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## The Use and Function of Gondang Sabangunan in the Pasahat Hoda Debata Ceremony in the Toba Batak Community

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DOI : 10.32734/lwsa.v7i2.2090  
Electronic ISSN : 2654-7066  
Print ISSN : 2654-7058

*Volume 7 Issue 2 – 2022 TALENTA Conference Series: Local Wisdom, Social, and Arts (LWSA)*



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# The Use and Function of *Gondang Sabangunan* in the *Pasahat Hoda Debata* Ceremony in the Toba Batak Community

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## Abstract

The tradition of *pasahat hoda Debata* is one of the highest ritual ceremonies in the Batak Toba community. Within this tradition, the use of *gondang sabangunan* is integral. This research aims to understand the usage and function of *gondang sabangunan* within the *pasahat hoda Debata* tradition performed by the Community of *Ruma Parsaktian Ompung Raja Isumbaon* in Sijambur Pusuk Buhit, Samosir. Employing a qualitative method, Alan P. Meriam's theory (1964) on use and function is selected to examine the usage and function of *gondang sabangunan*. Research data sources are obtained from *pargonsi* (traditional Batak Toba musicians), *panuturi* (ceremonial leaders), and the descendants' community of *Ruma Parsaktian Ompung Raja Isumbaon Raja Isumbaon*. Data collection techniques involve literature review, observation, and interviews, while data analysis employs methods such as data condensation, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification. This qualitative descriptive research aims to provide a systematic, factual, and accurate portrayal of a specific fact. The research findings indicate that *gondang sabangunan* is used during various ceremonial moments and its functions include serving as a means of communication, symbolism, and validation of the ceremony during *pasahat hoda Debata*.

Keywords: *pasahat hoda Debata*; *gondang sabangunan*; use; function

## Abstrak

Tradisi *pasahat hoda Debata* merupakan salah satu upacara ritual tertinggi pada masyarakat Batak Toba. Dalam tradisi *pasahat hoda Debata* tidak bisa terlepas dengan *gondang sabangunan*. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana penggunaan dan fungsi *gondang* pada tradisi *pasahat hoda Debata* yang dilaksanakan Komunitas *Ruma Parsaktian Ompung Raja Isumbaon* di Sijambur Pusuk Buhit, Samosir. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif. Teori Alan P. Meriam (1964) tentang use and function dipilih untuk melihat penggunaan dan fungsi *gondang sabangunan*. Sumber data penelitian diperoleh dari *pargonsi* (pemain musik tradisional Batak Toba), *panuturi* (pemimpin upacara), dan komunitas keturunan *Raja Isumbaon*. Teknik Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui studi pustaka, observasi, dan wawancara, sementara analisis data menggunakan metode kondensasi data (data condensation), penyajian data (data display), dan penarikan kesimpulan serta verifikasi (conclusion drawing/verification). Penelitian deskriptif kualitatif ini bertujuan memberikan gambaran yang sistematis, faktual, dan akurat terkait suatu fakta tertentu. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan *gondang sabangunan* digunakan pada saat *gondang mandudu*, *gondang manggora sahala*, *mangharihir* dan *paborothon hoda Debata*, *gondang umum hasuhuton*, *gondang mamuhai hoda Debata*, *gondang manaruhon bobak tu pusuk buhit*, *gondang mananom bobak*. Sedangkan fungsi *gondang* pada upacara *pasahat hoda debata* adalah sebagai sarana komunikasi, sebagai perlambangan, sebagai pengabsahan upacara.

Kata Kunci: *pasahat hoda Debata*; *gondang sabangunan*; penggunaan; fungsi

## 1. Introduction

This paper examines a traditional ancestral belief in the Toba Batak community called *pasahat hoda Debata* as well as the use and function of *gondang sabangunan* in the ceremony. As far as the author's observation, this may be the first writing in the form of scientific work regarding the ceremony. The *pasahat hoda Debata* ceremony is one of the Toba Batak traditions that is rarely carried out and is rarely known to the Toba Batak community at this time.

In terminology, the word *pasahat* means to deliver, *hoda* means horse (as a sacrificial offering), *Debata* means God. So, *pasahat hoda Debata* can be interpreted as conveying horse sacrifices to God. The God in the *pasahat hoda Debata* tradition is *Mulajadi Nabolon*. In oral Batak Mythology about the *Theogony of Debata* (*Theogony of High God*), which is a mythology that tells about *Debata* (High God) *Mulajadi Nabolon* as the Creator of the Universe which has no beginning and no end (*na so marmula na so marujung*), it is told how *Debata Mulajadi Nabolon* created three elements of *Debata* who are his own sons.

The horse offering was delivered through the incarnation of *Debata na tolu*<sup>1</sup>. The three horses that are offered are *hoda sihapas pili* (white horse), a symbol of *Debata Batara Guru*, *hoda nabara* (red horse), a symbol of *Debata Soripada*, *hoda silintom* (black horse), a symbol of *Debata Mangala Bulan*. In the *pasahat hoda Debata* ceremony, there will be a number of ritual stages that must be carried out.

