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# FROM ORGAN TO GAMELAN: JAVANESE CATHOLIC MUSICAL TRADITIONS IN YOGYAKARTA, CENTRAL JAVA

Elizabeth Hamilton  
*SIT Study Abroad*

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FROM ORGAN TO GAMELAN:  
JAVANESE CATHOLIC MUSICAL TRADITIONS IN YOGYAKARTA, CENTRAL JAVA

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SIT Study Abroad

Indonesia: Arts, Religion, and Social Change

Fall 2018

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## Introduction

I believe that authors have the great power of being able to inform audiences in extremely positive and negative ways. Writing of any kind inherently comes with the baggage of an author's bias – their positionality in the world, their background, their education, their privilege and oppression, and how these aspects of identity inform their view of the world around them. Nothing written for public consumption is free of the implications that come with the author's lived experiences and perspectives. After living and studying in Indonesia for three months, I have learned about only a fraction of the complexities that encompass Indonesian life, culture, religion, and custom. My greatest realization throughout this project is the reality that I am an American, white, upper-middle class, Western educated, English-speaking woman who is attempting to write something meaningful about lives and experiences that are quite different from mine. With these realities in mind, I sought to pursue an Independent Study Project that sparked a passion close to my heart and that could be informed by my own identities and experiences.

With little hesitation, I decided to learn more about the music of Catholic communities in the Yogyakarta area of Central Java. I am a born-and-raised Catholic who goes to Church for the spiritual lessons and meaningful community of believers, and I've stayed because of the moving liturgical music that enhances every mass I attend. I sang in my parish's church choir growing up, and I played piano for mass at my all-girls Catholic high school for the entirety of my time there. I am the person who always sits in a pew close to the musicians and sings out louder than my congregational peers at any given moment. I wondered what a country as religious as Indonesia, where the first principle of its official state philosophy, *Pancasila*, is "Belief in the One and Only God," might have to offer in terms of Catholic liturgical music.

For a portion of my project, I stayed with a Catholic host family in Godean, a town within the Special Region of Yogyakarta that sits approximately seven miles outside of the city center. The family was very involved in their parish's musical activities, and I was able to accompany them to choir practice, sing with the choir during mass, attend their area's monthly youth mass, and go to the preliminary *gamelan* and choir practice for their parish's Christmas mass. Even more so, my host dad was a musician who readily taught me how to play Javanese Catholic hymns on the piano during my entire stay! After ten days, I moved to downtown Yogyakarta to visit parishes there. According to the 2010 census, 9.39% of the Yogyakarta residents were Catholic, making it the second largest religion behind Islam and standing much higher than the national percentage of Catholic people, 2.91% (Penduduk Menurut Wilayah dan Agama yang Dianut). Yogyakarta has numerous Catholic parishes where I was able to visit and observe mass, making it the perfect place to learn more about Catholic music. Additionally, Yogyakarta is the home of *Pusat Musik Liturgi* (PML), a liturgical music center and school for those who want to study organ, conducting, and other forms of Catholic music. Both Godean and Yogyakarta provided me with a plethora of valuable experiences regarding Catholic music.

I chose to learn more about liturgical music in Yogyakarta because as a Catholic musician, this is a topic that naturally fascinates me. However, I also hope to contribute to a larger body of work about Catholic music in Indonesia. When initially searching for research on Catholic music in Indonesia, I noticed a distinct gap in information about Java. Many scholars have chosen to focus on Catholic people in other parts of Indonesia, such as the Toba Batak people in North Sumatra. When scholars do turn to Javanese Catholic music, many focus on *Gereja Hati Kudus Tuhan Yesus, Ganjuran* (Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Ganjuran) because of its regular incorporation of Javanese *gamelan* in the Catholic liturgy, and although I

do find this aspect of inculturation fascinating, so many other churches in Yogyakarta also hold liturgies with valuable inculturated Catholic musical traditions. In order to fully experience and learn about Catholic music in Java, I attended mass at six different parishes, seeking to explore the characteristics of Catholic music in the Yogyakarta area. Additionally, my field study investigates the value of singing and praying in the local language and the value of incorporating inculturated musical styles into the liturgy. What is the function of song within a Catholic mass, and how do these songs connect people to God and to one another?

My two primary methods of data collection were interviews and participant observation. I conducted six interviews with different kinds of members in the Catholic musical community, including choir members, organists, conductors, and liturgical songwriters. One interview was conducted in English, and the other five were conducted in *Bahasa Indonesia* and were translated to English by Dian Arisuci and Sani Cahyani. The core of my questions remained the same for all interviews, but each person's unique connection to music within mass drove me to creatively adapt the interview questions so that they were more personal for each respondent. Each interviewee was happy to offer their opinions for inclusion in my paper, and each interviewee gave oral consent to allow me to share their ideas. My other method of data collection, participant observation, allowed me to gather information about the characteristics of Catholic music by attending and participating in mass and church choir practice, and in many ways, my observations are equally as important as my interviews. Although I tried to find a wide array of people to speak with about Catholic music, I only interviewed two women. However, my observations show that women are very active within the Catholic music community, and I saw countless women acting as conductors, organists, and choir members. When I asked to speak

with someone, I was often pushed in a man's direction, and the limitations of my options mean that a woman's voice is not as highlighted in this paper as it could have been.

My journey into the Catholic music of Java has been an educational, illuminating, and personally spiritual experience. I have found that the Javanese Catholic musical community is thriving and that inculturated musical forms play a large role in contextualizing and connecting Javanese Catholics to the liturgy. Song functions as a vital structural component within mass, as well as a source of joy, a means for deeper connection to the liturgy and one's own belief or spirituality, and serves to bond participants with the community around them. Throughout the following pages, I use several Indonesian terms that can be distinguished by italics, and I have included a glossary to define those terms. Additionally, I use many English terms that are specific to Catholicism, and so I have also included those terms in the glossary, making it easier for a non-Catholic reader to comprehend the vocabulary that I utilize throughout the following pages.



