



Gondang Burogong in the Pasir Pengaraian community: a study of denotative and connotative meanings



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ABSTRACT

This study examines *Gondang Burogong* in the Pasir Pengaraian community by analyzing the denotative and connotative meanings embedded in its musical practices and socio-cultural context. The background of this research stems from concerns about shifts in the meaning of traditional music due to social change and technological development, which have the potential to reduce the local values contained within it. The purpose of this study is to reveal the denotative meaning of *Gondang Burogong* as a musical structure and practice, as well as its connotative meanings formed through situational contexts and analogies in the lives of the supporting community. The research employs a qualitative approach, with data collected through observation, in-depth interviews with artists and traditional leaders, and analysis of musical texts and practices. The findings indicate that, denotatively, *Gondang Burogong* functions as an accompaniment for ritual activities and traditional entertainment with distinctive musical patterns. Connotatively, this music represents values of togetherness, balance, and social order, which are interpreted situationally and analogically by the Pasir Pengaraian community. This study contributes to the enrichment of ethnomusicological and musical semiotic studies by offering a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between musical texts and cultural meaning, and it has implications for efforts to preserve and revitalize traditional music based on local interpretations.



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1. Introduction

Global phenomena that continue to develop to this day still give rise to concerns regarding the sustainability of various social structures. The advancement of information technology in its many forms is often regarded as one of the primary drivers of such change. Art and culture are likewise not immune to these dynamics, which are generally encompassed within the concept of globalization, a term that has become very familiar in public discourse. Essentially, globalization cannot be avoided or ignored, as it has become a fundamental support for various aspects of life. The economic, social, legal, and cultural sectors have gradually adapted to the currents of globalization, along with all of its consequences, both positive and negative [1]. *Gondang Burogong* is one of the traditional musical forms found in Pasir Pengaraian, Rokan Hulu Regency, and thus becomes important to be discussed within the context of globalization. This is particularly relevant in relation to the variables of meaning embedded in and interpreted by the community to which it belongs. Through this perspective, it can be examined whether globalization provides benefits or, conversely, leads to the degradation of meanings that have long existed within the community of its cultural bearers. It is not an exaggeration to state that the influence of modernization ("Western culture") has penetrated nearly every aspect of social life. It has even crossed the boundaries of private space, becoming increasingly transparent over

time. This condition inevitably affects the existence of *Gondang Burogong* itself. Before elaborating further, it is necessary to outline the instruments used in the *Gondang Burogong* ensemble. *Gondang Burogong* can be classified as a mixed musical ensemble. In its traditional form, there are three main types of instruments that are consistently employed: six units of *celempong*, two units of *gondang*, and one unit of *ogong*. Each instrument serves a distinct function. Fundamentally, the *celempong* functions as the melodic carrier, the *gondang* serves to regulate rhythm, while the *ogong* functions as the tempo keeper. With the presence of these three instruments, all fundamental musical elements are encompassed within the *Gondang Burogong* ensemble. Fig. 1 presents pictures of the instruments used in the *Gondang Burogong* performance.



Fig. 1. Musical instruments used in the *Gondang Burogong* ensemble

The traditional music of *Gondang Burogong* continues to exist within the cultural practices of the Pasir Pengaraian community, despite facing various challenges. Performances of *Gondang Burogong* are still commonly presented at certain traditional events, such as welcoming ceremonies for honored guests, regional cultural activities, and community celebrations. However, the frequency of these performances has declined due to decreasing interest among the younger generation and limited regeneration of performers. In several villages, groups of musicians remain actively engaged in practicing and preserving their repertoire and performance techniques, although their numbers are considerably smaller than in the past. This condition indicates that *Gondang Burogong* continues to function as an important marker of local cultural identity; nevertheless, its long-term sustainability depends largely on community support, the involvement of educational institutions, and more systematic cultural preservation initiatives [2].

Gondang Burogong plays a crucial role as a medium of cultural expression and collective identity within the Pasir Pengaraian community. Functionally, this traditional music is performed at various ceremonial and social occasions, including the welcoming of honored guests, wedding celebrations, communal feasts, and regional cultural events [3]. Its presence extends beyond mere entertainment, serving to strengthen social bonds, signify the ceremonial status of events, and reinforce shared communal values. The rhythmic structures and patterns of *Gondang Burogong* are believed to generate both sacred and festive atmospheres, thereby enhancing the symbolic significance of each traditional procession. Furthermore, Boer et al. argue that music across cultures plays a significant role in strengthening social bonds, fostering a sense of belonging, and facilitating the sharing of values among individuals within a group [4]. In the context of *Gondang Burogong*, the rhythmic structures employed not only accompany traditional processions but also help to create a social atmosphere that is both sacred and festive. This function is reinforced by the findings of Schäfer et al., who suggest that music facilitates collective experiences, enhances emotional engagement, and underscores the symbolic significance of social and cultural events [5]. Building on the preceding discussion, the role of *Gondang Burogong* in traditional processions can be further elucidated through its function in bridal reception ceremonies. In this context, *Gondang Burogong* serves as the principal musical accompaniment for *pencak silat* performances, which are presented as a symbolic gesture of respect toward the bride and groom. This musical accompaniment not only provides a steady rhythmic framework that guides the movements of the martial artists but also creates an atmosphere that is sacred, solemn, and respectful, in accordance with the traditional values of the Pasir Pengaraian community. The rhythmic patterns of the *gondang* regulate the

dynamics of movement, the *ogong* maintains a stable tempo, and the *celempong* supplies melodic accents that highlight transitions within each sequence of *pencak silat* movements. Consequently, *Gondang Burogong* functions not merely as background music but as a crucial integrative element that mediates between embodied movement practices and the transmission of traditional values within the bridal reception ritual, see Fig. 2.



