

Liturgical Music as a Means to Inculturation

An Example from North Sumatra

Yoshiko Okazaki, RSCJ

INTRODUCTION: CHANGE IN LITURGY— FROM UNIFORMITY TO DIVERSITY

RENEWAL IN LITURGY in terms of inculturation as laid down in directives from Vatican Council II has resulted in a dramatic shift from Western style liturgical uniformity in the universal church to liturgical diversity in a variety of styles in local churches. Today languages, designs of churches, altars as well as vestments, postures, gestures and songs used in the liturgy feature different cultures and local styles, whether traditional or contemporary, indigenous or Western or a mixture of both. Indeed the variety of liturgy in local churches in the whole world makes an extremely colorful picture, which would have been unthinkable some thirty years ago. Vital as this change has been in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, many questions have risen in the process.

The Vatican Council's basic directive towards the use of indigenous culture in liturgy¹ is stated as follows in *The Constitution on the Liturgy*:

Even in the liturgy the Church has no wish to impose a rigid uniformity in matters that do not affect the faith or the good of the whole community; rather the Church respects and fosters the genius and talents of the various races and peoples. The Church considers with sympathy and, if possible, preserves intact the elements in these peoples' way of life that are not indissolubly bound up with superstition and error. Sometimes in fact the Church admits such elements into the liturgy itself, provided they are in

keeping with the pure and authentic spirit of the liturgy.

In certain parts of the world, especially mission lands, people have their own musical traditions, and those play a great part in their religious and social life. Thus, ...due importance is to be attached to their music and a suitable place given to it, not only in forming their attitude toward religion, but also in adapting worship to their native genius....

But other instruments [those other than the pipe organ, the traditional musical instrument in the Latin Church] also may be admitted for use in divine worship... ("International Commission on English in the Liturgy," 1982, articles 37, 119, 120: 4–28).

So the principle is quite clear. What is expected from local churches is to seek answers to the question: What form of liturgy, incorporating traditional elements of a culture, is relevant to a group of people gathering together to celebrate a liturgy? (Chupungco 1992, 29). Many other questions occur when it comes to concrete implementation. Which elements of traditional culture can be chosen to be incorporated into the liturgy, and with what criteria? If there is a conflict between an expression based on culture and one based on the church's teaching, how is it to be resolved? How can old religious beliefs attached to traditional culture be reconciled with Christianity? Does the inculturated liturgy help to create unity among a community, or does it rather lead to divisiveness?

In this paper I shall focus on a liturgical inculturation experiment among the Toba Batak people in the Medan Archdiocese of North Sumatra, Indonesia, which I observed and participated in during my fieldwork in ethnomusicology from 1989 to 1992 and from 1996 to 1997. By presenting some examples of liturgies that incorporate indigenous musical instruments, I shall analyze different usages of these indigenous musical instruments in the liturgy, in the light of different congregations in each local church.

Active participation being central to liturgical renewal,² the composition of the congregation becomes one of the crucial factors in determining the type of liturgical expression and form. In the case of the Medan Archdiocese, which consists of at least eight different ethnic groups (Toba Batak, Karo Batak, Simalungun Batak, Pak-Pak/Dairi Batak, Angkola Batak, Chinese, Javanese, and Niasans), the liturgies in local churches within the diocese are greatly diversified reflecting ethnic differences (Pusat Penelitian Atma Jaya 1981, 29).³ The important point is that each of these ethnic groups has a different language, culture, customs and value system. This is not to mention the fact that traditional musical instruments and musical systems vary from one ethnic group to the other. In this situation, experimentation in liturgical inculturation in the Medan Archdiocese has been practiced quite energetically.

First of all I shall give some background knowledge about the people, their religion and culture as well as their music and musical instruments, the last of which is the focus of this paper. Much of the paper will be spent on these background matters, since understanding the socio-cultural aspect of a people is essential to understanding why they do what they do in the liturgy.

THE TOBA BATAK PEOPLE: SOCIETY, CULTURE, AND MUSIC⁴

In the heart of Sumatra near Lake Toba live the Toba Batak people. In Indonesia they are well-known as a Christian ethnic group in a predominantly Islam country. Indeed 90 percent of the total population of the three million Toba Batak people belong to the Toba Batak Protestant Church.⁵ This church resulted from the ministry of the German Lutheran Church, which has been successful in Christianizing the Toba Batak people since the latter part of the nineteenth century. Among the Christian Toba Batak people exist a handful of Roman Catholics who comprise ten percent of all the Christians there.

