

"Beta pung sasando untuk dunia"

Novosel, Julija

Master's thesis / Diplomski rad

2019

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **University of Zagreb, Music Academy / Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Muzička akademija**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:116:648867>

Rights / Prava: [In copyright](#) / [Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-04-27**



Repository / Repozitorij:

[Academy of Music University of Zagreb Digital Repository - DRMA](#)



SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU MUZIČKA AKADEMIJA

II. ODSJEK

JULIJA NOVOSEL

BETA PUNG SASANDO UNTUK DUNIA:
INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY AS
IDENTITY NEGOTIATORS AMONG
SASANDO BIOLA PLAYERS IN INDONESIA

DIPLOMSKI RAD



ZAGREB, 2019.

SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU MUZIČKA AKADEMIJA

II. ODSJEK

BETA PUNG SASANDO UNTUK DUNIA:
INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY AS
IDENTITY NEGOTIATORS AMONG
SASANDO BIOLA PLAYERS IN INDONESIA

DIPLOMSKI RAD

Mentorica: doc. dr. sc. Mojca Piškor

Studentica: Julija Novosel

Ak. god. 2018./2019.

ZAGREB, 2019.

DIPLOMSKI RAD ODOBRIO MENTOR

doc. dr. sc. Mojca Piškor

Potpis

U Zagrebu, _____

Diplomski rad obranjen _____ ocjenom _____.

POVJERENSTVO:

1. nasl. prof. dr. sc. Naila Ceribašić _____

2. doc. dr. sc. Mojca Piškor _____

3. dr. sc. Sarah Weiss _____

OPASKA:

PAPIRNATA KOPIJA RADA DOSTAVLJENA JE ZA POHRANU KNJIŽNICI MUZIČKE
ADADEMIJE

Foreword

This thesis is a result of the field research I conducted in Indonesia during Darmasiswa scholarship which I received from Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture for the two consecutive academic years 2016/2017 and 2017/2018. With the last year of my studies in Zagreb, it took me almost three years to do a field research, analyze and write the results, and to shape my thoughts and experience into this work. This would not be possible without many people who gave their contribution in one way or another, and who all deserve a mention here.

First of all, I would like to thank the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Croatia, whose officials encouraged me to apply for the scholarship and mediated the process, and Ibnu Swantoro, then cultural attaché, who was the first to point the way to me.

I want to thank my family, especially my father Nikola and mother Kata who, despite with the heavy heart, had the courage to let me go. Without their love, patience and care, I would not be where I am today, and for that, I am deeply grateful.

Big thanks goes to my “second” family of Pak Johanes Radjaban and Ibu Chatarina Catur Ani Trisnawati, who took care of me since my first days in Yogyakarta as if I was their own. Another big thank you to my “third” family Here Wila/Pingga in Kupang: Mamo, Noni, Angelica and their family, who provided me with a bed to sleep on, many bowls of *bakso* and great memories. To Noni, who drove me around Kupang and took some of the photographs, I owe a great deal. There are no words with which I could express my gratitude to both families. To the friends I created along the way and the ones who supported me since the beginning, I thank them all.

I am grateful to Josip Rončević for graphics of tuning diagrams. Special thanks goes to Dr. Christopher L. Basile, who generously provided me with access to his dissertation and field recordings, and to whom I am indebted greatly. To the professor Dr. Naila Ceribašić, I thank for the recommendations and encouragement throughout my studies in Zagreb. Thanks to the staff of ISI Yogyakarta, especially to Heri Abi Burachman Hakim and Ryan Hernugroho, for their understanding and help. Thanks to the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen in the Netherlands, which approved their collection photos for use.

While I was still in the high school of music, some teachers used the expression “musical mother” to describe their own teachers who inspired them. If there is one person who deserves a title of my “ethnomusicological mother”, it is then my supervisor, Dr. Mojca Piškor who,

since the first year of study, always knew how to ignite my curiosity. For all the enthusiasm, recommendations, guidance, help, care, encouragement, critique, meticulous reading and lessons learned along the way, I cannot thank you enough.

Finally, greatest thanks to all the members of Nusa Tuak: Emil, Izoe, Ganzer, Martin, Peppy, Ricky, Rico, Rizky, and Uta; and to all of my interlocutors in Kupang: Caro Edon, Jason Edon, Marline Edon Meyners, Cornelis Kun Kiik, Julio Letik, Natalino Mella, Claudette Nahak, Leonardus Nahak, Uchy Dessy Natalia, Zakarias Ndaong, Djitron Pah, Jack Pah, Welly Pah, Lewi Pingga, Djoni Theedens, and Nyongky Welwaart. Your music, your skills, your stories and experience are fundamental for these chapters, and with the hope that I did them justice, this thesis is dedicated to all of you. *Terima kasih sebesar-besarnya.*

Abstract

Sasando biola is a diatonic tube zither made of bamboo with an external resonator, *haik*, with the number of strings ranging from 24 to 48. Nowadays widely recognized as a symbol of the Nusa Tenggara Timur province in Indonesia, sasando belongs to the traditions of the island of Rote, and Kupang in West Timor. This research stems from my experience of playing in Nusa Tuak, a band of combo musicians and sasando players who regularly performed in Yogyakarta and across Java, and the experience I gained there shaped the research in its methodology and inquiry. For the field research I conducted from November 2016 to June 2018 in Yogyakarta, and in January 2018 in Kupang, I opted for performance practice-based methodology. Actor-network theory is applied through recognizing the actors which are relevant for my interlocutors, and which relate to each other to form a network. The chapters are organized in a manner which follows the recognized actors: firstly, I examine the history and then proceed with anatomy of the instrument, playing techniques, tuning, current performance and instrument-making practices. Accompanying practices related to the safeguarding, such as transmission of knowledge and the role of sasando in tourist promotion of Kupang are examined as well. Through all the mentioned categories, sasando is a symbol and a medium of expressing the identity of both individuals and the local community. Creativity and innovation of each sasando player and/or maker contribute to the development of sasando and its symbolic and medial role. The thesis also includes an analysis of performance practice of *Ofa Langga*, a song from Rote which became widely recognized as a local anthem, and a YouTube playlist with these and other performances which I gathered in Kupang.

Keywords: sasando biola, tube zither, Rote, Kupang, Indonesia.

Sažetak

Sasando biola je dijatonska cjevasta citra izrađena od bambusa, s vanjskim rezonantnim tijelom (*haik*) te 24 do 48 žica. Diljem Indonezije, danas je sasando prepoznat kao simbol provincije Nusa Tenggara Timur, iako izvorno pripada tradicijama otoka Rotea i Kupanga na Zapadnom Timoru. Moje istraživanje proizlazi iz iskustva sviranja u bendu Nusa Tuak, koji je redovno nastupao u Yogyakarta i diljem Jave. Iskustvo koje sam stekla u bendu utjecalo je na metodologiju istraživanja kojeg sam provela od studenog 2016. do lipnja 2018. godine u Yogyakarta, a tijekom siječnja 2018. u Kupangu, pa se tako istraživanje i u Kupangu prvenstveno temeljilo na izvedbenoj praksi. Takozvanu *actor-network theory* primijenila sam kako bih prepoznala čimbenike (*actors*) koji utječu na glazbovanje sugovornika te sam prema njima oblikovala izlaganje u ovom diplomskom radu. Počevši od povijesti i razvoja instrumenta, u sljedećim poglavljima propitujem tehnike sviranja, ugodbe, trenutnu izvedbenu praksu i praksu izrade instrumenta, kao i one prakse vezane uz očuvanje baštine, poput prijenosa znanja i uloge sasanda u turističkoj promociji grada Kupanga. U svim spomenutim kategorijama, sasando je i simbol i medij izražavanja i pregovaranja identiteta, kako pojedinca, tako i identiteta lokalne zajednice. Pritom kreativnost i inovativnost svakog svirača i/ili graditelja sasanda doprinose razvoju instrumenta i njegovoj simboličnoj i medijalnoj ulozi. Ovaj diplomski rad također uključuje analizu izvedbene prakse pjesme *Ofa Langga*, koja potječe s Rotea i koja je danas prepoznata kao svojevrsna lokalna himna te listu video-snimki, dostupnih putem *Youtubea*, koje sam snimila u Kupangu.

Ključne riječi: sasando biola, cjevasta citra, Rote, Kupang, Indonezija.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1.	Research Goals	1
1.2.	Literature Overview	2
1.3.	Methodology Overview	3
1.4.	About the Interlocutors	9
2	On the Origins of Sasando Biola	13
2.1.	Nusa Tenggara Timur	13
2.2.	Development of Tube Zithers in Rote	15
2.3.	Sasandu or Sasando?	22
3	Current Practices in Sasando Musicianship	26
3.1.	Instrument-Making Practices	26
3.1.1.	Sasando Biola	26
3.1.2.	Sasando Biola Listrik	31
3.1.3.	<i>Sasando Techno</i>	35
3.2.	Tuning	36
3.3.	Playing Techniques on Sasando Biola	38
3.4.	Performance and Repertoire	39
3.5.	Innovation and Individuation	41
4	Accompanying Practices	44
4.1.	Transmission of Knowledge	44
4.2.	Competitions	46
4.3.	Tourism and Marketing	49
4.4.	Safeguarding	51
5	Sasando as a Symbol, Sasando as a Medium	54
5.1.	Individual Identities	54
5.2.	Shared Identities	56
5.3.	Creativity and Innovation as Identity Negotiators	61
6	Nusa Tuak	62
6.1.	About the Band	62
6.2.	<i>Ofa Langga</i>	70
6.3.	Remarks on <i>Ofa Langga</i>	79
7	Concluding Remarks	81
8	Bibliography	84

9 Appendix	86
Appendix 1: List of Interviews	86
Appendix 2: Youtube Playlist.....	87
Appendix 3: Full Score of Nusa Tuak’s Arrangement of <i>Ofa Langga</i>	88

1 Introduction

When I first arrived in Indonesia, in August 2016, I was an exchange student through Darmasiswa scholarship program, excited to study *karawitan* at ISI Yogyakarta. Little did I know of how my studies would look like and what would I really learn. Out of sheer curiosity, I took several classes in Ethnomusicology Department and two months later I met Ganzer, ethnomusicology student and sasando player. We have soon started playing together, and within a month I became a member of his band Nusa Tuak. I had no idea that in some way, my research has already begun. Almost a full year passed before I realized that sasando biola was indeed my research topic and in September 2017, preparations to visit Kupang were on. While my school break began in December and thus I could travel, Christmas and New Year were coming and I decided to wait until early January in order not to interrupt anyone's holidays. Meanwhile, I put my hands on every book and article I could find about field research in ethnomusicology and everything else that could be helpful. On January 5th 2018, I landed in El Tari Airport and arrived at the home of Mamo Here Wila, where I was immediately involved in playing music with Lewi Pingga. Although I was quite tired from 18-hour trip, it was clear to me that the following two weeks would not be very relaxing anyway, so I unpacked my oboe and started to play.

1.1. Research Goals

I was well aware of how little time I had in Kupang, so I tried to set up goals which would be possible to achieve. Also, I thought that there might be a chance to come back and continue with the research while I was still in Indonesia, cover the questions which I have maybe forgotten or which were not possible to discuss in January. At first, I was mostly curious to find out how did Nusa Tuak fit in the sasando scene, but I was quickly aware of the fact that there has been no previous research of sasando biola. While sasando appeared in a couple of encyclopedia articles and Christopher Basile briefly described the instrument in his dissertation (2003), there was no detailed account or a writing devoted solely to sasando biola. In that light, my research suddenly had another purpose, so I thought of my Kupang visit as an initial probe in which I would meet as many musicians and instrument makers as possible, document their sasando playing, their instruments, tunings, and repertoire, try to understand the meaning of sasando for the local community. I knew that the two weeks will not be enough to result in a

comprehensive, all-encompassing text about sasando, but I decided to cover as much ground as I could so that goal could be accomplished later.

Another goal of this research was to keep it relatable to my experience with Nusa Tuak, and therefore, to learn through playing oboe with other sasando players or through learning sasando became a priority. Finally, this was my first research far away from what I deemed home, and it meant testing the limits of the young and quite inexperienced researcher which I am.

1.2. Literature Overview

Luckily, my research had a smooth start. At the time when I was only beginning to look out for sources, it turned out that Christopher Basile, who co-authored articles in *Grove Music Online* (Yampolsky *et al.* 2001) and *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (Basile and Hoskins 1998) on music of Indonesia and Nusa Tenggara Timur respectively, just arrived in Yogyakarta. His unpublished dissertation on sasandu-accompanied song became one of my main resources as it is the most comprehensive writing I found. While not oriented towards sasando biola, it represents an important document on Rotenese musical traditions, which are highly contextualized through many pages of the text and well-represented in more than four hours of field recordings accompanying the dissertation. In *Garland* and *Grove* articles, this content is quite summarized, so I relied on the full text instead. *Grove* features another, separate article on sasando written by Andrew McGraw (2015). McGraw does not quote Basile, although in several instances it seems that the data is taken either from the dissertation or from the main article on Indonesia. The rest of the short and very general description of the instrument is somewhat imprecise or incorrect.

Another important literary source was a book by Paul Haning, *Sasandu: Alat Musik Tradisional Masyarakat Rote Ndao* (*Sasandu: A Traditional Musical Instrument of Rote-Ndao People*) published in 2010. Haning, now retired teacher and journalist living in Kupang, writes from the local perspective, and his book provides a variety of topics related to various aspects of Rotenese culture: besides sasando and sasandu, there are chapters on traditional dances and *lagu daerah*. In many respects, his book is complementary to Basile's dissertation, often offering different interpretations of the matters discussed. These contrasting interpretations will be a frequent point of return throughout the chapters of this thesis.

Tutorial books for sasando, written by Djoni Theedens (2018) and Natalino Mella (2015), provide the student with the basics of sasando playing. The methods of teaching

featured in both books are quite similar, though Theedens's approach is wider in perspective. His book begins with the meaning of lontar palm tree as the tree of life and proceeds with basic information on sasando gong. The art of playing sasando biola is further discussed in a way that explains how to play sasando with his specific tuning. Notation for sasando is a cipher notation using numbers 1-32 where each number is assigned to one string – used by Mella as well – but following chapters introduce the student to the principles of Western theory of music and the classical notation, offering etudes and songs to practice on sasando. These are written in a piano staff: traditionally right hand staff is reserved for the melody (played by left thumb on sasando), and the lower staff is where the accompaniment is notated. The bass line is indicated by letters below the staff, and for this type of notation Theedens recently received a patent certificate. Contrary to Theedens, Mella uses only sasando cipher notation for teaching the basics, and then combines it with regular cipher notation¹ when notating songs for practice. What is interesting about these books, besides documenting the transmission of knowledge, are the two tales of the first sasandu included in their introductions, the one of Sanggu Ana and the other of Lunggi Lain and Balok Ama Sina, which are retold in Haning's and Basile's work, as well as in the brochure of *Edon Sasando Elektrik*, a small business of Caro Edon through which he sells instruments and teaches sasando, which details the invention of sasando biola listrik, amplified sasando biola.

1.3. Methodology Overview

When I was preparing for the trip to Kupang, I was trying to find a way in which I could spend the time there most economically to meet the goals of my research, but in a manner that would try to move away from the colonial practices. While there is a great talk of “postcolonial” and “decolonial” in the literature, what I witnessed on a day-to-day basis in Indonesia showed that a positive practice, in which scientific or any other activity is executed with respect and care for the local community, was still more of an exception than a rule. Discrepancy between the theory and practice annoyed me, and I was in a good position to observe it among exchange students and expat community, who often arrived from big universities, armed with all the privileges of the global north. Colonialism is alive and well, and I strongly refuse to participate

¹ By the term regular cipher notation, I am referring to a type of notation which is often used in Indonesia, especially among amateur musicians and choirs. Numbers 1-7 designate notes of major scale, a dot above or below the number suggests a change in the register, and the crossed number represents alteration of the tone. Rhythm is signified by the lines above the numbers: a single line for quavers and a double line for semi-quavers. A dot in the same line with numbers suggests the previous note to be sustained, and a zero stands for a rest. An example of such a cipher notation is featured in Chapter 6.

in it. Dropping the “colonial baggage” is easier said than done as it involves every little action and ideas we take for granted. Through the personal accounts inserted in the text, it will be obvious that despite having the best intentions in mind, the ghost of colonial lurked from behind, e.g. Chapter 6 where I describe the band's rehearsals. I have intentionally left them here because at the time of the first rehearsals such accounts were true for me. Just like many other things, the fascination I had in the first months had to be unlearned to make way for learning something “new” (new to me). Therefore, such accounts stand here as a reminder to the process which is necessary to happen “in the field”, as there is no book which can fully prepare a researcher in advance.

I was taking clues from whatever I was taught during my studies, whatever I could read at the moment, and whatever I have seen in practice. Geertz's thoughts on thick description and interpretation in ethnography (2000) were a constant reminder to analyze and question everything I was surrounded with, whether I was in Kupang, Yogyakarta, or somewhere else. Distinguishing “winks and ticks” (Geertz 2000:6-7) was especially important when I was meeting other sasando players in Kupang, as it helped me to understand both the local context and how Nusa Tuak was responding to it in Yogyakarta. Three analytic levels of study proposed by Merriam, namely conceptualization about music, behavior in relation to music and music sound itself (1964:32) provided me with a framework for analyzing data and forming the chapters of this thesis. While those levels stand more or less independently during the very process of analysis, they are inseparable when it comes to understanding the matter at hand, which led me to consider creativity and innovation as the main factors shaping the sasando scene.

Adams's inquiry into Toraja carvings in Sulawesi (1998) led me to think about sasando not only as an instrument, but as a work of art which is often ornamented with local or other motifs, and how the visual image of the instrument is used for negotiating identities. Works by Bates (2012) and Roda (2015) helped me to think of the multiple aspects of sasando in terms of actor-network theory (ANT). Non-human actors, in this case history, ornamentation, or the instrument itself, do not have intention, but they do influence outcomes (Roda 2015:316). They are neither subjects nor objects, but sources of action, and the actor network is assembled by grouping the actors which are deemed significant. Since the grouping is necessarily ad-hoc, to recognize which actors are significant and how they relate to each other is a key methodological challenge (Bates 2012:372). Besides the already mentioned examples, the network in this case

consists of many other actors, such as the materials used in making the instrument, stories about the invention of *sandu*, politics, and so on.

Kisliuk's review of her own experience during research of BaAka people in the Central African Republic (2008) was helpful in reconsidering the time I have spent as a member of Nusa Tuak. It made me realize just how essential Nusa Tuak was to my research and that story had to be told through autoethnographic lens, which is why Chapter 6 moves away from more prevalent descriptive and interpretative mode of writing towards a personal account. What Kisliuk advocated for as ethnography of performance or ethnography of experience (Kisliuk 2008:193), Wong calls performative ethnography (Wong 2008:78). It “shows rather than tells. It is specific and particular” (Wong 2008:79), and evokes “immediacy and particularity” of performance (Kisliuk 2008:194). These ideas affected writing about Nusa Tuak as much as they helped me to reconsider the way I wrote my research diary. I was never interested in writing very meticulous notes, as was the case with much of my time in Yogyakarta, which I briefly noted through the most important things I could forget later, but never wrote about details that could remind me of specifics of certain occasions. In order to document all the “winks and ticks” and the particularity of such moments in Kupang, I have decided to write as thick as I could at the time. The following example from my diary was written on January 7, 2018, when I went with Lewi Pingga to play at a wedding party in Soe. Our little trip lasted two days, and I was very uncomfortable with the whole idea of crashing the party and taking over the stage:

Yesterday morning was very peaceful. Mamo and Noni went to attend a funeral, and I stayed with nenek and kids to have a breakfast. Nenek was very focused on the TV, a NatGeo documentary about lions was on: “Nenek suka nonton binatang” (“Granny likes to watch animals”), she said. After some time, Lewi showed up and we practiced a bit again. We were supposed to leave around 2 p.m., but it was only around 3.30 that we left the house. With ojek we reached a place where “travel” drivers gather and collect passengers with their cars. Our driver had a Soeharto sticker on the windshield of his car... Lewi left his bag on the motorbike so he went back chasing the guy. The ojek showed up, returned the bag and it was all well. Once we hit the road, Lewi didn't stop talking. Luckily, I was sleeping squished on the back seat with his sasando, which was resting on its strings, for some reason. We arrived at the wedding party in Soe, bunch of people were having dinner at that moment, however, selfies and rubbing noses were inevitable. After we

ate, we went outside and people soon started to dance. Women were the first to dance and were slowly joined by men, who were sitting around the terrace, drinking sopi and chewing betel nut. I was recording the dances with my phone and my hands were shaking, probably from the inner frustration about the whole thing. I was also excited, as I heard before about circle dances in NTT and now I could finally see them live, even if they were accompanied by CD player. After some time, Lewi approached to the bride's mother and few moments later, the terrace was cleared, two chairs and a little table were set up for Lewi and me, and we were playing what we practiced. I didn't feel very comfortable with the mix of church and pop songs, let alone with the sudden break of atmosphere, but what could I do. Soon people joined us and started to sing, but Lewi had enough, and one could see it on his face. He was satisfied with our little out-of-tune show, and just a few moments later we were on the way. I was frustrated again, they continued dancing and I wanted to watch more, perhaps even join the dance, but Lewi was determined.

