



Didong music form as a representation of Gayo community cultural identity: a synthetic ethnographic approach



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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze Didong music form as a of cultural identity among the Gayo people of Aceh, by analyzing its instruments, melodies, rhythms, and poetry. This study employs ethnomusicology using the kualitatif etnografis method, gathering data through observation, documentation, and wawancara. The main subjects of the study are Didong and traditional figures involved in preserving Gayo cultural arts. Analysis is carried out through transcription, terbuka pengkodean, penafsiran, and cultural and musical interpretation. According to the study's findings, traditional instruments like the bantal didong and the telapak tangan (palm) create a khas rhythm that serves as the rhythms foundation for syair. Melodi didong, which employs *guk*, *tok*, *gelduk*, and *sarik* vocal techniques, conveys a strong emotional expression and creates a unique musical style. Through several beat marker rhythms such as *tepok tulu*, *tepok bantal*, *tingkah pumu*, *tingkah bantal*, and *geretek* enhance the character of Didong rhythms. Meanwhile, Gayo-language poetry contains cultural values, social criticism, and collective symbols of the Gayo community. These elements show that Didong music serves as both an aesthetic expression and a cultural identity for the Gayo people. This study highlights the importance of integrating music and culture analysis and creating an interdisciplinary research space on music as a social and ideological phenomenon.



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Article History

Received 2024-11-01

Revised 2025-06-09

Accepted 2025-12-10

Keywords

Didong Gayo,
Music Form,
Cultural Identity,
Gayo community,
Synthetic
ethnographic
approach

1. Introduction

Music is an important part of the performing arts because it can summarize the essence of a community's cultural identity, which has an impact on music as a social bond and a supporter of identity formation [1]. In Aceh, particularly among the Gayo community, there is an art form known as Didong. Didong is an important part of Gayo culture, with deep values and meanings. This art form is classified as a performing art that involves direct interaction between the artists and the audience. This art form is a cultural expression that combines aspects of music and oral literature. As a Didong performance, this art form has a distinctive musical character that serves as a cultural identity. This makes it interesting to study in depth, to explore the identity of the Gayo community behind the beauty of its music. To reveal the cultural identity of the Gayo, this study focuses on the musical form of Didong. Didong music has very distinctive instruments, melodies, rhythms, and lyrics. The instruments consist of a *bantal didong* and the palm of the hand. The *bantal didong* is similar to a small sleeping pillow, while the palm of the hand is used as an instrument played with a special technique. The melody is found in the vocal character sung by the *ceh* (singer), with the techniques of *guk*, *tok*, *gelduk*, and *sarik* giving the melody its distinctive character. The rhythm of Didong is produced from a combination of two musical

instruments, namely the clapping of the palms and the tapping of the *bantal didong*. This rhythmic character gives a distinctive beat and maintains the tempo of the performance. Meanwhile, the lyrics convey cultural values in the form of text. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to analyze the musical form of Didong as a comprehensive understanding of the musical elements that can contribute significantly to the interpretation of music as the identity of the Gayo people. Previous studies have emphasized the role of Didong in moral education and instilling character values in the younger generation [2][3]. However, most of these studies have focused more on social, educational, historical, or textual aspects, without analyzing how the musical elements of Didong contribute to the formation of the cultural identity of the Gayo people. Therefore, there is a research gap that needs to be explored, namely, an in-depth analysis of the musical aspects of Didong as an integral element of this performing art.

The study of musical form is a very important aspect of ethnomusicology because musical form not only reflects the structure and arrangement of a piece, but also displays dynamic artistic expression within a particular tradition. Music is understood as a logical and structured arrangement of basic elements such as pitch, rhythm, dynamics, and timbre, which collectively form the character and identity of a piece of music [4]. In Western musical tradition, musical form is often associated with harmonic structure, instrument selection, musical phrasing, and exploration of tone color [5]. In traditional music, analysis of musical form plays a role in explaining how melody, rhythm, and lyrics shape the structure of a performance and reflect local cultural identity [6]. The study of this musical form can pave the way for analyzing the Didong musical form in relation to instruments, melodies, rhythms, and lyrics as part of the Gayo cultural identity. The importance of understanding the form of Didong music cannot be ignored in the context of musical knowledge. Knowledge of musical form is key to listening to, analyzing, playing, and arranging musical works [4]. This shows that understanding musical form can open up opportunities to explore other forms of music, including Didong music. Thus, the study of musical form not only serves to improve technical understanding but also becomes a tool for appreciating cultural diversity and artistic expression in a broader context. An emphasis on musical forms such as Didong can provide deeper insight into how local culture influences musical structure and groups, and how cultural identity is reflected in musical works. Regarding cultural identity, which is an important aspect in understanding and appreciating diversity, as well as strengthening cultural diversity [7]. In Indonesia, as a country with a strong identity, it is positioned as a unifying tool that has the potential to improve the welfare of society [8]. This emphasizes the importance of efforts to transmit cultural values to the younger generation through socio-cultural education and programs that strengthen cultural identity [9]. Understanding cultural identity has shown that maintaining cultural identity is not merely an effort to preserve heritage, but also an active process that reflects the dynamics of community life. By integrating cultural values into every aspect of life, the Gayo community can ensure the continuity and strength of their identity amid the inevitable onslaught of modernization. Therefore, efforts to preserve cultural elements are very important as a foundation for building a strong identity in the context of nationality.

