

# The Role of Literary Work in Karo Community, Indonesia

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The study focuses on the role of literary work, namely 'ndungndungen' in the Karo community, Sumatera. Ndungndungen Karo is a poem regenerated orally (oral tradition). Generally, Ndungndungen Karo consists of four lines in one verse; the first two lines are a preface and the last two lines are the contents. The essence of Ndungndungen Karo mostly reflects social, cultural as well as educational value. This study applied qualitative research and sociological analysis, namely data collection, data reduction, data display, drawing and verification of conclusions. Based on the research, it can be concluded that the main purpose of ndungndungen is giving advice, knowing how to conduct a proper manner in society and maintaining kinship.

**Key words:** *Ndungndungen, poem, karo community.*

## Introduction

The Karonese community originated in the Karo Regency although they have now spread to many regions of North Sumatera Province. They migrated to several places namely Medan City, Binjai, Deli Serdang, Langkat, and Simalungun Regency. The Karo Regency is 2,97% of the North Sumatera Province. In 2011, the Karonese population in North Sumatera was about 913,000 people or 6,90 % of the total (Regency Statistical Bureau, 2012) & (Sitomorang et al., 2015).

The Karonese community who live in the Karo highland have inherited the old culture for a hundred years. As a tool for bounding their society, they still practice their traditions (Sembiring, 2018). In modern usage, 'culture' commonly refers to the systems of knowledge, values, beliefs, traditions, institutions, lifestyles, or artefacts used by a group of people or members of a society (UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2010) & (Wong et al., 2010).

Culture, namely oral literature has an important role and position which covers various aspects of the life of the Karo people, especially in traditional ceremonies. According to Tarigan dan Djago, (1979) oral literature is a tradition in the Karo community that has a role and position which covers various aspects of life. Oral literature is normally used in traditional ceremonies, such as proposing to a girl, marriage, child birth, respect for the elderly, death, occupancy of new homes, and annual parties.

There are several forms of Karo literature produced by oral tradition. They are poetry, prose, and lyrical prose. The forms of poetry are : (1) 'ndungungen', (2) 'cakap lumat', and (3) 'tabas'. The form of lyrical prose is 'bilang-bilang' and the form of general prose is 'turi-turin' (Tarigan dan Djago, 1979) & (Ginting, 2009). This study will reveal the role of 'ndungndungan' in Karo culture. This hereditary art needs to be maintained, preserved, and introduced to the world, as one characteristic of traditional poems in the society of the Karonese; one of the thousands of tribes in Indonesia.

### **Formulations of problem**

Ndungndungen Karo essentially reflects social, cultural as well as the educational values. Related to this explanation, the research question of this study is: How is the role of literary work, especially Ndungndungen Karo, in the Karo community?

### **Methods**

This study applied qualitative research and sociological analysis. (Miles et al., 2014) determines qualitative steps in research, as: 1) data collection; 2) data reduction; 3) data display; 4) drawing and verifying conclusions. This study focuses on the roles of ndungndungen in the Karonese community.

### **Results and discussions**

#### ***A. Structure of Ndungndungen***

According to Tarigan, (1980), ndungndungen contains 1) four lines (quatrain) and the rhyme scheme of the poem is abab or aaaa. The first two lines are the prologue, while the last two lines are the content. 2) Each line generally consists of three or four words and 3) has seven to 10 syllables. The first and second lines do not have a meaningful relationship with the third and fourth lines. The first two lines are only the prologue to deliver meaning in the third and fourth lines. This shows that the user of 'ndungndungen' does not frankly express his feelings but prefers using prologue (Tarigan, 1991) & (Tarigan, 1979).

**1) Ndungndungen containing four lines and rhyme scheme abab (Purba OFM Cap, 2007)**

**Table 1:** Four lines & abab rhyme scheme ndungndungen

Karo language	Rhyme scheme	English
Kandi-kandindu e Pa Lawi	a	It's your water pot Mr. Lawi
Page bas para tuhur	b	Rice is over the clothes line
Bangku sada anakndu ena mami	a	Give me one of your children, mami
Sada pe la ertukur	b	Although only one, there is no dowry

Ndungndungen containing four lines and rhyme scheme aa-aa (Purba OFM Cap, 2007)

**Table 2:** Four lines & aaaa rhyme scheme ndungndungen

Karo language	Rhyme scheme	English
Isuan buluh belin	a	Big bamboo is planted
Tehndu bulung pagi man rabin	a	You know the leaves must be cleaned
Adi sereh kam man parang mbelin	a	If you marry a widower
Kam naring pagi man tami-tamin	a	Only you will be adored later

