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Cultural Diversity and Worship: The Role of Ethnic Music in Eliezer Sentani Congregation

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Abstract: Caring for the congregation through the presence of ethnic music in weekly worship and religious festivals brings a new atmosphere to the Eliezer congregation in Sentani. The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of the forms, impacts, and meanings of ethnic music in the Eliezer Sentani congregation. The ethnic music and singing are a collaboration of six different ethnic groups: Papua, Maluku, NTT, Sulawesi (Toraja-Minahasa), Java, and North Sumatra (Batak). The method used is a qualitative descriptive method that employs data triangulation through document analysis, observation, and two types of interviews: focused interviews and free interviews. Data is analyzed by combining these three data sources and then providing a description and conclusions about the observed phenomenon. The results of this research reveal that the worship with ethnic nuances in GPI Eliezer Sentani can be seen in terms of its form, meaning, and impact. The form of worship with ethnic elements involves traditional music components in various combinations, serving the purpose of adding aesthetics and color to worship and devotion. In terms of meaning, the use of ethnic music in worship acts as a means of promoting culture and as a tool for unity and togetherness. Regarding its impact, the use of ethnic music in worship has led to an improvement in the quality and quantity of congregation members participating in the worship.

Keywords: forms, impact, significances, ethnic music, congregation of eliezer of sentani

1. INTRODUCTION

Music in worship is an essential aspect, as it can provide significant energy in the interpretation of worship through the interaction between humans and God or with one another. It is important to understand that the presence of music in Christian congregation worship has been intertwined with the existence of Christianity. A correct understanding of the role of music in Christian worship cannot be separated from thinking about church music. Thinking about church music, as expressed by Wolterstorff, should lead people to think about church music as a service or a means to serve various liturgical actions (Matondang & Munthe, 2022).

Church music serves as the heartfelt expression of believers, conveyed through harmonious melodies and rhythms, typically in the form of songs and hymns. The primary characteristic of music in church worship, known within the church's liturgy, is a symbolic representation of the congregation's celebration of faith. This celebration of faith involves a deep understanding of the mysteries of the Christian religion, particularly the presence of Christ as the true Savior, which profoundly resonates with the emotions of the congregation through song. The connection between music and liturgy should ideally be harmonious, where the balance and the expression of faith are inseparable.

Every worship celebration in the congregation is always attended and served by music, especially during weekly worship services. One of the congregations that provides music services is GPI Papua Eliezer Sentani. In these worship celebrations, they follow

the elements of liturgy that serve as a guide for the proper conduct of worship. Music services during Sunday worship are also organized with different time arrangements each week. There are five types of songs used as guidelines for a month of service, including Congregational Hymns, Sing a New Song, Supplementary Congregational Hymns, Two Old Friends, and Spiritual Songs. These songs are not only used in weekly worship but also in sectoral and categorical gatherings.

In addition to the five types of songs mentioned above, there are other songs or types of music used in the congregation's worship. This is done in accordance with moments in the church calendar, where the observance and celebration of important church days are adapted to the existing context. One of the music services present in worship, particularly during Sunday services at the GPI Papua Eliezer Sentani congregation, is music with an ethnic flavor. This is carried out according to a predefined calendar, where the ethnic characteristics of the respective regions, particularly the regions from which the congregation members originate, become a part of the liturgical elements in the worship, ranging from the Papua, Maluku, East Nusa Tenggara, Sulawesi, Java, and Sumatra regions.

The reason behind the presence of ethnic music in worship celebrations at GPI Eliezer Sentani is the congregation's pluralistic composition. Every member of the congregation possesses different potential and unique perspectives, and therefore, the ethnic elements in worship can add value to the worship experience. Additionally, the quality and quantity of worship have experienced degradation, leading some people to feel bored and weary with monotonous worship. Therefore, the congregation's council sees an opportunity to enhance the value of worship by incorporating ethnic elements into the service.