Several studies of traditional Gayo art have reinforced the position of art as a cultural identity, such as Kerawang Gayo, a traditional embroidered textile that shows how art can embody local values and is recognized as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Indonesia [10]. Additionally, a study of a song titled Tawar Sedenge reflects the cultural identity of Gayo through elements such as lyrics, music, and performance that combine aspects of belief, language, and traditional clothing [11]. Then there is the Guel dance performance art, which serves as a symbol of Gayo identity, with its movements conveying values of respect and harmony in social interactions [12], [13]. These studies have shown the deep values and meanings that have grown in traditional Gayo art as a cultural identity. Didong is a performing art that has musical elements with cultural values contained within it. Didong is a combination of various complementary artistic elements, creating a unique aesthetic experience [14]. This art form functions in a social context, such as welcoming guests and celebrating weddings [15], which emphasizes that Didong has proven to be effective in character education and the promotion of multiculturalism, given the local wisdom it contains [16]. Didong has tremendous potential as a medium for public education and cultural preservation. The power of poetry and the values

contained therein make Didong an effective tool for conveying important messages to the community [17]. However, existing studies have not yet touched on the ethnomusicological perspective, such as analyzing instruments, melodies, rhythms, and poetry as cultural identities in the form of Didong music. Considering the potential and role of Didong, in-depth research on the musical form of Didong is very important to enrich our understanding of the characteristics of music as a cultural identity of the Gayo people. This research is expected to provide new insights into how Didong music reflects cultural identity in the form of instruments, melodies, rhythms, and poetry. This study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of Didong music from an ethnomusicological perspective using an ethnographic approach to comprehensively analyze Didong music. It identifies and confirms each element of the music, namely the instruments, melody, rhythm, and poetry. These elements give Didong music its distinctive characteristics. This study will provide clear insights into the elements of Didong music and explain how these musical forms symbolize the cultural identity of the Gayo people.

2. Method

Research on the Didong music form uses a qualitative approach based on ethnography. This method was chosen because it allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of Didong music practices in a socio-cultural environment. In addition, ethnographic methods can also record culturally significant aspects of music from the perspective of the cultural actors themselves. This is particularly possible in studying Didong music, as ethnography is a commonly used approach in ethnomusicology studies because it is able to reveal culturally valuable musical elements from the perspective of the cultural actors themselves [18],[19]. The research location covers two subdistricts, namely Bebesen and Pegasing in Central Aceh Regency. This location was chosen based on the settlements inhabited by cultural figures and practitioners, including Didong practitioners. In addition, the community and Didong practitioners in the area actively preserve the Didong tradition from generation to generation and have a rich musical structure and performance practices. This location is strategic for conducting a qualitative approach based on ethnography. The research subjects include the main practitioners of Didong art, such as poets (*ceh*), *penepok*, and traditional leaders involved in the preservation of this art. The names of the sources are as follows: Mr. Basri is a *ceh* and writer of Didong poetry who has produced many works; Mr. Jamheri is a *ceh* and cultural heir to his father, To'et, who was very influential in the development of Didong in 1942. Mr. Sukri is a *ceh* who has produced many works of cultural value. Mr. Sukri is also a cultural heir to his father, Sali Gobal, a *ceh* who has produced many works of cultural value. Mr. Kabri Wali is a *ceh* who introduced Didong as Gayo culture in modern arts such as films and digital music. As for Mr. Riszki Rawe, he is an observer and enthusiast of Didong art. The data collection techniques used in this study were observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted on participants and were limited in nature and direct. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with several informants who were the subjects of this study. The documentation for this study consisted of videos of Didong performances, audio recordings, photographs, and other archives/documents. The data analysis techniques in this study included data transcription, in-depth reading and pattern recognition, open coding of field notes and interview data, musical interpretation in the context of Gayo culture, and musical interpretation in Gayo society. The analysis process was carried out manually using a coding sheet [20].

3. Results and Discussion

Didong music is a form of artistic expression that has cultural values, especially in the context of the Gayo community in Aceh. The characteristics of Didong music can be seen from three important elements, namely musical instruments, melody, rhythm, and lyrics. The musical instruments consist of a *bantal didong* and the palm of the hand. The melody consists of *guk*, *tok*, *gelduk*, and *sarik*. Meanwhile, the rhythm consists of *tepok tulu*, *tepok bantal*, *tingkah pumu*, *tingkah bantal*, and *geretek*. Each of these elements holds profound values related to the cultural identity of the Gayo people. The framework of Didong music can be seen in Fig. 1.