Fig. 2. *Gondang Burogong* accompanies *pencak silat* during the wedding welcoming ceremony

Gondang Burogong is also understood by the Pasir Pengaraian community as a symbol of the continuity of ancestral traditions passed down from generation to generation. This music functions as a marker of cultural identity and as a medium for transmitting customary values from one generation to the next [6]. As explained by Shelemay, music serves as a medium of cultural memory and the transmission of collective values within a community [7]. Each instrument and rhythmic pattern embodies philosophical values that reflect harmony, respect, and the community's sense of gratitude toward life. This perspective aligns with Stokes's view that music is a symbolic practice through which cultural identity is constructed and affirmed within a community [8]. These symbolic meanings are evident in the way the community positions *Gondang Burogong* as a core element that affirms local cultural identity. For its performers, *Gondang Burogong* is not merely a musical skill but also a form of moral responsibility to safeguard cultural heritage. As argued by Grant, traditional musical practices possess ethical and cultural dimensions in efforts to preserve cultural heritage amid social change [9]. Thus, its continuity within the Pasir Pengaraian community reflects the strong relationship between traditional music and cultural identity, while also serving as a reminder of the importance of preserving traditional arts in the midst of modern development [10].

Although *Gondang Burogong* has been widely discussed in terms of its functions, social roles, and cultural values, studies focusing on its denotative and connotative meanings remain very limited. Most existing research addresses only descriptive aspects, such as modes of performance, the use of instruments, or functions within customary ceremonies, without conducting an in-depth examination of the underlying structures of meaning. Several studies related to *Gondang Burogong* have been conducted; one of them is an article by Lia Wardani that discusses the form of *Gondang Burogong* performance in wedding ceremonies in Pasir Pengaraian [11]. According to the present author, to date, there has been no study that specifically examines *Gondang Burogong* through a clear distinction between denotative and connotative meanings, even though both aspects are crucial for understanding how this music operates as a system of cultural signs.

John E. Kaemmer, in his book *Music in Human Life: Anthropological Perspectives on Music*, distinguishes musical meaning into two main domains: denotative meaning and connotative meaning. Denotative meaning refers to aspects of music that are direct, objective, and technically identifiable, such as melodic structure, rhythm, playing patterns, instruments, performance functions, and the contexts in which music is used in ceremonies or specific activities. This type of meaning can be understood without deep emotional or cultural involvement, as it relates to "what the music does" and "how the music is structured." In contrast, connotative meaning, according to Kaemmer, relates to associations, emotions, symbolic values, and cultural experiences that a community attaches to the music. Connotative meaning does not arise directly from the musical text but is formed through social experience,

performance situations, belief systems, and analogies with everyday life. Thus, Kaemmer emphasizes that the interpretation of music should not stop at the analysis of sound alone, but must also consider how music is understood, felt, and interpreted by its supporting community within a specific cultural context [12].

The study of denotative meaning plays a role in revealing the basic meanings of musical elements that can be directly identified, such as rhythmic patterns, melodic structures, and instrumental performance characteristics. Meanwhile, the analysis of connotative meaning enables the interpretation of symbolic meanings, cultural values, social norms, and collective messages attached to the practice of *Gondang Burogong* in the daily life of the Pasir Pengaraian community. Within a semiotic framework, Roland Barthes explains that cultural meaning is constructed through two layers of signification: denotation as literal meaning and connotation as meaning shaped by social and ideological experience [13]. This approach aligns with contemporary anthropological music studies that position music and sound as social practices laden with meaning, identity, and power relations within society, as articulated by Sakakeeny in his discussion of the relationship between music, sound, and politics [14]. The limited exploration of changes in meaning within modern contexts suggests that previous research has been largely documentary in nature, consistently situating *Gondang Burogong* solely within the framework of traditional customary ceremonies. In fact, in contemporary contexts, *Gondang Burogong* has experienced shifts in function and interpretation as a result of modernization, media influence, and generational change. Therefore, the research gap addressed in this study lies in the absence of research that explicitly examines the denotative and connotative meanings of *Gondang Burogong* within the community to which it belongs. Accordingly, a study that specifically investigates the denotative and connotative meanings of *Gondang Burogong* is essential to fill this gap in the literature while also enriching ethnomusicological scholarship in the Riau region. This approach will also provide a stronger scholarly foundation for efforts in preservation, documentation, and revitalization of the *Gondang Burogong* tradition, ensuring that it remains relevant and that its meanings are understood by present and future generations. The following section presents a research framework diagram focusing on the denotative and connotative meanings of *Gondang Burogong* from situational and analogical perspectives, see Fig. 3.

