



Batak Toba Sulim Playing Techniques in Christian Worship: An Analysis of Mandiladilain and Mangangguk in "Pasu-Pasu Hatami" at HKI Simpang Tiga Paranginan Church

Samsul Rajagukguk^{1*}, Tahadodo Waruwu²

¹Student, Pendidikan Musik Gerejawi, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

²Lecturer, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: rj4581conection@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe and analyze the playing techniques of the Batak Toba flute (sulim), particularly the mandiladilain and mangangguk techniques, in the song "Pasu-Pasu Hatami" performed during worship services at HKI Simpang Tiga Paranginan Church. As one of the traditional musical instruments of the Batak Toba people, the sulim holds a significant role not only in cultural and customary contexts but also in the development of church music. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation involving pastors, congregants, and church musicians. The results indicate that the mandiladilain technique produces a melismatic nuance that enhances the melody and provides rhythmic emphasis, while the mangangguk technique generates a vibrato effect that enriches the emotional and spiritual expression of the song. The application of these two techniques effectively improves musical quality and strengthens the theological message conveyed in worship. Although challenges such as limited breath control and restricted practice time were encountered, structured and consistent training proved effective in improving sulim players' skills. This research affirms that the incorporation of Batak Toba sulim playing techniques into church worship serves as an important means of both cultural preservation and the inculturation of traditional music within Christian liturgy. The findings are expected to serve as a reference for musicians, churches, and music education institutions in developing traditional sulim performance techniques across the Indonesian archipelago.

Keywords: Batak Toba Sulim, Mandiladilain, Mangangguk, "Pasu-Pasu Hatami" Song, Church Music

INTRODUCTION

The intersection of indigenous musical traditions and Christian worship practices represents a significant domain of cultural negotiation and creative adaptation throughout the history of Christianity in non-Western contexts. In Indonesia, the process

of inculturation—whereby local cultural expressions are integrated into Christian liturgical practice—has produced diverse models of worship that honor both theological integrity and cultural identity. Among the various ethnic groups of Indonesia, the Batak Toba people of North Sumatra have developed particularly rich traditions of incorporating indigenous musical forms and instruments into Christian worship, reflecting the deep penetration of Christianity within Batak society since the nineteenth century. The *sulim*, a traditional bamboo flute of the Batak Toba people, exemplifies an indigenous instrument that has successfully transitioned from purely customary contexts into contemporary church music. Organologically classified as an end-blown bamboo aerophone, the *sulim* traditionally accompanied ceremonial occasions, storytelling, and communal gatherings, serving functions both aesthetic and social. The instrument's distinctive timbral qualities and expressive capabilities have made it a valued addition to church music ensembles, where it contributes unique sonic textures while embodying cultural continuity. Performance on the *sulim* involves specialized techniques developed through generations of practice within Batak musical traditions. Among these techniques, *mandiladilain* and *mangangguk* represent particularly important expressive resources. The term *mandiladilain* derives from the Batak Toba language and refers to a rapid alternation or ornamentation technique that produces melismatic melodic elaboration, enriching melodic lines with decorative figuration. The *mangangguk* technique, whose name suggests a nodding or pulsing motion, creates a vibrato effect through controlled manipulation of air flow or embouchure, adding warmth and emotional depth to sustained tones. These techniques, when skillfully executed, transform simple melodic material into expressive musical discourse capable of conveying complex emotional and spiritual states. The song "Pasu-Pasu Hatami," which translates approximately as "Bless Your Word," occupies an important place within the liturgical repertoire of Huria Kristen Indonesia (HKI) congregations. This hymn addresses themes central to Reformed Protestant theology, particularly the sanctifying power of Scripture and the believer's responsive reception of divine revelation. The text petitions God to bless the proclamation and reception of the Word, acknowledging human dependence upon divine grace for spiritual understanding and transformation. The theological weight of this content creates particular demands upon musical performance, requiring expressive means adequate to the spiritual significance of the text.

