

The Popularity of Karinding among Bandung Society

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on the impact of the *karinding* popularity on Bandung society. In trying to understand its focus, the study uses interdisciplinary approaches including sociology and anthropology. It employs qualitative research method including data collection from oral and written sources. Since being played by a band called *Karinding Attack*, *karinding* became popular in Bandung. Further, the popularity of *karinding* gave some impacts on Bandung people, both its practitioners and its audience. Some programs and activities considered as the result of the popularity of *karinding* include multiple activities such as tourism activities, networking development, educational activities, revitalization of traditional arts other than *karinding*, music development, literacy development, and the development of the creative economy.

Keywords: impact, popularity, *karinding*, Bandung, interdisciplinary approach

INTRODUCTION

Karinding is a musical instrument which originally served as a personal entertainment, then later developed to have multiple functions in West Java. At first, *karinding* was known by Sundanese people as a means of getting rid of pests in the rice field. Today, it has gone through various developments. The best moment happened in 2008, when there was an encounter between a community named Bandung Death Metal Syndicate with *karinding* that later developed as it is now.

Initially, the public response was ordinary for there were just a few people who knew *karinding*. However, it did not discourage individual member of the community of Bandung Death Metal Syndicate to introduce *karinding* and Sundanese culture to the metal music fans in particular and Bandung society in general.

Basically, at that time they thought that

karinding can be used as an educational medium to teach moral values to the community. The local wisdom contained in its simple form can serve as a way of life for the people.

Traditional music that was considered out of date by the youths now is in contrary point of view when *karinding* began to develop in Bandung. They have realized to preserve *karinding* and Sundanese culture in general. Moreover, *karinding* became an opening gate to introduce other forms of Sundanese culture such as *iket*, *pangsi*, Sundanese letters, heritage, and Sundanese religion called *Sunda wiwitan*. Currently, *karinding* is believed to be a musical instrument that can raise the awareness of the youths to local values, especially underground musicians in Bandung. One of the music groups that brought this phenomenon is *Karinding Attack*, a music group formed by the pioneers of the metal com-

munity, Ujungberung Rebels (it is believed to be the first and largest music community in Indonesia), whose each band has thousands of fans.

Conservation efforts by utilizing the development of Internet, technology and mass media, as well as a local economic base development, are effective tools to popularize *karinding*. *Karinding* expansion to major cities in West Java has caused some movements such as tourism activities, *karinding* networking, educational activities, revitalization of traditional arts other than *karinding*, development of *karinding* music and its forms, development of literacy associated with *karinding* arts and development of a creative economic base.

METHOD

The problems examined in this study are focused on the impact of the popularity of *karinding* among Bandung people. To answer the questions, this study uses a qualitative method which is basically a holistic method that combines data analysis with relevant aspects in order to produce a description or a picture systematically, factually, and accurately about facts and relationships between observed phenomena. This research includes observation and in-depth interview which were carried out in Bandung, Soreang, and Lembang, involving the members of the Karinding Attack band (later shortened- *Karat*) and other *karinding* practitioners associated with data necessary for this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The spread of Karinding in Bandung

1. Area

The acquaintance of Abah Olot with Bandung metal musicians has brought a new story to the world of *karinding* in Bandung. From creative hands of the metal community, *karinding* arises and transforms into a new form. Regarding this, some youths

are inspired to perform various cultural activities or even explore the potential of each individual that they later implemented in the form of creative cultural products with high economic values through *karinding*. A sequence of interesting events related to *karinding* during the period of 2008-2016 took place in some areas in Bandung such as Soreang (Bandung Regency), Lembang (West Bandung Regency), and other cities in West Java.

In particular, the figures (initiators) in Soreang and Lembang, as research locations, consciously acknowledged that the presence of *karinding* in their regions is strongly influenced by the music band *Karat*. Their patterns of spreading and movement the music are very similar to those of *Karat*. They also admitted that since they used social media, almost every product (songs and merch) that they launched was appreciated extensively, both positively and negatively. Appreciation of their patrons (fans) in social media could usually lead to invitations to perform in events such as music concerts, performances, gatherings, home bands, or wedding.