The frustration I expressed here continued the next day, when we played at two mass services in Soe, one being the church wedding of the same couple. To me, crashing someone's party and then performing felt inappropriate. I would have been happier if I was just another guest. I also felt as if I was falling into my own trap.

When I was thinking about how to do the research, and also being encouraged by Kisliuk's article, I decided to take my oboe with me and play with sasando players just like I played with Nusa Tuak. I have also decided to get a couple of lessons to learn the basics of sasando playing. I imagined taking sasando lessons from several players, as it might give me a better perspective of playing techniques and how do they teach the instrument, so I took lessons from Pak Lewi, Natalino Mella and Caro Edon. The time limit I had made it impossible to fully engage with each player, but I could still learn something and pick up clues for the future research. Performance-practice based research helped me to form better relationships in the field, although the time span affected the two primary locations of my research. In Yogyakarta, I had almost two years to play with the band, and that time allowed me to engage through more performance modes than in Kupang, where I could not allow another set of preparations like the ones I had with Pak Lewi. However, cross-cultural exchange proved to be an important part of performance practice in both places. Whether in Yogyakarta or in Kupang, I did not want to impose my own culture on anyone, I wanted to let musicians shape this research, and if they

asked me to play with them, I would accept. If not, no harm done, I could still focus on what they thought of as important.

When Nusa Tuak asked me to contribute with a piece for the band that would be based on Croatian traditional music, I accepted the idea, and my first thought was the presence of circle dances both in Croatia and in Nusa Tenggara Timur. I wrote a piece that was divided in two parts, the first one was based on *kolo*, a circle dance from my home region of Slavonia, and I imagined five sasando players in the band each playing their own part, just like *tambura* groups would. The second part was reminiscent of Macedonian *oro*, a circle dance to the 7/8 beat. While *Sasando Kolo* was met with delight, as the members of the band were excited with many similarities between the two so distant places, it was never performed publicly, due to other factors that ultimately led to the band falling apart. However, the rehearsals were revealing in other ways. I asked Rizky, who played the second part, to retune his B string to B^b, thinking it might be easier for him to play the part. He would always reply with something like “okay” or “yeah, yeah”, but he never retuned the string. Few days later, we were playing Bob Marley's *Three Little Birds* on the stage, for which he actually retuned the same string. I was shocked at first, but then I realized that such changes had to come from the player himself and not from someone telling him what to do. Finally, this little “wink” that happened on the stage I would probably never notice had I not been in the band.

In Kupang, Pak Lewi asked me to teach him a Croatian song that we could perform at the wedding reception, so I chose the song *Sijem žito, raste grahorica* (*I am planting the wheat, and the vetch is sprouting*), wedding song, again from Slavonia where I come from. Pak Lewi was delighted to learn about the performance context of the song and proud that he has learned a song from yet another country that expanded his repertoire. Together with his sasando lesson and many talks, teaching him a song of my own and then performing it together were appropriate ways to exchange knowledge: both of us were found on both the giving and receiving ends of exchange that appeared to be cross-cultural.

Besides performance practice, I collected data through the usual techniques of field research: interviews, research diary, audio and video recording. I have conducted semi-structured interviews with my interlocutors, sometimes asking them more specific questions about certain aspects of their musicianship, but mostly letting them to guide the narrative and discuss the things they deemed important. Another important technique I applied in this research was following their activities on social media. The ubiquity of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, Snapchat and their local counterparts such as Lime

or Bigo makes it impossible to see social media as phenomena separable from the “real” life (Undine Frömming *et al.* 2017:13). Use of communication technologies is inherent to humans as is the skill of driving a car; these are the activities for which we all, as human beings, have a potential, but which is realized through the development of technology (Miller *et al.* 2016:8). In Indonesian context, social media are especially important way of exchanging information as the mobile phones are more affordable than computers and thus more widespread across archipelago.² Because the social media are shaped by the content produced by their numerous users, they are prone to spreading fake news and hoaxes, which is why in Indonesia they are surveilled by the government and regulated by Information and Electronic Transactions Law from 2008, which recognizes many actions, such as “distributing and/or transmitting and/or making accessible electronic information/documents which are contrary to moral norms in Indonesia or related to gambling or insulting or blackmailing or threatening other people”, as criminal acts.³ In August 2019, the government switched off the internet network in West Papua amid protests so as to prevent the spread of fake news (Rahim 2019). Despite the law that leaves a lot of space for free interpretation, Indonesians are some of the most active users of social media in the world, and it was through these media that I established first contacts with most of my interlocutors.

Since the users are the ones shaping the content, multiple ways through which they do it affect the researcher's view. Social media blur the time and space limits of our field, they allow us to be somewhere when we are away, even though the sensory aspect is reduced to auditory and visual stimuli, especially in the case of live stream which allows us to follow events almost immediately. Besides the sensory limitations, our view depends on decisions made by the user: the placement of camera, what he wants us to hear and see, the choice of particular moment which is livestreamed, and so on. Viewer is allowed to engage by commenting or asking questions, thus transforming the content as the person who streams the video can react to it. By means of social media, their users are enabled to represent themselves according to their wishes, which is why following my interlocutors on social media was important source of information on how do they represent themselves and *sasando* (see Chapter 4). Concerned with their privacy, I have included only the content which was made publicly available.

² <https://www.bps.go.id/dynamictable/2015/11/10/985/persentase-penduduk-yang-memiliki-menguasai-telepon-seluler-menurut-provinsi-dan-klasifikasi-daerah-2012-2017.html> (May 14th, 2019).

³ <https://www.worldservicesgroup.com/publications.asp?action=article&artid=2608> (May 14th, 2019).

The audio-visual material accompanying the written text is available as a YouTube playlist on the link attached in Appendix. Its content is accessible only through the provided link.

1.4. About the Interlocutors

Before proceeding to the next chapter, I would like to briefly introduce sasando players, makers, and others who contributed to the research as interlocutors. Members of Nusa Tuak will be introduced in Chapter 6. Because the full names in Indonesia, and this was the case in Kupang as well, are not used unless for official purposes, throughout the chapters I will keep referring to my interlocutors in the same way they refer to each other. The title Pak which precedes some of the names here, is a short form of *bapak*, a father or a Sir/Mister.

Caro Edon, a sasando player and maker, is the owner of a small business *Edon Sasando Elektrik*. He is one of the leading makers of electric sasando biola and frequently participates in government-funded educational and cultural programs. His insights were often critical towards the sasando scene, and his lessons in sasando helped me to better understand the differences in playing techniques.

Jason Edon, Caro's son, is a young and aspiring musician playing sasando and bass guitar. In his father's workshop, Jason practices in sasando making and makes miniatures of sasando to be sold as souvenirs.

Marline Edon Meyners, Caro's wife, works in the tourist department in Kupang and also manages *Edon Sasando Elektrik* by taking care of schedule for the lessons, arranging performances, PR and accounting. As she is basically running the business, Marline's accounts of the activities carried out were important in understanding the dynamics of *ESE*.

Agusto Andreas Naga Lana, better known under his stage name Ganzer Lana, is Edon's student and the founder of Nusa Tuak, now situated in Jakarta. Ganzer regularly wrote new music for Nusa Tuak and himself. Through our often talks, he was the first to point out to the competitiveness of sasando musicians.

Cornelis Kun Kiik, a sound engineer and teacher at the vocational school (SMK). Together with Djoni Theedens, Cornelis works on *sasando techno*, an electric sasando biola that is still waiting to be built. His perspective helped me to observe other sasandos and their acoustic properties, as he often found them problematic.

Julio Letik, Caro's student, is a young sasando player of a great skill. When he was only 12, he had his first international performance in Japan, and now, still in his teens, regularly performs as a soloist or in a group.

Natalino Mella, together with Edon, is one of the leading makers of sasando biola listrik. He runs a website *Sasando Shop* through which it is possible to read about sasando in Indonesian and English, and to buy sasando, accessories for the instrument, his tutorial book and his CDs. He sometimes performs internationally, most recently in Columbia in 2018.

Leonardus Nahak is a retired chief curator of Museum Nusa Tenggara Timur. After my initial visit to the museum when no guide was present, he guided me through the exhibition and provided with information on its collection. Pak Leo also directed me to other players and people I should talk to.

Zakarias Ndaong is a sasando player and maker, owner of *Dalek Esa Production*. He learned how to make sasando working as an apprentice of his father-in-law, Jeremias Pah. Zakarias was the only one who was eager to talk about the financial aspects of his musicianship and craftsmanship. Sometimes, he makes sasandos which are sold through Natalino's website. He gives weekly breakfast performances at the Hotel Swiss Bell in Kupang.

Djitron Pah, son of Jeremias Pah, the winner of 2009 Presidential Cup, became well-known across archipelago after competing in Indonesia's Got Talent in 2010. He regularly performs internationally and I almost missed him in Kupang as he was preparing to leave for Finland the next day.

Jack Pah, the oldest son of Jeremias, takes care of *Pengrajin Sasando Pah* together with his siblings after Jeremias passed away in 2019. Sasando player and maker, he built a 48-string, chromatic sasando exhibited in the workshop in Oebelo.

Welly Pah is a grandson of a prominent sasando player of the 1980s and 1990s, Edu Pah. His father, Jeremias's uncle, was the first to play sasando biola listrik, who occasionally used to play it with accompaniment of a karaoke machine (private conversation with Christopher Basile). During 1990s, Pak Welly produced “the only cassette sold in Kupang featuring any kind of Rotinese song, a curious mix of Bernadus Henuk playing sasandu and singing with sequenced, synthesized drums, bass and keyboards overdubbed” (Basile 2003:19). When I asked him about the cassette, Pak Welly told me that it is not being sold anymore, and that even he does not own a copy.

Lewi Pingga is the only player I have encountered playing acoustic sasando biola exclusively. Retired pastor who studied theology in Los Angeles, Pak Lewi still plays sasando during mass services, and is the only player I have met who regularly sings while playing. He adjudicated several sasando competitions, performed in Japan and taught his son Ricky to play.

Djoni Theedens is the most prominent music educator in Kupang, and through his *Lembaga Kursus Musik Halleluya* he educated many young sasando, piano and guitar players. Some of the Nusa Tuak members learned from him: Pak Djoni taught Emil to play sasando and prepared Martin and Ricky for studying guitar and piano, respectively. He is the author of three tutorial books for sasando, and is very knowledgeable about the music of Nusa Tenggara Timur. Together with Zakarias Ndaong and Pak Lewi, Pak Djoni performed in Japan, where besides sasando he also played *ketadu mara*, a lute from Savu.

Nyongky Welwaart, a musician and producer born in Ende, Flores, who now teaches at the Cendana University in Kupang. He is responsible for writing many *lagu daerah*, such as *Kupang Timor Manise*, and giving a push to musicians like Ivan Nestorman, who is now well-known jazz singer and instrumentalist. Although very humble about his sasando playing skills, his opinions regarding the sasando scene are especially interesting and helpful for further thinking about the data I gathered.

* * *

Succeeding chapters are organized in accordance with the topics which emerged from the results of the field research. Chapter 2 deals with the history and development of sasando biola. As it will be evident from the discussion, sasando players and manufacturers offer different interpretations of history, in some cases even presenting different histories of the instrument.

Chapter 3 is an overview of current practices regarding instrument making, tuning, playing techniques, performance and repertoire. It provides an insight into how the creativity and innovation of each musician are employed for development of different aspects of sasando.

Accompanying practices related to tourism and safeguarding, described in Chapter 4, represent some of the ways in which sasando players act as a part of the local community, and how sasando is used for touristic purposes.

Chapter 5 summarizes all the previous chapters through the discussion of sasando's role of a symbol and a medium in expressing individual and shared identities. Creativity and

innovation of each sasando player or manufacturer are main identity negotiators on an individual level of identity, which is also discussed.

Chapter 6 is divided in two parts: the first tells the story of Nusa Tuak and its members, while the second part is an analysis of *Ofa Langga*, a Rotenese song, in which the performance of Nusa Tuak is compared to the ones I heard in Kupang. Concluding remarks point to the set of topics which have not been discussed in this thesis and which require further research.

2 On the Origins of Sasando Biola

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of sasando tube zithers. History of sasando will be examined through comparison of existing literature, stories related to the invention of sasando, and my own findings from the field research in Kupang. The goal of this discussion is to present various interpretations of history of sasando and its name, as they seem to affect the local perception on the instrument and its music.

2.1. Nusa Tenggara Timur

Nusa Tenggara Timur (literally translated as Eastern Southeastern Islands) is a part of Lesser Sundas archipelago, stretching eastward from Java. Comprising of hundreds of islands, the Lesser Sundas are divided into two provinces that form the main, if not the most important, political axes in the life of local population: Nusa Tenggara Barat (Western Southeastern Islands) and Nusa Tenggara Timur (later through the text: NTT). NTT is a home to more than 4 million people,⁴ and it has been one of the poorest regions in Indonesia, consisting of more than 500 islands divided into twenty-one regencies (*kabupaten*) and one city, Kupang, also being a province's capital. This administrative division says little about high diversity in cultures and languages of its people, who speak almost 70 languages and numerous dialects.⁵ The region is famous as the home to Komodo dragon, attracting a big number of tourists to the island of Komodo where the biggest lizard in the world lives under protection. While its islands were a constant point of interest of colonialist forces and Catholic/Protestant missionaries from Portugal and the Netherlands, it never achieved greater international attention of researchers in humanities and social sciences like islands of Java and Bali, and only few of them devoted their work to the cultures of the region, such as James J. Fox, whose anthropological research remained focused on this area. In ethnomusicology, Jaap Kunst spent some time researching music on the island of Flores, which consequently resulted in a big conundrum regarding cultural relations between polyphonic singing in Flores and the Balkans. The solution for it has not been found yet, and the relation proposed by Kunst appears to be highly implausible (Yampolsky *et al.* 2001). Despite of a relatively small number of written works and an increase of interest in cultures outside Java, Bali and Sumatra since 1990s, exceptionally diverse cultures of Indonesian archipelago, including Nusa Tenggara Timur, remain under-researched (*ibid.*).

⁴ <https://www.bps.go.id/statictable/2009/02/20/1267/penduduk-indonesia-menurut-provinsi-1971-1980-1990-1995-2000-dan-2010.html> (July 25th, 2019).

⁵ <http://badanbahasa.kemdikbud.go.id/petabahasa/pulau.php?idp=7> (December 29th, 2017).

Kupang, province's capital, is a coastal city in West Timor with a population of 300,000.⁶ Office building of the NTT governor dominates the landscape of the center of Kupang with its recognizable form of *sasando*, and the city is still home to a fair number of *sasando* biola players. At the time I arrived in Kupang, the city seemed relatively busy, and the area around the *sasando* building was decorated with many Indonesian flags. I was unaware of the fact that only two days later the president of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, would pay a visit to Kupang and to the island of Rote the next day. On the day of his arrival, everyone in the house I stayed in seemed excited about president's visit and frequently reported where did some of their friends see the presidential caravan driving by. The next morning, president Joko Widodo, often called Jokowi, famously washed his face in the sea water at Nembrala beach in Rote, and the photos quickly went viral, together with the ones of the president and his spouse dressed in traditional Rotenese costumes. For Rotenese people, Jokowi's visit had a great significance, as this was the first time since Indonesia's independence in 1945 that a president visited the island which has only recently seen some economic growth with the rise of surf tourism. Everyday life on Rote relies upon *lontar*, a palm tree native to NTT that plays significant economic, and therefore, symbolic role for the Rotenese being the main source of food, construction and clothing material. When tapped, *lontar* releases a sweet juice from its bark, and the juice is traditionally collected with *haik*, a basket made of *lontar* leaves which also serves as an outer resonating chamber of *sasando*. Together with *ti'i langga* hat and *sasando*, *haik* forms "*Trilogi Rote*" (Rotenese trilogy) which was recently suggested to the Indonesian government as the next Indonesian intangible cultural heritage for the nomination to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (Jappy 2018).

⁶ <https://ntt.bps.go.id/statictable/2018/08/28/591/jumlah-penduduk-hasil-sensus-penduduk-1971-1980-1990-2000-dan-2010-menurut-kabupaten-kota-di-provinsi-nusa-tenggara-timur.html> (July 25th, 2019).



Photograph 1. Lontar palms in Oebobo, Kupang.

2.2. Development of Tube Zithers in Rote

Similarly to the South Asia, East Asia or Africa, bamboo grows in great abundance throughout Southeast Asia, thus being readily available and versatile material. Due to its strength and availability, bamboo is used in construction, furniture production, textile industry, and for many other purposes.

Being naturally hollow, bamboo is perfect for making wind instruments – its tube requires only additional drilling for a mouthpiece and finger holes – which resulted in various types of bamboo flutes (*suling*) throughout the Indonesian archipelago. Another advantage of a hollow bamboo tube is that it can serve as a resonator tube. For example, the keys of *gendér*-

type instruments in gamelan are hanging above the series of bamboo tubes tuned in accordance to resonate with the bronze keys. *Rindik* bamboo xylophones of Bali feature bamboo keys partially cut out and shaped into keys, while their bottom part is kept as a tube.

Bamboo tube zithers also rely on the tube's resonance, and their strings stretch along the tube. In order to make an idiochord tube zither, a fresh length of bamboo is used, its bark is peeled to form strings which are further raised from the tube and tuned by bridges installed in-between (Grame 1962:10). Since those strings tend to be too strong to be plucked, they are usually struck with a light stick or a branch found nearby. However, in some parts of the province Nusa Tenggara Timur, the bamboo strings are peeled off to be slightly thinner, and more often than not, they are plucked with fingers or a bamboo plectrum: *gogah* from Sumba, *cantong* and *hitek* zithers from Flores seem to support the notion that the plucked tube zithers are specific to the NTT area (Keen 2017). Still, more research needs to be carried out to confirm this point, both in NTT and other parts of the archipelago.



Photograph 2. Idiochord sasandu from 1837. Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no. RV-1-316.

The first sasando zithers, according to several museum exhibits and personal accounts, have also been idiochord tube zithers. The oldest two *sasanu-ôh* zithers found in the collection of Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (National Museum of World Cultures, the Netherlands), dating from 1837 and 1861, are idiochord bamboo tube zithers with additional

resonator – *haik*, a palm-leaf basket.⁷ But really, how old is sasando? This question is a frequent starting point in narrative about sasando which I have encountered in Kupang on many occasions. Musicians ascribe a great age to the instrument, even when they disagree in their opinions, and many of them date the invention of sasando, or more precisely, *sandu*, far earlier than 19th century. For example, Ganzer Lana claims that the first idiochord *sandu* appeared in 1300s, his teacher Caro Edon thinks it appeared in the 7th century, and the diatonic sasando biola was developed during 18th century, sharing his opinion with Welly Pah, a sasando player of older generation, who supports his theory with the arrival of colonial forces into the area, as diatonic tuning of the instrument is most certainly influenced by European cultures (personal conversation with Welly Pah, January 17th, 2018). What matters here is not so much the quest for the definite answer, but the speculation itself, which my interlocutors based either on historical facts that they were familiar with, or the well-known stories about the invention of *sandu* which I will briefly outline in the following paragraphs.

In Rotenese oral tradition, there are several stories discussing the creation of sasando, as well as its meaning and rootedness in Rotenese culture. Some of those stories include a greater portion of local mythological narrative, and the others, such as the tale of Sanggu Ana and Nale Sanggu, are based on the actual history retold as *tutui tetebes* – a standing tale. Analyzing Rotenese oral tradition, Basile distinguishes between these stories as mythological narratives, standing tales, and *dede'ak* (the talk), the least formal type of oration, in which a discussion is potentially endless and depends on the persons involved in it. Mythological narratives use ritual language to describe origins of Rotenese culture and rituals, including *sandu* and *meko* gong ensemble. Since none of *sasando* biola players referred to these narratives, I have decided to omit them from the present discussion. Contrary to a myth or *dede'ak*, a standing tale “is a historical fact planted firmly like a border post to mark out conceptual and political territory” (Basile 2003:111).

The tale of Sanggu Ana and Nale Sanggu, according to Basile (2003:112) is such a standing tale, widely known among *sasando* players as a story of invention of *sasando*. According to the story, Sanggu Ana was fishing off the coast of Rote when he found himself in the middle of the storm. As a result, he was stranded on the nearby island of Ndana, where he was caught and imprisoned by locals. There he fell in love with the daughter of Ndana’s king, and the princess fell in love with him too. She ordered him to create a new art form such as

⁷ Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll. nos. RV-1-316 and RV-16-248. Available at: <https://collectie.wereldculturen.nl/#/query/75fdf139-e1a9-450c-ba2a-8aa6e3f25da8> (January 3rd, 2019).

never seen before, and if she was pleased, she would marry him. If, however, Sanggu Ana failed, he would be sentenced to death. Time went by and one night Sanggu Ana awakened from a dream in which he had played a certain musical instrument with a wonderful sound. Once he remembered how the instrument looked like, he created it using a length of bamboo as a body and roots of banyan tree as strings. The princess was touched by the sound of a seven-stringed instrument that Sanggu Ana named *sandu*, which means “trembling” or “vibrating”, and the song he played for the princess he named *Sari Sandu*, *sari* meaning “to be plucked”. Sanggu Ana kept entertaining princess at the royal court by frequently playing *sandu* for her, the two of them were secretly involved with each other, and soon enough the princess was pregnant. The king of Ndana was outraged and sentenced Sanggu Ana to death, but the princess kept the *sandu* for herself. In Rote, Sanggu Ana left behind his wife and a baby son, Nale Sanggu who learned of his father’s fate when he was old enough. In anger, Nale Sanggu took his father’s sword and sailed to Ndana with a friend to avenge Sanggu Ana’s death. Nale Sanggu and his friend staged an ambush and killed everyone living on the island. He did not spare princess’s life either, so he killed her too and took *sandu* to his home in Thie, Rote. Later on, his descendants continued to improve the instrument that is nowadays known among Rotenese as *sasandu*, or *sari sandu do depo hitu* (plucked vibrations or the seven strings).

