



***Dogdog Lojor* in The *Seren Taun* of *Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi*: Symbolic and Functional Analysis in the Context of Local Culture**

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Abstract: This study explores the symbolism and socio-cultural functions of *Dogdog Lojor*, a traditional Sundanese musical instrument that plays a vital role in the *Seren Taun* ceremony at *Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi*. The primary objective of this research is to analyze the symbolic meanings, as well as the social, spiritual, and ecological functions of *Dogdog Lojor* within the cultural framework of the Sundanese indigenous community, while also examining the challenges of its preservation amid modernization and cultural commodification. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing literature review, documentation, and thematic analysis of cultural texts and customary documents. The findings reveal that *Dogdog Lojor* serves not only as a ritual musical instrument but also as a cosmological symbol representing harmony between humans, nature, and ancestors. Its social function is evident in its role as a unifying force within the community and as a medium for informal cultural education. Furthermore, the use of natural materials and its eco-cultural production practices highlight the instrument's contribution to environmental preservation. However, the study also identifies a shift in meaning caused by globalization pressures and a weakening of cultural regeneration among younger generations. Therefore, preserving *Dogdog Lojor* requires participatory, community-based strategies that respect its spiritual and symbolic context. This research is expected to contribute to the development of symbolic anthropology, ethnomusicology, and cultural ecology theories, as well as serve as a foundation for sustainable cultural preservation policies.

Keywords: *Dogdog Lojor*, *Seren Taun*, symbolism, social function of music, Sundanese culture.

1. INTRODUCTION

This *Dogdog Lojor* is a traditional musical instrument unique to the Sundanese people, which continues to exist in the ritual life of the *Kasepuhan* indigenous community, especially in the *Seren Taun* procession at the traditional village of *Kasepuhan Sinar Resmi*. This instrument is not only musical in function, but also holds symbolic and spiritual values that reflect the harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and ancestors. In practice, *Dogdog Lojor* is solemnly played during the rice procession as a form of thanksgiving for the harvest, as well as a medium for communicating with the ancestors. The music produced becomes a medium of religious and cultural expression, rather than mere entertainment (Fadlilah, 2021; Malik, 2017).

However, social reality shows that changing times have had a significant impact on the sustainability of this tradition. Modernization, globalization, and the commercialization of culture have begun to influence the essence and originality of *Seren Taun* and the *Dogdog Lojor* instrument. In many cases, sacred meanings have been displaced by visual aesthetics for tourism purposes. *Dogdog Lojor* performances are often reduced to decorative elements, rather than integral parts of belief systems and social structures (Sumaludin, 2022; Anjany et al., 2021). Moreover, younger



generations have begun to show declining interest in participating in the tradition, which affects the regeneration of players and the cultural meaning.

In addition, external interventions—from media, cultural promotion, to government policy—often fail to grasp the depth of meaning in local cultural practices. Excessive focus on performative aspects has caused many symbolic values of *Dogdog Lojor* to be reduced, such as the rhythmic meaning as a connector between realms, its social role in fostering community cohesion, and ecological values that emphasize harmony with nature. In fact, in the philosophy of the Kasepuhan people, every cultural component is part of a system that is cosmologically, ethically, and ecologically interconnected (Sihabudin & Yusanto, 2018).

Amid these challenges, previous studies have mostly focused on *Seren Taun* in general as a cultural symbol or tourist attraction, and have not specifically discussed the symbolism and functions of *Dogdog Lojor* as a central element in the customary procession. Studies such as that by Amelia & Ribawati (2025) emphasize the role of *Seren Taun* in preserving local wisdom but do not explicitly explore the semiotics or spirituality of supporting instruments such as *Dogdog Lojor*. In-depth anthropological studies on the social functions and symbolism of this musical instrument are still limited, even though it plays a vital role in representing the cosmic and structural values of indigenous communities (Munawiroh, 2017; Firmansyah, 2018).

The regeneration of *Dogdog Lojor* players is also a major concern. The skill of playing this instrument is generally passed down orally and through direct experience, without formal documentation or learning systems that could ensure the sustainability of the tradition (Habibuloh, 2018). The lack of scholarly documentation also threatens the preservation of the instrument's meaning, especially if the minor narratives from local cultural practitioners do not gain space in academic discourse.

In this context, this research becomes relevant to provide a new contribution to Sundanese cultural studies by qualitatively exploring the functions and symbolism of *Dogdog Lojor* in the *Seren Taun* procession, and examining how the indigenous community preserves these meanings amid the pressures of modernity. An ethnographic approach is used to capture the cultural meanings from within, through participant observation and in-depth interviews with customary leaders, local artists, and indigenous community members.