2. Community Involved in Shaping the Appearance of *Karinding* in Bandung

Some communities are closely related to *Karat* and give a significant influence on the development of *karinding* in Bandung. Among them is the Ujungberung Rebels community. The acquaintance of *karinding* with Ujungberung Rebels community began when Bandung Death Metal Syndicate (BDMS) was formed. BDMS was initiated by some Bandung underground music figures, namely Amenk (Disinfected), Man (Jasad), and Okid (Gugat), which aims to liven up death metal music that was relatively quiet at that time. Developing local identity became their vision, because in addition to its uniqueness, they also assume that there was the same spirit with the music they brought.

Since 2007 they add martial arts like pencak silat and *debus* on their performance based on an advice of their friends. Since then, a traditional art began to get positive responses from Bandung metal music fans and led to close relationship between BDMS and Sundanese music groups. At that point, *Ki Amenk* and *Man* got to know *karinding*, and their tutors were *Mang Engkus* and *Mang Utun*. Since then *karinding* quickly spread among the metal musicians of Ujungberung Rebels until now.

Karat is a band that was born from the event namely "Jumat Keramat" ("Sacred Friday"). It was a weekly activity held every Friday at a place called Common Room. From the search done by the writer on its official website, the Common Room Networks Foundation is a place facilitating the needs of dialogue and multidisciplinary collaborations between individuals, communities, and organizations with multiple backgrounds to share their experiences and knowledge, with both local people and foreigners.

Regarding this, the Common Room is a meeting point for people with different interests and becomes a strategic place for *Karat* in accelerating the spread of *karinding*. As they joined in the Common Room, they met a French who was interested in their music and offered a recording session, so that the *Karat's* first song "Ma Hampura 1" was produced. After the single was uploaded on *Youtube*, it soon attracted lots of friends and viewers, especially metal musicians, and as the result, *Karinding Attack* was born.

3. Diffusion Patterns

The birth of some groups of *karinding* music in Bandung and its surrounding areas can be identified as the impact of the *Karat* popularity among the Bandung society. Thus, the diffusion patterns are analyzed by using Rogers' diffusion theory (1971: 5).

a. Diffusion Process

Basically, the *karinding* spread process

in Bandung can be classified into four stages, namely:

1) Innovation

Karat is able to present relatively *buhun* (old) music in a new concept.

2) Communication Channels

There are three types of communication channels used by *Karat*, among others: (1) mass media (printed and electronic); (2) internet (social media); and (3) interpersonal communication.

3) Time Period

The time span of 8 years is relatively a short time for *Karat's* achievement. Increasing numbers of players and researchers of *karinding* are a clear evidence of their success.

4) Social System

The similarity of the innovators' mindset in the effort of spreading *karinding* encouraged them to perform a series of penetrations that were initially impossible to be possible. Problems are solved and goals can be achieved.

b. Factors Affecting Diffusion Process

1) Social Level

The success of *karinding* spread in Bandung is caused by the backgrounds of the *Karinding Attack* members, in which the members can be considered the trendsetter in the area of metal music in Bandung, and even in Indonesia.

2) Strategic Location

The central point of dissemination for information (Common Room) is fairly strategic (located in Central Bandung) and it is the success determinant of the information dissemination of *karinding* to other areas in Bandung, such as East, West, South, and North Bandung. Until now, the most active *karinding* music groups are commonly found in the region of West Bandung (Lembang) and Southern Bandung (Soreang).

3) Adopters' Characteristics

Individual acceptance is regarded as one of the main factors affecting the process of *karinding* spread in Bandung. The adopt-

ers' characteristics include musical taste similarity, open-mindedness, and music atmosphere in Bandung.

The Popularity of Karinding in Bandung

1. The Parameters of Popularity

The term "popularity" used in this article means to be well-known and liked by many people. It means that the *karinding* popularity is defined as a traditional art which begins to attract Bandung society's attention and is favored by many people. These popularity parameters can be seen from multiple variables, including the growing number of the *karinding* music groups, *karinding* performances, and creative economic actors related to the community or the practitioners of *karinding*.

