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## Music Transformation of Gondrang Sipitu-pitu in Simalungun Community

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**Abstract :** This study investigates the transformation and adaptation processes of *gondrang sipitu-pitu* music within Simalungun society in response to social, cultural, and technological dynamics. Originally serving as a medium for ritual and spiritual communication in the context of Simalungun customs, *gondrang sipitu-pitu* has undergone significant changes in its musical structure, social function, and performance style due to the influence of religion, modernization, and external cultural forces. The research employs a descriptive qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, drawing upon Margaret Kartomi theory of transformation and adaptation, Jeff Todd Titon theory of musical style, and William F. Ogburn theory of socio-cultural change. The findings reveal that although modern instruments have begun to challenge the dominance of traditional ones, key musical elements such as rhythm, *sarunei* melodies, and ensemble structure remain preserved. The emerging musical style reflects the creative adaptation of traditional artists to contemporary performance contexts. However, this transformation is also accompanied by critical issues, including the erosion of sacred meaning, the influence of modern aesthetic pressures, and the commodification of local culture. The shift from sacred ritual to popular entertainment raises concerns regarding the authenticity and sustainability of cultural values. Thus, this transformation must be understood not merely as an adaptive process, but as a contested arena of meaning, identity, and cultural power within Simalungun society.

**Keywords:** *Gondrang sipitu-pitu; musical transformation; musical style; Simalungun community*



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## 1. Introduction

Transformation in the context of music refers to the changes or developments that occur in musical elements, both in form and function, along with time and cultural interactions. Kartomi emphasizes that musical transformation can occur through various processes, such as adaptation, acculturation, or modification caused by external and internal influences (Margaret J. Kartomi, 2020). In his view, music does not only develop in a linear path, but can undergo diverse changes due to contact with other cultures or social changes in society. In this study, transformation refers to changes in the format and presentation of music, rather than the physical form of traditional Simalungun musical instruments.

In the past, during the reign of Simalungun, art began to appear in the royal environment which also adhered to animist beliefs. The presentation of *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* at that time was used to liven up the atmosphere of the ceremony, arouse the spirit, and also to accompany the dance (Damanik, 2020). Animism believes that the environment around human residence is inhabited by subtle spirits that cannot be perceived by the five human senses, but have the ability to do things that humans cannot do. Therefore, these spirits must be honored and worshiped through various ceremonies, such as prayers, offerings, or sacrifices (Sipayung et al., 2020).

The entry of western culture has changed the perspective of the Simalungun people a lot, which then causes changes in various aspects of the life of the Simalungun people, especially in the religious aspect (Situmeang et al., 2025). The main function of this *gondrang* in the context of the early religious community of Simalungun was to summon the spirits of the ancestors and ask for advice and blessings from them. In its different presentations, *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* is also used and performed in the Royal environment as a form of entertainment presentation to the Royal family (Harvina, 2021). Starting from the long-held belief of the Simalungun people, the use of traditional musical instruments in ritual ceremonies and traditional ceremonies aims as a means of communication to the spirits of their ancestors or *sipala begu* (*Sipala begu is a Batak belief in animism or ancestor spirits*). (Silalahi, 2020) The ritual ceremony in the old beliefs of the Simalungun people is inseparable from the use of the *gondrang sipitu-pitu* ensemble which is indirectly believed to convey messages to the spirits of the ancestors. During ritual ceremonies or traditional events, *gondrang* ensemble players are highly respected. The existence of the Simalungun people who still believe in this old belief is no longer what it used to be, as this old belief has been abandoned by many Simalungun people since the entry of religion into the land of Simalungun (S. Purba, 2022).

The existence of Simalungun traditional music has developed from time to time. In the past, the role of traditional musical instruments was closely related to the animist beliefs embraced by the people at that time (Febi Andreas Manik, 2021). Later, the entry of Christianity into the Simalungun area in 1902 marked the beginning of a shift in the role of traditional musical instruments, because in general those who had embraced Christianity forbade the use of traditional musical instruments both at parties and any other events. Any event that plays a traditional musical instrument is considered as an event of idolatry (Purba, Salmon, 2021).

The transformation process occurs because of gradual changes, so that until the present stage, the changes are made by responding to the influence of external and internal elements that will direct them from the previously known form through the process of repeating or multiplying. The people of Simalungun today are experiencing a transformation process in terms of traditional music combined with modern musical instruments such as brass, keyboards, tom and cymbals (M. Purba, 2021).

In this study, adaptation is an effort made by traditional artists in the community due to the need or demand for Simalungun music works. Simalungun traditional music is an important part of the culture of the Simalungun people in North Sumatra, Indonesia. This music plays a central role in various traditional ceremonies, celebrations, and daily activities of the Simalungun people. In the process of *malasni uhur* and *pusokni uhur*, *gondrang sipitu-pitu* is used by musicians in an ensemble in the Simalungun traditional music format consisting of *gondrang*, *sarunei*, *gong*, *mongmongan* and *sitalasayak*. Along with the development of the times and technology, Simalungun music has undergone several changes that lead to today's music works (Harvina, 2021).

The phenomenon that occurs in the Simalungun community today shows changes that occur continuously and affect the existence of the original culture of the community. (Girsang, 2020) The use of *gondrang sipitu-pitu* music is not only used in traditional death ceremonies that are sacred, but today several music artists and music groups in Simalungun have combined elements of modern musical instruments which of course without eliminating the form of musical organology of *gondrang sipitu-pitu*.

In this research, the main focus is directed to how changes in the form, function, and musical style of *Gondrang* occur and are interpreted by cultural actors. It explores the experiences of music players, traditional leaders, and communities in understanding these changes, both in terms of musical structure, performance style, and social context (Tambak, 2021). Some of the questions serving as guidelines in data collection include how the form of *Gondrang* presentation changed from a ritual

context to a modern performance, what elements have undergone transformation or are still maintained, and how the musical style of the performers has adapted as generations change. In addition, the process of spreading or diffusing the new form of *Gondrang* outside the traditional community is also explored, including the role of key figures and the media in bridging these changes (Sipayung et al., 2020). Eventually, this study also highlights the community's response to these transformations whether it is seen as a form of dynamic preservation, a threat to authenticity, or a part of an ever-evolving cultural identity. All of these questions are structured based on the theory of transformation and adaptation (Kartomi), the theory of musical style (Titon), the theory of socio-cultural change (Ogburn), and are analyzed through a phenomenological approach to understand the meaning of cultural experience in depth from the perspective of the subject (Titon, 2020).

## 2. Literature Review

Margaret Kartomi's transformation theory is a framework for understanding how music, as one of the cultural expressions, changes through the process of intercultural interaction. Transformation, according to Kartomi, is more than just a simple adjustment; It involves a complex creative process that results in something new and unique. Transformation not only adds up cultural elements, but creates unexpected new integrations. This process is the result of negotiation, innovation, and collective adoption within society (Margaret J. Kartomi, 2020). This theory is used by researchers to analyze what changes occur in the presentation of *gondrang sipitu-pitu* in the Simalungun community and what elements undergo changes or additions of instruments both in terms of musical instruments and musical elements contained in the presentation of *gondrang sipitu-pitu*.

