

The Sound of *Dangdut* Music to Reject *Porkas* in Indonesia 1986-1987

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Abstract

This article examines the role of dangdut music as a medium of social protest against *Porkas* (Pekan Olahraga dan Ketangkasan), a state-sponsored gambling program implemented in Indonesia during 1986–1987. Using a historical and cultural approach, this study analyzes how dangdut—widely regarded as popular music of the lower and middle classes—functioned as a channel for moral criticism and public resistance to gambling policies perceived as contradictory to religious and social values. Drawing on song lyrics, media reports, government documents, and contemporary accounts, the research demonstrates that dangdut musicians and audiences actively articulated opposition to *Porkas* through musical performances and symbolic expressions. The findings suggest that dangdut was not merely a form of entertainment but also a vehicle for collective moral discourse that reflected broader tensions between state policies and popular religious sentiments, particularly within Muslim communities. By situating dangdut within the socio-political context of late New Order Indonesia, this article contributes to the understanding of popular culture as an arena of negotiation, resistance, and moral expression in modern Indonesian history.

Keywords: *dangdut music; Porkas; social protest; popular culture; New Order Indonesia; gambling policy; moral discourse*

1. Introduction

The Sports and Skill Week (*Porkas*) program is a fascinating policy in Indonesia's socio-economic history during the New Order era. *Porkas* was introduced as a form of lottery game officially legalized by the Indonesian government from 1986 to 1988. Formally, the program claimed its purpose was to support funding for national sports activities through a system of public participation. However, in practice, *Porkas* sparked various controversies and moral criticism due to

perceived elements of gambling. This phenomenon demonstrates how government policies can create a dilemma between economic interests and prevailing socio-religious values. The ratification of *Porkas* was not carried out haphazardly, but rather through a careful process of review and administrative consideration by the New Order government. This step demonstrates the government's attempt to provide legal legitimacy to the program, based on research deemed rational and measurable. Furthermore, this policy also demonstrates the government's orientation at the time,

seeking alternative funding sources without unduly burdening the state budget. Despite its social objectives, the legalization of Porkas continues to spark debate about ethics and morality particularly in a society that upholds religious teachings.

Music has long functioned as a powerful medium for expressing social criticism and negotiating political authority, particularly within popular culture. In Indonesia, dangdut music has occupied a distinctive position as a genre closely associated with the everyday experiences, moral values, and aspirations of the lower and middle classes. Emerging from a blend of Malay, Indian, and Middle Eastern musical influences, dangdut developed into more than a form of entertainment; it became a cultural space where social anxieties, religious sensibilities, and political critiques could be articulated (Weintraub, 2010). During the New Order period, when political expression was tightly controlled, popular music such as dangdut offered an alternative arena for voicing dissent in symbolic and indirect ways.

One significant moment that illustrates this function was the public controversy surrounding Porkas (Pekan Olahraga dan Ketangkasan), a state-sponsored gambling program introduced by the Indonesian government in 1986. Officially framed as a means of supporting sports funding, Porkas generated widespread opposition from religious leaders, Islamic organizations, and segments of the general public who viewed gambling as morally unacceptable and socially harmful (Noer, 1987; Ricklefs, 2008). While

formal political protest against Porkas was constrained, opposition found expression through cultural channels, including sermons, mass gatherings, and notably, popular music. Dangdut songs and performances became a vehicle for articulating moral rejection and communal unease toward the policy.

This article explores how dangdut music functioned as a form of social protest against Porkas between 1986 and 1987. By examining song lyrics, media coverage, and contemporary accounts, the study situates dangdut within the broader socio-political context of late New Order Indonesia. It argues that dangdut operated as a mode of moral communication that mediated tensions between state authority and popular religious sentiment. Through this lens, the article contributes to historical and cultural studies by highlighting the role of popular music as an active agent in negotiating power, morality, and resistance in modern Indonesian history.

2. Headings and Footnotes

Major This study employs a qualitative historical research design combined with a cultural studies approach to examine the role of dangdut music as a medium of social protest against the Porkas gambling policy in Indonesia during 1986–1987. Historical methods are used to reconstruct the socio-political context of the late New Order period and to trace public responses to Porkas through cultural expressions. The research process follows three main stages: data collection, source criticism, and interpretation (Gottschalk, 1969).

Primary sources include dangdut song lyrics released or circulated during the Porkas controversy, contemporaneous newspaper articles, magazines, government statements, and public responses documented in the mass media. These sources are analyzed to identify recurring themes related to gambling, morality, religion, and criticism of state policy. Secondary sources consist of scholarly works on dangdut music, popular culture, and New Order politics, which provide interpretative frameworks for understanding the cultural significance of musical protest (Weintraub, 2010; Heryanto, 2008).

