

# Saxophone in the Toba Batak Traditional Wedding Ceremony in Medan: Harmony of Tradition and Modernity

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## ABSTRACT

The authors aim to discuss the role of the saxophone in the presentation of Toba Batak traditional music in the city of Medan. The development of traditional music ensembles using the saxophone instrument is very rapid. This is caused by the large number of songs used that are popular music. The use of the saxophone instrument is growing rapidly in wedding customs and death ceremonies in the traditional music of the Toba Batak community as a carrier of melodies and 'bunga-bunga'. Usually, at Toba Batak traditional wedding parties, the function of the saxophone can be varied. There is the main melody carrier, carrying a collection of notes that resemble variations (flowers) and harmony with the various instruments used in the ensemble. The method used in this research is a descriptive qualitative method in which researchers conduct observations and unstructured interviews to obtain valid information. The research results show that the saxophone plays a role as power in the Toba Batak *gondang* ensemble for each song played. Especially when giving *ulos* to the bride and groom.

**Keywords:** Saxophone instrument, Toba Batak traditional wedding ceremony, Tradition, Modern

## ABSTRAK

Perkembangan ansambel musik tradisi yang di dalamnya menggunakan alat musik instrumen *saxophone* sangat pesat. Hal ini diakibatkan oleh banyaknya lagu-lagu yang digunakan lebih kepada musik populer. Adapun penggunaan instrumen *saxophone* sangat berkembang pesat pada adat pernikahan dan upacara kematian pada musik adat masyarakat Batak Toba sebagai pembawa melodi dan 'bunga-bunga'. Biasanya pada pesta adat pernikahan adat Batak Toba fungsi *saxophone* bisa beragam, sebagai pembawa melodi utama, membawa kumpulan nada yang menyerupai variasi (bunga-bunga) dan harmoni dengan berbagai alat yang digunakan dalam ansambel tersebut. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode kualitatif deskriptif dimana peneliti melakukan observasi dan wawancara tidak terstruktur untuk mendapatkan informasi yang valid. Hasil daripada penelitian adalah instrumen *saxophone* memiliki peran sebagai *power* di dalam ansambel *gondang* Batak Toba untuk setiap lagu-lagu yang dimainkan, khususnya pada saat memberikan *ulos* kepada pengantin.

**Kata kunci:** Instrumen *saxophone*, upacara pernikahan adat Batak Toba, Tradisi, Modern

## INTRODUCTION

The Batak tribe, one of the largest in Indonesia, consists of six sub -tribes from North Sumatera: Toba, Karo, Pakpak, Simalungun, Angkola, and Mandailing. Each subtribal has its own unique social structure, life system, and marriage customs. The Batak community has now spread to various regions of Indonesia (Hutagaol & Erfina, 2021: 142). According to Patora in Anugrah et al (2023: 615), tradition is a sustainable cultural heritage that form identity and needs to be preserved. Indonesia is rich in tribes and cultures, one of which is the Batak tribe in North Sumatra, which makes regional art as part of a sacred ceremony and a tradition, including marriage (William, 2018:3). The Batak tribe consists of six sub-tribes and continues to preserve cultural heritage, including the oral tradition of the Toba Batak ethnic group, which has been passed down for generations as an important part of the identity and values of the lives of their people (Cindy, et. al, 2023: 171). The Batak Toba community is one that inheriting ancestral culture from generation to generation and having an immigration culture to urban cities for education and work. Although Batak Toba people live in urban cities with different cultures, the Toba Batak community remains firm in the culture of its ancestors. Toba Batak migration also occurred in Medan in the 19th century. Despite living in a heterogeneous community and having a modern lifestyle, the Toba Batak community in Medan always runs traditional traditions, such as the customs of Saur Matua or Sari Matua traditional (customs of the death of people who are old age) and Pangoli Pangoli Pangoli or Ulaon Pamuli

Boru/ Marriage(Purba, 2014:259).

