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## The Existence Of Keroncong Music In The City Of Sawahlunto (2012 – 2023)

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### Abstract

This article discusses the existence of Keroncong music in Sawahlunto City 2012 – 2023. This research uses heuristic research methods, source criticism, interpretation, historiography. Based on the research results, it can be concluded: The research results show that musical arts in Sawahlunto City originate from ethnic Javanese workers who are employed in mines. These workers eventually formed the Keroncong Orchestra group, which was first formed in the 1940s and consisted of only ethnic Javanese people. However, over time, cultural acculturation occurred, including the use of tools, players and songs used in Keroncong music. Keroncong in the city continues to feel strongly tied to local customs, and is often featured in community-involved events and festivals, highlighting the original and unique aspects of the region. 3) From a perspective outside Sawahlunto City, keroncong music tends to be made by incorporating modern elements and collaboration with other genres, making it more easily accepted by the general public.

**Keywords:** Existence, Keroncong Music, Sawahlunto

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## 1. Introduction

The city of Sawahlunto was formed due to coal mining activities carried out by the Dutch colonialists. Mining workers at the Ombilin mine are divided into 3 categories, namely contract workers, forced workers and daily workers. Contract workers are workers contracted by the Dutch government to serve as foremen and are given facilities in the form of housing, food and wages. Meanwhile, forced laborers were Dutch prisoners who were sent to Sawahlunto to become chained mining workers without being paid. Daily workers are Minang people who come for mining activities voluntarily and are given a daily wage. The workers were brought in from various regions and various ethnicities, including Javanese, Batak, Bugis, Chinese and Minang ethnic groups. (Raiszah Mufti, 2023). The majority of mine workers are ethnic Javanese, so ethnic Javanese traditional arts also grow and develop in Sawahlunto. However, with a multi-ethnic society, traditional Javanese art has experienced cultural acculturation and cultural adaptation to the culture of each community, so that this traditional art has its own characteristics which have then become the traditional art typical of the Sawahlunto community. Javanese arts that developed in Sawahlunto City include Kuda Kepang, Keroncong Music, Grebek Suro, Ludruk, Shadow Puppetry, Ronggeng Dance.

Keroncong music is still being developed and preserved by the local community and government, one of which is the focus of writing about this art. This is in accordance with the information provided by the Sawahlunto City Culture Service regarding the number of Keroncong Music arts groups in Sawahlunto. Apart from that, keroncong music is influenced by Portuguese culture because it originally came from a combination of European music and was then developed by Javanese people, both in Java and outside Java, one of which is keroncong music which developed in Sawahlunto City. The Dutch East Indies government offered entertainment to entertain mine workers, making keroncong music more popular. In the following year, Ombilin coal mine workers began to form keroncong music groups.



Sawahlunto keroncong music has many fans of all ages. On 4 February 2012, the city's Department of Tourism and Culture facilitated weekly keroncong music performances at the terminal. The aim is to attract the attention of the people in Sawahlunto. On June 23 2012, the Keroncong Station incident was then held at the locomotive fire station. Several keroncong musicians from each region were invited to this event to participate in preserving and reviving keroncong music in Sawahlunto City, which has been lost over the last few years.

Several keroncong music groups active in Sawahlunto are Buana Lestari and Setia Abadi. Purwoko said that he was the founder of the Buana Lestari Keroncong Orchestra, which was founded on November 24 2014. This is a Buana Lestari Arts association founded by Paguyuban Adikarsa Baharja, which was founded in 1998. The Buana Lestari Keroncong Orchestra consists of players and, has instruments that more complete and often appears at various national events (Interview with Budi Santoso, 2024). The founder of Orkes Keroncong Setia Abadi Budi Santoso, which was founded in 2015, is a former member of Orkes Buana Lestari. The Setia Abadi Keroncong Orchestra consists of elderly people with old instruments and artistic tools that they use. However, they formed this group with the aim of channeling their hobbies and reviving their grandparents' art (Interview with Budi Santoso, 2024).