## Vatican II: A Bridge to Inculturation

One of the Catholic Church's greatest accomplishments, one that affects the present nature of liturgy and sacred music across the world, was the Second Vatican Council, or Vatican II. Vatican II was an ecumenical council that took place from October 11, 1962, until December 8, 1965 and reflects the Catholic Church's efforts to reform and renew herself amongst the rapidly changing world around her ("Historical Background of Vatican II"). The following passage from a book about Vatican II describes what the liturgy looked like before the council:

The Mass was celebrated by the priest in Latin with his back to the people whilst altar servers responded in Latin on behalf of the congregation. In many cases the people were silent for the whole of the Mass unless they were attending the main Sunday Mass which was usually a sung Mass with choir. The musical repertoire in the vernacular language such as hymnody was very limited in many countries. As the liturgical movement progressed the people themselves took part in the Latin dialogues with the priest and sang hymns sometimes in a more modern responsorial style with texts that reflected the fruits of the latest liturgical studies. The only musical instrument allowed was the organ (Pilcher, Orr, & Harrington, 2013).

After Vatican II, the priest could celebrate Mass in the vernacular, the local language of the people, and was allowed to face the people while speaking to them. Regarding music, sacred hymns were now also allowed to be in the vernacular, and musicians were authorized to use a variety of musical instruments. Needless to say, the world of Catholic sacred music exploded and "over 100,000 hymn titles appeared in a few years" (Pilcher, Orr, & Harrington, 2013). Musicians could create music in their own language with instruments that reflected their own traditions and cultures. The decisions made in Vatican II echo not only the immanent need for change that reflected the changing outside world, but also the Church's reality of its own expanding borders and identities. Catholic missionaries had been traveling and converting people all over the world for centuries, and the faces and practices of Catholicism were quickly

becoming more diverse, and I feel that this may have contributed to the Church's decision to embrace inculturation across the globe.

Inculturation is a theological term that describes how Christianity can be contextualized within the practices and traditions of a local culture. Marzanna Poplawska article, "Christianity and Inculturated Music in Indonesia," cites inculturation as "the on-going dialogue between faith and culture or cultures," and as 'the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture or cultures'" (Poplawska, 2011). Inculturation is not assimilation; it does not force people to accept Euro-centric ideas of liturgy and worship, but rather, inculturation seeks to ground the liturgy and Catholic spirituality in customs, beliefs, and traditions that already exist as meaningful practices for local people. Inculturation includes countless aspects of worship, including but not limited to "liturgy, language, music, dance, clothing, architecture, and interior ornamentation" (Poplawska, 2011). The churches that I have visited during my field study are living examples of how inculturation; they seamlessly incorporate aspects of Javanese culture into the Catholic liturgy, truly making it their own. Given sixty more pages, I might be able to write about all these aspects; however, solely focusing on the musical aspect in Javanese Catholic churches is a big enough project.

Many of the people that I interviewed talked about the importance of inculturation within their parishes. Sister Andrea, a 34-year-old Sacred Heart of Jesus sister and local choir member at *Kapel Santo Albertus Agung* (Chapel St. Albertus Magnus) explained why she felt inculturation was valuable:

"I think inculturation is good. We can feel that being Catholic is connected to local culture. When we sing a song in Javanese, we're singing using Javanese style – it feels better! Like when they sing *Kidung Adi*, I think the Javanese people like it better because the Javanese can understand the words more. Using Javanese language feels more meaningful" (Sister Andrea, personal communication, November 12, 2018).

During our interview, Sister Andrea lit up when she was talking about her favorite Catholic songs. Even though she's originally from East Java, she has been serving in Sumatra for over ten years and has only recently come back to Java. Because of this, she said that she was only vaguely familiar with *Kidung Adi*, the local hymnal for Javanese songs, but has already fallen in love with some of the songs. For her, listening to mass and singing in *Bahasa Jawa* has been extremely meaningful because she is able to understand the words even more than she might be able to in *Bahasa Indonesia* (Sister Andrea, personal communication, November 12, 2018).

Many churches that I saw utilize traditional Javanese music forms like *gamelan* or *keroncong* only to mark special masses. When I spoke with Mbak Alma, a 41-year-old organist, vocalist, and liturgical songwriter, she spoke about the great benefits of inculturation but also warned against its overuse. Although she enjoys the inclusion of traditional musical instruments from time to time, she finds that some churches that use these instruments and musical styles too often, turning something special into a kind of "cultural show" for others to view. People from different areas might not appreciate the indigenous instruments as much as the local people, and its continued inclusion may take something from its sacredness. She also emphasized that music during mass "must support prayer for all the people, not just Javanese people" (Mbak Alma, personal communication, November 27, 2018). I had never thought about the potentially negative effects of including inculturated music until I spoke with her, and I do agree that the people's intention and position have everything to do with its appropriateness in a liturgical situation. That being said, my encounters with inculturated music were numerous and very positive, as the music seemed to connect the Catholic liturgy even more closely to the people of the church.

### **Pushing Keys, Striking Gongs, and Strumming Strings**

As previously mentioned, organ was the only acceptable instrument before Vatican II, and the post-Vatican II music scene burst forth with inculturated songs and arrangements for any variety of musical instruments. Out of the six masses that I went to, four of them continued to use organ. In some ways, I thought I might find more parishes using different instruments, and so I was surprised to see such a continued use and love of the organ. When I spoke with Frendy, a 27-year-old organist who also teaches the instrument, I asked him why Indonesian churches in this area consistently use organ over piano or other types of instruments. He finds that using instruments like piano are often reminiscent of pop music, whose purpose is “not to praise God but only for entertainment or show.” For him, the organ is an instrument that characteristically evokes an atmosphere that is conducive to prayer, and he believes people continue to use the organ for this reason (Frendy, personal communication, November 26, 2018). Indeed, when I attended mass, I was continuously awestruck by the organ’s distinctive, stately sound in conjunction with the choir. Oftentimes, I saw the practice of playing inculturated Javanese hymns (which use the *pelog* scale) on the organ – showing you don’t always need to have traditional instruments to have an inculturated musical experience.