Horse sacrifice in the ritual tradition of the Toba Batak community is considered the highest offering in establishing a relationship with *Debata na tolu*. According to Mr. J. Limbong one of the *panuturi*<sup>2</sup> in the *pasahat hoda Debata* ceremony, said the belief of the people who carry out this tradition is considered an ancestral message if there is a disaster that comes into their village. This ritual ceremony is also the last way if bad luck comes to this world and is prolonged<sup>3</sup>.

This certainly has its own reasons and philosophical meanings for the culture of the Toba Batak people. In many cultures, horses are also considered to have a connection to the spiritual world and transcendence. Horses are often associated with deities or mythological beings, which raises philosophical meanings about the relationship between the physical and spiritual realms. Horses can symbolize a spiritual journey toward a higher consciousness or a search for meaning in life.

The Toba Batak community still practices many customs in their daily lives even though they have embraced Christianity. One of them is the re-implementation of the *pasahat hoda Debata* tradition in 2021 by the *Ruma Parsaktian Oppung Raja Isumbaon Community*<sup>3</sup>. The *pasahat hoda Debata* tradition was carried out again despite the corona virus pandemic that occurred at the beginning of 2019 until 2022. The ritual ceremony of the *pasahat hoda Debata* tradition was held at Sijambur Nabolak Pusuk Buhit in Samosir Regency on September 28-30, 2021.

According to Fadil Pasaribu as one of the young *panuturi* in Samosir district, *gondang* cannot be separated from a big ceremony in the Toba Batak community. He also emphasized that if *gondang* is not presented in a big ceremony in the Toba Batak community, the activity could be canceled<sup>4</sup>.

The role of *gondang* is very important in every traditional ceremony, because traditional ceremonies, especially those that have a large category or are called *ulaon bolon* with the presence of *gondang*, have become a system. If in a system one of them is missing, it is certain that something is missing and the system may not work. Likewise between traditional ceremonies and the presence of *gondang*.

The *pasahat hoda Debata* tradition attracted the author's attention because this ceremony is rarely known to the Toba Batak community. The role of *gondang* in the *pasahat hoda Debata* tradition is also one of the main focuses of the author to be researched and studied. This is a cultural phenomenon that really attracts the author to become a research with the title *Use and Function of Gondang in the Pasahat Hoda Debata Ritual in the Toba Batak Community*.

## 2. Literature Review

Research on *gondang* can be found in many scientific works. In 2016, Harahap wrote a book entitled "Hata ni debata: *etnografi kebudayaan spiritual-musikal Parmalim Batak Toba*". This paper discusses the relationship between the use of *gondang* and the implementation of rituals in the context of the Toba Batak tradition. In traditional Toba Batak belief, it is believed that there is no more effective way to connect human hope with the creator of the universe than through the sound of *gondang*. Therefore, *gondang* is the only channel to reach the supernatural dimension in the view of the Toba Batak people.

<sup>1</sup> They are called *Debata na tolu* (three debatas) or *debata sitolu sada* (triune debata, three but one). There are two opinions about the presence of these three debatas. The first opinion as expressed by A.B. Sinaga says that *debata na tolu*, namely *Batara Guru*, *Sori Pada* and *Mangala Bulan*, were created by *Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon*. The second opinion as expressed by P. Lumban Tobing says that *debata na tolu* is the self of *Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon*. *Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon* incarnates into three selves, namely as *debata banua ginjang*, as *debata banua tonga* and as *Debata banua toru*. The *Debata banua ginjang* is called *Debata Batara Guru* or *Tuan/Ompu Bubi Na Bolon*, the *Debata banua tonga* is called *Debata Soripada* or *Tuan/Ompu Silaon Na Bolon*, and the *Debata banua toru* is called *Debata Mangala Bulan* or *Tuan/Ompu Pane Na Bolon*. Because of this, the traditional Toba Batak community believes in *sada Debata di ginjang*, *sada Debata di tonga*, *sada Debata di toru* (one God above, one God in the middle and one God below).

<sup>2</sup> The *Panuturi* or often called *raja parhata* is in practice the spokesperson of adat. The *Panuturi* must be well versed in customary law. More than that, he must be able to find a solution if there is a dispute over the application of adat. That is why the *panuturi* is often likened to *panjaha di bibir*, *parpustaha di tolonan*. (reader on the lips, library owner in the throat). So, a *panuturi* must be knowledgeable and articulate, and must also be able to teach and explain anything that is asked of him.

<sup>3</sup> King *Isumbaon* was the youngest son of the King of Batak. King *Isumbaon* had 3 (three) sons, namely: *Tuan Sorimangaraja*, *Raja Asiasi Sangkar* and *Somaliang*.

<sup>4</sup> Interview 08 August 2023

In 2022, Tinambunan wrote a journal entitled "Gondang Batak Toba: *Makna Religi dan Implikasinya pada Keagamaan dan Adat*". This paper focuses on the religious meaning of *gondang* which is implemented in religious and traditional life.