Being widely recognized as the origin story of *sasandu* and retold many times, this tale comes in many renditions, therefore its details vary from person to person. The story as I presented it above is only a brief summary containing details that overlap in different versions.⁸ However, according to Basile’s findings, this story does not originally refer to *sasandu*, as it turns out it is a variation of an actual standing tale recalling the conquest of Ndana by the Thie people in 1675 (Basile 2003:118-125). Furthermore, Rotenese were already familiar with *sasandu* by that time and there is a possibility that the first *sasandu* originated from Thie.

Findings of Paul Haning, a Rotenese writer and teacher now situated in Kupang, seem to be in tune with this. He suggests that the actual inventor of *sasandu* could be Pupuk Soroba from Thie, who lived at the end of 13th century (Haning 2010:13). One day, Pupuk Soroba witnessed a large spider knitting a web, and the sound that the spider produced by plucking the strings of its web amazed him. Pupuk Soroba was inspired to create an instrument that would sound just as beautiful, and spent his time improving on this idea. After realizing that leaves of *gewang* (a type of palm tree) were not good enough, he tried to peel bamboo skin in long strips

⁸ In the brochure of *Edon Sasando Elektrik*, the tale of Sanggu Ana is quite reduced: after Sanggu Ana played for the princess of Ndana, they married, thus there is no mention of Nale Sanggu.

– strings – and raised them using a smaller piece of bamboo as a bridge (*senda*). Then he tuned the strings to the notes played on gong,⁹ and plucked them. It was good, but Pupuk Soroba was still in search for better sound. He tried to attach the bamboo tube to *haik* and instead of peeling the tube, used the roots of banyan tree as strings. Later, banyan roots were replaced with civet intestines which improved the sound of the instrument until they were replaced again with a wire, and finally, with a metal string (Haning 2010:11).

A motive of a spider plucking strings of its web is a vital one, and in Rote, sasandu playing is compared to the work of spider's legs while spinning a web, which is why this motive appears in other stories as well. Therefore, to become a good sasandu player, one needs to climb a coconut tree and bring a coconut, then catch a spider, crush its body and cook it in the oil from the coconuts. After the mixture is ready, a player needs to rub it on his fingers every time before playing, and the sound will be sweet. This belief is mentioned in both Basile's and Haning's work with little difference. In Basile's version (2003:126), it is a dragonfly that needs to be caught, also known as water spider, and there are two coconuts needed. Personally, I have not heard of this belief in Kupang, which leads me to assume that the belief, if still present, is valid only in Rote, and/or applies only to sasando gong players.

These tales tell the story of the first *sandu*, and in the case of Pupuk Soroba, sasando gong. There is another story of Lunggi Lain and Balok Ama Sina, who got the idea of creating an instrument when they realized that lontar leaves of their *haik* split in thin strings (*fifik*) on their edges. When they stretched a *fifik* from one end of *haik* to another, they heard a good sound and continued to improve their instrument, as *fifik* breaks very easily. Finally, they peeled a length of bamboo to create strings and installed it into the *haik*, and they were satisfied with an instrument they made.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the exact history of the instrument is of secondary importance, at least in terms of the early development of tube zithers in Rote. It is likely that the idiochord sasandu zithers were tuned to the notes of *meko* gongs, thus following a pentatonic scale of *meko*. With the introduction of fine wire, the simple construction of idiochord sasandu was abandoned: a wooden head with tuning pegs was added to the top of bamboo tube, at the bottom of the tube another piece of wood holds the strings, and the number of strings expanded

⁹ Besides sasandu, Rotenese play in *meko*, or *me'o* gong and drum groups, where five to seven players play nine or ten gongs in interlocking patterns. The strings of pentatonic sasando gong correspond to the notes of *meko* gongs, hence the name of the instrument.

from seven to at least nine and up to eleven strings, covering the full range of *meko*.¹⁰ McGraw mentions tuning pegs “made of bamboo or nowadays often of metal” (McGraw 2015), but elsewhere there is no mention of bamboo being a material used for tuning pegs, and museum exhibits do not support it either. This newer sasandu, also called sasando gong, is still played in Rote, and it shares a part of its repertoire with *meko*, but most often it is used to accompany song. When describing the performance practice of sasandu, McGraw writes of playing in pair with a drum, *kendang*. From the description of *kendang*, “a single-headed drum about 15 cm in diameter and 60 cm tall played with two wooden sticks” (McGraw 2015), it becomes clear that the instrument in question is in fact *labu* drum which is a part of *meko* gong and drum ensemble. Sasandu, on the other hand, is sometimes accompanied with a different, smaller drum called *labu kici* (Basile 2003:53). Contrary to sasando biola, sasando gong is distinctly Rotenese instrument, even though sasando biola was invented in Rote as well.

In the available literature, there is a mention of an instrument similar to sasando gong in the island of Savu, northwest of Rote, but it is most likely extinct. *Ketadu haba* was a tube zither with eight strings, also using *haik* as an outer resonating chamber (Basile and Hoskins 1998:802-803). It is the only known tube zither beside sasando having additional resonator, except there is no evidence of the instrument (personal conversation with Christopher Basile, October 7th, 2017).

At the turn of the 20th century, there was a need for an instrument in Rotenese style that could play non-Rotenese music: to accompany church hymns brought in by Dutch colonialists. The invention of sasando biola, a diatonic tube zither, is credited either to Paulus Mesak or to Kornelis Frans.¹¹ Oldest examples of sasando biola found in the NMVW (National Museum of World Cultures) collection from 1920s and 1930s show a gradual development and expansion of the instrument in number of strings, and consequently, a widening of the bamboo tube to accommodate more strings. Registered under collection number TM-A-1317, a sasando biola dating back to 1920 employs 18 strings, while an exhibit from 1938 features 22 double-course strings (collection number TM-1253-1). Nowadays, a typical sasando biola has 32 metal strings arranged in ascending order on the left half of the tube, and in descending order on its right side, but the number of strings is still arbitrary and varies from one sasando-maker to another, as well as their tuning. Usually, melody strings arranged on the left half are double-course, and

¹⁰ While *meko* group usually consists of nine gongs and a *labu* drum, a tenth gong might be added to cover the range of a ten-string sasandu (Basile 2003:53).

¹¹ Basile 2003:51. Paul Haning credited only Cornelis [sic!] Frans (Haning 2010:18). In conversation with *sasando biola* players, none of those names ever came up.

sometimes triple-course, but they can be single strings as well, especially on *sasando biola listrik*, an amplified version of *sasando biola*. Below melody strings (sometimes called *soprano*) and on the right side of the tube are strings used for rhythmic chord accompaniment. The strings that provide a bass melody are situated behind the tube, hidden from the player's sight. Being invented in Rote, *sasando biola* continued to flourish in Kupang among the Rotenese community. From the 1960s onwards, a wooden box was sometimes used as a resonator instead of *haik*. Fixed inside a box, *sasando biola* was less fragile, and more practical to carry around (Basile 2003:52). Another type of resonating chamber, still popular today, is a foldable *haik*, found only on *sasando biola zithers*. Jeremias Pah, one of the most media-exposed *sasando* makers, claimed to be the inventor of foldable *haik*, adding that he got an inspiration for it when he observed a woman during a mass service, cooling herself down with a fan (Susetyo 2013).



Photograph 3. Sasando biola with 22 double-course strings from 1938. Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no. TM-1253-1.

Sasando biola listrik (*listrik* – electricity in Indonesian) has a pickup installed in the bamboo tube either through the wooden head or the foot of the instrument. The patent is now officially credited to late Arnoldus Edon, a physics teacher, but Edu Pah was the first musician who actively played it, which led to confusion that it was Pah who built the first version of the instrument (Basile 2003:52). In a private conversation with the author (October 7th, 2017) whose research focus was not on the modern development of *sasando*, I have found out that at

the time, he was told that Pah and Edon worked together on the new type of sasando, but Edu Pah promoted it through his performances, so he included only Pah's name in his dissertation. This invention seems to be the only case in which the actual history still matters as it happened recently, and both Edon and Pah families are one of the most active participants on the sasando scene. According to Caro Edon, Arnoldus's son, the first sasando biola listrik was a repaired sasando biola in 1958. However, Arnoldus continued to improve the instrument with Edu Pah, as both shared the wish for an instrument that would allow audience to see what a player does with his hands while playing it. With a pickup, there was no need for external resonator and *haik* was removed, which meant that the new instrument could not rest on musician's lap anymore, so Arnoldus built a stand for sasando. Nowadays, sasando biola listrik is a common choice among musicians for practical reasons, and more often than not, those instruments still include foldable *haik* so they can either be played acoustically or with amplification.

2.3. Sasandu or Sasando?

There are several theories about the name of the instrument. Presenting the development of a sasando zither, I have already included the one related to the tale of Sanggu Ana and Nale Sanggu. Many musicians I have talked to accept that the archaic name for the instrument was indeed *sari sandu do depo hitu*, and that sasandu appears as abbreviated form of *sari sandu*, meaning “plucked vibrations”. Paul Haning writes that the term *sasandu/sasanu* appeared only around 1970 as an abbreviation of *sandu-sandu*, or *sanu-sanu*, depending on the spoken dialect of Rotenese (Haning 2010:12). It seems unlikely that the word appeared that late, especially considering the NMVW collection. Older exhibits, like the two idiochord sasandu zithers, were registered as *sasanu-ôh* (*ôh* – bamboo in Rotenese), and taken together with the rest of the collection, it appears that the information about each object was never updated nor corrected, which further suggests that the names of registered objects correspond to the time when they were acquired in the field.¹² Therefore, it is possible that the term sasandu, or *sasanu*, appeared much earlier than Haning proposed.

¹² For example, Rote island is still inscribed as Roti, which is the old name for the island. Furthermore, the web catalog of NMVW which encompasses four Dutch museums (Tropenmuseum Amsterdam, Afrika Museum Bergen Dal, Museum Volkenkunde Leiden, Wereld Museum Rotterdam), lists an idiochord sasandu from 1890 as *Buisciter van bamboe met klankkast van lontarblad met achttien snaren – Sasando* (Bamboo tube zither with resonance box made of lontar leaf with eighteen strings – Sasando) under collection number TM-A-1318. This is clearly a mistake, as such *sasando* with the same description is found under number TM-A-1317. There are further inconsistencies in designating the instruments, like the two Rotenese zithers from 1924 and 1927 which are marked as *luit* – a lute.

When I asked musicians why is there an “o” in sasando, some of them replied that they do not know the answer, but some like Caro Edon provided a simple answer: sasandu belongs to *Bahasa Rote* (Rotenese language), and sasando to *Bahasa Kupang* (Kupang language, actually a dialect of modern Indonesian). On the other hand, Paul Haning remains very critical of the word sasando, which according to the author, appeared when a new hotel opened in 1980s on the outskirts of Kupang – Hotel Sasando. After the hotel opened, some people started to call the instrument sasando instead of sasandu. The word sasando, Haning continues, does not belong to Rotenese language, therefore it is meaningless as such. In a public meeting organized by the Tourism Office of NTT in Kupang, which took place in 1985, Haning proposed to the officials that the name of the hotel be changed to Hotel Sasandu, saying that if the name of the instrument is sasandu, and a hotel is named after it, then it must be the same word. The officials promised Haning to forward the request to the hotel owner, but as of today, the hotel keeps the same name (Haning 2010:12) with recognizable contours of the instrument in its logo. In Haning’s writings, even sasando biola is written as sasandu biola, and the only other case where I have seen the term sasandu being related to the diatonic zither are the drawings on bamboo tubes of Jeremiah Pah’s instruments, which often include a treble clef with *Sasandu Rote* written above. Nevertheless, because sasando biola is essentially different from sasandu, or sasando gong, and the fact that the diatonic tube zither still thrives in Kupang, I will keep referring to it as sasando biola, or sasando throughout the text.

Rather radical theory on the name that I encountered in the field belongs to Cornelis Kun Kiik, a sound engineer for Radio Tirilolok. Kiik suggests that both sasandu and sasando are wrong expressions, believing that the both terms are derived from the word *sasenda*. *Sasenda*, because the Rotenese term for a bridge that supports a string on the instrument is *senda*.

Another question that I have discussed with the musicians in Kupang is the meaning of *biola* in sasando biola. *Biola* is a violin in Indonesian, and for many of my interlocutors it represents the fundamental difference between sasando and sasandu. Sasandu, or sasando gong, is tuned to the tones played on *meko*, shares a part of its repertoire with *meko*, and the playing technique rests upon imitation of patterns played on gongs. Sasando biola, beside its diatonic tuning, can play a melody of a song, just like violin which was brought in the area by Europeans, hence the name. Caro Edon offered another explanation which involves tuning pegs of sasando biola that belonged to his late grandmother. This sasando used to have wooden tuning pegs shaped like violin body, which was a common thing back in 1940s when the sasando was built.

As a proof, Edon showed me one of those pegs which are now replaced with metal tuning pegs on the instrument. When asked about his experience as a sasando player, a producer and performing musician Nyongky Welvaart shared his opinion on the matter, saying that sasando biola should not be called like that in the first place. The addition of *biola* to the term assumes that sasando is played like a violin, which is not true, because a violin player alone can't provide accompaniment to the melody, nor is sasando played with a bow. Rather than sasando biola, if there is a comparison to be made, Welvaart suggests a change of the name to *sasando piano*, as sasando shares more with a piano than a violin, and has a possibility of supporting the played melody with chordal and bass accompaniment.

Developing one's own opinion related to this or that aspect of sasando seems to be a prevailing *modus operandi* among sasando players and those concerned with traditional music in their professional lives. Here I argue that different interpretations of history and the name of the instrument, reflect different understanding of what sasando is nowadays, or what it should be. For example, Haning's work shows a great concern for tradition and keeping sasando biola closely related to both its predecessor, sasandu, and tradition that sasandu represents. Others like Nyongky Welvaart or Caro Edon, would not ignore the history, but will pay a greater attention to the novelty that sasando biola has brought to the fore. These various perspectives are more obvious in other aspects of musicianship, such as performance or instrument-making, which will be discussed later in this thesis.

Regarding myths and standing tales told about the origin of sasando, another thing becomes apparent. In the center of those stories, there is always an individual responsible for the invention of the first instrument. The exception is made in case of Lunggi Lain and Balok Ama Sina, but if we are to follow the principles of parallelism present in Rotenese oral tradition, their names might have originally referred to only one person.¹³ Therefore, not only that the tales provided a space for individual speculation, but it also seems that by introducing an inspired individual as the main character, whoever he might have been, they set a standard that requires of future individuals to create something new. This creativity is not reserved only for sasando players, rather it is a deeply embedded cultural trait which has earlier been embodied in individuals highly regarded as *manahelo*, a master poet, or as *manasoda*, a master sasandu player, both skillful in ritual language and improvisation. With the development of sasando

¹³ In Rotenese ritual language, the form of *bini* is constructed with dyadic pairs and parallel phrases that are used as a metaphor for something else. For example, a pair "orphans-widows" is a metaphor for existence, "comparing the human condition in general with the unfortunate state of orphans and widows" (Basile and Hoskins 1998:799).

biola and its localization in Kupang, new types of creative individual emerged: an innovative performer, innovative instrument maker, and an individual who is a combination of both. Just as Sanggu Ana and Pupuk Soroba experimented with roots of banyan tree, or as Pupuk further experimented with bamboo that created idiochord sasandu, today's sasando players explore different ways to advance the instrument or playing technique.

3 Current Practices in Sasando Musicianship

Sasando makers pride themselves with adding their own, personal touch to the instrument. In some cases, this pride stems from being historically true to the instrument's design, whereas in others innovation appears crucial. Following paragraphs will deal with various approaches to the instrument-making practice in which several notable sasando makers' work will be presented, along with practices regarding the tuning of sasando and playing techniques. Some of the solutions introduced below come from one maker's own needs as a sasando player, but a custom-made sasando is still a rare sight. What appears to be a standard usually refers to maker's individual decisions on the bamboo tube's length or width, use of external resonator, tuning pegs, type of strings or a pickup etc., as there is no agreement on what sasando should be like and the competitive nature of the scene seems to perpetuate instrument's development. The last part of this chapter will give an overview of the repertoire played on sasando and some aspects of its performance.

3.1. Instrument-Making Practices

3.1.1. Sasando Biola

Nowadays it is not so common to see an acoustic sasando biola since most of the manufacturers tend to install a pickup so their sasandos could be played either as acoustic or amplified instruments. The only person I have encountered playing acoustic sasando biola exclusively is Lewi Pingga, who admitted that the sound of an amplified sasando never suited him well, so he prefers to sound his instrument with a microphone if needed. Similar practice is sometimes found among students of Caro Edon during their group performances.

Typically, sasando biola (or its amplified version) has 24 to 48 strings stretched along the bamboo tube, but the ones used the most are sasando zithers employing 32 metal strings. Strings are arranged according to their function in music making, so a typical sasando would have 8 bass strings stretching along the far side of the tube, 11 rhythm strings arranged to be played by both left and right hand, and the melody section of 13 strings facing the player. Melody strings often appear as double- or triple-course to even their sound volume with the rest of the strings, a practice which is sometimes abandoned on *listrik* instruments. While most of the makers are familiar with the concept of multiple-course strings, Natalino Mella tends to promote his instruments having either 24, 32, 45, 54, or 60 strings, and some of the manufacturers strongly disagree with it, adding that it is a false counting of the strings that tricks

the audience and potential buyers. Here it should be noted that the division of the strings into three sections, namely bass, rhythmic, and melodic, is somewhat misleading: higher bass strings can be played as a part of rhythmic accompaniment, and higher rhythm strings can be played as a part of a melody when its range is low. String sections are thus more descriptive of a primary mode of playing in which a certain melody is accompanied by rhythmical configuration of harmony and a bass line.



Photograph 4. Lewi Pingga's sasando biola with double-course melody strings, made by unknown manufacturer.

Strings of sasando biola are usually adjusted by *ai-didipo* or *di'i don*, tuning pegs which require pliers or *kunci* (a wrench) to be turned in one direction or another. Sometimes called *telinga*

(ears), tuning pegs can be of quadratic or triangular shape at the top, similar to the ones commonly found on other zithers (e.g., Sundanese *kecapi*), or they can be handmade by flattening the head of a screw and piercing a hole for the string. They are further screwed into the wooden part on the top of the bamboo tube, called *langa/langgan*. At the bottom, the tube is closed with another piece of wood, *mea* or *tulung*, where the lower end of each string is attached to a tiny wedge or nail, and the two wooden parts are sometimes referred to as a head and a foot (or an end) of sasando. Nowadays, both parts are shaped with a lathe, and because he does not own a machine, Zakarias Ndaong still makes them manually.



Photograph 5. Tuning pegs on sasando built by Djoni Theedens.

Aon or *nilak*, a bamboo tube, varies in length and it depends on a distance between the two nodes on a bamboo that is cut in the forest (or bought from a local supplier), as well as on the preferences of sasando maker, but it usually measures between 40 and 50 centimeters. Moveable bridges, called *senda*, contribute to the tuning of each string, and sometimes they can be higher in order to compensate for the narrow tube. Bamboo tube is often decorated with layers of lacquered paint (Caro Edon and Natalino Mella) or motifs as seen on *tenun*, a versatile woven cloth which is a part of traditional costume throughout NTT province, often present on instruments made by Zakarias Ndaong, Jeremias Pah, Djoni Theedens, and Natalino Mella. The late Jeremias Pah was particularly creative in this aspect: he used to draw a treble clef or entire world maps with sasando pictured in the place of Indonesia and positioned at the center of the map, often leaving metaphorical messages about the importance of sasando and his autograph

at the bottom of the tube. One of his sasandos features a drawing of two shepherds bringing their sheep to the water, with a text reading: “*Gembala yang baik membawakan domba2nya dari padang rumput hijau ke air yang hening guna menghilangkan haus dan dahaganya. Jernih ini!*” (A good shepherd brings his sheep from the green pasture to the still water to deprive them of their thirst. This is clear!)¹⁴ On his *Sasando Shop* website,¹⁵ Natalino Mella offers a range of pre-made sasandos, but customers can also choose among several colors of the tube if they want an instrument that is more custom-made.



Photograph 6. Sasando biola with triple-course strings built by Jeremias Pah.

¹⁴ Comparing with other instruments seen at his workshop, it seems that Jeremias Pah frequently expressed his devotion to God in his drawings and inscriptions. This drawing, however, does not clearly correspond to a particular biblical image, but most likely refers to John 10:11: “I am the good shepherd.” and Isaiah 49:9-10: “They will feed beside the roads and find pasture on every barren hill. They will neither hunger nor thirst, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat down on them. He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water.”

¹⁵ <http://www.sasandoshop.com/> (October 13th, 2019).