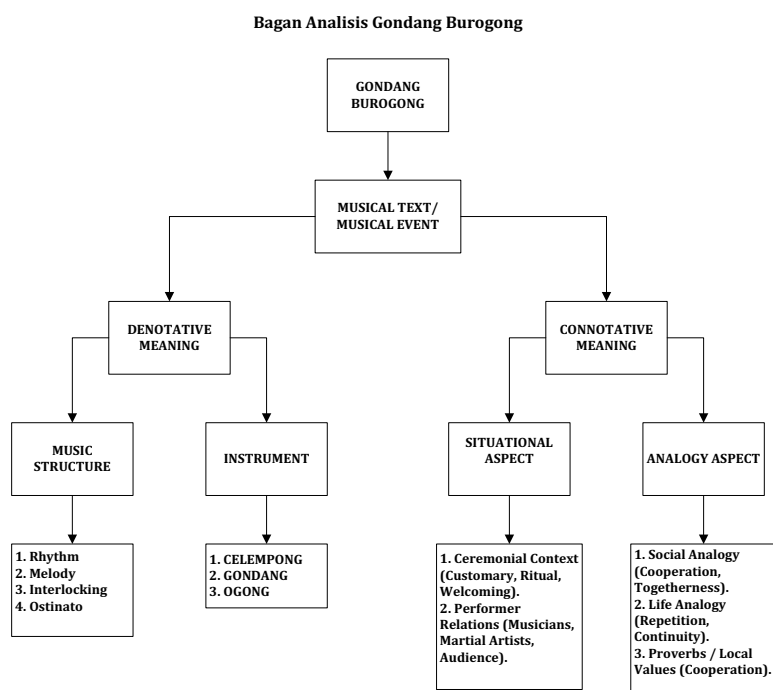


Fig. 3. Analytical Framework of *Gondang Burogong*

2. Method

Patton explains that qualitative methods facilitate the in-depth and detailed examination of issues. Conducting fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined analytical categories contributes to the depth, openness, and richness of qualitative research [15]. Referring to Patton's perspective, this study employs an ethnomusicological approach within a qualitative, descriptive framework to examine the denotative and connotative meanings of *Gondang Burogong* as a musical artifact intertwined with systems of meaning, values, social structures, and ritual practices of the Pasir Pengaraian community. The ethnomusicological approach is selected because it provides analytical tools to examine music not only as a sonic object but also as a cultural phenomenon that is produced, transmitted, and interpreted within the context of collective life. This view is consistent with Merriam's [16] assertion that music is a product of human behavior shaped by cultural patterns and thought. In addition, Nettl [17] and Blacking [18] regard music as a tradition that is produced, transmitted, and given meaning through the processes of collective social life. Creswell states that qualitative data collection involves integrated procedures such as observation, interviews, documentation, and audio-visual materials. Researchers collect data directly from participants in order to understand phenomena in a deep and holistic manner [19].

In the context of this study, data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participant observation was employed to capture the performativity of *Gondang Burogong* directly, including its musical structure, rhythmic patterns, inter-instrument relationships, and the social configurations that accompany its practice in customary ceremonies. In-depth interviews were conducted with *Gondang Burogong* practitioners (Mr. Amrizal), cultural leaders (Mr. Taslim), and community members who possess authoritative knowledge of the tradition. This technique aimed to obtain emic explanations regarding musical functions, customary values, and the symbolic meanings attached to *Gondang Burogong* practices. Similar approaches have been widely adopted by other scholars in cultural arts research, including Emanuel S. Leuape and Susanne Dida [20]. Documentation in the form of audio-visual recordings, photographs of instruments, preliminary transcriptions, customary archives, and scholarly literature was used to support data triangulation. Data analysis was carried out in two main stages. First, musical analysis focused on sound structure, modes of presentation, and instrumental functions as representations of denotative meaning. Second, cultural analysis examined connotative meaning based on customary values, ancestral symbols, constructions of identity, and cultural narratives articulated by the informants. The validity of the findings was ensured through source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking to maintain interpretive consistency between the researcher and the cultural bearers.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Denotative Meaning in *Gondang Burogong*

The denotative meaning referred to in this study pertains to the meaning that emerges directly from the structure of the musical text through the use of musical elements such as rhythm, melody, harmony, and scale. These elements fundamentally function as carriers of musical messages that can be objectively observed within a composition. However, in this study, the analytical focus is directed specifically toward the element of rhythm. This emphasis on rhythm is based on the results of interviews with informants, which indicate that information regarding other musical elements, namely melody, harmony, and scale, was not obtained in a sufficiently comprehensive manner. The explanations provided were not strong enough to serve as a valid and academically accountable basis for analysis. Therefore, rhythm was selected as the sole variable of analysis, as it is supported by clear, consistent, and relevant empirical data for revealing denotative meaning within the musical context under investigation. The following section presents an analysis of the *ogong* sound motif pattern that is employed in nearly all repertoires within the *Gondang Burogong* ensemble. From the three notations, it can be observed that the *ogong* instrument is written using the F clef (bass clef), indicating that its pitch range lies in a low register. This corresponds to the physical characteristics of the *ogong*, which has a large diameter and therefore produces low-pitched sounds. The notation also

shows the use of a 4/4 time signature, meaning that each measure consists of four beats. Nearly all repertoires in the *Gondang Burogong* ensemble employ this time signature. To the author's knowledge, no other time signatures besides 4/4 have been found in the existing works. Meanwhile, the fundamental pitch played by the *ogong* is notated as B \flat , although its actual pitch does not correspond exactly to B \flat within the Western tonal system. The pitch is written on the second line of the staff and is played as a single, continuous pitch without melodic variation, clearly indicating its function as a timekeeper or a support for the basic rhythm.