Marriage in the Toba Batak custom is not just a husband-and-wife relationship but also unites a large family and clan from both parties, including parents, siblings, boru, and Hula-hula (Simarmata et.al. 2023: 20). Meanwhile, Novelita et. al. (2019: 37) said in the Batak culture, marriage not only requires the blessing of the family but also involves their active role in traditional ceremonies. Situmorang & Robert Sibarani (2021: 83) argue that the wedding ceremony is a tradition of the Toba Batak tribe formerly, but now many traditions, such as Paulak Une and Maningkir Stairs, are simplified into a series in Ulaon Badika because of various factors. Traditional activities always involve traditional music as an important part of the implementation of music during traditional events. Music is one of the main pillars of all traditions, culture, and civilization, which can build a framework of modality, especially Melody (Zachariadou in Galingging, 2022, p. 503). Music has several advantages, because it is comfortable, soothing, causing positive feelings, relaxing, structured, and universal (Coal, 2021, p. 469). In the Toba Batak community, traditional music complements and accompanies Toba Batak customs. At present, traditional music can still be found in the Toba Batak community because it is the result of creativity, initiative, and real feelings that are present in the culture of the Toba Batak community itself. In the social life of the Toba Batak community, musical activities also have different meanings and goals: depending on their use, for example, in the context of customary education and religious rituals or

in the context of entertainment events.

According to Batubara, the existence of music is the creativity of one of the musical facts of a performance art that is still alive, and it will not be like that just like that (2021, p. 5). Music is the expression of artists born from various stimuli, such as stories, experiences, and emotions. Differences in stimuli affect music innovation through experiments and the development of traditional idioms in modern dishes, creating novelty in music (Sumarsono & Sukotjo, 2024: 77). According to Simanjuntak et.al (2025: 3882), music has always been an important part of human life, with each culture having a typical type and function used on various occasions. Everyone enjoyed music according to their taste, both in terms of genre and instrument. The development of traditional Toba Batak music in Medan has experienced very rapid changes, and the development of music has influenced the pattern of presentation and music consumption of the Batak Toba community in Medan. This is in line with the development of technology, especially information and communication, which can accelerate the exchange of ideas, values, and patterns. This development is common in culture. The modern world affects all aspects of life, with technology and information media being the main driving force for modernity, even in remote areas (Henik, 2023: 148).

This is confirmed by the functional cultural theory that culture must be in line with the development of the era, so that it is not stagnant. For example, Gondang Batak Toba used traditional music during the death ceremony. It should be noted that Batak

Godang's presentation uses traditional instruments. However, today gondang music poets have undergone changes in terms of the use of instruments. Gondang games using wind instruments are extensively used in Toba Batak traditional music. One of the most frequently used instruments is a saxophone.

The presentation of music using saxophones is a new pattern today. This can be observed in various traditional ceremonies in the city of Medan. For example, when the writer attended a wedding ceremony in Medan, presentation of music that should use Gondang ensembles at traditional events actually used blowing instruments, one of which was Saxophone. A saxophone is an aerophone musical instrument used in the Curt Sachs and Hornbostel classification. Although made from metal, this instrument is included in the woodwind group because the sound comes from vibrating air (simanjuntak. et.al., 2025: 3968)

The use of the saxophone in the traditional ensemble gives a new color, even as a lead melody in the presentation of Toba Batak traditional music in various contexts of ceremonies. The use of saxophone instruments in traditional music is not only for the value of the music function in an ensemble, with the saxophone instrument providing aesthetic value in the presentation of traditional Toba Batak music. Therefore, music lovers prefer to provide traditional music using saxophones, especially in urban cities such as Medan City.

Today, the use of saxophones in the presentation of traditional music in Medan shows significant developments. This can be seen in the presence of saxophone musical

instruments in various Toba Batak traditional music presentations in the city of Medan. It is also influenced by the development of ensembles and community needs. Basically, the Toba Batak Ansambel uses traditional instruments in the Gondang Sabangunan and Gondang Hasapi ensembles. Gondang Sabangunan Ensemble is an ensemble whose instrument consists of Four Ogung (suspended gongs), namely ogung ihutan, ogung oloan, ogung dale, and ogung panggora; Five Taganing or Drums (Single Headed Braced Drum), one ODAP (Double Headd Drum), one Gordang (Single Headed Braced Drum), a Double Reed Oboe Sarune, Aerophone, and one hesek (Struck Idiophone) but, as the culture and community are developing.