The Toba Batak people have unique instrumental ensembles called *gondang sabangunan* and *gondang hasapi*. The former, consisting of specific gongs, tuned drums and oboe-like instruments, is an official ensemble for solemn ceremonial feasts according to Toba Batak customs,⁶ and for important occasions in present day Toba Batak society, such as weddings, funerals and ceremonies for dedication of monuments and buildings. In pre-Christian times especially, such ceremonies were almost always inseparable from the ritual in trance based on a belief in spirits. The latter, that is the *gondang hasapi* ensemble consisting of two plucked boat-lutes, a xylophone and a clarinet-like instrument, is mainly used for entertainment today, especially accompanying singing. But this type of ensemble also played an essential role in Toba Batak religious rituals in the past.

Musical instruments are often not only tools to produce sound but also play an important role as symbols (Becker 1988, 390). They may symbolize a particular society, group of people, culture and religion—for example, the pipe organ for the Christian church and *mokugyo* (a wood block in the

shape of a fish) for the Japanese Buddhist ceremony, just to name a few.

In pre-Christian Toba Batak society, *gondang sabangunan* has been almost equivalent with Toba Batak religion and religious ritual. Since spirit beliefs and ancestor worship rituals penetrated every aspect of Toba Batak life and a *gondang* performance was indispensable to the rituals, the *gondang* became the symbol, as it were, of Toba Batak religion and the Toba Batak themselves.⁷

Because of its deep connection with practices related to belief in spirits, particularly with trance ceremonies, the Lutheran missionaries who pioneered the Christianization of the Toba Batak people forbade the performance not only of the old religious ritual, but also the *gondang* performance itself (Burton and Ward 1827, 502; Schreiner 1970, 408; Warneck 1909, 71–72, 75).

Today, however, *gondang* is being reintroduced into Toba Batak society, on condition that all the old religious meanings and usage are stripped off (Schreiner 1970, 411) and clearly redefined as “traditional culture,” not a part of religion. Today *gondang* features the official music not only at Toba Batak traditional, customary ceremonies but also at church events in both Protestant and Roman Catholic churches. In traditional ceremonies it accompanies dances performed by various kinship groups according to certain rules of Toba Batak customs (Okazaki 1994, 97–145). *Gondang* performances also take place in fund raising events at churches (Okazaki 1994, 164–76). Indeed it is said that people become more generous when dancing to *gondang*, because young and old alike enjoy dancing to *gondang* music while carrying and presenting gifts and money.

In the following section I shall introduce five examples of characteristic liturgies in terms of music and the use of musical instruments: (1) the golden jubilee mass of a missionary at a village of Samosir, (2) the Easter vigil in a remote outstation of Samosir

Island, (3) mass for the anniversary of a local seminary, (4) mass of dedication for a new church on the outskirts of the city of Medan, and (5) Sunday mass at the Cathedral in Medan.

(1) The Golden Jubilee Mass of a Missionary in a Village of Samosir

Samosir Island on Lake Toba is heavily inhabited by the Toba Batak people. The members of four parishes on the island with as many as 65 outstation churches are almost all Toba Batak people. Therefore Toba Batak language, customs, popular symbols and ceremonial symbols often are featured in the liturgy.

Just as large-scale ceremonial feasts, such as weddings, funerals of eminent persons and dedication of monuments, are to be celebrated according to Toba Batak customs with *gondang sabangunan* as the official instruments, the same idea is transferred to Roman Catholic liturgy. It is considered appropriate to celebrate big feasts, such as the dedication of a new church, anniversaries or a priest's ordination ceremony, by performing *gondang sabangunan* and dance. In such masses the traditional ceremonial order is almost completely adapted to the Order of the Mass.⁸ An appropriate repertoire is chosen from traditional ceremonies, since no new *gondang* repertoire has been composed specifically for the Roman Catholic liturgy. The church leader who takes the role of master of ceremonies prepares a ceremonial speech, called *mangido gondang* (meaning a request for *gondang*), between each *gondang* performance, placing each piece within the framework of a Christian meaning and the Order of the Mass. As in Toba Batak ceremonies, seven (or five) *gondang* pieces are chosen and arranged according to the appropriate order from both the Toba Batak and Roman Catholic liturgical point of view.

A liturgical performance differs from a traditional ceremony in at least three ways: (a) ceremonial dances are performed by the same representative group of people throughout the mass instead of rotating kinship groups, as in traditional ceremonies; (b) Christian meanings are attributed to gongang and dance pieces, and prayers are included in the mangido gongang.

