue or enemy. Meanwhile, resistance music is interpreted as songs with vague and implied political ideas, relying on narratives that are not as straightforward as protest music. In Aceh Province, protest music emerged and developed dynamically as a form of media for voicing social criticism and documenting the conflicts experienced by civilians after the revocation of the Military Operations Area (DOM) status from 1989 to 1998.

### Historiography of Protest Music Genres in Aceh

When observed from the historical trajectory of the popular music industry and the production of songs on popular music albums in Aceh, especially after the revocation of the Military Operations Area (DOM) status in 1998, several protest songs emerged as a form of emotional expression by the community regarding the bloody events that occurred during the implementation of DOM in Aceh. In addition, the emergence of songs that dared to voice the aspirations of the community was a form of euphoria after the fall of the New Order regime in the same year. "Protest songs have a unique function in reflecting perspectives on how society works, including issues such as social justice, inequality, the environment, and the rights of indigenous peoples; they often explore power imbalances between social groups. Importantly, they often express minority perspectives that contradict mainstream opinion or government policy" (Box & Aronson, 2022).

Songs in the form of albums with themes of protest and resistance in Aceh began to

emerge after the fall of the New Order government in 1999. Several early albums by Acehese musicians were given straightforward titles, such as those using the terms “referendum,” “the Arakundou tragedy,” and others. There were also terms with implied meanings, such as the use of the term “free-dom,” which means ‘independence’ or “freedom from DOM.” These two types of album titles are considered to represent the voice of the Acehese people regarding various forms of violence and injustice during the implementation of DOM and the beginning of the referendum issue. “When the Soeharto government collapsed, various songs of resistance flowed like a river that could not be contained, including the album *Free Dom* (1999), which featured singers Azhar P and Dessi Miranda. The hard-hitting songs on the album were written by Bob Rezal. After that, there was also the album *Lakee Referendum*, most of whose songs were written by Novel Tango and sung by Saifannur, Rosmawati, Yossi, and Novel Tango himself” (Sirait. 2018). In addition to these two albums, there were also dozens of songs with themes of protest, resistance, and related topics released at the same time as the wave of calls for independence for Aceh.



**Figure 1. (Left).** The album “Freedom” by Bob Rezal, produced by Mita Record, Langsa, Aceh, Indonesia. 1999. (source: P. Hasudungan Sirait. [Eliminating Musicians Who Support Separatism](#). **(Right)** Album “Haba Referendum” by Bob Rezal, produced by Kanakri Music Studio, Malaysia. (Source: personal collection of Syeh Ghazali/Kasga Record)

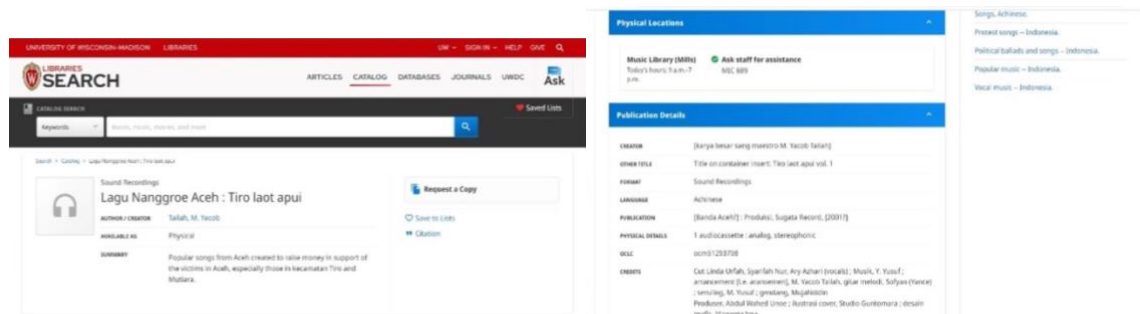
Songs with a referendum theme were created by several musicians when the people of Aceh and the political elite echoed the idea that emerged from Wali Nanggroe, Hasan Tiro, to break away from the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). This movement was a form of civil society action from various groups, including religious leaders and pro-independence civil organizations, to support Aceh's demand for independence from the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). A wave of demonstrations in the form of marches attended by thousands of people to voice their support for a referendum emerged in several areas and was also centered in Banda Aceh. “In 1999, referendum fever swept across Aceh. Acehese people of all ages discussed the referendum, which was seen as a solution to the Aceh conflict.” “The word ‘referendum’ appeared on several public facilities and was even considered the longest word in the world, stretching across various roads in regions throughout the province of Aceh” (AcehKini via Kumparan.com. 2020). “The referendum parade was held in support of the General Assembly of the Referendum Fighters Community (SU-MPR) on November 8, 1999. “Several Acehese musicians also participated in voicing the Aceh referendum through popular songs.” Although during the referendum parade, the lyrics of *Hikayat Prang Sabi* remained the most popular song that