The analysis applies textual and contextual interpretation. Song lyrics are examined as cultural texts that convey symbolic meanings and moral messages, while media reports are analyzed to situate these texts within broader public discourses. By combining historical reconstruction with cultural analysis, this study seeks to demonstrate how dangdut music functioned as a form of indirect resistance and moral communication within the constraints of authoritarian governance. This methodological approach allows for a nuanced understanding of popular music as an active participant in socio-political negotiation rather than a passive reflection of social conditions.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Dangdut Rejects Gambling

In the 1980s, Porkas became one of the most controversial forms of gambling in Indonesia. Initially marketed as a government effort to

support national sports, the program ultimately had widespread social impacts. Many people fell into the habit of purchasing Porkas coupons in the hope of instant profits. Consequently, numerous cases of economic loss and family breakdown emerged due to gambling addiction. This situation demonstrated that policies containing elements of gambling, even disguised as social goals, still have the potential to undermine society's moral fabric.

The numerous victims of Porkas triggered a wave of social protests from various groups, particularly Muslims. Scholars and religious organizations considered policies that allowed rampant gambling to be a form of moral deviation and a violation of religious values. From an Islamic perspective, gambling, or *maisir*, is forbidden because it creates social injustice and fuels greed. Therefore, the strong reaction of Muslims to Porkas was not only an expression of religious belief but also a social concern for the moral future of the nation.

This religious perspective subsequently became the basis for public criticism of the government. Many Islamic figures believe that legalizing gambling in any form contradicts the principles of social justice and public welfare. They argue that policies like Porkas can foster a consumerist and instant gratification mentality that contradicts the values of hard work and honesty. This situation raises concerns that if not immediately

stopped, such practices will weaken the nation's character and exacerbate negative impacts within society.

In a social context, Porkas has had a serious impact on the economic structure of lower-class households. Many ordinary citizens are tempted to purchase Porkas coupons in the hope of quickly escaping poverty. However, in reality, most of them actually suffer losses because the money used for gambling should be allocated for basic needs. This phenomenon demonstrates that gambling in any form will always harm the lower classes, while the only parties who benefit are the organizing institutions and certain parties with economic interests.

Opposition to Porkas has come not only from religious institutions and community leaders, but also from artists and the media. Music, writing, and images have become effective media for expressing protest against legalized gambling practices. Artists use their work to educate the public about the dangers of gambling and its social impacts. The involvement of artists demonstrates that opposition to Porkas is not merely ideological but also cultural, as it touches the collective consciousness of society through artistic expression.

Music, in this regard, plays a crucial role as a tool for social and moral communication. Through poignant lyrics and catchy melodies, messages opposing gambling can be

conveyed more broadly and emotionally. Music has the power to reach across ages, social classes, and regions, making it an effective medium for moral campaigns. Socially critical songs, such as those by Hamdan ATT and Rhoma Irama, exemplify how music can function as a tool for moral struggle amidst social issues.

The impact of this massive opposition movement demonstrates that public moral awareness has the power to influence public policy. Opposition from various elements, including religion, the arts, and the media, ultimately shaped strong public opinion, forcing the government to reconsider the policy. In this context, the emergence of social reactions to Porkas demonstrates the high moral and cultural sensitivity of Indonesian society to the issue of gambling.

Overall, the Porkas phenomenon and the wave of opposition reflect the dynamic between state policy and public moral awareness. The emergence of various expressions of resistance, particularly through music and art, demonstrates that society is not passive in the face of policies deemed to violate the values of justice and religion. Music, writing, and other art forms serve as symbolic tools of resistance capable of raising social awareness and strengthening the nation's moral solidarity. Thus, the historical experience of Porkas provides an important lesson that national development cannot be

separated from the ethical and spiritual dimensions of society.

3.2 Songs by Hamdan ATT

The song "Mabuk Judi" (Drunk Gambling) is one of the most popular compositions by Hamdan Attamimi, better known by his stage name Hamdan ATT. It was released in 1986 and included on the album of the same name. As part of the development of dangdut music in Indonesia, this song stands out for its strong moral message and relevance to the social conditions of the time. Within the historical context of dangdut music, "Mabuk Judi" emerged amidst a wave of romantic songs, bringing a new, more educational and reflective tone. Hamdan ATT is known as one of the dangdut singers who boldly addresses social themes in his music. In "Mabuk Judi," he collaborated with songwriter Harsono, producing a work that is not only pleasing to the ear but also touches the listener's moral compass. The message conveyed in this song is not only entertaining but also serves as a warning against destructive behavior that can ruin one's life. Through his distinctive vocal style, Hamdan ATT successfully conveys the suffering of the characters in the lyrics emotionally and convincingly.