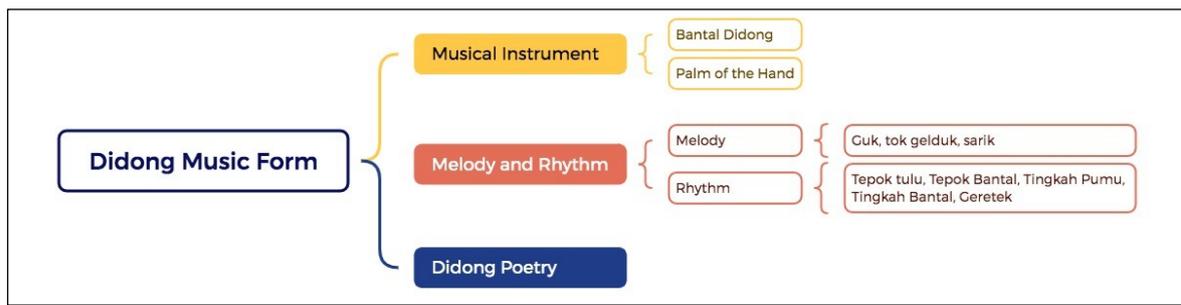


Fig. 1. The concept of thinking

The musical instruments in Didong reflect local wisdom, such as the *bantal didong* and palm, in creating a performance atmosphere that depicts the creativity of the Gayo people. Second, the melodies and rhythms consisting of *guk, tok, gelduk, and sarik* have created a harmonious blend of each sound, each with its own distinctive characteristics. The rhythms consisting of *tepok tulu, tepok bantal, tingkah pumu, tingkah bantal, and geretek* give the rhythm its character. This combination gives a distinctive sound to the Didong rhythm. Meanwhile, Didong poetry has a profound message, often related to cultural values, folklore, or social criticism. In addition, these poems are a means of expressing the culture of the Gayo people. The interaction between the instruments, melody, rhythm, and poetry forms Didong music as the cultural identity of the Gayo people.

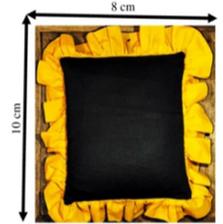
3.1. Didong Musical Instrument

The Didong musical instrument consists of a *bantal didong* and the palm of the hand. The *bantal didong* resembles an accessory pillow, measuring 10cm x 8cm. This instrument is covered with fabric and filled with cotton, giving it a unique texture and bounce when played. In addition, the pillow is equipped with a pillowcase as an outer layer so that it can be easily used as a Didong musical instrument, such as instruments from the Lungun and Sebaya Gayo studios, with variations in black and red colors, and some parts given distinctive Gayo motifs. These pillow cases do not follow any specific rules but depend on the creativity and imagination of each Didong group. Next is the palm instrument. The palm instrument in Didong performances functions as the main instrument for producing rhythmic sounds, played by clapping. This sound is produced by the palms of the Didong performers (clappers), who create a regular clapping pattern called *tepok pumu*. By varying the beats, tempo, and shape of the claps, the palms can produce unique sound characteristics without the need for additional instruments. This is explained in detail in [Table 1](#).

The Didong musical instrument has three main patterns of use that reflect the cultural identity of the Gayo people, namely the pattern of size and material, the pattern of creativity in making the *bantal didong* case, and the pattern of using hands as instruments. First, the size and material pattern show consistent characteristics in the manufacture of *bantal didong*. The *bantal didong* are carefully made by the Gayo people, are small in size, and are covered with cotton-filled fabric. This uniform shape reflects the Gayo people's dedication to quality and uniformity in their traditions. The small size allows for free movement in enjoying each sound of the beat, while the soft material provides a distinctive sound quality when the instrument is played. This type of uniformity is a principle embedded in Gayo culture, namely precision, harmony, and regularity [\[21\]](#).

The small size and material of *bantal didong* have been passed down as a tradition and are considered to be authentic Didong. Second, the creative patterns in the production of Didong pillowcases differ from the patterns in terms of size and materials, which are not bound by specific rules. However, the Gayo people seem to take advantage of this opportunity to express their creativity and unique identity, such as by incorporating symbolism into the very strong Gayo kerawang motifs to highlight their cultural identity [\[22\]](#). Kerawang has long been known as a symbol of the aesthetics, morals, and cosmology of the Gayo people, which is passed down from generation to generation [\[23\]](#). Each didong pillowcase reflects artistic motivation, symbolism, and attitudes towards tradition that mirror the Gayo community that created them, giving them cultural values.

Table 1. Didong Musical Instruments

The Shape of Didong Musical Instruments	Description
	<p>The <i>bantal didong</i> is a musical instrument that resembles a sleeping pillow but is smaller in size, measuring 10cm x 8cm. This pillow is covered with synthetic leather and filled with cotton.</p>
	<p><i>Bantal didong</i> covered with creative pillow case made by the Didong group at the Lungun studio in Yogyakarta</p>
	<p><i>Bantal didong</i> with black and red covers. There is no standard design for the <i>bantal didong</i> covers; they depend on the creativity of each Didong group.</p>
	<p><i>Bantal didong</i> feature strong symbolism in Gayo openwork motifs to highlight their cultural identity.</p>
	<p>The hand as an instrument, The hand struck with a specific technique that produces a distinctive timbre</p>
	<p>Hands as instruments, Hands are clapped using a specific technique that produces a distinctive sound character.</p>

Creativity in Didong pillowcase motifs is a way for Didong to highlight their personality, qualities, and bonds in relation to tradition without changing the musical structure of Didong. Third, the pattern of using hands as instruments is an interesting innovation in Didong music practice. Hartenberger's concept of body percussion can be used to understand the use of the palm as an instrument in Didong music [24]. Higgins and Campbell state that the body is not only an expressive tool but also a musical instrument that has rhythmic and aesthetic power [25]. The palm instrument is used in various ways, such as clenched, clapped, or a combination

of both, which produces a dynamic and distinctive rhythm. The involvement of the hands in playing this instrument demonstrates a direct interaction between the player and the musical instrument, creating an aesthetic experience. Therefore, Didong musical instruments that use the palms of the hands demonstrate the relationship between local tradition and the body as a musical instrument, providing an idea of the simplicity of palm instruments, which play an important role in producing rhythms in Didong music.