A good example of a liturgical celebration using gongang sabangunan and mangido gongang in their traditional ceremonial style was the mass of thanksgiving for the fiftieth anniversary of the priesthood of Father Waterreus (August 1986).

At this mass the original meaning and purpose of gongang pieces at traditional ceremonies were transmuted into Christian meanings in the following ways. *Gongang Somba-somba*, originally addressed to the gods, ancestors' spirits or kinship groups of superior rank,⁹ was addressed to God the Father or God the Almighty. *Gongang Parsiarabu*, which originally meant gongang for death or an unhappy situation, was changed to gongang for contrition of sins. *Gongang Pelean*, associated with offerings to spirits according to the medicine man's suggestion, was earmarked to accompany the procession dance in which people bring to the altar offertory gifts and ceremonial items for the mass (bread, wine, flower, candles).

Since the people are all Toba Batak, who are familiar with these traditional symbolic expressions adapted from Toba Batak ceremonies, almost all of them are satisfied and feel proud of such a liturgy full of Toba Batak expression. Only a very few would question the validity of using all these symbols, while just reinterpreting the meaning according to Christian understanding.

(2) *The Easter Vigil Mass at an Outstation in a Remote Village*

While gongang sabangunan is generally performed infrequently—only in significant

worship services on major occasions, gongang hasapi is used much more flexibly among the Toba Batak communities, as it is easier to assemble. Instruments are usually available among church members and it is relatively easy to find someone who can play the instruments. Most importantly, the ensemble is not associated with Toba Batak traditional ceremonies and therefore can be performed in any liturgy.

Some mission churches in North Sumatra have come to use the bamboo flute and simple two-stringed plucked instruments to accompany congregational singing at masses. Most of the small churches cannot afford an organ but there is almost always someone among the members who can play gongang hasapi instruments.

In 1992 the Easter vigil liturgy at Silaban, a remote mission outstation church in Samosir Island, was celebrated using gongang hasapi. Since Easter is the greatest liturgical feast in the church, about 500 people gathered together from four nearby mission churches. Easter being the most significant and solemn of all liturgical celebrations of the church, it may have been more appropriate, from the Toba Batak sense of propriety, to celebrate this significant occasion with gongang sabangunan. However, the members of a mission church in Samosir came up with the idea of using gongang hasapi for the Easter vigil liturgy.

Interestingly the gongang hasapi ensemble for the liturgy included three *taganing* drums from the gongang sabangunan ensemble. The reason for using only three rather than the normal five drums, according to Father Josue Stiener,¹⁰ who presided at the mass, was that people decided after discussion that the full set of *taganing* could unleash undesirable associations with Toba Batak religious and trance ceremonies.

Gongang hasapi accompanied all the hymns during the mass. Old and young, men, women and small children all sang in full voice with complete confidence under

the direction of a conductor. People afterwards said that they had never experienced such a joy-filled unity. The use of gongang and well-prepared, coordinated singing facilitated the congregation's full participation and aroused a sense of unity and satisfaction, which is vital to a liturgy.

From the viewpoint of appropriateness of the liturgical music, this example offers interesting points to consider. The fact that gongang hasapi, which is usually associated with lighter, less official music by the contemporary Toba Batak people, was chosen for the greatest feast in the church shows, from the liturgical point of view, that the people felt free to do so in the Christian context, which differs from custom-bound Toba Batak ceremonies. Traditionally it is natural for the Toba Batak people to use gongang sabangunan for major events. For the conventional Christian Easter liturgy, special hymns and choirs usually feature in the liturgical music. Thus from both Toba Batak and Roman Catholic liturgical points of view, the Easter vigil liturgy at the church of Silaban was a breakthrough into something new and free.

(3) Anniversary Mass at a Local Seminary

The fifth-year anniversary mass of the major seminary was celebrated in Pematang Siantar, a town located halfway between the city of Medan and Lake Toba. The ethnic composition of the seminarians was quite rich, with Toba, Karo and Simalungun Bataks, plus those from Nias, Java, Sunda, Kalimantan, Flores and some other ethnic groups. The average age was early- to mid-20s.