HKI Simpang Tiga Paranginan Church, located in the Tapanuli region of North Sumatra, represents a congregation deeply embedded within Batak Toba cultural context while maintaining commitment to Christian faith and practice. The congregation's worship life reflects intentional efforts to honor cultural heritage through the incorporation of traditional musical elements, including the use of the *sulim* in hymn accompaniment. This practice exemplifies broader patterns of cultural negotiation occurring throughout Indonesian Christianity, as churches seek to develop authentic expressions of faith that resonate with local identity while maintaining connection to global Christian tradition. Despite the evident presence of *sulim* performance in Batak church music contexts, systematic documentation and analysis of specific playing techniques remain limited. Questions persist regarding the precise execution of techniques such as *mandiladilain* and *mangangguk*, their effects upon musical expression, and their contribution to worship effectiveness. Furthermore, the relationship between technical execution and theological communication requires careful examination. Specifically, this study addresses the

following research questions: How are the mandiladilain and mangangguk techniques executed in sulim performance of "Pasu-Pasu Hatami" at HKI Simpang Tiga Paranginan Church? What are the musical and expressive effects of these techniques? How do these techniques contribute to the theological and spiritual dimensions of worship? What challenges do sulim players encounter in developing and applying these techniques, and what pedagogical strategies prove effective in addressing these challenges? This investigation aims to provide detailed description and analysis of mandiladilain and mangangguk techniques as applied in sulim performance of "Pasu-Pasu Hatami," to examine the musical effects and expressive functions of these techniques within the worship context, to explore the relationship between technical execution and the communication of theological content, to identify challenges encountered in technique development and application, and to document effective pedagogical approaches for sulim instruction in church music contexts. This research contributes to the limited scholarly literature examining indigenous Indonesian musical instruments in Christian worship contexts. By providing detailed analysis of specific playing techniques, the study offers practical guidance for church musicians seeking to incorporate sulim into worship music effectively. The investigation addresses broader questions regarding musical inculturation and the relationship between cultural preservation and religious practice. Furthermore, the findings have potential relevance for music education, offering insights applicable to the teaching and learning of traditional Indonesian wind instruments. Finally, this study participates in the documentation of endangered cultural knowledge, as traditional instrumental techniques face threats from social change and limited intergenerational transmission.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative methodology, an approach particularly suited to examining cultural practices within their natural social contexts and to capturing the meanings participants attribute to their actions. Qualitative inquiry emphasizes depth of understanding over breadth of coverage, seeking to illuminate phenomena through detailed examination of specific cases rather than through statistical generalization. The descriptive orientation focuses attention upon careful documentation of observable practices and systematic analysis of participant perspectives, producing accounts that render cultural phenomena intelligible to readers unfamiliar with the specific context. The selection of qualitative methodology reflects the nature of the research questions, which concern matters of technique execution, expressive effect, and meaning rather than quantifiable variables amenable to experimental manipulation. Understanding how sulim playing techniques function within worship requires attending to the interpretations and experiences of participants embedded within the practice, perspectives accessible primarily through qualitative inquiry methods. Furthermore, the cultural specificity of both the instrument and the worship context necessitates approaches capable of capturing contextual particularity. The investigation was conducted at HKI Simpang Tiga Paranginan Church, located in the Tapanuli region of North Sumatra. This congregation was selected as the research site based upon several considerations. First, the church maintains an active tradition of incorporating sulim into worship music, providing ready access to the phenomenon under investigation. Second, the congregation represents a