*Gondang* has many different meanings and interpretations. It can function as a musical instrument, part of a musical ensemble, the title of a musical composition, a collection of several musical compositions (repertoire), a tempo determinant in a composition, as well as being part of a series of ceremonies. In addition, the *gondang* can also symbolize groups such as families or age groups, and even function as a prayer. In this case the author focuses on *gondang* as an ensemble.

There are two types of *gondang* as an ensemble in the Toba Batak community, namely the *gondang sabangunan* ensemble and the *gondang hasapi* ensemble. Both of these musical ensembles are used as accompaniment to the ceremonial dance, the Tortor. In this case the author focuses on the use and function of *gondang sabangunan* in the *pasahat hoda Debata* ritual.

However, research on *pasahat hoda Debata* has not yet been found by the author in the form of scientific work, so this also makes the author interested in researching and studying it in the form of scientific work.

### 3. Methods

This research adopts the qualitative research method as the main approach. The in-depth interview method was used to collect significant primary data. The data were reinforced by secondary data derived from the study of research-related literature and pre-existing literature sources. This research analyzed the use and function of the *gondang sabangunan* ensemble, which involved both audio and visual dimensions. Careful observation was required, which was supported by the use of video recordings and photographs taken with video cameras and still cameras. In addition, the documentary video analysis method was also used to analyze the events that had been implemented as part of this research.

The theory used to analyze the use and function of *gondang sabangunan* in the ceremony in question is the theory of *use and function* proposed by Merriam. This approach recognizes that every type of music is created with a specific purpose that suits the needs of the individual or group that owns it. When discussing the meaning or purpose of a piece of music, it is not enough to understand the function of the music. In addition to identifying function, it is important to look at how and when the music is used.

In his book *The Anthropology of Music* (1964), Merriam explains that there are differences in meaning between the use of music in certain contexts. He emphasized that temporal and situational aspects must also be considered when analyzing music. Using this approach, the research can look at how *gondang sabangunan* is used in the context of the ceremony and how the music contributes to the overall experience and meaning of the ceremony.

The use and function approach helps in revealing the deeper dimensions of the role of music in specific cultural and ceremonial contexts. According to Merriam (1964:219), music enthusiasts use songs to woo their idols, in terms of function, music can be analyzed as the continuation and preservation of biological groups. When the supplicant uses music to speak to God, he uses certain mechanisms that are related to other mechanisms such as dance, prayer, ritual, ceremony. The function of music, apart from the religious function, may be interpreted as a form and protection of the universe. Usage then refers to the situation in which music is used in human action, function relates to the reason for the usage and especially the broader purpose.

In other words, the term *use* refers to the situation of what, where and when the music is used. Meanwhile, the term *function* refers to what the music is used for.

Merriam (1964) suggests that there are at least 10 functions of music, namely: (1) the function of emotional expression (2) the function of aesthetic appreciation, (3) the function of entertainment (4) the function of communication, (5) the function of symbolism, (6) the function of physical reaction, (7) the function related to social norms, (8) the function of authorizing social institutions and religious ceremonies, (9) the function of cultural continuity, (10) the function of community integration.

## 4. Finding and Discussion

### 4.1. Pasahat Hoda Debata

#### 4.1.1. Pasahat Hoda Debata in the Ancient Tradition

The tradition of *pasahat hoda Debata* in the Toba Batak community has rarely been practiced since the entry of Christianity in the Batak land from the 1860s to the 1940s. Nommensen succeeded in 'Christianizing' a large number of Toba Batak people who were originally adherents of Toba Batak ancestral beliefs. The tradition of *pasahat hoda Debata* is considered part of adat and *hasipelebeguan*<sup>5</sup>.

In Lukas, H. (2003). *Theories of Indianization exemplified by selected case studies from Indonesia (Insular Southeast Asia)*. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften,

*"The most essential part among the offerings, which the Toba-Batak made to the rulers of Barus, were the so-called "horses of the gods" (hoda debata), but their colors were strictly prescribed. The Island of Samosir and the surroundings of the Lake Toba used to be included in the system of the "ritual trade" with Barus. According to ancient traditions, the sultan of Barus was sent an offering in the form of a white horse by Singamangaraja. The Muslim ruler is said to have sent it to the sovereign of Pagaruyung (see fig. 2), that is to say, to the King of Minangkabau, who on his part is reported to have had it sent to Raja Uti (Heine-Geldern 1959:387f). Raja Uti, the legendary ruler in the land of the setting sun, who was regarded as the incarnation of the god of the Batak, Mulajadinabolon, was presented a white horse of the gods. The Sultan of Barus was given a piebald horse as the incarnation of the Batak-god Mangalabulan. The Singamangaraja received a black horse as the incarnation of Batara Guru."*

The writing says the most important part among the offerings given by the Toba Batak people to the rulers of Barus were the so-called horses of the gods (*hoda Debata*), but their colors were highly specified. Samosir Island and its surroundings around Lake Toba were once included in the "ritual trade" system with Barus. According to ancient tradition, the sultan of Barus was sent an offering of white horses by *Singamangaraja*.