Unlike sasando biola listrik, sasando biola always comes with an external resonator. This need arises from a completely closed bamboo tube that cannot be a sufficient resonating chamber.¹⁶ For a while during the mid-20th century, a wooden box resonator was popular due to its sturdy design. However, sasando makers stayed true to the palm-leaf resonator, *haik*, which bears a strong connection to the Rotenese identity (see Chapter 2). Over the time, foldable *haik* became more popular, but this type of resonator is completely dismissed by Caro Edon, who asserted that sasando biola can only have the traditional *haik*, because foldable *haik* is not a product of tradition. Therefore, all of his sasando biolas feature the traditional type of *haik* which cannot be folded.



Photograph 7. Sasando biola with a wooden box resonator, sometimes called *sasando kotak* (*kotak* – a box).

¹⁶ In the collection of NMVW, one 20-string sasando biola (collection no. TM-346-1) features a small diagonal slit on its bamboo tube, but there is no indication that a slit or a sound hole were further experimented with. Both types of perforations are commonly found on other tube zithers, like *valiha* from Madagascar, *gogah* from Sumba island in NTT, several tube zithers from the Philippines, etc.

Sasando biola traditionally rests in player's lap during playing, but many makers tend to sell their sasandos with an additional stand. Very often they are adjusted cymbal stands that allow players to adjust the angle and height of the zither so a player can comfortably sit or stand in front of the instrument. For the purposes of performance at *Indonesia's Got Talent*, Djitron Pah came up with *sasando mobile*, a sasando that was attached to a marching drum carrier, which allowed him to move around the stage and dance whilst playing.¹⁷ Some sasandos with foldable *haik* have additional rest made of bamboo to support it in player's lap or make it stand firmly on the ground. Again, such is not the case with Edon's instruments, who said that only sasando biola listrik requires a stand.



Photograph 8. Zakarias Ndaong plays his sasando biola listrik with a foldable *haik*. Lewi Pingga sits in the background.

3.1.2. Sasando Biola Listrik

Writing about features of sasando biola, I have already touched on multiple similarities between the two instruments. In most of the cases, the only notable difference is the use of a built-in pickup which amplifies the sound of sasando biola listrik. Most of the sasando makers tend to use one type of pickup on their instruments, always putting it in the same place: Djoni Theedens,

¹⁷ Video of this performance is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99q7pRB0Jcg> (September 24th, 2019). In the video Djitron plays another sasando, which he named *sasando 3G*, featuring three differently tuned zithers placed within a single *haik*. These zithers, tuned in C, G, and F can be rotated depending on player's needs.

Zakarias Ndaong, and Jeremias Pah install the pickup through the wooden head of sasando, whereas Natalino Mella and Caro Edon use the bottom part of the instrument. Pickups used the most are in fact built-in microphones that catch vibrations from the inside of the tube. Edon, on the other hand, experiments with under-saddle guitar pickups, for which he makes the bottom part of sasando larger. Such pickups come with a preamp and a tuner, requiring additional source of power.

Although all aforementioned makers build sasando biola listrik on a regular basis, Natalino Mella and especially Caro Edon appear as main exponents and developers of electric sasando, so let us take a closer look at their work.

Natalino Mella's most significant input to the development of sasando is his new baritone sasando built in 2018. Baritone sasando comes as an adjustment of his previous, so-called 54-string sasando, sounding an octave lower in its melody section than its predecessor and tuned to E major. Both instruments feature significantly longer bamboo tube to accommodate the lowest wound strings. Apart from melody string section, the 54-string sasando has double-course strings on rhythm section on the right side as well. Those strings are tuned in octaves so the chords are sounded over two octaves simultaneously, like on a 12-string guitar. Baritone sasando brings an unprecedented novelty to the sasando scene as there were no other attempts to create sasando in a different sound register, and the time will show if there will be other variations in this respect.



Photograph 9. Natalino Mella's 54-string sasando.

The work of Caro Edon nurtures the legacy of his late father Arnoldus who invented sasando biola listrik. His acoustic sasando zithers never feature a foldable *haik*, and his sasando elektrik is always free of outer resonating chamber. He claims that there can be no mixing between the two types, so his policy remains strict on this matter, as well as on the name of the instrument: as the word *listrik* (electricity) is a noun, the term sasando biola listrik is incorrect form in standard Indonesian, therefore an adjective (*elektrik*) is needed. Throughout the years, Edon devoted himself to enhancing *elektrik* models, and his latest instruments are more complex in design than found elsewhere, and consequently, twice as expensive.

Typical model of his sasando elektrik has 32 single strings with slightly bigger distance between adjacent strings than on the instruments made by other manufacturers. As Edon

explained, such an adjustment came from listening to sasando players and trying to meet their needs. Another adjustment arose from the need for fine tuning, so Edon started using guitar tuning pegs. Guitar tuning pegs are found on instruments made by other makers as well (Natalino Mella, Jeremias Pah, and Jack Bulan), but they are more expensive than screws and not all the players can afford a fancy instrument, so they are still rarely seen on stage. Another factor contributing to higher price is the wooden head that has to be significantly larger and requires more time and skill to make. The bottom of his sasando elektrik is equally complex: except the under-saddle pickup, it has a large screw to place sasando on a stand and lately, another magnetic pickup handmade by Edon which encircles either the bamboo tube or the bottom joint below the strings. Edon takes a great pride in developing sasando as much as being true to its historical development, so every year he gives a task to himself to make something new on the instrument. At the time of my visit, he was exploring the possibility of longitudinal slits on the tube to let the air flow inside.



Photograph 10. Sasando elektrik with magnetic and under-saddle pickup by Caro Edon.

Here I have only mentioned the name of Jack Bulan, whose instruments I have seen up close since Izoë and Ganzer of Nusa Tuak played them in the band. Unfortunately, Mr. Bulan lives in Jakarta and often performs internationally, so at the time of my field research it was impossible to reach him. Mr. Bulan is equally interesting as a sasando manufacturer and as a performer with international career, so hopefully another exploration of sasando will rightfully include his work in a greater detail.

3.1.3. *Sasando Techno*

So far I have presented several technical and aesthetic solutions applied by sasando makers to their instruments, yet the technical aspect often lacks critical approach to the final result. Cornelis Kun Kiik, who works as a sound engineer at the Radio Tirilolok in Kupang, although not a sasando player himself, felt dissatisfied with the instruments currently in use and their uneven or guitar-like sound, so he took a closer look to understand the problem. According to Kiik, the main issue stems from the lack of manufacturers' knowledge of acoustics area and therefore, proper standardization is absent: the length and width of sasando strings do not correspond to the wavelength of designated tones, placement of *senda* (bridges) is more arbitrary than calculated, and the bamboo tube is not long enough to allow such improvements. Regarding *sasando modern* (sasando elektrik), placing the transducer inside the tube results in unnatural and distorted sound that lacks the airflow. Kiik thus wanted to build a sasando that would correct those issues and offer manufacturers a standard to rely on, hence the idea for *sasando techno*.

With its design, *sasando techno* should provide an answer to the problems of sound balance, fine tuning and amplification. Having a longer central tube made of PVC, *sasando techno* would properly accommodate all the strings and bridges, and instead of tuning screws or pegs, each string would have a clamp ring that is cut in the middle and stretched along the wooden head. The instrument would keep *haik* as a resonating chamber, but since lontar leaves would not be long enough for the new, longer tube, they would be replaced with leaves of *gewang*, another common palm tree.

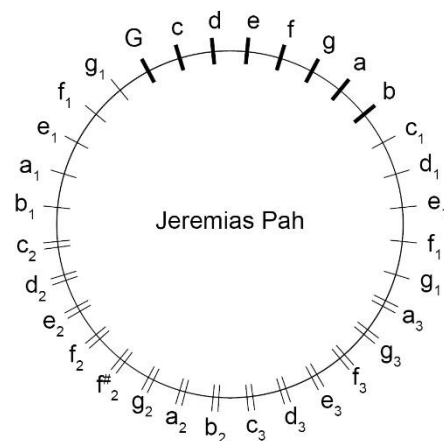
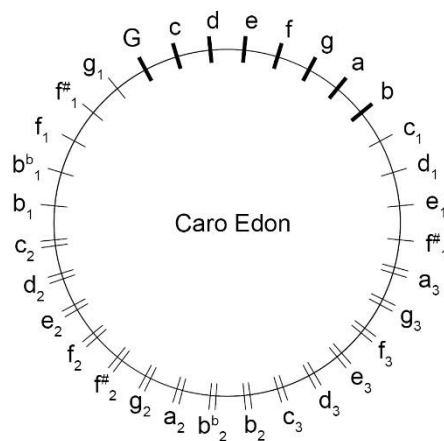
Instead of guitar pickup, *sasando techno* would feature three transducers of Kiik's own design. Each would be assigned to one part of sasando's range with the use of band-pass filters for low, middle, and high range respectively. Transducers would encircle the PVC tube (similarly to magnetic pickups made by Edon), and would use condenser microphones to catch the vibrations from outside the tube, including the ones produced by outer resonating chamber.

Sasando techno would also include a built-in transposer to shift its tuning to other keys. Kiik's hopes are that with the introduction of better technology, the sound of sasando would "*kembali ke alam*" ("return to natural").

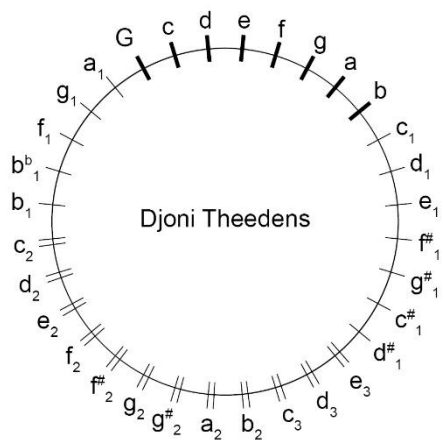
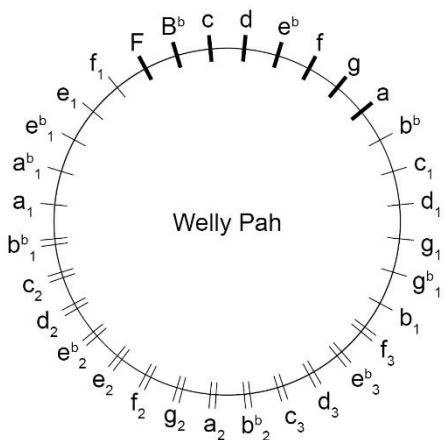
The design of *sasando techno* is a result of Kiik's input as an engineer and Djoni Theedens's experience as a sasando player and manufacturer. However, due to the high cost of producing its electronic components and lack of funds, *sasando techno* still exists only as a blueprint. Kiik made presentations of his project to other sasando makers on several occasions, but according to him, they were not interested in improvements of such scale and could not reason with the technical language that was put before them.

3.2. Tuning

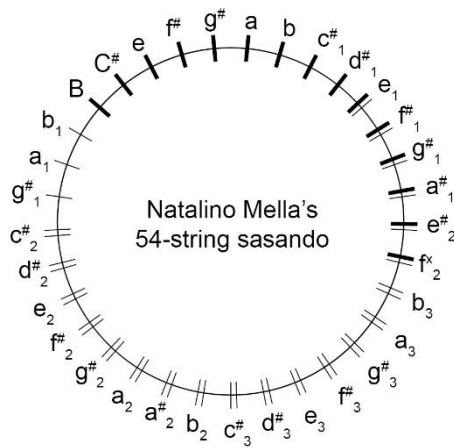
The strings of sasando biola are usually tuned to diatonic C major scale with a range of four octaves spanning from G to g₃. Typically, the lowest register starts with a gap between G and c (Mella added C[#] to his 54-string sasando tuned in E) and the first octave where most of the chords are played is expanded with F[#] and B^b, allowing a player to modulate between C, G and F major. There have been several attempts to move away from the diatonic nature of the instrument to open the possibility of more complicated modulations and chromatic progressions. Djoni Theedens tunes his sasando in a way that the first octave is fully chromatic from c₁ to c₂, thus reducing the higher end of its range to e₃. Jack Pah, the oldest son of Jeremias, built a fully chromatic sasando with 48 strings which now stands exhibited in the corner of his father's workshop because, as his brother Djitron observed, it is "...sulit untuk memainkan. Otak saya mau pecah!" ("...it's difficult to play. My mind wanted to explode!") This is the only aspect of sasando that Edon does not try to improve: "...kalau kita pasang ini, berarti lagu semua bisa, tapi ini sudah cukup". ("If we added those [tones], then all the songs are possible [to be played], but this is already enough".) Meanwhile, Ganzer is exploring the possibility of adding tuning levers as seen on *qanun*. Following tuning diagrams of Edon's and Pah's sasando represent the tunings which are most commonly found among other players as well. Pah's tuning includes only F[#] as a non-diatonic addition, so on his instrument it is possible to modulate only between the C and G major.



Some players retune their sasandos from C major to other keys, like Welly Pah who tunes his sasando (built by Zakarias Ndaong) down to B^b major, claiming it sounds better that way. Notice the chromatic octave c₁-c₂ in Pak Djoni's tuning:



Lewi Pingga tunes his instrument to D major because it suits his voice better to sing in that key, and to tune the sasando, Pak Lewi blows a little pan flute that fits in the pocket of his vest. As an aid, other players use electronic tuner, but most of the time they tune their instruments by ear. Because Mella's latest models are tuned to E major, he sometimes uses a transposition pedal to play in other keys.



3.3. Playing Techniques on Sasando Biola

Strings of sasando biola are plucked with fingers on both player's hands, but the number of fingers used is still debatable. Even though it is generally accepted that sasando is played with seven fingers (three fingers on the left, and four fingers on the right hand), some players pluck the strings with all ten fingers. Some players tend to grow longer nails to pluck the strings, especially on their left thumb which plays the melody. As a result, the string that is plucked with a nail instead of a finger (which does involve nail to a certain extent) produces a clearer tone.

When sasando is played with seven fingers, little fingers are not used because they are considered to be too weak to pluck the bass strings that are within their reach. Instead, ring fingers on both hands play a bass line (the left one usually plays only G and c), three remaining fingers on the right hand play chords with the aid of left index or middle finger, and the left thumb plays the melody. Edon argues that this is the only true way of playing a sasando, because “*ini bukan harpa!*” (“This is not a harp!”) For players like Natalino Mella and Lewi Pingga, playing with only seven fingers presents a limitation of musical expression, therefore they advocate for use of all ten fingers.

Another common technique of playing is *glissando* played over melody strings, often used at the end of a piece or section. Besides a regular *glissando* that is played over the tuned part of the string stretching from the bridge to the bottom of sasando, Welly Pah sometimes plays *glissando* over the non-tuned, upper part of the string. As he explained it to me, he does it to create a quasi-chromatic sound. Welly Pah is also the only player whom I witnessed to

occasionally sacrifice the rhythmic accompaniment in order to play a two-part melody with both of his thumbs. Other players have been exploring guitar techniques and their application on sasando. Djitron Pah was the first to bend the strings on sasando in 2010, when he was a contestant in *Indonesia's Got Talent* show. To achieve the sound similar to a guitar, Djitron pressed on the string above the bridge when he performed Eric Clapton's *Wonderful Tonight*. Ganzer elaborated on this technique and started using a lighter to bend the strings rather than his thumb on his amplified sasando gong. Natalino Mella, who used to play guitar, imitates various ways the chords are struck on a guitar.

3.4. Performance and Repertoire

Diatonic nature of sasando biola enabled musicians to expand their repertoire and move away from sasandu-accompanied song which requires the specifics of sasandu's pentatonic tuning. For the same reason, repertoire played on sasando biola does not include sasandu's shared repertoire with *meko* gong ensemble. An exception is made in the case of *Ofa Langga*, a song that belongs to the more recent layer of sasandu-accompanied song, and which is nowadays played on sasando biola in a pentatonic scale c-e-f-g-b (see Chapter 6).

Initially, sasando biola was used to accompany church hymns, but soon enough the repertoire started to include *lagu daerah* (popular folk songs), *lagu nusantara* (national, patriotic songs), pop and rock songs from Indonesia and Western mainstream, Christian pop, and still rarely, *dangdut* hits.

Lagu daerah (*lagu* – song, *daerah* – area, region), here translated simply as popular folk songs, is a genre of pop that encompasses a wide repertoire of songs composed as to imitate the tradition of certain region, with lyrics written in local language or dialect, sometimes featuring traditional instruments from the region. Some songs like in *pop Sunda* (from West Java) include more elements of music from the region, like introducing a pentatonic scale similar to *degung* scale, while *lagu daerah* from Eastern Indonesia (including NTT province) rest more upon dialects as identity markers. Simultaneously, *lagu daerah* from Eastern Indonesia of a newer date, such as *Gemu Fa Mi Re* from Flores, feature MIDI samples and disco beats, which is why they are favorite choice for dancing at social gatherings even outside the region. Older songs, like *Bo Lele Bo* or *Mana Lolo Banda* do not include such elements, but both have entered sasando repertoire. One *lagu daerah* from each region, together with *lagu nusantara*, patriotic songs in standard Indonesian, make the repertoire of songbooks for elementary schools.

Songs that entered sasando repertoire from Indonesian, Christian and Western mainstream pop and rock, and sometimes reggae, are the ones that have harmonic progressions suitable for diatonic sasando. When it comes to this part of the repertoire, it seems that sasando players tend to imitate each other: as soon as one plays a certain song, e.g. *Fix You* by Coldplay, it becomes the repertoire of other players as well. Clapton's *Wonderful Tonight* became a staple piece soon after Djitron Pah performed it live on TV: the novelty of bending a string on sasando was so great that everyone else included the song on the list to show off their skills. In choosing the repertoire, players also consider songs which became viral or radio hits, like *Despacito* or Virgoun's *Surat Cinta untuk Starla*,¹⁸ which Djoni Theedens sees simply as satisfying the audience: "People nowadays are consumeristic and we play what they want us to play".

Pachelbel's *Canon in D* is a curious addition to the mostly pop and folk playlist which is briefly outlined above. Again, it seems the players followed Djitron's steps, who played it along with *The Blue Danube Waltz* when performing in Vienna a couple of years ago, and currently there are no other pieces of Western classical music that are performed. However, Ricky Pingga, Pak Lewi's son who is also sasando player and a piano student, is trying to arrange simple piano pieces for sasando, one of them being *Menuet in G major* by J. S. Bach.

For international performances, musicians like to include one song that would appeal to the local audiences. Sometimes, a song is recommended by local Indonesian embassy so all the players who performed in, for example Japan, have included *Kokoro No Tomo* in their repertoire.¹⁹ Musicians who do not perform internationally anymore, like Welly Pah and Lewi Pingga, still like to learn songs from other countries, and both have asked me to teach them one from Croatia too.

It is not common for sasando players to compose their own music for the instrument, except Nusa Tuak which regularly created new pieces for the band of sasando and combo instruments or rearranged the pieces already written by Ganzer. The only other piece written for sasando, *Emotion*, was composed in 2019 by Natalino Mella.²⁰

Sasando players usually perform as soloists and entertain audiences at all kinds of events: birthday parties, wedding receptions, various family or social gatherings, festivals,

¹⁸ *Surat Cinta untuk Starla* (Love Letter for Starla) is a song written for the Indonesian movie of the same name and quickly gained popularity in 2017.

¹⁹ Written by Mayumi Itsuwa, *Kokoro No Tomo*, released on 1982 album *Shiosai*, became very popular among Indonesians in the 1980s, and in 2006, Itsuwa recorded Indonesian version of the song together with Delon Thamrin.

²⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EI4xWvC7WNo> (October 13th, 2019).

fashion shows, mass services, etc. When performing internationally, they participate in promotion events organized by Indonesian embassies and the Ministry of Tourism. Whatever the occasion, they almost never perform without *ti'i langga* on their head and *selimut*, woven scarf which is either hanging freely around man's neck or worn diagonally over torso. When I asked Welly if I could make some recordings of him playing, he immediately replied asking if I want to take a video. As soon as I answered positively, he went to the other room and returned wearing *ti'i langga* and *selimut*, saying: "Okay, now you may record". For more formal events, musicians wear a full traditional costume which also includes *sarong tenun* and a white shirt.

When not playing alone, sasando players accompany singers, but they almost never sing themselves. The only two players whom I witnessed to play and sing simultaneously are Lewi Pingga and Ganzer Lana, who makes regular trips to Rote in order to learn sasandu-accompanied song. Very rarely, sasando players perform in groups. These groups are usually students of one teacher, usually organized *ad hoc* for a certain event. Djitron accounts of times when they had a family sasando band, since all ten children of Jeremias learned to play sasando in their young age. Daughters were singing, and the six sons were divided in three pairs: one pair would play the melody, the second pair would play the harmony, and the last would play the bass line. Pak Welly makes similar arrangements with his students in elementary school, whereas all of Edon's students usually play bass and harmony, and only one plays the melody. If the musicians are playing in a duo or a group, it probably means they either learned to play sasando from one another, or they learned from the same teacher. When asked about this, one player said that it is impossible for him to play with other sasando players because they have a different technique of playing, while another said that he tried to play with others, but it just could not work because "...*karakternya pung beda*" ("...they have different characters") and "...*sebagai orang seniman, mereka terlalu emosional dan egois*". ("...as artists, they are too emotional and egotistic".) Once again, Nusa Tuak is an exceptional case in which five players who were taught by different teachers proved that these obstacles are possible to overcome.