3.2. Melody and Rhythm of Didong Music

Didong music also plays an important role in shaping the characteristics of Gayo music. Through Didong music, there are melodies and rhythms that are powerful in shaping Didong music. The distinctive melodies of a singer and the distinctive rhythms produced by instruments give it its cultural identity. This identity arises from the characteristics of the melodies, namely *guk*, *tuk*, *gelduk*, and *sarik*. As for the rhythm, there are *tingkah pumu*, *geretek*, *tingkah bantal*, *tepok tulu*, and *tepok bantal*. These characteristics of Didong music can only be found in the Gayo highlands. Therefore, it is important to introduce Didong music to the younger generation as their ancestral heritage, so that it can support the preservation of a culture that is increasingly threatened by the tide of globalization. The following will describe in detail the melody and rhythm of Didong in [Tables 2](#) and [Table 3](#).

Table 2. Melody in Didong Music

Title of Work	Name Ceh (singer)	year	Melody Type	Description
Peruweren	Ceh Daman	The 70s, Takengon Radio Recordings	Guk, tuk	The distinctive melody was created by a singer in the 1970s named Ceh Daman. The melody features strong <i>guk</i> and <i>gelduk</i> sounds in a Didong poem titled <i>Peruweren</i> .
Anak Ku	Ceh Daman dan ceh Mael	Year, 70s Cassette Tape	Guk, tok, gelduk	My Child's poetry, which tells of the suffering and sadness of an abandoned child, features melodies sung by two singers, Ceh Daman and Ceh Mael, accompanied by <i>guk</i> , <i>tok</i> , and <i>gelduk</i> instruments.
Semilir Angin	Ceh Abd. Rauf	Year, 70s Cassette Tape	Gok, tok, gelduk	The poetry of the gentle breeze, written by Abd. Rauf, gives a distinctive melody of <i>guk</i> , <i>tok</i> , <i>gelduk</i> .
Kekuyang	Ceh Aldian	Year, 2024.	Kekuyang	The <i>kekuyang</i> poetry performed by Aldian, recorded in 2024, presents a distinctive melody characterized by the sounds of <i>sarik</i> , <i>gok</i> , and <i>gelduk</i> .
-	Kabri wali, The Didong Taruna Jaya Group	Year, 2024. the Alas Gayo Festival Event	Sarik, guk, tok, gelduk	Kabri Wali emphasized in the question and answer session that there are four characteristics of a <i>ceh</i> , namely <i>guk</i> , <i>tok</i> , <i>gelduk</i> , and <i>sarik</i> , which are the hallmarks of a <i>ceh</i> .
Kala Laut	Ceh Mael	Year, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pMPBZnN8aM&list=RD5pMPBZnN8aM&start_radio=1	sarik, guk, gelduk	The distinctive melodic character is produced by a <i>ceh</i> Mael singer documented by the Laya Project. The melody form contains <i>sarik</i> , <i>guk</i> , and <i>gelduk</i> , which are strong in the Didong poem entitled <i>Kutalu-talu Kala Laut</i> .

Data [Table 2](#) illustrates that Didong has unique melodic characteristics, reflecting a deep cultural richness. The Didong melody consists of four core elements, namely *Guk*, *Tuk*, *Gelduk*, and *Sarik*. These four elements produce a distinctive sound, in which the chanting by a *Ceh* (singer) combines these elements in a melody to create a lively and interesting atmosphere. The Didong melody of *Ceh Daman*, known for producing distinctive melodies in the 60s and 70s, reflects a strong combination of *Guk* and *Gelduk* in his work titled "*Peruweren*," giving a deep nuance to the delivery of the poetry. Additionally, *Ceh Mael* also contributed to the development of this distinctive melody, as documented by the Laya Project in the poetry "*Kala Laut*," which

highlights *Guk*, *Sarik*, and *Gelduk* as the basic elements in the chant. Vocal techniques play an important role in shaping the emotional atmosphere and musical structure of Didong. Several distinctive vocal techniques are used, including *guk*, *tok*, *gelduk*, and *sarik*, each of which has different melodic characteristics. *Guk* is a low-pitched chant with a descending melody and a light vibrato that resembles a soft lament, creating a deep sense of sadness. In contrast, *tok* is a sudden burst of high-pitched notes, resembling a *sforzando* accent in music, with a nuance of conveying regret. *Gelduk* has a slower and more static quality with low and flat tones, symbolizing deep sadness sung with quiet intensity. *Sarik* is the peak of emotional expression, characterized by high-pitched sounds with ascending melodies and strong, dry expressions, depicting cries of sadness and suffering. These four techniques reflect depth of feeling, symbolic function, and identity. The following is a visualization in Didong melody.