This Muslim ruler is said to have sent it to the ruler of *Pagaruyung*, namely to the *King of Minangkabau*, who in turn reportedly sent it to *King Uti* (Heine-Geldern, 1959: 387f). *King Uti*, the legendary ruler of the land of the setting sun, considered to be the incarnation of the Batak god *Mulajadinabolon*, was presented with a divine white horse. The Sultan of Barus was given a striped (white and black) horse as the incarnation of the Batak god *Mangalabulan*. *Singamangaraja* received a black horse as the incarnation of *Batara Guru*.

Related to this article, the tradition of *pasahat hoda Debata* was once practiced in the ancient tradition. Historically, the horse offering pilgrimage from Silindung to Barus lasted until 1927. It is recorded in history that from the second half of the 7th century to the 16th century, Barus appears to have been a Batak kingdom, Indianized and shaped by Hindu or Buddhist traditions respectively. This kingdom was ruled by members of the Batak clan (clan) Pasaribu (Lukas, H 2003: 8).

In the Toba Batak community, horses are often considered to have a deep philosophical meaning and are considered sacred. Some writings mention horses as a symbol of *Debata na tolu*. In the book: Dictionary of Toba Batak Culture mentioned about the work of *Mulajadi Nabolon*, namely: the creator of all things, the source of the Most Great events, *Debata* creator of the upper continent (*banua ginjang*), middle continent (*banua tongah*), and lower continent (*banua toru*), has no origin and no end, is everywhere at all times.

Horses in the local beliefs of the Toba Batak community are also considered to have a connection to the spiritual world and transcendence. Horses are often associated with the vehicles of the gods *Debata Batara Guru*, *Debata Soripada*, *Debata Mangala bulan*, which raise philosophical meanings about the relationship between the physical and spiritual realms. Horses can symbolize the spiritual journey towards higher consciousness or the search for meaning in life.

According to Fadil Pasaribu as one of the *panuturi*, the horse symbolizes *Debata na tolu*. *Hoda sihapus pili* (white horse) symbolizes *Debata Batara Guru*, *hoda nabara* (red horse) symbolizes *Debata Soripada*, *hoda silitong* (black horse) symbolizes *Debata Mangala Bulan*.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Hasipelebeguan* is an old form of belief that is strongly opposed to the Christian faith and therefore the church strongly rejects it, including all aspects attached to the practice of *hasipelebeguan*. In other words, *hasipelebeguan* is a collective term that encapsulates the entire practice and nature of the religion of the Toba Batak people (Pardede 1987:238).

<sup>6</sup> Interview 08 August 2023

#### 4.1.2. The current return of the Hoda Debata Tradition

The Toba Batak community believes that there are spiritual forces beyond the limits of human strength. In explaining the concept of soul and spirit, the Toba Batak community recognizes several terms, including *tondi*<sup>7</sup> and *sahala*<sup>8</sup>.

When the power of *Mulajadi Nabolon* is said to communicate through human beings, the individual who receives this special gift is considered to be the recipient of a special *sahala*, such as the gift of the sixth sense. Such individuals are then known as *parbinoto* or *datu*. It is therefore not surprising that *parbinoto* or *datu* (psychics) held a highly respected position in society at that time.

Similar to the phenomenon of dreams, there are situations where specific dreams are deemed necessary to ask the *datu*, because in Toba Batak ethics, there is a guideline that states "*sori mago dohot sori hasea marhitehon parnipion*." In translation, this means that one's joys and sorrows in life should be directed by dreams.

In this context, the *pasahat hoda Debata* ritual becomes an important event. This tradition is carried out in response to a dream experience experienced by a person, as happened to Donne boru Lumban Gaol. However, when the author asked about the content of the dream, Donne boru Lumban Gaol was reluctant to provide detailed information, as this was considered a secret between her and the *datu*.

In this situation, Donne boru Lumban Gaol then went to the *datu* or *Panuturi* to seek further understanding of the meaning of her dream. The *datu* is considered to have the expertise to translate the messages hidden in dreams and provide an in-depth view of how the dream impacts on the individual's life journey.

The tradition of *Pasahat Hoda Debata*, which involves consulting a *datu*, becomes a means for individuals to gain a clearer understanding of the meaning and implications of their dreams.

#### 4.2. Gondang sabangunan Ensemble

The Toba Batak community recognizes two types of *gondang* ensembles, namely the *gondang sabangunan ensemble* and the *gondang hasapi ensemble*<sup>9</sup>. Both of these musical ensembles are used as accompaniment to the ceremonial dance, the *Tortor*.

The *gondang sabangunan* ensemble is an ensemble whose instrumentation consists of: five *taganing* (single headed braced and tuned drums), one *odap* (double headed drum), one *gordang* (single headed braced drum), one *sarune bolon* (double-reed oboe), four *ogung* (suspended gongs), namely *ogung ihutan*, *ogung oloan*, *ogung doal*, and *ogung panggora*; and one *hesek* or an empty bottle (struck idiophone). All of these instruments are incorporated into an ensemble called *gondang sabangunan*.