relatively typical example of Batak Toba Christian communities, enhancing the potential relevance of findings to similar contexts. Third, preliminary contact established the willingness of church leadership and musicians to participate in research activities. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, a non-probability technique appropriate for qualitative research wherein individuals are chosen based upon their specific knowledge, experience, or involvement with the phenomenon being studied. The participant group included the senior pastor, who provided theological and liturgical contextualization and discussed the relationship between music and worship from clerical and leadership perspectives. Church musicians, including the primary sulim player and supporting instrumentalists, offered technical insights regarding performance practice and discussed their experiences developing and applying playing techniques. The worship music coordinator contributed organizational and programmatic perspectives regarding the integration of sulim into church music ministry. Selected congregation members provided reception perspectives, describing their experiences of worship music incorporating sulim and reflecting upon its effects on their engagement with worship. Data were collected through three complementary methods: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Each method provided distinct types of information, and their combination enabled triangulation to enhance the credibility of findings. Participant observation involved the researcher's attendance at worship services and music rehearsals over a period of several months. During these occasions, detailed field notes were recorded documenting the sulim player's technical execution, the coordination of the sulim with other musical elements, and the apparent engagement of congregational participants. Particular attention was directed toward instances of *mandiladilain* and *mangangguk* technique application, noting the musical contexts in which these techniques were employed and their observable effects. Observational notes employed both descriptive language, capturing what occurred without interpretation, and reflective commentary, recording the researcher's emerging analytic insights and questions for further investigation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with each category of participant. Interview protocols consisted of open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses while maintaining sufficient flexibility to pursue unexpected insights and emergent themes. Questions addressed topics including participants' personal histories with Batak music and the sulim, their understanding of the *mandiladilain* and *mangangguk* techniques, their perceptions of the sulim's role in worship, experiences of learning or teaching sulim performance, challenges encountered in performance or instruction, and reflections on the relationship between cultural tradition and Christian worship. Interviews typically lasted between forty-five and ninety minutes, were audio-recorded with participant consent, and were subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis. Documentary materials collected included musical scores or melodic transcriptions of "Pasu-Pasu Hatami," worship bulletins indicating the song's liturgical placement, any existing written materials related to sulim instruction or church music guidelines, and historical documents regarding the congregation's music traditions. Photographic and video documentation captured visual aspects of sulim construction and playing position, though such recordings were created only with explicit participant permission and in accordance with ethical protocols. Data analysis proceeded through systematic qualitative coding processes informed by grounded theory methodology. Initial open coding involved careful reading of interview transcripts and

field notes, identifying discrete concepts, actions, and themes present in the data. Each meaningful unit of data was assigned a code representing its content or significance. This initial coding remained close to the data, using terminology and concepts drawn from participants' own language where possible.

Axial coding subsequently organized the initial codes into broader categories by identifying relationships and patterns among concepts. This phase involved asking questions about the relationships among codes, such as what conditions lead to particular phenomena, what strategies are employed in response to situations, and what consequences follow from actions. Categories were developed that grouped related codes and captured higher-level themes. Selective coding refined the categorical structure, identifying core themes that integrated major findings and represented the central insights of the study. This phase involved determining which themes most effectively organized the data and which relationships among themes best captured the phenomenon under investigation. Throughout the coding process, constant comparative analysis ensured systematic examination of similarities and differences within and across data sources, comparing incidents, perspectives, and contexts to develop nuanced understanding. Analytic memoing accompanied all stages of coding, with the researcher recording developing insights, questions, and hypotheses in separate documents. These memos served as spaces for analytical thinking and eventually contributed to the formulation of findings and interpretations presented in the results and discussion sections. Multiple strategies were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of findings. Triangulation involved comparison of data from different sources and collection methods to identify convergent evidence supporting interpretations. Member checking provided key participants with opportunities to review preliminary findings and offer corrections or elaborations, ensuring accurate representation of their perspectives. Prolonged engagement at the research site allowed the researcher to develop rapport with participants and deeper understanding of the local context, reducing the likelihood of superficial or distorted interpretation. Detailed methodological documentation, including preserved raw data and clear explication of analytical procedures, enables readers to assess the study's credibility and to evaluate the transferability of findings to their own contexts. Finally, reflexive attention to the researcher's own assumptions, biases, and positioning relative to the study ensured that interpretations remained grounded in data rather than reflecting merely the researcher's preconceptions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The sulim employed at HKI Simpang Tiga Paranginan Church represents a traditional construction pattern characteristic of Batak Toba instrumental craftsmanship. The instrument consists of a bamboo tube approximately forty to fifty centimeters in length, selected from bamboo species exhibiting appropriate diameter and wall thickness. Six finger holes are positioned along the upper surface of the tube, with spacing determined through traditional measurement methods relating to the maker's finger widths. The instrument lacks keys or mechanical components, requiring all pitch modification to occur through fingering combinations and breath control techniques. Interview data revealed that the sulim currently used in worship was crafted by a local instrument maker who maintains traditional construction knowledge passed through familial transmission. The

