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ANALYSIS OF MELODIES AND TEXTS IN KATONENG-KATONENG BY SEVEN PERKOLONG-KOLONG IN KARO DISTRICT

Naima Serenia Girsang¹, Mauly Purba², Vanesia Amelia Sebayang³, Pulumun P. Ginting⁴, Ikhwanuddin Nasution⁵
Program of Art Creation And Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia¹²³⁴⁵

naimasgirsang14@gmail.com¹, maulypurba29@gmail.com²,
ameliasebayang@yahoo.com³, pulumunginting@gmail.com⁴,
ikhwanuddin25@gmail.com⁵

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the Katoneng-katoneng vocal tradition in Karo society, specifically focusing on the Pemasu-masun (blessing) segment. The primary aim is to analyze the musical characteristics, textual meanings, and the transmission process of this tradition through seven prominent perkolong-kolong (traditional singers) across different generations. The study addresses the shift from traditional instrumentation to electronic keyboards and the potential loss of melodic authenticity and depth of meaning due to declining interest among the younger generation. The study employs a qualitative method with an ethnomusicological approach. The theoretical framework integrates Bruno Nettl's Musical Character Theory to analyze melodic structures, Ferdinand de Saussure's Semiotics to decode textual signs, and Robert Sibarani's Oral Tradition Theory to examine performance and local wisdom. Data were gathered through field observations, in-depth interviews, audio-visual documentation, and prescriptive musical transcriptions to map the stylistic variations of each informant. The findings reveal that the musical characteristics of Pemasu-masun follow a cyclical structure: pattern A (antecedent), which tends to use the Aeolian mode, and pattern B (consequent), which aligns with the Phrygian mode. Aesthetic variations are defined by the perkolong-kolong's improvisational skill in executing vocal ornaments known as rengget. Textually, the Pemasu-masun lyrics serve as a system of signs representing the philosophical value of teneng (tranquility) and the Rakut Si Telu kinship structure. The transmission process occurs orally through observation and social interaction. In conclusion, despite the transformation of musical accompaniment, the perkolong-kolong remains a vital guardian of cultural identity, ensuring the continuity of Karo's traditional values amidst modernization.

Keywords: *Katoneng-katoneng, Pemasu-masun, Perkolong-kolong, Semiotics.*

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INTRODUCTION

The Karo people in North Sumatra have a traditional structure that is always accompanied by art as the main medium for expressing cultural values and social communication. Every important event in the Karo human life cycle, from birth and marriage to death, is never separated from vocal music. This vocal music occupies a main position because it functions as a means of conveying messages, prayers, advice, and hope that connects humans to the Creator. (Takari, 2021: 112).

In their rich musical culture, the Karo people group vocal music into various specific domains based on the context of its use. This division reflects how sound and melody are present in every sphere of life, from personal expression to collective rituals involving the wider community.

The diversity of functions and types of vocal music in the Karo tradition can be mapped systematically into four main domains, which include social, spiritual, and emotional dimensions. The first realm is performing arts, represented by the Ende-enden song. This song is generally sung by group members at events. The Guro-guro Aron drum, which functions purely as people's entertainment. The second realm relates to a very broad ritual dimension, including songs such as Didong doah, Ndilo wari udan, Mang-mang, Nendong, Ngeria, Perumah begu, and Tabas. The functions and characteristics of this group of songs are very specific, ranging from daily activities such as putting children to sleep and tapping sap to magical functions related to divination, summoning rain, and summoning spirits or supernatural powers.

The third realm is the traditional context, where the songs of Katoneng-katoneng, Pemasu-masun, and Didong Doah Bibi play a central role. This group of songs is a mandatory element used in the life cycle of the Karo people, starting from wedding ceremonies and entering a new house (mengket rumah) to death ceremonies. Finally, the fourth realm is personal entertainment, which includes the singing of Didong-doah, Tangis-tangis, and Io-io. This type of singing is more intimate and personal, functioning as an individual's spontaneous emotional expression to express feelings, whether in the form of sadness or love.

This mapping, which adapts Kumalo Tarigan's classification of Karo vocal music (in Sitepu, 2020), provides a clear picture of the wide scope of vocal music in Karo culture, which touches on the dimensions of performance, sacredness, and personal emotions. However, of all these classifications, vocal music in a traditional context has its own appeal because of its nature as a mandatory instrument to perfect the course of cultural processions. The focus of this research is directed at this category, because it contains a very complex and in-depth communication structure. One form of singing that carries a unique musical character and has a strong identity in the category of traditional vocal music is Katoneng-katoneng.