In addition to considering the functions and uses of music in Toba Batak society, other aspects that need to be considered are the dynamics of changes and their development. Since the formation of the culture of the Toba Batak community and the days of the ancestors of the Toba Batak community, this culture has never been separated from change or development. Both in terms of function and use, how to create music, the social status of musicians, and the type of musical instrument used. However, the most significant changes occurred in the practice of music in the Toba Batak community were marked before and after the entry of religious teachings into the territory of the community.

The entry of the use of this saxophone is a new phenomenon of collaborative music such as Campursari music in Javanese society, and Tanjidor music in the Betawi community (Suparno; 200: 13). Music used in the traditional

activities of the Batak Toba community shows the existence of musical activities that are influenced by Christianity. The fundamental changes in the life of the Margondang tradition began with the influence of Christianity. Some regulations issued by the Zending Agency limit traditional Gondang performances to certain settings among Toba Batak Christians. The church, as an extension of Zending's mission, legalized the rules through laws that must be obeyed by the Batak Toba community of Christianity. (Purba, 2000:32-35).

The Church's view on Zending's mission considers the practice of Gondang as a cultural activity associated with the ritual ceremony of old trust (pre-Christian). Therefore, the Church has a policy to deny the existence of the Toba Batak Anemambel tradition. This was part of the efforts of the German Rheinische-Gesellschaft (RMG) mission in the 1860s throughout the Batak region. The Toba Batak people who have adhered to "the new" religion do not want to take risks to be ostracized from the ecclesiastical community because they participate in the practice of margondang performances. Restrictions and even bans on the church cause changes in musical performance. The missionaries who brought Christianity to introduce Western music into the church service, starting with trumpets and then the blowing ensemble (saxophone music is used to accompany songs of worship in the church).

With this cultural anomaly, wind music that has only been found in church buildings, transplanted from the church environment into the domain of traditional, religious, and ritual of the Toba Batak, takes the role of

Gondang Batak as a local wisdom. Gondang Batak was abandoned due to social change caused by foreign cultural pressures and adopted by the Toba Batak community as an act of strengthening in addressing new cultures that are considered exotic. This is based on an understanding that Gondang which was once considered sacred as part of cultural activities, can be replaced by the role of wind music as a new product to complete the functions and objectives of using Gondang.

The Toba Batak community's understanding of music for each custom over the last three decades has experienced a cultural shift marked by the existence of collaborative music whose style is different from that of Gondang Batak Toba. The initial concept of including Western diatonic music in the traditional music system of the Toba Batak community, which was originally intended to accompany religious worship in the church, was finally used in traditions, wedding parties, ritual ceremonies for those who died (Saur Matua), excavation of bones (mangongkal holi), monument parties and customs of other Batak Toba people.

The authors argue that the cultural contact of the European community (especially those brought by missionaries) with the Batak Toba community has an impact on the cultural change in the Batak community, where the two cultural contacts lead to innovation (renewal). In this cultural encounter, there was also a change in the instruments used. At present, most traditional ceremonies of the Toba Batak community using Western musical instruments do not eliminate the special characteristics of Batak music, but the instruments used are

different. In music, they also often borrowed special features of music culture, one of which is the exchange of instruments. The concept of music does not need to be accompanied by its old concept. However, the music innovation presented here does not have a new meaning. (Nakagawa, 1998, p. 234).

In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musician*, it is stated that Saxophone is a form of wind band whose entire instrument consists of a metallic wind instrument originating from the 1820s (1980, pp. 209-210). The wind music tradition that first appeared on the European and American continents has now become a tradition of music culture for other people. This tradition can be seen as a result of cultural contact and has a clear relationship with European expansion in terms of cultural development, there are three processes of social dynamics. The first is related to the cultural learning process of community members, including the internalization process (independent/individual learning process); the second is socialization (interaction with individuals around); and the third is enculturation (adjusting the mind to the norms or rules of one's cultural life). There is also a process of cultural development, from a simple form to a complex culture or cultural evolution. In this case exemplified by Lestari (2020: 382), the socialization process can be through music by instilling love, longing and attachment and the beauty of the brothers' culture of life. For example, first going home only reflects a simple family ritual, which is to gather with relatives during holidays. However, over time, this tradition has developed into an important



part of the social identity of Indonesian people, involving various aspects of culture, economy, and technology.