Pic 1. Hamdan ATT's Gambling Drunk Tape

The lyrics of the song "Mabuk Judi" tell the tragic story of an individual trapped in a gambling addiction. The character in the song is depicted as having lost everything—possessions, family, and self-respect—due to his addiction to gambling. The narrative in the lyrics is simply constructed yet possesses powerful symbolic power, depicting how greed and dependency can lead to destruction. This story reflects the social reality in society, where gambling is often the root of various economic and moral problems.

Musically, the song embraces a classical dangdut style, highlighting the combination of drums, flutes, and soft Malay melodies. The musical arrangement is designed to harmonize with the deep sadness, supporting the moral message conveyed in the lyrics. The slow, flowing rhythm allows listeners to more deeply absorb the meaning of each verse. With this musical approach, Hamdan ATT demonstrates his ability to convey social messages through a popular and widely accepted musical medium.

"Mabuk Judi" also has high didactic value. The lyrics encourage listeners to reflect on the harmful consequences of gambling and to realize that the instant wealth they

desire will never bring true happiness. In this context, the song serves as a moral education tool, reminding people to avoid behavior that can lead to suffering for themselves and their families. The message aligns with religious and social values, which teach the importance of hard work, honesty, and self-control.

In terms of its social message, "Mabuk Judi" holds a significant place in the Indonesian dangdut music scene. This song not only depicts an individual tragedy but also serves as a critique of the social phenomenon of gambling that was rampant in the 1980s. During that period, gambling was considered a social ill that threatened the stability of families and communities. Through this song, Hamdan ATT and Harsono voiced public concern about this phenomenon and encouraged listeners to think critically about its negative impacts.

When viewed within the context of the development of popular culture, the presence of "Mabuk Judi" demonstrates how dangdut music has transformed from mere entertainment into a medium for conveying moral and social messages. Dangdut, as folk music, has a broad reach across all levels of society, making its messages easily accepted and internalized. Thus, this song represents the ability of music to function as an effective cultural communication tool in building social awareness.

Furthermore, "Mabuk Judi" also reinforces Hamdan ATT's image as a singer who relies not only on his vocal abilities but also on his concern for social conditions. Through his songs, he often touches on moral and humanitarian issues, establishing himself as an artist championing good values. His courage to address themes such as gambling demonstrates that dangdut music has great potential as a vehicle for social change and moral reflection for society.

From the perspective of music and morality studies, this song can be understood as an art form that integrates entertainment and education. Hamdan ATT successfully demonstrates that music need not be separated from ethical and spiritual values. "Mabuk Judi" is a clear example of how dangdut songs can be used as an instrument of moral preaching, encouraging introspection. In the context of character education, this song provides valuable lessons about the importance of avoiding addictive behavior and living responsibly.

Overall, "Mabuk Judi" is not just a popular dangdut song from the 1980s, but also a work of high aesthetic and moral value. Through its combination of lyrics, melody, and social message, this song successfully serves as a medium for reflection on human behavior and the negative impacts of gambling. Its message remains relevant today, especially amidst the increasing phenomenon of online gambling that

threatens the younger generation. Therefore, Hamdan ATT's work can be categorized as a popular cultural heritage that not only entertains, but also educates and makes people aware of the importance of avoiding destructive behavior in social life.

3.3 Songs by Rhoma Irama

The song "Judi" is one of the monumental works of Rhoma Irama, a dangdut maestro known as a singer, songwriter, and moral figure in the Indonesian music world. It was released in 1987 on the album *Nada-Nada Rindu* and *Judi*. As part of his socially preaching works, "Judi" holds a special place in Rhoma Irama's career because it contains a strong moral message relevant to the social realities of Indonesian society at that time. Through this song, Rhoma Irama emerges not only as a musician but also as a moral educator, striving to instill good values through the medium of popular music.



Pic 2. Rhoma Irama's Gambling Cassette

Thematically, "Judi" presents a sharp social critique of the phenomenon of gambling, which has damaged many aspects of society. Rhoma Irama cleverly utilizes the power of dangdut music to convey religious and ethical messages. In its lyrics, he depicts gambling as a deceptive activity that leads people to the abyss of laziness and destruction. This message is delivered in a straightforward style and supported by a choice of words that are easily understood by all groups, so that its moral message is effectively conveyed to listeners.

The lyrics of "Judi" demonstrate Rhoma Irama's attempt to highlight the psychological and social dimensions of gambling. He describes how gamblers are often lulled by the false hope of winning big, when in reality, they end up losing much of what is valuable in their lives. Gambling in this song is depicted as a symbol of uncontrolled human greed. Thus, Rhoma Irama aims to demonstrate that gambling is not merely an economic activity, but a moral and spiritual issue that can destroy one's faith.