In 2017, Sawahlunto City started a breakthrough to become a World Heritage City by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and received invitations to various national events. This effort intensified when the City of Sawahlunto proposed to become a World Heritage city in 2019. The Sawahlunto government, which has a vision and mission that declares Sawahlunto to become a Cultural Mining Tourism City in 2020, is reviving the arts that once existed. In 2023, Sawahlunto celebrates ten years of Keroncong Station, an activity that has become part of the cultural identity of Sawahlunto City. This activity is an effort to reflect on the history and development of keroncong music in West Sumatra, especially Sawahlunto, and to attract the interest of the younger generation by inviting keroncong orchestras from various parts of the archipelago.

Based on this, the researcher wrote in the form of research entitled "The Existence of Keroncong Music in Sawahlunto City (2012 - 2023)" which aims to provide a deeper understanding of the history and development of Sawahlunto Keroncong Music. By digging deeper into the understanding of Sawahlunto Keroncong Music through this research, it is hoped that it can raise public awareness and concern for Keroncong Music as a cultural heritage material that needs to be widely preserved and developed. Apart from that, this research can also be a source of reference and inspiration for other researchers in developing and promoting Sawahlunto City Keroncong Music.

## 2. Method

The research method used in this research is the historical method. As a science, history requires methods and methodology. Historical method or historical research methods can be defined as follows: A systematic collection of principles and rules intended to assist effectively in the collection of source materials from history, in assessing or examining those sources critically, and presenting a "synthesis" (generally in written form) of the results achieved. The design of historical research includes several systematic steps to ensure valid and trustworthy results. First, the researcher must clearly identify the problem or research question, such as understanding the causes of a historical event or evaluating its impact. After that, the determination of the scope and boundaries of the research becomes important, covering specific time periods, geography, and themes. Furthermore, the collection of data sources is carried out by accessing primary sources, such as archives and original documents, as well as secondary sources such as relevant scientific books and articles. Evaluation and verification of sources is essential to ensure the credibility, authenticity, and historical context of the source. After the data is collected, the researcher conducts analysis by organizing and correlating information to gain deep insights, as well as interpreting to answer research questions. The results of the analysis are then synthesized and written in a report that includes an introduction, literature review, methodology, results, and conclusions. This process also involves reviewing and revising to ensure accuracy, as well as, if possible, peer review. Finally, the results of the research are published in the form of journal articles or books to be

disseminated and discussed with the academic and general community. This well-structured historical research design allows researchers to generate a deep and valuable understanding of the past.

### 3. Results and Discussion

The development of keroncong music studios in Sawahlunto over the last decade has shown very positive dynamics, especially since 2012. Sawahlunto, which is known as a city of history and culture, has a wealth of a heritage that covers various aspects of art, including keroncong music. As public awareness of the importance of preserving local culture increases, keroncong music is starting to receive greater attention. The emergence of various keroncong music studios over time is one sign of the revival of this genre. The younger generation can learn to play musical instruments, study music theory, and practice vocals with the guidance of experienced musicians. They also gain knowledge about the history and meaning of keroncong music. This is very important to keep traditions alive and relevant for the next generation.

The existence of these two keroncong orchestra groups, which have achieved legal status and are registered with the Cultural Service, shows the community's commitment to preserving traditional music. The two groups of keroncong orchestras presented are as follows:

**Table 1.** Name of the Sawahlunto City Cultural Institute

No	NAME	NOTARIAL DEED	ADDRESS	TYPES OF ART
1.	Buana Lestari Keroncong Orchestra	Notarial deed No. 15 November 24, 2014	Ex. District Filter. Barangin Sawahlunto City	Keroncong Music
2.	Eternal Faithful Keroncong Orchestra	Notarial Deed No. 86 July 31, 2019	Ex. Field Land, Segar Valley Subdistrict, Sawahlunto City	Keroncong Music

Source: Department of Culture, Museums and Cultural Heritage Preservation of Sawahlunto City (27 June 2024)

From the presentation of the table above showing information about two keroncong groups in Sawahlunto, including addresses, notary deeds and names, we can see how important legality and organizational structure are in the development of arts and culture. This data shows that both groups have fulfilled legal requirements, which gives them legitimacy to operate and contribute to the preservation of keroncong music. The listed address reflects their community base, while the notarial deed confirms a formal commitment to artistic activities.