However, of the two masses that I attended that did not utilize organ, one used *gamelan* and the other used a *keroncong* ensemble – two types of Javanese music. *Gamelan* is a traditional ensemble including a variety of bronze percussion instruments. A complete, traditional Javanese *gamelan* ensemble includes not only a set of instruments, but also male and female singers. You might see a full *gamelan* ensemble within the traditional Javanese court, but there are numerous smaller variations that are utilized all over the island as well. (Perlman, 2004). At *Gereja Hati Kudus Tuhan Yesus Pugeran* (Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

Pugeran), I saw a mass that was spoken in *Bahasa Jawa*, the music included *gamelan* and a choir of male and female voices, and they were singing and playing songs from the local Javanese hymnal, *Kidung Adi*. The Javanese *gamelan* uses a *pelog* scale, which includes scale tones one, three, four, five, and seven. Six can also be used, but it rarely comes into play (Mas Kanung, personal communication, November 13, 2018). This essential scale is the basis of Javanese *gamelan*, and the corresponding songs from *Kidung Adi* use the same scale tones so that they can be accompanied by *gamelan*. At *Gereja Pugeran*, a large portion of the congregation was older, potentially signaling the older generation's preference and/or general appreciation of the use of *Bahasa Jawa* and *gamelan* at mass.

While staying with a Catholic host family in Godean, I was able to accompany my host mom, Ibu Yuni, to their church's first music practice for Christmas mass. Their church, *Kapel Santo Albertus Agung*, is a small building and congregation, and the church's name also notes its size because it is a *kapel*, chapel, instead of a *paroki*, a parish. Nonetheless, when we showed up to the community rehearsal space, there was a ten-person *gamelan* ensemble and a twenty-person choir ready to rehearse. I was very impressed by the entire group because even though it was only their first official rehearsal, the *gamelan* ensemble played very well as a unit and the choir did an amazing job sight-reading the songs. Mas Kanung, a 49-year-old musician, choir member, and my host dad while in Godean, explained to me that most Javanese Catholic churches include *gamelan* at their Christmas mass, even if they don't have *gamelan* usually. The *gamelan* ensemble and choir are entirely comprised of volunteers from the congregation (Mas Kanung, personal communication, November 13, 2018). The widespread inclusion of *gamelan* for special holidays like Christmas illustrates the value and importance the Javanese people place on *gamelan*.

In addition to seeing *gamelan* used during mass, I also saw a *keroncong* ensemble being employed when I attended the area's monthly youth mass. *Keroncong* is a style of music that originated from the "descendants of slaves from Goa (India)" who were influenced by their Portuguese colonizers' religion, Catholicism, and the Portuguese's distinct musical styles. During the Indonesian fight for independence, freedom fighters broadcasted *keroncong* nationalistic songs about freedom and independence, shifting the public's view of *keroncong* from a low-brow form of music into a source national pride and identity. *Keroncong* music found particular success in Java when they "combined *keroncong* music with Javanese traditional music called *Langgam Jawa* or the Javanese style" (Alfian, 2013). Although the musical style has become less popular in recent years with more access to Western and other international pop music, many people are committed to its continued presence in the traditional Javanese musical scene.

A typical *keroncong* instrumental ensemble includes piano, guitar, ukulele, cello, bass, violin, and flute. At *St. Petrus & Paulus* in Klepu, Central Java, I attended the monthly youth mass that was hosted by *Ekaristi Kaum Mudah (EKM)*, Eucharist of the Young People, and I was able to see a full *keroncong* ensemble in action during a liturgy. EKM is a group of young Catholics that are committed to creating liturgical celebrations that actively involve and engage young people. The *keroncong* ensemble was made up entirely of young people, including six instrumentalists, a choir of over twenty people, and two female co-conductors. The preparation of the entire group was evident because the music during mass was amazing; it was engaging, upbeat, and vibrant. Young people have continuously pushed musical boundaries through EKM. Mas Kanung, for example, reminisced about when he used to play with EKM over twenty years ago, remembering one mass when they decided to use a lot of electric guitar to accompany the

liturgy. The priest approached the instrumentalists after mass to inform them that he strongly disagreed with their instrument choices, and he banned them from using electric guitar during mass ever again (Mas Kanung, personal communication, November 13, 2018). Utilizing *keroncong* music during this liturgy struck me as a smart choice because the older Indonesian generation appreciates this musical style, while young people still find the music to be attractive, fresh, and upbeat. Using *keroncong* music during this monthly youth mass shows the younger generation's continued commitment to traditional Javanese music forms and marks this liturgy as a truly special occasion for all involved.

### ***Pusat Musik Liturgi: The Center of Catholic Music***

As I began my investigations into Catholic music, I continuously heard about *Pusat Musik Liturgi* (PML), the central hub for Catholic music production and education in Yogyakarta. Out of the six people I interviewed, three of them had formally studied at PML, and so I was acutely aware of its significance in the larger Catholic music scene. However, I don't think I truly realized the scale of their publications or the importance of their position until I went to their main office. PML was founded by the Society of Jesus on July 11, 1971. The organization's primary mission is "to propagate, renew and compose liturgical songs, especially according to the scales and rhythms of the local music traditions." They do this by collecting and studying scores, traditional instruments, and recordings of indigenous music from all over Indonesia and have an inculturation program that works with local musicians who want to create new hymns. They have a music library that contains both Western and Indonesian music – sacred and secular. PML edits and publishes a bi-monthly magazine entitled "*WARTA MUSIK*," which serves as a form of education and communication with the larger musical community around them. They also host special activities, including seminars throughout Indonesia, weekend courses on liturgical music for local Catholic musicians, and yearly intensive courses for choir leaders (*Pusat Musik Liturgi*, 2017).