3.5. Innovation and Individuation

Each section of this chapter represents one competing field for sasando manufacturers and players. It is possible to notice how each manufacturer has developed or is still developing his own, unique style of crafting the instrument. The examination above shows that different manufacturers build their instruments with different concerns, for example: both Edon and Mella produce high-end instruments, but Mella experiments with the tone range of sasando, an

aspect that Edon sees completely unnecessary to change. Meanwhile, Edon makes sure his instruments are made with respect to what he sees as tradition, so his *elektrik* instruments never feature *haik*, which is not the case with Mella's instruments. Others like Djoni Theedens or Ganzer see the diatonic tuning of sasando as insufficient and focus their efforts on resolving the issue, while manufacturers like Zakarias Ndaong and late Jeremias Pah kept their instruments essentially the same.

Various ways in which sasando-makers and players operate reveal to us different identity markers: the ones that define individual identities of each player/manufacturer and the ones that relate those individuals to a certain group, i.e. which allow the individual to identify himself as a member of imagined community. Identity markers can either be conceptual or actual, physical objects. The way in which Caro Edon conceptualizes sasando biola as opposed to sasando elektrik does not speak of history of sasando, but of the way he interprets that same history, and that interpretation is his individual identity marker. At the same time, his sasando, a physical artifact which comes as a result of this interpretation, is both individual – regarding the skill involved and the specific manner of crafting the instrument – and shared identity marker, as he is one of many others who build sasando, an instrument which is highly localized and recognized as a symbol of local identity. Innovation is decisive for the formation of individual identities: whether a different tuning, a new design or a playing technique, it determines one's degree of individuation.

Other identity markers that speak of shared identities are *haik*, *ti'i langga* hat, *tenun* cloth and *lagu daerah*. On the other hand, drawings of biblical motives on sasando – although Christianity is indeed shared – should be seen as individual markers of Jeremias Pah, who appears to be the only one who related his life-long work on sasando to God. Later in this thesis, I will show how sasando, besides forming individual identities, relates to shared identities on local, religious, and national level.



Photograph 11. Sasando built by Jeremias Pah with the drawing of the good shepherd.

4 Accompanying Practices

The activities which will be examined here I describe as accompanying practices to the sasando musicianship. When put together, they represent local community's efforts towards safeguarding and increasing the visibility of the sasando. One of the most important activities of sasando players, besides instrument-making and performing, is transmission of knowledge, as almost every sasando player has several students, mostly children, who then participate in competitions for sasando players. Touristic promotion of NTT, and more specifically of Kupang and Rote, rests greatly on sasando, and the workshop of Jeremias Pah in Oebelo has become one of the must-see tourist destinations.

4.1. Transmission of Knowledge

Number of sasando players in Kupang has always been small, but nowadays that number has gone up thanks to some players' dedication to teach the instrument to the younger generation. There are two main modes of transmission: the first rests upon the view of sasando as a family heritage, and the second are private lessons intended for anyone willing to learn to play the instrument.

In Pah family, the skill of playing sasando has been passed on from generation to generation. Djitron and his nine siblings belong to the fifth generation of sasando musicians in the family, and the sixth generation has already begun to form since Djitron teaches his nephews to play. Along with the playing skills, crafting of sasando is passed on as well, and Djitron described it as "*wajib*" ("mandatory") to make sure the knowledge stays in the family. Edon family is another example: Caro's daughter Yunilia often performs in Jakarta and Kupang, and his son Jason assists him in the workshop.

Besides keeping it in the family, Edon runs a sasando course as a part of *Edon Sasando Elektrik*, a small enterprise managed by his wife Marline. His students regularly perform as a group for events in Kupang, and at the time of my visit, they were preparing for a performance in Bali scheduled for later that week. In July 2017, Edon participated in a government-funded program *Belajar Bersama Maestro* (Learn with Maestro) created by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Over the course of two weeks, high-school children coming from all around the archipelago learned to play sasando and on the last day, performed the learned repertoire together with Edon.



Photograph 12. Caro Edon (left) practicing with his students: Jason Edon, Uchy Dessy Natalia, Rizky Hauteas and Julio Letik.

Djoni Theedens, who graduated guitar at ISI Yogyakarta, is a pioneer in teaching sasando and writing tutorial books, with his first tutorial written in 1989 and the following one published in 1996. In 2018, he published a tutorial with accompanying DVD which gives the students visual demonstrations of exercises to be practiced at home. Djoni runs *Lembaga Kursus Musik Haleluya* (Institute for Music Courses Haleluya), where he also teaches piano, keyboard and guitar. Currently, Welly Pah is teaching sasando in one elementary school in Kupang as an extra-curricular activity. There are also ongoing efforts to include sasando in elementary-school programs where Djoni acts as an advisor to the Ministry of Education and Culture. In 2019, the Ministry has started a nation-wide program *Gerakan Seniman Masuk Sekolah* (Artists Movement Enters School), in which the selected artists teach performing arts to children in elementary, middle and high schools, and Caro Edon has been selected to teach sasando at one Christian high-school.

In 2015, Natalino Mella published his first sasando tutorial which is available through his web-shop, and in 2018 he held a successful sasando course *Sasando 10 Jari* (Sasando [Played with] Ten Fingers). He published an English translation of his tutorial in 2019, further promoting his goal of “*menduniakan sasando*” (“introducing sasando to the world”). According to Leonardus Nahak, retired chief curator of Museum of NTT in Kupang, Rotenese community was not always this open to the idea of introducing sasandu and sasando to the wider public and

tried to maintain the exclusiveness of instruments for Rotenese only, but those attitudes, although still present, began to change when sasando gained greater visibility in Indonesia. Ganzer, who is not of Rotenese descent, experienced this animosity first-hand, saying that at first he could not find a teacher when he wanted to learn sasandu, but as soon as he offered bigger amounts of money for lessons, he was allowed to learn the instrument.

Through teaching sasando, musicians have established a *guru-murid* (teacher-disciple) model of loyalty which prevents them from exchanging knowledge or performing together for the reasons described in previous chapter (see 3.3. Performance and Repertoire).

4.2. Competitions

Ever since Indonesia claimed independence in 1945, cultural policies were considered an important medium for uniting the diverse population and forming a national culture, although it was never clear what was meant by this term (Yampolsky 1995:701-705). During Soeharto's *Orde Baru* (New Order), government took a more systematical approach towards both national and regional culture through *Repelitas* (Five-Year Development Plans), which focused on advancing national culture (Yampolsky 1995:707). State-organized festivals and competitions were instrumental in promoting the state ideology through performing arts (Ako 2009:111), and some competitions were held as early as in 1960s (Williams 2003:80). In 1980s, government officials (who were mostly Javanese) were sent to different regions to conduct projects, including organization of festivals and competitions, which would “develop” performing arts (Harnish 2007:61). Soeroso, a gamelan professor at ISI Yogyakarta who was sent to Kupang in 1980 to report on performing arts in NTT, wrote:

Given that sasandu is a traditional Indonesian musical instrument found only on island of Rote (NTT) and according to observations, cultivation [of sasandu] can be equated with the cultivation of the *kecapi* in West Java or *clempung* in Central Java, also bearing in mind that sasandu has colored the identity of the Indonesian people in terms of music, sasandu as a whole is considered necessary to be handled, assisted, dug out, and developed.²¹
(Haning 2010:22)

²¹ “Mengingat bahwa sasandu merupakan alat musik tradisi Indonesia yang hanya terdapat di Pulau Rote (NTT) dan menurut peneropongan penggarapan dapat disejajarkan dengan penggarapan permainan Kecapi di Jawa Barat, Clempung di Jawa Tengah, mengingat pula bahwa sasandu telah turut mewarnai identitas dari bangsa

Unfortunately, Haning does not mention what were the repercussions of Soeroso's report, nor is there any discussion in his book regarding the cultural policies during New Order. Also, since Haning uses *sasandu* as a term for both instruments, it remains unclear if the instrument that Soeroso was referring to was *sasando gong* or *sasando biola*. Nevertheless, Soeroso's report reflects the official attitude towards regional performing arts which, in order to serve the national ideology, had to be "handled, assisted, dug out, and developed".

In a few passing remarks in Basile's dissertation, there is a mention of at least one festival and at least one competition. When he first came to Rote in 1992, Basile had attended an "arts and sports festival" (Basile 2003:9), and in another passage he writes about Eli Koamesa, an experienced *sasando biola* player who has since passed away, but who was "regularly invited to adjudicate performing arts competitions in Kupang" (Basile 2003:18). In a private communication with the author, I was able to find out that neither of those events featured *sasando biola*, nor does he recall any other festivals occurring at the time of his field research. According to Basile, both the festival in Termanu, Rote, and the competition in Kupang (that he attended in 1993 or 1995), were state-funded and included performances on *sasando gong*, but the Rotenese festival also included other traditional performing arts, like *meko gong* groups and *foti* dance. Regarding the government's policies in other regions during Soeharto's era, it seems unlikely that both Rote and Kupang were unaffected by Soeroso's report from 1980. Another research of archival data is needed in order to understand the locally-specific consequences of the government's agenda, not only in terms of the projects that were carried out (festivals, competitions), but in terms of the changes in performing arts themselves.

More recent history leads us to June 14th, 2009, when the then president of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono visited Kupang and unnamed *sasando* players performed for him. Yudhoyono showed high appreciation of the performance during opening remarks of his speech, recommending a competition to be held under his sponsorship. In December same year, the *Festival Musik Sasando Piala Presiden RI* (Festival of Sasando Music and the Presidential Cup) was organized (Haning 2010:30). The four-day event included seminar on *sasando* with several speakers, competition, exhibition of *sasando gong*, ceremony honoring three *tokoh* (a notable person) of *sasando*, and the final performance of jazz-pianist Dwiki Dharmawan accompanied by *sasando* orchestra (Haning 2010:36).

Indonesia dari segi musik, maka sasandu secara utuh dianggap perlu ditangani, dibantu, digali, dan dikembangkan".

The competition was divided into four categories, namely: sasando gong – solo performance, sasando gong – group performance, sasando biola – solo performance, and sasando biola – group performance. Groups of up to five performers, including singers, were allowed to compete, without a standardized group setting. In both categories for sasando biola the competitors were required to perform three pieces: the mandatory piece – a song *Ku Yakin Sampai Di Sana* – written by president Yudhoyono, one *lagu daerah* and one piece of competitors’ choice. Competitors were evaluated by senior sasando players, whom Haning did not name in his otherwise detailed account of the competition, but both Lewi Pingga and Djoni Theedens have confirmed to be among the jurors. The winner of the Presidential Cup in sasando biola – solo performance was Djitron Pah, and the winning group in parallel category was Loka Bintra led by Zakarias Ndaong, who was also runner-up in soloist category (Haning 2010:41). Since 2009, sasando biola competitions became more regular, retaining the soloist and group categories. Numerous trophies and medals are exhibited in Pah’s and Edon’s workshops, proving the quality of their work in yet another aspect.



Photograph 13. Trophies exhibited at the workshop of Jeremias Pah.

While the state-funded competitions were designed with the goal of (among others) encouraging children and youth to engage in traditional performing arts, perhaps televised talent shows had the greatest impact on younger generations. In 2010, Djitron Pah won fifth place in *Indonesia’s Got Talent* finals, and his brother Berto became a Top 10 finalist in *Indonesia*

Mencari Bakat (Indonesia is Looking for Talent). According to Djitron and other players, the year 2010 was a turning point: all of a sudden, many young people got interested in *sasando*, and the instrument gained recognition nation-wide. In 2019, Ganzer Lana was competing as a member of SaS Duo (*sasando* and *sapek*) in *Rising Star Indonesia*, and Natalino Mella had a short appearance in *The Voice Indonesia* accompanying Rambu Piras.

4.3. Tourism and Marketing

In shaping the city's tourism policy, Kupang officials focus on local tradition. It is then no surprise that *sasando* appears as one of the main cultural capitals, ultimately becoming one of, if not the most important symbol of Kupang's identity. Two large models of *sasando* are put on display at the El Tari Airport, and driving through the town it is possible to see entrance gates to several neighborhoods adorned with *haik* or *sasando* statues. As I have mentioned in Chapter 2, governor's office building is designed to resemble *sasando*. Driving to the coast, one can see *Ina Boi* (Darling), a statue of a woman playing *sasando* facing the sea. Miniature *sasandos* are sold at every souvenir or gift shop, but they can be bought from *sasando* makers as well. In Oebelo, a suburb of Kupang, tourists often come to the workshop of Jeremias Pah, where they can take photos of themselves sitting by *sasando* and wearing *ti'i langga* and *selimut*, or buy the instrument or its miniature in different sizes. When tourists enter the workshop, one of Jeremias's sons immediately puts on his *ti'i langga* and begins to play *sasando* on a small stage. While still in good health, Jeremias would demonstrate the process of building *sasando* dressed in a full costume. After Jeremias passed away in 2019, all the activities in the workshop have been carried on by his sons. The workshop of *Edon Sasando Elektrik* is also open to the public, but does not attract as many tourists.



Photograph 14. The statue of *Ina Boi* (Darling).

While other musicians do not own sasando workshops to be visited by tourists, they are most certainly aware of the potential of social media in promoting both sasando and their own work. Musicians frequently update their profiles on YouTube, Facebook or Instagram with photos and videos of their instruments, performances, rehearsals etc., never forgetting to add as many hashtags as possible. Besides regular hashtags referring to sasando, NTT, or Indonesia as a whole, some like Natalino Mella add hashtags that appeal to broader, international public, such as #sasandofortheworld or #rareandstrangeinstrument. Both Natalino and members of Nusa Tuak, whose motto is “*beta pung sasando untuk dunia*” (“my sasando is for the world”), frequently use #sasandountukdunia and #betapungsasandountukdunia, respectively. Natalino is even more explicit on his YouTube channel, where he regularly invites viewers to help him to achieve the goal of *menduniakan sasando*, so it could be played world-wide, just like a guitar or piano.

By using a palette of hashtags, musicians achieve greater visibility on social media and promote sasando in their own way. However, sasando players also participate in government-funded promotional programs which take place across the world. These events are usually designed to promote Indonesian tourist destinations and regularly involve performances of traditional music and dance from several parts of the archipelago, including sasando. Musicians are very proud of their travels and performances abroad, but those performances tend to be more beneficial than only providing international audience. When asked about the importance of

those gigs, Zakarias Ndaong replied: “*Kalau saya buat rumah ini, ini hasil karyanya sasando. Saya main kemana-mana, uangnya kumpul buat rumah*”. (“This house that I built, it is the result of my work with sasando. Wherever I played, I saved that money to build this house”).)



Photograph 15. Sasando miniatures and keychains for sale at Pah’s workshop.

4.4. Safeguarding

According to many of my interlocutors, the number of sasando players has significantly increased in the past decade compared to the early 2000s, when there were no more than 20 players in total. The increase appears as a result of many contributing factors: teaching sasando is slowly moving from private to public-education sphere, festivals, and especially mass and social media contribute to the visibility of local musicians, and finally, growing tourism in Kupang (and Indonesia in general) that relies on local culture offers musicians another source of income. Regarding these phenomena, there are two things which can hardly be over-estimated: the impact of government’s cultural policies and the consumer society. While it has been more than twenty years since the regime fell, the Javanese centralism still shapes most of the aspects of everyday life, including performing arts. Traditional arts are preferred to anything imported from the West (for example, symphonic orchestras receive almost no funding at all), but the traditional arts themselves are encouraged as long as they fit the official idea of what traditional performing arts should be, what Acciaioli described as “corporatism or limited pluralism” (Acciaioli 1985:150). Performing arts were once submitted to aestheticization in

order to comply with national ideology, a process in which “culture has become art, ritual has become theatre, and practice has become performance” (Acciaioli 1985:153). After that, the government does not need to intervene to that extent, but to uphold the ideology of unity. So, what happened to sasando biola? Not much needed to happen: sasando biola which was developed in the early 20th century is actually a result of similar processes during Dutch colonialization. Its diatonic nature already separated sasando biola from the older layers of Rotenese culture, and after all, *lagu nusantara* cannot be performed on *meko* or sasando gong. The only thing left to do was to *melestarikan* (preserve) and *menyelamatkan* (safeguard) *sasando* by providing enough funding and including it into cultural programs. On the other side of the spectrum, there is a consumer society which follows global trends introduced through social media, radio and television. For sasando musicians it means conforming to new tastes in order to thrive, what Djoni quickly described as “we play what they want us to play”. Sasando biola is then well-positioned between the currents of state ideology and mass consumption, and therefore, a “safe” and “unthreatening” identity marker.



Photograph 16. Rino Pah plays for tourists in his father’s workshop, *Pengrajin Sasando Pah*. Chromatic sasando built by Jack Pah stands in the background.

Most of the phenomena described in this chapter correspond to the means of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Some of them are imposed by a top-down hierarchical system (competitions), and others are initiated by the tradition bearers, such as transmission of

knowledge, although that is currently changing. Another bottom-up initiative is a recent suggestion of Diaspora Rote to the Indonesian government that the *Trilogi Rote* (Rotenese trilogy) – including *sasando*, *haik* and *ti'i langga* – be proposed for the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (Jappy 2018). As of the time of writing these lines, there has not been an official response to the proposal.



Photograph 17. Office building of the NTT governor in Kupang.

5 Sasando as a Symbol, Sasando as a Medium

In previous chapters I examined different narratives and practices related to the sasando musicianship. Each one of them points to the fact that sasando represents an identity while simultaneously being a medium for expressing it. Here I will elaborate on symbolic and medial function of sasando by relating it to the different identities which are expressed in everyday practice of sasando players and manufacturers. As identity is a quite flexible category with no clear boundaries, division into identity levels in this thesis is arbitrary and they are indeed overlapping, which will become more evident as I discuss them through the text. Since creativity and innovation of each musician contribute to establishment, negotiation and expression of identities at play, but with varying intensity, such division is important in order to understand a web of different factors which affect sasando musicianship.

5.1. Individual Identities

Using the term individual, or personal identity, I intend to describe how sasando players and manufacturers define themselves, distinguish themselves from other musicians and establish their own, special role within community. Individual identity is constantly negotiated through means of performance, instrument-making, transmission of knowledge, social media, and so on. Because individuals have the biggest control over establishing their personal identities, this is the level where most of their creativity and innovation is at play.

For sasando makers, this is particularly true. Though many makers share some features of their instruments, it is impossible to mistake them for one another. Each instrument, whether it includes maker's signature or not, acts like his signature on its own. What constitutes distinction between sasando makers are numerous decisions on technical features and design, for example: even though they look almost identical, when unfolded, a *haik* made by Jeremias Pah forms a characteristic egg-like hemisphere, while the one made by Djoni Theedens unfolds into a regular hemisphere. Same goes for Edon's instruments, despite the fact that he always includes a logo of Edon Sasando Elektrik; even without the logo, the shape of sasando's head or bottom joint would hardly be attributed to Mella's design and vice versa. Innovative approaches do not only define sasando makers as innovative. Instead, to claim the invention of foldable *haik* (J. Pah) or magnetic pickup for sasando (Edon) is to assert an authority in the field. To be creative and innovative is to be a genius, just like the inventors of sasandu in tales (see Chapter 2). While instruments might be highly personalized, i.e. being reflection of

manufacturer, the ornamentation of bamboo tube points to different levels of shared identity, to which I shall come back later.

Since most of the players adopt the same repertoire, the crucial element in defining their identity is not *what* they perform, but *how* and *for whom* do they perform. Through development of playing techniques, musicians do not negotiate their relationship with the audience (which is maintained through the choice of repertoire), but with each other. This is probably why sasando musicians do not often play together: it is not really impossible, but it might compromise everything that they have built as unique, including playing techniques. Another *how* is connected to their self-representation in social media. Just like the rest of Indonesian population, sasando players are avid users of social media: by live streaming and uploading photos or videos, they regularly let their audience see what is going on both on and behind the stage. Social media are a powerful tool: not only are they used for self-promotion, but they are also used for expression of musicians' sentiments, opinions on everyday matters and of course, opinions on sasando. Earlier I have described how Natalino uses social media to *menduniakan sasando*, but he is not a lone example. Other players, though they might not talk about *menduniakan sasando*, also state their vision of sasando and mission to be accomplished, hence portraying themselves as tradition bearers with goals of preservation and development of that same tradition. Maybe more than the rest of players, Djoni Theedens maintains his role of educator by frequently writing posts about history of sasando, traditional music of NTT and music theory.

The relationship between a player and his sasando seems to concur with sasando's symbolic role. While many players use every opportunity to emphasize the importance of sasando in their lives, they almost never attach themselves to a certain instrument. Players who are also regularly making sasando often use different instrument for each performance as a sort of self-promotion and for visual impression. Zakarias told me of several accounts when he would take his sasando to perform abroad or outside Kupang, and if there was an interested buyer, he would sell it and make himself a new one. The only player that I have witnessed to form a special relationship with his instrument is Ganzer, who owns four or five instruments, but prefers to play the one he named Milaia, saying: "She's the love of my life". When talking about the meaning of the instrument for him, Djitron instead described his passion for playing sasando:

Nowadays, many people don't really see me playing sasando. But I [do it] almost every day, every hour, I never leave sasando. Even though people

*don't like to perform, I keep playing. Not that I play here, then I play there, no. I stay at home alone, practicing, learning more.*²²

In order to understand this detachment from sasando as a physical object, we should return to sasando gong. Basile recollects how, after musicians have finished playing, sasandu was laying in the dust, being frequently bumped and even used as an ashtray. One of the musicians explained to him that there was no big deal about it; when a sasandu wears out, one would just make another one (Basile 2003:81). The author further suggests that the Rotenese “do not affirm the importance of the *sasandu* through displays or actions which can be observed, but through poetic images and tales which must be heard, deciphered and finally, understood” (*ibid.*). However, both Haning and Basile wrote about the agency of *meko* and sasando gong, which can lift up the spirit, make heart happy or calm the body down (Haning 2010:23). Supernatural powers are ascribed to sasandu (Basile:80), mythological narratives explain how the power of sasandu and *meko* “restore the humanity of be-deviled soul”, and how “the origin of *sasandu*-playing is linked with the origin of death and mourning” (*ibid.*:83). Furthermore, a certain type of “magical strings” for sasandu will make the player irresistible to women (*ibid.*:126).