2. Factors Contributing to the Popularity of *Karinding* in Bandung

a. Internet and Social Media

The development of information technology is considered as something that can change habits and attitudes of the global world community. Whether it is realized or not, people nowadays are living in two worlds, the real world, and cyberspace (cyber community). This phenomenon is called "New Media" by Ron Rice. He defines it as a communication technology that involves computers that is able to facilitate communication with its users (Setiawan, 2013: 362). The power of the "New Media" lies on the Internet connection as a medium for finding and spreading information.

Social media is a term which refers to the online technology used for sharing opinions and information, having discussion, promotion, and establishing relationships. Its services are a mixture of technology, telecommunication, and social interaction. Mayfield (2008) revealed that social media as a new form of online media has some characteristics, among others: participation (eliminating the distance between media and audience), openness (creating a room

for discussion), conversation (social networking as a two-way communication), community (communicating effectively in the community that shares same interest), and connectedness (making relationships with many people).

Social media help *karinding* practitioners and their managers to interact with their fans, partners and event organizers in a more flexible way that leads to getting job offers or collaboration for performances or other activities. Social media platform that are commonly used by *karinding* practitioners are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, and Reverbnation.

With those media, *karinding* practitioners can easily measure their band popularity among its audience.

b. Television as Mass Media Communication

If we look close to online-news websites and social media, they give similar contents of information with television but sometimes faster, more detail, and more accurate. However, people are more attracted to television other than to online website and social media. A number of technical issues such as a low signal of Internet connection, complicated use of gadget may be the reasons why public prefer television to social media.

As mass media, television has three major functions for society, namely: (1) the environment supervisor; (2) correlation between parts of society in responding to the environment; and (3) transmission of socio-cultural heritage, information delivered continuously from generation to generation. In this context, television functions as a medium to express a culture and introduce a new culture (cultural hybrid) in order to enhance and preserve its values (Eskaputra, 2012: 34).

The phenomenon of the *karinding* popularity in Bandung can be assumed as the result of mass media utilization by *karinding* players in order to maintain the existence and popularity of their band. Persuasive

approaches can be done well, so that the *karinding* is often broadcasted by some local and national television stations. *Karat* efforts of penetrating broader music industry by performing in various national television shows have great impacts on the youth's interest in Bandung. *Karat* has performed in several private television programs like *Ini Talk Show* hosted by Sule and Andre, an electronic cinema *Kelas Internasional*, *Live with Trio Lestari*, and *Music Everywhere with Noah Band*.

The Impact of the Karinding Popularity on the Bandung Community

After *Karat* was born, *karinding* immediately spread everywhere, including Bandung, Lembang and Soreang. Youth's enthusiasm in responding to *karinding* in the location of the study has amazed the entire personnel of *Karat*. They can see that young people are very interested in getting information about this instrument. "Mystical" impression which always complements *karinding* instrument has also encouraged the personnel of *Karat*, especially Kimung, to dig more information about *karinding* and discover a series of musical development to answer questions proposed by the youth.

In addition to musical satisfaction, the popularity of *karinding* also has impacts on other aspects of the life of the music community in Bandung. The built of tourism activities, education, economy, traditional arts revitalization other than *karinding*, development of forms and music, development of the national and international network, and development of literacy related to *karinding* arts become a series of positive impacts that take place when *karinding* began to be popular in Bandung. The impacts on the research locations are varied, but basically, cover some of the following activities:

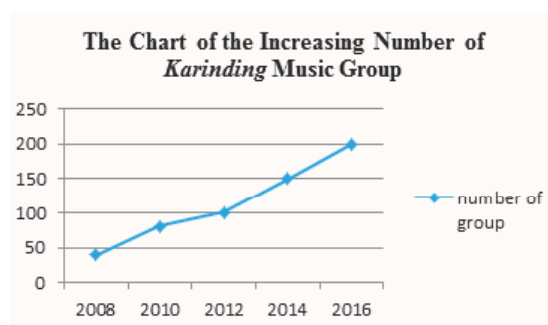
1. Tourism Activities

The popularity of *karinding* turned out to have an impact on tourism activity, such

as in Lembang. *Karinding* active movement in Lembang was also supported by a sponsor that facilitated sound system and a manager of a tourist destination who provided a meal as they were interested when they saw *Karinding on The Street* program initiated by Iwan and Hendra (*karinding* initiators in Lembang). They also were offered to manage a tourist-destination village at Floating Market (*leuit kampong*), but due to their lack of managerial experience, the collaboration was ended. On the other hand, there was a home band of *karinding* in a cafe in Lembang that performed *karinding* regularly to entertain the cafe's visitors. At this point, it is clear how it all began with the *karinding* movement which then attracted the managers of tourist-destinations, started networking and benefited from *karinding*.