In addition to all these offerings, *Pusat Musik Liturgi* has a three-year course on Church Music. Their Level One classes currently have 30 people, their Level Two classes have 10 people, and nobody is currently enrolled in their Level Three classes. Students who participate in these courses learn basic organ, a variety of musical styles, solfège, conducting styles, the science of harmony, and liturgy study. The students put on a performance every three months for



the community that doubles as their educational assessment (Frendy, personal communication, November 26, 2018). PML's informational brochure explains the necessity of these courses:

“The need of choir leaders and organists in Indonesia is very high, because each parish has a couple of basic districts, and each of them forms a choir to assist in the Sunday parish services” (*Pusat Musik Liturgi*, 2017).

Moreover, PML also expanded their educational services to include a training program for voice and organ for children ages 6-12, as well as a department for teenagers ages 13-15 to learn how to play organ, *gamelan*, and *angklung*. When I visited PML, Frendy graciously showed me the room where they keep all their traditional instruments from Indonesia. I saw many new indigenous Indonesian instruments, including the *siter sunda* from West Java, *kolintang* from Sulawesi, *sasando* from southeast Timor, and *sarol* from central Kalimantan. They regularly have classes where junior high students come in to learn about the variety of traditional Indonesian musical instruments and learn how to play them. Of all their offerings, I was most struck by their publication department, which offers multitudes of books, CDs, and DVDs. Their brochure boasts:

“Within 46 years, the Center has published more than 300 books and booklets containing sacred music for the congregation, choirs, liturgical leaders and organists. The CDs and audiocassettes contain traditional music (vocal and instrumental music) as well as sacred music. However, there are also books with educational material (e.g. history of music, music theory, harmony, musical form, melody; manuals on playing the organ, on conducting choirs etc.)” (*Pusat Musik Liturgi*, 2017).

Directly next to PML's office is *Toko PusKat*, a Catholic supply store where you can buy everything from statues of Jesus and Mary to rosaries and prayer books. Within the store, there's an entire section of PML books, CDs, and DVDs that showcase liturgical music from numerous parts of Indonesia and for any liturgical season. Through publication, PML brings Indonesian Catholic sacred music to the forefront in a way unmatched by any organization, and their commitment to music, especially inculturated music, in Indonesia is extremely admirable.

### **A Little Black Book with Red-Lined Pages**

The most successful and impactful hymnal that PML has created is called *Madah Bakti*. Immediately upon entering the Yogyakarta Catholic music scene, I knew of this book, because most parish musicians consult this book to choose songs for the liturgy. *Madah Bakti* is the first Catholic hymnal that has been used all throughout Indonesia. Its first edition has 450 hymns, including Indonesian translations of Western hymns, hymns by Indonesian composers but in Western style, and hymns based on indigenous melodies and rhythms. The second edition of *Madah Bakti* was published in 2000 with 300 new songs, and its widespread popularity means that four million copies have been sold and circulated throughout Indonesia and even Malaysia (*Pusat Musik Liturgi*, 2017). PML also publishes the aforementioned Javanese book *Kidung Adi*, a hymnal with songs all in *Bahasa Jawa* that use the Javanese *pelog* scale, allowing these songs to be accompanied by *gamelan*. For any local mass in *Bahasa Jawa*, *Kidung Adi* replaces *Madah Bakti* as the standard hymnal.

All the masses I attended except one were in *Bahasa Indonesia*, and so buying *Madah Bakti* was a good investment. As I perused the little black book with red-lined pages, and I was truly impressed by the its comprehensive nature. On the right-side underneath most of the titles is a short label of where in Indonesia, or even southeast Asia, the hymn came from, and the label also indicates what musical style it takes from. In the most recent edition, from song 700 on, all the hymns are labeled as “inculturated” songs. All the masses I attended offered small pamphlets at the entrance with the lyrics of the songs and major prayers of the mass. However, the lyrics did not include any sort of musical notation, as it assumed that the congregation would know the tune. *Madah Bakti* therefore became an essential part of my Indonesian liturgical experiences because it allowed me to look up the tune of the hymns being sung. When I was staying with

Mas Kanung, I learned how to play Indonesian hymns on the piano straight from his own copy of *Madah Bakti*. He clearly cherishes his own copy of the book, because although the book was well-worn around the edges, I could also very clearly see that it had been well taken care of for many years. *Madah Bakti* is so important in the Indonesian Catholic musical community because its creation was the first time that someone made a standard hymnal for circulation throughout the country. It has allowed people to find and use hymns from a wide variety of Catholic communities across Indonesia all in one book. Moreover, I appreciate how its publication intentionally centers inculturated forms of Catholic music. It would be very easy to prioritize music from Western sources or with Western musical styles, but PML continues to be committed to inculturated music, and this clear commitment shows in *Madah Bakti*.

## **Tensions Between Traditional and Progressive Church Musicians**

In William A. Jordan's chapter on the development of sacred music in relation to Vatican II, he states that "sacred music was unfortunately the most unsettled area of the reform both before and after the Council" (Pilcher, Orr, & Harrington, 2013). One of the most interesting conversations that I discovered in my research was about whether the foremost responsibility of sacred music was to its functionality or to its beauty, and liturgical musicians were, and still are, very divided over this issue. Supporters of sacred music's functionality argue that music in Church should primarily connect to the liturgical actions in a mass, and they believe that the beauty or likeability of the song should not be considered important. On the other side, supporters of sacred music's beauty argue that musical beauty points to God's presence within liturgical songs and that an emphasis on functionalism creates music that fails to be aesthetically pleasing (Pilcher, Orr, & Harrington, 2013). Traditionalists support a more literal translation of Latin lyrics and often favor more traditional styles of music like the original Gregorian style of composition, while progressives allow for looser, more artistic translations of original Latin lyrics and may favor a variety of musical styles.

