

Musical Expression of *Gandang Tasa* in *Bapereih* Performance in Pariaman, West Sumatra Indonesia

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Abstract

Bapereih is a traditional music competition among *gandang tasa* groups (traditional music ensembles) within the cultural region of Pariaman, West Sumatra, Indonesia. The judging system in the *bapereih* competition is unique, as it considers mistakes made by players from both musical and non-musical aspects, assigning them negative points. The smallest accumulation of errors determines the winner. Calculating negative points creates psychological pressure on players, making them afraid to make mistakes, thus affecting their expression and playing behavior, leading to tension, stiffness, lack of fluidity, and gimmicky strokes to avoid errors. This research aims to uncover the musical expression and behavior of players in *bapereih* performances. The research method employed is qualitative with a case study approach. Data collection involves carefully observing players' expressions and behaviors in detail to understand their musical expressions and playing behavior. The research results indicate that psychologically, the pressure from the competition affects the players' mentality and expression, making them stiff, tense, and less fluid.

Keywords: Musical expression, *gandang tasa*, *bapereih*

DOI: 10.7176/ADS/108-06

Publication date: December 31st 2023

1. Introduction

Pariaman, West Sumatra, Indonesia, has a tradition of cultural competitions encompassing various aspects such as rituals, customs, traditions, and performing arts. Typically, these competitions involve showcasing various cultural products through parades and festivals. However, some competitions are contests demonstrating skills, with winners receiving prizes. Competitions in this form are called "*bapereih*" (with prizes), such as kite-flying competitions with large kites (*layang-layang danguang*), *Indang* dance competitions, and traditional *Gandang Tasa* music. Asril et al. (2019) state that *bapereih gangandang tasa* is a performance of *Gandang Tasa* in a competition or contest among *Gandang Tasa* groups in the city of Pariaman and Padang Pariaman Regency, with distinctive implementation mechanisms and judging systems (see also Asril et al., 2021).

Individuals from the community itself carry out the implementation. They do not involve individuals from the government sector in organizing the event, and the competition judges also do not include people from the academic, artistic, or cultural community. The competition judges are exclusively drawn from the elderly members of the *Gandang Tasa* community who possess the skills and experience of proficient *Gandang Tasa* players. The judging system is also unique, incorporating negative points, where points are tallied based on the mistakes made by each group's players during their performances. The group with the fewest accumulated mistakes is awarded first, second, third place, and so on, based on the order of the accumulation of error points (Asril et al., 2019).

The negative point scoring system has psychological effects on the participants of *bapereih*. The symptoms of these psychological effects manifest in changes in musical expression, behavior or gestures, and playing style that appear stiff, tense, and not fluid. There are even suspicions of gimmicky movements to avoid discordant sounds when striking the drums simultaneously. The players' expressions are related to musical expression. According to Yahya et al. (2020), "Expression in music is the expression of thoughts and feelings that encompass all nuances of tempo, dynamics, and tonal color (sound)..." Expression is also related to facial expressions such as joy, anxiety, and disappointment, as well as movements in the body. Sukmawati (2016) states that musicians' ideas and feelings are visible through body posture, hand gestures, and facial expressions to enhance visual performance.

Previous authors have extensively conducted research related to *gandang tasa* and musical expression. Asril et al. (2019a; 2019b) discuss the performativity of *gandang tasa* in rituals, *bapereih*, entertainment, and *gandang tasa* performance gatherings. Yunaidi & Asril (2020) write about *gandang tasa* becoming the most prominent processional music in Minangkabau, West Sumatra, Indonesia; Wimbrayardi (2023) examines *gandang tasa* from the perspective of organology. Sukmawati (2016) writes about the musical expression regarding the characteristics of saxophone music played by Kaori Kobayashi through melody, improvisation, dynamics, and other aspects: movement, sound, appearance, and the musician. Yahya et al. (2020) write about

the diversity of musical expression in *sholawat* art within a multicultural context. Nisa (2022) analyzes the effects of sound systems and musical emotional expression in the song "*Tenang*" by Yura Yunita. Risqi & Sinaga (2022) discuss musical expression in the types of songs presented and their functions in the *Sintren* dance group KSYR Lestari in Tegal, Central Java, Indonesia.