In the book *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World's Peoples* (Fifth Edition), music is described as follows: The musical style includes everything related to the organization of the sound of the music itself, including the elements of pitch (scales, melodies, harmony, tuning systems), elements of time (rhythm, meter), timbre elements (sound quality, tone color of the instrument), and intensity of sound (loud/soft). The style of music is influenced by the aesthetics of a particular musical culture, creating a distinctive sound that the group recognizes (Titon, 2020).

The theory of musical transformation according to Margaret J. Kartomi explains that traditional music changes occur through two main paths, namely internal factors (intra-musical) and external factors (extra-musical) (Margaret J. Kartomi, 2020). Internal factors include changes in musical elements such as melody, rhythm, form, presentation techniques, and playing styles that are often influenced by the artist's

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creativity or the evolution of local styles. Meanwhile, external factors include social, political, religious, economic, and technological and media influences. Kartomi emphasized that music cannot be separated from its socio-cultural context, so changes in belief systems, social interaction patterns, and the development of mass media can encourage a significant transformation of the form and function of music.

The theory of sociocultural change according to William F. Ogburn emphasizes that changes in society occur as a result of technological developments and shifts in material culture that are often faster than changes in non-material cultures (Hati, 2020). Ogburn posits the concept of "cultural lag," which describes the mismatch between advances in technology and material tools and the slow change in values, norms, and ideologies in society. According to Ogburn, material culture encompasses all things physical and technological, while non-material culture encompasses values, beliefs, and social norms. In the context of the transformation of *gondrang sipitu-pitu* in the Simalungun community, new technologies in the presentation of music, such as the use of modern musical instruments or sound systems, show a faster development in material culture; while non-material cultural aspects, such as the sacred meaning contained in the performance, take longer to adapt. This process creates tension between new, more modern forms, and more rigid traditional values (Saragih, 2022).

In addition, Ogburn also highlights the importance of innovation (new discoveries in technology or culture) and diffusion (the spread of cultural elements from one society to another) as major factors in socio-cultural change (Awerman, A. et al., 2023). In this case, innovation in Gondrang can be the use of modern musical elements, while diffusion occurs when Gondrang is introduced to a wider audience, both in national and international contexts. Ogburn also explains that sociocultural change does not occur spontaneously, but rather through a series of stages involving innovation, diffusion, and social adjustment, which will ultimately lead to acceptance or rejection of the change. Thus, Ogburn's theory is very relevant to analyze how changes in the form and presentation of Gondrang Sipitu Pitu can affect the cultural values and meanings contained in the traditional art (Hati, 2020).

Regarding musical transformation, the author refers to the scholarly work of Fajry Subhaan Syah Syah Sinaga's thesis entitled "The Transformation of Trunthung Music from Accompaniment to Performance in Warangan Hamlet, District, Magelang Regency," which found that focuses on the transformation of Trunthung music, especially from an accompanying function of traditional activities to a performing art. The transformation of Trunthung music reflects how traditional arts can adapt to the times without losing their local cultural roots. This change not only enriches the cultural heritage of Warangan Hamlet, but also provides new opportunities for

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traditional arts to continue to live and be relevant in modern society (F. S. Sinaga, 2021). The similarity with the research to be carried out is that both *Trunthung* and *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* Music have undergone a change in function from traditional use to performing arts. These two forms of music are influenced by the socio-cultural dynamics of the community. Transformation occurs due to changing needs of society, whether for entertainment, commercialization, or the preservation of traditions. The difference between *Trunthung* and *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* music lies in its cultural context, function of origin, and transformation. *Trunthung* music originated from Central Java, especially Warangan Hamlet, with its initial function as an accompaniment to agricultural rituals such as village cleansing, which later transformed into modern performing arts with the addition of instruments such as keyboards, oriented towards entertainment and artistic aesthetics. Meanwhile, the *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* from Simalungun in North Sumatra functions more in traditional and religious ceremonies, with a transformation that is more directed at the preservation of traditions, although it begins to reach contexts outside of ritual (F. S. Sinaga, 2021).

According to the journal article Art Studies Oki Dirgualam et al. explore the "Aesthetic Adaptation of Western Music Games in the Big Band Salamander" and find that the similarities between the study and this research in the focus of investigation that discusses musical adaptation in the context of local culture. These two studies emphasize the transformation of traditional music adapted to new elements, such as the influence of Western music on the Big Band Salamander and the change in the presentation of *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* music in the Simalungun community. Both also examine changes in musical aesthetics that occur through the process of adaptation to new social and cultural contexts. The difference lies in the object and context of the music being studied. Big Band Salamander's research focuses more on aesthetic changes and the influence of Western music in the composition and playing of music in the music group, while *Gondrang sipitu-pitu*'s research focuses on the transformation of the traditional music used in the traditional ceremonies of the Simalungun people, and how it adapts to the broader socio-cultural dynamics. The research of the Big Band Salamander operates in the realm of commercial and musical performances, while *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* is more related to the preservation of tradition despite the influence of modernization (Dirgualam et al., 2021).

Hernauly Sipayung et al with the title The Simalungunese Traditional Musical Instruments is referred to by the researcher as a reference material for this research as it also discusses traditional Simalungun music, especially related to the use of musical instruments in the Simalungun community. Thus, both of studies sought to dig deeper

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into the importance of traditional musical instruments, as well as their role in the social and cultural context of the Simalungun community. These researches have the goal of preserving and identifying important aspects in the traditional music art of Simalungun (Napitu et al., 2023). The difference between the two lies in their focus and approach. The book *The Simalungunese Traditional Musical Instruments* by Hernauli Sipayung focuses more on the description and classification of traditional musical instruments of Simalungun, as well as their role in the cultural life of the community. This research emphasizes more on the ethnomusicological aspect by providing information about the various musical instruments used in the Simalungun musical tradition, the types of musical instruments, and their history (Sipayung et al., 2020).

### 3. Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. The qualitative method was chosen because it is in accordance with the purpose of the research that wants to explore the meaning, experience, and deep understanding of the transformation of the traditional music of *gondrang sipitu-pitu* in the Simalungun community. In qualitative research, data is collected in the form of narratives and descriptions, rather than numbers, to capture the complexity of social and cultural realities. The descriptive method is used to systematically describe the facts, characteristics, and relationships that appear in the research object without manipulating variables. The goal is to provide a detailed explanation of the transformation of the form, function, presentation, and public perception of *gondrang sipitu-pitu* music in the midst of socio-cultural changes.