This musical debate manifests itself in Indonesian musical circles as well. While I had clearly seen the use of *Madah Bakti* and *Kidung Adi* in Yogyakarta, I also became aware of another hymnal called *Puji Syukur*, the other widely used hymnal in Indonesia. It was created by the National Council of the Liturgy of the Indonesian Bishop's Conference in 1987 and has been in circulation since then ("Puji Syukur," 2018). I understand that I probably I didn't see *Puji Syukur* often in the Yogyakarta Catholic music community is because they much prefer their city's own publications. However, Mbak Alma illuminated the subject further by describing *Puji Syukur* and *Madah Bakti* as physical indicators of the larger debate about acceptable sacred

music styles. *Puji Syukur* is known for having songs that are an exact translation of the original Latin, but what they honor in accuracy they lose in beauty. Mbak Alma describes the translations as awkward, unused phrases that sound odd in Indonesian. The words in *Madah Bakti*, on the other hand, are much more flexible, and for Mbak Alma, more “beautiful” and “like a poem” (Mbak Alma, personal communication, November 27, 2018). *Madah Bakti*’s quintessential inculturated music section is another reason that aligns the hymnal more closely with progressive Catholic musicians.

In all things, I strive to see the balance. I understand the commitment to translation that traditional Catholic musicians support; after all, all music before Vatican II had been in Latin, and I imagine that it might have been scary to think about what sacred meaning might get lost in the translation aftermath. On the other hand, I also understand the desire to create sacred music in a post-Vatican II world that is aesthetically beautiful and uses inculturated music styles. I see both sides as having valid points for consideration, and my only hope is that people can see and understand people on the other side. Mbak Alma talked to me about her own songwriting style, saying that because of the abundance of popular musical influences around her, she tends to write in a musical style that leans towards “pop.” She shared experiences about having priests come up to her after mass to say that they disapprove of her songs and forbid them from being played in their church. Although she respects their opinions on her music, her frustration stems from their lack of articulation about what exactly they disapprove of or how she could alter her songs. She chuckled as she affectionately referred to herself as a “conversional person” to conventional church musicians (Mbak Alma, personal communication, November 27, 2018). Tensions between traditional and progressive church musicians are still present, and we can only hope that both sides will strive to listen and respect one another, despite their different views.

## Where Do We Find Music in Mass?

Although Catholic liturgical music can now use a wide variety of instruments, languages, hymnals, and styles, the structure of a Catholic liturgy remains the same across the world. The very first time I went to mass in Java, I cried because of the familiarity I felt being able to understand and celebrate my God in a different country. Although I understood almost none of the actual words during the liturgy, years of going to mass allowed me to know exactly what they were saying. I knew when to sit, when to stand, and when to kneel. I knew the general meaning of the prayers the priest and congregation were saying, and I knew the function of the songs being sung. The structure of the liturgy allows me to feel united to the ceremony wherever I am, and the frequency and variety of songs throughout mass allows me to connect to my spirituality through song.

The mass begins with *Pembukaan*<sup>1</sup>, the Opening Song, which may be taken from *Madah Bakti* or *Kidung Adi* and is different each week. Sometimes, parishes hand out a pamphlet at the



entrance with all the songs in it, or other times, as seen in the photograph (left) that I took inside *Kapel Santo Albertus Agung*, some parishes have a white board where they write the number where the song can be found in *Madah Bakti* or *Kidung Adi*. During this song, the priests, deacons, altar servers, and sisters process down the aisle and take their respective spots in the pews or in chairs next to the altar. After the song ends, the priest begins by greeting everyone.

<sup>1</sup> (Mas Kanung, personal communication, November 13, 2018). Mas Kanung taught me all the words for the major types of songs during a Catholic liturgy. All subsequent Indonesian musical words in the section, “Where Do We Find Music in Mass?” are credited to him.

*Tuhan Kasihanilah Kami*, the Act of Penitence, follows the greeting. This prayer is in the form of a song, and it encourages the congregation to think about their sins and to ask for contrition. After this, on Sundays during specific times of the liturgical season and on celebrations of great importance, the congregation sings *Kemuliaan*, the Gloria, which proclaims the joy in worshipping God. Once these two songs have concluded, the priest offers an Opening Prayer for the liturgy, and then everyone sits down to listen to the Liturgy of the Word (“The Structure and Meaning of the Mass”).

The Liturgy of the Word is generally comprised of three readings from the Bible: the first reading is taken from the Old Testament, the second reading is taken from the New Testament, and the third reading, the Gospel, is taken from one of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John). After the first reading, *Mazmur*, the Responsorial Psalm, is sung. *Mazmur* begins with a cantor who sings a short phrase, and when they raise their hand, this signals to the congregation to respond by singing the same phrase. The cantor sings a verse by themselves and then signals for everyone to sing the refrain that was learned at the beginning. *Mazmur* helps us to digest and contemplate the readings that we are hearing. The Catholic liturgical calendar dictates the readings for every Sunday of the entire year, and this same calendar suggests what *Mazmur* to use for each week’s readings. In this way, *Mazmur* complements the readings around it by connecting song to Scripture. After the song concludes, the second reading is read (“The Structure and Meaning of the Mass”).

Before the Gospel is read, the congregation sings the *Alleluya* (Alleluia). *Alleluya* is “derived from a Hebrew phrase meaning ‘Praise the Lord!’” This proclamatory song offers praise and worship to God before reading about the life of Jesus Christ (“The Structure and Meaning of the Mass”). *Alleluya* includes only that singular word, and it remains the same despite the

language of the Mass. Because of this, *Alleluya* has countless arrangements from all over the world, and the compositions can generally be utilized anywhere. After these three readings and two musical interludes, the congregation listens to the homily, where the priest summarizes and contextualizes the readings that the congregation just heard, connects the Scripture to daily life, and offers advice to bring the congregation closer to God. After the sermon concludes, the congregation declares the Nicene Creed, which is the statement of faith for all Catholics. The Liturgy of the Word ends with Prayer of the Faithful, where a lector verbally offers up prayers to God while congregants simultaneously offer up their own prayers in silence.