The amplitude of the *guk* is indicated by small waves that do not change much over time, Fig. 2. These small changes in amplitude indicate that this vocal technique is created with soft and consistent vocal pressure. This reflects the role of *guk* as the base sound in Didong, which is to create a continuous rhythm without emphasizing changes in volume. This flat amplitude pattern shows that *guk* functions as a low, undulating sound that serves to maintain the stability of the vocal texture within the group.

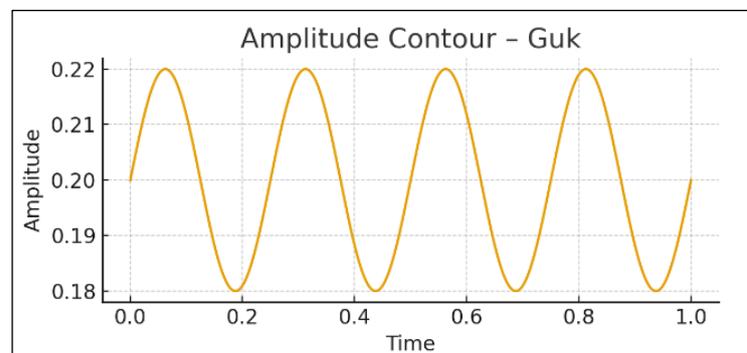


Fig. 2. Amplitude Control *Guk*

The amplitude in the *tok* vocal technique is characterized by very sharp peaks that only last for a short time, then drop rapidly. This pattern shows the percussive nature of the *tok* vocal technique, where sound is produced with strong air pressure in a very short period of time. The amplitude graph is shaped like an "impulse," reflecting the musical role of *tok* as a rhythmic accent that emphasizes important beats, Fig. 3. This amplitude characteristic shows that *tok* is a dynamic element that provides pressure, surprise, and strengthens the rhythmic structure of Didong.

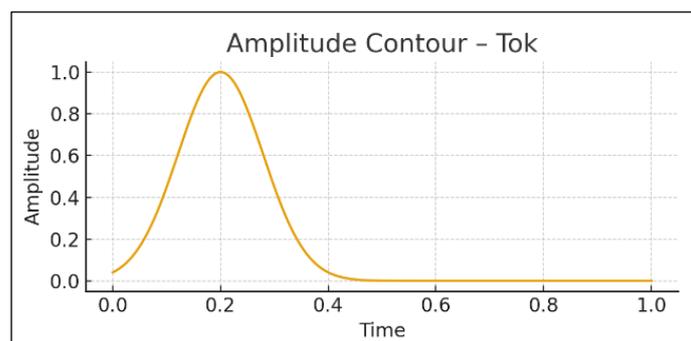


Fig. 3. Amplitude Control *Tok*

The amplitude of *gelduk* shows a rapid and repetitive pattern of rising and falling, indicating the presence of vibrato or strong voice vibrations, Fig. 4. These changes in amplitude show how vocalists modulate their voices with a rapid rhythm to create decorative effects. The amplitude in *Gelduk* is a pull between the first and second notes. Its role is as a vocal embellishment that

adds richness to the texture of the Didong melody. The form of this amplitude change shows its function as an ornament that enhances the aesthetic impression of the performance.

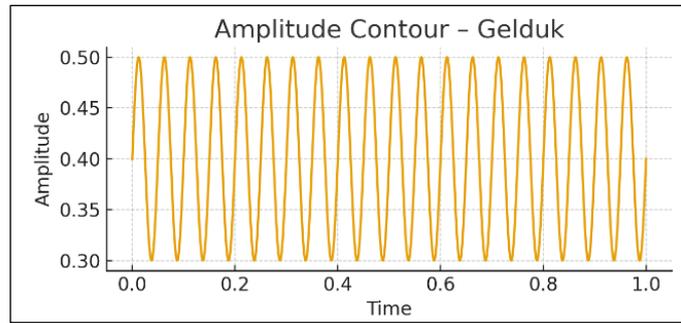


Fig. 4. Amplitude Control *Gelduk*

The amplitude of the *sarik* forms a curve like a scream, rising slowly to a peak and then falling slowly again. This wide and smooth amplitude shape indicates a more emotional and intense sound. A large amplitude indicates a louder sound, while a longer duration gives a dramatic impression to the melody, Fig. 5.

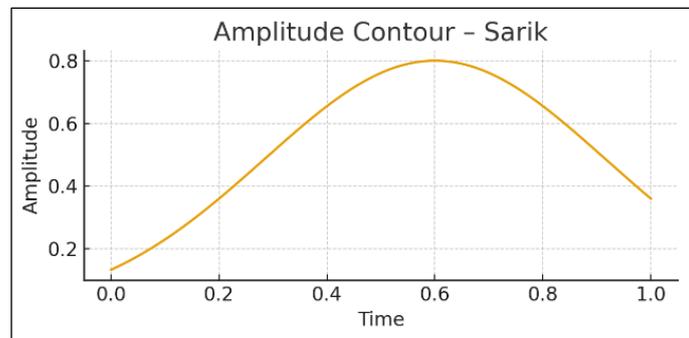


Fig. 5. Amplitude Control *Sarik*

Sarik usually occurs at the climax or when reinforcing the poetry, so that the amplitude reflects a deep and meaningful sound. The *guk*, *tok*, *gelduk*, and *sarik* techniques in Didong Gayo originate from the oral tradition of the Gayo people, known as *sebuku*. *Sebuku* is a form of lamentation or emotional expression commonly used in various traditional ceremonies, such as funerals, weddings, and other important events [26]. *Sebuku* is a form of vocal expression that is rich in meaning and is part of cultural communication that has been passed down from generation to generation. From the practice of *sebuku*, special vocal styles emerged that were then used and developed in Didong poems, forming distinctive melodic patterns and techniques. These four techniques not only add to the musical dimension of Didong but also serve as indicators of emotion, enhance the atmosphere of the performance, and symbolize the collective expression of the Gayo people.