The uniqueness of katoneng-katoneng lies in the way it is presented, called masu-masu, namely, singing poetry spontaneously, known as Pemasu-masun². Through Pemasu-masun, each performance always presents new texts that are adapted to the specific context of the event, such as when entering a new house (mengket rumah mbaru), harvest celebrations (gendang guro-guro aron year party), or death ceremonies (cawir metua). In each phase of life, katoneng-katoneng is not just mere entertainment but the main instrument for praying, giving advice, and strengthening the kinship relations of the Karo people who are bound by the rakut sitelu structure (Kalimbubu, Senina, and Anak Beru).³. Without the presence of this song, the delivery of blessings in a traditional ceremony is felt to lack a strong emotional and spiritual foundation for those who receive it.

The presence of this song in every traditional ceremony cannot be separated from the important role of perkolong-kolong. They are professional traditional singers who are trusted by the community to be a mouthpiece for families hosting events. Becoming a perkolong-kolong is not an easy matter because they are not only required to have a melodious voice but also have to have a deep understanding of Karo traditional procedures. They must be able to compose sentences that are smooth, polite, and full of respect, especially when dealing with kalimbubu (respected parties in the Karo traditional structure). This ability to maintain the dignity of the family through polite speech is what gives the figure of the perkolong-kolong a place of honor in the social order of Karo society.

Technically, these perkolong-kolong musicians possess a distinctive singing style, combining syllabic (one note for one syllable) and melismatic (one syllable sung with multiple notes) techniques. One of the aesthetic characteristics that defines Karo vocal music is the use of vocal embellishments called 'rengget'.⁴ These distinctive rengget, or cengkok, are the elements that give life and beauty to each katoneng-katoneng verse. Without a good command of rengget, a katoneng-katoneng song will feel bland and lose its distinctive Karo character. Therefore, the ability to spontaneously improvise, stringing words together and embellishing melodies with rengget, is the primary strength of the katoneng-katoneng tradition. Through the skills of these perkolong-kolong musicians, kinship values, social norms, and religious beliefs are conveyed orally and continue to live within their communities.

However, over time, the katoneng-katoneng tradition has begun to face serious challenges due to the tide of modernisation. Since the 1990s, the use of complete traditional musical instruments, such as the five-piece sendalanan drum, has been gradually replaced by the use of electronic keyboards. This change was generally driven by practicality and the increased affordability of events. This phenomenon has resulted in the distinctive sound of the sarune being rarely heard in traditional ceremonies, which has indirectly influenced the musical tastes of the Karo people today. As the accompanying music shifted to electronic music, the atmosphere and authentic spirit of these traditional songs have also shifted.

This situation is exacerbated by the fact that the regeneration process among the younger generation of Karo seems to be weakening. Based on field observations, the younger generation's interest in learning traditional vocal techniques and delving into complex customary rules is waning. They tend to gravitate towards popular entertainment, perceived as more modern. Several previous studies have even shown that those under 40 years old are almost completely unable to sing these traditional songs correctly. If this situation continues without in-depth documentation, it is feared that the authenticity of the melodic style and the depth of meaning within the katoneng-katoneng will be lost in the future.

Several researchers have previously attempted to document and research katoneng-katoneng. For example, Sitepu (2018) examined how these songs function in the ceremony of entering a new house. Furthermore, Tarigan (2017) also examined the lyrics of katoneng-katoneng to discern their moral values. Furthermore, research by Tarigan, Ginting, and Barus (2022) examined the use of these songs in the context of Karo traditional weddings in general. These findings provide a strong foundation for understanding the social role of Karo vocal music in community life.

However, these studies are largely general in nature and primarily examine katoneng-katoneng from a sociological perspective or their societal functions. There remains an unexplored gap, namely, the diversity of singing styles and individual word choices from one perkolong-kolong to another. Yet, as an oral tradition, the beauty of these songs depends heavily on the personal creativity of each singer. This phenomenon has not been widely discussed in previous research, as each perkolong-kolong actually brings a distinct musical "colour" and storytelling style even though they sing the same genre.

Based on this information, this study focuses on the melodies and texts of katoneng-katoneng performed by seven traditional perkolong-kolong figures in Tanah Karo. These seven perkolong-kolong are Sabarina Br. Sitepu, Jenny Br. Sembiring, Ulina Br. Ginting, Keleng Barus, Unjuk Br. Ginting, Erwina Br. Ginting, and Oky Ginting. The selection of these seven perkolong-kolong was carried out with careful consideration because each of them represents a different musical style, has extensive experience on the traditional stage, and comes from different generational backgrounds.

The existence of these perkolong-kolong is very valuable because they are the keepers of collective memory about how the original katoneng-katoneng should be sung. This research becomes even more interesting to carry out because the conditions of several key informants require immediate attention. For example, one of the big figures, Ulina Br. Ginting, is now gone, and Keleng Barus is currently in a declining health condition (sick). Through surviving documentary data from these senior figures, as well as comparing them with other active practitioners across

generations, this research attempts to map musical and textual variations as a whole. This is done so that the richness of vocal techniques and word choices possessed by these masters does not just disappear but can be studied again by future generations.