The next portion of the Mass is called the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The altar is prepared to receive the bread and wine that will become the Body and Blood of Christ. As this is happening, a basket goes around for people give donations to the church, and these monetary gifts are brought up with the bread and wine. This process, and the song that accompanies it, is called *Persembahan Hati*, the Preparation of the Gifts. This song is usually taken from *Madah Bakti* or *Kidung Adi*, just like *Pembukaan*, and so the choice of song is different each week. After this preparation concludes, the Mass moves onto the Eucharistic Prayer, which is the heart of the liturgy. This part begins with a Preface from the priest and then moves into the *Kudus*, which literally translates to “holy.” During this song, everybody “joins the song of the angels giving praise to the Father in heaven,” and the song serves as a powerful reminder of the power and glory of God. Following this proclamation, the priest performs the Eucharistic Prayer, where the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ (“The Structure and Meaning of the Mass”).

After witnessing the powerful Eucharistic Prayer, the congregation stands and sings *Bapa Kami*, Our Father – the prayer that Christ taught his disciples when they asked Him how to pray



(Luke 11:1-4, *New Revised Standard Version*). The Rite of Peace comes after, where the priest invites everyone to share a sign of peace and greeting with one another by shaking hands. As the priest breaks the consecrated bread and the congregation begins to prepare to receive the Eucharist, the congregation sings *Anak Domba Allah*, Lamb of God. The lyrics come directly from John the Baptist who proclaimed that Jesus Christ was “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29, *New Revised Standard Version*), and the song entreats God to have mercy on His believers and grant them peace (“The Structure and Meaning of the Mass”).

Before receiving Communion, where believers eat the Body and Blood of Christ, the congregation acknowledges that they are not worthy to receive such a gift. The priest receives Communion first, and then all Catholics in the congregation may also receive Communion. The song during this portion is called *Komuni*, the Communion song. *Komuni* is often a contemplative song that focuses on Christ as the Bread of Life, but song choices may vary widely. After Communion, the priest makes a final blessing and the mass ends. As the priests, deacons, altar servers, and sisters process out of the church, there is the *Penutup*, or Closing Song. Like *Pembukaan* and *Persembahan Hati*, the *Komuni* and *Penutup* are chosen from *Madah Bakti* or *Kidung Adi* and are different every week. *Penutup* is often a lively song with a faster tempo, perhaps illustrating the joy of having celebrated mass and reminding congregants to go forth to love and serve their God throughout the week (“The Structure and Meaning of the Mass”).

### **Music Gives Muscles to the Skeleton of Prayer**

Although this explanation of the liturgy may have been tedious, its inclusion is essential for understanding how intrinsically vital music is within a Catholic mass. The Catholic liturgy is marked with many forms of song. *Pembukaan*, *Persembahan Hati*, *Komuni*, and *Penutup* are songs that vary each week and are independently chosen by church musicians, meaning that different parishes could play different songs on the same weekend. From my observations during mass, congregants are less likely to participate in singing these songs. Engaging with the liturgy in other ways may account for this decreased participation; for example, ushers are passing around baskets for donations to the church during the *Persembahan Hati* song, and the congregation is getting in line to receive the Eucharist during the *Komuni* song. Because these songs change from week to week, it is also possible that congregants are more unfamiliar with these songs. A 25-year-old conductor Yayok confirmed that sometimes people “don’t know” the songs (Yayok, personal communication, November 9, 2018). Musicians must strike a delicate balance when choosing songs for the liturgy. Choosing the same sorts of songs each week might increase singing participation but runs the risk of becoming repetitive and boring. Of course, Catholic musicians strive to branch out by incorporating liturgical music that is new and potentially challenging, but these choices might lead to less singing participation. Mas Kanung talked about the importance of choosing songs with the congregation in mind because he said that “if we choose difficult songs, no one will sing them” (Mas Kanung, personal communication, November 13, 2018). Additionally, regardless of knowledge or lack thereof of songs during mass, some people may just not join in singing because they don’t want to sing.

In contrast to songs that change each week, songs like *Tuhan Kasihanilah Kami*, *Kemuliaan*, *Alleluya*, *Kudus*, *Bapa Kami*, and *Anak Domba Allah* are sung every single week at

mass, and I found that the congregants usually knew all the words and sang along. Although the words of these sung prayers always stay the same, the variety of arrangements are countless, and different parishes often use different versions of the songs. I was especially struck by the congregation's participation in singing *Bapa Kami*. Within every American Catholic church that I have attended, the Our Father prayer is simply spoken, and so I found this aspect of Indonesian Catholic mass to be particularly powerful – that Christianity's uniting prayer is sung. From my observations in churches in Yogyakarta and Godean, even if congregational singing participation was lacking in any other part of the mass, everyone passionately sang *Bapa Kami*. Yayok described to me how he feels when everyone sings together, saying, "Of course, I feel happy because I can invite people to sing; then, as a conductor, I feel successful" (Yayok, personal communication, November 9, 2018). Songs that remain the same each week encourage participation because they are readily known by the congregation, and this consistency allows people to focus on other aspects of the song-prayer, such as how the meaning of the words applies to their life or why these prayers are important enough to be repeated each week.

In addition to all these songs, the priest will often also sing certain prayers a cappella and the congregation will sing the responses back to him. Within the Indonesian churches I visited, the priest often sings part of the Opening and Closing Prayer. The Catholic liturgy turns powerful prayers into songs. The songs that are sung each week are technically prayers, and they could also be spoken. When I asked Mas Kanung, about how mass might be different without music, he responded:

"Yes, if there was no music, it would be so quiet – not rousing or fun. Because the congregation also joins [in singing at] mass with a happy heart, the songs in the mass are also a conduit of prayer" (Mas Kanung, personal communication, November 13, 2018).

Song allows the basic skeletal structure of the liturgy to come alive by allowing people to engage more deeply with the prayers by singing them. Without these songs, sung or spoken, the structure

of the Mass would be fundamentally incomplete. Sister Andrea described it best when she said that “everything from the opening song until closing song is the support system for everyone to join Mass in a good way” (Sister Andrea, personal communication, November 12, 2018). These liturgical songs invite the entire congregation to participate in all aspects of the mass and encourage people to get as much out of mass as they possibly can.