Ethnic music services provide an advantage by involving congregation members in their participation. Worship, which can sometimes become monotonous due to its focus on the council and worship leaders, can be overcome by introducing elements of dynamism into worship. This offers an opportunity for congregation members to express themselves more freely and to experience a more meaningful worship.

A study was conducted to explore the aspects of church music and how the understanding of church music is perceived within the Sinta Kuala Kapuas congregation. This research provides insights into the understanding of music and how it has evolved within the context of worship. The study was undertaken by the researcher due to the fact that the Sinta Kuala Kapuas congregation, one of the oldest congregations, plays a significant role in the development of the congregation, worship models, and the presentation of songs among other churches in Kalimantan. The results of this study show that the Sinta Kuala Kapuas church has experienced positive growth because the church service schedule is well-organized through scheduled training and is effectively utilized by choir leaders and organizers. In this research, two aspects were observed: the accuracy of tempo in organization and the adjustment of pitch by choir leaders (Pahan, 2021).

Definitively, this research provides an understanding of the significance of church music for Christian believers. The primary objective of this study is to unveil the essence of music in Christian

worship related to its religious dimension. The research was conducted at the Ekklesia Church in East Kalibata, South Jakarta. The findings of this study reveal that church hymns have an impact on the physical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual aspects of individuals. Furthermore, the meaning of music in the worship of Christians is as a tool to draw closer to God, and through music, self-expression can be articulated, which in turn influences dimensions of faith, knowledge, personal worship practices, and religious experiences (Ulam, 2019).

The collaboration between traditional and modern music also imparts a distinct atmosphere to worship ceremonies. A research study aimed to explore the significance and the worship process involving the collaboration of traditional and modern music (Simanjuntak et al., 2019). The findings of this research indicate that traditional music is incorporated into worship due to the desires of the older members in the congregation and to instill a love for domestic products and culture among the younger churchgoers. The presence of traditional music offers a unique experience for the elderly, positively enhances the worship experience, and addresses their longing for traditional music. However, there are certain challenges in the collaboration of traditional and modern music in worship, such as a lack of harmony and dissonance in some musical aspects due to the insufficient training and skills of the younger generation in playing traditional instruments. Nevertheless, from a psychological perspective, this musical collaboration motivates the elderly to be more enthusiastic in their worship.

In line with the study above, contemporary worship, or 21st-century worship that many churches predominantly use today, can be examined for its influence and impact when viewed through a liturgical-critical lens (Panjaitan & Lumingkewas, 2019). They argue that the development of worship, whether traditional or contemporary in the 21st century, is generally accommodative or performative. To maintain the church's stability and adaptability, they have transformed the worship style into semi-contemporary or contemporary, known as alternative worship. The results of this research indicate that contemporary worship, on a physical level, has been successfully adopted across various church demographics. A proper liturgy, whether classical or contemporary, is one that effectively facilitates communication in worship to the Creator.

Based on the previous research reference above, this study aims to examine the effects of the ethnic music service arrangement during Sunday worship in the Eliezer Sentani congregation. The influence and congregation's development are evaluated within the context of the ethnic atmosphere incorporated in the church's worship. The questions developed for this research are concerned with understanding the form, significance, and impact of the presence of ethnic music in the worship process at the Eliezer Sentani congregation.

2. METHODS

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method with a data triangulation approach. The primary objective of this study is to reveal the occurrences, facts, and phenomena during the research process by presenting what actually transpired, as suggested by Sugiyono in (Wenda et al., 2022).

The data in this study were collected using observation, interviews, and documentation techniques. During the observation, the researcher aimed to assess the congregation members' enthusiasm in worship involving ethnic elements and various worship materials that bring cultural values and freshness to the worship experience. The same approach was used during interviews to confirm the attitudes and enthusiasm of congregation members. Interviews included focused interviews with church leaders, centering on the development of worship with ethnic nuances, and free interviews (Kabanga, 2021) with congregation members. The questions in the focused interview were centered on the development of worship with ethnic nuances, while the free interview included open-ended questions about the congregation members' attitudes towards ethnic-themed worship. Documentation was employed to gather data related to the congregation's attendance over the past four months. Data analysis was carried out using triangulation techniques to determine the form, significance, and impact in both qualitative and quantitative aspects.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

The existence of ethnic music in worship at GPI Eliezer Sentani provides a unique character when viewed from the perspectives of form, meaning, and impact.