In the context of performance, these techniques create interaction between the audience and the performers, build tension, and convey messages and feelings that are not expressed directly. Therefore, *guk*, *tok*, *gelduk*, and *sarik* serve as an important part of the Gayo cultural identity embodied in the sounds and performances of Didong. Data Table 3, shows that rhythm is just as important as melody in Didong, with instruments such as the *bantal didong* and the palm of the hand playing an important role. The *bantal didong* produces a bass sound that is heard from the combination of pillow tapping and pillow movements, which are important components in forming rhythmic strength. On the other hand, the palms function as the main instrument in creating rhythm, involving techniques such as *tingkah*, *geretek*, and *tepok tulu*. These five techniques contribute to musical harmony, which is very important in maintaining rhythm and consistency in performance.

Table 3. Rhythm in Didong Music

Rhythm	Description
 <p data-bbox="507 560 587 584">Source:</p> <p data-bbox="256 586 836 638">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ib_HC48vO_w&list=RDib_HC48vO_w&start_radio=1&rv=5pMPBZnN8aM</p>	<p data-bbox="874 434 1382 517">Didong Pegayon performance, the rhythm played consists of <i>tepok tulu</i>, <i>tepok bantal</i>, <i>tingkah pumu</i>, <i>tingkah bantal</i>, and <i>geretek</i>.</p>
 <p data-bbox="507 952 587 976">Source:</p> <p data-bbox="256 978 836 1032">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pMPBZnN8aM&list=RD5pMPBZnN8aM&start_radio=1</p>	<p data-bbox="874 754 1382 920">Didong performance documented by Laya Projeck. The Didong group is from Kala Laut. The performance features Didong music rhythms such as <i>tepok tulu</i>, <i>tepok bantal</i>, <i>tingkah pumu</i>, <i>tingkah bantal</i>, and <i>geretek</i>. These rhythmic elements are played together.</p>
 <p data-bbox="453 1281 826 1332">Source: Interview, Basri (74), <i>ceh</i> Didong. (October 12, 2023 at 4:10 p.m.)</p>	<p data-bbox="874 1061 1382 1312">The Didong rhythm is produced by instruments such as the <i>bantal didong</i> and <i>tepok pumu</i>. The distinctive sound produced by the <i>bantal didong</i> creates a bass character, which consists of <i>tepok bantal</i> and <i>tingkah bantal</i>. Meanwhile, the palm of the hand is the main component in creating the rhythm, which consists of <i>tingkah</i>, <i>geretek</i>, and <i>tepok tulu</i>, which maintain the harmony of the music as the main determinant of tempo.</p>

The *tepok tulu* is the most basic rhythmic element of the overall Didong rhythm. Hakimiadi shows that the *tepok tulu* can produce two main sound characteristics, namely “*dup*” and “*tak*”. The “*dup*” sound is produced by clapping a clenched fist against an open palm, producing a low, heavy sound, similar to a bass but not as deep. Meanwhile, the “*tak*” sound is produced by clapping open palms together, producing a sharper (treble-forward) sound. These two sound characteristics are played separately and simultaneously, forming a rhythmic pattern that is the main foundation for other rhythmic components. The combination of two different sound colors or rhythmic accents in a single tempo cycle is known in music theory as polyrhythm [27]. These “*dup*” and “*tak*” patterns create a dynamic contrast between heavy and light accents, known as strong-weak beats, which produce a lively musical sensation. To create the distinctive flow of Didong, the balance between these two types of beats is very important, where rhythmic stability is combined with the expressive energy of the *penepok* players (musicians). The two characteristics of the *tepok tulu* beat can be described through notation as Fig. 6.



Fig. 6. *Tepok Pumu* Notation

clapping as an introduction with a flat accent in a repetitive rhythmic beat before a poem is recited or used to mark the transition between sections of a poem. Meanwhile, *geretek* is a hand clapping technique with a flat accent and repeated beats between the *tingkah* rhythm to provide a response to the *tingkah* or an additional rhythmic layer. *Tepok tulu*, on the other hand, plays two sound characters, namely clenched hand claps and open hand claps, which serve as the basic rhythm for other rhythm techniques. In the context of Didong performances, the rhythmic structure serves to signal to the performers and audience when the poetry is reaching its climax, when the theme is about to change, or even when the performance is about to end. In other words, rhythm functions as an emotional and structural marker that underpins the entire course of a Didong performance. Rhythm in Didong also plays a role in building social solidarity among the performers. A harmonious rhythm reflects the values of togetherness and cooperation. This is reflected in the culture of the Gayo people, who uphold the values of togetherness and cooperation that build communal life based on Gayo customs [28]. Meanwhile, rhythm variations can serve as a means of individual expression in a collective context. This is in line with the principles of traditional music aesthetics in many cultures, where music serves as entertainment and also as a medium to strengthen group identity [29].