**2) Each line generally consists of three or four words (Purba OFM Cap, 2007)**

**Table 3:** Three or four words each line

Karo language	Words	English
Tabu-tabu si garantang	4	Pumpkins are hanging down
Isarut-sarut bengkala	3	Bitten by apes
Adi mberalah untung	3	If you're lucky
Reh nge kerbo penenggala	4	A plowing buffalo will come

**3) Each line generally has seven to ten syllables (Purba OFM Cap, 2007)**

**Table 4:** Seven to ten syllables each line

Karo language	Syllables	English
Bel-gang-ndu, si-bu-lung pa-ku	8	You boiled ferns
Pa-ku la-bo lit bu-nga-na	8	Ferns have no fruit
Pan-dang-ndu, tem-pa u-sur a-ku	9	You always berate me
a-ku nge a- te- ndu si nge-na-na	10	Only me you love you the most

In ndungndungen, there is also a poem which consists of two lines (couplet). It is called a poem with two lines (karmina), it is also called a ‘quickie’ poem. The first line is prologue and second is the content with the rhyme scheme, aa (Tarigan).

**Table 5:** Two lines & aa rhyme scheme ndungndungen

Karo language	Rhyme scheme	English
Tah kurung tah labang	a	Either the field cricket or tree cricket
Tah surung tah lahang	a	Either happened or not

In ndungndungen, there is also a poem which consists of six lines (sestet). The first three lines are prologue and second three lines are the content (Ginting, 2009).

**Table 6:** Six lines ndungndungen

Karo language	English
Tuhan kap empuna geluhta	God is the owner of our lives
Gegehta pe la si mberekenca	Even our strength is from Him
Dage tetaplah bulat ukurta	So keep our strong determination
Geluhta pe lalap min erguna	Our lives continue to be useful
Lagu langkah pe la sia-sia	Even our deed is not in vain
Gelar Tuhanlah ermulia	God's name is glorious

## ***B. The Role of Ndungndungen in Karo Community***

### **1) Giving advice to school children**

'Ndungndungan' is usually sung by school children before the lesson begins, as a warning to study diligently that should be started from childhood (Ginting, 2009).

**Table 7:** Ndungndungen giving advice to school children

Karo language	English
Ari Selasa Tiga Binanga	Tuesdays are market days of Tiga Binanga
Mate ersepah kambing bajar	Male goats are dead fighting
Tupung kita kitik denga	When we are still young
Tutus min ateta erlajar	You should study seriously.

### **2) Expressing feeling of love**

In general, 'ndungndungen' is being sung by young adults to express their feelings of love. (Ginting, 2009)

**Table 8:** Ndungndungen expressing feelings of love

Karo language	English
Bereng-bereng kuidah	I see beetles flying
Lada jera si tangke lenga	Pepper, cumin and lemongrass
Nterem jelma kuidah	I see lots of people
Sada kena ateku ngena	Only you I love

### 3) Communication between husband and wife in a family life

Ndungndungen was spoken by a married couple to communicate and discuss their family life (Ginting, 2009).

**Table 9:** Ndungndungen a married couple communicating

Karo language	English
Brakbiken si buah rimo	The oranges are falling down
Kenca ridi baba ku tiga	After taking a shower, take them to the market
Peduaken aku mindo	The second I ask
Ula erjudi ula erlua-lua	Don't do gambling, don't do cheating with the girls

### 4) Using satire to insinuate someone (Ginting, 2009)

*Satire to a woman who is not a good mother*

**Table 10:** Satire to a mother

Karo language	English
Jambe jemborat	Pumpkin to pumpkin
Jering sada baka	A basket of <i>Jengkol</i>
Nande la rorat	Even though mother is not good
Ngena ate bapa	Father loves her

*Satire to selfish people*

**Table 11:** Satire to selfish people

Karo language	English
Gundera salak gundera	Garlic and onion
Buluh belin kubenteri	I throw the big bamboo
Kutera kalak kutera	I don't care with other people
Beltekku mbelin kubesuri	I feel full with my big belly

### *Satire to hypocrites*

**Table 12:** Satire to hypocrites

Karo language	English
Mejile tuhu bunga ndapndap	'Ndapndap' is really beautiful flower
Rupa megara la erbau	It's red and odourless
Mejile tuhu rupandu i tatap	How beautiful you are
Tapi pacik kena erlagu	But have bad behaviour

### *Satire to lazy person*

Ndungndungen contains satire to lazy people who just want to eat, but don't want to work.