In the tradition of *gondang sabangunan* and *gondang hasapi* the musician is called *pargonsi*. While the individual designation for each musician is based on the instrument he controls or plays, for example: the designation for *taganing players* is *partaganing*, the designation for *sarune players* is *parsarune hasapi* players are *parhasapi*, and so on.

In addition to the group and individual designations above, there are also special designations given to *taganing players* and *sarune players* which are community awards by aligning them with gods. The title given to *taganing players* (*partaganing*) is *Batara Guru Humundul*<sup>10</sup>, while the title for *sarune players* is *Batara Guru Humuntar*<sup>11</sup>.

According to Sangti (1973:14), the designations *Batara Guru Humundul* and *Batara Guru Humuntar* were given because to become a *partaganing* and *parsarune* one must have expertise in music, knowledge of *ruhut-ruhut niadat* (customary joints), knowledge of ancient religion and also knowledge of supernatural sciences.

<sup>7</sup> *Tondi* refers to one's spirit or life essence, as the force that drives the individual.

<sup>8</sup> *Sahala* is the special power or ability of the *tondi*, which is also often referred to as authority. In accordance with the view of Batak society, *sahala* is a gift given by God to each individual with variations in quality and quantity. In the context of Toba Batak society, *sahala* has an important role in determining one's position in the social hierarchy.

<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the *gondang hasapi* ensemble is an ensemble consisting of two *hasapi* (*hasapi ende* and *hasapi doal*) (*twostringed boat lute*), a *garantung* (a wooden-xylophone), a *sarune etek* (*single-reed idioglot aerophone*), a *sulim* (*transverse bamboo flute*) and an empty bottle called *hesek* (*struck idiophone*).

<sup>10</sup> *Batara Guru Humundul* has the meaning of a teaching deity sitting on earth who teaches the procedures for implementing customs in a ceremony that includes *gondang* and also as a place for people to ask about matters related to religion.

<sup>11</sup> *Batara Guru Humuntar* has the meaning of a teaching god who conveys messages to the wider community through the booming sound of *sarune*

Therefore, the *partaganing* and *parsarune* are not only musicians but also *paniroi* (advisors) in the procedure of the ceremony. For this reason, they both always receive special attention from the *suhut* (the one carrying out the ceremony), as well as from other parties involved in the ceremony. This is because they are the ones who convey requests and adoration to the *partaganing* (the Almighty) and to the subordinate gods who have the right to autonomy through the sound of their *gondas*.

Throughout the author's observations during the *pasahat hoda Debata ceremony*, the *gondang sabangunan* ensemble was always used in every part of the ritual ceremony. The selection of the *gondang sabangunan* ensemble to be used in every part of the *Debata hoda pasahat ceremony* was determined by the request of the host of the ceremony on the grounds that the *Debata hoda pasahat ceremony* was an *ulaon bolon* (large ceremony). This is also synonymous with the term *gondang sabangunan* which is often also called *gondang bolon* which is related to major ceremonies in *habatahon* (the basis of Batak customs) and *Pardebataon* (the basis of Batak divinity)...

#### 4.3. Use and Function of Gondang sabangunan in the Pasahat Hoda Debata Ceremony

##### 4.3.1. Use of Gondang Sabangunan

In accordance with Meriam's opinion that use is more closely related to practice, when, where and in what situations *gondang sabangunan* is used. In this case, the author wants to see how *gondang sabangunan* is used in the context of the *Raja Isombaon* community's *pasahat hoda Debata* ceremony.

The *pasahat hoda Debata* ceremony that I researched was held on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 28-30 September 2021 at Sijambur Nabolak Pusuk Buhit, Sianjur Mula-Mula District, Samosir Regency. Based on observations through video documentaries and interviews with traditional leaders who participated in the ceremony, the author obtained an analysis of the use of *gondang sabangunan* at the *pasahat hoda Debata* ceremony as follows.

- Gondang Mandudu

One of the rituals that most makes *gondang* an interrelation of theoanthropocosmos (the relationship between God, humans and nature) in the *pasahat hoda Debata* tradition is the *gondang mandudu* ritual stage. *Gondang mandudu* is a ritual of playing *gondang sabangunan* for approximately one hour without stopping, where the ritual participants cannot move but must pray. *Gondang mandudu* was held on Tuesday, September 28, 2021 at 10:00-24:00 WIB in the courtyard of *Ruma Parsantian Raja Isumbaon*.<sup>12</sup>

One type of music, called *gondang mandudu* (or *gondang dudu*), is part of a *gondang*-playing ceremony exclusively performed for *Mulajadi Nabolon*. This music is believed by the Toba Batak tribe to be the *gondang of God* or the music of their God (Rithaony, 1995:643).

When the *gondang mandudu* is played, everyone must sit and listen quietly, and must not do anything else. The ritual is played in the dark. It is especially performed for the spirits, to invite them to come down and bless the ceremony. The spirits are invited to dance invisibly in the middle of the ceremony. Usually one or two people become possessed by the spirits.