The liturgical music planned by the seminarians was innovative in the sense that they combined two instrumental ensembles—gongang sabangunan and gongang hasapi—and even added Western musical instruments to accompany hymn singing and simple dance at the offertory proces-

sion. Twelve players performed a combination style of gongang. Occasionally an electric organ and guitar were added to the ensemble to achieve a clearer and more sustained rendition of the melody. This style of combined ensemble has been developed during the past ten years by a group of musicians among the seminarians, with the help of some professional gongang performers. It has become popular since the group accompanied some newly composed hymns for cassette recordings in 1989.¹¹ The main reason for combining the two ensembles was a practical one: to get clearer pitches from the gongang hasapi instruments as well as typical Toba Batak rhythmic effects from the gongang sabangunan instruments. Four gongs play a syncopated rhythmic pattern¹² throughout a piece in every repertoire. It is interesting to note that the seminarians enjoyed playing the gongs even when the pitches didn't match the melody, according to a Western musical sense. The original function of each instrument is retained, except for the taganing that occasionally imitates the drumming style of Western popular music.

Interestingly this instrumentation is also common in popular music, although it is unclear whether or not the young seminarians got the idea from that. In liturgy, however, they have not gone to extremes with such instrumentation, for example by creating differently sized instruments or using drum sets and synthesizers.

(4) Mass for the Dedication of a New Church on the Outskirts of the City of Medan

A Western-style new church, designed by an Italian architect, was completed on the outskirts of the city of Medan, and a great many people attended the opening mass celebrated by the archbishop of Medan. A special liturgy was prepared by Father Purba, former director of the diocesan liturgical commission, together with a young

ethnomusicologist from among the parishioners.

The liturgical music was a mixture of different ethnic expressions. Since 70 percent of the parishioners are Karo Batak, and the rest are Toba and Simalungun Bataks, the repertoire of the Order of the Mass was divided among the three different Batak groups: the entrance procession in Karo Batak style, the Kyrie in Toba, the Sanctus by Simalungun, the Agnus Dei by Toba again. For the offertory procession, other ethnic groups such as Niasans, Javanese and Kalimantanese also joined in by carrying their unique items of offering. Father Purba questioned putting too much emphasis on the offertory by using an elaborate and time-consuming procession, but he had to yield to the request because of each group's enthusiasm for presenting their gifts in its own ethnic style. Small though this episode may be, it shows an instance of conflict between cultural values and Church values.

Another innovative experiment in this mass was the creation of a dance that incorporated characteristic gestures of the various ethnic dances. This was quite an exciting part of the whole project in liturgical inculturation, in the sense that it went beyond the mere borrowing or repeating of expressions already in use by the culture or cultures.

(5) Sunday Mass at Medan Cathedral

On Sundays, Medan's Cathedral is filled with Roman Catholics who live in the city, gathering together to celebrate the liturgy. Many of the 300 ethnic groups in Indonesia are represented in the church membership. While many of the villages in the rural areas consist of just one ethnic group, a city like Medan is truly multiethnic, comprised of various Batak ethnic groups, such as Toba Batak, Simalungun Batak, Karo Batak, Pak-Pak/Dairi Batak, plus Malay, Aceh,

Chinese and others, including Javanese, Sundanese, Florenese and Niasan.

This ethnic composition of the city inevitably influences the liturgy in the cathedral. The idea of using one particular cultural expression from these ethnic groups is hardly acceptable in this situation. The language has to be Indonesian, the common language for all.¹³ For the same reason no indigenous instrument except a medium-sized hanging gong, probably taken from a Javanese *gamelan* orchestra, is used during the mass. The gong is beaten twice at the consecration. The electronic organ, a Western musical instrument, is used to accompany hymn singing and sometimes for interludes. Songs are chosen from the general hymn book called *Madah Bakti (Praise in Service)*, which includes hymns in the Indonesian language in various ethnic styles—Flores, Sulawesi, Java, Sunda, Bali, Melayu, Batak, Manado and so on. Each ethnic hymn demonstrates specific differences in style, melody, rhythm and general feeling. By singing repeatedly on Sundays, people are exposed to the many styles and characteristics of each region. No one specific culture dominates in the liturgy, but European hymns and the organ, which belong to everybody and not to any one ethnic tradition, function best as "the common expression" for all in such an ethnically heterogeneous group.

CONCLUSION

These examples show how people in the Medan archdiocese have created various styles of liturgy that incorporate traditional musical elements—musical instruments to be more specific, according to the composition of the congregation in each local church. In addition there are innumerable examples of local churches with other situations and conditions. Each one illustrates either the emphasis on traditional cultural elements that are reinterpreted and given Christian

meaning or the emphasis more on external cultural expression that is freely arranged and often characterized by Westernization. The different emphases are related to the composition of the congregation: those that are homogeneous like the Toba Batak, and those of mixed ethnic groups.