The phenomenological approach is used because this approach focuses on the subjective experience of humans, namely the experience of cultural actors (musicians, traditional leaders, and supporting communities) towards the transformation of *Gondrang sipitu-pitu*. This approach is also used to explore the meaning, experience, and perception of the community towards the transformation of *gondrang* music. This approach is enriched with a critical paradigm to examine the cultural dynamics that occur in the process of change. According to John W. Creswell, phenomenology aims to understand the meaning contained in human life experience of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2020). In this context, what is of concern is how the informants experience, interpret, and respond to the changes in the form and function of *Gondrang Sipitu Pitu* in their lives. The phenomenological approach is described as one of the main strategies in qualitative research methods that focus on studying specific cultures or social groups within their natural environment, focusing on the meanings given by the individuals involved (Creswell & Poth, 2020). The focus of the research is the transformation and adaptation of traditional music in Simalungun Regency.

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To obtain data related to the presentation of *gondrang sipitu-pitu* music in the Simalungun community with a study of transformation and adaptation, this study was conducted in Simalungun Regency, North Sumatra Province, especially in the Pematang Siantar and Raya City areas. The researcher chose these areas because of the activities of Simalungun traditional music artists in various events such as customs, entertainment, and performances; besides is the areas are also the focal point of Simalungun regency. To obtain data in the form of documentation, voice recordings, videos, and direct information needed, the research was carried out from December 2024 to June 2025 to obtain accurate data on the presentation of *gondrang sipitu-pitu* music in the Simalungun community.

The primary data in this study were the main data obtained directly from the field through interaction with individuals or groups who are actors and witnesses of the transformation of the *gondrang sipitu pitu*. This data were collected through direct observation methods, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The researcher selected a sample of 5 people consisting of Traditional Leaders, Cultural Maestros, Traditional Musicians, and Simalungun Artists. This research has inclusion criteria, namely the Simalungun people who live in Simalungun Regency, North Sumatra, have a special traditional art studio for Simalungun Traditional Music, have experience and knowledge in the field of Simalungun Traditional Music. The researcher chose the criteria and samples based on the research topic that discusses the change in the music tradition of Simalungun that directly contributes and plunges into the Simalungun art environment. This step helped the researcher to obtain data information that is right on target and relevant.

Secondary data is supporting data that is not obtained directly from the field, but comes from documents, archives, and other written sources that are relevant to the focus of the research (Agustono & Suprayitno, 2020). The purposes of using secondary data are to provide a historical context to the development of *Gondrang Sipitu Pitu* music, strengthen the conceptual theoretical framework, become a basis for comparing field findings with existing documentation. By combining primary and secondary data, this study is expected to be able to provide a comprehensive understanding of the transformation process of *Gondrang Sipitu-pitu* music in the socio-cultural context of today's Simalungun community.

In this study, participatory observation was used to observe the practice of *Gondrang Sipitu Pitu* music performances in various contexts, both in traditional ceremonies, community activities, and modern entertainment performances. Through participatory observation, researchers obtained data on the structures and musical arrangement of *Gondrang Sipitu Pitu*, such as rhythm, drumming patterns, the use of musical instruments, and the way of presentation. The social context of the



performance, including the relationship between drummers, traditional leaders, and the audience, is an important factor. There have been changes in the presentation format, such as the number of drummers, additional instruments, performance duration, and modifications to costumes and stage layout. The social and cultural function of the music has also been reinterpreted by society, moving from a sacred and symbolic role to public entertainment. The interaction between cultural actors during rehearsals and performances demonstrates the dynamics and adaptations that have taken place (Purwanto et al., 2025). To collect the data, the researchers were only involved as passive observers with a limited interaction with cultural actors to gain more internal context and meaning behind their actions.

This is in line with the phenomenological approach that emphasizes understanding meaning from the perspective of the subject. Observation was carried out with the help of recording tools such as field notes, video recordings, photographs, and if possible, sketches of the arrangement of musical instruments or player positions. The results of these observations were thematically analyzed and used as a basis to support the findings of interviews and documentation data. Secondary data sources include scientific literature such as books, journals, articles, and theses that discuss traditional Batak music, especially Simalungun, as well as music theories and socio-cultural changes; traditional documents and local archives, such as records of traditional ceremonies, documentation of cultural activities, and transcriptions of traditional music.(Saputra et al., 2024).

In addition to interviews and observations, documentation was used as a supporting method in data collection to strengthen the results of field findings.(Batubara, 2021). The documentation in question includes various forms of media, both in the form of photos, videos, and audio recordings of the *gondrang sipitu-pitu* performance, both in traditional contexts and in modern situations (such as art performances, festivals, or cultural events). Visual documentation is very important to observe firsthand aspects of the performance that cannot be recorded through oral narrative alone, such as the formation of the drummers, the body movements when hitting the *gondrang*, the emotional expressions of the performers, and the interaction between the drummer and the audience. Meanwhile, audio documentation was used as material for the analysis of the rhythm and musical structure of *gondrang sipitu-pitu*, mainly to detect changes in playing style, beating patterns, and the type of instrument used. All of this documentation results were systematically organized and triangulated to verify data from interviews and observations, while strengthening the validity of research findings. In this study, the transcription process was carried out on the data from in-depth interviews, audio-visual recordings of *Gondrang Sipitu-pitu's*

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performances, and field notes during observation. Transcription served as the initial stage in the data analysis process, especially to identify forms of transformation and adaptation of music in the socio-cultural context of the Simalungun community. The transcription process was carried out in stages, starting with the sorting of relevant recording data, then continuing with the process of translating discourse in detail and systematically (Kartomi & Blum, 2020).

The transcription of the interview was done verbatim, which was by writing down all the informant's speech as it was without omission or adjustment. This approach was chosen to maintain the integrity of the meaning and capture the nuances of the informant's emotions, emphasis, and speaking style that contribute to the understanding of the social context of *Gondrang Sipitu Pitu's* music. In this process, tools such as an audio player application with speed control and manual transcription features were used to ensure accuracy and avoid one-sided interpretation. To maintain the validity of the data, validation was carried out through the member check method for confirming the transcription results to the relevant informants.

The music data was transcribed using a descriptive and semi-notational approach. Because traditional Gondrang performances are often improvisational, a full musical notation wasn't practical. Instead, the transcription relied on narrative descriptions to capture rhythmic patterns, instrumentation, drummer interactions, and the musical dynamics of the performance. This method was crucial for revealing changes in performance style and function, particularly as the Simalungun community adapted to modernization (Sihotang, 2020).

#### 4. Results

##### Instrumentation of *Gondrang Sipitu-pitu*

Figure Gondrang sipitu-pitu instrument  
(Ricky Nelson, 2025)



Based on an interview with Mr. Fredy Purba, a traditional musician and Simalungun artist residing in Simalungun, served as a key informant in this research. His insights were crucial for gaining a deeper understanding of the transformation of *gondrang sipitu-pitu*. He said, *Gondrang Sipitu-pitu* is actually the same as *gondrang bolon*, but these two instruments are used interchangeably. *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* is used in mourning events (*pusok niuhur*), while *gondrang bolon* is used in joyful events (*malas niuhur*) yet with the same instrument. (H. L. Purba, 2024). Currently, the existence of the *gondrang sipitu-pitu* musical instrument is rarely found in the Simalungun community because of the great influence of modern music and because of the community's desire to simplify the custom. For this reason, they do not have to spend a lot of money. The people of Simalungun often use *gondrang bolon* with only two players, so that *gondrang sipitu-pitu* is rarely used. Mr. Fredy Purba said, We, as the people of Simalungun, should uphold the culture of Simalungun. One way is to establish a studio so that it can maintain the culture of Simalungun.