In Notation 1 (Fig. 4), all of the notes used are eighth notes, forming a repetitive and stable rhythmic pattern that indicates a regular pulse. The pitch is written on the second line of the staff and is played continuously as the same pitch, without melodic variation, thus clearly functioning as a timekeeper or a support for the basic rhythm. The resulting pattern consists of eight eighth notes performed consistently, with each beat in the 4/4 measure filled by two short sounds. Denotatively, this represents a steady and repetitive rhythm without syncopation, special accents, or dynamic changes. Consequently, the phrase proceeds from beginning to end with uniform duration on each beat, without pauses, literally affirming the instrument's role as a generator of constant pulsation within the *Gondang Burogong* ensemble.



Fig. 4. Notation 1: the first ogong rhythmic pattern

In Notation 2 (Fig. 5), the entire sequence of sounds is presented in the form of eighth notes, accompanied by two quarter-rests that occur on the second and fourth beats. The presence of this pattern produces a repetitive, stable, and regular rhythm similar to that found in Notation 1. The pattern consists of four eighth notes, creating two short sounds on the first and third beats within the 4/4 measure.

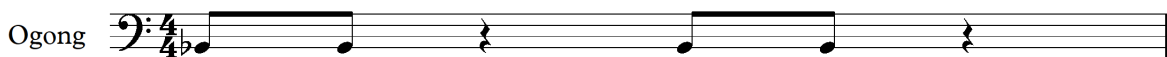


Fig. 5. Notation 2: the second ogong rhythmic pattern

In contrast, Notation 3 exhibits a slight variation (Fig. 6). It contains two eighth notes followed by a quarter note, an element not found in either the motif of Notation 1 or Notation 2. In this notation, the eighth notes occur on the first beat, while the quarter note falls on the third beat. Thus, the second and fourth beats continue to be filled by quarter rests within the 4/4 measure.

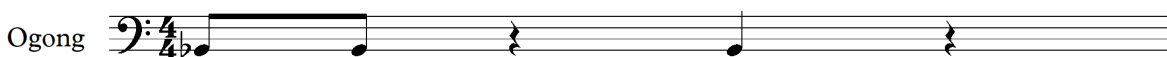


Fig. 6. Notation 3: the third ogong rhythmic pattern

Denotatively, this pattern likewise represents a steady and repetitive rhythm without syncopation, special accents, or dynamic changes. Accordingly, the phrase unfolds from beginning to end with uniform duration on each beat, without pauses, which literally reinforces the role of the instrument as a producer of constant pulsation in the *Gondang Burogong* ensemble. In addition to the *ogong*, the *celempong* instrument also plays an important role in explaining denotative meaning. In this context, denotative meaning is examined through the aspect of rhythmic patterns performed by the *celempong*. Although the *celempong* produces only a single pitch in this context, it is nevertheless regarded as the melodic carrier in *Gondang Burogong*. Therefore, the melodic patterns produced by the *celempong* can still be analyzed denotatively. Consequently, denotative meaning in *Gondang Burogong* can be elaborated not only through rhythmic patterns but also through melodic patterns. This becomes evident when

the *celempong* functions to initiate and conclude a piece. In general terms, this role may superficially be equated with Western musical terms such as an introduction (opening) and an ending or coda (closing). However, according to the researcher, this function is not entirely equivalent to Western musical terminology. More precisely, the role of the *celempong* relates to the technique or method used to signal the beginning and ending of a piece. Thus, it can be understood that there is a form of cue communicated by the *celempong* player to the performers of other instruments to mark the commencement or conclusion of a piece. The reason the researcher argues that this function cannot be equated with the terms introduction or ending/coda in Western music terminology is as follows. First, the opening and closing sections performed by the *celempong* are always present and exhibit a uniform pattern in every piece. Second, the pitch used by the *celempong* to open and close a piece is always the same. Therefore, the influence of this melodic pattern is more closely related to its function as a marker for initiating and terminating performance. To clarify this point, the following notation example is presented.

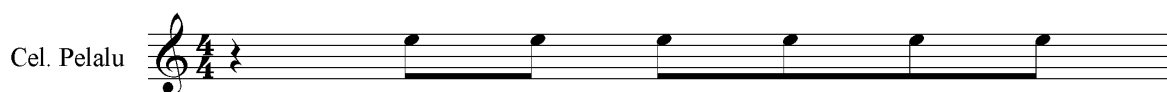


Fig. 7. Notation 4 *celempong* melodic pattern for initiating a piece



Fig. 8. Notation 5 *celempong* melodic pattern for concluding a piece

When examining the melodic patterns at the beginning and ending sections in the example shown in Notation 6 (Fig. 9), the resulting form more closely resembles a simple melodic motif. The pattern consists of only a few notes that can be divided into two motif cells, both in the opening and the closing sections. Nevertheless, the presence of these opening and closing motifs plays a very important role in every piece performed. These motifs function as markers or cues for all *Gondang Burogong* performers, indicating when the performance should begin and end. Without these melodic motifs, the *gondang* and *ogong* players would experience difficulty in determining the appropriate moment to initiate or conclude a repertoire. Thus, these melodic motifs constitute an essential element in the presentation of the *Gondang Burogong* ensemble.