pastor described the instrument's introduction into church music approximately fifteen years prior, following discussions within church leadership regarding appropriate means of expressing Batak cultural identity within worship. Initial experimentation with sulim incorporation faced some resistance from congregation members who associated the instrument exclusively with pre-Christian customary contexts, but sustained exposure and theological framing emphasizing the baptism of culture into Christian service eventually secured general acceptance. The sulim's timbral characteristics were described by multiple informants using vocabulary suggesting brightness, clarity, and penetrating quality. Musicians noted that the instrument's sound projects effectively even within ensemble contexts, allowing melodic lines to remain audible without excessive volume. This acoustic characteristic was identified as particularly valuable in church settings, where the sulim must balance with congregational singing and other instruments without overwhelming the sonic environment. The pastor specifically valued the sulim's distinctiveness, describing it as providing unique sonic identity to the congregation's worship that reflected their Batak heritage.

Execution of Mandiladilain Technique

The mandiladilain technique, as observed and described by participants, involves rapid alternation between adjacent or nearly adjacent pitches, creating ornamental figuration that elaborates the basic melodic line. The technique requires precise coordination of finger movements and controlled breath support to maintain even articulation across the ornamental pattern. The primary sulim player described the physical execution as involving quick lifting and placement of fingers while maintaining steady air flow, comparing the motion to a rapid tapping or fluttering action. Analysis of mandiladilain application in "Pasu-Pasu Hatami" revealed that the technique was employed selectively rather than continuously throughout the song. Observations documented its use particularly on longer note values within the melodic line, where the basic melody provided sustained pitches that the technique could ornament without disrupting the fundamental melodic contour. The sulim player explained that selecting appropriate moments for mandiladilain requires musical judgment regarding where melodic elaboration serves interpretive purposes rather than creating excessive busyness or obscuring the melody. The musical effect of mandiladilain was characterized by participants as adding richness, interest, and forward motion to the melodic line. The rapid pitch alternations create a sense of melodic activity and rhythmic vitality that energizes passages that might otherwise sound static. The music coordinator compared the effect to embroidery on fabric, suggesting that the technique adds decorative detail that enhances beauty without fundamentally altering the basic design. Congregation members who were interviewed noted that while they could not necessarily identify the specific technique being employed, they experienced the sulim melody as lively and engaging. Technical challenges associated with mandiladilain execution centered primarily on evenness of articulation and maintenance of rhythmic precision. The sulim player reported that achieving consistent execution required substantial practice, as natural tendencies sometimes produced uneven alternations or disrupted the underlying rhythmic pulse. Particular difficulty arose when mandiladilain needed to be executed while simultaneously managing other performance demands such as dynamic shaping or coordination with other musical parts.