was always sung by residents during the action. At that time, songs with the theme of the Aceh referendum were also created by several Acehnese musicians during 1999, such as the song “Referendum” by M. Yacob Tailah, the song “Sidang Umum Masyarakat Pejuang Referendum Aceh” (General Assembly of the Aceh Referendum Fighters) by Syeh Youldy Prima, ‘Referendum’ by Doles Marsel, and the song “Haba Referendum” by Bob Rezal.



**Figure 2.** Screenshot of the music video for the song “Referendum” by M. Yacob Tailah (1999), re-uploaded to YouTube by the account @kikinbotaksweet in 2014. (accessed on July 18, 2024).

In terms of quantity, songs that record conflict events and the emotions of the people of Aceh tend to appear and be produced more often than songs with ideological content. The lyrics of these songs tell the story of four bloody events that are deeply engraved in the memory of the Acehnese people. These songs were created by one musician for one event, as shown in the song data above. However, the song Haro Hara covers all four events that were the result of the armed social conflict. In addition, a song titled “Tiro Laot Apui,” which is also the title of Wahed Uno's album, tells a story outside of the four events of Rumoh Geudong, the Simpang KKA Incident, Arakundoe, and the Tengku Bantaqiah Incident in Beutong Ateuh. This song refers to the events that befell the Tiro and Mutiara communities in the early 2000s. So far, the author has not found any data related to song recordings that tell the story of the events in the Tiro and Mutiara areas. Even the song “Tiro Laot Apui” can no longer be found on several search engines on social media platforms and has even been removed from YouTube. The author has only found digital data from the archives of the ISEAS Library - Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore, and several university libraries in the United States, including the University of Michigan, Cornell University, University of California Los Angeles, and University of Wisconsin. At the University of Wisconsin, the song “Tiro Laot Apui,” written by M. Yacob Tailah and Wahed Uno, is collected in physical form, with the subject titled Songs Achinese, Protest Songs-Indonesia. The summary description reads: Popular songs from Aceh were created to rally and support the victims in Aceh, especially those in the subdistricts of Tiro and Mutiara.



**Figure 3.** Screenshot of the data archive for the song collection “Tiro Laot Apui” at the University of Wisconsin Library, USA (<https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/999944174302121>, accessed on October 2, 2024)

The song “Tiro Laot Apui” is one of the Acehnese protest songs that was banned by the Regional Military Emergency Authority (PDMD) of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (NAD) during the military emergency on May 19, 2003. Several Acehnese songs were banned and withdrawn from circulation by the government. Even the musicians were summoned and interrogated (direct interview with Syeh Ghazali, producer at Kasga Record, in Banda Aceh, August 8, 2024). One of the Acehnese musicians summoned by the military was Yusbi Yusuf (50 years old) and several other Acehnese musicians and artists, including song producers. According to Yusbi, two of his songs resulted in him receiving a summons from PDMD-NAD officials, namely the songs “Tragedi Arakundou” and “Nanggroe Meredeka”. He said that at that time, several other Acehnese songs were also included in the list of “banned songs,” including the song ‘Referendum’ by M. Yacob Tailah and the song “Tiro Laot Apui” by Wahed Uno (in BBC News, 2023, and a live interview with Yusbi Yusuf, October 7, 2024, in Banda Aceh).



**Figure 4. (Left)** Direct interview with Yusbi Yusuf, one of the popular musicians in Aceh in the 1990s to 2000s, several of whose songs were banned by the military (Banda Aceh, October 7, 2024). **(Right)** Cassette album of the song “Tragedi Arakundou” sung by Yusbi Yusuf. Recorded at Ly Record studio, Medan, and produced by Yusbi Yusuf under the PAS Record label in 1999 (source: author's personal collection).