In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musician* (227-228), it is stated that there is a process of geographically spreading culture caused by the transfer of nations, also called diffusion. Another process is the process of absorbing foreign elements by citizens in society, which includes the process of cultural acculturation, especially the absorption of foreign elements. Culture without eliminating the original culture and the process of assimilation, especially the emergence of a mixture of different cultures. The latter is an update or innovation that creates a new culture. Something that underlies the development of wind music in the Toba Batak community is the entry of Christian missionaries from Europe to Batak. A spread such as this is called diffusion. The cultural absorption of the Toba Batak community (acculturation) is a result of the diffusion process. This absorption was performed without eliminating the original culture (Gondang Sabangunan and Gondang Hasapi). The Toba Batak community uses blowing instruments in traditional ceremonies without losing the culture of Gondang because Gondang is still used but rare. In reviewing the process of inflatable music adaptation to the Toba Batak community, it is necessary to pay attention to the condition of the recipient community, individuals, or groups of people who have foreign cultural elements (missionaries), and the channels traversed by foreign cultural elements to enter into the cultural recipient (Christianity). Furthermore, there are elements of the recipient community

(the Batak Toba community believes that wind music can be used in traditional ceremonies), and the reactions of individuals exposed to these foreign cultural elements. The Toba Batak community may accept the entry of wind music into Toba Batak culture especially in Medan. After blowing music was received by the Toba Batak community, this ensemble developed into commercial music. To meet traditional needs, the wind instrument began to combine several traditional musical instruments into the wind instrument, especially the sulim (flute) and hasapi (picking instruments, harp). Thus, the combination of traditional music elements with wind ensembles can be considered an assimilation process, and through the combination of the two cultural elements in the end, new culture will emerge as a result of the innovation process. Thus, the wind instrument (saxophone band) in its development in the Toba Batak community went through the four processes described above, namely diffusion, acculturation, assimilation, and innovation (renewal).

## METHOD

According to the author's observations in the city of Medan, in all traditional activities carried out by the Batak Toba community (especially traditional marriage ceremonies and traditional death commemoration ceremonies), wind music is always chosen to accompany the ceremony. Why did it happen? What context makes this wind instrument the first choice for use in traditional ceremonies?

To investigate this the problem further, the author conducted direct observations

of the activity of the Saxophone musical instrument in traditional ceremonies, including wedding customs and traditional ceremonies commemorating deaths around the city of Medan. Regarding the historical aspects and development of wind music, the authors conducted a literature research and interviewed several relevant speakers (informants) related to the topic of the discussion. The method used in this study was a descriptive analysis of the EMIC and ETIC approaches. This research was conducted in the Batak community in Medan, especially in Wisma Menteng Indah, Wisma Gorga, and Wisma Lambok. The ETIC approach in studying the use of saxophone in the Toba Batak traditional wedding ceremony in Medan focused on objective external analysis, seeing this phenomenon from the perspective of universal culture and identifying the effects of modernity on local traditions. Then, the results of this study are also accompanied by photos to get a visual picture of the object under study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **The entry of the Toba Batak people in the city of Medan**

With the establishment of schools in Batak, the knowledge of the Batak community is even more advanced and developed. The Batak people, educated and are able to read, write, and speak Dutch, leave their homeland to find work in the ruling government, as a teacher or low-level administrative staff, work on plantations, or as bookkeepers in the library. However, being a government

employee was a job that Toba Batak desired at that time. Education for them is "golden fields", a way to break away from boring farming and monotonous village life. The educated Toba Batak people want to change their lives, which is why they always migrate to the city. Although the Toba Batak migration outside the Batak land occurred before 1900, the migration year that could be traced was when the Batak Toba people, precisely after 1900, first moved to Simalungun, Asahan, and Karo. (Cunningham, 1958:83).

Some Toba Batak people came to Medan, but the situation was not the same as that in Eastern Sumatra. The Toba Batak people who came to the Medan region were usually small in number, but the number gradually increased. This was motivated by the desire of educated migrants to get a job in the government environment at the time (around the 1930s). Medan City is an administrative and trading area in North Sumatra. Records of data on the migration of the Toba Batak people to Medan City were also proposed by Cunningham (1958:93) in the form of the spread of churches. According to him, it is reasonable to see the development and spread of churches as an indication of the spread of the Toba Batak community itself. In other words, the existence of churches, especially KBP, can be used as a graphic index of its distribution. According to his notes, the period 1951-1954 showed a significant increase in the migration of the Toba Batak community to Medan and other regions in eastern Sumatra. From a total of 96,715 people in 1951, it reached 132,193 in 1954.