Execution of Mangangguk Technique

The mangangguk technique generates a vibrato effect through periodic modulation of pitch or intensity. Multiple informants described the physical execution somewhat differently, suggesting either controlled variation in air pressure, slight oscillation of finger position over a tone hole, or subtle movement of the head position relative to the instrument. These varying descriptions likely reflect individual differences in how players achieve the desired sonic effect, illustrating that traditional techniques may admit multiple execution approaches while producing similar results. The primary sulim player described developing mangangguk through imitation of more experienced players and through trial and error, rather than through explicit verbal instruction. This learning pattern reflects traditional transmission modes wherein techniques are acquired through observation and experimentation rather than through formalized pedagogical explanation. The player characterized the physical sensation of mangangguk execution as involving a pulsing or nodding motion, which may relate to the technique's etymological derivation from the Batak Toba word for nodding. Observational data documented mangangguk application primarily on sustained tones in emotionally significant moments of "Pasu-Pasu Hatami," particularly during phrases expressing devotional intensity or spiritual longing. The vibrato effect produced by mangangguk adds warmth and expressiveness to these sustained pitches, creating a vocal quality that multiple informants associated with human singing. The music coordinator described the effect as making the sulim sound more alive or breathing, characteristics valued within the emotional aesthetic of Batak musical expression. The expressive function of mangangguk relates closely to the emotional communication central to effective worship music. Participants consistently associated the vibrato effect with feelings of depth, sincerity, and emotional engagement. The pastor suggested that mangangguk contributes to the music's capacity to touch hearts and facilitate spiritual openness, functions essential to worship's transformative purposes. Congregation members employed vocabulary suggesting warmth, tenderness, and intimacy when describing passages incorporating prominent mangangguk execution. Technical challenges associated with *mangangguk* centered on control and consistency. Achieving vibrato that sounds natural rather than exaggerated or mechanical requires careful calibration of the oscillation rate and depth. The sulim player reported that breath control proved particularly challenging, as maintaining sufficient and steady air flow while simultaneously inducing the pulsing modulation demanded coordination that developed only through extended practice.

Musical Context and Theological Function of "Pasu-Pasu Hatami"

The song "Pasu-Pasu Hatami" exhibits musical characteristics that create particular opportunities for sulim performance incorporating mandiladilain and mangangguk techniques. The melodic structure consists of relatively conjunct motion with occasional leaps, proceeding through phrases of moderate length that allow for both ornamental elaboration and sustained expressive tones. The harmonic progression, while simple, provides clear tonal foundation supporting melodic elaboration. The overall tempo and rhythmic character combine elements of solemnity and forward momentum, creating an atmosphere conducive to contemplative yet engaged worship. The song's liturgical placement typically occurs during the service of the Word, either immediately preceding

or following the scripture reading and sermon. This positioning reflects the text's thematic focus on receptivity to God's Word and petition for divine blessing upon proclamation and hearing. The pastor explained that the song functions to prepare congregational hearts for engagement with Scripture or to respond to the Word that has been proclaimed, making the music's emotional and spiritual effect particularly important. Analysis of the hymn text reveals theological emphases characteristic of Reformed Protestant spirituality. The lyrics acknowledge human inability to understand or benefit from God's Word apart from divine grace, petition the Holy Spirit's illumination, and express commitment to obedient response. These theological themes create interpretive demands upon musical performance, requiring expressive means adequate to communicate both human humility and divine transcendence, both earnest petition and confident faith. Participants articulated connections between the sulim playing techniques and the song's theological content. The mandiladilain technique's additive, elaborating character was associated with the abundance and richness of God's Word, while the mangangguk technique's emotional warmth was connected to sincere devotional response and the Holy Spirit's tender work in hearts. These associations suggest that technical execution carries symbolic resonances that reinforce textual meaning, though participants varied in how explicitly they articulated such connections.