“Tiro Laot Apui” is a song and the title of a protest-themed album released for humanitarian purposes. Part of the profits from the sales of Abd. Wahed Uno's first album on the Sugata Record label in Banda Aceh were donated to the victims of conflict in the districts of Tiro and Mutiara. The author found this narrative on the second album, also produced by Wahed Uno, entitled “Hikayat Prang”. The narrative on the cover of the second album reads, "InsyaAllah, we will donate Rp. 1,000 (one thousand rupiah) per cassette from your participation in this album for the education costs of orphaned children who are victims

of conflict. We will distribute this assistance through the dayah or Islamic boarding schools that nurture them. Furthermore, Rp. 1,500 (one thousand five hundred rupiah) per cassette from the album “Tiro Laot Apui” will be distributed in September 2003 through the NGO-HAM Pidie and KAMPI to the communities affected by the fires in nine villages in the Tiro and Mutiara sub-districts, which was a tragedy that occurred in July 2001.” The album “Hikayat Prang” contains ten songs, most of which were written by Abd. Wahed Uno and sung by Ari Harman and Fitria Junita. Several songs in the album were adapted from stories in the Acehese war epic with heroic themes, with the aim of contextualizing the songs with the socio-political situation in Aceh at that time. These two albums can be categorized as protest songs and protest albums with philanthropic goals.

In terms of music, most of the protest songs above use dangdut, Indian, and even house music rhythms, or Acehese house-dut, such as the songs “Referendum” by M Yacob Tailah and “Musibah Beutong” by Nurhayati & Ari Rama, which use house-dut or Acehese dangdut house rhythms in their musical arrangements. This phenomenon is thought to be due to market trends and the preferences of record producers at that time. “Record producers in Indonesia often require musicians and singers to follow consumer tastes” (Mulyadi, 2009). In addition, dangdut, Indian, and house music rhythms are relatively popular among the general public. This phenomenon occurred from the 1900s to the 2000s. This influence was due to the popularity of Indian music and dangdut and pop rhythms in the Indonesian music market since the 1980s. Furthermore, before 2000, Acehese musicians generally recorded and released their albums in studios and recording labels in Medan, one of which was the Ly Record studio (1990s). Even earlier, since the 1970s, popular Acehese music and Acehese arts such as hikayat Aceh, Seudati, and Didong had been recorded by several regional recording companies or labels in Medan (North Sumatra), including Mini Hero, Hero Record, Top Record, and O.K. Record.



**Figure 5.** Acehese art albums, titled “Seudati Aceh, Syeh Lah Geunta vol. 2” and “Sudati Aceh vol. 3.” Produced by O.K. Record and Hero Record, Medan, 1970s to 1980s (source: personal collection of Jauhari Samalanga, 2024).

The influence of the local music market in North Sumatra and Sumatra also contributed to the development of popular music genres in Aceh. In fact, the dynamics of market development and musical preferences on a national scale also greatly influenced various popular music genres in Aceh and led to the emergence of regional music albums in Aceh in line with the music that was booming or popular at the time. Examples include the dangdut music genre, which was popularized nationally by Rhoma Irama in the 1970s, and kasidah by the Nasida Ria group in the late 1970s in Jakarta. In addition, the high demand for kasidah music in Aceh was also influenced by several musicians and kasidah music groups from

North Sumatra whose albums were widely distributed in Aceh. This phenomenon began to emerge in the popular music scene when several musicians started to “migrate” to record their work at regional record companies in North Sumatra in the late 1970s. Ibnoe Arhas is noted in several records and information as the troubadour who made his name as the first Acehnes musician to record his golden voice in the recording industry. At that time, the popular regional music genres of dangdut and kasidah were the most beloved melodies among music enthusiasts. In addition to following market trends, the influence of prominent musicians such as Nur Asiah Djamil, Ahmad Baqi, and the Gambus El Surayya Orchestra was highly sought after by the Acehnes public and significantly shaped the musical works of Aceh during that era.



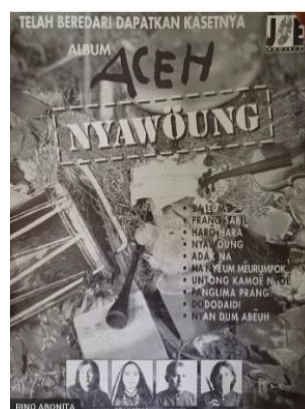
**Figure 6. (Left)** Aceh Qasidah album titled “Gaseh Ibu Bapa” by the Rencong Meutia '82 Group, produced by O.K Record label, Medan (source: personal collection of Syeh Ghazali/Kasga Record). **(Right)** Aceh Qasidah album titled “Do'a,” produced by Hero Record and Mini Hero labels, Medan, 1970s (collection of @Zabe Audio, 2024).