To scientifically dissect the diversity of styles of the seven perkolong-kolong, this research uses three main interrelated foundations. First, from the musical side, researchers use the theory of musical character proposed by Bruno Nettl (1964). This theory is very helpful in analyzing technical elements such as melody structure, use of notes, and rhythm patterns. Through this approach, researchers can see how the rengget or cengkok techniques performed by each group have differences or similarities so that their musical characteristics can be clearly mapped.

Second, to understand the depth of the message contained in their poetry, this research applies the semiotic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure. The aim of using this theory is to systematically dissect the sign system in katoneng-katoneng texts. The researcher will see how a sentence of prayer or advice in the song works as a single sign, which connects the signifier in the form of the sound and the lyrics being sung with the signifié, which is the mental concept or cultural meaning contained therein. In this way, the messages conveyed by the perkolong-kolong are not only seen as lines of words but also as a sign structure that represents the life values and philosophy of the Karo people in depth.

Apart from the musical aspects and the meaning of the text, this research is also based on the theory of oral tradition put forward by Robert Sibarani (2014). Considering that katoneng-katoneng is a tradition passed down through hearing and memory (orally), this theory is used to dissect how the local wisdom of the Karo people is maintained even though it is conveyed spontaneously. With the help of this theory, researchers can see how these pekolong-kolong act as 'custodians of culture' who pass on ancestral values to the next generation through every blessing poem they recite.

To achieve depth of analysis of the melodies and texts of the seven perkolong-kolong, this research uses qualitative research methods with an ethnomusicological approach. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the musical practices and use of Pemasu-masun texts

directly in a traditional context. Research data was obtained through observation of performances and interviews with kolong-kolong workers, as well as audio and visual documentation as study material. Next, the musical and text data were analyzed to see variations in melody and word choice used by each perkolong-kolong so that differences in presentation styles could be understood systematically.

Based on all the descriptions above, it is clear that Katoneng-Katoneng is not just an ordinary traditional song but a cultural heritage that holds the identity and noble values of the Karo people. The shift towards modern musical instruments and the decreasing interest of the younger generation are alarms for efforts to preserve this tradition. By comparing the musical styles and text meanings of the seven selected perkolong-kolong figures, it is hoped that this research will be able to make a real contribution in documenting the skills of these perkolong-kolong before their traces are lost to time.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses qualitative research with analytical descriptive characteristics. The choice of qualitative methods was based on the research objective of understanding the meaning and sign systems contained in Katoneng-katoneng cultural practices, not just measuring with numbers or statistics.

Philosophically, this research is based on the structuralism paradigm, which is theoretically rooted in the thinking of Ferdinand de Saussure. In contrast to the hermeneutic approach, which tends to be subjective, the structuralism paradigm views that cultural phenomena, whether music or language, have a basic structure that regulates the relationships between the elements within them. In this case, the research is positioned as an effort to uncover the relationship between the signifier, namely, the physical form of the Pemasu-masun melody and text, and the signified, namely, the concept of values and prayers collectively agreed upon by the Karo community. Thus, this approach allows researchers to dissect Katoneng-katoneng as an orderly and systematic cultural communication system through oral traditions.

The analytical descriptive nature of this research is used to explain the characteristics of the melody, text structure, and unique style of the seven Karo traditional perkolong-kolong.

This research not only describes the katoneng-katoneng phenomenon as it really is but also analyzes patterns, variations, and the relationship between musical and textual elements with traditional values and mechanisms of traditional inheritance. The use of this paradigm expands the space for shared understanding in bridging the meaning of traditional texts with the realities of current society.

The entire theoretical analysis process is carried out through an ethnomusicological approach, namely the study of music in the cultural context of the supporting community. Ethnomusicology is seen as the main relevant umbrella because Pemasu-masun in Katoneng-Katoneng is not just a musical work but is part of a social and customary system that functions as a means of communication, a glue of solidarity, and a medium for inheriting Karo cultural values. This approach is in line with the aim of knowledge to understand (interpretative) cultural reality in depth and provide a more complete picture of Katoneng-katoneng practices among Karo society.

Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from relevant literature, archives, and previous research. This data includes books, journal articles, theses, and historical notes, which are used as comparative material and to strengthen analysis so that research does not only rely on field findings but also has a strong theoretical and historical foundation.

This division is important because it provides a balance between empirical data originating from the direct experience of traditional practitioners and supporting data originating from academic studies and written documents. With these two types of data sources, it is hoped that research will be able to produce a more complete and in-depth picture of the practice, meaning, and dynamics of katoneng-katoneng inheritance in Karo society.