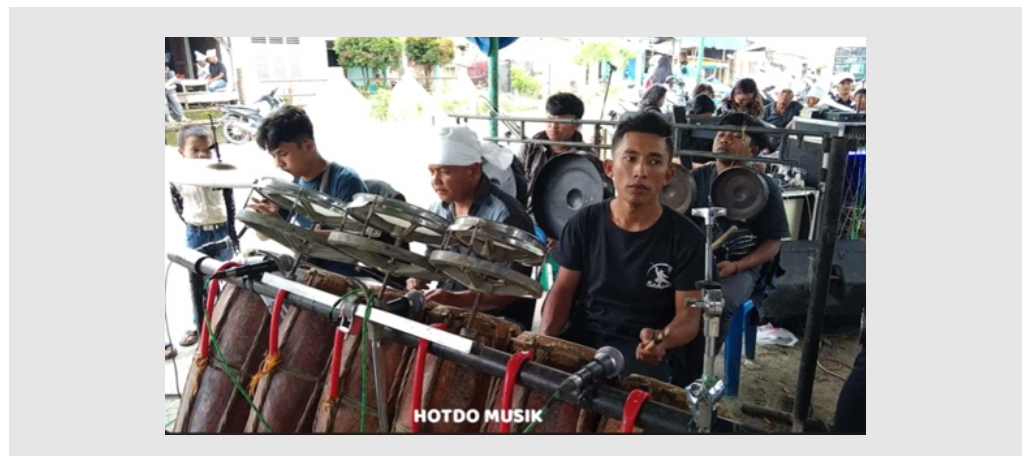
Based on the data found by researchers in the field, the first *Gondrang* starts from the largest as a protector. *Gondrang* as a protector is a *gondrang* that presents a basic rhythm pattern that is repeated continuously. The second, third, fourth and fifth *gondrang* are referred to as *panirang*. *Panirang* means separator. The sixth and seventh *gondrang* are called *panintingi* (*The sixth and seventh drums of the gondrang sipitu-pitu*) *Gondrang* as a *panirang* consists of several *gondrang* drums that are played alternately, creating a rhythm that is different from the basic rhythm. The beating of a set of *gondrang sipitu-pitu/gondrang bolon* consists of one *parsarunei*, three *panggual* people (one person as a protector, one person as a *panirang*, and one person as a *panintingi*), one person as a *parmongmong* (*Small-sized gong players*) and one *parogung* (*Large gong player*) person. *Pahata gondrang sipitu-pitu/gondrang bolon* has the same rules as *gondrang sidu-dua*, namely by holding a *mananti* event or as the opening event and *manamsam* or as the closing event (Nelson et al., 2022).

At this present time, the use of *gondrang sipitu-pitu/gondrang bolon* is differentiated based on its use. If the *gondrang* is used for the *malasni uhur* (joy) traditional ceremony, then only six drums are used. If it is used for the *mandingguri* (condolence) ceremony, the drums used consist of seven pieces. The Simalungun people often call *gondrang bolon* for the purpose of the *malasni uhur* traditional ceremony, and *gondrang sipitu-pitu* for the *mandingguri* ceremony. In traditional ceremonies, it is divided into two parts: the *malasni uhur* traditional ceremony and the *sayurmatua* traditional ceremony. The *malasni uhur* traditional ceremony is a ceremony in relation between humans and their neighbors or between humans and others which nature is joyful. Meanwhile, the traditional ceremony of *sayurmatua* is a ceremony in relation between humans and their neighbors which is in the nature of

condolence. It is a ceremony to honor those who have passed away in old age (*sayurmatua*) and have children and grandchildren (Silalahi, 2020).

Based on the field research, the author also found various versions of *gondrang* by adding some instruments to the existed traditional ones, such as a small drum band tom. The picture below shows there is an addition of 3 small toms at the top of the *gondrang sipitu-pitu* by installing additional wood or iron on the wood of the seven *gondrang*. Furthermore, there is also an addition or merger to the structure of the *gondrang* form, namely the addition of 1 cymbal or called *crash cymbals* on the right side of the *gondrang*, if viewed from the position of the player placed standing with his cymbals stand.

Figure 2: Gondrang Sipitu-pitu Music Ensemble by Hotdo Musik in Simalungun (Hotdo Musik, 2024)



These two types of musical instruments are part of acoustic drum musical instruments in general which are then used today by *panggual gondrang sipitu-pitu* with the intention of increasing the variety of beats and sounds produced to be diverse with the character of crash cymbals and tom-tom. In this case, *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* has undergone structural changes in the shape of the *gondrang* itself. Previously, there were only 7 drums, now it has increased in numbers in its other parts. Whereas for the players, there should also be 3 people who play *gondrang*, but in reality, there are only 2 people, or even only 1 person. This is strengthened by the statement of Mr. Vius Garingging in his interview who said that nowadays the *panggual* in the *gondrang* section is sometimes incomplete, less than 3 people, only played by 2 people or even 1 person for the reason of shortening, simplifying and easing costs. This is in order to adjust the budget situation of the party/*suhut* or the host of the ceremony. (Sukmono, 2022).

*Gondrang sipitu-pitu* refers to several *gondrang* or drums that is seven in number. *Pitu* in Simalungun language means seven. Originally, the *Sipitu-pitu gondrang tabuh* (Tabuh is a verb that means to strike or beat a percussion instrument, such as a

gondrang or a gong) is made in almost the same way as how to make the *gondrang sidua-dua tabuh* tool. *Baluh*, a *tabuh* tool made from the trunk of a jackfruit tree or the trunk of an *aparawas* tree. In accordance with the musical classification, the *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* musical instrument is a musical instrument that belongs to the Membranophone classification that produces sound by the skin of an animal or membrane through a resonance box (I. Sinaga & Wiflihani., 2023). Mr. Fredy Purba in an interview mentioned that *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* was divided into three parts according to the cast of three people, namely *Indung*, *Tikkah* and *Rin-Rin*. In playing *Gondrang sipitu-pitu*, positions of the beater use an adult-size chair where the instrument can be hit by sitting on a chair. This is because the source of the sound produced is at the top of the instrument. In positioning the strike correctly, the batter needs to be positioned for touching the membrane, thus producing a loud sound. The wrong position is when the bat (stick) stands touching the skin of the bat. The following is a picture of the *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* Musical Instrument and the position of the *Gondrang* players.