As sasando biola is a result of outsiders’ influence, it has never possessed a supernatural domain like sasando gong. Therefore, the agency of sasando is understood through the ways of using sasando as a symbol or a medium, which differs from one musician to another. Although it could be argued that the two instruments represent two different traditions with the same origin, for Djitron sasando represents continuation of Rotenese tradition of sasandu-playing, but each instrument he plays is a medium of his musical creativity. For Edon, sasando biola elektrik is both a symbol of innovation and a medium for display of his own inventiveness, for Zakarias it is a medium for supporting the family, and so on. Most importantly, for all the players sasando is a medium of expressing themselves.

5.2. Shared Identities

Sasando biola is often described as *alat musik dari Rote* (musical instrument from Rote), with the history dating back to this or that century, of which the tales and myths are told. This Rotenese identity is further emphasized by *tenun* patterns painted on bamboo tubes of sasando or Jeremias Pah’s inscriptions “*sasandu Rote*”, and is a frequent point of return for players.

²² “Banyak orang tidak terlalu melihat saya bermain sasando sekarang-sekarang. Tetapi saya hampir setiap hari, setiap jam, saya tidak pernah tinggalkan sasando. Bahkan orang tidak memang bersayang berperform, tetapi saya terus bermain. Bukan saya ke sini main, ke situ main, tidak. Saya tetap di rumah sendiri, latihan, belajar lagi”.

Local displays of sasando biola in Kupang show that, despite being primarily Rotenese instrument, sasando biola is not *exclusively* Rotenese. When I asked Ganzer whether sasando biola is a traditional instrument or not, he replied:

G: My opinion is, if [talking about] tradition, then it [is passed on] from generation to generation. If you ask me, that (sasando) is tradition of Rotenese people, but it has been developed in Kupang. That is, if we talk about sasando, then it doesn't belong to Kupang people anymore... ah, it doesn't belong to Rotenese, because sasando has been developed in Kupang. So I want to say, Kupang alone, is the capital of Nusa Tenggara Timur.

J: Then, is sasando a traditional instrument of Kupang?

G: NTT, more or less.

Ganzer's notion of sasando being the tradition of entire province only because it was developed in province's capital is dubious. However, many sasando makers that I have talked to confirmed that they have been frequently selling instruments across NTT as the demand for sasando is growing in the province. Others claimed that there already are skillful players outside Timor and Rote, one of them being well-known Ivan Nestorman from Flores. Certainly, sasando is *one of* NTT's traditions, and to ascribe any tradition to the limits of administrative unit is false and unjust. Yet, much of Indonesian reality is occurring within such borders, so even cultural phenomena become translated and adjusted to constructs of political life. This comes as a by-product of decentralization of Indonesia which happened after the fall of Soeharto, in which the country has been well-stratified into provinces, regencies, cities, districts, etc. All provinces, regencies and cities are provided with their local government, which for workers in culture, including musicians, means more sources of funding to which they have to appeal to. Successful application will, naturally, refer to how a certain project benefits assumed region, which is why sasando regularly appears in conjunction with NTT. Whether sasando biola will truly speak for the entire province of such cultural diversity, remains to be seen as the process is ongoing.

As sasando biola was invented to accompany church hymns, its ties to Christianity are still present and for some musicians, inseparable from their practice. This is most evident in the work of Jeremias Pah, whose drawings and use of biblical images testify to his devotion to God. In the interview for *Indonesia Expat*, Pah described how he got an idea for invention of foldable *haik*: "I arrived in the middle of a sermon and took the only seat left next to some ladies. It was hot, so a lady pulled out a folding fan from her purse. It was as though God was telling me to develop a foldable resonator similar to the lady's fan" (Susetyo 2013). When Zakarias Ndaong

wanted to learn to play sasando, he asked a pastor for advice. Pastor told him that he should pray to God for the gift of playing, three times a day and then practice after each prayer. Zakarias followed the advice and in a week, he was able to play his first songs. Lewi Pingga, a retired pastor himself, still plays sasando during mass services, just like family Edon and their students.



Photograph 18. Sasando with *tenun* motifs made by Djoni Theedens.

Here it should be noted that modern Indonesia is guided by Pancasila, a state ideology comprised of five principles or pillars: monotheism, humanism, unity, democracy and social justice. The first pillar requires from all the Indonesian people to belong to one of the five officially recognized religions: Islam, Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism), Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. It is important to be religious, but in a proper way: many of indigenous religions across the archipelago are slowly disappearing due to this principle.

Access to education, healthcare and other resources is granted with the issue of documents like identity card, which are available once a person converts to recognized religion and their choice is printed on the document. Some local systems of beliefs, like Javanese *kejawen* are officially abandoned, but still quietly practiced.

Sasando biola players and musicians constantly negotiate their personal identities by relating themselves to higher levels such as ethnic or religious identity, and ultimately, Indonesian identity. This is multi-directional process mediated through the sasando. Sasando is taken as a Rotenese symbol, then it is further developed in the hands of manufacturers or players who use their creativity and inventiveness to improve the instrument to this or that respect (thus leaving their “fingerprint”), after which sasando is finally displayed in public both as a personal and shared identity marker.

When sasando biola players perform on stage, they often engage in a talk with an MC, who usually asks of players to say a word or two about the instrument. In those talks, sasando is described as Rotenese, then as a part of NTT tradition, and finally, of Indonesian culture. This sort of ritual talk on stage is not exclusively related to sasando, but to virtually any other traditional instrument except gamelan, because gamelan needs no special introduction. Listening to conversations between MCs and musicians during my first months in Java, it was always unclear to me what actually makes all those traditions Indonesian, and I was not convinced with the usual conclusions about the richness or diversity of Indonesian culture either. It seemed to me that the MC’s role was always a bridging one, with the goal of convincing uninformed audience of an instrument’s “Indonesianess”. What does, then, make sasando or its players Indonesian?

As it became clear in the previous chapter, to contribute to the diversity of Indonesian culture is to conform to the national cultural policies which were once employed to regulate that same diversity to acceptable levels. However, people of NTT are continuously neglected and left on the margins of Java-centric political and cultural life, so for them the Indonesianess does not come by default. One reason is the ongoing discrimination of religious minorities (Ali-Fauzi and Hillman 2015), including Christians, and the other one is a more silent implication that, as one moves eastward from Java and Bali, people become more and more primitive, and their culture less advanced, thus portraying Papuan tribes as the equivalent of primitive. Such attitude is usually not expressed openly anymore, but it indeed exists, and the recent case of arresting Papuan students for allegedly disrespecting Indonesian flag sparked a row of protests and openly expressed racism (Rahim 2019). While still in Yogyakarta, I was asked to give an

interview for the local newspaper in which I answered the usual set of questions on the nature of my studies and interests in Indonesian culture, because the word has spread that I was not only interested in gamelan, but in sasando as well. Later another journalist approached me and asked me off-the-record what do I think, which is more difficult to play, gamelan or sasando? I have told him that the two are impossible for me to compare given how different they are, but he kept insisting, saying at one point that sasando surely cannot be “as sophisticated as gamelan”. Sometimes, on the other hand, it spills in the public and it spills greatly. In December 2017, the minister of education and culture Muhadjir Effendy commented on disappointing results of PISA testing saying he was “afraid that all the students in the sample were from NTT” and caused a public outrage. For people of NTT, the statement was offensive and immediately understood as if the minister implied that NTT people are stupid.²³ Of course, PISA sampling is designed to cover the whole economy of a participating country, and it is impossible for NTT to be the only province assessed, but the minister never apologized for the statement.²⁴



Photograph 19. Sasando Rote and a *tenun* cloth on a 5,000-rupiah banknote, issued in 1992.

Taken all together, it is not surprising that much of traditions from NTT are neglected as well. It is sasando biola that dominates the narrative of Rotenese tradition being a part of national culture, but not sasandu too. *Sasando Rote* pictured on a 5,000-rupiah banknote (issued in 1992) was also sasando biola. Musicians who perform for the Ministry of Tourism are sasando biola players, and so on. Whatever sasando players say in public about their Indonesian identity and whatever the number of patriotic songs they play for the Independence Day, private

²³ <https://garudanews.id/2017/12/sebut-orang-ntt-bodoh-mendikbud-didesak-minta-maaf/> (August 12th, 2019).

²⁴ For a more insightful overview of Indonesian education, see Pisani 2013.

conversations revealed that what matters more to them is their representation of Rote and NTT rather than Indonesia as a whole.

5.3. Creativity and Innovation as Identity Negotiators

Drawing on Adams's definition of negotiation as "the social processes whereby identities are articulated, asserted, challenged, suppressed, realigned, and co-opted in both verbal and nonverbal arenas" (Adams 1998:329), I have tried to show how sasando players convey multiple identities using their instrument as an agent with symbolic and medial function. These processes begin as an individual effort: employing their creativity and innovation, sasando players and manufacturers build their own personalities and visions of sasando which are contested among each other. While sasando players do not operate as a group, their need to relate to the broader community is something they all share. For that purpose, they established the roles of respected performers, educators, manufacturers, and ultimately, tradition bearers who represent Rotenese identity nationally and internationally. As we shift from "lower", individual level of identity to "higher", ethnic, regional or national level, sasando biola becomes less of a medium and more of a symbol: an instrument which served as a medium for the person to explore their creative or inventive potential inevitably turns into a symbol of a shared Rotenese identity. The work of art produced by sasando makers that is sasando biola becomes "more than a passive ethnic marker" (Adams 1998:346) through which their individual identities are articulated.

As I have shown, such agency belongs to sasando biola, but not to sasando gong as well. The essential difference between the two translates in two different "social lives" (Bates 2012): while both represent the Rotenese people, agency of sasando gong lies in mythological narratives and potential to make people feel in a certain way, but sasando biola represents the underlying creativity, innovation, and possibility to adapt to local or global trends.

6 Nusa Tuak

6.1. About the Band

Nusa Tuak started in 2013 as a sasando duo of Ganzer Lana and Gaspar Araja with the goal of promoting sasando. In the following years, as they performed in Yogyakarta, other sasando players were joining the group that by the June 2016 grew to the setting to which I was later introduced. Five sasando players, electric guitar, bass and drums were gathered for the graduation recital of Martin Koehuan, the guitarist, who in his thesis explored the application of guitar-playing techniques on sasando.

When I first performed with Nusa Tuak, I was invited to step in for the gig at the little stage at Alun-Alun Kidul (Southern Square) which demanded a smaller group to perform, so at first I did not meet all the members. It was supposed to be a one-time performance, but the band was happy with how the sound of oboe blended with sasando and they asked me to stay. As I have always dreamed of playing in a band, it felt like a dream come true and I was looking forward to every rehearsal. On the other hand, I was already aware of my *bule*²⁵ appearance and felt that it might disrupt the band and render it to an attraction of having a white female among the members. They reassured me that that was not their intention and that, rather than having a saxophone player, they thought that both the oboe and my experience of classical musician would be an interesting addition to the concept of the band. After all, the motto of the band was *beta pung sasando untuk dunia*, and by adding more Western instruments and Western bodies to the mix the band would prove their point.

Rehearsals went in a common Indonesian manner which was in accordance with their perception of time. Gathering of the band members would take anywhere from 15 minutes to 2 hours (and sometimes even longer), and only after everyone was there would we start to practice, choose the repertoire for the upcoming gig, or consider further changes to the pre-existing arrangements. Although it took me a whole year to adapt to the loose idea of schedule, those waiting hours were spent in getting to know the members, bonding over many cups of coffee and lengthy discussions that followed once my Indonesian improved. The 'boys', as I liked to call them, already had an internal system of nicknames in accordance with their roles in the band. Martin and Ganzer were *opa* and *oma*, grandfather and grandmother, as they were the ones who were arranging the gigs and writing new music, Uta (Pradistya Agusta Ananto)

²⁵ *Bule* is a derogatory term for a white foreigner in everyday Indonesian language.

the bass player would be jokingly called both *bapak* and *ibu* (father and mother), and the rest of the band were *anak-anak* (children). My nickname came only later when Ricky, one of the youngest, met my younger sister. As their birthdays are only a day apart, the band concluded the two would be a perfect match, thus I have become *nyadu* (sister-in-law). The youngest *anak* present, either Emil (Imanuel Suwenda Ruku) or Ricky (Ulrich Zwingli Pingga), was in charge of bringing coffee, dinner, cigarettes or doing anything that was needed at the moment. When I asked why is it always them, feeling embarrassed that I was not allowed to contribute in the same way, Martin who was also Emil's uncle, answered that it was the way a family works in Kupang. As Emil's uncle, he exhibited the privilege of seniority, and despite the usually egalitarian and democratic way of the band, family was to be respected. The household of Ricky's mother, where I stayed in Kupang, worked in the same way: his youngest sister, Angelica, had a clear set of duties too. After returning from school and switching her uniform to something more comfortable, the first things she would do was to sweep the entire house, eat, wash the dishes and do homework.

Nusa Tuak was a curious mix of musicians that went beyond the instruments they played, and the band's repertoire often reflected not only the demands of the audience, but the players' most diverse interests as well. Immediately after attaining his bachelor degree, Martin was hired as an assistant professor for the electric guitar at ISI Yogyakarta. There he continued to pursue master degree, expanding his research on sasando. Martin is also a skillful arranger of music interested in music production, which is why such technicalities in the band were always his concern. Uta was classically trained in double bass at ISI Yogyakarta and he would participate in all kinds of projects. As a bass player was equally difficult to find as was an oboist, we would often play together around Yogyakarta in *keroncong* ensembles or classical orchestras, but he also played bass guitar wherever he could, including reggae or heavy metal bands. In Nusa Tuak, Uta was loved both for his comedian-like approach and the ability to stay serious and provide most rational arguments or practical solutions. The first drummer, Sempurna, had to give up on the band as he was trying to pursue career in jazz, and was soon replaced by Peppy (Febriyan Stevanus Kurniawan), another jazz drummer and aspiring composer, also studying at ISI Yogyakarta. Together with Uta he formed a very reliable, yet flexible rhythm section that was able to adapt to any of Martin's ideas. He was also very critical of the band's progress and tried to intervene by introducing discipline in tuning instruments and showing up on time. Rico Matahelemual, ethnomusicology student at ISI, joined the band on Hawaiian steel guitar and was the complete opposite of Peppy in his approach. Less focused on

his studies, he is a talented musician and singer, able to play almost any instrument that comes in his hands, and that is what he still enjoys the most. More often than not, I would find Rico sitting in front of the ethnomusicology department (instead of sitting in the class or as a way of killing time), entertaining others by playing *keroncong* bass and cello, or djembe. Both of us were tasked with playing fill-in instruments in the band, so over time we developed a loose system of ideas for the fillers that were meant to be followed or improvised upon.



Photograph 20. Nusa Tuak with the lontar palm in the background. Photograph taken by Eno Tunya.

Rizky Hauteas learned sasando from Caro Edon and joined the band while studying oil engineering. He is also a good drummer, so he would step in when Peppy was unable to attend the rehearsal. During his studies in Yogyakarta, Rizky led the church band in Babarsari and in his free time he often made covers of pop songs on sasando. Nowadays, Rizky is back in Kupang, helping Edon with teaching the instrument to children. Izoe (Ischak Hadi Nastantio) graduated in anthropology and learned sasando from Zakarias Ndaong, but he mostly remained a mystery to me. Soon after graduating he returned to Kupang, where he writes music for dance and other stage performances. In the band, Ricky was the quiet one. Besides having the responsibilities of the youngest, Ricky was a great chef famous for his *sambal* (chili paste), and the cooking was his task in the house he shared with Ganzer and Rico, where we practiced the most. As I previously wrote, his main concern as being both piano student and sasando player was arranging classical pieces for sasando, which he learned from his father Lewi. Emil is another student of ethnomusicology, but his studies were always of secondary importance: he

prefers to play rock music on guitar or sasando. In 2018, after he decided to step out of Nusa Tuak, he continued with solo performances and had a small tour around Java and Bali under the stage name Emil June. Combining all the sasando players in Nusa Tuak usually followed a simple system: as the principal, Ganzer played the melody, and the others played harmonic and bass accompaniment. Sometimes, like in *The Sound of Love*, all sasando players would play both the melody and the accompaniment, and in the arrangement of *Gemu Fa Mi Re*, everybody was given space for a solo improvisation, with each sasando player having their own prepared pattern.



Photograph 21. Nusa Tuak performing at the Gondokusuman Christian church in Yogyakarta.

However, the biggest problems with having five sasando players in the band were related to properly tuning the instruments and balancing their sound levels. Firstly, the five instruments were made by four different sasando-makers: Izoe and Ganzer played on Jack Bulan's instruments, Rizky played sasando elektrik made by Edon, Ricky played on borrowed sasando built by Jeremias Pah, and Emil's instrument was made by Zakarias Ndaong. Ricky's and Emil's instruments were particularly difficult to tune because the screws used as tuning pegs were unreliable and imprecise. Another problem was that the players were mostly tuning their instruments by ear, and while personally I thought there was a certain charm to such a sound, it had to be solved to achieve the goals to which the band agreed on. Persuading the players to use their phones and tuner apps available, which was suggested on many occasions by both Peppy and myself, was impossible as they were confident in themselves and their abilities of tuning instruments good enough. For the concert in Jakarta, Ricky and I spent almost 30 minutes

until we finally tuned his sasando, but as soon as we entered the heavily air-conditioned concert hall, all the instruments fell out of tune and the players were unable to fix the problem on the stage. Indeed, tuning is something that requires as much of an attention as practicing the instrument, and the matter of tuning and discipline required was later put forward as a question to the whole band: do you want to become professional or not? Balancing the sound on amplifiers and mixing desks was equally challenging. By default, Ricky's and Emil's instruments were weaker in the sound and nasal in color, while the others were significantly louder and had a guitar-like sound. In addition, Rizky and Ganzer experimented with sound-effect pedals. While such a setting provided a space for creativity and testing the sound limits of the band, it was never experimented with. Rather, the main issue was how to balance all the instruments without one sticking out too loud or one not making it to the mix at all.

Nusa Tuak mostly played at festivals and similar events, where the time on stage was often limited to twenty minutes for each performing act. Needless to say, our performances would exceed this limit with almost no exception. Big as the band was, we always needed more time to climb on stage and properly plug all the instruments than others, and even when the band performed covers of pop songs, it would rarely follow the three-minute duration of the original. Other numbers like *Gemu Fa Mi Re* or *Ofa Langga* could last anywhere around ten minutes, depending on the audience willing to dance to the former, or Martin's and Ganzer's solos in the latter. Usually, one of the two would have been chosen as the last number on the playlist, during which we would often be signaled from behind to cut it short or simply stop playing. The rest of the repertoire would be chosen to fit the nature of event, for example, when we performed at the event Playing for Change Day in 2017 and picked two songs by Bob Marley to spread the message of love and peace. Another common choice for the Yogyanese audience was a song *Yogyakarta* by Kla Project, as to let the audience sing along.

In 2017, Nusa Tuak reached its peak with giving out two big performances. At this time, Bank (Bangkit Yudha Prastiyo) joined the band as a manager. The first was in June at the Taman Budaya Yogyakarta (Yogyakarta Culture Park) as a part of Ganzer's final recital which involved an orchestra of twenty-some musicians on Indonesian traditional instruments, smaller winds and strings orchestra, and Nusa Tuak. This *orkes etnik*, featured as Indonesia Etnik Orkestra, comprised of other ethnomusicology students from ISI who played traditional instruments from all over the archipelago, four vocalists, and a portion of Nusa Tuak (Uta on double bass, Rico on *keroncong* bass, Peppy on drums and myself on oboe). It was gathered specifically for this occasion and performance of Ganzer's piece *Re'u*, and it took a whole month of lengthy

rehearsals to prepare the orchestra for the performance. Except few, most students were struggling with reading Western notation and mostly relied on their ear and feeling to move between the sections of 25-minute long piece for sasando and orchestra. After a couple of solo pieces, all Ganzer's own compositions, Nusa Tuak played accompanied by winds and strings in a 45-minute session. The last days before the concert were as hectic as one could imagine. Morning rehearsals with Etnik Orkestra were followed by a lunch break, then rehearsal of Nusa Tuak with the classical orchestra, evening Nusa Tuak rehearsals, and through nights, Martin and I were exchanging in three-hour long shifts of arranging for the orchestra and sleeping. Fortunately, the concert went well, and Nusa Tuak proved to be able of carrying out bigger projects such as the one that followed a month later.