Based on the above writing, there has yet to be any discussion or research on the musical expression of *gandang tasa*. The phenomenon of musical expression in *bapereih gandang tasa* performances is interesting and important to study to uncover why there are changes in expression, style, and gestures becoming tense, stiff, and even gimmick. This research aims to understand how these changes alter the expression and visual aspects of *gandang tasa* performances within their context.

2. Research Method

This research employs a qualitative case study method focusing on *gandang tasa* performances in the context of *bapereih*, emphasizing data collection through observation (Creswell, 2017; Prasetya, 2013). The research stages include (1) determining the research topic, (2) defining the research problem, (3) establishing premises, (4) collecting data, (5) data analysis, (6) concluding.

Gandang tasa performances in the context of *bapereih* encompass several phenomena in implementation, musical, and non-musical aspects. The implementation aspect involves all mechanisms and systems applied in *bapereih* competitions. The musical aspect focuses on mastering competition materials, such as the songs played and various mistakes made. The non-musical aspect is directed at the behavior and expression of the *gandang tasa* players during their performances. They may do things that are not natural, as they experience psychological pressure to avoid mistakes, leading to their expressions appearing stiff and tense and even resorting to gimmicks.

Data collection is carried out through interviews, observations, and field notes. Focused and in-depth interviews are conducted with traditional figures, *gandang tasa* teachers or elders, judges, and players. Observations of *gandang tasa* performances in the context of *bapereih* are conducted to gain experience and capture musicians' expressions during the performances (Simatupang, 2013). Data analysis involves categorization or classification and reducing data obtained in the field. Data analysis focuses on discovering the musical expression, players' expressions and behaviors, and understanding what mistakes lead to negative point calculations.

3. Results And Discussion

3.1. The Concept of *Bapereih*

Bapereih originates from the word "*pereih*," generally understood by the people of Pariaman, West Sumatra, Indonesia, as a prize or reward. The term "*ba*" (equivalent to "*ber*" in Bahasa Indonesia and a prefix in English) in *Bapereih* signifies an activity that comes with the consequence of a reward or prize, as seen in the context of *gandang tasa* performances. When analyzed phonemically, "*pereih*" comes from the sound "*prais*," derived from the English word "prize," which means a reward (Echols & Shadily, 2010). The phoneme "*prais*" is pronounced as "*pereih*" in the Minangkabau-Pariaman dialect. According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian Dictionary), "*hadiah*" (prize) means a gift (souvenir), an award, or a reward (for victory) (Alwi, ed., 2014). In the context of the arts and traditions of the Pariaman community, various activities are rewarded with prizes called "*pereih*," such as *gandang tasa* competitions, kite-flying contests with large kites (*layang-layang danguang*), top-spinning competitions (*lomba gasiang*), and others.

So, the meaning of "*bapereih*" in Pariaman is to compete to vie for several prizes with a system and competition pattern determined by its criteria. The form and type of prizes provided depend greatly on the organizing committee. They typically consist of gold or goats for the first to third winners, while the fourth to last winners (the total number of winners could range from 7 to 9 groups) receive cash prizes. The monetary value of the prizes is small size. In addition to the prizes, the winners also receive trophies (Asril, et al., 2019a). In *gandang tasa bapereih* competitions, it usually involves 20-30 *gandang tasa* groups.

Bapereih is organized by the *gandang tasa* community from a *nagari* (village) or *korong* (hamlet), fully supported by community leaders and the local government at the *nagari/desa* level. *Bapereih* has its system and mechanisms in its implementation. Each *bapereih* event must have an organizing committee, participants, a clear time and place, judges as evaluators, and compulsory songs to compete. The organizing committee undertakes various activities, starting from distributing written invitations to various *gandang tasa* groups, preparing a specially arranged stage for the competition, such as creating a dedicated space on the stage for the *tasa* player (ensemble leader with a *tasa* instrument) and a place for the drum players. They also provide a complete set of *gandang tasa* with drumsticks.