Figure 3: Gondrang Sipitu-pitu Music Ensemble by Sanggar Budaya Rayantara in Simalungun (Ricky Nelson, 2025)



In the Simalungun Community, ceremonial activities among them are divided into two parts, namely *Pusokni Uhur* and *Malasni Uhur*. According to Sri Sultan Saragih in an interview, this *pusokni uhur* includes death ceremonies such as *sari matua*, *layur matua*, *sayur matua*. And the *malasni uhur* ceremony is divided into several events, for example wedding or marriage party events, inauguration of buildings or local government events, house *mamokkot* (*Mamokkot* is a ceremony to celebrate moving into a new house in Simalungun tradition). and other entertainment events such as the Bittang Rondang Performance, Simalungun Cultural Festival, Simalungun Regency Anniversary or Pematang Siantar City Anniversary (Samosir, 2021). In Simalungun society, the terms *sari matua*, *layur matua*, and *sayur matua* are part of the death status (*partuhaon tondi*), which determines the customary procedures, forms of ceremony, and social treatment toward the bereaved family. Each refers to the family circumstances of the deceased, particularly in relation to descendants and the order of











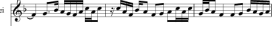

life. In Simalungun tradition, *sari matua* refers to a person who passes away having children, all of whom are married, but with one or both parents still alive; this status is considered not to have reached the “highest level of death” because the deceased's parents are still living. *Layur matua* describes someone who passes away having children, all of whom are married, with both parents already deceased, yet still having an unmarried child; this status is positioned between *sari matua* and *sayur matua* in terms of customary honor. *Sayur matua* refers to a person who passes away having children, all of whom are married, and already having grandchildren; in Simalungun tradition (and Batak culture in general), this is regarded as the highest and most honorable death status, as the deceased has “seen descendants up to grandchildren (Manurung, 2020).

At the death ceremony, the Simalungun people used the *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* ensemble in full, and there was no *electronic music* intervention consisting of *Sarunei bolon*, *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* (7 drums of different sizes), two *Ogung Banggal* (large gong), and two *Mongmongan* or *Mingmong* and or also called *Ogung etek* (The gong is smaller than *Ogung banggal*). During its performance, in the past, no loudspeaker or sound system was used like this present time. However, over time, with the influence of the entry of western music among the Simalungun people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ensembles and instruments have experienced some addition or merging of *transculturation* with western culture which is dominated by electronic devices. As found by the writer during the field research, now, the people of Simalungun have used an addition of electronic musical instruments, such as keyboards, at a death ceremony. This musical instrument is a type of *electrophone musical instrument*, which is a musical instrument whose sound source comes from an electrical power.

The *gondrang* has also undergone a change in its nomenclature to *Gondrang Bolon*, when this *gondrang* is played at events of joy.. There was also another change in the number of musical instruments that were previously *gondrang sipitu-pitu* consisting of 7 drums at the event of death; now at the event of joy or *marhajabuan* (marriage), this *gondrang* consists of only 6 *gondrangs*. Another fact found is that the musicians have now added or combined several other musical instruments beside the *gondrang sipitu-pitu* ensemble in its initial form, such as addition or merging with modern musical instruments such as keyboards or electronic music, brass winding, the addition of toms 1,2 and 3, as well as cymbals and cymbals crash as in general acoustic drum instruments.



Table 1. Repertoire Transcription Data in the Gondrang sipitu-pitu Ensemble

Transcription Before Transformation	Transcription After Transformation	Explanation
<p>Pangidung</p>  <p>Paitrang</p> 	<p>Gondrang, Tim dan Cymbal</p> 	<p>The change in notation has changed by using a 1/16 note which is played at a moderate tempo at a speed of 108 beats per minute. By this change, the <i>gondrang</i> starts the beat from the 4<sup>th</sup> beat in the first beat, so that it is clearly different from the previous rhythm style that was played directly on the first beat in the 1<sup>st</sup> beat.</p>
<p>Sarunei</p> <p>Moderato ♩ = 100</p> 	<p>Sulim</p> <p>Moderato ♩ = 108</p> 	<p>The rhythm pattern of the above notation is the rhythm played by Sulim as the melody carrier in the <i>gaul sitalasari</i>, with a moderate tempo with a speed of 108 bpm, the notes that often appear are notes 1/8 and 1/4 also accompanied by notes 1/16 in the second beat. It is very clear that the difference between the initial rhythm played by Sarunei, when compared to the initial rhythm pattern played by sulim in the gondrang keyboard ensemble, is very clear.</p> <p><i>Sulim</i>: This is the name of one of the Simalungun wind instruments</p>
<p>Ogung</p>  <p>Mongmongan</p> 	<p>Gondrang, Tim dan Cymbal</p> 	<p>The use of notation has changed and has used cymbal notation symbols that are clearly different from the rhythm pattern previously played by <i>ogung</i> and <i>mongmongan</i>. Besides, the notation uses notes 1/16 and 1/8 with a moderate tempo that is faster than andante with a speed of 108 bpm.</p>
<p>Sarunei</p> 	<p>Sulim</p> 	<p>In addition to the change in the use of instruments previously performed by Sarunei, now it can be performed by the Sulim instrument with a simple melodic pattern in playing the <i>sitalasari</i>; and the use of the basic note is also different - if previously it was played in f=do or 1 mole, but in sulim it was played through the basic note Bes=do or 2 moles.</p>

5. Discussion

Musical Style Transformation in Rhythm and Melody

In general, musical style refers to the distinctive way of arranging and expressing musical elements, such as melody, rhythm, harmony, tempo, dynamics, and timbre, that distinguish one type of music from another. Style also includes the characteristics of interpretation, playing technique, and the form of presentation of music, both individually and in groups. The style of music develops from the cultural, social, and historical background of the people who create and practice it. Therefore, style not only speaks of the "sound" of music, but also reflects the cultural identity and social values behind it. In his book *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World's*

Peoples (2020), Titon wrote that style is "the way the music sounds and also how the music is done," including the way musicians dress, gestures, interactions with the audience, and the social atmosphere that surrounds the performance. He also referred to style as a marker of identity, where people express who they are through the way they present music (Titon, 2020). Thus, according to Titon, the style of music is a dynamic cultural reflection, which continues to evolve along with the changing times, media, and social values of the supporting society.

The transformation of the musical style of *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* can be observed in several main aspects. In terms of melody, although the *sarunei* is still the main instrument, the melody is now often enriched by the harmonization brought by the keyboard, *gondrang*, tom, cymbals and flute. In the rhythm aspect, the traditional fixed rhythm pattern is further modified to be faster and syncopated according to the needs of today's performances. Improvisation that was once limited by customary rules is now given a wider space for players to be creative in their expressions. The musical ornamentation also became more varied and expressive according to the context of the performance. This change in style shows how the traditional music of *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* responds to the pressures and demands of the contemporary cultural environment by making itself more dynamic and adaptive, which thus undergoes a change in meaning from spiritual expression to an object of spectacle or cultural commodity.