Examples one and two above are both churches on Samosir Island where almost all the members are Toba Batak. There are still quite a few villages on Samosir Island and elsewhere with homogeneous ethnic groups, although they will not remain so for long. In an ethnic composition a liturgy incorporating traditional expressions and styles into the mass makes sense, since people usually have a common knowledge and understanding about what each expression means within their community.

A congregation consisting of the same ethnic group can share common symbols, meaning and memory. Many Toba Batak are glad to participate in a mass that incorporates *gondang sabangunan* with Toba Batak ceremonial ritual, dance and speech because they feel their prayers and praise are being offered in a Toba Batak way. While this is true, some clergy, like Father Purba, question to what degree it is possible and permissible to borrow from the old religion and reinterpret its elements as Christian and whether it is necessary instead to compose completely new *gondang* pieces and dances specifically for Catholic liturgy.

In contrast the fourth and the fifth examples represent multiethnic churches. In this situation it is considered inappropriate to emphasize only one particular ethnic expression. Something more general and inclusive or a completely new expression should be used. Interestingly the way in which traditional music and musical instruments were incorporated in these two examples are quite different. In the case of the cathedral the traditional is abandoned or avoided, and the organ, a foreign instru-

ment, is used. The organ functions in a culturally neutral way in this situation.

In the case of the newly-built church on the outskirts of the city of Medan, members used more than one ensemble to express the music of the various ethnic groups by assigning each group to perform different portions of the mass. They also created a dance that mixed different characteristic elements of each ethnic group.

The third example of the mass at the seminary also represents a multiethnic community, since seminarians come from various ethnic groups of Sumatra and the other islands. These seminarians are more eager to look for some common expression rather than to emphasize one particular cultural expression. Mixing the two *gondang* ensembles certainly softens the identity of each one. The addition of some Western instruments shows the tendency to depart from the traditional rendition, choosing what is better according to the practical purpose of accompaniment to singing, and also according to what is more interesting (and probably more "modern").

Today, some 30 years after Vatican Council II, the world has changed from what it used to be. It is now moving towards urbanization, multiculturalization, internationalization and globalization. There is also, inevitably, a strong tendency towards Westernization (Nettl 1981). Changes in rural areas might be slower but they are surely happening. Socio-cultural realities of local churches are also changing. Once homogeneous communities are becoming more heterogeneous. In such a situation it is necessary to realize that the meaning of "traditional culture" or "the cultural tradition of a people" has to be considered from many different aspects.

Gondang sabangunan, incorporated into the liturgy with Toba Batak ceremonial form, dance and speech, makes the most of the traditional Batak style, while adapting a Christian interpretation of *gondang* and

dance. Many Toba Batak feel proud to participate in masses that have taken on a strong Toba Batak flavor. If this kind of liturgy makes sense only in ethnically homogeneous churches like those on Samosir Island, how long such a situation will last is a question. Another question concerns the validity of the adaptation and reinterpretation of the old religious meaning attached to traditional culture as Christian. Although very few people still know about the old religious beliefs, it is true that for some, certain old symbols may remind them of such beliefs. Whether or not this is still a very serious problem, someone like Father Purba strongly desires to stop adaptation and to start creating a liturgy with gongang pieces specifically composed for Roman Catholic masses.¹⁴ How to do this is a new challenge.

When gongang hasapi is incorporated into the liturgy, it seems that more creative and freer ideas seem to operate, partly because this music is not tied so closely to traditional ceremonies, and partly because it is easier to perform. Whether instruments of two different ensembles are combined or Western instruments are added, people choose freely what seems to be "better" from a practical point of view or what is more "interesting" and probably more "modern." The mixed gongang ensemble with the organ and guitar performed by the young seminarians definitely demonstrated the Westernization of Toba Batak culture.

Other experiments include the juxtaposition of various ethnic expressions within one liturgy, making provision for the representation of each element and the creation of something new that incorporates elements of differing cultural expressions. Fr. Purba's idea—an ideal indeed—is to examine the essential elements of several cultural expressions and to combine them in such a way that various cultural elements are molded into an integrated expression.¹⁵ This is probably the most demanding task

because of the urgent need for new liturgy in local churches, which are becoming more pluralistic. An important and challenging question is how people experience participating in such a liturgy. Do they recognize it as "our celebration" or do they feel alienated?