Data sources in this research are divided into two, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly from the field through interviews, observation, documentation, and audio-visual recordings of the seven Karo traditional villages, which were the focus of the research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Historical Roots: From Sacred Ritual to Oral Art

The existence of katoneng-katoneng in the Karo tribal civilization is a very old

heritage. Historically, the origins of katoneng-katoneng are rooted in the original beliefs of the Karo people (Pemuhen era). At that time, this vocal form was not known as entertainment but as a sacred medium of communication.

In the past, this chant was performed by Guru Sibaso (spiritual figure) or a traditional elder in a very closed ritual. Its function is to perform pepajek tendi (strengthen the soul) or as a spell to summon ancestral spirits to ask for protection. Regarding the magical atmosphere in the Karo ritual, Muhammad Takari explained as follows:

Katoneng-katoneng in the Karo rite functions as a sacred sound medium that bridges the profane dimension of humans with the sacred dimension of ancestors. Rhythmically regular sound vibrations are an important instrument in facilitating the psychological condition of ritual performers to reach the threshold of consciousness or trance" (Takari, 2021: 112).

The tones used at that time tended to be repetitive and had a magical emotional vibration. This explains why to this day, the "soul" of katoneng-katoneng remains in the form of prayer or Pemasu-masun (giving blessings), because its roots come from human communication with the Creator and the universe. The transition from ritual functions to oral (performance) arts occurred in line with the adaptation of the Karo people to social change. Robert Sibarani (2012: 115) strengthens this by stating that local wisdom often experiences a shift in function from ritual to performative for the sake of the continuation of the tradition.

2. Philosophy of the Name and Meaning of "Teneng"

If we look at its meaning, the term "katoneng-katoneng" comes from a strong root word in the Karo language, namely "teneng." In the daily conversation of the Karo people, "calm" describes a calm, peaceful state or a stable mental condition without any disturbance. Through saying and repeating the word, the word "teneng" then developed into "katoneng-katoneng." In meaning, this change describes a process or effort that is carried out continuously to achieve inner peace. In other words, this singing is not just a sound but a way or means to bring the listener to a peaceful and serene atmosphere. This philosophy of "calmness" is not just an empty term, but rather the essence of Karo's musical aesthetic.

Regarding the meaning of this word, an expert on Karo literature and culture, Henry Guntur Tarigan, gave the following explanation:

"The term 'katoneng-katoneng' contains the hope of a harmonious inner situation. The repetition of this word in oral tradition shows a spiritual journey from anxiety to calm. So, every verse sung by the singer is a bridge to bring the listener and the subject being prayed for into a state of calm or peace." (Tarigan, 1979: 28). In the context of customary implementation, this teneng philosophy is the main mission of a perkolong-kolong. The tranquility in question includes three important dimensions for the Karo people:

- 1) Personal Dimension: Calmness for the individual so that his soul (*tendi*) remains strong and is not shaken by life's problems.
- 2) Social Dimension: Calmness in family relationships (*rakut sitelu*) to avoid disputes.
- 3) Spiritual Dimension: A calm relationship between humans and the Creator and ancestors.

This provides a deep understanding that the musical characteristics of *katoneng-katoneng* are in harmony with its meaning. In practice, this song is sung to the accompaniment of the Simalungun Rayat drum, which has a slow tempo and tends to create a sad atmosphere. This calm tempo provides space for the 7 groups in this research, such as Sabarina Br. Sitepu and other groups, to appreciate every verse of the prayer that is chanted so that the essence of the message in *Pemasu-masun* is focused on the hope that the person being prayed for will have a peaceful life.

Thus, *katoneng-katoneng* is a cultural manifestation that uses a combination of the sounds of the *perkolong-kolong* and the rhythmic patterns of the *simalungun rayat* as a tool to create order and inner peace. Through the harmony created by the *sierkerjagen8*, this oral tradition has succeeded in maintaining the emotional balance of the Karo people, where every beat of the Simalungun Rayat drum and prayer verses work together to bring shade to life.

3. Dynamics of Changes in Context and Function

Along with the times, *katoneng-katoneng* experienced a significant shift in context in the lives of the Karo people. In the

past, much of the literature only recorded this tradition as the main part of the *mengket rumah* ceremony (entering a new house), but the reality on the ground today shows a much wider scope. Through the results of interviews with the 7 *kolong-kolong* in this research, it was found that *katoneng-katoneng* has become a spiritual and social necessity in almost all traditional Karo community parties.

The expansion of this function can be seen from the presence of the *kolong-kolong*, who now sing prayers not only for the blessing of the house (*mengket rumah*) but also at wedding ceremonies (*erdemu bayu*), annual parties (*guro-guro aron* drum year work), and various family thanksgiving events. This phenomenon shows a process of cultural adaptation, where the Karo people feel that a traditional party does not feel emotionally complete or "legitimate" without the chanting of prayers performed by the *perkolong-kolong*.