Musically, this song retains the hallmarks of the modern dangdut sonnet widely known through Rhoma Irama's works. The combination of electric guitar melodies, tabla beats, and a moderate tempo creates a dramatic effect that reinforces the lyrics' meaning. This arrangement not only engages listeners but also emphasizes that moral messages can be packaged in dynamic and

entertaining music. Rhoma Irama's emotionally charged vocal style deepens the meaning of each verse, making it more vivid and touching for the listener.

Furthermore, the song "Judi" also contains strong religious and moral dimensions. Rhoma Irama states in the lyrics that "those who believe can become apostates, those who win can become evil, those who are rich can become poor, those who are happy can become miserable," indicating that gambling is not only about material loss, but also the loss of spiritual values. This message demonstrates the theological perspective that any gain obtained through wrongdoing will not bring blessings. Rhoma Irama wants to emphasize that true wealth can only be obtained through lawful endeavors and honest hard work.

In the socio-cultural context of Indonesia in the 1980s, the song "Judi" held strong relevance. At that time, gambling remained a concerning social issue and was often associated with poverty and crime. Through this song, Rhoma Irama emerged as a moral agent for society, warning against the dangers of gambling and encouraging people to return to the values of faith. This aligns with the social and religious mission he consistently upheld in his work, utilizing music as a medium for preaching that could reach all levels of society.

As part of the Islamic music movement, this song also reflects

Rhoma Irama's commitment to renewal in the arts and religion. He successfully combined elements of entertainment and moral education without losing its musical essence. With its meaningful lyrics and strong religious message, "Judi" exemplifies how art can serve as a means of spiritual enlightenment and strengthening national character. Messages like these demonstrate the immense potential of dangdut music to build public moral and ethical awareness.

From a musical semiotic perspective, the song "Judi" also possesses profound layers of meaning. The word "gambling" in the context of this song not only refers to the literal practice of gambling, but also serves as a metaphor for all forms of human behavior that rely on luck without hard work. Thus, this song has a universal meaning that can be applied in various social contexts. Through these symbols and metaphors, Rhoma Irama encourages listeners to self-reflect and correct behaviors that deviate from moral and religious values.

The song "Judi" also demonstrates how Rhoma Irama positions himself as an artist with social responsibility. He uses his popularity not only to entertain but also to raise public awareness. This attitude demonstrates that an artist can play a vital role in conveying social and moral messages through art. In this regard, Rhoma Irama uses music as a tool for social

transformation, oriented toward good values and the formation of national character.

Overall, the song "Judi" is a work that harmoniously combines elements of music, Islamic preaching, and social criticism. Through this song, Rhoma Irama successfully demonstrates that dangdut music functions not only as entertainment but also as a medium of morality that can change society's perspective on social issues such as gambling. The message conveyed remains relevant today, especially in the face of the rampant phenomenon of online gambling and instant gratification. Thus, "Gambling" is not just a popular song from the 1980s, but also a moral cultural heritage with educational and spiritual value for Indonesian society.

4. Conclusions

The Sports and Skills Week (Porkas) was a lottery game legalized by the Indonesian government during the New Order era, specifically between 1986 and 1988. Porkas' legalization did not emerge suddenly, but rather through careful consideration and research conducted by the government prior to its enactment. This step demonstrated that the policy had a strong administrative and political foundation and was intended to garner public support in a measured manner. However, the legalization of Porkas also sparked public debate due to its complex moral, economic, and social issues.

Porkas was officially legalized on November 10, 1986, through Decree No.

BSS 10-11/86 issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs. In this decree, the government established various provisions governing the game's mechanics, from the drawing procedures and prize amounts to the age limit for participants. Thus, Porkas became a legally recognized lottery game in Indonesia. This legalization also marked the state's direct involvement in lottery-based economic activities, previously considered taboo in Indonesian social and religious contexts.

Porkas is managed by the Social Welfare Fund Foundation (YDBKS), which is directly supervised by the Ministry of Social Affairs. Through this foundation, proceeds from the Porkas game are claimed to be used to support various social and community welfare activities. In practice, Porkas coupons are distributed by official agents spread across various regions, particularly in centers of economic and social activity. The buying and selling of these coupons is active from afternoon to evening, often attracting people from all walks of life hoping to achieve significant profits with little capital.

However, despite the government's stated social goals, Porkas has had significant negative impacts. Many people are trapped in consumptive and speculative behavior due to the hope of winning the lottery. This phenomenon demonstrates how legalized gambling, even disguised as a social goal, can foster economic and moral dependence within the community. Thus, although Porkas was originally intended as a means of raising social funds, its practice has instead sparked controversy, highlighting the tension between the

state's economic interests and the moral values of Indonesian society.

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