This research is not only important for the development of scientific knowledge, particularly in cultural anthropology and ethnomusicology, but also offers practical contributions in designing contextual, participatory, and community-based cultural preservation strategies. Ultimately, the preservation of *Dogdog Lojor* is not just about maintaining the existence of a musical instrument, but also about safeguarding the narrative of identity, customary social structure, and ecological harmony inherited across generations.

2. METHODS

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative research design to comprehensively analyze the symbolic meanings, social roles, and ecological significance of *Dogdog Lojor*, a traditional Sundanese musical instrument that serves as a central element in the *Seren Taun* ritual at Kasepuhan Sirna Resmi. The qualitative approach was

selected because it enables the researcher to explore deeply embedded cultural phenomena that extend beyond empirical measurement, encompassing spiritual, aesthetic, and cosmological dimensions that are intrinsic to indigenous musical practices (Alhazmi, 2023; Sugiyono, 2019). Data collection involved a combination of literature review, document analysis, participatory observation of ritual performances, and audiovisual documentation to capture both textual and performative aspects of the tradition (Sugita & Tilem Pastika, 2021; Nilamsari, 2014). Archival sources, including ritual manuscripts, oral histories from adat leaders, and video recordings of *Seren Taun* ceremonies, provided rich primary data for cultural interpretation. The analysis employed a dual approach: content analysis to systematically examine cultural texts and archival materials (Krippendorff, 2018), and thematic analysis to identify patterns of symbolic meaning, social cohesion, spiritual significance, and ecological ethics embedded in the music (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The credibility of the findings was reinforced through triangulation across academic, community, and archival sources (Bowen, 2009), with interpretative frameworks grounded in symbolic anthropology (Geertz, 1973) and ritual studies (Turner, 1969) to ensure that the analysis was both culturally situated and theoretically robust. This methodological integration is designed not only to generate nuanced insights into the *Dogdog Lojor* tradition but also to contribute to broader academic discourses on cultural sustainability, intangible heritage preservation, and the interplay between tradition and modernity in indigenous performing arts.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

This study reveals various symbolic, social, ecological dimensions, as well as contemporary challenges faced by the traditional art of *Dogdog Lojor* within the *Seren Taun* ceremony at Kasepuhan Sirna Resmi. Through a thematic approach and narrative documentation, five major themes emerged that reflect the depth of meaning and the role of *Dogdog Lojor* as a key element within the cultural structure of the Sundanese indigenous community.

3.1.1 Symbolism of *Dogdog Lojor* in *Seren Taun*

Dogdog Lojor functions not only as a musical instrument, but also as a cosmological symbol rich in meaning. Its rhythmic sounds carry spiritual power believed to open channels of communication with ancestors and natural forces. In kasepuhan society, *Dogdog Lojor* represents the sacred relationship between humans, nature, and the Creator.



Figure 1. Angklung Dog Dog Lojor in the *Seren Taun* Ceremony (research documentation)

The instrument's structure—comprising the dogdog, gonggong, panembal, kingking, and kinclok—symbolizes elements of life and the cardinal directions, as explained by Abah Asep, the Pupuhu Adat (customary leader). The word *lojor*, meaning "long," represents the continuity of life and the cyclical nature of time, in line with the Sundanese cosmological philosophy.



Figure 2. Dog Dog, Gonggong, Panembal, Kingking, Kinclok (source: author documentation)

This symbolism is supported by Clifford Geertz's (1973) theory that cultural symbols not only reflect meaning but also shape the way a society thinks. In this context, *Dogdog Lojor* is a cultural text "read" by the indigenous community within their agrarian ritual. When played during *Seren Taun*, *Dogdog Lojor* serves as a bridge between the profane and the sacred, marking a moment of social transition (liminality) as described by Victor Turner (1969).

Moreover, *Dogdog Lojor* carries powerful semiotic value: its sound is not merely auditory but a sign denoting the presence of core values such as fertility, harmony, and balance between humans and nature. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1976) refers to such

symbols as components of binary cultural structures (nature–culture, sacred–profane, ancestor–descendant), and *Dogdog Lojor* bridges these oppositions through music and ritual.