This change indicates that *katoneng-katoneng* has been transformed from a ritual that was previously very specific to a cultural identity that must be present at every moment of blessing (*Pemasu-masun*). This is in line with what was expressed by Sabarina Br. Sitepu and other *kolong-kolong*, that the current role of *perkolong-kolong* is as a mouthpiece for the family to convey hope to God and fellow humans in various life situations.

Even though the context of the event is now very diverse, the essence brought by the *perkolong-kolong* remains consistent and unchanged. They remain based on conveying messages of goodness, life advice, and prayers through regular musical rhythms (drum *simalungun rayat*). This dynamic proves that *katoneng-katoneng* has a flexible nature because it is able to follow changes in the social structure of Karo society but still maintains its original "spirit" as a communication medium that brings calm (*calm*). Thus, the expansion of this function is not seen as a dilution of values, but rather as a way for this tradition to survive and remain relevant for the Karo generation today.

4. Transformation of Musical Accompaniment: From the Five-String Sedalanen Drum to the Keyboard Era

The development of *katoneng-katoneng* does not only occur in the scope of the event but also in the musical aspect that accompanies it. Traditionally, the main instrument that accompanies the *perkolong-*

kolong is the gendang lima sedalanen, a musical ensemble consisting of the sarune, gendang singindungi, and gendang singanaki, as well as metal instruments in the form of gung and penganak. The combination of sounds from these five musical instruments creates a harmonious network of tones to unite the listener's feelings with the prayer message conveyed. However, in the reality of today's performances, especially those involving the seven stages in this research, the use of electronic instruments in the form of keyboards has become commonplace. The use of this technology brings new colours to the aesthetics of Karo music without shifting its traditional identity. Regarding the shift in musical instruments, Edi Sembiring gave his views as follows:

"The presence of modern musical technology such as keyboards in the Karo tradition functions as an aesthetic amplifier, where traditional sounds are reproduced digitally without destroying the basic structure or original rhythm. This allows oral traditions to still sound relevant and magnificent on an open stage without abandoning the essence of traditional music." (Sembiring, 2014: 45).

Even though we have switched to electronic devices, the main principles of katoneng-katoneng accompaniment remain unchanged. The Simalungun Rayat rhythm, which is the breath of this song, is still played by the Sierkerjaten¹ with the same beat discipline, namely, the gung on the first beat and the penganak on the first and eighth beats.

This change in musical instruments is not an attempt to eliminate old values but rather a form of adaptation so that katoneng-katoneng can still be enjoyed by the wider community in various types of traditional activities. This explains why the kolong-kolong are still able to provide a peaceful and calm atmosphere, because the harmony between the human voice and a regular rhythmic pattern is maintained as one complete prayer unit.

5. The Role of Perkolong - kolong as Guardians of Oral Traditions

The sustainability of katoneng-katoneng to date cannot be separated from the important role of the kotoneng-kolong. In the view of the Karo people, the figure of a perkolong-kolong has a very honorable position. They not only appear as entertainers on stage but also act as mouthpieces representing the feelings and hearts of the

family.⁹ The 7 informants in this research, including Sabarina Br. Sitepu, show that to be a true believer, you must have the ability not to ngerana, namely, intelligence in arranging speech and skill in composing verses of prayer poetry spontaneously. This ability is not just a speaking skill but rather an art of speaking that is able to harmonize human expectations with the noble values of Karo customs so that the Pemasu-masun message conveyed feels very deep and meaningful to those who listen to it.

A perkolong-kolong bears a great moral responsibility to maintain the purity of the prayers being recited. Apart from having to have a rengget (vocal bow) that touches the heart, they are also required to understand the customs and kinship of the event owner (sukut si erkerja).¹⁰ This skill in narrating or speaking is what makes their poetry feel very personal, as if they really feel the anxiety or happiness of a family partying. This is what makes their existence irreplaceable because no machine or technology can replace the "feeling" and sincerity of a human's prayer.

Through their voices and deep appreciation, these people become an emotional bridge that connects the family's hopes with the blessings they await. The consistency of these informants in carrying out their roles proves that even though musical accompaniment has developed, the figure of the perkolong-kolong remains the main pillar of custodianship of tradition. They are the figures who ensure that the "spirit" of katoneng-katoneng, namely prayers for achieving a peaceful life, continues to flow clearly from one generation to the next, ensuring that the Karo cultural identity is not lost to the times.

This ability to survive ultimately becomes the main asset for the workers to place themselves in various situations in the field.¹¹ Based on the results of observations and interviews, this skill in speaking then manifests in two different performance contexts, namely the traditional context and the entertainment context. This division of context really determines how a perkolong-kolong positions himself in front of society.