In the study of music, the two most basic elements that make up the musical identity of a work are rhythm and melody (Titon, 2020). Rhythm is a pattern of duration and beats that are arranged repeatedly over a certain period of time, forming a temporal structure in music. Rhythm determines the pulse and dynamics that are the basis of musical movement, both stable and varied. Rhythm not only provides structure but also creates emotional nuances and encourages physical responses, such as gestures or dance. In the context of traditional music, rhythm is often closely related to social activities, such as rituals, ceremonies, or collective dances, and is often conveyed through percussion or percussion instruments.

In the presentation of *gual sitalasari* played by Juli Ardiles and his music group using the *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* Ensemble, it began with the rhythm of *gondrang* as shown in the following picture:

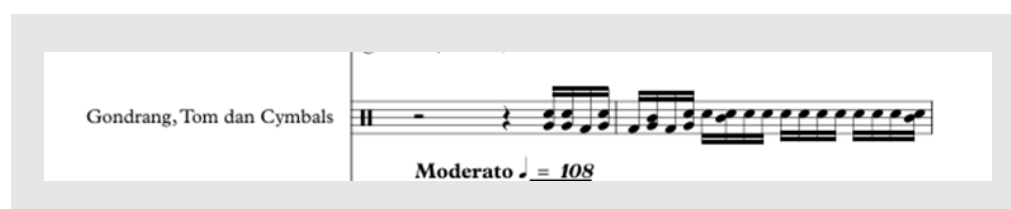
Figure 4 The rhythm pattern of the *gondrang sipitu-pitu* on the *gual* before undergoing a change



In the notation above, you can see the different initial rhythm patterns between *pangindungi* (*Pangindungi* is a large-sized gondrang in the gondrang sipitu-pitu ensemble, played as the tempo regulator in the repertoire) and *panirang* (*Panirang* is a medium-sized gondrang in the gondrang sipitu-pitu ensemble, played as a counter beat or up-beat cutter in opposition) with an andante tempo that means a bit slower than the moderato of about 100 bpm using a measure or 4/4 meter.

The rhythm of this *gual* changes when presented with a *gondrang* keyboard instrument consisting of *sulim*, *gondrang* and keyboard instruments, as seen in the notation below.

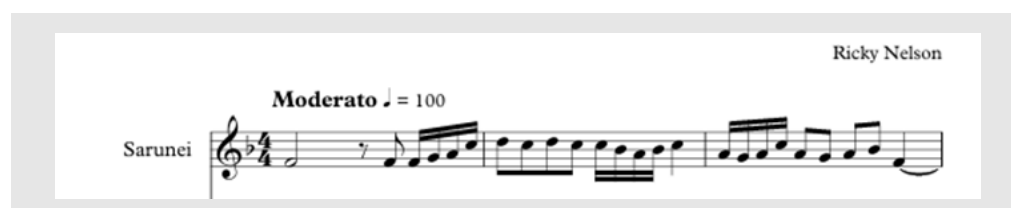
Figure 5 Gondrang rhythm pattern in *gual* after experiencing changes



Through the above illustration, it can be seen that the notation changes have been modified by using a 1/16 note which is played at a moderate tempo with a speed of 108 beats per minute. Based on the notation image above, we can see that after undergoing a change, the gondrang now begins on the fourth beat of the measure. This is a clear departure from the previous rhythmic style, which was played directly on the first beat by the *pangindungi* and *panirang* on the *gondrang sipitu-pitu* (as seen in Figure 4 above).

Furthermore, the initial rhythm pattern performed by the *sarunei* as the melody carrier is shown in the following notation image.

Figure 6 The Rhythm Pattern of the Early Saarunei as a Melody Carrier in the Gondrang sipitu-pitu Ensemble

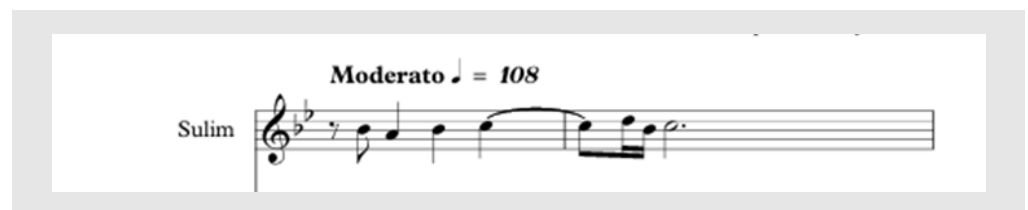


From the notation above, *Sarunei* plays this *gual* with a rhythmic pattern that begins at the first beat in the 1<sup>st</sup> beat and uses the 1/2 note then continues with the 1/4 note and the 1/16 note. The pattern played by the *sarunei* uses an andante tempo with a speed of 100 bpm.

In the *gondrang* ensemble, the rhythm keyboard of the *sarunei* has been replaced by the role of *sulim* or *simalungun* flute, and there are some differences in notation as

in the notation below.

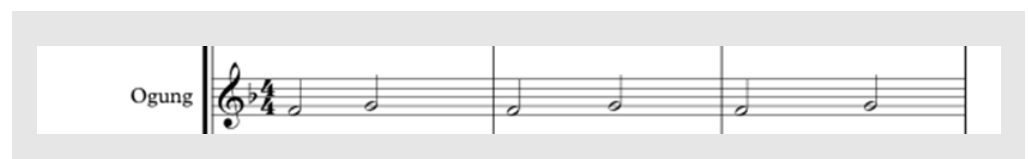
Figure 7 The Rhythm Pattern of the Early Flute as a Melody Carrier in the Gondrang Keyboard Ensemble



The rhythm pattern of the above notation is the rhythm played by *Sulim* as the melody carrier in the *gual sitalasari*, with a moderate tempo with a speed of 108 bpm; the notes often used are notes 1/8 and 1/4, and also accompanied by notes 1/16 in the second beat. It is very clear that the difference lies between the initial rhythm played by *Sarunei* when compared to the initial rhythm pattern played by *sulim* in the keyboard gondrang ensemble.

Furthermore, the *ogung* plays the rhythm pattern is as follows.

Figure 8 Ogung rhythm pattern in Gual sitalasari with the gondrang sipitu-pitu ensemble



As in the notation picture above, the initial pattern of *Gual Sitalasari* played by the *ogung* uses full notes with a long value of 2 taps and is repeated for the next rhythm. The rhythm pattern is played in the first beat of 1 with an andante tempo of 100 bpm.

Furthermore, the *Mongmongan* instrument plays the rhythm pattern as follows

Figure 9 Mongmongan rhythm pattern in Gual Sitalasari with the gondrang sipitu-pitu ensemble



As in the notation picture above, *mingmong* playing *Gual Sitalasari* begins in the third rhythm in the first beat using a 1/4 note played repeatedly on the next bar with an andante tempo of 100 bpm.

In the *gondrang* keyboard ensemble, the *ogung* and *mongmongan* instruments are no longer used, but they are replaced by tom and cymbals instruments, so that the rhythmic presentation style is played as the notation below.