Nusa Tuak was invited to play at Galeri Indonesia Kaya (literally, Gallery of Rich Indonesia) in Jakarta and give a full-evening concert. This was something the band had never done before, but with the set of new pieces that we prepared for the previous concert and a couple of older ones, the pressure was off and the confidence grew. Ganzer, however, imagined of presenting more, and not just sasando biola. Therefore, the band ordered idiochord sasandu-zithers to perform two songs from Rote (*Batu Matia* and *Te'o Renda*) as an introduction to the rest of the concert. As it was a last-minute idea, zithers arrived on the evening before the departure to Jakarta, so the night was spent in installing the bridges and tuning the instruments. Unfortunately, things did not go as well as expected once we climbed the stage. Except the previously mentioned problems with tuning, we were having trouble with the sound mixing, and the concert (which was also live-streamed) passed without a single note heard from the bass guitar. Incidents regarding the sound quality were not something uncommon since most of sound engineers were not professionals, and the equipment was oftentimes faulty or improper. Sounding the oboe was almost impossible until I borrowed an attachable microphone for guitar from my brother, which was equally improper, but was possible to work with.



Photograph 22. Nusa Tuak waiting for the train to Jakarta.

After the two concerts, I thought that Nusa Tuak was capable of traveling abroad and playing in front of international audience, and that “going international”, as they called it, might help the band to achieve greater success in the future. So I suggested the idea, saying that I would like to help in any way I could, and the others accepted. We made a list of activities that had to be carried out in the following months so we could travel to Europe next year. The band agreed to work on a CD that could be used as a promo material and sold at the venues to partly cover the expenses, everybody would make sure their passports were up-to-date, Bank would apply the band for funding at all possible local and national administrative offices, and I was in charge of arranging gigs abroad, starting from Croatia and neighboring countries. Initial excitement and enthusiasm was slowly fading away as everybody realized how much effort was actually

needed to achieve this goal, and another contributing factor was that I simply could not arrange the gigs in a way that would bring the band's budget balance to zero, let alone make any profit. During my last months in Indonesia, Nusa Tuak was not performing at all, even the gig in Bali was cancelled, and the band slowly fell apart as the fresh graduates in the band were forced to look for a job at their hometown or in Jakarta. Even though the success of the project was depending heavily on everyone's contribution, I could not help but feel guilty for putting the pressure on the band that was not yet ready for it.

Being the only girl in the band was not as challenging as being a white female in Indonesia on an everyday basis. Playing in the band was always joyful and collaborative experience, I felt that I could express my opinions freely and that my ideas about what or how we should play were accepted just as everybody else's thoughts on the matter. More to the point, it was a place where I was able to develop friendships. While my whiteness was not an issue at the rehearsals, it would pop up as soon as we would perform at events. Curious MCs could not unsee me as exotic and odd addition to the band. To be viewed only as a musician was impossible goal, and the short hair that I have been fashioning even before coming to Indonesia made it difficult for most of the people to see me as a female. The question of my hairstyle was baffling for the guys in the band as much as it was for anybody else, and I could not blame them. They were born and raised into society which recognizes patriarchal gender roles and appropriate looks, to which I am not entitled to act upon. However, being a female was not an issue reflected only through the appearance of one. Sometimes we would rehearse until late into the night, or just stay late after rehearsing and hang out. When I moved from Kasongan to Tegal Dowo, a small *kampung* maybe three kilometers away from where we practiced, Rizky and Ricky insisted that they accompany me home because the rehearsal ended about 2 a.m. Even though I was opposing to the idea, feeling that there was no need for dragging anyone on the short ride, they accompanied me anyway, saying that it was not safe for a girl to ride alone so late. I appreciated the thought, still thinking it was unnecessary. A couple of months later, one night I was riding home alone on my motorbike, passing through the rice fields between Kasongan and Tegal Dowo when I noticed the man who passed me by moments ago, waiting in the middle of nowhere. These roads had no street lights, and only when he approached me really close, I was to understand that I was being followed. Driving next to me, he started asking questions about where do I live and where do I come from. After telling him to stop following me, he took a turn to the left and I was relieved. Seconds later he was behind me again and at this point I was scared for life, knowing that I might not be fast enough on the bumpy roads to

escape. He was following me all the way to the *kampung* and I disappeared through its narrow and weaving streets, not knowing if he actually saw me before and knew where I live. Luckily, nothing happened that night and I was safe once I got home, but this mishap, along with the stories of my scholarship mates, made me realize that the neighborhood (and roads in general) must have been even more unsafe for the local women who never leave their homes after evening hours. When I told the guys what has happened, they were concerned as much as I was, telling me that was the exact reason why they insisted on taking me home. From then on, I used only main roads to get from place to place when riding alone.

Despite the band's short life, its music should not be rejected easily. To gather five sasando players coming from different teachers and having various perspectives on the instrument was unprecedented event. Even though they all lived in Kupang prior to their studies in Yogyakarta, they have never met until joining Nusa Tuak. According to Ricky, who quoted his father Lewi on this matter, had it been not for Yogyakarta, the five would never have played together. This geographical displacement rendered the question of a teacher or playing technique unimportant, and allowed them to make music in a way that would be impossible had they stayed home. For this reason, the following sub-chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the band's version of *Ofa Langga* and its comparison to renditions by other sasando players.

6.2. *Ofa Langga*

If there is one song that all the Rotenese identify with, it is *Ofa Langga*. Fixed in every sasando player's repertoire, this is the only song which I found to be played on both sasandu and sasando biola and having several versions. *Ofa Langga* was composed during World War II, at the time of Japanese occupation (Basile 2003:190, Haning 2010:56) when many Rotenese were enslaved and shipped off from the port of Pante Baru to Timor. Written in the vernacular language, it tells the story of Rotenese suffering during the occupation. Haning describes *Ofa Langga* as a love song between a girl and a young man who was one of many to go to Pante Baru, not knowing whether he will return home. Upon hearing of his death in Kupang, the girl ended her own life by drinking poison (Haning 2010:57-58). There is, however, no mention of this sad outcome in the verses of *Ofa Langga*, which are here introduced as Basile transcribed and translated them (2003:189-190):

Stanza 1:

Ofalanga adinda soba soba (2x)

Soba nita adinda tasi ani (2x)

Refrain:

Ani soba kasian susi ana

Lu lembe terlalu susi matan

Te tango pinu lembe

Mama bo'i susa hati

Nae dae ki

Dae ki tua meko

Tua meko Pante Baru

Kola de'a Pante Baru

Nae lena sari

Ta dadi lena seri

Nae nasa fali

Ta dadi nasa fali

The little boat is struggling

Trying to find a way through the windy sea

Wind have pity on the little sister

So many tears stream from her eyes

That her nose runs

Dear lady with the broken heart

To the north

The palm tree and the gong

The palm tree and the gong to Pante Baru

The talk in Pante Baru

They want to leave

But they can not leave

They want to go home

But they can not go home

Although Basile recorded more subsequent stanzas in *bini*, sasando biola players tend to perform only the first stanza followed by refrain. Furthermore, while both the stanza and the refrain are not composed in the form of *bini*, they reflect some of its principles. For example, the struggling little boat is a metaphor of Rotenese suffering, while the use of *tua* (lontar palm tree) and *meko* (gong) follows the principle of parallelism in which an object or an idea, in this case the Rotenese people (Basile 2003:190), is represented by two complementary terms.

The lyrics are somewhat different in Haning's rendition (2010:57-58), but the differences appear to be a matter of a dialect instead of the text's meaning:

Stanza 1:

Ofa langga adinda soba soba (2x)

Soba nita adinda tasi anin (2x)

Soba sayang kasian susi ana

Lu reme adinda susi matan

Se tanggon pinu reme

Bu bo'i susa hati

Refrain:

Se nae dae ki

Dae ki tua meko

Se nae dae ko na

Kola dea Pante Baru

Nae lena seri

Ta dadi lena seri

Nae nasa fali

Ta dadi nasa fali

While the composer is unknown, both authors agree that he could be from Thie, Rote. For Haning, the word *bo'i*, abbreviated form of *bonggi*, originates in Thie dialect and stands for a child or blood-related person (Haning 2010:59). One of Basile's interlocutors suggested that the author might have been Ba'i Sa Fe from Thie, who was likewise taken from Pante Baru to Timor, but never returned home (Basile 2003:191).

The best known melody of *Ofa Langga* is syllabic, fits within the 4/4 meter, and the portion of refrain is chanted on a single tone. The lyrics as written above suggest different perceptions on how the song is divided into stanza and refrain. Basile's version reflects the practice of sasandu players that he recorded in Rote in 1993: the first stanza is fixed and followed by the refrain, after which subsequent *bini* verses (which are double) alternate with the refrain. Haning (2010:57-58) wrote down the melody in cipher notation as follows:

Ofa Langga (Versi Asli)
Oleh : Ena Hayer Pah & Paul A. Haning

4/4 C=do

$\dot{1} \overline{5} | \dot{1} \dot{1} \cdot 7 \overline{17} \overline{17} | \overline{55} \cdot \dot{1} \overline{5} | \dot{1} \dot{1} \cdot 7 \overline{17} \overline{17} | 5 \overline{5}$
o fa langga adin da so ba so ba o fa langga adin da so ba soba

$\overline{34} | 5 \overline{54} \overline{33} \overline{43} | \overline{11} \overline{34} | \overline{55} \cdot \overline{433} \overline{43} | \overline{11} \cdot \cdot$
So ba ni ta adin da ta si a nin So ba ni ta a dinda ta si a nin

$\overline{34} | \overline{55} \cdot \overline{55} \cdot \overline{53} | \overline{55} \cdot \cdot \dot{1} \overline{5} | \dot{1} \dot{1} \cdot \dot{1} \overline{11} \dot{1} \overline{7} | \overline{55} \cdot \cdot$
So ba sayang ka si an su si a na Lu re me a dinda susi matan

$\overline{05} | \overline{55} \overline{54} \overline{55} \overline{34} | \overline{31} \overline{21} \overline{66}$
Se tanggon pi nu re me bubo i su sa ha ti

Reef:

$\overline{01} | 1 \overline{11} \overline{101} | 1 \overline{11} \overline{11}$
Se na e dae ki dae ki tu a meko

$\overline{01} | 1 \overline{11} \overline{134} | \overline{31} \overline{11} \overline{11}$
Se na e dae ko na ko la dea pante ba ru

$\overline{03} | 3 \overline{34} \overline{55} \overline{05} | \overline{55} \overline{54} \overline{55}$
Nae le na se ri ta da di le na se ri

$\overline{01} | 1 \overline{11} \overline{33} \overline{04} | \overline{31} \overline{43} \overline{11}$
Nae na sa fa li ta da di na sa fa li

The cipher notation by Ena Hayer Pah and Paul Haning required some intervention when translated into Western notation. While I mostly remained faithful to the source, bars 9 and 13 required rationalizing with the 4/4 meter as the lines designating 16th beats and the dots suggesting a tie were placed irregularly and even incorrectly within the system of cipher notation. Bar 9 is transcribed as quavers, as that is how song is most often performed:

Ofa Langga

as transcribed by
Ena Hayer Pah and Paul A. Haning

O - fa lang-ga a - din-da so - ba so - ba o - fa lang-ga a - din-da so - ba so - ba So - ba

5
ni - ta a - din-da ta - si - a - nin So - ba ni - ta a - din-da ta - si - a - nin So - ba

9
sa - yang ka - si - an su - si a - na Lu re - me a - din-da su - si ma - tan Se

13
ref.
tang-gon pi - nu re - me bu bo - i su - sa ha - ti Se na - e dae ki dae ki tu - a me - ko Se

17
na - e dae ko na ko - la dea pan - te ba - ru Na - e le - na se - ri ta

20
da - di le - na se - ri Na - e na - sa fa - li ta da - di na - sa fa - li.

As one can see from the transcription, the refrain starts with an upbeat to bar 15 in which chanting begins, after a cadence ending on tone *a*. This cadence appears to be very odd, as the melody is a diatonic rendition of sasandu's pentatonic scale, usually interpreted as c-e-f-g-b in tempered tuning. Such cadence is missing in both Basile's field recordings from Rote and the performances I heard in Kupang. Treatment of lyrics in the refrain is also strange, as is the appearance of upbeat to bar 19 onwards, which is not present in any of the performances. The syllables in the word *nae* are actually never distributed over different beats, and the word is sung as if having one syllable only, similarly with the word *dae*. The verse *kola dea pante baru* usually starts half beat earlier than written above, thus properly placing the word *dea* on the heavy beat instead of the atonic syllable *-la*. To further draw the line between the stanza and refrain, Natalino Mella inserts a bar-long caesura before proceeding to refrain, during which he continues playing harmonic accompaniment:

Ofa Langga

as performed by Natalino Mella



The first and the second upbeat can be played both as *c-g* (Haning), *c-b* (Mella), or as *g-b*, and they vary from player to player. As Mella's example suggest, there are other variations of the same melody, but the cadences remain ending on either *c* or *g*. I shall return to his performance later.²⁶

There is another melody of *Ofa Langga* which is less often performed, but can sometimes alternate with the first melody. Haning included this melody in his book along with the first one, and I only heard it from Lewi Pingga:

²⁶ In the video uploaded to his YouTube channel (available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRGD88o5zrE>), Natalino plays without the caesura. The transcription is made after his performance on January 12th, 2018 which is available in the YouTube playlist.

Ofa Langga

as performed by Lewi Pingga

O - fa lang-ga so - ba so - ba__ so - ba ni - ta ta - si - a - ni__

so - ba sa-yang yang ka - si - an__ lu__ lem-be su - si ma- tan.__

Nae le - na se - ri__ ta da-di le - na__³se - ri ³nae na-sa fa - li__ ta da-di na-sa

fa - li__ A - du ka - si - an__ a-du ka - si - an__ ma-ma bo'-i e. sasando interlude

A - du ka - si - an__ a-du ka - si - an__ ma-ma bo'-i e.

A - du ka - si - an__ a-du ka - si - an__ ma-ma bo'-i e. **rit.**

As Pak Lewi played and sung in a very casual tempo, it seemed to retain the melancholic feel even though half of the refrain verses are omitted, and the melancholy is further emphasized with the final repetition of the verse “*adu kasian mama bo'i e*”, which roughly translates as “dear poor lady”. The stanza contains four verses which are then repeated before the refrain. What is not visible from the transcription, but is heard in the video in the YouTube playlist, is that Pak Lewi often extends the fourth beat.

The arrangement of *Ofa Langga* for Nusa Tuak was written by Martin for his final recital in 2016, and revised in 2017 for Ganzer’s recital when the wind section was added to the strings and the band.²⁷ *Ofa Langga* score does not include sasando parts, electric guitar and Hawaiian, and the only band instruments featured are bass guitar and drums as orientation instruments and the oboe to build the wind section around it (see the full score attached in Appendix). Martin’s rendition is by far the most radical, turning *Ofa Langga* into a rock piece: not only that Martin transposed the melody to the minor mode, but he also metrically modulated the melody for the

²⁷ Video of this performance is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmlN4O19U2g> (September 24th, 2019).

first two verses (stanza in Basile's version), translating it into 7/8 meter. When I asked him about how did he come up with the idea, Martin answered that although he knew the song since childhood, only recently he was made aware of the meaning of its lyrics, which were incomprehensible to him since he does not speak Rotenese. After learning about the story of Japanese occupation, he concluded that the melody in major mode does not do justice to the text, so he opted for minor mode. As he wanted to emphasize on the tragedy and suffering, he also felt that 4/4 meter does not satisfy him and that 7/8 appears more intense. The rest of the piece was built upon the modulated theme played on guitar and sasando:



Arrangement for Nusa Tuak can be divided into three larger sections A-B-A' with coda. Section A begins with an introduction in 4/4, using the upbeat of the *Ofa Langga* melody as the main motif. The meter then switches to 7/8 and after another introduction a newly composed theme arises played on guitar and sasando, and echoed by the oboe and Hawaiian:

27

Oboe/Hawaiian

Guitar/Sasando

Ofa Langga theme

This theme does not appear again in the piece, but its motifs are later used to form a refrain to the modulated *Ofa Langga* theme which appears immediately after the first theme has finished. After the refrain, B section starts with sasando moving to 4/4 (rehearsal mark I in the score), and introducing a motif reminiscent of the pattern commonly played on sasandu:

The motif is played by all sasando players in unison, and at this moment all the other players stop playing. After the signal, usually after the motif has been played twice, everybody starts to sing *Ofa Langga* in a minor mode, accompanied only by the motif above. Once again, the stanza is longer and the refrain starts from the verse “*Se nae dae ki.*” The feeling of the refrain starting from that point is enhanced by singers moving an octave higher, and returning to the lower register for the stanza, as it is sung twice. Compared to the octave range of the original melody, *Ofa Langga* in Nusa Tuak’s version has extended over octave and a half.

Ofa Langga

as performed by Nusa Tuak

O - fa lang-ga a - din - da so - ba so - ba o - fa lang-ga a - din - da so - ba

so - ba so - ba ni - ta a - din - da ta - si - a - ni so - ba

ni - ta a - din - da ta - si - a - ni So - ba sa - yang ka - si - an su - si

a - na lu lem - be ta - la - lu su - si ma - tan Se tang-gon pi - nu

re-me bu bo' - i su - sa ha - ti ref. Se nae dae ki dae ki tu - a me-ko tu - a

me - ko Pan - te Ba - ru ko - la de - a Pan - te Ba - ru Nae le - na se - ri ta

da - di le - na se - ri Nae na - sa fa - li ta da - di na - sa fa - li.

After the song, sasando players continue repeating the motif joined by bass guitar and drums, serving as the background for rounds of alternating guitar and sasandu improvisations. For this purpose, Ganzer switches from sasando to amplified sasandu he fondly calls sasando rock, and improvises by often bending the strings either with his thumb or a lighter. Martin's and Ganzer's improvisations culminate until the band is joined by the orchestra, moving to the A' section. This final section of the arrangement omits the first theme and ends with coda which is the refrain repeated and extended.

6.3. Remarks on *Ofa Langga*

From the previous sub-chapter, one can see how the perception of stanza and refrain has shifted towards a more Western-like perception, in which the refrain is characterized by introduction of different melodic progression. In this case, it is the chanting starting in the verse “*Se nae dae ki*” which marks the line between stanza and refrain.

This shift, however, seems to be a result of more contributing factors than the sole influx of Western music. With the migration of Rotenese community to Kupang and its surroundings,

much has been falling into oblivion, including the ritual Rotenese language which is used to form *bini* verses. *Bini* does not involve only the language, but the skill to improvise new verses as well, and this skill is being lost. With the recent passing of Jeremias Pah, Kupang has lost probably the only sasandu player who still knew *bini*, whether he was able to create new ones or not, and Ganzer claims that there are only two sasandu players left in Rote who can still improvise. Consequentially, forgetting the language results in forgetting the meaning of the sung text, which is here illustrated by Martin's example, who is Rotenese by descent, but still had to look for the translation. Forgetting the meaning of the lyrics is further enabled by the prevailing practice of sasando biola players, who in general almost never sing and are not capable of playing sasandu or performing sasandu-accompanied song. *Ofa Langga* remains the only example of contact between the two traditions, as well as being an example of shifting knowledge. Taken all together, it is then no wonder that Mella's instrumental performance appears to ignore the meaning of the text and the melancholy suggested within, or that there are multiple performances on YouTube combining the two melodies in order to compensate for the repetition of the same text.

Martin's arrangement of *Ofa Langga* indicates another shift in thought. The so-called original melody of *Ofa Langga* is performed in major mode as a diatonic rationalization of pentatonic scale of sasandu, although Basile's field recordings reveal that the scale might as well become a minor mode since each player tuned his sasandu differently. This major mode sounded "too happy" for Martin, and his decisions in arranging the song imply the cliché borrowed from Western music in which the major mode is perceived as happy or joyous, and the minor mode suggestive of sadness, tragedy, etc.

It is unfortunate that the *Ofa Langga* makes the only example of sasandu-accompanied song that entered the repertoire of sasando biola, so the conclusions are drawn on the account of one song only. However, the fact that the song "survived" the shift between the two instruments speaks of its importance to the Rotenese community.

7 Concluding Remarks

Throughout the chapters of this thesis, I have tried to portray the small, but thriving sasando biola scene to which the case of Nusa Tuak serves as a sort of counter-narrative. Due to the short stay in Kupang, caused by my student obligations and lack of financial support, some questions remained uncovered and are only hinted throughout the text. Other topics, like instrument-making or performance practice were discussed in greater detail, to which I hope I provided an informed insight to benefit the future research of sasando. For this reason, I would like to point to what is missing in this thesis and give some ideas about further research.

What appears to be most striking about sasando biola is the plurality of practices in instrument-making and meanings inscribed into the instrument, which arise from the competitive character found among musicians and manufacturers. Therefore, this competitiveness provided a creative space without the need to set or conform to any standard and enabled creative individuals to act in many directions of their musicianship: they have established themselves as inventive instrument makers, capable performers, and pedagogues. A creative individual, which was once embodied in *manasoda* in Rote, has taken these new forms to thrive in the new, urbanized and globalized context. There is, however, no clear division, as almost all established musicians have their students and/or make instruments to sell.

As I have pointed out before, different interpretations of history created different perceptions of the instrument, upon which the instrument is developed. What is seen as tradition and how that tradition is acted upon, mostly relies on the opinion of creative individual. Rather than in the repertoire played, it is in design of sasando, innovation, tuning, or playing technique where these interpretations are evident the most and where individual identities are created and articulated.