In the traditional context, a perkolong-kolong usually appears alone to lead the blessing procession or Pemasu-masun. In this position, the responsibility of the co-perkolong is completely focused on the aspect of sacredness. The main focus of perkolong-kolong is not the excitement of the stage but

rather the accuracy in conveying prayers and respect to the worker's tribe (the owner of the event). The presence of the perkolong-kolong alone creates a more sacred space so that a calm atmosphere truly envelops the entire ceremony.

On the other hand, in the context of entertainment, the role of perkolong-kolong shifts to become more dynamic through the tradition of perkolong-kolong fighting. In this context, they appear in pairs to show dexterity in responding more fluidly and interactively. Even though the atmosphere created is more festive, the essence of Karo values remains the main basis so that the entertainment presented does not go outside the corridor of cultural ethics.

The informants' ability to switch between these two contexts, from sacred and silent prayer bearers when performing solo to lively and communicative stage artists in a duet format, proves that they are highly professional cultural practitioners. They understand very well when a tradition must be upheld for its sacred value and when it must be celebrated as a form of joy with the community.

6. Analysis of the Musical Characteristics of Pemasu-Masun in Katoneng-Katoneng

This section is the core of the analysis to answer the first problem formulation regarding the musical characteristics presented by the seven perkolong-kolongs. Through a prescriptive transcription approach, the researcher focused the analysis on the basic melodic framework, which is the foundation in the delivery of the Pemasu-masun prayer.

1) Transcription

In ethnomusicology, transcription is basically the process of changing the musical sounds we hear into written form or visual symbols called notation. Charles Seeger, in his writing entitled *Prescriptive and Descriptive Music-Writing* (1958), explained that musical sounds have a temporary nature. Once heard, they immediately disappear, so researchers need writing assistance so that the music can be studied regularly and repeatedly. Correspondingly, Bruno Nettl, in his book *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology* (1964), added that transcription serves as a means of communication to convey to readers how music should sound. Based on the views of

these figures, there are two main approaches to writing music: descriptive and prescriptive.

The fundamental difference between the two lies in the researcher's purpose and the detail with which the researcher records the sounds. Descriptive transcription functions like a very honest and in-depth report. In this method, the researcher attempts to record everything heard as accurately as possible, including subtle details such as subtle vibrations of the voice, the singer's breath, and even subtle, unintentional changes in pitch. Both methods essentially record the basic elements of music: pitch (melody) and duration. However, in the descriptive method, the goal is to document the sound event as perfectly as possible, so the results often appear very dense and may be difficult to read for non-musicologists.

On the other hand, the prescriptive transcription used by the researcher in this paper is more selective and functional. While descriptive recordings are "what actually sounds like in great detail," prescriptive recordings focus more on "how the music should sound," or simply its basic structure. While still recording pitch (melody) and duration (length and shortness of sound), researchers using this prescriptive approach only capture those parts deemed essential for analysis. In other words, researchers intentionally filter out overly dense sound details to make the basic patterns and main framework of the music more prominent and easier to understand.

Researchers chose this prescriptive transcription approach because perkolong-kolong songs are rich in improvisations and vocal embellishments that change constantly. Using this prescriptive method, which aligns with the thinking of Bruno Nettl, researchers can eliminate overly complex sound details and focus more on the recurring core melodic patterns that are characteristic of Karo music. The use of Western notation in this chapter also aims to graphically depict the melodic movements of these songs, making it easier for readers, both experts and laypeople, to see and understand the basic form of these perkolong-kolong songs.

7. Analysis of the Textual Meaning of Pemasu-masun in the Seven Perkolong-kolong

In this section, the researcher dissects the meaning of the texts sung by the seven

perkolong-kolong as the research subjects. The analysis was conducted in-depth by grouping the texts based on their event contexts to discover how the "Logic of Meaning" operates in each Pemasu-masun utterance. This study uses Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic analysis to view the text not simply as a series of words but as a system of signs that operates through an integral relationship between the signifier (signifiant), the physical manifestation of the lyrics and melody, and the signified (signifié), which is the mental concept or cultural meaning understood by the Karo people.

Through this structural approach, the researcher found that although Pemasu-masun is delivered in the context of highly contrasting events: mourning (simate-mate), church rituals, and joyful celebrations (kerja tahun), there is a stable and universal sign structure in the Karo tradition: it serves as a medium for spiritual and social transformation. This analysis will demonstrate that the texts chanted by the perkolong-kolong have a "magical-religious" function through a system of signs that can influence the psychological state of the audience, legitimize the position of Rakut Sitelu, and serve as a bridge between human hopes and the blessings of the Creator and ancestors. The analysis focuses on how the diction chosen by these perkolong-kolongs represents individual actualization (parole) while remaining grounded in the collective system of rules (langue) in Karo culture.