More specifically, they prepare a stage for the judges to sit and evaluate each group's performance. The judges' stage is elevated (Asril et al., 2019a), approximately 4 to 4.5 meters high, with dimensions around three by 3 meters, and located about 10 meters from the front of the competition stage. The elevated position of the

judges allows them the flexibility to observe each performing player meticulously without being disturbed by the audience traffic. It prevents any intervention by anyone, including the committee. No one can approach the judges due to their elevated position.

The performance in the context of *bapereih* is participated in by various *gandang tasa* groups, each of which will play a 'compulsory song.' The designated compulsory song is the song called "*Alihan Anam*." The song "*Alihan Anam*" has a complete structure than other *gandang tasa* songs and is widely mastered by various *gandang tasa* groups in Pariaman. The song's structure consists of two parts: *matam* and *alihan*. *Matam* is also called the first part of the song, consisting of *pangka matam* (a kind of introduction), *matam* (the main part of the song consisting of interlocking patterns between drum and *tasa* rhythms), and *ikua matam* (the closing or ending of the song). The *matam* song highlights the presentation of drum rhythm with *tasa*. *Alihan*, on the other hand, is the second part of the song, consisting of six groups of arranged rhythm patterns, each forming phrases and song sentences; hence, it is called *alihan anam* (six stages of song transition). The characteristic of the *Alihan Anam* song is presenting diverse and complex rhythm patterns and having a longer song structure.

Each *gandang tasa* group comprises seven players with specific roles: one *tasa* player serves as the leader and commander during the performance, while the remaining six are drummers. The player formation during the performance is predetermined; the drummers are divided into two groups, three on the left and three on the right, standing upright and facing the stage, creating a face-to-face arrangement. The *tasa* player is positioned in the middle at the end of the drummers with an elevated position. The *tasa* player issues commands or musical codes through rhythmic motifs, entering the stage, assuming a standing position in front of the drums, picking up the drums, slinging or positioning the drums on the shoulder, preparing to start the performance, introducing motifs and rhythm patterns, and providing transition codes in the *alihan* section.



Figure 1. The players' position when picking up the drum, then it will be lifted and slung over the shoulder (Photo: Asril)

3.2. Judging System

The evaluation involves counting the mistakes made by the players categorizing them into musical and non-musical accidents. Musical accidents encompass errors in playing song sections, rhythm patterns, and asynchronous strikes. For example, if a drum player makes a mistake, one negative point is recorded. If there is a lack of synchronization or a flam performed by two drum players, then two negative points are recorded. The most significant mistake can result in a negative value of 7. If the *tasa* player, serving as the ensemble leader, makes a mistake in the motif or rhythm pattern, it impacts all six drum players, resulting in a calculation of 7 negative points.

Non-musical errors that incur negative points have various provisions. For instance, if a drumstick falls, the drum rope breaks or slips, a "*taawek*" (an attempt to strike the drum that is then aborted), and inconsistent movements. When a drumstick falls from a drum player, 1 negative point is tallied. If the same drum player retrieves the drumstick, another 1 negative point is counted. The same principle applies to a broken or slipped drum rope, considered 1 negative point. If the drum player independently restores the rope or drum to its original position, another 1 negative point is recorded. Ideally, the drumstick should not be retrieved by the drum player, and the same applies to a drum that slips or falls, as committee members are available to assist in retrieval and repair.

In addition to negative points, an element of evaluation garners positive points. Positive points can be earned by each group demonstrating cohesion in playing, tempo, dynamics, harmonious movements, and

expression. It demonstrated cohesion across various elements is termed "*renten*" or "*marenten*." Positive points in *renten* can be obtained by each group, ranging from 1 to 2, and can be converted to reduce negative points. Cohesion is primarily observed in the *matam* section and then the *alihan* section. The *renten* score attained by each group is determined through consensus among all judges.