1. The forms of ethnic music in worship vary according to the cultures used (from six cultural groups, namely Papua, Maluku, East Nusa Tenggara, Toraja, Jawa, and Batak). Despite the differences in traditions, similarities can be observed in their functions:
 - a. Traditional Songs and Instruments: The entire worship service is colored by songs in traditional languages and accompanied by traditional musical instruments such as flutes and drums for the Toraja people, tifa and Wolay for the Sentani people, tifa, gong, and sapale for the Maluku people, flutes, hapetan, and sordang for the Batak people, and sasando and tetek for the NTT people.
 - b. Songs in specific languages and dialects that are sung and accompanied by a combination of contemporary and traditional music.
 - c. Percussion music, involving core musical instruments played by striking, plucking, and blowing to elevate the spirit of worship
 - d. Ceremonial chants, ritual songs that facilitate worship and devotion.

These elements of ethnic music enhance the worship experience at GPI Eliezer Sentani by adding cultural diversity and richness to the church's worship practices.

2. The meaning conveyed through ethnic worship, particularly the use of traditional musical instruments, serves as a medium to introduce the culture and cultural richness of the region. It also represents a means of preserving and passing on the art and culture possessed by the community. Through the incorporation of traditional musical instruments in worship, the congregation

aims to not only celebrate their cultural heritage but also ensure its continuity and appreciation for future generations.

3. There are both positive and negative impacts felt in worship when featuring local cultural art.

3.2 Discussion

There are six ethnic groups registered in the PGI Eliezer Sentani congregation. These six ethnic groups come together as one and are bound by an organization that forms a harmonious congregation. The mentioned ethnic groups are Papua, Maluku, East Nusa Tenggara, Toraja, Jawa, and Batak. Their worship is not limited to a single ethnicity; instead, all congregation members participate in it.

Ethnic music presented in the Sunday worship at the Eliezer Sentani congregation is in accordance with the celebration of church holidays and other special worship contexts. However, it's not just music that is featured in these worship services. Other forms of art, such as dance and various creations in a blend of cultural ornaments and strong traditions, are incorporated, rich in traditional content from specific ethnic backgrounds.

Forms

The form of ethnic music in worship carries its own ambiance, such as:

1. The integration of traditional songs and music is a way to combine religious elements with the cultural heritage of traditional music. Various musical instruments used serve specific functions depending on the ethnic group playing them. Wahyudi, Rafiloza, and Ediwar emphasize that the use of musical instruments in a ritual has its uniqueness, depending on its purpose and the surrounding context (Wahyudi et al., 2019). Traditional percussion instruments such as gongs, drums, and tifa serve a function in religious rituals, which is to regulate rhythm, pauses, or draw the congregation's attention to the fact that they are entering the next session or stage as per the liturgy of worship. Another form of traditional musical instrument with religious elements is the flute (seruling/suling), used as a melodic instrument to produce expressive melodies that are adapted to the choice of songs sung in worship. Other traditional stringed instruments like the sasando and sapale serve to provide melodic and expressive music. In a cultural and ritual context, these instruments are used to emphasize the atmosphere or emotions based on the experienced ambiance.

In essence, the integration of traditional musical instruments from various ethnic groups in a sacred worship does not prioritize the inherent function of music in its original ritual context. Instead, it serves as an aesthetic element to enhance the worship atmosphere. This aligns with (Handoko, 2022) who states that the existence of musical forms in worship primarily serves an aesthetic purpose, encompassing the form of expressive faith, beauty regarded as goodness, and aspects of sacredness, worship, and surrender

2. The existence of dialects combined with music is a characteristic feature of each region, such as among the Toraja and Maluku ethnic groups, accompanied by shouts, body language, and monologue expressions to arouse emotions and enhance enthusiasm in worship.