**Table 13:** Satire to lazy person

Karo language	English
Keteng-keteng pengulu Bukit	As a leader, Mr. Bukit is really full after eating
Nca keteng lanai ngasup muit	After being full, he can't move

### *Satire to old bachelor*

Ndungndungen contains satire to young people who don't get married until he was old enough

**Table 14:** Satire to old bachelor

Karo language	English
Erpurih bulung binara	"Binara" leaves have stems
Buluh belin batang buhara	Large bamboo from 'buhara' tree
Kumalih gundari nggo bicara	The condition of era has already changed
Lakon parang mbelin asangkan anak perana	It is preferred widower than young man

### *Satire to a girl who marries a widower*

Ndungndungen contains satire to a girl who wants to marry a widower because of certain purposes.

**Table 15:** Satire to a young woman

Karo language	English
Iuan buluh belin	Big bamboo is planted
Tehndu bulung pagi man rabin	As known tomorrow the leaf is cut
Adi sereh kita man parang mbelin	If we marry a widower
Kita naring man tami-tamin	Only us who will be spoiled

***Satire to a spinster***

Ndungndungen contains satire to a widow or spinster who married a man younger than her. She must be responsible to support her family, so she has to work hard while her husband is jobless and just stays at home.

**Table 16:** Satire to a spinster

Karo language	English
Suan bulung binara	'Binara' leaves are planted
Bulung-bulung man rabin	Bushes are cleaned
Sereh kita man anak perana	If we marry young men
Kita naring latihan erdahin	Only us who must get tired of working

***Satire to the unkind person***

Ndungndungen contains satire to people who never show kindness, or affection for others.

**Table 17:** Satire to unkind person

Karo language	English
Adi turah kayu i deleng	If you grow wood on a hill
Melala ka nge kayu erduri	It will be lots of spiny wood
Adi labo lit ate keleng	If there is no love
E tambah me ate mesui	Pain can be increased

***Satire to young people***

Ndungndungen contains satire to young people who behave badly.

**Table 18:** Satire to young people

Karo language	English
Singuda-nguda anak perana	They are young men and women
La sipandangan mesui takalna	They have a headache if they don't insult each other
Ula metuda kam ngerana	Don't talk in arrogant way
Kutadingken kam munuh bana	You will commit suicide if I leave you

***Satire to impolite person***

Ndungndungen contains satire to people who are not polite in communication

**Table 19:** Satire to impolite person

Karo language	English
Adi upih perpangan suari	If 'upih' is a place to have lunch
Ula lupa giling cina sere	Don't forget to grind chili and lemongrass
Nggo canggih jelma gundari	People have already been sophisticated now
Mamak nina ngataken nande	'Mamak' is used for calling a mother

***Satire to someone who does not obey the tradition***

Ndungndungen contains satire to those who do not obey tradition in appearance.

**Table 20:** Satire to those who disobey the tradition

Karo language	English
Taneh kendit turah batang pinang	The trees of areca nut grow on flat land
Meledang seh kal bage tunggung na	They are straight and beautiful
Singuda-nguda rabbit buk gedang	Young ladies with long hair wear sarongs
Mela, talu zaman nina erkata bana	They feel embarrassed because it is out of date

**Describing Fate**

Ndungndungen contains the description of someone's fate

**Table 21:** Ndungndungen describing fate

Karo language	English
Sibakut liang kurkuren	Catfish make holes
Ise ndia beluh nggulesa	Who is good at making it curry
Adi serbut perukuren	If you have a complex mind
Ise ndia beluh pejoresa	Who can comfort you



## Giving Warning with Humour/Joke

**Table 22:** Ndungndungen to warn through humour

Karo language	English
Gelat-gelat kelawes	Slice galangal into pieces
Gembur-gembur Lau Biang	The water of Biang river is not clear
Gelap-gelap kena lawes	You go in darkness
Ola tertumbur kotor kucing	Don't step cat faeces

### To Give Advice (Ginting, 2009)

Ndungndungen contains advice to young people, school children, daughter-in-law, husband and wife, everyone, gamblers, gossipers, liars, fighters, someone who likes to demean others, and arrogant people.

#### *Giving advice to young people to get spouse*

**Table 23:** Ndungndungen giving advice to get spouse

Karo language	English
Tasak gia kenas Benjire	Even though Benjire's pineapple is ripe
Adi bengkuang babo sabahna	And pandanus is on the wet rice fields
Dat gia pagi rupa mejile	Even you get the beautiful one later
Adi terbuang usur babahna	But she speaks impolitely.

#### *Giving advice to school children to be smart*

**Table 24:** Ndungdengen giving advice to be smart

Karo language	English
Cimen si maolah-olah	Hanging cucumbers
Palu-palu si Kutabuluh	Beater from Kutabuluh
Adi kita nggo sekolah	If we have attended school
Mela malu kita la beluh	We feel ashamed if we are not smart

***Giving advice to daughter-in-law to have a good relationship with her parents-in-law***

**Table 25:** Ndungndungan giving advice for family good relationship

Karo language	English
Beluh kal nuduh-nuduhi adi cikua	Grasshopper is so smart in pointing
Tempa beluh ia randing-andingen	As if he is good at giving allusion
La lit gunana la meriah ras si mertua	It is useless you don't have good relationship with parents-in-law
Sabab ibas metua nari kerina tading tadingen	Because you get the inheritance from them.