Below is an explanation of the two Keroncong Music groups in Sawahlunto City, the Buana Lestari Keroncong Music Group is committed to preserving keroncong music and creating something new with various musical instruments and the expertise of its members. Therefore, this group functions as a forum for developing talent, building collaboration, and increasing the wealth of keroncong music in the area. "The music of the Keroncong Buana Lestari Orchestra (OKBL) has unique instruments by incorporating traditional Minangkabau instruments into the keroncong arrangements. By using creative bansi, sampleong and talempong, OKBL maintains the essence of keroncong and adds nuance to the music. The goal of this initiative is to replace the flute with a more unique and evocative sound. "OKBL is expected to attract the attention of the younger generation and encourage the preservation of Minangkabau culture in keroncong music by integrating this traditional instrument." The Buana Lestari keroncong orchestra group has succeeded in attracting many people, from children to adults, with its rich repertoire. They show good acceptance from society when they are invited to take part in official events, local celebrations, and school activities.

The Buana Lestari Sawahlunto Keroncong Orchestra has participated in various events that demonstrate their commitment to the preservation and promotion of keroncong music. Here are some details of appearances that have taken place:



Figure 1. Notes on Saturday Night Busking with Keroncong Music in Sawahlunto  
Source: Ronald Documentation, 14 February 2012

From the picture above, it proves that the Sawahlunto City Tourism and Culture Office provides space by holding regular events every Saturday night where various traditional arts can be performed. The evening culinary center at the Sawahlunto Market terminal displays various art performances. Saluang, rebab, and salawat dulang are some of the arts performed alternately which are an important part of Minangkabau culture. The main goal of effective geopark management is to have a positive impact on the welfare of the surrounding community. Through training, seminars and cultural arts performances, the public is invited to become more familiar with and appreciate existing natural resources, so that they can play an active role in preserving them.



Figure 1. Performers at the Minang realm geopark event at the Buana Lestari camping ground  
Source: Erik Documentation, 2023

From the picture above, it can be seen that the Buana Lestari keroncong orchestra is not only active in the field of arts events, but also contributes to various opening events, one of the Minang Geopark events.



Figure 2. Keroncong Station Show in Sawahlunto

Source: Syukri Documentation, 2012

From the picture above, it proves that the keroncong station event really celebrates keroncong music in the city of Sawahlunto and is also a cultural exhibition with various keroncong orchestras from Sawahlunto and outside the Sawahlunto area. This event is usually held in an open field or historic place in the city, namely at the City Railway Museum Sawahlunto provides an authentic and enjoyable atmosphere for the audience. With performances from various orchestras, this festival offers the opportunity to enjoy various styles and interpretations of keroncong music, from classical to modern, as well as showcasing the uniqueness and expertise of each group. Starting from this event, the vision was to make the Railway Station a venue for keroncong music concerts.

In recent years, The Sawahlunto Buana Lestari keroncong orchestra was invited to perform at several keroncong music festivals outside the city, one of which was the Solo Keroncong Festival. This festival is an important event that gives them the opportunity to showcase the uniqueness and richness of their culture to a wider audience. This event presents performances from various keroncong orchestras from all over Indonesia and also functions as a medium to introduce keroncong music to the general public. Each of their performances at the Solo Keroncong Festival is an opportunity to demonstrate their musical abilities and build cultural ties with people from Sawahlunto and other areas.