### **With the Angels and Saints, We, Too, Sing**

During a Catholic liturgy, right before we sing *Kudus*, the priest says, “And so, with the Angels and Saints, we, too, sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim...” (Just, 2011). After that phrase is uttered, the choir and congregation begin to sing. I’ve always found the descriptive nature of this phrase to be deeply spiritual, this idea that when we sing the hymns of God’s glory, the angels and saints in heaven sing along with us as we become one choir in worship. During mass, songs like *Mazmur* and *Kudus* are usually passages taken straight from the Bible, and many hymns also use Bible verses or are inspired by Scripture. Chapter Six of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* opens by saying that “sacred music is a necessary and integral part of the liturgy particularly because it is bound so closely to the text,” and so Scripture is obviously a central component in creating spiritually resonant music (Pilcher, Orr, & Harrington, 2013). As a liturgical songwriter, Mbak Alma has written over 100 songs, and she spoke with me about the importance of her intention when creating sacred music. She gives the example of a couple wanting to include a popular love song as one of the songs during their wedding ceremony in the Church. This love song is devoted to God, they’ll say, but she says “that’s not true;” the writer originally intended it to be devoted for another person. She feels that utilizing a pop style for sacred music is not necessarily bad, but that “the most important part is that before the song is written, it is devoted for God” (Mbak Alma, personal communication, November 27, 2018). When a song is intentionally devoted to God in its creation and is bound closely to sacred Scripture, this will enhance and benefit the liturgy.

In every church I visited and with every person that I talked to, music was clearly a joyful expression of their own connection to the heavenly choirs. All organists, conductors, choir members, and composers that I spoke with provide their services to the Church entirely for free. I

was especially moved by Mbak Alma's commitment to sharing the songs she has written. By day, Mbak Alma is a dentist and lecturer at the University of Gajah Mada's Dentistry Department, and because she makes a living this way, she sees no reason to charge people to use her songs and arrangements. The only thing she asks is that people donate money to their local parish when they use her music (Mbak Alma, personal communication, November 27, 2018). When I asked Mas Kanung why he invests the extra time to go to choir practice each week and sing every Sunday when he could just sing in the congregation anyway, he said that joining the choir serves simultaneously as "an offering or gift to God" and a "form of service for God." Additionally, he admitted that he also joined choir just because he genuinely enjoys it (Mas Kanung, personal communication, November 13, 2018). Sister Andrea describes singing during mass as a way to "worship God" and says that these songs that we sing during the liturgy are "always connected to God, so that it can't be separated."

Participating in liturgical music does not only reap spiritual benefits, however. Joseph and Southcott's article "Personal, Musical and Social Benefits of Singing in a Community Ensemble" found that creating music with others is "an effective way to support individuals, build community, and share culture and heritage" (2014). Many of my interviewees echoed this sentiment by elaborating on the beneficial communal aspects of participating in music making at their church. For Yayok, one of his favorite parts about conducting and singing with the choir at *Kapel Santo Albertus Agung* is "interacting with people and having a lot of friends" (Yayok, personal communication, November 9, 2018). I felt this warm sentiment when I joined their parish's choir for one week. I was initially worried as I headed to choir practice with my host mom and dad, Ibu Yuni and Mas Kanung, because we arrived at their church just in time for rehearsal to start, at 7:00pm. As we got off our motorbikes, though, there was only one other

person who had already arrived. We proceeded to sit outside for another 15 minutes while people arrived, casually chatting with those around us and greeting every newcomer by name and with a handshake. At 7:15, people began wandering into the church and only then did we start rehearsing songs for the coming Sunday.

Another time I witnessed the communal aspect of liturgical music was when I accompanied Ibu Yuni to their church's first music practice for Christmas mass, which included a *gamelan* ensemble and a choir. Rehearsal began in a timely manner, but after rehearsal concluded, nobody immediately left. The men lit up cigarettes, the women began chatting, and the children played around in the back of the hall. Everybody stayed while a few volunteers passed out a hot cup of tea to each one of the thirty people in attendance. Additionally, bowls of snacks like donuts and bananas circulated around the room, and everybody took something to eat. The *gamelan* troupe played three more songs just for fun and allowed the small children to come and try to play as well. Joining the rehearsal that night showed me that people don't solely join church ensembles for enjoyment or for religious purposes; joining a *gamelan* ensemble or a church choir allows you to break up the routine of your week and connect with other people who have similar interests as you. My host mom's best friend came to this rehearsal, and as we munched on our snacks, I smiled as the two of them giggled like schoolgirls, showing each other pictures on their phones, jokingly slapping one another, and animatedly recounting parts of their days. Participation in Catholic music making undoubtedly reaps not only personal and spiritual, but also communal benefits for everybody involved.

## Conclusions

Javanese Catholic society is a thriving religious community, and its liturgical music forms are one way that their faith and connection to the Christ are manifested. Because of the Second Vatican Council from 1962-1965, Catholics across the world can now create and perform liturgical music that includes local languages, tones, rhythms, and instruments; and inculturation plays a large role in contextualizing and connecting Javanese Catholics to the liturgy.

Organizations such as *Pusat Musik Liturgi* play an instrumental part in fostering Catholic musicianship in Java and across Indonesia through their classes, seminars, and especially through their publications. The widespread use of hymnals such as *Madah Bakti* and *Kidung Adi* in Java illustrate the importance of having access to inculturated songs for liturgical use, although different groups of musicians might have different ideas about what characterized acceptable Church music. This much is clear: within a Catholic liturgy, songs play an essential role in maintaining the structure and enlivening the prayers during mass. Those who participate in liturgical music making through songwriting, singing, or playing an instrument tangibly experience joy, spiritual connection, and camaraderie with their parish's community. Without music, the Catholic liturgy would not be the same.

This Independent Study Project marks only the beginning of a wide breath of possible continued research. Catholicism has a rich history in Central Java, and I was saddened that I didn't have more time to dive into this research. Exploring the history and practices of *Pusat Musik Liturgi* could encompass an entire project unto itself. Although I only attended mass at six different churches, studying Yogyakarta's Catholic parishes more fully or focusing on one parish in depth could both provide fascinating insight into topics of liturgy, inculturation, and music.