Depending on how traditional cultural elements are used, the liturgy could create either growth in community or divisiveness. An ethnomusicologist who observed a case in Papua New Guinea stated that since the singing of hymns in a vernacular language could create divisiveness rather than community among the people, indigenization has to be pursued with care (Niles 1997, 6).

Since musical instruments of various peoples are one of the most powerful cultural markers, their use in liturgy can be effective or counter-productive in liturgical inculturation, depending on the type of congregation in the local churches. Just as "inculturation" is defined as "the dynamic relation between the Christian message and culture or cultures; an insertion of the Christian life into a culture; and the ongoing process of reciprocal and critical interaction and assimilation between them," the tension between socio-cultural factors and liturgical appropriateness will never fade (Azaavedo 1982, 11). Liturgical inculturation carried out with courage and care will give birth to expression that truly makes sense, both from the cultural and Christian points of view.

NOTES

¹ For "inculturation," see nos. 37-40, 119 and 123 in the *Constitution on the Liturgy*, although the terminology, "inculturation" is not used in the document. It came into usage only in the late 1970s.

² For "active participation," see nos. 19, 26, 28-30 and 100 in the *Constitution on the Liturgy*.

³ The Toba Batak occupy 76.6%; Karo Batak, 12.7%; Simalungun Batak, 6.0%; Pak-Pak Batak, 1.9%; Chinese, 2.0; the rest are small in number.

⁴ For more detail, see Okazaki 1994, 39-163; Sherman 1990, 36-116, 312-21; Sibeth 1991; and Simon 1986 and 1995.

⁵ The Toba Batak Protestant Church is known as HKBP (Huria Kristen Batak Protestan) in Indonesia and is exclusively for Toba Bataks. The church has become the largest Protestant denomination in Southeast Asia. For more detail see Nyhus 1987, 127-430.

⁶ The detailed set of rules concerning rituals and conduct among an ethnic group observed as customary law is called *adat*, which in origin has spiritual and religious aspects. Any inquiry into the life of Toba Batak people (their philosophy, values, culture and religion) would be impossible without a detailed understanding of *adat*. For more detail, see Bruner 1959, 55, Okazaki 1994, 52-57, Sianipar 1974, 28-29, and Vergouwen 1964.

⁷ Most of the Toba Batak know that even today *gondang* is performed at the healing ceremony secretly done at midnight in remote mountain places. From this point of view, *gondang* can still be associated with old Toba Batak religion.

⁸ Bishop A.B. Sinaga of Sibolga Diocese, who is competent in both Toba Batak religion and Christian liturgy, is the person who studied the relationship between the two and created the mass that incorporates all the Toba Batak ceremonial symbolisms (Sinaga 1981).

⁹ According to Toba Batak *adat* (see note 5), detailed rules are applied for reciprocal and unequal relationships among three kinship groups through marriage: a husband's own lineage, his father-in-law's lineage, and his son-in-law's lineage. Ceremonial dance gestures and the presentation of offerings, while dancing to *gondang* accompaniment, express the status among the kin groups. This is related to an ancient Toba Batak belief in supernatural power flowing between these groups or persons.

¹⁰ Interviews with Father Josue (Mela, Sibolga, June 4, 1992; Pematang Siantar, June 8, 1992).

¹¹ The Medan Archdiocese Liturgical Commission published four cassette tapes of newly composed hymns in Toba Batak style, all of which are accompanied by traditional instruments and/or the organ.

¹² It is said that the syncopated rhythmic pattern constantly played by four gongs throughout a piece is the hallmark of Toba Batak *gondang* (Simon 1986, 25).

¹³ All Indonesians are bilingual, speaking both their ethnic group's mother tongue and the standard language, Indonesian. The Indonesian language was constructed in the 1920s for the purpose of national unity among the three hundred ethnic groups in the country.

¹⁴ This was from an interview and informal conversation I had with Father Benyamin Purba during my fieldwork (Pematang Siantar and Medan, July and August, 1996 and 1997).

¹⁵ This kind of project, though it may be in much larger scale, is already being experimented with among artists in Asia. The recent staging of "Lear," which was produced through the cooperation of artists from six Asian countries, is a good example. A Singaporean director, Ong Keng Sen, says, "Tradition has continued to include change, in order to sustain its relevance.... As a traditional theater it negotiates roots, identity and tradition" (Japan Foundation Asia Center 1997, 5).

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