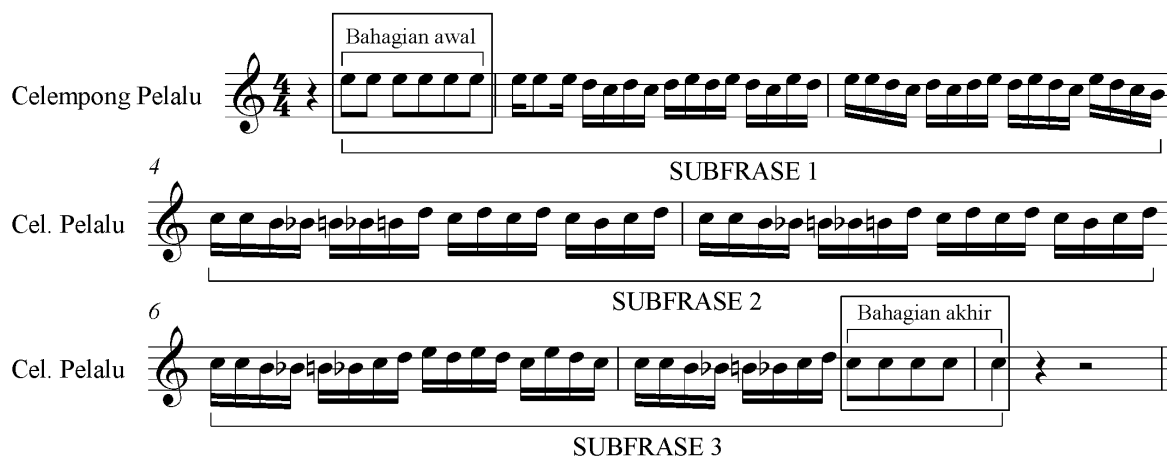


Fig. 9. Notation 6 *celempong* melody for initiating and concluding the piece *Senayong*.

3.2. Connotative Meaning in *Gondang Burogong*

In addition to denotative meaning, which can be identified through its musical elements, *Gondang Burogong* also possesses connotative meaning that is formed through the musical experiences of the community that sustains it. This connotative meaning does not arise directly

from the musical text itself, but rather emerges from the interaction between sound, performance situations, and the social and cultural experiences of both listeners and performers. Within the context of community life, *Gondang Burogong* is understood not merely as a sequence of musical sounds but also as a medium that evokes emotions, collective memories, and customary values attached to particular events. Such meanings may be experienced consciously or unconsciously by listeners, even in the absence of any explicitly intended symbolic design by the musicians. In this context, Cross explains that musical meaning is shaped through experience, context, and cognitive-cultural associations, rather than solely through sonic structure [21]. In line with Kaemmer's perspective, connotative meaning in music may emerge through situational experience, namely, the association of music with social contexts, ritual practices, and customary events, as well as through analogy, which refers to the interpretive process by which musical sounds are associated with lived experiences, emotions, or cultural symbols embedded within the community [12].

3.3. Connotative Meaning of *Gondang Burogong* from a Situational Perspective

Situational meaning in *Gondang Burogong* can be understood as the result of mental associations formed through the community's experience of the social and customary contexts in which this music is performed, rather than arising solely from its musical structure or textual elements. Unlike denotative meaning, which relies heavily on the presence and analysis of musical texts, the connotative meaning of *Gondang Burogong* emerges from social interaction, the atmosphere of performance, and the emotional involvement of the community in the accompanying customary events. In the context of welcoming ceremonies or customary processions, for example, the sound of *Gondang Burogong* is often perceived as a marker signaling the beginning of an important event and as a symbol of respect toward guests and customary authorities. In this regard, Keil also discusses the role of emotional engagement and social interaction in shaping the ways communities attribute meaning to music in customary events [22]. In this context, Taslim explains that *Gondang Burogong* is understood as "a sound that evokes a sense of respect and inner readiness among the community for the unfolding of customary procedures," so that its presence is not merely regarded as accompaniment, but also as an element that gives meaning to the ongoing social situation. Such interpretations are formed through what Kaemmer refers to as informal social action, namely collective experiences, habits, and cultural memories that develop and are transmitted across generations within a community [12]. Thus, the essence of the connotative meaning of *Gondang Burogong* in this study can be more comprehensively understood through an exploration of situational meanings that live within the social practices and musical experiences of the supporting community.

From an ethnomusicological perspective, Kaemmer views situational meaning as a form of musical meaning that depends not only on the actual event during which a performance takes place, but also on various external conditions surrounding musical practice. He emphasizes that factors such as political, religious, economic, and other social dynamics, although external to musical structure, have a significant influence on shaping the meaning of a musical performance (Kaemmer, 1993, p. 118). Accordingly, situational meaning can be understood as contextual and dynamic, formed through the interaction between music and the social realities of the community that sustains it. Based on this conceptual framework, various phenomena related to situational meaning in *Gondang Burogong* can be explained through their connections to the accompanying social and customary contexts. *Gondang Burogong* functions not only as a form of musical expression, but also as a symbolic medium reflecting particular social conditions. This is evident in the form known as *ratok*, which in certain contexts does not merely present a sonic structure, but becomes a means for articulating collective emotion, social experience, and the community's cultural response to the situations they encounter.