3.1.2 Social and Cultural Functions of *Dogdog Lojor*

Dogdog Lojor acts as a means of social integration and value transmission within the indigenous community. Every time it is played, the instrument does not merely produce sound, but also creates a shared social space that strengthens collective identity. During *Seren Taun*, all community members—from children to elders—participate, creating a shared experience that enhances social cohesion and solidarity.

In Kasepuhan Sirna Resmi, *Dogdog Lojor* also functions as part of an informal education system. The learning process is direct and participatory, often beginning with observing performances, helping carry instruments, and eventually playing them in ritual events. There is no formal curriculum, but rather a transmission of knowledge through experience and role modeling—a deep form of enculturation.



Figure 3. Photo of young generation learning to play *Dogdog Lojor* (source: author documentation)

As shown in the theory of the social function of music by Alan P. Merriam and supported by Amin (2024), traditional music serves expressive, educational, and integrative functions. *Dogdog Lojor* actualizes all three:

- (1) as an expression of gratitude and collective spirituality,
- (2) as a medium of education in customary values and behavior, and
- (3) as a social adhesive that unites the community in cultural and ritual settings.

Field data shows that youth participation still exists, particularly when encouraged by family or customary leaders. In fact, *Dogdog*

Lojor has begun to be integrated into elementary and secondary school curricula as an extracurricular activity. This demonstrates the flexibility of tradition in adapting to modern educational contexts without losing its core values.

3.1.3 Ecological Function and Relationship with Nature

The ecological function of *Dogdog Lojor* is reflected in the materials and methods of its production, which are entirely sourced from nature. The bamboo and animal skin used are not taken indiscriminately but with regard to the seasons, specific locations, and with customary blessings. This reflects the ecological harmony embedded in the *kasepuhan* philosophy of life: humans are not rulers over nature, but part of it.

The music of *Dogdog Lojor* becomes a form of ecospirituality, a cultural expression that fuses ecological awareness with spiritual values. In every stage of *Seren Taun*, the music is not just an accompaniment, but a sonic offering to nature—an act of respect and gratitude.

According to Hidayat (2022), traditional arts such as *Dogdog Lojor* play a role in both cultural and environmental conservation. These ecological values are increasingly important in the face of global climate crises, as indigenous communities like *Kasepuhan Sirna Resmi* possess local ecological knowledge that is highly relevant for sustainability practices.

Therefore, *Dogdog Lojor* is not only a cultural artifact but a symbol of deep ecological ethics. Its music is a way for the community to maintain cosmic awareness—a spiritual relationship between humans, nature, and the Creator.

3.1.4 Challenges of Preservation and Shifting Meaning

Modernization and commodification are the two main challenges that lead to shifts in the meaning of *Dogdog Lojor*. In cultural performances or festivals, *Dogdog Lojor* is often detached from its ritual context and reduced to a mere aesthetic display devoid of spiritual depth. This transformation risks turning *Dogdog Lojor* from a living heritage into a performing object.

Cultural globalization has led to the dominance of mass culture, distancing younger generations from their cultural roots. Digital entertainment, social media, and a standardized education system have narrowed the space for local culture. As emphasized by Komarudin et al. (2021), commodification of traditional instruments risks reducing cultural value to consumable products.

Regenerating the tradition also presents a challenge. Interviews with customary figures revealed that transmission still occurs sporadically and is highly dependent on individual motivation and family encouragement. The lack of documentation and the absence of formal institutions that teach *Dogdog Lojor* worsen the situation.

Nevertheless, the indigenous community's awareness of safeguarding its meaning remains strong. *Dogdog Lojor* is not played carelessly, and violations of ritual context are regarded as breaches of customary law. This serves as a cultural barrier that keeps its spiritual value intact.

3.3.4 Relevance of *Dogdog Lojor* in Local and Global Cultural Contexts

Dogdog Lojor continues to hold high relevance in both local and global cultural dynamics. Locally, it serves as a foundation of

kasepuhan identity—a symbol of cultural resilience and an expression of noble ancestral values. *Dogdog Lojor* is not merely a tangible heritage, but an intangible heritage that lives on in daily practice.

Globally, *Dogdog Lojor* can be an important representation of cultural diversity and local spirituality rich in meaning. However, efforts to globalize this heritage must be carried out with a participatory approach that is sensitive to local context—not through exoticization or shallow commodification. UNESCO (2003) emphasizes that safeguarding intangible cultural heritage must prioritize sustainability, local identity, and respect for the community that owns it.

Thus, *Dogdog Lojor* is an ideal example of how traditional arts can adapt and endure in the modern era. It is not a symbol of nostalgic past, but a living source of meaning and value relevant for building a rooted and sustainable future.