Figure 10 Changes in the instrument and style of presentation of gondrang



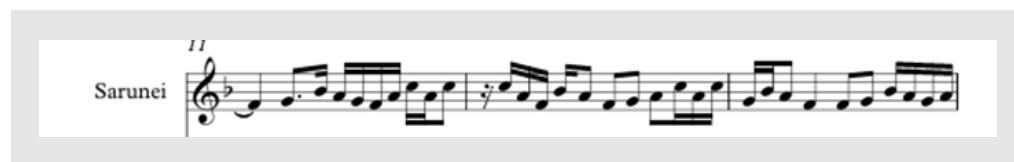
Through the notation above, it can be seen that the use of notation has changed and it also has used cymbal notation symbols that are different from the rhythm patterns previously played by *ogung* and *mongmongan*. The notation uses notes 1/16 and 1/8 with a moderate tempo that is faster than *andante* with a speed of 108 bpm.

In understanding the rhythm of *Gondrang sipitu-pitu*, Jeff Todd Titon's approach is very relevant. Titon views rhythm not just as a repetitive beat pattern, but as a representation of the social structure and cultural values of the society that gave birth to it (Titon, 2020). In *Gondrang sipitu-pitu*, the rhythm played by the seven *pangindungi*, *panirang*, and *paninting* drums has a certain regularity that reflects the social concept of the Simalungun community, such as the philosophy of *Tolu Sahundulan*. *Tolu Sahundulan* is a fundamental principle or philosophy in Batak Simalungun customs and culture. Literally, "tolu" means three and "sahundulan" means one seat or sit together. So, in a literal sense, this phrase means "three who sit together." However, the meaning contained in it is much deeper. *Tolu Sahundulan* refers to the three pillars of power and decision-making in the Simalungun kinship system, which must work together in harmony.

Each rhythmic pattern not only enlivens the atmosphere of the traditional ceremony, but also shows the interconnectedness among social, spiritual, and emotional functions in people's lives. In addition, the rhythmic pattern of *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* which is layered and complementary shows a polyrhythmic character, where different rhythms meet in a complex musical unit, as explained by Titon in the phenomenon of world music (M. Purba, 2021). The transformation that is taking place today still maintains this basic pattern, although some innovations, such as the use of modern instruments, have begun to be adapted to answer the needs of contemporary performance. Thus, the rhythm in *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* is a mirror of the cultural dynamics of the Simalungun people that continue to move with the times without losing their traditional roots. Here is the rhythm of *Gual Sitalasari* which has undergone changes in its presentation by using mixed ensembles such as *Gondrang*, *Sulim*, and Keyboard. In this part, *Gondrang* has been added with other supporting musical instruments such as tom 1, 2, and 3 then added with Ride and Crash Cymbals which are placed next to *Gondrang sipitu-pitu*.

The melody in the *gual sitalasari* is played by the *gondrang sipitu-pitu* ensemble with variations using the basic note Bb which begins with the minor note also using the format of 1 *sarunei*, *gondrang sipitu-pitu* and *ogung* and *mingmongan*, as shown in the following picture:

Figure 11 The melody of *sarunei* in *Gual sitalasari* with the ensemble format of *Gondrang sipitu-pitu*



The notation above shows a melody played by *sarunei*, starting with the note F (c) in the 11th beat, beaten to 1 beat, then continued the note G (re) with a note value of 1/8 and continued with the next note which uses the note 1/16 that is played rather slowly but with a tight and abundant melody.

Figure 12 The melody of *sarunei* in the middle of bars is simple in *Gual Sitalasari*



In the notation above, *sarunei* as the melody carrier plays notes 1/2 and notes 1/8 which begin with the note F and then continue with F-F-G-A. This melody pattern is played repeatedly according to the notes in *Gual Sitalasari*, and basically this pattern can be said to be very tight in the melody part of the *gual* with the format of the *gondrang sipitu-pitu* ensemble.

Some changes in the melody development of the *Gual sitalasari*'s performance can also be noticed as the results of observations and interviews. The changes can be seen in the following notation.

Figure Melodies played by *sulim* in the *gondrang* keyboard ensemble



It can be seen from the notation above, there has been a change in the use of instruments that were previously performed by *sarunei*. It now can be performed by the *sulim* instrument with a simple melodic pattern in playing the *sitalasari*. Besides, the use of the basic note is also different; previously, it was f=do or 1 mole, but in *sulim* it was played through the basic note Bes=do or 2 moles.



The socio-cultural changes in the practice of *Gondrang Sipitu Pitu* reflect the dynamics between traditional cultural values and modern social realities, as described in the theory of socio-cultural change by William F. Ogburn. This theory emphasizes that changes in society can be divided into two main aspects: material culture, such as technology, tools, musical instruments, media of dissemination; and nonmaterial cultures, such as values, norms, beliefs, and symbolic meanings (Budijarto, 2020).

Ogburn states that changes often occur more quickly in material cultures, while nonmaterial cultures often lag behind, causing inequality called cultural lag. This concept is very relevant in explaining the transformation of *Gondrang Sipitu Pitu* (Jansen, 2021).

### **Changes in material culture: forms, tools and media**

The transformation of *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* culture can be observed clearly through its changes in the aspect of material culture, namely physical elements related to its form, tools, and presentation media. In the past, *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* was played purely acoustically using traditional instruments such as *gondang*, *sarunei*, *ogung*, *hesek*, and *taganing* in an arena of traditional rituals, which are generally sacred and limited to the socio-cultural space of the Simalungun people. Its musical function was also closely tied to traditional contexts such as death ceremonies, blessings, or traditional parties (*horja*). The presentation was simple and was carried out directly in front of the community or traditional elders without the help of modern technology.

However, in its development, the material culture of *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* has undergone significant changes along with the presence of technological elements, digital media, and contemporary social needs. Modern musical instruments such as keyboards, toms, cymbals, and electric bass began to be used to enrich the musical structure of *Gondrang*. This combination not only brings a new color in terms of harmony and sound dynamics, but also makes *Gondrang* music more flexible to reach today's audience's tastes. In fact, sound systems, microphones, stage monitors, and lighting are now part of the mandatory devices in *Gondrang* performances, especially when performing on a large scale such as in cultural festivals, modern weddings, or public performances in open spaces.

In addition, changes in material culture are also seen in the media of dissemination and documentation. *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* is now not only played live, but also recorded, filmed, and disseminated through digital media such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and various online music platforms. This digitization process allows *Gondrang* music to reach new social spaces, including audiences from outside the Simalungun community, both domestic and international. *Gondrang's*

performance videos are now not only documentary, but also artistically arranged with narration, animation, and even music editing to increase the appeal of the audience. Social media has opened up a wider space for expression, as well as accelerated the process of popularization and transformation of this music into entertainment, educational, and spiritual formats.