Committing to additional research topics within Javanese Catholicism has countless benefits that can be applied to how we view and study Catholicism in the rest of the world.

The word itself, “catholic,” comes from the Greek adjective *katholikos*, meaning “universal.” (“Catholic [term],” 2018). As a Church that has 1.2 billion people globally, it is amazing to see how its leaders manage to balance allowing inculturation while also maintaining an unchanging liturgy. (“How many Roman Catholics,” 2013). Above all, I am thankful to have learned more about music in the Catholic Church, and my experiences have brought new significance to the notion that this Church, no matter where you are, is truly universal.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

- A project detailing the history of *Pusat Musik Liturgi* and its historical and current impact on Indonesian Catholic music
- Traveling to all the major Indonesian Catholic communities to research the widespread use of *Madah Bakti*. I was fascinated to hear that they have sold four million copies and would be interested to conduct further research to see where exactly all these books have gone and how consistently they're used within various Catholic churches in Indonesia and southeast Asia
- A comparative study of the two main Catholic musical schools of thought, traditionalists and progressives, and how these opinions have manifested themselves within different Indonesian musical groups
- A look into the National Indonesian Bishop's Conference to gain greater understanding about the current issues that they face within the Indonesian Catholic Church; also, to see if they have different committees (possibly a musical committee), and if so, how that committee is influencing and fostering national Catholic music
- Exploring inculturated aspects of Indonesian Catholic churches through different lenses: music, architecture, dress, iconography within religious spaces

## Glossary

*Alleluya* - “Alleluia,” a proclamatory song praising the Lord before the Gospel reading in the liturgy

Altar – the table at the front of a church where the bread and wine are consecrated

*Anak Domba Allah* - the Lamb of God, a song that is sung before receiving the Eucharist expressing Christ as the one who takes away the sins of the world

*Angklung* – Indonesian musical instrument comprised of various bamboo tubes attached to a bamboo frame

*Bahasa Indonesia* – the Indonesian language, national language of Indonesia

*Bahasa Jawa* – the Javanese language, used on the island of Java

*Bapa Kami* - “Our Father,” the central prayer of Christian belief, which is also sung during Indonesian Catholic liturgy

Communion – one of the Seven Sacraments of the Church; the rite initiated by Jesus Christ at the Last Supper when he changed bread and wine into His Body and Blood, “celebrating” or “receiving” Communion, also known as the Eucharist, means consuming the consecrated Body and Blood of Christ

Congregation – a group of people assembled for religious worship

Consecrate – to declare something to be holy; within Catholicism, when the priest changes the bread and the wine into the body and blood of Christ

Deacon – men ordained to an office in the Catholic Church who support the local priest

Ecumenical – representing several different Catholic churches across the world

Eucharist – see “communion”

*Gamelan* – Indonesian musical instrumental ensemble, primarily from Bali and Java, that is made up primary of percussive instruments like metallophones and gongs

Gregorian – unaccompanied, monophonic, plain chant music that originated during the 9th and 10th centuries in central Europe

Homily – a sermon or religious discourse given to instruct on spiritual improvement

Hymn – a religious song

Hymnal – a collection of hymns in a book

*Kemuliaan* – “Gloria,” a song prayer that proclaims our worship of God, occurs during the Opening Rites of a liturgy

*Kapel* – “chapel,” a small building for worship, usually smaller than a church

*Keroncong* – an Indonesian musical style that quintessentially includes a ukulele, and also usually includes piano, guitar, flute, and voice

*Kidung Adi* – the Javanese-language hymnal used in Catholic churches throughout Java

*Kolintang* – wooden or xylophone instruments from Northern Sulawesi

*Komuni* - see “Communion,” the song that is played while the congregation receives the Eucharist

*Kudus* - translating to “holy,” this song is sung during the beginning of the Eucharistic prayer

Liturgy – official public worship ceremony of the Church, synonymous with mass

*Madah Bakti* – the Indonesian-language hymnal used in Catholic churches throughout Indonesia and other parts of southeast Asia

Mass – see “liturgy”

*Mazmur* – the Responsorial Psalm, a song that occurs between the first and second reading of the liturgy to inspire reflection on the Scripture

*Pancasila* – “panca” → five, “sila” → principles; the official state ideology of Indonesia

*Paroki* – “parish,” a community of people who go to a particular church, usually a substantial amount of people need to regularly attend a church for it to be called a parish

*Pelog* – one of the essential scales in *gamelan* ensembles consisting of five tones

*Pembukaan* – the Opening Song, played at the beginning of the liturgy

*Penutup* - the Closing Song, the song played at the end of the liturgy

Pew – a long bench, often found in churches, where the congregation sits

Priest – an ordained minister in the Catholic Church who has the power to administer certain rites and sacraments

*Puji Syukur* – one of the official prayer books for Catholic people in Indonesia, contains prayers and hymns

*Pusat Musik Liturgi* – “Center of Liturgical Music,” abbreviated to PML; the Catholic music organization in Yogyakarta that offers classes on sacred music, publishes inculturated sacred music forms, and preserves and encourages liturgical songs, with a special focus inculturated liturgical music

*Sarol* – Indonesian musical instrument from central Kalimantan that is a type of *saron* instrument similar to, but with less keys than, a *saron* in Javanese *gamelan*

*Sasando* – Indonesian musical instrument from East Timor that utilizes palm leaves in the shape of a bowl as a resonator and is played by plucking wire strings

Scripture – the collection of books considered to be holy by the Catholic Church; often used interchangeably with the Bible

Sister – a woman who has taken public vows to the Catholic Church and are dedicated to doing God’s work publicly, as opposed to nuns, who live cloistered in a life of prayer

*Siter Sunda* – Indonesian musical instrument from West Java where you pluck the strings on the instrument to create sound

*Tuhan Kasihanilah Kami* - the Act of Penitence, a prayer song during the Opening Rites of the liturgy that admits sin in all our lives and asks for contrition

Vernacular – the local language of the people in any given area

*WARTA MUSIK* – “music news,” a bi-monthly magazine publication of Indonesian Catholic musical happenings

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