Impact on Worship Experience and Musical Quality

Multiple informants testified to positive effects of sulim incorporation into worship music, attributing enhanced engagement and satisfaction to the instrument's presence. Congregation members described feeling greater connection to their cultural heritage when traditional instruments were employed in worship, experiencing this as affirmation of their identity as Batak Christians rather than as people required to adopt foreign cultural forms in religious expression. This validation of cultural identity contributed to a sense of ownership and belonging within worship that participants valued highly. The specific contribution of mandiladilain and mangangguk techniques to worship effectiveness operated through multiple mechanisms. The musical interest and vitality generated by these techniques helped sustain congregational attention and engagement throughout the song, preventing the experience from becoming routine or inattentive. The emotional expressiveness facilitated by mangangguk supported the text's devotional content, helping congregation members enter into the spiritual posture the lyrics expressed. Several participants noted that the sulim melody, when skillfully performed with appropriate technique, often remained in their awareness following the service, serving as a vehicle for continued reflection on the song's message. The worship music coordinator emphasized that sulim incorporation, supported by competent technical execution, contributed to the overall quality and professionalism of the congregation's music program. This enhanced quality supported the congregation's sense that they offered their best to God in worship, a value emphasized within Reformed theological understanding of worship as the offering of grateful response to divine grace. The coordinator also noted practical benefits, including increased interest in music ministry participation among younger congregation members who found traditional instruments appealing. Interview data also revealed some challenges and limitations related to sulim use in worship. The instrument's dynamic range and timbral characteristics mean that it functions most effectively in particular musical contexts and arrangements. Careful

attention to ensemble balance and the selection of appropriate songs ensure that the sulim contributes positively rather than creating performance difficulties. Some participants noted initial unfamiliarity with traditional instruments among younger congregation members required patient introduction and education to build appreciation.

Pedagogical Approaches and Learning Challenges

The primary sulim player's own learning trajectory illustrated patterns common to traditional music transmission while also incorporating more formalized instructional elements. Initial exposure to the instrument occurred through family and community contexts during childhood, creating familiarity with the instrument's sound and basic playing approach. More serious study began in late adolescence through mentorship with an accomplished player, involving primarily observational learning and imitative practice. Written notation or explicit technical instruction played minimal roles in this traditional apprenticeship model. The player identified several specific challenges encountered during technique development. Breath control emerged as a fundamental and persistent difficulty, as the sulim requires substantial and steady air flow to produce consistent tone. Developing adequate breath capacity and control demanded both physical conditioning and technical understanding of efficient air use. Finger coordination and speed necessary for clean mandiladilain execution required extensive repetitive practice, with progress occurring gradually over months and years. Achieving expressive mangangguk that sounded natural rather than forced involved trial and error experimentation with different physical approaches until discovering methods that worked for the individual player.

When the player began teaching sulim to other church musicians, adaptations to traditional transmission methods proved necessary. While maintaining emphasis on observational learning and imitative practice, the player developed more explicit verbal explanations of techniques and created structured practice exercises targeting specific skills. These pedagogical innovations reflected the player's awareness that contemporary learners often lacked the immersive exposure to traditional music that characterized earlier generations, necessitating more efficient and systematic instructional approaches. Time constraints emerged as a significant practical challenge for sulim learning within church music contexts. Musicians typically balanced multiple responsibilities and commitments, limiting time available for instrument practice. The music coordinator discussed strategies for working within these constraints, including establishing realistic expectations regarding developmental timelines, providing structured practice materials that maximized efficiency of limited practice time, and creating opportunities for peer learning and encouragement among musicians. The effectiveness of sustained, consistent practice was emphasized by all musician informants. While initial progress might seem slow, regular engagement with the instrument and persistent work on technical fundamentals eventually yielded substantial improvement. The sulim player noted that technique development exhibited a non-linear trajectory, with periods of plateau punctuated by moments of breakthrough, requiring patience and continued effort during times when progress seemed minimal.