Meanwhile, the exact number of the Toba

Batak community in Medan was not mentioned by Cunningham. However, according to him, in 1930 there was a congregation of the HKBP Church on Jalan H.O.S. Cokroaminoto, and in the 1950s there were also several other congregations, such as the Sidorame HKBP Church Congregation, Brayan Island, Padang Bulan, Simpang Limun, and in areas adjacent to Medan City, namely Percut Sei Tuan, and Belawan (Cunningham, 1958, p. 171). The Batak Toba urban community seems to continue to grow along with the entry of migrants from villages to cities. They come either individually or in group. Some come to stay, school, or visit. This migration continues, and, until now, the Toba Batak community has spread to all corners of Medan.

#### **The entry of wind music (saxophone band) in the culture of the Toba Batak community**

The entry of wind music, especially through the Saxophone Band group, has brought significant changes to the culture of the Toba Batak community. Previous wind music which was not part of the Toba Batak music tradition began to become an important element in the social and cultural life of the people in the region. This phenomenon reflects the process of cultural acculturation in which the elements of modern music are accepted, adapted, and combined with existing local music traditions.

The emergence of the Saxophone Band is an example of how the Toba Batak community opens itself to the influence of outside culture, while maintaining its cultural identity. In this context, wind music not only becomes entertainment but also functions as a medium

for expressing the spirit of collectivity, celebrating traditional traditions, and enriching the variety of music arts that reflect the dynamics of the Toba Batak community. Therefore, this study of the entry of wind music into the culture of the Toba Batak community provides an interesting perspective on how new elements are accepted and developed in complex cultural landscapes.

#### **New Interpretation of Presentation of Toba Batak Traditional Music**

One form of ensemble currently used in traditional Toba community ceremonies in Medan City is the Gondang Entrepreneurs. In various regions (research locations) or existing music organizations/groups, the number and type of musical instruments used in gondang ensembles are equipped with wind instruments that are constantly changing from time to time. Sometimes, the formation of a band depends on the availability of musicians, and there are times when it depends on the format that people want. The use of saxophones in the presentation of Toba Batak traditional music in the city of Medan begins with the emergence of ideas for the modernization of traditional Batak Toba music. It aims to be a melody carrier even as a substitute for Sulim in the Toba Batak Uninging Music as traditional music at a particular ceremony. Toba Batak traditional music offerings using wind music are used as variations of melodies and they (traditional music personnel) often mention the term "flowers or mambosa-bungai". These variations for listeners can increase the aesthetic value which can produce harmony. The use of sulim and saxophone in the Batak



melody uning-uningan produces a melody within a certain interval distance. In fact, it is not uncommon for a saxophone to be a core melody carrier in a gondang report in the Toba Batak custom.

The presentation of Batak traditional music using saxophone instruments in the customs of marriage and death does not have significant differences. It is just that in a custom music presentation shown in a certain customary context that has a different format. In the wedding music presentation, the format of traditional music presentation includes Trumpet Formation - Alto Sax - Trombone - Tenor Sax - Tuba - Bass Drum/ - Snare Drum. This formation is usually used to accompany the bride on the journey to the church for blessing. This formation also forms harmony. TROMBE is a Lead Melody, Alto Sax, and others as harmony by using certain intervals. The Keyboard-Drum Kit-Elect is often used in the presentation of traditional music formation. Bass - Elect. The formation (Guitar - Trumpet - Alto Sax - Taganing) is often referred to as band formation in the presentation of traditional music. The presentation of the formation in traditional music is adjusted according to consumer demand. Traditional music formation using a keyboard-sulim-alto sax is common. The existence of a saxophone is the first choice in every formation and is even able to defeat core instruments such as sarune-hasapi and others as melodic carriers in the indigenous music of Toba Batak.