According to Taslim, the meaning of *ratok* in the context of *Gondang Burogong* can be examined from two main perspectives: that of the performer and that of the listener. From the performer's perspective, *ratok* functions as a medium of expressive communication that enables performers to convey and channel emotions to the audience through musical performance. Through *ratok*, performers seek to establish emotional connectivity so that the message embedded in the work can be deeply felt by listeners. From the listener's perspective, *ratok* is

understood as a communicative medium capable of triggering affective experiences, either in the form of emotions currently being felt or emotional memories from the past, such as sadness, joy, or other emotional experiences (interview, 20 November 2020). This explanation is further reinforced by a statement made by Amrizal in the following interview. In *Gondang Burogong* practice, *ratok* constitutes an element that plays a very important role in the overall realization of a piece, both for performers and listeners. For performers, *ratok* serves as a medium of emotional expression used to build affective connections with listeners, enabling the performance to touch and influence the audience's feelings. Through the shaping of *ratok*, performers seek to transmit particular emotional content that they expect listeners to receive and experience. From the listener's perspective, *ratok* often generates psychological stimuli in the form of emotional suggestion, encouraging the re-emergence of past experiences and memories. This interpretive process is subjective, so each listener may interpret *ratok* differently depending on their personal experiences and memories. Some listeners may perceive *ratok* as representing difficult experiences from childhood, while others may associate it with pleasant memories shared with a life partner. Thus, the flow of *ratok* opens space for diverse forms of interpretation, strongly determined by each listener's past experiences (interview, 20 March 2025).

Based on the discussion above, it can be understood that the presence of *ratok* in *Gondang Burogong* performance practice is interpreted differently by performers and listeners, even though both belong to the same traditional music community. These differences in interpretation indicate that the meanings attached to *ratok* are neither singular nor uniform, but are formed through individual perspectives, roles, and experiences within the performance context. This phenomenon represents a concrete example of what ethnomusicological studies refer to as situational meaning. In the context of *Gondang Burogong*, performers and listeners possess different intentions, orientations, and objectives in interpreting *ratok*. Performers tend to understand *ratok* as a deliberately presented means of emotional expression and communication intended to convey affective messages to the audience. Conversely, listeners interpret *ratok* based on the emotional responses that arise and the personal experiential associations formed during performance. Despite these differing perspectives, both forms of interpretation are grounded in the accumulation of prior musical and social experiences. In line with ethnomusicological perspectives, musical experience is understood as a fundamental component shaping how individuals interpret music, both in performative and receptive contexts. Musical experience encompasses not only cognitive engagement with musical structures and elements, but also subjective experiences that emerge when music is produced or heard within specific social and cultural situations. Accordingly, differences in the interpretation of *ratok* between performers and listeners can be understood as the result of diverse musical experiences that directly contribute to the formation of situational meaning in *Gondang Burogong* performance.

Therefore, musical experience can be regarded as a decisive factor in the process of forming situational meaning for both performers and listeners. Such experience functions as a trigger that stimulates emotional and cognitive awareness in understanding the meaning of *ratok* when it is presented within the context of *Gondang Burogong* performance. Consequently, the situational meaning of *ratok* arises not only from its musical structure but also from the interaction between music, individual experience, and the surrounding socio-cultural context. Furthermore, closer examination reveals a particular uniqueness in the phenomenon of *ratok*, especially regarding the ways in which both performers and listeners of *Gondang Burogong* process and interpret *ratok* melodies as stimuli or suggestions within their musical experiences. As is well known, traditional *Gondang Burogong* does not employ verbal elements or vocal media, which are commonly understood as facilitating the conveyance of meaning or messages in musical works. Nevertheless, for the community that owns the *Gondang Burogong* tradition, the absence of verbal elements does not hinder the meaning-making process.

Instead, the melodic flow of *ratok* is understood and internalized through nonverbal musical experience, in which sonic nuance, musical expression, and performance context serve as the primary media for constructing meaning. According to the researcher, the community's ability to understand and respond to *ratok* without textual or vocal assistance is inseparable from the

presence of local wisdom internalized as sensitivity to musical “nuance” that is lived and natural. This local wisdom does not form instantaneously, but through a long process of cultural transmission, habituation, and particular modes of engagement with traditional artistic practices in social life. Through this process, a distinctive form of musical experience emerges, enabling both performers and listeners to grasp and respond deeply to the meaning of *ratok* within the context of *Gondang Burogong* performance. This understanding then becomes the foundation for the formation of situational meaning derived from the interaction between melody, musical experience, and socio-cultural context. This view aligns with a statement expressed by Taslim in the following interview. The term *priangso* refers to a feeling that cannot be equaled by any other sensation. In the context of *Gondang Burogong* performers, this experience manifests as inner satisfaction when playing this music, often referred to as *seleso*. In everyday life, *priangso* is commonly used to describe the sensation of pleasure when tasting food, while *seleso* is used in work contexts to indicate a level of satisfaction that exceeds standards of perfection. Such affective experiences are not constant; they may or may not arise, both for performers and listeners of *Gondang Burogong* (interview, 20 March 2025).