8. Textual Meaning in the Space of Religiosity

In this section, the researcher examines the textual meaning of the katoneng-katoneng chant performed by informant Keleng Barus. The analysis focuses on the use of the text in the space of religiosity, particularly in the context of church events at the GBKP Runggun Kampung Lalang. The researcher examines how the Pemasu-masun text integrates modern church organizational terminology with traditional Karo prayer structures.

Signifier: The explicit lyrical form spoken by Keleng Barus specifically mentions the church's organizational entity: "committee... Mamre, six years; Ras Moria, forty-four years... runggungereja, pandita, ras nora bagepe, pertua deacon."

- 1) Signifier: This text refers to the mental concept of respecting the social structure existing at the event location. The resulting meaning or signifier is a "social map" that

places each individual in their respective function within the event's order. Researchers assess this as an attempt by the community to harmonize traditional identity with modern religious structures.

- 2) Sign Structure Analysis: The relationship between signifier and signified in Keleng Barus' text is strongly evident in the sentences "ula ertaktak" (don't guess/complain) and "sangap kam kerina" (fortunate are you all). In Karo culture, ertaktak (signifier) refers to the mental concept (signified) of sincerity as a prerequisite for receiving blessings. Through this sign system, a cultural convention emerged that God's blessings will only be bestowed if tasks are carried out without calculation. Furthermore, the phrase "erbelas ertoto aku bas lebelebendu" (saying my prayer in front of you) serves to legitimize the authority of the perkolong-kolong as "spiritual mouthpieces" with sacred power equivalent to formal prayers in public spaces. Textual Meaning in the Context of Grief

In contrast to the previous context, Sabarina Br. Sitepu and Ulina Br. Ginting chanted katoneng-katoneng during a funeral ceremony (simate-mate). In this context, the text is no longer merely a work instruction, but rather an instrument of the sign system for managing the Karo people's sense of loss. Researchers analyze the structure of these signs as follows:

- 1) Signifier (Significant) The form of the lyrics spoken by Sabarina Br. Sitepu and Ulina Br. Ginting mentions familial relations and group identity: "tigan... anak singuda... nini bulang karo mergana nini bru pinem" and "bapa milala mergana... anak perpulungen anak melumang." It also includes the use of emotional diction such as "tedeh atai" (longing) and "terpingko-pingko" (touched).
- 2) The message contained in the text is respect for the Rakut Sitelu social order and the strengthening of the family's inner spirit. The resulting meaning is recognition of the social status of each grieving individual and the assurance that they will not be abandoned because they will continue to receive customary protection and guidance (penggurun-gurun) from the extended family.

Sign Structure Analysis The relationship between signifier and signified in the context of grief is seen in the sentences "lit denga aku man penggurun-gurun" (I am still there to guide) and "mereken pedah ajar" (giving advice). Through this sign system, a cultural convention emerges that the words chanted by the perkolong-kolong during mourning have spiritual authority.

The ritual serves as a "Guide to New Life." The text systematically shifts the family's mood from deep sadness to a state of inner stability (teng) through the collective support of the Karo community. The Meaning of Hope for Family and a Message for Descendants.

In this section, the researcher examines the lyrics sung by Jenny Br. Sembiring and Unjuk Br. Ginting. These texts focus on the emotional connection between the bereaved family and ancestral memories, as well as a message for future generations.

- 1) Significant: The explicit lyrics spoken by Jenny Br. Sembiring and Unjuk Br. Ginting concerns a substitute figure, spiritual communication, and hopes for grandchildren: "tambar malem mergana... gancih sambarndu" (a replacement for you), "ngajari erkusik dage pertennindindu" (teach/whisper through your spirit), and "persadan Purba Mergana... lit lah min pagi tinetuna man kempu-kemputa" (a reminder for our grandchildren).
- 2) Signifier (Significance) The message contained in the text is the continuity of values and blessings from ancestors. The resulting meaning is the belief that death does not sever the connection or spiritual guidance of the deceased. Furthermore, this text conveys the message that family unity (persadan) is a prerequisite for dignity and good fortune to continue flowing to descendants.
- 3) Sign Structure Analysis The relationship between the lyrics about inner guidance (percussion) and hopes for descendants indicates the existence of a sign system that maintains the integrity of family dignity. Researchers observe that ancestors are believed to still play an active role in guiding the surviving family through signs or inner messages. Through the lyrics performed by Jenny Br. Sembiring and Unjuk Br. Ginting, this sign system works to strengthen the solidarity of the extended family and ensure the preservation of the legacy of local

wisdom through the perkolong-kolong prayer.

9. Textual Meaning in the Context of Joy and Gratitude

In this section, the researcher dissects the lyrics sung by Oky Ginting and Erwina Hani Br Bangun in the context of a traditional party (Kerja Tahun). This text works as a sign system to acknowledge the role of all elements of society and express gratitude for the results of nature.