During *gondang mandudu*, the horse is offered to *Debata na tolu*. *Pargonsi* is believed to be the messenger and translator of the purpose of every request and hope to *Mulajadi Nabolon*. In *gondang mandudu* it must be done sacredly, so that the *pargonsi* status will also be considered and believed to be a god, namely *parsarune* as *Batara Guru Humundul* and *partaganing* as *Batara Guru Humuntar* who can make *gondang sabangunan* as a medium of communication with *Mulajadi Nabolon* through the sound of the *gondang sabangunan* played.

The sacredness of *gondang mandudu* must follow every rule and regulation. If there are participants in the ceremony who are pregnant, they are asked to deliver *napuran tiar* (betel leaves) to the *pargonsi* as a symbol of permission so that the baby is in good condition during and after the ceremony. Likewise, participants who have supernatural powers should also give *napuran tiar* to the *pargonsi* so that everything is fine.

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<sup>12</sup> The place of the gathering house of the descendants of *King Isombaon* is in Sijambur Nabolak Pusuk Buhit, Samosir Regency.

- Gondang Manggora Sahala

After the *gondang mandudu* ritual, it will be followed by the *gondang manggora sahala* ritual. The word *manggora* in the Batak-Indonesian Dictionary is translated as calling. The word *sahala* in the Batak-Indonesian Dictionary is translated as charisma or magic. *Sahala* has a very broad meaning and has different meanings between people who are alive and dead. For people who are alive, *Sahala* is interpreted as authority or charisma (Siahaan, 1993, p. 18). In this case *gondang manggora sahala* means calling the charisma and magic of the dead through the sound of *gondang*.

This ritual was held on Wednesday, September 29, 2021 at around 01.00-03.00 WIB. *Gondang sabangunan* in this ritual ceremony is the main requirement for presenting *sahala* and ancestral spirits to sick people who are ritualized. There are two types of healing rites according to the severity of the person's illness, namely *gondang sahala* (people who give offerings to the tondi of the sick so that they are strong again), *gondang saem* (people give offerings as a substitute for the tondi of the sick), because the tondi is held by *sombaon* (another spirit). The main thing is that the *gondang sahala* means that the person's illness is not severe, but something or another spirit is disturbing the person's tondi (self). Signs such as the person talking to himself without an interlocutor. He dances without music, and has no passion for life.

The *gondang sahala* rite was created to strengthen the person's spirit again, by asking which spirit dwells and disturbs the soul of the sick person.

- Mangharihir and Paborothon Hoda Debata

After the *gondang manggora sahala* is completed, the next event is the *mangharihir and paborothon hoda*. *Mangharihir* means tying a rattan or iron ring to the horse's nose. When you want to *mangharihir hoda Debata*, the *panuturi* will ask the *gondang sabangunan* to sound. This event is held on Wednesday, September 29, 2021 around 09.00-12.00 WIB. When *mangharihir*, there will be some special people named *pamuhai*<sup>13</sup> to carry out this event.

*Pamuhai* will *mangharihir* one by one the horses that have been prepared. The purpose of *mangharihir hoda Debata* is so that the horse can later be tied on the *borotan* wood<sup>14</sup>. *Mangharihir* will start from a white horse (*hodasihapas pili*), then a red horse (*hoda sibara*), and a black horse (*hoda silintom*). Each *pamuhai* will *mangharihir* each of each horse will be asked to *gondang*<sup>15</sup>. *Gondang somba* for white horses, *gondang elek-elek* for red horses and *gondang lae-lae* for black horses.

After completing the *mangharihir hoda Debata* ritual, the *paborothon hoda Debata* ritual is immediately followed. The horse will be tethered to a pole that has been stuck before in the middle of the yard, precisely in the courtyard of *Ruma Parsantian Raja Isombaon*. Just like the *mangharihir* ritual process, the *paborothon* ritual will also be accompanied by *gondang sabangunan*. After the *paborothon hoda Debata* is completed, the *pamuhai manortor*<sup>16</sup> around the tethered horse three times with *gondang mangaliat*. Then this event will be closed with *gondang sitio hasahatan*.

- Gondang Mamuhai Hoda Debata

The *mamuhai hoda Debata* ritual is also one of the most important things of all the activities that have taken place. This ritual was held on Wednesday, September 29, 2021 at around 15.00-17.00 WIB. *Mamuhai hoda Debata* is a ritual of spearing a horse offering by a spearman called *pamantom*. During this ceremony, *pamantom* will perform a series of rituals that are always accompanied by *gondang*. *Pamantom* will ask *pargonsi* for *gondang* for the success of his ritual. First the *pamantom* will convey *tonggo-tonggo*<sup>17</sup> to Mulajadi Nabolon, then ask for *gondang alu-alu* to *pargonsi*. *Gondang alu-alu* is asked for a sign of respect and permission to the rulers of the upper, middle and lower worlds so that they are given smoothness in the ritual process.

<sup>13</sup> *Pamuhai* is the person chosen to carry out the *pasahat hoda Debata* rituals such as putting a ring into the nose of the sacrificial animal and executing the sacrificial animal.