Within the framework of situational meaning theory as proposed by Kaemmer, *priangso* and *Seleso* can be understood as forms of connotative meaning that are not directly attached to the musical text, but are formed through the relationship between sound, context, and the social experiences of listeners. The repetitive (*ostinato*) and strongly accented rhythmic patterns of the *ogong* function as denotative markers that musically affirm performance situations, such as openings, reinforcement of atmosphere, or the emphasis of particular moments in customary sequences. However, when these rhythmic patterns are deeply experienced by performers and listeners within specific social contexts, they transcend their technical signaling function and give rise to affective experiences articulated by the local community as *priangso* or *seleso*. Thus, the relationship between the musical structure of the *ogong* and connotative meaning is not arbitrarily symbolic, but rather grounded in collective experience formed through repeated musical practice in relatively similar social situations. In this context, *priangso* and *seleso* function as local concepts that bridge the sonic structure of *Gondang Burogong* with the emotional and social experiences of the Pasir Pengaraian community. This analysis demonstrates that the connotative meaning of *Gondang Burogong* cannot be understood solely through cultural description or informant narratives, but must be read as the result of dynamic interaction among rhythmic structure, performance context, and situational meaning-making mechanisms within musical practice.

3.4. Connotative Meaning of *Gondang Burogong* from an Analogical Perspective

The discussion now turns to the connotative meaning of *Gondang Burogong* as viewed from an analogical perspective. Connotative meaning within an analogical framework can be understood when an individual perceives a relationship or similarity in form between one phenomenon and another. This mode of analogical thinking represents a common cognitive pattern through which humans make sense of reality. In the context of music, analogy may emerge either consciously or unconsciously, namely when music is perceived as bearing similarities to various aspects of life. Through an analogical approach, music may thus generate meaning because its musical structures are capable of representing or resembling specific social conditions within a community, as well as broader dimensions of human life [12]. In addition, musical meaning may also be understood through semiotic and functional cognitive–linguistic approaches. Within the context of musical interpretation, semiotic theory explains the relationship between musical structure and the listener’s interpretive experience, which is highly relevant for understanding connotative meaning as the result of cultural and cognitive interpretation of musical elements [23].

Analogical relationships can also be observed in the interaction among musical instruments in *Gondang Burogong*. The roles of each instrument, such as the *gondang* as the regulator of rhythm, the *celempong* as the carrier of melodic patterns, and the *ogong* as a marker of accentuation, may be analogized to the division of roles within the social structure of the community. The *gondang* functions like a regulator of the tempo of communal life, the *celempong* reflects the dynamics of social interaction that fill everyday life, while the *ogong* serves as a symbol of the reinforcement of customary norms and values that provide collective

reference points. This entire musical structure forms a harmonious unity, analogous to an ideal social life in which each element fulfills its function in a balanced manner. Furthermore, the dynamics of loudness and softness (musical dynamics) in *Gondang Burogong* performances may also be understood analogically as representations of emotional and social situations in human life. Variations in sonic intensity reflect shifts in atmosphere, ranging from calmness and joy to tension, which commonly occur within the sequence of customary events. The connotative meaning of *Gondang Burogong*, through an analogical approach, therefore lies not only in the sounds that are heard, but also in its capacity to present symbolic images of life journeys, social relationships, and cultural values that are embedded within the supporting community. In this sense, the connotative meaning of *Gondang Burogong* operates primarily within the domain of the latent function of music, namely as a symbolic medium that conveys cultural values, reinforces social solidarity, and shapes collective awareness of life cycles and social relations within the community [24].

The following discussion addresses the interlocking and ostinato playing patterns in the *Gondang Burogong* ensemble, both of which play a crucial role in constructing a collective and repetitive musical texture, while simultaneously creating rhythmic continuity within the performance. Interlocking is understood as a technique of arranging rhythmic or melodic patterns that interweave among instruments, such that musical meaning does not reside in any single part, but rather emerges from the integration of the overall patterns [25]. In this context, each instrument in *Gondang Burogong* performs a particular rhythmic fragment that may appear simple in isolation, yet collectively forms a cohesive and dynamic musical structure. Ostinato, on the other hand, refers to the continuous repetition of rhythmic or melodic motifs that function as a temporal framework, maintaining the stability of musical flow and serving as a foundation for interaction among instruments [26]. The combination of interlocking and ostinato functions not only in a technical-musical sense, but also reflects values of togetherness, social interconnectedness, and collective cooperation that characterize communally based traditional music. Accordingly, these playing patterns may be understood as musical representations of the social order of the community that sustains *Gondang Burogong*, in which harmony is achieved through interdependence and continuity of roles among individuals. The following notation illustrates the interlocking and ostinato playing patterns performed by the *celempong* instrument in the *Gondang Burogong* ensemble, see Fig. 10.



Fig. 10. Notation 7 Interlocking and ostinato playing patterns in *Gondang Burogong*.

The musical notation that presents two instrumental layers, *Celempong Pelalu* and *Celempong Peningkah*, clearly demonstrates the application of interlocking playing patterns constructed through a mutually complementary division of rhythmic and melodic roles. In the *Celempong Pelalu* layer, a sequence of pitches moves in a relatively constant manner with dense, repetitive rhythmic figures, functioning as a basic pattern that maintains the continuity of the musical flow. Meanwhile, the *Celempong Peningkah* performs a more fragmented pattern, with certain accents entering the rhythmic spaces created by the *Pelalu*. This relationship indicates that no single instrument presents a complete melody or rhythm on its own; rather, the overall musical structure only emerges when both patterns are sounded simultaneously. This mutually interlocking relationship is the defining characteristic of the interlocking technique, in which musical meaning arises from collective integration among parts rather than from a single voice.