Sulim Techniques as Cultural-Musical Resources

The mandiladilain and mangangguk techniques documented in this study represent culturally specific expressive resources developed within Batak Toba musical traditions and subsequently adapted to Christian worship contexts. These techniques embody indigenous aesthetic values and expressive priorities, reflecting particular understandings of what constitutes beautiful, effective, and meaningful musical performance. The ornamental elaboration characteristic of mandiladilain aligns with broader Southeast Asian musical preferences for melodic embellishment and improvisatory variation, while the vibrato effect of mangangguk reflects values of emotional expressiveness and humanistic warmth in musical performance. The successful incorporation of these techniques into Christian worship music illustrates broader processes of musical inculturation, wherein indigenous musical resources are integrated into religious practices introduced through cross-cultural encounter. This integration involves not merely the addition of exotic timbres to otherwise Western musical forms but rather the substantive engagement with indigenous musical logics and expressive systems. The result is worship music that sounds distinctively Batak while remaining recognizably Christian, creating musical expressions that honor both cultural heritage and religious commitment. This process of musical inculturation carries theological significance beyond its immediate practical effects. The affirmation of indigenous cultural expressions within Christian worship embodies theological convictions regarding the universal scope of divine redemption and the appropriateness of diverse cultural forms for mediating religious truth. By incorporating sulim performance into worship, HKI Simpang Tiga Paranginan Church enacts a theology that validates Batak cultural identity as compatible with, rather than opposed to, Christian faith. This stance challenges historical patterns of missionary practice that sometimes equated Christianity with Western cultural forms, requiring converts to abandon indigenous cultural expressions.

Technical Execution and Expressive Function

The relationship between technical execution and expressive effect illuminated by this study reveals the intricate connections between physical action and musical meaning. The specific finger movements, breath control strategies, and embouchure adjustments required for mandiladilain and mangangguk techniques are not arbitrary but rather precisely calibrated to produce desired sonic results that carry expressive significance. Technical proficiency enables expressive communication, while expressive intentions motivate technical development. This relationship has important implications for music pedagogy. Teaching sulim performance involves not merely the transmission of mechanical procedures but rather the cultivation of musical sensibilities that guide technical choices toward expressive purposes. Effective instruction must therefore address both the how and the why of technique, helping learners understand not only physical execution but also expressive function and aesthetic judgment. The integration of technical and expressive dimensions distinguishes artistic performance from merely competent execution. The findings regarding the emotional and spiritual effects attributed to mangangguk technique raise interesting questions about the nature of musical expression and emotional communication. Participants consistently associated the vibrato effect with particular emotional qualities such as warmth, sincerity, and depth,

suggesting reliable connections between specific sonic characteristics and perceived emotional content. Whether such associations reflect universal psychoacoustic responses or culturally learned interpretive conventions remains an open question, though the evidence suggests that at minimum, within Batak cultural contexts, these associations function reliably and are shared across participants.

Traditional Instrument Preservation and Contemporary Adaptation

The incorporation of sulim into church music represents an important mechanism for the preservation of traditional instrumental knowledge in contexts of rapid social change. Throughout Indonesia and other regions experiencing modernization and globalization, traditional musical practices face pressures from competing entertainment forms, changing social structures, and diminished contexts for traditional performance. The integration of traditional instruments into contemporary religious institutions creates new contexts for their use and new motivations for learning traditional performance techniques. This preservation function carries both opportunities and risks. On the positive side, church contexts provide regular, valued occasions for traditional instrument performance, ensuring continued transmission of performance knowledge across generations. The association of traditional instruments with respected religious practices enhances their status and encourages young people's interest in learning them. Furthermore, churches often command resources and organizational capacity that can support instrument construction, instruction, and performance opportunities. The adaptation of traditional instruments to church contexts may also involve modifications that distance performance practices from their original cultural meanings and functions. Musical repertoire shifts from traditional to Christian content, performance contexts change from customary ceremonies to liturgical services, and the social meanings associated with performance transform accordingly. These changes raise questions regarding authenticity and the potential for decontextualization to undermine preservation efforts. The extent to which church-based traditional instrument performance genuinely preserves cultural knowledge versus creating new hybrid forms that bear superficial resemblance to tradition requires careful consideration.