In the group format, there is Da'iyul Fata Group, a gambus orchestra that carries the kasidah genre. This Banda Aceh-based music group has produced four kasidah albums from 1979 to 1982 with the record companies Hero Record and Top Record. Around the same time, Ibnoe Arhas and his group Rencong Meutia released an Aceh kasidah album titled Gaseh Ibu Bapa. Not only that, in the dangdut genre, names such as Ibnoe Arhas also appeared in collaboration with Nurainun [Group] – the legendary Malay Deli singer – with the album Dangdut Aceh, which was also produced by Hero Record. The names Rohani Jeumpa, Cut Rosmawar, and Syah Loethan must also be noted as early musicians who contributed to the history of popular music in Aceh, particularly in the dangdut genre. The 70s to 80s are remembered as the golden age of “Qasidah Aceh” and “Dangdut Aceh.”



**Figure 7.** (Left) Aceh Dangdut album by Mawar Group led by Cut Rosmawar (source: personal collection of Syeh Ghazali/Kasga Record). (Right) Aceh Dangdut album by Nurainun Group produced by Hero Record and Mini Hero labels, Medan, 1970s, personal collection of the late Nurainun, a Malay Deli musician in Medan (<https://buntomi.wordpress.com/2018/02/27/menyanyilah-dari-hati/>, accessed October 27, 2024).

The phenomenon described above is quite different from the emergence of the song Haro Hara by the band Nyawöung in the early 2000s. The appearance of Haro Hara on Nyawöung's album marked a new era and the evolution of popular music in Aceh, featuring the concept of world music or popular music with elements of traditional music packaged with jazz and alternative rock. The initial idea behind the musical arrangements in the Nyawöung album was to reintroduce Acehnese art to the Acehnese people and even the world (interview with Jauhari Samalanga, July 28, 2024). This can be seen from the album cover chosen by Jauhari Samalanga, the initiator of the album project, which contains ten songs in the Acehnese language. The album photo used is a photo of several Acehnese musical instruments that have been thrown into a pile of trash. This visual strongly represents the decline of Acehnese music and culture at that time. This idea was also driven by the increasingly complex socio-political situation in Aceh, which resulted in the mental and psychological collapse of most of the Acehnese people.



**Figure 8.** Album poster from 2000  
(Photo: Rino Abonita, via BBC News Indonesia, 2023)

The socio-political conditions in Aceh prior to 2000 motivated the creation of the album Nyawöung. According to Jauhari, the songs on the album are works of journalism in the form of music. The lyrics raise social issues and the plight of the Acehnese people as a result of the conflict. In addition, the album project is a continuation of Jauhari's voice on social

issues, which he originally voiced through print media. However, at that time, many works of journalism reporting on the conditions in Aceh were silenced by the authorities. One of the print media outlets founded by Jauhari was even forced to close (direct interview with Jauhari Samalanga, producer of Joe Project, which produced the Nyawöung album, in Banda Aceh, July 28, 2024). On the Nyawöung album, these social issues are voiced through the lyrics of the songs. Several songs, both explicit and metaphorical, such as “Dododaidi,” convey a mother’s message to her child to prepare for the worst and be brave in defending the country, even if it means going to war. The song “Untong Kamoe Nyoe” tells the real story of the impact of conflict on the people of Aceh. The song “Prang Sabi” is about the story of war in the name of Allah. The song “Panglima Prang” depicts the joy of the Acehnese people in welcoming the heroes who defended Aceh. The song “Haro Hara” depicts the overall tragedy of the conflict period. All of these songs have a heroic tone and were very contextual at the time, even inspiring the Acehnese people to fight for their independence.