3. Percussion music also functions as a traditional musical instrument aimed at igniting the congregation's enthusiasm to delve deeper into the sanctity of worship.
4. Chants in music have two versions. The first involves a combination of all musical instruments, whether plucked, struck, or blown, along with contemporary music for praise and worship. The second version involves only one musical instrument, like a flute, producing beautiful melodies to immerse the atmosphere in worship or guide thoughts deeper while the worship leader recites or reads prayers.

3.4 Significances

In addition to its form, the meaning of integrating ethnic music in worship serves specific intentions

Promotion of Culture

In a multicultural organization, there are naturally various cultural differences that intersect. It's not about highlighting these differences but rather the church's attitude towards embracing these cultures. (Rumbay et al., 2021) in their writings, religion and its curriculum towards local cultures today are characterized by a friendly, anthropocentric approach. They add that people and their cultures can be a means of developing Christian faith, starting from the family. This is in line with the worship practices at the Eliezer Sentani congregation, where the church can actualize the congregation's cultural work and express it in the church through the process of spiritualism, which is worship.

The presence in an organization presents a challenge, which is why it requires a strong stance in maintaining unity. These differences can be actualized through various cultures, works, and even perspectives. However, building positive perceptions, such as worship with ethnic elements, contributes positively. The tangible expression of these differences can be seen through the presence and combination of various musical instruments and music itself. Music can evoke a sense of unity and togetherness. This aligns with Wiflihani's view that music serves functions in life, and these functions can be dynamic, shifting from a ritual element to an entertaining one and ultimately serving as a means of unity and cohesion. (Wiflihani, 2016).

The GPI Ebenezer Church recognizes the presence of pluralism within the congregation, and therefore, there is a need for a perspective to address this pluralism. Ethnic worship is one efficient way to foster togetherness. The church does not promote ethnocentrism or favor any particular ethnic group's dominance; instead, they emphasize that all ethnic groups are part of the same unified organization.

Impact

The impact felt by implementing worship with an ethnic nuance includes improved quality of Worship and Quantity of Congregation. The Increased congregation attendance during weeks 3 and 4 can be observed in the [table 1](#) below:

Table 1. Congregation Attendance Frequency of July-October

Number	Month	Week				Σ
		1	2	3	4	
1	July	69	71	87	85	312
	%	53.49%	55.03%	67.44%	65.89%	60.46%
2	August	85	77	80	82	324
	%	65.89%	59.69%	62.02%	63.57%	62.79%
3	September	87	83	123	88	381
	%	67.44%	64.34%	95.35%	68.22%	73.84%
4	October	81	79	88	77	325
	%	62.79%	61.24%	68.22%	59.69%	62.98%
	Σ	62,40	60.08%	73.26%	64.34%	65.02%

Based on the results in Table 1 above, it can be concluded that in weeks 3 and 4, the percentage of congregation attendance indicates an increase. The data demonstrates that the influence of ethnic-themed worship on the Eliezer Sentani congregation has a positive impact on church attendance. During weeks 3 and 4, an average of 73.26% and 64.34% of the congregation attended worship. These figures are dominant when compared to worship without an ethnic nuance.

This aligns with the results of interviews with the congregation board and members, who expressed an increase in attendance during ethnic-themed worship.

"...berdasarkan data jemaat pada minggu ibadah nuansa etnis semangat jemaat beribadah bertambah" (majelis jemaat)
"... jemaat banyak yang hadir kalau ibadah etnis..." (jemaat).

Specifically, the impact of ethnic music on the congregation demonstrates a significant increase in both the quality and quantity.