The judges in each *bapereih* competition typically consist of five individuals. Two judges on the right observe the drum players on the right, two on the left observe the drum players on the left, and the center judge observes the *tasa* player. However, there are instances where duties are not divided in this manner, and all judges collectively observe all musicians. Each judge records the mistakes made by the players they are observing. The guidelines for the judges concerning the elements of errors to be recorded and evaluated result from consultations conducted among the committee, the participating *gandang tasa* groups in the *bapereih*, and the judges in a meeting. This approach is unique, meaning that participants, through their respective leaders/officials, can propose and discuss the elements and criteria to be evaluated. No fixed set of evaluation criteria imposed by the committee must be followed; instead, it must be collectively discussed first.

The elements evaluated by the judges include the *matam* section of the song, which consists of *pangka matam* (introduction), *matam*, *alihan 1*, *alihan 2*, *alihan 3*, *alihan 4*, *alihan 5*, *alihan 6*, and *renten/marenten*. After each group finishes its performance, the judges will record the accumulation of their notes on a whiteboard or a similar surface visible to everyone. The judges' work appears objective, transparent, and quick, leaving no opportunity for anyone to influence them. The judges are experienced teachers and *gandang tasa* players who fully master the played song and evaluation criteria. The instrument used by the judges to record scores is a grid or columns made on A4-sized paper. Each box is labeled with the evaluated section. If there is a mistake in the evaluated section column, it is marked with a circle or a small mark. An example of a column box can be seen below.

Column indicating the assistant point recorder.

<i>Pangka matam</i>	<i>matam</i>	<i>Alihan 1</i>	<i>Alihan 2</i>
<i>Alihan 3</i>	<i>Alihan 4</i>	<i>Alihan 5</i>	<i>Alihan 6</i>

An example table of assessment points and total final scores

No.	Group name	<i>Pangka matam</i>	<i>Matam</i>	<i>Alihan</i>						<i>Renten</i>	Total
				1	2	3	4	5	6		
1.	Kabun Sunua	7	5	2	4	3	5	3	3	-	32
2.	Batang Piaman	2	6	1	1	2	3	2	2	-	19
3.	Lurah Parit	2	4	2	1	2	3	4	4	-	21
4.	Palembayan Sintuk	4	6	5	4	3	4	6	3	-	35
5.	Solok Pintu Gadang	3	5	3	3	4	3	2	4	-	27
6.	Kabun Bungo Ulakan	3	5	2	2	2	4	3	2	-	23
7.	Manggopoh Ulakan	3	4	2	-	2	2	1	3	-	17
8.	Durian Dama Limau Purut	2	5	2	2	1	2	2	1	-	17
9.	Aie Angek Bari	2	5	3	2	4	3	2	4	-	25

In this table, it appears that the lowest negative point value is 17 obtained by the Manggopoh Ulakan and Durian Dama Limau Purut groups. The values in the table were obtained by all groups at the time of elimination. All groups will perform one more time at the final stage. The value obtained in the final stage is accumulated with the value of the preliminary stage. The lowest accumulated score will be the winner.

3.3. Musical Expression

The players' attitude, expression, and style in the *bapereih* performance begin from the moment they enter the arena/stage, throughout the performance until its finish, well-organized and following the rules of the *bapereih* game. For example, players from each group about to perform must wait for the signal from the committee, then walk towards the performance stage initiated by the *tasa* player. The *tasa* player sits in front of the stage and then signals through *tasa* strikes for all drum players to enter the stage. The drum players move towards the stage and sit on the chairs before the drums. Next, the *tasa* player signals again through short rhythmic strikes from the *tasa*, which the drum players respond to by standing in front of the drums and taking them until they are ready to be played.

All of these stages are carried out through codes from the *tasa*. As the performance progresses, all players play the song and strike their instruments carefully, resulting in a bias towards their playing technique, style, and expression. They generally appear very rigid, even though they move and style themselves following the spirit and rhythm of the played song. They seem haunted by mistakes in playing, so some players, when they have to make simultaneous strikes on the drum (where six drums play the same strike in the same tempo), only mimic the striking motion without touching the drum membrane. See figures 2 and 3 below.