<sup>14</sup> *Borotan* is a pole used to tie the animal offerings in the center of the yard that will be slaughtered.

<sup>15</sup> In this case *gondang* can be interpreted as a repertoire. For example, *gondang somba*, *gondang elek-elek*, etc.

<sup>16</sup> The name of the dance activity for the Toba Batak community

<sup>17</sup> *Tonggo-tonggo* is a kind of invitation or prayer request to the Almighty. *Tonggo* is composed in a beautiful language style.



After being asked for *gondang alu-alu*, next will be asked for *gondang somba jujungan*, then *gondang tu da Ompung didolok nabolon* which aims to give permission to the ruler of Pusuk Buhit. Then the *pamantom* will again ask for *gondang mula-mula* as a sign of the beginning of the ritual, followed by asking for *gondang somba* as a sign of respect to *Mulajadi, Soripada and Naliat Nalolo*. Then *gondang clay* to surround the horse that has been moored.

After the *gondang* part mentioned above has been fulfilled, the *pamantom* will convey the three horses to each *Debata na tolu*. After that, the *gondang lae-lae* will be asked again while the *pamuhai manortor* carries a spear and then the horse's stomach is speared one by one starting from the red horse, then the white and black horses. After all the horses have been speared then the *pamuhai* will leave the place of the ceremony while accompanied by *gondang*.

- Gondang Manaruhon Bobak Tu Pusuk Buhit

After a series of *pasahat hoda Debata* rituals have been carried out, the next stage is to take the horse skin that has been slaughtered to *Pusuk Buhit*. This ritual is called *manaruhon bobak* which is carried out on Thursday, September 30, 2021 at 08.00-09.00 WIB. In this ritual must always be accompanied by *gondang*.

In previous rituals such as *gondang mandudu*, *gondang manggora sahala*, *gondang hasuhuton*, *gondang gondang mangharihir dohot paborothon hoda Debata* and *gondang mamuhai hoda Debata*, the *pargonsi* was on top of the attic of *Parsantian Oppung Raja Isumbaon's* house called *bonggar*. But after the *manaruhon bobak* ritual, the *pargonsi* must go straight down in playing the *gondang*.

According to the beliefs of previous ancestors, the placement of *pargonsi* in the *bonggar* because *pargonsi* is able to convey desires, messages and *Tonggo Tonggo* (prayers) to *Mulajadi Nabolon* (Ruler of the universe according to ancient Toba Batak beliefs). Because the *pargonsi* is also considered equal to the god who is given the title *Batara Guru Humundul* for *taganing* players and *Batara Guru Humuntar* for *sarune bolon* players, the *pargonsi* place must be higher than the *hasuhuton* or the event maker.

*Pargonsi* will later be asked for *gondang dalam* by the *panuturi* as a sign that the *bobak* (horse skin) will be delivered to the top of *Pusuk Buhit* and blessed by *Mulajadi Nabolon*. After arriving at the *harbangan* (gate leading to *Pusuk Buhit*), the *panuturi* will ask for *gondang buka harbangan* as a sign of permission to the ruler of *Pusuk Buhit*. Then after arriving at *aeq tala-tala*<sup>18</sup>, then the *panuturi* will ask for *gondang lae lae* and *elek-elek* which means the first *gondang* to ask permission to start the event to honor the *Mulajadi Nabolon*.

After arriving at the top of *Pusuk Buhit*, the *panuturi* will ask for *sipitu gondang*. The existence of *sipitu gondang* in the ceremony is very important, because the purpose of this *gondang* is to convey all the intentions and objectives of the ceremony to *Mulajadi Na Bolon*.

As long as *si pitu gondang* is played, ceremony participants are not allowed to *manortor*. This is based on the concept of *si pitu gondang* which was originally played to honor *Sahala Badia Guru*, namely *Mula Jadi Na Bolon* who taught *pargonsi* to be able to play *gondang*.

- Gondang Mananom Bobak

In the next ritual, *mananom bobak* or planting horse skins will be carried out on Thursday, September 30, 2021 at 10.00-12.00 WIB. *Panuturi* will first convey *tonggo-tongo* as a greeting of respect and gratitude to the Creator. After all the requests have been made, the *gondang habonaran* will be requested which symbolizes the recognition of the form of purity and honesty of the executor in making offerings to *Mulajadi Nabolon*.

After the *gondang* is sounded, the *bobak* will be planted one by one in a hole in the *Pusuk Buhit* land. First *bobak hoda silintom* will be put into the excavated soil, then *bobak hoda sibara*, then *bobak hoda sihapas pili*.

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<sup>18</sup> *Telaga tala-tala* or *aeq tala-tala* is one of the sacred places on *Pusuk Buhit* mountain, at the top of *Pusuk Buhit* there are two pilgrimage sites that can be visited, namely *aeq tala-tala* and *Parsaktian Pusuk Buhit*. *Aeq tala-tala* is a small pond that is believed to have certain powers.