Through a simple but touching performance, they succeeded in inviting the public to know and love keroncong music more. Their focus on solo organ also allows them to experiment with musical arrangements, adding to the appeal for audiences who may not be familiar with the genre. The main goal of these two groups is to maintain and develop keroncong music as part of Indonesia's cultural identity. It is hoped that this art will remain alive and can be enjoyed by future generations with the support of the community and related agencies. The solidarity of the two keroncong orchestras in Sawahlunto was clearly visible in their participation in making the celebration of a decade of the Sawahlunto Keroncong Station event a success. This collaboration reflects the spirit of unity and love for keroncong music, which has become an important part of local culture. With harmonious and energetic performances, the two orchestras not only entertained the audience, but also strengthened the regional artistic and cultural identity. This activity is a momentum for artists to support each other and introduce keroncong to the younger generation, ensuring the preservation and development of keroncong music in the future. The Sawahlunto City Cultural Service does not only stop there but also holding various cultural events and festivals is one of the first steps taken by the Cultural Service. These events aim to promote local culture and attract visitors and tourists. For example, arts and culture festivals that combine many things, such as music concerts,

dances and craft events. Local communities are empowered to participate and introduce their culture to a wider audience through this festival. "Apart from that, the Department of Culture also collaborates with local arts and culture communities to collaborate in various promotional projects. They can create more authentic and interesting events by involving local artists. Promotions also focus on the use of social media and digital platforms. The Department of Culture has utilized social media to disseminate information about cultural events, encourage handicraft products, and raise public awareness about the importance of preserving local culture." That way they can reach a wider audience, especially millennials who are more active on the internet. In addition, the government seeks to collaborate with private companies and international organizations to support cultural promotion. With adequate facilities, local artists can practice and collaborate, while the general public can enjoy various art performances. Apart from that, this building also functions as an exhibition space to showcase local handicrafts and arts, thus providing a space for artists to display their work.

"In addition to building physical infrastructure, the Culture Service is also trying to improve human resources through training and development. The Culture Department's strategy also includes collaboration with educational institutions and the private sector. The government can access additional resources for developing facilities and infrastructure by collaborating with sponsors and universities. One of the efforts that has been made by the Sawahlunto cultural service in terms of funding is by providing grants to the arts community and keroncong musician groups.

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the results of previous research and descriptions, it can be concluded that the background to the formation of the Keroncong Orchestra artistic development. As time goes by, from 2012 to 2023, the existence of keroncong music in Sawahlunto experiences various dynamics that reflect social, economic and cultural changes in society. Keroncong music in Sawahlunto remains alive amidst the current of modernization. This is proven by the existence of various arts activities and festivals that feature keroncong as a form of cultural expression. The local community of musicians and arts activists continues to strive to preserve and introduce keroncong to the younger generation through training, performances and collaboration with other musical genres. Despite experiencing challenges, such as shifting interest to modern music, keroncong still has loyal fans. Conservation efforts through music education in schools and community activities also contribute to maintaining its existence. In addition, with support from the local government, events highlighting keroncong as part of cultural heritage are also being held more frequently. Thus, even though the world of music continues to change, keroncong in Sawahlunto City still shows its existence as an important cultural identity. The collective efforts of the community and government play an important role in maintaining and developing keroncong music, making it not only a tradition, but also a source of pride and creativity that is relevant in this modern era. Based on the explanation above, several things can be suggested related to the theme of this research. It is hoped that today's young generation will return to listening and watching with high appreciation traditional arts. It is hoped that the government will continue to participate in supporting traditional arts groups by providing moral and material assistance so that the obstacles in the development of traditional music can be overcome. It is hoped that related parties such as the Department of Culture will always promote traditional arts and carry out performances or festivals of keroncong music.

#### Thank you note

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**Verb** This verb may be incorrect. Proofread the sentence to make sure you have used the correct form of the verb.