



The Enculturation Sasando At Haleluya Music Course Institute East Nusa Tenggara

(A Historical Study On Sasando Performances)

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Abstract

Haleluya Music Course Institute is a music course institute located in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara province which provides Sasando lessons and opportunities for students to take part in Sasando performances at festivals, government events and other events. This study aimed to investigate the history and enculturation of Sasando performances. The qualitative research method was implemented with these data collecting techniques, i.e., observation, interview, documentation and document study. The results of the initial research showed the functions of Sasando as an auxiliary, support or accompanist in a poetry reading (Sasando gives life to the poem being read). Mr. Djony Theedens is interested to develop the use of Sasando through a course institute to bestow the musical instrument for the younger generations and avoid its extinction. It is done through the teaching of this instrument from the older generation to the younger one. The teaching is done to prevent its extinction and pass on the knowledge to future generations. Apart from that, the enculturation process of Sasando is also carried out through Sasando performances by the students from the course institute. Through the performances, the enculturation of Sasando occurs. Further, the distribution of cultural values also happens through the performances.

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INTRODUCING

East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) is one of Indonesian provinces rich in cultures. The cultures are highly related to its history, custom, art, religion and belief (Supriadi, 2020). The province has diverse traditional arts such as traditional songs, dances, and musical instruments. Among the instruments is Sasando. It is a traditional music instrument originated from Rote, East Nusa Tenggara (Theedens, 1996). It is a type of chordophones, i.e., musical instruments which produce sounds through vibrations of stretched spring (ropes, wires, or fibers) (Hendarto, 2002). To play the instrument, one needs to pluck a string as on a guitar which can play the rhythm, melody, and bass altogether. Sasando is played using both hands from the opposite direction, i.e., the left hand to the right and the right hand to the left. The left hand plays the melody and bass while the right hand plays the chords.

There are two types of Sasando namely Sasando Gong and Sasando Violin. The first is made by bending whole lontar palm leaves. The middle part is equipped with bamboo stick to place the strings, a triangular wood to support the strings, and nylon strings to produce varied and melodious sounds and tones. In total, there are nine strings in line with the sound of gong which consists of nine sounds. Meanwhile, Sasando Violin is developed and modified from Sasando Gong. The modified part is on the number of strings. It used to have nine strings similar to the sounds of gong. Later, a center line is added. The stretched strings are held with a piece of wood named 'Senda' and set to produce the desired tones (Francis, 2019).

At the very beginning, Sasando was created by a young man named Sangguana who lived in a kampong called Oetefu – Thi, in Southwest Rote district (Theedens, 1996). On his fishing boat trip, he was stranded on Ndana island. A few days later, he was found by the locals and taken to the king. At night, the people performed kebak/kebalai plays which was a mass dance performed by young couples holding hands and forming a circle. Manahaelo, a performer, spoke and chanted

in which the couples responded to. That night, Sangguana showed a high musical talent which charmed the young people.

Without realizing it, a princess fell in love with Sangguana. One day, the princess asked Sangguana to create a musical instrument. If he could grant her wish, he would be allowed to marry her. One night, Sangguana dreamt of playing a beautifully shaped musical instrument producing beautiful tunes. It inspired him to create a musical instrument named Sari Sandu which means vibrating. As the princess watched Sangguanae played the instrument, she asked him "What musical instrument are you playing?" to which he replied "Sari Sandu". She accepted the instrument with a happy heart and named it in a local language, i.e., Hitu (which means seven) as it had seven strings. Meanwhile, the song was named Deta Hiu which means once plucked, seven strings vibrated. The tuning system was different from the one used now as it is influenced by gong musical instrument. Presently, Sasando Gong has eleven to twelve strings (Theedens, 1996).

Sasando continues to experience changes regarding its organology and musical scale. At first, it used pentatonic musical scale which is later changed to diatonic scale as an influence of colonization in Indonesia especially in East Nusa Tenggara (Jefri, 2021). After the change, there have been some developments and variations on its technique and play. Among them is the one done by Djony Theedens who writes musical notations as a guideline in studying Sasando play.

Nowadays, many people are interested to learn how to play Sasando in NTT. Haleluya Music Course Institute is one of the places to learn the musical instrument. It is located at Nanga Jamal Street., No. 3, Naikoten 1, Kupang city, East Tenggara Timur. The institute provides classical piano, classical guitar, keyboard, and Sasando class. It effectively teaches Sasando using published good quality books. Through its classes, Sasando gains fame among people. The instrument is introduced through local

music performances, cultural festivals, and government events. The events significantly help introduce the musical instrument. It is similar to *Joend Pro Tegal* music performance which still exists up to now. It is proven by the increasing numbers of *Joend Pro Tegal* music performance (Pratama, 2020).