### **Haro Hara Songs as Protest Music in Aceh**

The song Haro Haro is one of the songs on the album Nyawöung, released in 2000 under the management of Joe Project (Joe Samalanga). As mentioned earlier, this song is one of the songs on the album Nyawöung that was banned after enjoying popularity from 2000 to 2003. The song contains straightforward lyrics and references four bloody events that occurred during the implementation of the Military Operations Area (DOM) in Aceh from 1989 to 1998. In addition, this song also touches on the socio-political conditions in Aceh during the conflict in each verse: “*Rumoh sikula, abeh dum tutong, Jeut saboh gampong, le inong janda*” || “schools, burned down in every village, many widows.” The lyrics convey the heartbreaking conditions experienced by the people of Aceh: “*Nanggroe Aceh nyoe, jinoo ka reule. Ureueng dum mate, dianiaya*” || “This land of Aceh is now in disarray, most people are dead, persecuted.” As well as a series of tragic events experienced by the Acehnese people at that time, in the lyrics: “*In Kreung Arakundo, manyet dum apong, Lheuh nyang meusambong, Simpang KKA, Teungku Bantaqiah, di ateuh Beutong, di Rumoh Geudong, ureung ji siksa*” || “In Sungai Arakundo, corpses float, After that, it continues, at the KKA intersection, Tengku Bantaqiah, in Beutong Ateuh, in the house, people are tortured.” These lyrics clearly describe the conditions and several events that occurred in Aceh at that time.

“The song Haro Hara reflects the rhythmic character of coastal music, rich in percussion, which distinguishes it from the era of sweet songs typical of Aceh, such as the lyrics of Bungong Jeumpa, which reflect the charm of the mountains of Aceh Besar” (Tempo, Requiem for Aceh, 2005). Furthermore, in the same article, Jauhari Samalanga, producer of the Nyawöung music group, explains, “Acehnese coastal music is typically louder, with a fast beat, patriotic themes, and stronger vocals” (Tempo, Requiem untuk Aceh, 2005). This clearly represents several songs in the Nyawöung album, including Haro Hara. The rhythmic musical form of Haro Hara is also supported by lyrics that clearly describe dark events and their impact on the people of Aceh. The explicit form of protest is evident in several lines of the lyrics to Haro Hara, written by Nurdin Daud: “*Saket lam hate, angoh lam jantung. Wahe rakan loen, ka tangiang nyata.*” || “Pain in the heart, scorched in the heart. O my brothers, it is now clear.” This excerpt from the lyrics is quite clear, not only conveying the pain in the heart caused by various heartbreaking events, but also a form of protest against the impact of these events. At the end of the lyrics, there is a plea to God Almighty to protect the people of Aceh from the evil deeds that have destroyed them as a result of the armed conflict, as in

the following lyrics: "*Ta lakee do'a, bak Tuhan sidroe Nanggroe, Aceh nyoe, neubrie seujahtera. Beu jeuoh-jeuoh aeb, Malee ngoen keuji. Meu bek Allah brie, Aceh binasa. Allah.*" || "We ask for prayers, to the one God. May this land of Aceh be given prosperity. May it be kept away from disgrace, shame, and wickedness. May Allah not let Aceh perish. Allah."

The rhythm of the song Haro Hara is adapted from an Acehese folk song believed to have emerged at the start of the Aceh War nearly two centuries ago. It is known among the people as Dum Meugedum Beude or Tum Meugeutum Beude. The word "Beude" is Acehese for "gun." The phrase "Dum Meugedum Beude" is interpreted as an onomatopoeia for the sound of guns or weapons during war. The song certainly has various meanings, one of which is as a motivational song to arouse patriotic spirit and resistance against colonialism. As stated by the Deputy Commander of the PDMD-NAD Aceh Information Task Force, Lieutenant Colonel CBH Firdaus, in 2003, when several Acehese songs were banned for containing provocative lyrics and motivating the people to voice their desire for Acehese independence during the conflict between GAM and the Indonesian military and government in the early 2000s – as quoted from a BBC News Indonesia article, that, "When going to war, the Acehese people of old were often motivated by heroic poems" (BBC News Indonesia, 2023). "In addition, Hikayat Prang Sabi was written by Teungku Chik Pante Kulu during the Aceh War against Dutch colonialism." "Hikayat Prang Sabi was written in 1881 to stir up the spirit of jihad and Acehese ethno-nationalism against Dutch colonialism" (1873-1942) (Sari, et.all, 2022). "The Dutch government at that time viewed the power of Hikayat Prang Sabi as a dangerous weapon. Therefore, Hikayat Prang Sabi was banned from being distributed, stored, or read by anyone" (Hasjmy, 1977; Subroto, 2015, in Sari, Et al., 2022). "Not only as a war poem during the war against colonialism, according to Sari, et al. (2022), Hikayat Prang Sabi was also a "war song" for the GAM against the Indonesian government" (1976-2005). Both works of art in the form of folk songs and hikayat were once present in Acehese society as "war songs" in the long history of Aceh's socio-political life after peace.