This transformation marked that the changes in material culture were not only concerned with the physical equipment and stage appearance, but also the way people produced, presented, and consumed *Gondrang* music. The use of modern tools and digital media shows the recontextualization of the function of traditional music, from what initially only functioned in traditional ceremonies to a means of entertainment, cultural promotion, and even the expression of cultural identity in the wider public sphere. In other words, this change is part of the process of cultural adaptation to the times, where technology and communication media play an important role in encouraging openness, innovation, and sustainability of traditional values in a contemporary format.

#### **Nonmaterial culture: a shift in values, functions and meanings**

In terms of values, *Gondrang Sipitu-Pitu* was used to be considered sacred, having a spiritual position in traditional ceremonies, such as an introduction to spirits or affirmation of ethnic identity. Nowadays, the ritual function began to shift to the function of entertainment and art performance. The value of sacredness starts to be replaced by commercial value and creative expression, and symbolic meaning in the context of customs is increasingly less understood by the younger generation. This is what Ogburn means by cultural lag (Fitri, 2022): although the means and forms of presentation of *gondrang* are changing rapidly (material culture), the understanding and appreciation of traditional values (non-material culture) is actually delayed or decayed.

The transformation of *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* music does not only occur in material aspects such as tools, forms, and presentation media, but also touches the realm of nonmaterial culture that includes value systems, social functions, and symbolic meanings inherent in the music. In the past, *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* had a sacred and spiritual position, especially in the context of the customs and religious rites of the Simalungun people. This instrument does not only function as entertainment or musical accompaniment, but it has a deep meaning as an introduction to spirits, a prayer reinforcement, a ritual atmosphere, and an affirmation of ethnic identity in various traditional ceremonies.

However, along with the development of the times and the entry of modern elements into the cultural practices of the community,(Saputra et al., 2024) there has been a shift in the function and value of *Gondrang sipitu-pitu*. Functions that were previously ritualistic and sacred are now beginning to be desacralized and shifted to entertainment functions, art performances, and even part of commercial packages in weddings, cultural festivals, or contemporary ethnic concerts. Spiritual values that were once considered high and inseparable from the traditional context are beginning to be replaced by aesthetic values, individual expression, performance creativity, and market orientation.

This shift also had an impact on the symbolic meaning inherent in the elements of *Gondrang's* music. Sounds, rhythmic patterns, and musical structures that were once full of symbolic meaning and functioned as a medium of spiritual communication (such as dialogue with ancestral spirits or expressions of traditional blessings) are now often only understood as "distinctive sounds" or "exotic rhythms" without a deep understanding of their cultural and philosophical context. The younger generation of Simalungun who grew up in the digital age often see *Gondrang* only as a traditional heritage that is visually and auditorily appealing, but they do not understand the traditional values contained in it.(Saragih, 2022).

This phenomenon can be explained through the concept of "cultural lag" put forward by sociologist William F. Ogburn (Hati, 2020). Cultural lag describes the delay of nonmaterial culture in following changes in material culture. In the case of *Gondrang sipitu-pitu*, although presentation technology, musical instruments, and performance media have developed very rapidly (such as the use of sound systems, digital recordings, and social media), the understanding and appreciation of the spiritual, ethical, and symbolic values contained in this music has not undergone a balanced development. This leads to cultural inequality: outward forms develop, but the content of the meaning that should accompany these cultural practices begins to be eroded. Thus, the transformation of non-material culture in *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* reflects a critical point in the preservation of tradition, where cultural actors and connoisseurs must reconsider the importance of maintaining a balance between form and content, between aesthetics and values, and between innovation and the roots of tradition. If sacred values and symbolic meanings are no longer recognized or understood, the transformation that occurs is not only a form of change, but can also mean a loss of a deeper cultural identity.

### Socio-Cultural Implications

This socio-cultural change has a wide impact on the Simalungun people on the transformation of *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* music as follows. It shows that the culture of Simalungun is dynamic, not static. The challenge is how to make the younger generation to understand the meaning of tradition while innovating, and to encourage cultural and educational institutions to take a role in cultural preservation and reinterpretation.

The transformation of *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* music has a significant socio-cultural impact on the people of Simalungun. This is a proof that Simalungun culture has the ability to adapt and respond to change, both from within the society itself and from external influences such as globalization, digital media, and the development of aesthetic tastes. If this process is carried out consistently, then traditions will not only survive, but will also live and thrive in a broader and more modern social space. In the context of *Gondrang sipitu-pitu*, the Simalungun community is negotiating between traditional heritage and contemporary expression. They face the challenge of maintaining cultural continuity while adapting to the changing times, ensuring the performance remains socially and spiritually relevant.

### 6. Conclusions

This research reveals that *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* music has undergone significant transformation in the Simalungun society in response to social, cultural, religious, and technological dynamics. Initially, *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* served as a sacred ritual medium, used in traditional ceremonies and animist beliefs to communicate with ancestral spirits. However, with the entry of Christianity, modernization, and the influence of outside cultures, there has been a shift in its function, form, and style of presentation. In terms of musical structure, transformation can be seen in the addition of modern instruments (such as keyboards, tom or tam tam, cymbals, brass), modifications of rhythm patterns, to the exploration of harmony and improvisation that were not previously dominant in the original tradition. The presentation of music that was once limited to traditional ceremonies has now expanded to entertainment stages, cultural festivals, digital media, and social media content. This transformation is a form of creative adaptation of traditional artists to the tastes and demands of contemporary society.

In terms of function, *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* music has shifted from a sacred function to an entertainment function and cultural identity, even becoming part of a cultural product that is aesthetically and commercially packaged. This shows that *Gondrang* has entered the current of cultural commodification, which on the one hand

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expands its reach and existence, but on the other hand carries the risk of decay of its traditional values. This change also reflects the cultural lag as described by William F. Ogburn, which is an imbalance between changes in material culture (tools, media, and performance technology) that are rapidly evolving (Hati, 2020), and nonmaterial cultures (values, meaning, and spiritual understanding) that tend to be left behind. The younger generation, for example, is more interested in the modern *Gondrang* musical look and format, but no longer understands the symbolic meaning and sacred function inherent in the customary context. Thus, the transformation of *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* is not only a matter of aesthetic and technological adaptation, but also an arena of meaning contestation, where there is a tug-of-war between the preservation of cultural values and the demands of innovation and contemporary expression. For this reason, the preservation of *Gondrang* needs to be carried out comprehensively, not only maintaining its physical form, but also revitalizing the symbolic, spiritual, and ethnic values of Simalungun that are inherent in the music.s.

The suggestion in this study, namely the *Gondrang sipitu-pitu* Transformation, shows that culture is not static. Therefore, the preservation of this music needs to be carried out in a balanced manner, namely while maintaining traditional values, symbolic meanings, and spiritual functions inherent in the traditional context, while responding to the development of the times through innovation in form, media, and presentation. In practice, some artists only emphasize the entertainment and aesthetic aspects of the stage, so that the deep meaning and sacredness of this music is at risk of being reduced. An understanding of cultural values should be the main foundation in any renewal effort.

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