Sasando makers and players are well aware of these differences between each other, and they make sure they have opinion on them just like on everything else. Before going to Kupang, I was warned about their gossiping habits, and I did not have to look hard for it, it was everyone's habit. While gossiping is not something very unique to any place, for musicians I have talked to it was a very important way through which they discussed certain matters. Gossip was used to talk about almost anything related to sasando scene, from economic benefits, playing techniques to the "truths behind". I have largely decided to omit the gossip from this text as it was almost impossible to keep it anonymous and impartial, except in the sub-chapter 3.4., in

which the players were stating their reasons why they do not play with each other. In that case, there is no mention of characteristics which would make it easy to identify other musicians, and yet it illustrates some of the principles of social dynamics guiding sasando scene: “different characters” are no match, and egoism is not something to deal with. Musicians were quick to discredit each other for many reasons, from “using bad strings”, “appreciating things that are not that good”, “they didn't pay me there” to “he's not who he says he is”. Some future research might question social aspects of the scene in more detail, which was impossible in this thesis because of the relatively small number of interlocutors.

My research revealed that sasando scene is dominated by men, but sasando is not exclusively male as is the case with sasandu. There is a fair number of female performers, like Yunilia Edon or Tiara Pingak, who won the third prize at 2009 sasando competition, but they were both unavailable at the time of my research. However, I was fortunate to meet Claudette Nahak and Uchy Dessy Natalia. Uchy played in Edon's group that was practicing for the performance in Bali, and due to her job of a nurse, she could not stay longer as she had to prepare for a night shift. Claudette, at the time a high-school graduate student, was taking lessons from Djoni Theedens, but for her, sasando was only secondary to English debate club and preparations for studying anthropology. I was hoping that I would hear her play, but unfortunately, her sasando fell on the ground and the *haik* was seriously damaged, so she said she could not play until the instrument is fixed. Simple Instagram or YouTube search, as well as the photos and videos of sasando courses, show that there is indeed a great number of young girls playing sasando equally well as their male counterparts who get to perform on stage more frequently. To the best of my knowledge, there has not been a female instrument maker or sasando teacher. In the male-dominated world of sasando, they remain someone's students and rarely become established performers. It is certainly a topic which deserves more attention than having a single paragraph.

When talking about international performances, I have only briefly mentioned the economic aspect of sasando musicianship. While most of the instrument makers told me the prices of new instruments, I did not find out how well can they cover the costs of everyday life in Kupang, which is more expensive than Yogyakarta, as it is often the case with “remote areas of the archipelago” (in public discourse and media, “remote” often means further away from Java). Without a better insight, one can only assume the challenges of precarious labor.

Finally, islands of Nusa Tenggara Timur and their various music traditions are still largely unknown, and except occasional recording sessions, we do not know much about their

music or dances. Such a diverse area could provide new readings of local and translocal contexts or better understanding of there existant traditions. It is my hope that in the near future ethnomusicological studies in Indonesia expand to the province and shed light on its cultures and ways of music making.

8 Bibliography

- Acciaoli, Greg. 1985. "Culture as Art: From Practice to Spectacle in Indonesia". *Canberra Anthropology* 8(1-2):148-172.
- Adams, Kathleen M. 1998. "More than an Ethnic Marker: Toraja Art as Identity Negotiator". *American Ethnologist* 25(3):327-351.
- Ako, Mashino. 2009. "Competition as a New Context for the Performance of Balinese *Gender Wayang*". *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 41:111-137.
- Ali-Fauzi, Ihsan, and Ben Hillman. 2015. "New Hope for Indonesia's Ethnic Minorities". Available at: <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/?p=46372> (March 11th, 2018).
- Basile, Christopher. 2003. *Tradition and Change in Rotinese Sasandu-Accompanied Song*. Doctoral dissertation. Monash University, Melbourne.
- Basile, Christopher, and Janet Hoskins. 1998. "Nusa Tenggara Timur". In *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Volume 4: Southeast Asia*. Miller, Terry E. and Sean Williams, eds. New York: Garland Pub., 786-803.
- Bates, Eliot. 2012. "The Social Life of Musical Instruments". *Ethnomusicology* 56(3):363-395.
- Geertz, Clifford. 2000. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Grame, Theodor C. 1962. "Bamboo and Music: A New Approach to Organology". *Ethnomusicology* 6(1): 8-14.
- Haning, Paul A., *Sasandu, Alat Musik Tradisional Masyarakat Rote Ndao*, Kupang: Kairos, 2010.
- Harnish, David. 2007. "'Digging' and 'Upgrading': Government Efforts to 'Develop' Music and Dance in Lombok, Indonesia". *Asian Music* 38(1): 61-87.
- Jappy. 2018. "Diaspora Rote Usul Haik, Ti'i Langga, dan Sasando Sebagai Warisan Budaya Dunia". Available at: <https://www.kompasiana.com/opajappy/5b7f5c6e677ffb27402d9d92/diaspora-rote-usul-haik-ti-i-langga-dan-sasando-sebagai-warisan-budaya-dunia?page=all> (October 3rd, 2019).
- Keen, Palmer. 2017. "Sumba Strings Pt.6: Gogah". Available at: <https://www.auralarchipelago.com/auralarchipelago/gogah?rq=flores> (August 14th, 2019).
- Kisliuk, Michelle. 2008. "(Un)doing Fieldwork". In *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*. Barz, Gregory, and Cooley, Timothy J., eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 183-205.
- McGraw, Andrew C. 2015. "Sasando". *Grove Music Online*, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.L2281758> (September 25th, 2017).
- Mella, Natalino. 2015. *Sasando, Solo Tutorial*. Kupang.

- Merriam, Alan P. 1964. *The Anthropology of Music*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Pisani, Elizabeth. 2013. "A Nation of Dunces?". *Inside Indonesia*, December 7th, 2013. Available at: <http://www.insideindonesia.org/a-nation-of-dunces> (March 10th, 2018).
- Roda, P. Allen. 2015. "Ecology of the Global Tabla Industry". *Ethnomusicology* 59(2):315-336.
- Susetyo, Grace. 2013. "Melodies from Indonesia's Far South: Sasando, the Palm Harp of Rote". *Indonesia Expat*, September 23rd, 2013. Available at: <https://indonesiaexpat.biz/travel/melodies-from-indonesias-far-south-sasando-the-palm-harp-of-rote/> (March 20th, 2018).
- Theedens, Djony. 2018. *Tutorial Sasando. Mari Bermain Sasando, Lembaga Kursus Musik Haleluya*.
- Williams, Sean. 2003. "Competing Against "Tradition" in Sundanese Performing Arts". *The World of Music* 45(1):79-95.
- Wong, Deborah. 2008. "Moving. From Performance to Performative Ethnography and Back Again". In *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*. Barz, Gregory, and Cooley, Timothy J., eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 76-89.
- Yampolsky, Philip. 1995. "Forces for Change in the Regional Performing Arts of Indonesia". *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 151(4):700-725.
- Yampolsky, Philip, *et al.* 2001. "Indonesia". *Grove Music Online*, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.42890> (December 27th, 2017).
- Miller, Daniel, *et al.* 2016. *How the World Changed Social Media*. London: UCL Press.
- Rahim, Zamira. 2019. "Papua protests: Indonesia cuts off internet to entire province and deploys more than 1,000 soldiers as riots escalate". *Independent*, August 22nd, 2019. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/free-papua-protests-internet-indonesia-racism-separatists-a9074211.html> (September 12th, 2019).
- Undine Frömming, Urte, *et al.* 2017. "Digital Environments and the Future of Ethnography: An Introduction". In *Digital Environments: Ethnographic Perspectives across Global Online and Offline Spaces*. Undine Frömming, Urte, *et al.* Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 13-22.

9 Appendix

Appendix 1: List of Interviews

Christopher Basile, October 7th, 2017.

Caro Edon, January 9th, 2018.

Marline Edon Meyners, January 9th, 2018.

Rizky Hauteas, January 9th, 2018.

Emil June, May 25th, 2018.

Martin Koehuan, January 2nd, 2018.

Cornelis Kun Kiik, January 13th, 2018.

Ganzer Lana, December 10th, 2017.

Julio Letik, January 9th, 2018.

Natalino Mella, January 12th, 2018.

Leonardus Nahak, January 12th, 2018.

Zakarias Ndaong, January 15th, 2018.

Djitron Pah, January 10th, 2018.

Welly Pah, January 17th, 2018.

Lewi Pingga, January 5th, 2018.

Ricky Pingga, December 30th, 2017.

Djoni Theedens, January 8th, 2018.

Nyongky Welwaart, January 19th, 2018.

Appendix 2: YouTube Playlist

Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxD4MByPZB9WgrV5V9oGuvAxy8zy-vRFy>

The playlist contains videos that I recorded in Kupang, January 2018. Videos are arranged according to the repertoire: the playlist begins with performances of *Ofa Langga* and *lagu daerah* (*Bo Lele Bo*, *Gemu Fa Mi Re*, *Janger*, and two songs played by Lewi Pingga at the wedding party in Soe), then with an unknown traditional piece played by Welly Pah, two mainstream radio hits (*Wonderful Tonight* and *Despacito*), Pachelbel's *Canon in D*, and the Croatian song *Dolinom se šetala* (*She Walked the Valley*). The last video on the playlist is the *bonet* dance from the wedding party in Soe.

Appendix 3: Full Score of Nusa Tuak's Arrangement of *Ofa Langga*

The full score is the revised version (2017) of the original score written by Martin Koehuan in 2016. Except the bass guitar, drums and oboe, there are no other instruments from the band featured in the score, which is written for the winds (flute, oboe, clarinet in B^b, alto saxophone in E^b, horn in F, trumpet in B^b, trombone) and strings (violins 1 and 2, viola, cello).

OFA LANGGA

ARR. L. ORCH. MARTIN KEEJIAN

FLUTE $\text{♩} = 110$ **2** **A** **3** **4** **5** **6** **7**

OBOE

CLARINET IN B♭

ALTO SAXOPHONE

HORN IN F

TRUMPET IN B♭

TROMBONE

VIOLIN 1

VIOLIN 2

VIOLA

VIOLONCELLO

4-STRING BASS GUITAR $\text{♩} = 110$ **A**

DRUM SET **pp** **f**

8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23

$\text{♩} = 190$

FL. Oboe CL. ALTO SAX. HN. TPT. TRN. VLN 1 VLN 2 VLA. VC. BASS DR.

8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23

$\text{♩} = 190$

FL. Oboe CL. ALTO SAX. HN. TPT. TRN. VLN 1 VLN 2 VLA. VC. BASS DR.

Musical score for "The Rose Tree" (Der Rosenkranz). The score is in 3/4 time and consists of three systems. The vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor) and piano accompaniment (Right and Left Hand) are shown. The lyrics are in German and English.

System 1:

Soprano: A- A- A-

Alto: A- A- A-

Tenor: A- A- A-

Piano: Right Hand (RH) and Left Hand (LH)

System 2:

Soprano: A- A- A-

Alto: A- A- A-

Tenor: A- A- A-

Piano: RH and LH

System 3:

Soprano: A- A- A-

Alto: A- A- A-

Tenor: A- A- A-

Piano: RH and LH

The musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is presented in a system of 16 staves, organized into four groups of four staves each. The first group of four staves (labeled VLN. 1, VLN. 2, VLN., and VC.) contains the main melody and accompaniment. The second group of four staves (labeled VLN. 1, VLN. 2, VLN., and VC.) contains the second melody and accompaniment. The third group of four staves (labeled VLN. 1, VLN. 2, VLN., and VC.) contains the third melody and accompaniment. The fourth group of four staves (labeled VLN. 1, VLN. 2, VLN., and VC.) contains the fourth melody and accompaniment. The score is written in 2/4 time and features a variety of musical notation, including eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests. The lyrics 'The Rose Tree' are written below the staves, with the words 'The Rose Tree' appearing on the first staff of each group.

A musical score for the song "The Rose Tree". The score is written for a single melodic line on a five-line staff. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is composed of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests. A square box containing the letter "a" is placed above the staff, indicating a specific note or measure. The score ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

93

94

This page of a musical score is for a 12-piece band. The staves are arranged in two systems of six staves each. The instruments are: Flute (FL), Oboe (OB), Clarinet (CL), Alto Sax (ALTO SAX), Horn (HN), Trumpet (TP), Trombone (TB), Violin 1 (VLN 1), Violin 2 (VLN 2), Viola (VLA), Violoncello (VC), Bass (BASS), and Drums (DR). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'mf' and 'f'. The page number '7' is in the top right corner.

91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102

FL. Oboe CL. ALTO SAX. HN. TPT. TEN. VLN 1 VLN 2 VLA VC. STRASS. DR.

Am G F G Am G F G Am G F G Am G F G

4 4 4

This musical score is for the song "The Sound of Silence" by Simon & Garfunkel, arranged for a 12-voice choir. The score is written for 12 voices, divided into four groups of three: Flute (FL), Oboe (OB), Clarinet (CL), and Alto Saxophone (ALTO SAX); Horn (HN), Trumpet (TP), and Trombone (TN); Violin 1 (VLN. 1), Violin 2 (VLN. 2), and Viola (VLA); and Violoncello (VC). The score includes a piano introduction and a vocal entry. The piano part features a complex, rhythmic melody in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand. The vocal parts enter with a powerful, sustained note, followed by a series of chords and a final, dramatic conclusion. The score is marked with various musical notations, including dynamics (piano, forte), articulation (accents), and phrasing slurs. The tempo is marked "Ad libitum" (Ad lib). The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 103 through 116 indicated at the top of the page.

10

rit. $\text{♩} = 100$ $\text{♩} = 55$

117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128

Solo Siemao Gong (Tungqu Kope)

FL.

OB.

CL.

ALTO SAX.

HN.

TRP.

TBN.

VLN 1

VLN 2

VLA

VC.

BASS

DR.

SOLO GUITAR

129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145

FL. OB. CL. ALTO Sax. HRL. TPT. TBN. VLN. 1 VLN. 2 VLA. VC. BASS DR.

SOLO SASSANDO LONG

♩ = 57

11

145 146 147 148 149 150

FL. Oboe Clarinet Alto Sax. Horn Trumpet Trombone Violin 1 Violin 2 Viola Violoncello

145 146 147 148 149 150

SHS Dr.

4 4

The musical score is written for measures 145 through 150. The woodwind section (Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Alto Saxophone) and brass section (Horn, Trumpet, Trombone) are mostly silent, indicated by whole rests. The string section (Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello) plays a sustained harmonic. The percussion section (SHS, Drums) features a rhythmic pattern in measure 145, followed by a 4-measure rest in measure 146, and then a more complex rhythmic figure in measures 147-150.

131 SOLO QTR 132 133 134 135 136

FL. OR. CL. ALTO SAX. HN. TPT. TBN. VLN. 1 VLN. 2 VLA. VC. BASS DR.

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is for measures 131 through 136. Measures 131-135 are marked with a 'SOLO QTR' (Solo Quarter) and show woodwinds (Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Alto Saxophone) and strings (Horn, Trumpet, Trombone, Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello) with rests. Measure 136 shows a full orchestral entry with woodwinds, strings, and drums. The woodwinds play a melodic line, the strings play a rhythmic pattern, and the drums play a snare drum pattern. The measure is marked with a '4' and a 'ff' (fortissimo) dynamic.

155 156 157

FL. OR. CL. ALTO SAX. HN. TPT. TBN. VLN. 1 VLN. 2 VLA. VC. BASS DR. II

14

102

This musical score page contains measures 155, 156, and 157. The instruments listed are Flute (FL.), Oboe (OR.), Clarinet (CL.), Alto Saxophone (ALTO SAX.), Horn (HN.), Trumpet (TPT.), Trombone (TBN.), Violin 1 (VLN. 1), Violin 2 (VLN. 2), Viola (VLA.), Violoncello (VC.), Bass (BASS), and Drums (DR. II). The score is written for measures 155, 156, and 157. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. The music features a complex arrangement of woodwinds, strings, and percussion. The woodwinds (Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Alto Saxophone) play a melodic line with many slurs and ties. The strings (Violins 1 and 2, Viola, Violoncello) play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The percussion (Horn, Trumpet, Trombone, Bass, Drums) provides a steady beat. The score is written for measures 155, 156, and 157. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. The music features a complex arrangement of woodwinds, strings, and percussion. The woodwinds (Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Alto Saxophone) play a melodic line with many slurs and ties. The strings (Violins 1 and 2, Viola, Violoncello) play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The percussion (Horn, Trumpet, Trombone, Bass, Drums) provides a steady beat.

Musical score for measures 138-145. The score is written for a full orchestra and includes the following parts:

- Flute (Fl.):** Measures 138-145. Measures 138-140 feature a melodic line with a *ff* dynamic. Measures 141-145 are rests.
- Oboe (Ob.):** Measures 138-145. Measures 138-140 feature a melodic line with a *ff* dynamic. Measures 141-145 are rests.
- Clarinet (Cl.):** Measures 138-145. Measures 138-140 feature a melodic line with a *ff* dynamic. Measures 141-145 are rests.
- Alto Saxophone (ALTO SAX.):** Measures 138-145. Measures 138-140 feature a melodic line with a *ff* dynamic. Measures 141-145 are rests.
- Horn (HN):** Measures 138-145. Measures 138-140 feature a melodic line with a *ff* dynamic. Measures 141-145 are rests.
- Trumpet (TPT.):** Measures 138-145. Measures 138-140 feature a melodic line with a *ff* dynamic. Measures 141-145 are rests.
- Trombone (TBN.):** Measures 138-145. Measures 138-140 feature a melodic line with a *ff* dynamic. Measures 141-145 are rests.
- Violin 1 (VLA 1):** Measures 138-145. Measures 138-140 feature a melodic line with a *ff* dynamic. Measures 141-145 are rests.
- Violin 2 (VLA 2):** Measures 138-145. Measures 138-140 feature a melodic line with a *ff* dynamic. Measures 141-145 are rests.
- Viola (VLA):** Measures 138-145. Measures 138-140 feature a melodic line with a *ff* dynamic. Measures 141-145 are rests.
- Violoncello (VC):** Measures 138-145. Measures 138-140 feature a melodic line with a *ff* dynamic. Measures 141-145 are rests.
- Bass (BASS):** Measures 138-145. Measures 138-140 feature a melodic line with a *ff* dynamic. Measures 141-145 are rests.
- Drum (Dr.):** Measures 138-145. Measures 138-140 feature a melodic line with a *ff* dynamic. Measures 141-145 are rests.

The score includes a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. The dynamics *ff* (fortissimo) are indicated for the woodwinds and strings in measures 138-140. The percussion part (Dr.) features a complex rhythmic pattern in measures 138-140.

161 162 163

FL. OS. CL. ALTO SAX. HRT. TPT. TBN. VLN 1 VLN 2 VLA. VCB. SASS. DR.

The musical score spans measures 161 to 163. In measure 161, the Flute (FL), Oboe (OS), Clarinet (CL), and Alto Saxophone (ALTO SAX.) play a melodic line, while the Horns (HRT), Trumpets (TPT), and Trombones (TBN) play a supporting line. The Violins (VLN 1, VLN 2), Viola (VLA), and Violoncello (VCB) play a rhythmic pattern. In measure 162, the woodwinds continue their melodic line, and the strings play a rhythmic pattern. In measure 163, the full orchestra joins in, with the brass (HRT, TPT, TBN) playing a strong, rhythmic pattern, and the woodwinds (FL, OS, CL, ALTO SAX.) playing a melodic line. The Bassoon (SASS) and Drums (DR) also play in this measure.

164 165 166 17

FL

OB

CL

ALTO SAX

HN

TPP.

TBN

VLN. 1

VLN. 2

VLA

VC

SASS

Dr.

108

[illegible]

This musical score page contains measures 207 through 225. The instruments and parts are as follows:

- Fl.** (Flute): Measures 207-215 have rests. From measure 216, it plays a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes.
- Ob.** (Oboe): Measures 207-215 have rests. From measure 216, it plays a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes.
- CL.** (Clarinet): Measures 207-215 have rests. From measure 216, it plays a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes.
- ALTO SAX.** (Alto Saxophone): Measures 207-215 have rests. From measure 216, it plays a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes.
- HN.** (Horn): Measures 207-215 have rests. From measure 216, it plays a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes.
- TP.** (Trumpet): Measures 207-215 have rests. From measure 216, it plays a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes.
- TBN.** (Trombone): Measures 207-215 have rests. From measure 216, it plays a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes.
- VLN. 1** (Violin 1): Measures 207-215 have rests. From measure 216, it plays a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes.
- VLN. 2** (Violin 2): Measures 207-215 have rests. From measure 216, it plays a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes.
- VLA.** (Viola): Measures 207-215 have rests. From measure 216, it plays a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes.
- VC.** (Violoncello): Measures 207-215 have rests. From measure 216, it plays a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes.
- STR.** (Strings): Measures 207-215 have rests. From measure 216, it plays a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes.
- Dr.** (Drum): Measures 207-215 have rests. From measure 216, it plays a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes.

The score includes various musical notations such as rests, eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and dynamic markings like *f* (forte) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). A rehearsal mark 'N' is placed at the beginning of measure 215.

24

222 223 224 225 226 227 228 229 230 $\text{♩} = 110$ 231 $\text{♩} = 150$ 232 233 234

FL

Ob.

CL

ALTO SAX

HN

TPT.

TBN

VLN 1

VLN 2

VLA

VC

BASS

DR.

$\text{♩} = 100$

235 236 237 238 239 240 241 242 243 244 245 246 *rit.* 247 248 FINE

FL. Oboe CL. ALTO Sax. HN. TPT. TBN. VLN. 1 VLN. 2 VLA. VC. BASS DR.

817 $\text{♩} = 100$ FINE