2. Development of Karinding Network

It cannot be denied that the main factor contributing to the popularity of *karinding* in Bandung was the birth of *Karat*. Since it was established in 2008, there were about 40 *karinding* bands that actively practiced and performed. Now, the number has increased to approximately 200 bands. That means within 8 years, the number of *karinding* music group has increased to 400%.



Graph 1. The growth of Karinding Group

The massive movements of *karinding* in Bandung were then connected with a lot of performances either small or big scales, held independently or by the sponsors. Furthermore, the increasing number of *ka-*

rinding music groups and performances strengthened relationships between *karinding* music groups in Bandung and led to an annual activity called *Karinding* Camping. It is an event usually filled with group ritual prayer, *karinding* music performances, and ended with tree-planting. *Karinding* Camping was usually followed by dozens of *karinding* music groups from various regions around Bandung.

3. Karinding Educational Activities (KEKAR)

Since *karinding* gained its popularity and attracted media’s attention, *Karat* as the initiator had the initiative to do a movement by holding gatherings every week. The establishment of KEKAR is a kind of *Karat*’s responsibility. As they are famous now, they feel responsible for giving information about *karinding* to those who are interested in having *karinding* class.

Each traditional music community (*angklung*, for example) is supposed to train someone’s musicality. The values of togetherness, sensitivity, and desire to preserve the culture are maintained. Similar to *karinding*, its practitioners continue to develop methods that suit an educational purpose. Viewed from the perspective of *karinding* as an educational tool, it is now in line with objectives proposed by Bloom (1956) in which these objectives are divided into multiple domains, including cognitive domain, which contains behaviors emphasizing the intellectual aspects, such as knowledge, comprehension, and thinking skills. The affective domain contains behaviors that emphasize aspects of feelings and emotions, such as interest, attitude, appreciation, adaptation, and motor skills such as writing, typing, swimming, and operating a machine (Prasetya, 2012: 108). Manifestations of the educational goals proposed by Bloom can be seen from grading system formulated by Kimung and *Karat*.

In detail, programs run by KEKAR have

been well developed. The lesson for basic level typically starts with history of *karinding* in Priangan to *karinding* playing techniques. Another program is group lesson to learn *karinding*, so that students will get guidance in creating a piece of *karinding* music.

There are three levels of *karinding* course:

KARINDING LESSON MATERIAL		
Grade One	Grade Two	Grade Three
Classic <i>karinding</i> history	Modern <i>karinding</i> history (continued)	Songs Arrangement
Abah Olotan techniques of playing <i>pirigan</i> (play pattern)	Potency of creative economy	Pentatonic <i>Karinding</i>
Evaluation (if student passes the test, he can proceed to the next grade)	<i>Celepung</i> learning Evaluation (if student passes the test, he can proceed to the next grade)	Diatonic <i>Karinding</i>
-	-	Technical Stage and Technical Records

Table 1. Lesson Materials for *Karinding* Class

After students pass the evaluation of all stages, students are encouraged to organize a *karinding* recital for the next three months. Tutors who have the initiative to give guidance for free are the *Karat* members and *karinding*-course graduates. Recently, KEKAR has been re-opened and run in Soreang.

4. Revitalization of Traditional Arts Other than *Karinding*

Another movement considered as the result of the *karinding* popularity is the re-appearance of instruments such as *celempung*, *terbang*, *toleat*, and *tarawangsa*. This is also the result of *karinding* appreciation in daily life. The appreciation of *karinding* as a sacred instrument gave impact on its development and usage in ritual practices and custom ceremonies such as *hajjat buruan*, *seren taun*, *ngarajah*, *pabaruu Sunda*, *tumpekan*,

etc. In a series of such ceremony, *karinding* is often collaborated with other traditional instruments, so that when *karinding* becomes more popular, other musical instruments are also well-known by the public.