Based on an interview with Noel Entertainment, a Toba Batak traditional music service provider in Medan, the use



**Figure 1. Noel Entertainment (Saxophone on Traditional Music)**

(Source: Author, 2024)

of saxophones in Batak Toba traditional music in Medan has become the main choice of consumers in traditional music, both in wedding ceremonies and death ceremonies. The option to use traditional music formation using saxophones is considered to raise the status of the music provided. The use of saxophone in Toba Batak traditional music, according to consumers as a modernization of music is able to give the impression of an aesthetic at the traditional event that is held. Not only as a form to increase modern music, the provision of traditional music using the Saxophone format is considered capable of producing "expensive" music. This is because saxophone is an instrument that has a high selling value; therefore when used in traditional music, it can improve the quality of the music provided.

### **Dynamics and Development of Saxophone in Toba Batak Traditional Music in Medan City**

Cultured communities are developed based on various factors that determine the ways of life in society. In addition to the environment and technology, other factors are social and political organizations that affect

daily needs. These elements are called the core of culture and include the ability to understand existing resources. The core of culture more broadly explains how it influences the way of life of the Toba Batak community's local environment, especially in traditional music culture. Toba Batak has its traditional music and is an element of culture. Traditional music in the Batak Toba community occupies a very important position in traditional events in the form of traditional ceremonies, religious ceremonies, and entertainment. In social life, musical activities are used in the context of customs, religious ceremonies, and entertainment music performances. Community musical activities include music performances such as Margondang.

At present, the blowing music for the Toba Batak community has been attached to most of the Toba Batak community, especially the Toba Batak community in the city of Medan, because in every traditional wedding ceremony and the commemoration of the death of Saur Matua or other events, the wind genre always exist as part of the customs. During its development, inflating ensembles are present in big cities and managed professionally to meet the needs of the Toba Batak community by holding a celebration in a traditional atmosphere.

On the other hand, the presence of blowing ensembles in the cultural life of the Toba Batak community, especially in the death ceremony of Saur Matua, caused different reactions in these circles. These point of views and opinions come from the Batak people, who are concerned about the presence of this type of wind instrument. Concerns that occur

because of the role of wind music will disturb the role of traditional Gondang music, so it is likely to be extinct.

This happened to the saxophone with the development of the brass musical instruments in Medan. The use of saxophones has become the latest phenomenon in traditional music in the Toba Batak community in Medan City. In the presentation of gondang, the saxophone is often used as a melody accompaniment, and can also be used to replace sulim. For saxophone musicians, an understanding of traditional Toba Batak music is more or less the same as that of other ordinary people. However, because they are often directly involved in traditional activities, they are familiar with customary systems and goals.

Initially, wind music began to be introduced in the city of Medan around 1962 to accompany songs in religious ceremonies every week, so that they began to be invited to traditional wedding and death ceremonies to accompany church and tortor songs. At that time, it was still just entertainment or just filling the time at certain times and increasing rhythmic accentations (beating the rhythm of the song) mainly when accompanying the tortor. In its development, the need for Toba Batak to blow music to accompany traditional ceremonies is increasing over time. Although the number of winds in Medan is very limited, the priority is only to meet the needs of the church because this music belongs to the Sidorame HKBP Church and HKBP Sudirman Medan. Togatorop in Torang (2022: 33) said that in 1965, the Sidorame Church's Inauguration music group began to accompany the traditional wedding and death

ceremonies with church and tortor songs as entertainment. To strengthen the rhythm, they added bass drums as tempo regulators. In addition, the main service can only be carried out by members of the Church Church owner of the wind instrument, whereas outsiders will only receive services if the music owner congregation provides recommendations to the church of the music owner.

Based on this situation, some Toba Batak people in Medan tried to present the wind group from Batak land, especially from Balige, Laguboti, and Tarutung, to accompany the traditional ceremonies they held. These needs are mainly aimed at accompanying traditional marriage and death ceremonies. Considering that the prospect of wind music in Medan was very promising, in 1987, a Toba Batak businessman surnamed Tambunan established a new music group called Tambunan Music in Balige and then spread wings to Medan. Members of this group are often members of the Balige Music Group who came to Medan to find a better life (*Manjalahi Jalanti Na Lomak*). Tambunan Music was the first commercial wind music group in Medan, the owner and leader of noel music. With the development of wind music in the city of Medan, various music groups presented traditional music, traditional marriage, and traditional music of death.