3.3. Didong Poetry

Didong poetry represents a distinctive form of Gayo literary expression that embodies profound cultural and social values, reflecting the lived realities of its community. Two particularly notable examples are "Peruweren," composed by Ceh Daman in the 1960s, and "Kutalu-Talu," written by Mustafa AK of the Kala Laut Group in 1985. Although differing in thematic focus, both works articulate significant social realities. The following section provides a detailed explanation of their components (Table 4). Didong poetry is a form of literary work in the Gayo language, which contains profound values and reflects the social and cultural conditions of the community. Two notable poems in this context are "Peruweren" created by Ceh Daman in the 1960s and "Kutalu-Talu" by Mustafa AK from the Kala Laut Group in 1985. These two works present different themes, but both describe important social realities. These parts will be explained in Table 4. Table 4, data illustrate that the poetry "Peruweren" is a dialogue between a buffalo owner and his herd, reflecting the values of attachment and mutual dependence. Through this interaction between humans and animals, Ceh Daman successfully conveys the message that the relationship between humans and animals is built on mutual understanding and dependence.

The buffalo owner not only depends on the animal to help with daily work, but also shows how important the emotional bond formed in the process is. These values underlie the understanding of a harmonious and mutually respectful life for the sake of survival. This behavior is ingrained in Yago culture, namely the value of *setie* (loyalty), which instills an awareness to always do good [30]. These values are embedded in the poetry Ceh Daman, through his poem, successfully convey a profound message about the relationship between humans and animals. This message highlights that this relationship is built on mutual understanding and interdependence. In this context, both entities can understand each other's roles in the ecosystem, thereby creating a harmonious life. The values contained in Daman's poetry provide important insights into the continuity of life.

The synergistic relationship between humans and animals not only brings practical benefits but also creates space for the development of empathy and respect. Increased concern for animals is reflected in the perception that equates the fate of humans and animals, especially when faced with ecological threats [31]. This concept shows that threats to the environment not only endanger animal life but also harm humans. Respect for nature must be considered an important value that underlies sustainable development [32]. This shows that recognizing and understanding the reciprocal relationship between humans, animals, and the surrounding environment is key to promoting environmental protection efforts. In this context, the Daman poem serves as a call to spread awareness of the importance of this interdependence in order to achieve a harmonious balance.

Table 4. Didong Gayo Poetry

Didong Poetry	Description
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Peruweren</i></p> <p><i>Pora-pora naku ku bayangên i pèruêrên</i> (<i>Pora-pora naku ku bayangên i pèruêrên</i>) <i>Ku kôrô bêrmanat.....</i></p> <p><i>Caweng gonok gampang cacak aku bêrmanat</i> <i>Aku bêrmanat kêrna male ulak</i> <i>Môrôm kô ku tômpôkên</i></p> <p><i>Kê gaeh aku purên môrôm lagu kentes.....</i> <i>Bêta-bêta manat pêmulô mujulê kôrô</i> (<i>Bêta-bêta manat pêmulô mujulê kôrô</i>) <i>Pèruêrên atas.....</i></p> <p><i>Ganas kulê i uêr munêhên pégêr</i> <i>Munêhên pégêr ênti bêlidê remes</i> <i>Gêlah êkeng pégêr i ikot</i> <i>Ênti kase bêrsêmêt ôrôm kuêl bêrkekes.....</i></p> <p><i>Bêbêru mampat bêrsubang</i> <i>Bêbujang mampat bêrkêres</i> <i>Ë têtûê mampat bêrawes</i> <i>Bêbêru mampat bêrsubang</i> <i>Ë têtûê mampat bêrawes</i></p> <p><i>Asar-asar atas taer kô ulak kaôl ôrôm kucak</i> (<i>Asar-asar atas taer kô ulak kaôl ôrôm kucak</i>) <i>Ênti bêrulon pantas.....</i></p> <p><i>Gêlah kini ku uêr sêlalu i sône mênggugu</i> <i>I sône mênggugu dêrong bêrlapes</i> <i>Kat lêlah si kucak mudê</i> <i>Si kêrna kôrô tuê lêmêm kati êmes.....</i></p> <p><i>Sumber; https://azmidira.wordpress.com/2016/09/22/lirik-lagu-gayo-peruweren-aufagayo/</i></p>	<p>The poetry created by Ceh Daman entitled “<i>Peruweren</i>” in the 1960s describes the bond between a buffalo owner and his animal, reflecting the values of attachment and mutual dependence. This reflects the cultural values of the Gayo people, namely Setie.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Kutalu-talu</i></p> <p><i>Wô ama...ku talu talu lê gêrê musaôt</i> <i>Rupên i lêlah ni laôt...amangku</i> <i>Asal lê kêrtôk ni lugê</i></p> <p><i>Wô inê...i simpang ni jêlên ara kêrpe bêrjêrgôt</i> <i>Rupên batang ni cêmôcôt...amangku</i> <i>Oya i bôbôn ken tènê</i> <i>Gêlah muningêt mi kô ken Kala Laôt</i> <i>Si bêrpêri manes si mutimah lêmôt</i> <i>Oya patôt bôn ken cöntô</i></p> <p><i>Wô ama...nasep ni bêdên lagu tongar manôt</i> <i>Isihên diê sangkôt...amangku</i> <i>Asal ku paser musêrme</i></p> <p><i>Wô inê...kaôl pèdi batang i salôpi gamôt</i> <i>Pêrdue ngê mujêrgôt...amangku</i> <i>I sangkan ni gégêbê</i> <i>Ênti kirê kona lagu musang pôlôt</i> <i>Ku Ukên gêrê siêp ku Toa gêrê êlôt</i> <i>Gêrê lagôt ikê mulahô</i></p> <p><i>Sumber; Dokumen Audio</i> <i>Lirik; Mustafa AK, Grup Kala Laut</i></p> <p><i>Music of Indonesia, Vol. 12: Gongs and Vocal Music from Sumatra © 1996</i> <i>Smithsonian Folkways Recordings Released on: 1996-11-19</i></p>	<p>The poetry “<i>kutalu-talu</i>” was created by Mustafa AK, Kala Laut Group in 1985, as a social critique that material wealth cannot be possessed by everyone, but kindness and richness of heart are clearly possessed by everyone. However, economic and political factors force husbands and wives to divorce, leaving their children neglected.</p>