- 1) Signifier (Significant) The form of lyrics spoken explicitly by Oky Ginting and Erwina Br. Ginting mentioned the committee's challenges, the identity of village youth (Aron), the unification of souls (Tendi), and the condition of agricultural land: "Melala nge tantangen ras rintangen..." (There are many challenges...), "Bapa aron... nande aron..." (Father Aron... Mother Aron...), "Gelahna todeng kerina tendinta" (So that all souls are united), as well as "Wari mehuli" (Good day) and "juma raja simalem" (The king's healthy field).
- 2) Significance: The message contained in the text is appreciation for the hard work of the community and hope for collective peace of mind. The resulting meaning is recognition of the struggle of the committee and youth groups, as well as the belief that inner peace for all citizens is the key to shared happiness. Apart from that, this text also carries a message of gratitude for the fertility of the fields as the main source of life.
- 3) Sign Structure Analysis The relationship between the lyrics about togetherness (si la eroleh) and the hope for the unification of souls (todeng tendinta) shows the existence of a sign system that maintains social harmony in the village. Researchers see that the mention of fertile field conditions (juma raja simalem) is a sign of the success of the relationship between humans, nature, and the Creator. Through the text presented by Oky Ginting and Erwina Br. Ginting, this sign system works to harmonize the mood of the residents so that all individuals feel valued at the celebration.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that katoneng-katoneng is a cultural manifestation of the Karo tribe, which has a long history in the culture of its people, rooted in sacred communication

practices during the Pemuhén period, which then underwent a transformation into performative oral art without losing the essence of its religiosity. In its development, katoneng-katoneng not only functions as a form of musical expression but also as a medium for conveying prayers and advice and strengthening social relations within the traditional structure of the Karo community.

Through analysis of musical characteristics, it was found that the seven sentences studied consistently used two main sentence structures, namely Sentence A with the aeolian mode (original minor) as the opening and Sentence B with the phrygian mode approach as the answer. This pattern shows the existence of a relatively stable basic musical framework in the katoneng-katoneng tradition, so that even though each perkolong-kolong has an individual style, they still rely on the same melodic structure as the musical foundation.

The differences between groups can be seen in the way they process melodies, choose note variations, and place vocal ornamentation, which is characteristic of each individual. For example, Sabarina Br. Sitepu tends to use melodic patterns with major nuances in the B section, while Jenny Br. Sembiring shows a tendency to add different note variations to the note pattern.

commonly used basis. This difference shows that in the katoneng-katoneng tradition there is room for individual creativity for singers to express their respective musical styles. This unique aesthetic is further strengthened by the use of rengget vocal ornament variations I and II, which function as the main expressive element as well as a marker of musical identity in the Karo vocal tradition.

In terms of textual meaning, the Pemasu-masun text is proven to have a meaning structure that works at two levels. At the denotative level, the poetry directly represents social relations in the structure of Rakut Sitelu, which consists of kalimbubu, senina, and anak beru. Meanwhile, at the connotative level, the text functions as an instrument of emotional transformation that directs listeners towards a state of calm, namely a peaceful and harmonious inner state. This concept of teneng includes three main dimensions in the life of the Karo people, namely, personal, social, and spiritual dimensions.

The research results also show that even though there are differences in musical styles between perkolong-kolong, the meaning conveyed in each katoneng-katoneng chant still has the same goal. This happens because in this tradition, the melody functions as a medium of expression, while the main message remains in the prayer text and the traditional values conveyed. Thus, musical variations do not change the direction of meaning but instead enrich the way the message is conveyed.

Apart from that, this research also found that changes in aspects of musical accompaniment do not necessarily eliminate the basic structure of tradition. Despite the transformation from the use of five sedalanan drum ensembles to the use of modern keyboards, the rhythmic principles of simalungun rayat are still maintained through disciplined tapping patterns. The gung and penganak instruments are used. This demonstrates a process of cultural adaptation that allows the tradition to survive without losing its musical framework.

From a heritage perspective, this research demonstrates that expertise in the katoneng-katoneng tradition is passed down entirely through oral tradition mechanisms, particularly through the practices of megi-megi (listening) and nonton (watching directly). In the contemporary context, audio-visual recordings have also begun to play a role as an indirect learning tool, serving as "shadow teachers" for the younger generation. This process demonstrates that the continuity of tradition depends not only on formal instruction but also on direct experience, social interaction, and individual perseverance in learning these cultural practices.

Based on the overall analysis, it can be concluded that katoneng-katoneng constitutes a cultural system that unites musical elements, prayer texts, and social practices of the Karo people. The stylistic differences between the perkolong-kolong reflect individual creativity within the oral tradition, while the similarities in musical structure and textual meaning indicate a shared cultural framework that serves as the primary foundation for katoneng-katoneng practice.

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