Ethnic worship is contextualized with ethnic music and ethnic songs. Both of these elements can be connected to the impact of congregation attendance. Culture and worship are intricately linked and cannot be separated; they have a mutual relationship. Therefore, a form of worship that encompasses various liturgical elements contains not only spiritual significance but also human values in human-to-human relationships. The essence of human values is reflected in cultural forms that can be embraced as part of worship and considered values that must be preserved to maintain the authenticity of worship itself. When culture is adopted into the elements of liturgy, the essence of worship should be maintained and preserved. This is known as liturgical inculturation. Chupungco provides a simple definition of Worship Inculturation as "the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and culture (Daulay, 2020). Therefore, the inculturation process provides space for the congregation to participate and express themselves, one of which is demonstrated through the presence of music in

worship. Music can be used to depict the beauty of God that is believed in. Thus, the presence of traditional (ethnic) music is a form and effort to bring to life the beauty bestowed by God, which is evident in a cultural heritage.

"... saya merasa semangat beribadah dengan suasana baru, ada tari-tarian, ada musik-musik dan nyanyian daerah..." (Jemaat pemuda)

"...ibadah model ini cocok ki tong pu hati..." (Jemaat lansia)"...ibadah model ini cocok ki tong pu hati..." (Jemaat lansia)

"... saya melihatnya ada semangat beribadah yang hadir dalam gereja..." (majelis gereja)

Ethnic music is closely related to traditional music. It's not just one form of traditional music that is used but various forms of traditional music that provide a fresh atmosphere in worship. The meaning associated with the use of ethnic music in the Eliezer Sentani congregation can be viewed from both a theological and cultural perspective. From a theological perspective, it is believed that worship should be accompanied by a joyful heart, as seen in contextual worship, where the magi presented their best with joyful hearts upon meeting the Son of God. In line with this, worship accompanied by music such as the tambourine, dancing, harp, and flute (Psalm 150:4, 5, and 6) is a representation of a joyful heart. (Hutagalung, 2021).

"... membawa suka cita, mempererat persaudaraan walaupun berbeda latar belakang suku dan ras" (majelis jemaat)

"... suasana gembira, memperkenalkan budaya dan saling memahami budaya) (jemaat)

Worship is filled with songs and music, including ethnic music. This is evident in the thanksgiving and doctrinal aspects of the Christian faith. The purpose is to enhance the spirituality of the congregation so that they can focus on heartfelt worship (Polla, 2021).

From a cultural perspective, the existence of ethnic music in worship serves as a means to strengthen brotherhood and love. Ethnic music does not reduce the quantity of the congregation but increases the number of worshipers. Ethnic music is a gift from God, and it is fitting for us to glorify God with all our strength and effort. Music, especially ethnic music, helps us become aware of God's presence (Farrand & Jeremiah, 2014). The existence of ethnic music is a process of cultural inculturation by applying contextual worship for the sake of a vibrant and active worship.

4. CONCLUSION

The diversity of cultural backgrounds within a community can be manifested as a richness in shaping and managing the concept of a congregation and realized in the form of worship, both in regular Sunday worship and other celebratory worship services. This is precisely what the GPI Papua Eliezer Sentani congregation in the Jayapura Nabire Classis has experienced. In their worship activities, the focus is not solely on liturgy using common worship methods but also incorporates ethnic elements, which are held during regular Sunday services and other special church celebrations in accordance with predefined schedules. Therefore, the regular implementation of ethnic worship is seen as a form of service that

combines music, culture, and Christian faith, resulting in an alternative approach to Christian worship that remains true to the essence and meaning of Christian worship.

The forms of ethnic worship held in the context of six cultures (Papua, Maluku, NTT, Sulawesi, Java, and North Sumatra) serve as a benchmark for developing a worship method within the congregation. This approach prevents the worship services from becoming monotonous due to the frequent repetition of liturgical content in worship manuals. It is intended to encourage greater engagement and a deeper understanding of the true meaning of Christian worship among the congregation members. This has theological and cultural implications, resulting in the enhancement of both the quality and quantity of worship services and contributing to contextual cultural inculturation, stimulating the worship experience, and implicitly strengthening the sense of brotherhood among the faithful.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Cosye Meilina Sahureka as her contribution to translate and make corrections throughout the process of proof reading
Nelinio Parinussa as guider to complete and revise article based on the reviewers' correction.

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