Music, Theology, and Embodied Worship

The study's findings regarding the relationship between sulim performance techniques and theological communication illuminate broader questions concerning the role of music in worship and the mechanisms through which music facilitates religious experience. The connections participants articulated between specific musical techniques and theological themes suggest that music in worship functions not merely as neutral accompaniment to verbal content but rather as a meaning-making medium in its own right, capable of embodying and communicating theological ideas. This perspective resonates with theological traditions emphasizing the incarnational dimension of worship, the understanding that spiritual realities are mediated through material and bodily means. The physical actions of sulim playing, the acoustic vibrations produced, and the auditory and emotional responses evoked all participate in the embodied character of worship, reminding participants that religious life engages the whole person rather than merely the intellect. The breath required for sulim playing carries particular symbolic resonances within Christian theology, where *pneuma* (breath or spirit) designates divine presence

and power. The Reformed Protestant context of this study adds specific theological dimensions to considerations of music in worship. Reformed theology traditionally emphasizes the primacy of Word-centered worship and maintains some suspicion of elaborate artistic expression that might distract from proclamation or suggest that human works contribute to salvation. The validation of sulim performance within this theological framework suggests that when properly understood and employed, instrumental music serves rather than competes with the Word, facilitating rather than hindering congregational engagement with scriptural truth. The careful attention to how musical techniques support the theological content of "Pasu-Pasu Hatami" reflects this theological sensibility.

Pedagogical Implications and Knowledge Transmission

The pedagogical challenges and strategies documented in this study illuminate broader issues in the transmission of traditional musical knowledge in contemporary contexts. The tension between traditional apprenticeship models emphasizing observational learning and contemporary expectations for explicit instruction and efficient skill acquisition reflects widespread patterns as traditional arts adapt to changed social circumstances. The adaptations developed by the sulim player-teacher, incorporating more explicit technical explanation while maintaining emphasis on imitative learning and musical context, suggest a productive middle path between preservation of traditional transmission approaches and accommodation to contemporary learning conditions. This hybrid pedagogy recognizes that while traditional methods evolved to suit particular social and cultural conditions, their wholesale transplantation into substantially different contexts may prove ineffective. Thoughtful adaptation that preserves core principles while modifying specific practices can maintain pedagogical effectiveness. The finding that structured, consistent practice proved essential for technique development, while perhaps unsurprising, carries practical importance for church music programs operating within resource constraints. This result suggests that even limited but regular practice time can yield meaningful progress, providing encouragement to volunteer musicians who might feel discouraged by their limitations. The non-linear character of skill development, with periods of plateau and breakthrough, also suggests the importance of patience and persistence, qualities that align well with broader spiritual values of faithfulness and endurance.

CONCLUSION

This investigation has examined the application of traditional Batak Toba sulim playing techniques in Christian worship, focusing specifically upon the mandiladilain and mangangguk techniques as employed in performance of the hymn "Pasu-Pasu Hatami" at HKI Simpang Tiga Paranginan Church. Through qualitative inquiry incorporating observation, interviews, and documentation, the study has provided detailed description of technique execution and systematic analysis of musical, expressive, and theological functions. The findings demonstrate that mandiladilain technique, characterized by rapid pitch alternation creating melismatic ornamentation, enhances melodic interest and rhythmic vitality while maintaining coherence with the fundamental melodic structure. This technique enriches the musical texture without overwhelming or obscuring essential

melodic content, contributing to sustained congregational engagement with the worship music. The mangangguk technique, producing vibrato effect through controlled modulation, adds emotional warmth and expressiveness particularly effective on sustained tones in devotionally significant moments. This technique facilitates emotional communication and spiritual engagement, supporting the song's function in preparing hearts for receptivity to God's Word. Both techniques require substantial technical proficiency for effective execution, involving coordinated finger control, disciplined breath management, and refined musical judgment regarding appropriate application. The challenges of technique development documented in this study, including physical coordination demands, breath control requirements, and time constraints, reflect broader patterns in traditional instrument learning. The effectiveness of structured, consistent practice and thoughtful pedagogical approaches combining traditional transmission methods with contemporary instructional innovations suggests promising directions for traditional music education in church contexts.

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