Meanwhile, the poetry “*Kutalu-Talu*” by Mustafa AK highlights a more complex social issue, namely, financial injustice and its impact on family life. Mustafa AK criticizes the reality that material wealth cannot be possessed by everyone, while kindness and inner wealth are universal values that every individual should possess. However, he also points out that economic and political factors can force married couples to divorce, resulting in the neglect of children. Research shows that divorce not only has an emotional impact on the couple involved but also has implications for the social and economic conditions of their children. This issue is important today because children who experience their parents' divorce are often marginalized

because their parents are unable to provide a supportive environment after the separation [33], [34]. In many cases, low parental income is a major factor that leads to neglect of children, resulting in various negative consequences for their development. Thus, the poem "Kutalu-Talu" becomes a profound reflection, reflecting the reality that despite efforts to maintain integrity and peace within the family, external challenges often become obstacles that exacerbate the situation. This work emphasizes the need for greater attention to structural issues that undermine the quality of family life, as well as the need for policies that can prevent the negative impact of divorce on children in the future. Through this social criticism, the poem "Kutalu-Talu" illustrates that despite efforts to maintain integrity and peace within the family, external challenges often become obstacles. Overall, these two Didong poems, despite originating from different contexts and themes, create a space for readers to reflect on the complexity of human relationships and the challenges faced in future social life. One form of poetry that plays an important role in reflecting on life and culture [35]. The poetry "Peruweren" describes the importance of attachment in simple relationships, while "Kutalu-Talu" invites us to reflect on how economic and political conditions can affect family dynamics and child welfare. Through these works, both *Ceh Daman* and Mustafa AK have successfully used poetry as a medium to touch on relevant and pressing issues in life.

4. Conclusion

This study emphasizes that Didong Gayo music is an expression of artistic practice, as well as a tangible manifestation of the value system and cultural identity of the Gayo people. By analyzing four main elements, namely musical instruments, melody, rhythm, and lyrics, it was found that the structure of Didong music is formed from a strong relationship between musical expression and the cultural meaning contained within it. Simple instruments such as bantal didong and palms are used in unique ways to create distinctive rhythms that support the performance from a musical perspective and also emphasize the values of togetherness and community that are highly cherished by the Gayo people. The melodies found in Didong feature vocal techniques such as *guk*, *tok*, *gelduk*, and *sarik*, which create a distinctive musical identity and serve as a channel for emotions and social symbols originating from the oral tradition of *Sebuku*. The rhythm of Didong, which is formed through hand clapping and drumming patterns, exhibits a rhythmic structure that strengthens social cohesion while reflecting the musical communication system of the Gayo people. On the other hand, Didong poetry contains social narratives and ethics that are reflective in nature, both in the context of human relations with nature (as in the *Peruweren* poetry) and social criticism of family and economic conditions (as in the *Kutalu-Talu* poetry). This confirms Didong's position as a rich and diverse cultural expression that transcends the boundaries of ordinary performing arts. Methodologically, the ethnography-based qualitative approach has proven to be very effective in exploring the deepest aspects of Didong music practice, as this method allows researchers to be directly involved in understanding the reality of music from the perspective of cultural practitioners. However, although this study has successfully identified important elements in Didong music, it should be noted that the analysis of musical structure can still be deepened through further research by combining formal music analysis approaches (such as transcription notation and rhythm-melody patterns) and musical semiotics theory to interpret the symbolic meaning of each musical pattern used.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to thank Isbi Aceh, Didong Gayo artists, and Gayo cultural figures for their support in making this project possible.

Declarations

- Author contribution** : AA: research idea, analyzed the data, and wrote the article;
BS: analyzed the data and wrote the article; SS: analyzed the data and wrote the article; ZM: analyzed the data and wrote the article.
- Funding statement** : There is no funding for the research
- Conflict of interest** : The authors declare no conflict of interest.
- Additional information** : No additional information is available for this paper.

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