After completing the *mananom bobak*, *mangalap tua ni gondang* will be performed. In this ritual the *panuturi* again asks for *sipitu gondang* with the aim of conveying all the intentions and objectives of the implementation of the ceremony to *Mulajadi Na Bolon*.

#### 4.3.2. Function of Gondang Sabangunan

In accordance with Meriam's opinion, the function of music is more closely related to the approach that each type of music is created with a specific purpose that suits the needs of the individual or group of owners.

In this case, the author wants to see how *gondang sabangunan* functions in the context of the *pasahat hoda Debata* ceremony held by the *Oppung Raja Isombaon* community. The author gets an analysis of the function of *gondang sabangunan* in the *pasahat hoda Debata* ceremony as follows.

- Gondang sabangunan as a means of communication

At the *pasahat hoda Debata* ceremony, *gondang sabangunan* will specifically be played to begin and end the ceremony. The community of *Ompu Raja Isombaon's* descendants believe that the *pargonsi* (*gondang sabangunan* player) is a special person who can communicate with the Creator through the *gondang sabangunan*. Through the *gondang sabangunan*, the *pargonsi* delivers prayers to the Almighty Creator so that the ceremony is smooth from beginning to end.

Thus, after the ceremony is over, through the *gondang sabangunan* game, the *pargonsi* also convey gratitude and thanks to God for blessing the success of the event from beginning to end. From this we can see that *gondang sabangunan* here functions as a medium to communicate to convey prayers to the Creator. In addition, *gondang sabangunan* as communication can also be seen from the *gondang manggora sahala* ritual, where in this ceremony *gondang* is believed to be able to call the spirits of the ancestors which are characterized by *trance*. One other very concrete example is during the *gondang mandudu* ritual. In the *gondang mandudu* ritual, the sound of *gondang* for approximately 1 hour can communicate to the Creator.

- Gondang sabangunan as a Symbol

*Gondang sabangunan* is an ensemble consisting of *sarune bolon*, *taganing*, *gordang* and 4 *ogung*. *Taganing* and *sarune* players are also believed to be equal to the Gods, namely *Batara Guru Humundul* and *Batara Guru Humuntar*. Therefore, if the ceremony uses *gondang sabangunan*, it is certain that the ritual ceremony is an *ulaon bolon* (big ceremony) and *ulaon Pardebataon* (divinity). Likewise, the *pasahat hoda Debata* ceremony is one of the highest ritual ceremonies in the Toba Batak community. In other words, *gondang sabangunan* has become a symbol of the Toba Batak community.

- Gondang sabangunan as a Validation of the Pasahat Hoda Debata Ceremony

*Gondang sabangunan* in the *Pasahat Hoda Data* traditional ceremony does not only function as accompaniment. More than that, *gondang sabangunan* is one of the important elements in the continuity of the ceremony. The presentation of *gondang sabangunan* at the beginning and at the end of the *pasahat hoda Debata* ceremony serves to validate the ceremony. In other words, the presentation of *gondang sabangunan* at the beginning states that the ceremony is legally opened or started and the presentation at the end states that the ceremony is legally closed or has been completed.

In addition, Fadil Pasaribu (interview 08 August 2023) also mentioned that the *pasahat hoda Debata* ceremony would not be *saur* (perfect/complete/valid) without the accompaniment of *gondang sabangunan*. Thus it can be concluded that *gondang sabangunan* functions as a validation of the *pasahat hoda Debata* ceremony.

## 5. Conclusion

The *pasahat hoda Debata* ceremony is a tradition that reflects ancestral beliefs by offering three horses to the *Mulajadi Nabolon* through *Debata na tolu*. In the *pasahat hoda Debata* ceremony there are a series of rituals that must be passed and the *gondang sabangunan* ensemble plays a dominant role as the center for the implementation of each stage of the ritual.

*Gondang sabangunan* in the *pasahat hoda Debata* ceremony is not only an accompaniment. More than that, *gondang sabangunan* is one of the important elements in the continuity of the ceremony. The importance of the *gondang sabangunan* ensemble in the *pasahat hoda Debata* traditional ceremony in the Toba Batak community can be seen from its use and function in the continuity of the ceremony.

Broadly speaking, the use of *gondang sabangunan* is to accompany the ceremony from beginning to end. The use of *gondang sabangunan* is specifically divided into several situations, namely, during *gondang mandudu*, *gondang manggora sahala*, *mangharithir* and *paborothon hoda Debata*, *general gondang hasuhuton*, *gondang mamuhai hoda Debata*, *gondang manaruhoon bobak tu pusuk buhit*, *gondang mananom bobak*. While the function of *gondang* in the *pasahat hoda debata ceremony* is as a means of communication, as a symbol, as a validation of the ceremony.

## Acknowledgements

- Sastra Gunawan Pane : Designing and conducting research, collecting field data, analyzing data, and writing the script.
- Prof. Drs. Mauliy Purba, M.A., Ph.D. : Proposed the conceptual framework of the research, conducted a literature review, assisted in the preparation of conclusions, and provided critical input in the preparation of the manuscript.
- Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan (LPDP): Funding sponsor for research.

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