3.2 Discussion

The tradition of *Dogdog Lojor* within the *Seren Taun* ritual is undergoing a dynamic negotiation between preservation and adaptation in the face of cultural change. While it remains rooted in sacred cosmology, the growing influence of modern media, digital culture, and tourism has initiated shifts in how this musical tradition is performed and perceived. As Clifford Geertz (1973) explains in his theory of symbolic anthropology, cultural rituals and artifacts such as *Dogdog Lojor* are “webs of significance” constructed by society, which means any transformation—whether visual, functional, or contextual—affects the depth of symbolic meaning embedded within the practice.

Technological enhancement, such as digital documentation, stage lighting, and modern sound systems, may serve as tools for cultural outreach, especially among younger audiences who are more attuned to digital interfaces. However, these changes risk desacralizing *Dogdog Lojor* if removed from its ritual framework. This aligns with Turner’s (1969) concept of liminality, where cultural symbols lose their transformational power when separated from their sacred space and process.



Figure 4. Photos of *Dogdog Lojor* are displayed at festivals or non-ritual performances. (source: research documentation)

Community responses toward these innovations vary. Some younger members perceive modernization as a creative

opportunity to sustain cultural relevance, while elder custodians express concern about the erosion of spiritual and ethical values. This generational gap reflects what Hobsbawm (1983) terms the invention of tradition—when cultural practices are recontextualized in ways that both preserve and transform their original meanings. If not carefully managed, this can lead to cultural dissonance and the commodification of heritage (Smith, 2006).

Despite such tensions, *Dogdog Lojor* holds great potential as a living heritage that adapts without losing authenticity. Cultural sustainability, as described by Throsby (2010), depends on the community's ability to maintain identity while responding to change. In this light, the development of participatory and community-based digital platforms may serve not only as preservation strategies but also as vehicles of intergenerational dialogue and education.

Thus, the main challenge lies in striking a balance between ritual authenticity and adaptive innovation. Collaborative efforts involving customary leaders, cultural practitioners, educators, and technology specialists are needed to ensure that the development of *Dogdog Lojor* remains rooted in its indigenous cosmology while opening itself to meaningful transformation. If managed respectfully, modernization can function as a bridge—not a rupture—between tradition and future, local wisdom and global discourse

4. CONCLUSION

This study affirms that *Dogdog Lojor* in the *Seren Taun* ceremony is not only a traditional musical instrument but a multidimensional cultural symbol that embodies the cosmological, spiritual, social, and ecological values of the Kasepuhan Sirna Resmi community. Through an interpretive framework grounded in Geertz's symbolic anthropology and Turner's theory of ritual process, *Dogdog Lojor* emerges as a liminal medium—connecting the sacred and the profane, the ancestral and the contemporary, the ecological and the social.

The findings demonstrate that the function of *Dogdog Lojor* transcends its acoustic role. It operates as a ritual language, a social adhesive, and an ecological marker—shaping the community's worldview and reinforcing cultural continuity through informal education and spiritual participation. As Throsby (2010) suggests, the sustainability of cultural expressions relies not only on preservation but on the capacity for renewal grounded in local epistemologies.

In facing the pressures of modernization and commodification, *Dogdog Lojor* stands at a cultural crossroads. While digital platforms and tourism open avenues for wider recognition, they must be navigated with caution to avoid ritual desacralization. The role of community-based governance, intergenerational transmission, and participatory documentation is thus central to safeguarding both form and meaning.

This study contributes to the discourse in ethnomusicology, indigenous studies, and cultural sustainability by providing a case-based understanding of how traditional music can serve as a living system of values. Furthermore, it offers practical insights for cultural policy, local education, and community revitalization strategies in the preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

Ultimately, preserving *Dogdog Lojor* is not simply about maintaining a musical tradition—it is about protecting an

integrated system of meaning that reflects the philosophical, ethical, and spiritual fabric of Sundanese culture. As such, it must be preserved not as a static relic, but as a dynamic cultural practice capable of inspiring future generations while remaining true to its ancestral roots.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Aria is the sole author of this study and was responsible for all aspects of the research and writing process. This includes the conceptualization and formulation of research problems, data collection through literature review, theoretical framework construction, data analysis using content and thematic approaches, interpretation of symbolic and sociocultural findings, and the preparation of the full manuscript. The author also ensured the cultural accuracy of local terminology, integrated relevant theories, and finalized the journal article for submission..

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