Furthermore, the relatively stable repetition of rhythmic and melodic figures in both instruments indicates the presence of an ostinato pattern. In this notation, the ostinato functions as a temporal framework that preserves the stability of the musical structure while simultaneously allowing room for micro-variations in accentuation and articulation. Continuous repetition is not interpreted as mechanical reiteration, but rather as a

reinforcement of the cyclical and sustained musical identity of *Gondang Burogong*. Thus, the ostinato becomes the foundation for the consistent interlocking interaction throughout the performance. Within the context of connotative meaning approached through analogy, the interlocking and ostinato patterns in this notation may be understood as symbolic representations of social relations in the life of the *Gondang Burogong* community. Analogically, the *Pelalu* and *Peningkah* patterns reflect the division of roles in social life, in which each individual holds a different function yet remains mutually dependent on others. The absence of dominance by any single voice illustrates principles of togetherness, balance, and collective cooperation, which are important cultural values in traditional societies. The repetition inherent in the ostinato, on the other hand, can be analogized as the continuity of customs and traditions that recur from generation to generation, forming a stable foundation upon which social dynamics unfold.

Practically, the ostinato playing technique in *Gondang Burogong* functions as the repetition of mutually complementary melodic patterns (interlocking), thereby creating musical continuity within a piece. However, in the context of connotative meaning analysis, this ostinato pattern is not understood merely as a technical musical device, but also as an analogical symbol rooted in the worldview of the local community. For the people of Pasir Pengaraian, the principle of repetition embodied in the ostinato is perceived as a reflection of patterns of human existence within social and religious life. Analogically, repetition in the ostinato represents the cycle of human life ordained by God Almighty, beginning with birth, continuing through life in the world, and ultimately returning to Him through death. This sequence of events is understood as a natural cycle that applies universally to all human beings without exception. Awareness of this cycle has become part of the collective knowledge of the Pasir Pengaraian community and, in turn, encourages individuals to carry out God's commandments and avoid His prohibitions. Such awareness not only strengthens the vertical relationship between humans and the Creator but also fosters harmonious horizontal relationships among fellow human beings.

This perspective is consistent with Amrizal's statement that human life is essentially a repetition of patterns experienced by previous generations, from birth and growth to death, as a universal divine decree (interview, 20 March 2025). In this context, repetition is not understood as stagnation, but rather as the continuity of meaning in the human life journey. From this analogical perspective, it can be concluded that the concept of ostinato in *Gondang Burogong* represents a paradigm of structured and recurring beginnings and endings, analogous to human existence itself. Without repetition, either in human life or in the musical structure of *Gondang Burogong*, the existence and integrity of meaning cannot be realized. Therefore, interlocking and ostinato playing patterns become fundamental elements in constructing the integrity of *Gondang Burogong* works, whether they function as entertainment or as a supporting medium for various artistic and cultural activities. In this sense, ostinato serves not only as a musical element, but also as a connotative symbol reflecting the worldview of the supporting community. Thus, the connotative meaning of this notation lies not only in the audible sound structure, but also in its capacity to present analogical representations of social order and cultural values. Interlocking represents the interconnectedness among individuals within the community, while ostinato symbolizes continuity and the steadfastness of tradition. Through an analogical approach, the musical structure of *Gondang Burogong* can be understood as a symbolic medium that reflects how the community interprets togetherness, social roles, and the continuity of their cultural life. As expressed in a Malay proverb, "*Bersilang kayu di tungku, barulah nasi itu tanak*" ("Only when the firewood is crossed on the hearth will the rice be properly cooked").

4. Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that *Gondang Burogong* is a musical tradition that not only serves musical and social functions but also embodies complex layers of meaning, both denotative and connotative, which are lived and interpreted within the cultural context of the Pasir Pengaraian community. Amid the currents of globalization and modernization that have the potential to shift traditional values, *Gondang Burogong* continues to function as a marker of collective identity, a medium of cultural expression, and a vehicle for

the transmission of customary values and local wisdom. The analysis of denotative meaning demonstrates that the musical structure, particularly the *ogong* rhythmic patterns and the *celempong* melodic motifs, clearly functions as a support for pulsation, a marker of beginnings and endings, and a regulator of continuity in performance. Meanwhile, connotative meaning is constructed through the situational and analogical experiences of the community, in which the sound of *Gondang Burogong* is interpreted as a symbol of respect, inner preparedness, emotional expression (*ratok*), as well as a reflection of values of togetherness, social interconnectedness, and the cycle of human life. The techniques of interlocking and ostinato, in addition to their technical-musical functions, also represent the community's worldview regarding collective work, the continuity of tradition, and the orderliness of existence, as reflected in the Malay proverb, "*bersilang kayu di tungku, barulah nasi itu tanak*" ("only when the firewood is crossed on the hearth will the rice be properly cooked"). Thus, the study of the denotative and connotative meanings of *Gondang Burogong* not only fills a gap in ethnomusicological literature but also provides an important conceptual foundation for efforts to preserve and reinterpret this tradition so that it remains relevant for present and future generations.

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