The song Haro Hara then transformed from a folk song during the Aceh War into a song that encouraged people to go to the fields and rice paddies. This was stated by Jauhari Samalanga, who said that the rhythm of the song was found among agrarian communities as a song used during various agricultural activities (direct interview with Jauhari Samalanga, in Banda Aceh, September 18, 2024). The rhythm of this folk song was then adapted and arranged in a progressive rock style. The rhythm was chosen because it has historical roots related to the Aceh War. The song Tum Megeutum Beude is very contextual to the vision and ideas behind the songs in the Nyawöung album. The lyrics were also rewritten and contextualized according to the conditions of the conflict.

The rhythm of the song *Tum Megeutum Beude* was also adapted into one of the songs in the recitation of Islamic poems in Aceh, known as *Dalail Khairat*, by a religious vocal group in a house of worship commonly referred to as meunasah. There is no definitive data on the background of the adaptation of the rhythm found in one of the songs in the *Dalail Khairat* recitation. However, there are two assumptions regarding this. First, before the release of the song Haro Hara or when the rhythm was still known to the public as a folk song. Second, after the release of the song Haro Hara with a rearranged rhythm, it became more popular. The *Tum Megeutum Beude* rhythm in the Haro Hara song version was very popular among the Acehese people when it was released, with lyrics that were considered relevant to the social and political conditions in Aceh, so it spread widely among various groups of people and was adapted into several other vocal arts.

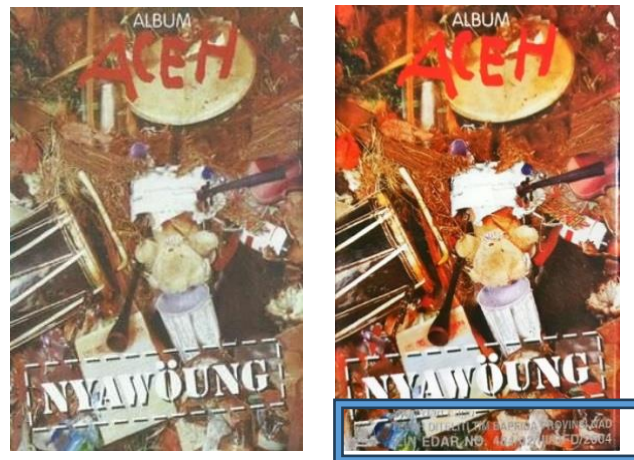
### **The Influence of Haro Hara Songs during the Aceh Conflict 2000-2003**

The song Haro Hara is a heroic song with straightforward lyrics that describe the tragic events that occurred in Aceh during the armed conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian National Army (TNI). When the album Nyawöung was first released in 2000, Haro Hara was one of two songs that producer Nyawöung used as promotional material in the media, especially on the radio, along with the religious-themed song “Saleum.” Haro Hara and several other songs on the album Nyawöung tell their own stories from the period between 2000 and 2003. The songs on the album have become a magnet and a new color for music listeners in Aceh, in addition to the high-quality musical arrangements produced through an international standard recording process that cost more than one hundred million rupiah (direct interview with Jauhari Samalanga, in Banda Aceh, September 18, 2024).

Several historical narratives that the author gathered during interviews with several research informants indicate that the song Haro Hara was often played at the secretariats of civil and student movements and even used during demonstrations. Some activists used the lyrics of the song “Dododaidi,” which say, “bek ta takot keu darah ile, adak pi mate poma ka rela” || “Don't be afraid of bloodshed, if we die, our mothers will be willing.” This line from the song's lyrics was used by some activists during demonstrations demanding Aceh's independence as a rallying cry during the demonstrations by printing it on banners and T-shirts. Meanwhile, the song Haro Hara, which contains lyrics about historical events, was more often played on the radio, in homes, civil organization secretariats, and among students, and even at posts of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) forces. The influence of the song Haro Hara was also strong among the general public, activists, and even among GAM troops, to the extent that the song was considered provocative and disruptive to the stability of the country during the conflict. Therefore, the song Haro Hara, the only song on the album Nyawöung, was eventually banned from distribution and playback in public. Furthermore, the song Haro Hara was omitted from the latest release of the Nyawöung album (2004) in both cassette tape and Compact Disc (CD) formats.