5. Karinding Music Development

In Bandung, *karinding* music groups can be categorized into two types:

a. Conventional *Karinding*

Conventional *karinding* usually combines several Sundanese instruments in every ensemble. It uses conventional playing techniques. The instruments that always accompany it are *celempung anak* or *renteng* (rhythm guidance), *suling* (melody carrier), *tarawangsa*, *toleat*, and *goong tiup*. The song themes from each *karinding* music group are ranging from daily life, social condition, political situation, manners, natural beauty, etc.

Basically, almost all conventional music groups that still exist today in Bandung have not-too-complicated musical forms, tend to have lots of repetition, and almost do not have accompanying instruments (chord). Nevertheless, in terms of the instrument, almost all groups spread across several areas of Bandung have similarities. They have several instruments that serve as a melodic instrument (flute or *tarawangsa*) and percussion (*celempung*). This indicates that in terms of instrument, the form of *karinding* ensemble starts to develop. There is a possibility that one day there will be a distinctive feature in instruments used in the *karinding* ensemble.

b. *Karinding* Collaboration

In terms of music, there are some differences when it is compared to conventional *karinding*. *Karinding* collaboration uses Western musical instruments, such as guitar and sequencer. The presence of the guitar and sequencer, according to the practitioners, enhances the music. The guitar functions as a melodic instrument as well as a guide (leader) in particular basic tones. In another

period in 2012, there was a new generation (young people) that explored *karinding* with Sundanese pop music style. Furthermore, in 2013-2014, *karinding* musical exploration began to turn to *buhun* music. "Bangbung Hideung" became obligatory repertoire in the performance of this new generation. Ironically, they admitted that the *karinding* band they heard first was *Karat*, with their metal-style appearances they often wore clothes from metal bands like Burgerkill, Jasad, Disinfected, and Gugat, as they believed that the members of those bands had risen *karinding* in West Java.

6. Literacy Development

Literacy in Sundanese culture is still low. Many types of traditional performing arts, especially bamboo music, have not been written in books or academic writings. A figure from Cilengkrang (now Cijerah), grown in a metal community in Bandung, named Iman Rahman Angga Kusuma, known as Kimung, became a pioneer in developing literacy culture in the field of *karinding* music. Having decades of musical experience and history degree from Padjadjaran University, he decided to focus his research on *karinding*.

At least there are three books related to *karinding* art written by Kimung. *Memoar Melawan Lupa* (Minor Books, 2011), *Jurnal Karat, Karinding Attacks Ujungberung Rebels* (Minor Books, 2012), and *Ujungberung Rebels Panceg Dina Galur* (Minor Books, 2012) are a trilogy taking *karinding* as an object of study. These sources also have stimulated academics to conduct various studies on it at several universities in Indonesia. Multiple approaches were used in the study ranging from history, communication studies, politics, sociology, anthropology, musicology, creative economy, education, acoustic physics, graphic design, cinema, and many more.

7. Creative Economy Development

The spread of *karinding* in Bandung has engendered to a new movement of creative

economic activity. Economic benefits are received by artisans and *karinding* musical groups today. The rise of *karinding* community network which has boosted the rise of new music groups certainly has an impact on the demand of *karinding* instrument on the market. Further, it expanded to the bamboo-craft industry. Some creative economic activities including the sales of *karinding* instruments, albums, and merchandise manufacture indicated the *karinding* influence on the creative industry. Furthermore, these creative products were then distributed through channels of Bandung metal music community, such as distribution stores (*distro*) or during traditional music and metal music performances in Bandung.

a. Sales of *Karinding* Instruments and Merchandise

Economic-based development with a vision to prosper bamboo craftsmen is an idea brought up by the *Karat* members. They refuse brokers or the intermediary practices among the craftsmen. Thus, members of the group such as Okid encourages every



Figure 1. T-Shirt of *karinding* music group *Sukmaraksa Soreang*
(Source: Personal Collection, 2016)

karinding craftsman to always give identity to each *karinding* they made, so that when the consumers want to buy again, they can directly contact the craftsman.