Enculturation is defined as an effort to transfer something (values, knowledge, beliefs, norms, attitudes, behaviors, skills) among generations to sustain them (Triyanto, 2015). As an example, a research on *Gambang Kromong* music show in *Setu Babakan Betawi* cultural kampong reveals that such enculturation informally occurs among family and community members at local studios (Marissa, 2016). In addition, enculturation process is done through communication which helps people build and transfer cultural values to the new generations.

The teaching of Sasando at Haleluya Music Course Institute significantly helps the enculturation of the instrument. Therefore, the researcher was interested to conduct a study on the process.

METHOD

The researcher implemented community study method as it was related to the enculturation of Sasando. Enculturation is defined as a cultural transmission from one generation to the next one. It is in line with the definition proposed by Koentjaraningrat who conceptualized cultural inheritance as an enculturation concept referring to the transmission of culture among generations (Koentjaraningrat, 1986). The transmission continues to happen anytime anywhere. Further, the teaching of musical instrument can also be regarded as enculturation process as knowledge is transferred from teachers to students. This is similar to what Haleluya Music Course Institute has been doing in their Sasando classes.

A qualitative approach, i.e., ethnography, was applied in this research to

identify social phenomenas and problems. Qualitative approach is investigation on natural occurrences to observe social realities (Salim & Syahrums, 2012). Specifically, this research was done to observe the enculturation process of Sasando on its performances.

The data were obtained through observation, interview, and document analysis. Regarding the first, the researcher conducted direct observations at Haleluya Music Course Institute. There were three things observed namely the location, the people involved, and the activities to gather complete and valid data (Spradley, 1980). The researcher also interviewed a local figure who makes the instrument and establishes the music institute. Documents from the institute were analyzed to investigate the history and enculturation of Sasando.

To check the data validity, the researcher used confidence interval. Further, triangulation technique was also used to confirm the result of the confidence interval. The data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive model. It involved data reduction, data display, and verification.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The History of Sasando Performance

The information was obtained from interviews with Djony L. K Theedens and supported by several relevant articles. He is an important figure in the development and teaching of Sasando in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). Many of his family members are famous Sasando players. It is therefore clear that he has deep understanding on Sasando.



Figure 1. Research Informant: Djony L. K Theedens
(Source: Djony's photo album, 2020)

At first, Sasando functioned as an auxiliary, support or accompanist in a poetry reading (chants to the earth, sky, and nature). In this regard, Sasando gave life to the poem being read. In the past, it was played at weddings, funerals, and other events. Francis (2019) mentioned in his research that at the beginning, Sasando was only performed at certain occasions such as weddings, funerals, farewells, and other cultural events. The poems read depended on the events. At weddings, the poems were about love, affection, and the wedding. Meanwhile, at funerals, the poems were about sadness, separation, and death. Many also used poems to express love. At a certain event, one would express their love with a poem accompanied by Sasando play. It is why Sasando is considered as an auxiliary in poetry reading. As time goes by, Sasando performance is accompanied with wooden gong and drum play.

In 1988, Djony L. K Theedens was asked by the local government to help manage the enculturation of NTT music instruments as he already graduated from Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta. Regarding Sasando, the government provided free classes for school children. The chief of local government office requested Djony to prepare the students to welcome special guests from Jakarta and Australia visiting the Governor Office of Kupang. The audience were pleased with and appreciated the performance. Afterwards, the group had the role to welcome any guests visiting Kupang. They were then also asked to

perform at the Government's official residence.

In the 90s, Rote local government conducted festivals on Youth Pledge Day. In such events, Sasando was performed by four players along with wooden gongs and drums to assist 4-5 singers. Djony was often asked to be a judge in such festivals. The local government and people's supports helped spread the popularity of Sasando, wooden gongs and drums. Moreover, there was a musical team from Jakarta invited Djony for a collaboration.



Figure 2. An art performance with Jak Art
(Source : Djony's photo album, 2020)

In 2009, the former Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono came to Kupang for a political campaign and was welcomed with a stunning performance by Sasando group during a dinner with some ministers. The audience applauded the show. The president mentioned that the group performed well. He also admitted that the performance made him proud. The president then requested the Ministry of Tourism to conduct a national Sasando festival which was later held in 2009. Several Sasando groups took part in the festival. This is in line with the statement of Beda Ama in Francis (2019) on Sasando transmission. Beda Ama was a music composer and a judge in the national festival. He noted that Sasando music festival showcased stunning performances watched by not only the people in NTT but also in other regions.