***Giving advice to husband and wife to get a happy lasting home life***

**Table 26:** Ndungndungen to advice to have happy family

Karo language	English
Batang pola kadena pe man palaren	All parts of palm tree stem are useful
Madalit kepe dagingna adi belut	The eel has smooth skin
Maka dame i bas jabu asuhilah Kesabaren	Be patient to have a peace in household.
Bage pe sikapta lemah lembut	You also have to be gentle

***Giving advice to everyone to have good attitude***

Ndungndungen contains advice for everyone to be careful when talking, think first before acting in order not to break unity.

**Table 27:** Ndungndungen giving advice for good behaviour

Karo language	English
Enda gundera alas	This onion is 'alas' onion
Ku caleng sitik baba ku rumah	I pick some to bring them home
Adi la lah pengerananta medatas	Don't be arrogant when If we talk
Kerina kalak rate mekuah	Everyone will feel sorry to you

***Giving advice to gamblers***

In ancient times many Karo people liked to gamble and it was allowed by wives and family. They even supported it, so it broke the family. Ndungndungen advises gamblers to avoid breaking families.

**Table 28:** Ndungndungen giving advice to gamblers

Karo language	English
Cuan si regap-regap	The 'regap-regap' hoe
Penaka-naka timbako	Cleaning tobacco trees
Turang si mambur merap	Many brothers are scattered
Pengelako judi pako	Because of gambling

***Giving advice to gossipers***

Ndungndungen contains advice to people who like to gossip, do not waste time gossiping. Instead of gossiping it is better to work in the fields.

**Table 29:** Ndungndungen giving advice to gossipers

Karo language	English
Asa nungkir biang ranak	Instead of peeping at a dog having a baby
Ulin tuma uista itindesi	It's better to clean our clothes
Asa ngeranaken kalak	Instead of gossiping
Ulin peren jumanta icameti	It's better for us to clean our field

***Giving advice to liars***

Ndungndungen contains advice to people who like to tell lies, because they can be embarrassed and get disease if they are known as liars.

**Table 30:** Ndungndungen giving advice to liars

Karo language	English
Adi piher ula i karat	If it's hard, don't be bitten
Adi i karat taka dua	If bitten, it will split in two
Lain i bas lain i darat	If it's different inside and outside
Jadi penakit asa metua	It becomes sickness until old age

***Giving advice to those who like fighting***

Ndungndungen contains advice to people who like fighting. If you really have to fight, fight, but after fighting, you have to forgive each other because there are no perfect people in this world.

**Table 31:** Ndungndungen giving advice to live peacefully

Karo language	English
Sejari si bulung sukat	It is an inch of caladium leaves
Sejari kang si bulung birah	It is also an inch of taro leaves
Adi la banci la rubat	If you have to fight
Minter ka gelah meriah	Then soon you have to make peace

***Giving advice to those who like to demean others***

Ndungndungen contains advice to people who like to demean others. We cannot know someone's fate. Maybe today he is poor, but tomorrow he can be rich.

**Table 32:** Ndungndungen giving advice not to demean others

Karo language	English
Ola mbuesa pola	Don't get too much sugar palm water
Pola enda ganda-gandan	There is much sugar palm water
Ola mbuesa sora	Don't talk too much
Pengindo enda lenga tandan	The fate of someone is not necessarily

***Giving advice to arrogant people***

Ndungndungen contains advice to people who pretend to be smart. They pretend to know but in fact he doesn't know. This makes him trouble.

**Table 33:** Ndungndungen giving advice not to be arrogant

Karo language	English
Adi arih langa sue	If you have not reached agreement
Sueken lebe maka tingtang	You better get it first
Adi la ieteh ole niuwe-uwe	If you don't know, don't say you know it
Adi iuweken jadi utang	If you say it, it will be a debt for you

**Conclusion**

Based on the description and analysis above, it can be concluded as follows: First, the structure of ndungndungen contains a) four lines (quatrain) and the rhyme scheme of the poem is abab or aaaa. The first two lines are the prologue while the last two lines are the content. b) Each line generally consists of three or four words and has seven to 10 syllables. The first and second lines do not have a meaningful relationship with the third and fourth lines. The first two lines are only the prologue to deliver meaning in the third and fourth



lines. Second, in the Karo community, Ndungdungen has an important role; to evaluate the life of Karo society. It gives advice to the Karonese community to behave well and live harmoniously.

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