As a creative economy practitioner, Okid (2016) admits that the sales of *karinding* in Bandung are quite different from other regions. *Karinding* craftsmen in Lembang tend to have a stable rate of sales because they live in a tourist destination. Most craftsmen distribute their hand-made *karinding* through the *distro* in Bandung, others sell the crafts hand to hand or on the tourist destination like Tangkuban Perahu.

b. *Karinding* Performances

Karat is the only music group that able to penetrate music industry because it is supported by a strong and stable network. Their music album distributed massively by *Karat* has an important role in penetrating a wider music industry. Supported by a militant network of metal music community, *Karat* is a group that gets national and international appreciation. Some printed and electronic media such as Ireland local television and the British magazine *Metal Hammer* had proven that the metal music network supporting *Karinding Attack* could not be underestimated. Some constraints related to the album or merchandise distribution to wider market, among others:

- 1) Unready management to fulfil the distributor's demand (record company).
- 2) Easy listening songs for listeners are not available, as is the case for *Karat*, people still do not understand the messages trying to be delivered in their works.

Karat that serves as an inspiration and an innovator for many *karinding* music groups inspired a new mindset for later *karinding* groups that traditional arts could not be underestimated, especially from financial aspect; it is not to commercialize artistic traditions, instead, it is meant to develop more appreciation to traditional performing arts.

c. Album Sales

For the *karinding* music group in Bandung, launching a *karinding* album is still something new. The socialization of the importance of having works released in a CD-format album is continuously done by Kimung and friends in *Karat*. Improving their knowledge of both sound exploration and recording techniques are kept being done, so that local *karinding* music group can release albums soon. For a musical group, releasing an album means risking its reputation, because it shows the group's musicality, quality, identity, and vision. However, another important thing is the support of market and distribution network in order to reach wider listeners.

A *karinding* music group's album released in CD format is sold and promoted through a distribution channel commonly used by Indie bands; their CDs are entrusted to be sold in several *distros* managed by Remains *Distro*. *Karat's* album is released and distributed independently. *Karat* claimed that its album is the first album created by a *karinding* music group that is contained their own songs. This distribution pattern had never been done by the other traditional music groups.



Figure 2. Karinding Attack's Album Cover
(Source: Private Collection, 2013)

Metal and Indie music networks generally are the distribution channel chosen by *Karat* and are considered an effective way

up to now. In addition to that, the mapping of *karinding* music network in West Java is a target set by *Karat* in distributing and promoting its products. Yet, since the *karinding* networking is not fully ready, the band uses social media to reach listeners and fans outside Bandung.

CONCLUSION

The characteristics of the Indie music community, especially metal music in Bandung, that is open to a new culture, is the channel for *karinding* to access some areas outside Bandung. *Karinding* becomes an opening gate to introduce other Sundanese cultures such as *iket*, *pangsi*, *aksara Sunda*, *pusaka* and even Sundanese religion called *Sunda wiwitan*. Recently, *karinding* is assumed as an instrument to raise young people of Bandung's awareness, especially of the underground music community, for local values. Its pioneer is Karinding Attack, a music band founded by the pioneers of metal community Ujungberung Rebels (which is believed as the first and biggest music community in Indonesia), whose each band has thousands of fans.

Karinding now has spread to some areas in Bandung and its surroundings. The *karinding* practitioners in those areas consciously admitted that their musical movements were much influenced by the existence of Karinding Attack. The massive movement of *karinding* in Bandung has attracted a lot of attentions, especially from media which become more active in investigating and reporting its practitioners. Slowly but sure, the *karinding* practitioners keep trying to develop *karinding*. They always set targets every year in order to keep the existence of *karinding* and also to establish the network on local, national and global scales.

Finally, the *karinding* expansion to other big cities in West Java has caused some beneficial activities such as tourism activities, the expansion of *karinding* networking, educa-

tional activities, revitalization of traditional arts other than *karinding*, the development of *karinding* music, literacy development, and activities of the creative economy.

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