Thomson (2016) argues that, “when faced with social and political injustice, songwriters turn to their craft to produce songs that seek to explain the gaps that are currently being felt.” “The layered history of these songs and the way they have adapted with changing technology reflects the state of contemporary protest music ready to create an artful and thrilling soundtrack for effective mass engagement.” “By doing so, artists express themselves politically and become a powerful force in society” (Ihediwa, 2023).

As mentioned earlier, the song Haro Hara and several other protest songs were banned. Several musicians were summoned by the Regional Military Emergency Authority (PDMD) of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (NAD). The result of the meeting between the PDMD-NAD and the musicians, accompanied by officials from the Aceh Recording Industry Association (AIRA), was a mutual agreement that certain songs should not be played in order to maintain security and stability. The PDMD-NAD even established a censorship agency called the Regional Film Board (BAPRIDA) in 2003, tasked with selecting Acehnese songs to be distributed to the public (direct interview with Syeh Ghazali, producer at Kasga Record, in Banda Aceh, August 8, 2024). After the agreement between the two parties, every Acehnese regional song album to be released must include a censorship stamp from BAPRIDA. This included the re-released Nyawöung album, which did not include the song Haro Hara. It was replaced by a song titled Troh Bak Watee, sung by Kurniatun Z. The second release of the Nyawöung album was due to high market demand for the album. The cover of the re-release bore the stamp of the BAPRIDA censorship agency in 2004.



**Figure 9. (Left)** Cover image of the Nyawöung album cassette released in 2000. **(Right)** Cover image of the Nyawöung album cassette released in 2004, without the song Haro Hara and stamped by the regional censorship agency or BAPRIDA of the Province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (NAD), with the 2004 distribution permit number included (Photo: Rika Wirandi's personal collection).

As an album produced to high standards and crafted with seriousness, featuring world music packaging and touches of jazz and rock, the song Haro Hara and all the songs on the album Nyawöung have had a strong influence on the emergence of music groups promoting ethnic pop music in Aceh, including Raket, Cupa, Bidjeh, and Tangke. The Nyawöung music group is considered by some musicians and artists to be pioneers in popularizing ethnic-inspired popular music in Aceh. "In addition, the Nyawöung album entered the Amazon iTunes market in April 2012. It is one of several Indonesian music albums that have penetrated the global distribution platform market, alongside albums by other Indonesian musicians such as Iwan Fals, Slank, Indra Lesmana, and Agnes Monica" (Lintas Gayo. 2012).

### **The Influence of Haro Hara Songs in the Post-Conflict Period in Aceh (Present Day)**

More than two decades after the release of the song Haro Hara on the album Nyawöung and the end of armed conflict following the 2004 tsunami and the 2005 Helsinki MoU, which marked a milestone for peace in Aceh, this song still has a significant social and political influence on certain segments of society and the political elite in Aceh. As mentioned earlier, the song Haro Hara has had a social and even political influence on the movement in Aceh, as it is considered one of the songs that was able to raise the spirits of the Acehnese people in the midst of adversity and strengthen their desire to fight for independence. Additionally, this song was also appreciated by the troops and even several high-ranking officials of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) during the conflict and even after the conflict subsided following the Aceh peace agreement.

Regarding the influence, evolution, and adaptation of the Haro Hara song today, it can be observed through one of the most popular social media platforms, namely the TikTok application. As of July 21, 2024, there are two accounts that provide the Haro Hara song as background music for their users' videos. First, from the TikTok Music account @NyawoungAceh, which is used for 435 videos. Additionally, the TikTok account @KUMPULAN LAGU ACEH has been used for 312 videos by several accounts with various video themes, and this number is likely to continue growing periodically. The use of

the song Haro Hara as background music or sound on TikTok is relatively diverse, ranging from commemorations of the birth and death of one of the commanders of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), videos in the form of posters of regional legislative candidates from local political parties, the Aceh Party (PA), videos and photos of the Aceh conflict era, videos commemorating several Acehnese figures who died during the conflict, videos of official events of the Aceh Party (PA) and KPA, and everyday videos.