Figure 2. The drum player on the right performs the gimmick by merely placing their hand on the drum membrane, while the drumstick does not hit the surface of the membrane. He also made a mistake, because he touched the membrane first compared to his friend on the left (Photo: Asril)



Figure 3. *Tasa* player with a stiff and tense expression. (Photo: Gusrizal)

According to Randel (ed., 1986: 295) in *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, it is explained that: "Expression comes from musical elements such as dynamics, tempo, and articulation, while in musical performance, expression comes from the different activities of the players that go beyond the pitch and rhythm of the composition and does not always mean expressing something specific." Then, Jamalus (Kumbara, 2013) states that expression in music is an expression of thoughts and feelings that includes tempo, dynamics, and tonal color of the basic elements of music conveyed to the listener. The musical expression of the *gandang tasa* performance in the context of *bapereih* includes aspects of musical elements such as tempo, dynamics, rhythm, and articulation. Tempo and dynamics greatly influence the performance. When the tempo is fast, and the dynamics are loud, the expressed atmosphere is enthusiastic and passionate. The rhythm and articulation of the

sound played by the musicians with pressure and emphasis on drum beats at certain rhythms can enhance the musical expression to be more dramatic.

Expression derived from the activities or behavior of the *gandang tasa* players is expressed through various movements or gestures, techniques, and styles. When the players are stable emotionally and self-confident, they will play straightforwardly, enjoyably, and enthusiastically, as reflected through their gestures. As Sukmawati (2016) also stated, expression in musical performances is essential to support the delivery of the musical work's goals accompanied by changes in behavior and physiological aspects, and it contains expression signs such as tempo, dynamics, and soulfulness. Musical expression is conveyed through the overall attitude of a musician, visible through body posture, hand gestures, and facial expressions, complementing the visual aspect of the performance. An example of the *gandang tasa* performance in the context of *bapereih* is provided below. See Figure 4 below.



Figure 4. *Gandang tasa* performance during the *bapereih* competition (Photo: Gusrizal)

According to Wigram et al. (Djohan, 2010; 2009), changes in emotion and musical expression are greatly influenced by musical elements. When musical elements are stable, the subject tends to be stable. However, suppose there are variations and changes in elements such as tempo, volume or dynamics, rhythm, timbre, pitch, and accents. In that case, it will significantly affect the expression and mood of the music. In addition to these musical elements, changes in emotion and musical expression in *gandang tasa* also occur due to psychological 'pressure' from the competition and the penalty for mistakes. It leads to a playing style that appears stiff, tense, and not fluent, and gimmicks are employed. Gimmicks are performed to avoid the inconsistency of drum sounds when striking the drum simultaneously. The sound of drum strikes is entrusted only to players with stable mentalities, influenced by the fear of making mistakes that result in negative points.

CONCLUSION

The musical expression of *gandang tasa* in the *bapereih* performance is influenced by musical elements and changes in tempo, dynamics, volume, accents, and the timbre of the drum and tasa sounds. The players' behavior, gestures, and style can convey musical expression, and the players' expression becomes passionate, straightforward, and enthusiastic when in a stable emotional condition. Conversely, it can become stiff, tense, not fluent, and include gimmicks due to the psychological pressure of the competition, attempting to avoid musical and non-musical mistakes. Errors are penalized with negative point values, and accumulating the least negative points determines the winner.

The *bapereih* event serves as a crucial platform to test the abilities and mutual learning among *gandang tasa* players in mastering the competition songs and the techniques and strategies during the competition. The *bapereih* event is a gathering for *gandang tasa* groups and significantly contributes to revitalizing *gandang tasa* in the community by the community members themselves. For the people of Pariaman, the *bapereih* activity has become a long-standing tradition. Concerning the competition's mechanisms, system, and management, they adhere to a 'professional-traditional' approach. Modern and professional competition management cannot be applied to *bapereih*.

Acknowledgments

Thanks are extended to the Research and Community Service Institute of the Indonesian Institute of Arts Padang Panjang, which funded this research through the 2023 budget. Gratitude is also expressed to the informants and gandang tasa artists in the Pariaman region who provided information and data to support this research.

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