The musicians of the wind instrument, especially saxophone, realized that wind music that accompanied traditional ceremonies, such as the Gondang Sabangunan game, was a problem or deviation. The partisanship of the wind music players, especially the saxophone player, to the Gondang Sabangunan musical



**Figure 2. Noel Music Photo Archives**  
(Source: Author, 2024)

instrument because the music is their identity that they try to express with a different nuance. The position of saxophone in traditional Toba Batak music in the traditional music scene is considered *pargonsi* (name of the Gondang Sabangunan player). Saxophones in music offerings in the context of traditional music are often asked to play the Gondang ratio and music offerings with *lairing* melodies such as spiritual songs. The Batak community who attended the traditional ceremony felt emotional and amazed when they saw the ceremony took place. Therefore, an idea emerged from the community to make music an alternative to the Gondang Sabangunan.

Another factor that places saxophone in traditional music is related to the difficulty in obtaining the Gondang Sabangunan ensemble. The limitation of the existence of Gondang Sabangunan is that it does not meet the calls of every traditional ceremony, so it provides an alternative opportunity for musicians to think of ideas to combine music from traditional contexts and wind instruments, especially saxophones. The presence of the saxophone is

the most desirable instrument apart from the color of the sound but it can replace the sulim as a carrier of the Melody of the Traditional Music of Death or the Marriage of the use of the Saksophone in the Customary Music of Death or often called Saur Matua is delivered to accompany the Tor-tor (Batak dance during the ceremony) thus the saxophone is not only as a melody carrier but also as a trigger for the panortors (dancers) implementing traditional systems followed by the hassle of the gondang likewise with the wedding ceremony. As in the Saur Matua ceremony, the saxophone was used to accompany the traditional Toba Batak marriage ceremony in Medan. At the Toba Batak Community Marriage Ceremony in Medan City today, Saksophone is used both during the bride pickup from her parents' house known as Marsibuha-Buhai, accompanying the bride to the church, and the procession when the bride enters the building where the wedding traditional series is held. In customary series, the saxophone is often used as a lead melody in clay gondang, gondang hasanah, and initial gondang. Even more inclined to use the saxophone in the Manjalo Tumpak session, namely the ceremony to receive money from the bride and groom from the families and invited guests.

After conducting an interview, it was clear that the commercial music founded in Medan had a better life for its musicians. In addition, the courage of music owners in providing facilities as mentioned above, is due to its promising prospects and expected benefits. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the number and diversity of other commercial wind groups in Medan. The musical instruments

used by the Tambunan music group included three trumpets, two Alto Saksophone, one Saksophone Tenor, two thrombones, one bass tube (sausafon), and one drum set.

The dynamics of saxophone development that have occurred over three decades are in line with the development of brass bands. Brass band formation began to change with keyboard-Sulim-Saxophone-Trombone and trumpet formations. This is influenced by the sound sampling technology on the keyboard, which produces sounds similar to the brass band. However, the saxophone still exists in the presentation of traditional music because it is considered to be able to produce expensive nuances in every presentation of traditional music both marriage and death customs. Some of the views and opinions are present from the Batak people who have been worried about the presence of this wind music. The family that occurs because of the role of this wind music will erode the role of traditional Gondang music that can result in the loss of culture.

## CONCLUSIONS

Saxophones are used in traditional music during death and marriage ceremonies. The use of saxophone in the presentation of Toba Batak traditional music in the city of Medan begins with the emergence of ideas for the modernization of traditional Batak Toba music. It aims to be a melody carrier even as a substitute for Sulim in the Toba Batak Uninging Music as a traditional music at a particular ceremony. Toba Batak traditional music offerings using wind music are used as



variations of melodies and they (traditional music personnel) often mention the term "flowers or mambosa-bungai". These variations for listeners can increase the aesthetic value that produces harmony. The use of sulim and saxophone in the Batak Uninging melody produces a melody with a certain interval distance. It is common for the saxophone to be a core melody carrier in a gondang report in the Toba Batak custom.

From year to year, blown music has continued growing. At the end of 2000, there were 21 Toba Batak music groups in Medan. Developments carried out are not only related to the number of music groups but also to the development of musical instruments. The development is by combining wind instruments and traditional musical instruments (such as Sulim and Hasapi), as well as supporting facilities for the ensemble, namely the sound system (sound system) and mixer (electric device to combine the sound of the instrument so that it sounds more harmonious).

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