**Figure 10. (Left)** Screenshot from a video containing photos of the Simpang KKA tragedy (1999) with the song Haro Hara as background music on the TikTok platform (source: TikTok account @arsipaceh). **(Center)** Screenshot of a video containing a photo of a deceased GAM leader, using the song Haro Hara as background music on the TikTok platform (source: TikTok account @Partai Aceh Meurah Mulia) account. **(Right)** Screenshot of a video featuring a photo of GAM GURKHA troops using the song “Haro Hara” as background music on the TikTok platform (source: TikTok account @abu Azzam). (Photo: screenshot accessed July 30, 2024)

The song Haro Hara has also been tracked as being used in TikTok videos by several official accounts of regional election teams, namely candidates for regent and governor of Aceh for the 2024-2029 term. Among them: the campaign account of the Aceh Besar Regent candidate, H. Mukhlis Basyah from the Aceh Party (PA), with the account name @for.acehbesar.1 or GARDA H. Mukhlis Basyah, with a total of 6 videos of visits to the community and campaigns in various areas, using the song Haro Hara as the background music for the videos. The campaign account of the same regent candidate with the account name @rakan\_adun\_a.rayeuk uses the song Haro Hara for one campaign activity video. In addition, the campaign account of the Aceh governor candidate, who is also a pro-independence or pro-referendum activist from the SIRA organization, Muhammad Nazar, with the account name @barisanmuhammadnazar, also uses the song Haro Hara in one of the videos showing photos of Nazar's trial in July 2003.

The official account of Aceh gubernatorial candidate @muzakirmanaf1964 on the social media platform TikTok also used the soundtrack from the song Haro Hara during the 2025-2029 Aceh regional election campaign. The video featuring the song “Haro Hara” shows a photo of gubernatorial candidate Muzakir Manaf (Mualem) wearing a red hat with the Aceh Party (PA) logo during a campaign event. The video has been viewed by approximately seventeen thousand viewers since it was uploaded to the platform in March 2024.



**Figure 11. (Left)** Screenshot of a campaign video for one of the candidates for governor of Aceh for 2024-2029, Muzakir Manaf (source: TikTok account @muzakirmanaf1964). **(Center)** Screenshot of a campaign video for one of the candidates for governor of Aceh for 2024-2029, Muhammad Nazar (source: TikTok account @Barisan Muda Nazar). **(Right)** Screenshot of a campaign video for one of the candidates for regent of Aceh Besar Regency for the 2024-2029 term, H. Mukhlis Basyah (source: TikTok account @GARDA H.Mukhlis Basyah). (Photo: screenshot accessed on July 23, 2024)

The use of the song Haro Hara on social media, particularly on TikTok during the General Election (Pemilu) and Regional Head Election (Pilkada) campaign period in Aceh, was influenced by two factors: first, as a trend among social media users on the TikTok platform to use various songs as background music for uploaded videos. This trend has been developing over the past few years since TikTok became popular among people in various countries around the world as a platform for sharing short videos using songs as background music. Therefore, the song Haro Hara is used by most users who are Acehnese people for the background music of their daily videos and videos and photos with historical figures and important events in Aceh as the background, especially photos from the conflict period. Second, it functions as a supporting medium in political contests during the Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) in Aceh. The song Haro Hara is also used by several official social media accounts of regional legislative candidates and official accounts of regency and provincial head candidates. The use of this song in campaign videos reflects the struggle of regional leaders during the campaign period because the spirit of the song is considered to represent the spirit of the current Aceh leaders' vision. In addition, according to data obtained during the research, specifically related to the current use of the song Haro Hara, it is only used by legislative candidates and regional head candidates who are cadres of the local political party, namely the Aceh Party (PA). This party was founded by most of the former combatants and leaders of the Free Aceh Movement after the Aceh conflict.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Haro Hara Song Research: Historiography of Protest Music in Aceh 2000-2003 is the first study of its kind, conducted primarily by the researcher himself with the aim of describing the history of protest songs and identifying the social influence of music in the realm of popular music, which is one genre of protest music. This music genre became an alternative medium for narrating and voicing the pain, sadness, and protests of civil society against the bloody events caused by the armed social conflict between the Indonesian

National Armed Forces (TNI) and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) that had been ongoing in Aceh for decades. In addition, this study aimed to map the landscape of the development and dynamics of protest music in the region (province), especially in the province of Aceh.

This study is expected to fill the gap in the lack of research on regional popular music in Aceh, especially on the topic of protest music within the framework or context of vertical conflict, which has been overlooked by music academics, especially in the field of ethnomusicology. In addition, the main objective of this study is to examine how listeners' experiences and interpretations, as well as the influence of protest music, affected the social and psychological dynamics of the community during and after the conflict. It also examined how this influenced military policy, leading to a ban on the distribution (bredel) and listening to protest songs in public spaces and domestic spaces (homes) in Acehnese society from 2000 to 2003.

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