Figure 3. Indonesian president's trophy presentation ceremony on national level in 2009 (Source: Djony's photo album, 03 December 2020)

After the national festival, the local government continues to support Sasando groups especially on art events in Kupang NTT.

Djony's passion on Sasando encourages him to establish Halleluya music course institute. The course offers the teaching of several musical instruments such as classical guitar, classical piano, and Sasando. Jefri (2021) in his research stated that the goal of Halleluya music course institute is to prepare the students become good performers in the future. The courses motivate young people in NTT to learn how to play Sasando. Djony himself has been involved in many Sasando shows performed by the course students. In 2019, the Church Music department of *Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Negeri Kupang* conducted a live music concert at Kupang Cultural Park. The Sasando group was invited to perform in the event and the people of NTT were blissful about the performance.



Figure 4. Live Concert of *Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Negeri Kupang* (Source: Djony's photo album, 03 December 2020)

After the involvement in several art events, the local government and the Governor of NTT truly respect the Sasando group. The Governor invited the group to virtually perform in the third batch of Traditional Music Performance in 2020 at Kupang Cultural Park.



Figure 5. Traditional Music Performance

(Source: Djony's photo album, 2020)

Nowadays, Sasando performance has greatly improved. Other than offering interesting performance, such group helps introduce the cultures of East Nusa Tenggara.

The Enculturation of Sasando Musical Instrument at Halleluya Music Course Institute

Enculturation is defined as the transmission of cultures among generations. Koentjaraningrat (1997) stated that individual's ways in learning and adapting to

cultural norms, customs, and rules are regarded as enculturation. In short, this process has been existing in the mind of certain individuals. Basically, enculturation is an acceptance process to adapt to changes and enrich certain cultures through continual internalization and socialization. Moreover, it may also be defined as a process of cultural transfer from one to other generations. Specifically, Haleluya Music Course Institute conducts an enculturation of Sasando teaching for the younger generations.

Through observations and interviews, the researcher found that there are two enculturation processes done by the institute. The first process is done by the older generation teaching the younger one how to play the instrument. In Ardian (2019), Sanjaya explained that teaching goal refers to the abilities that students have to master after teaching learning process in one meeting (Sanjaya, 2008). Further, the teaching goal of the institute is to prevent Sasando from extinction. Despite the fact that Sasando is a traditional musical instrument, the institute provides relevant books to teach playing the instrument. The books contain information on techniques to play Sasando. The enculturation process occurs as students read the sheet music and practice the technique. Here are the stages of teaching Sasando to students: The first is the finger placement exercise. Students pluck the string on the instrument based on what is written on the sheet music. It is aimed to familiarize students with Sasando's strings. The second step is the arpeggio technique. It is a method to play the strings in quick succession using just one finger. Commonly, this technique is done using the right hand. Meanwhile, the left hand is used to play songs' melody. As an example, the ring finger plucks C string (Do), the middle finger plucks E string (Mi), the index finger plucks G string (Sol), and the thumb plucks high C string (Do). This practice is done repeatedly until the students are able to comfortably pluck the strings. Third, students practice playing easy songs. The songs are mainly traditional ones from NTT. The next stages of teaching depend on students' level of mastery.

The second enculturation process is done through Sasando performance by the students of Haleluya Music Course Institute. The shows are performed at cultural festivals, art performances, government events and several other occasions. The performance is commonly done by several people on stage in which they play Sasando along with other musical instruments in unison. The audience are the local people. Based on observations and interviews, the Sasando performance of Haleluya Music Course Institute's students attract a lot of viewers. Many parents encourage their children to learn to play Sasando. Most of the students enroll due to this exact reason. Further, such performance helps teach cultural values. In short, it is significant to preserve Sasando traditional instrument.

CONCLUSION

Despite the fact that at first Sasando was merely used as an auxiliary, support or accompanist in a poetry reading (chants to the earth, sky, and nature), there have been changes on its previous roles. In the past, the instrument was only played at weddings, funerals, and other events. Much later when the government of Rote initiated festivals to commemorate Youth Pledge Day, they also started to invite Sasando group consisting of four players to perform using Sasando, wooden gongs and drums to assist 4-5 singers. Such performances are mainly managed by Djony Theedens and continue to perform at government events. Further, Djony's interest in the instrument encourages him to establish Haleluya Music Course Institute. Through this institute, young generations learn how to play Sasando properly. They have been performing at all kinds of events, including live concerts. Presently, people of different regions are aware of the existence of this musical instrument.

There are two ways of Sasando's enculturation process. First is done through the teaching on how to play the instruments by the older generation to the younger one. The second one is done through Sasando performance by the students of Haleluya

Music Course Institute. Other than the occurrence of cultural transfer, such performance also helps spread cultural values.

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