

***Talempong* Music in West Sumatra: Application of Tonalities in Traditional Minangkabau Music Performances**

Musik talempong di Sumatera Barat: Penerapan Tonal dalam Pertunjukan Musik Tradisional Minangkabau

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PEER REVIEWED

Received November 27, 2023
Accepted June 17, 2024
Published April 3, 2025
DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.26721/spafajournal.i39kf22kki>

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Abstract

The ethnomusicological focus of this study is primarily directed at the musical traditions that are still alive and actively maintained by the community and its supporters. This study delves into the unwritten realm of music, especially music that is delivered orally, which is represented by the traditional metal *talempong* in the Minangkabau ethnic area. This study addresses issues and objectives that center on *talempong* as a characteristic or “icon” of traditional performing arts that develop in every village in the Minangkabau region, such as in Tanah Datar Regency; Agam Regency; Lima Puluh Kota Regency, Sijunjung Regency; and Solok Regency. The findings of the study on metal *talempong* music in Minangkabau reveal its significance as a cultural representation that symbolizes the Malay community in general. *Talempong* music serves as a key indicator of Minangkabau regional identity, recognized since ancient times throughout the entire archipelago. This study highlights interesting findings regarding the diversity of *talempong* existence today, emphasizing the “tuning” technique used by traditional cultural groups in Minangkabau. Where, this group relies on their senses, moods, and feelings to produce the distinctive sound of the metal *talempong*. In contrast, modern artists in Minangkabau approach the *talempong* “tuning technique” using Western diatonic instruments following established standards. Despite being influenced by modernity, traditional tuning methods persist in Minangkabau society, using a non-diatonic approach. Two striking basic techniques are the five-tone variant scale, synonymous with the Minangkabau musical tradition known as “limo Salabuan voice,” and the six-tone variant scale, associated with the Minangkabau musical tradition known as “onam Salabuan voice.”

Keywords: Ethnic Minangkabau, *Talempong*, diversity of tuning system, ethnomusicology | Minangkabau Etnis, *Talempong*, Keragaman system Penyetelan, etnomusikologi

Introduction

Talempong is traditional form of music which remains popular in modern Minangkabau society. The *talempong* is a percussion instrument made from bronze. In Minangkabau, the term not only refers to those made from metal, but includes those made from bamboo (*talempong bambu*), wood (*talempong kayu*), and stone (*talempong batu*) (Nursyirwan 2011: 4-5).

Minangkabau is a highland region that Padang people usually call *Darek* (Land/Mainland), which is separated from Tanah Rantau by a range of hills called Bukit Barisan, while in the highlands there are six high mountains, namely: Mount Marapi, Mount Singgalang, Mount Sago, Mount Pasaman, Mount Talang, and Mount Kerinci. At the foot of Mount Marapi there is Lake Singkarak, and at the foot of Mount Singgalang there is Lake Maninjau. Furthermore, Minangkabau nature consists of three Luhak parts, namely: Luhak Agam, Luhak Limo Puluh, and Luhak Tanah Datar. The area located around Minangkabau nature by the population is called *Tanah Rantau*. Tanah Rantau is a place for Minangkabau people to spread out in order to develop their culture and residence. The term for the region uses the term Minangkabau, the term for the community is called the Minang community or Minangkabau people, while the Minangkabau Tribe is part of the West Sumatra Province.

According to Muhammad Radjab (1969: 9), Padang and Teluk Bayur serve as an outlet for Minangkabau people to wander. This paper focuses specifically on the Minangkabau ethnic group located in the West Sumatra, in the Republic of Indonesia. The discussion focuses on talempong musical performances, exploring the cultural norms of the Minangese people.

Minangese people commonly refer to themselves as *Urang Awak*, equivalent to Minangkabau itself (Navis 1984: 71). Apart from Minangkabau speakers, various dialects exist in different regions. The Minangkabau language can be divided into four dialects, namely Agam, Tanah Datar, Limopuluh Kota, and Pesisir (Nadra 2006: 29-34). During conversation, if someone speaks in a distinctive dialect, individuals from Minangkabau can quickly judge the speaker's place of origin.

Despite being predominantly influenced by Islam, Minangkabau follows a traditional system characterized by matrilineal kinship. The tradition and culture of Minangkabau revolves around motherhood, where women play a significant role as heirs and in kinship. According to Tambo (an oral historical narrative), the Minangkabau traditional system was initially proposed by two brothers, Datuk Perpatih Nan Sabatang and Datuk Ketumanggungan. Datuk Perpatih inherited the Bodi Caniago cultural system, which was a democratic system, while Datuk Ketumanggungan inherited the Koto Piliang, which was aristocratic. Over time, these two cultural systems, known as *kelarasan* (the division of territory according to Minangkabau customs), influenced and shaped each other, forming a democratic system in Minangkabau society (Manggis 1971:90-91). In the Minangkabau ethnic group, three pillars—teachers, scholars, and *penghulu* (a leader who is elevated within an ethnic unity), collectively known as *Tali nan Tigo Sapilin*—play essential roles in building and maintaining the integrity of culture and customs. All three elements work together in a complementary manner within the democratic and egalitarian Minangkabau society, where public affairs are discussed by consensus until a unanimous decision is reached.

The Minangkabau community has implemented a proto-democratic system since the pre-Hindu era, utilizing customary norms to decide on crucial matters and legal issues. The Minangkabau principle is encapsulated in the succinct statement “*Adat basandi syara'k, syara'k basandi Kitabullah*” (Customary based on law, syarak based on Al-Qur'an), signifying customs rooted in Islamic teachings, inherently including principles of deliberation (Naim 2007: 95-97).

The *talempong* form brought by the ancestors of the Minangkabau people is believed to be the same as contemporary *talempong*. Still, non-diatonic scales predominantly characterized the original tuning techniques. This form of *talempong* can be categorized as a type of gong that produces musical notes, similar to gong chimes or a set of gongs, found in various parts of Southeast Asia such as the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Brunei, Java, and Bali. It is significantly smaller in size compared to the commonly known gongs. In terms of its instruments, they mainly consist of small gongs similar to the Javanese bonang, and this ensemble can be said to be related to the gamelan family. Due to contact with Western music in Minangkabau, two styles of *talempong* ensembles emerged: the pentatonic scale *talempong* and the diatonic scale *talempong*.

In the academic circles of Minangkabau society during the 1980s, Boestanoel Arifin Adam (1986) was a local musician considered influential in studying Minangkabau ethnicity and Malay music. He stated that *talempong* music possesses the oldest pentatonic modal technique in Minangkabau and Malay musical repertoire, comprising a series of tones that “approximate” the notes [c-d-e-f-a] (Adam 1986). When compared to the diatonic system of [c-d-e-f-g-a-b-c] which developed around the post-Renaissance era, in the 16th century, it can be established that the pentatonic mode of *talempong* is more recent compared to the historical and mythological estimates long held by the Minangkabau society, dating back to 1580 (M. Rasjid Manggis 1971).

The evolution of the *talempong*, estimated to have begun in the 1980s, tends to utilize diatonic tuning techniques, even adopting a diatonic scale that includes chromatic elements (a format found in the *talempong goyang*). This assumption arises because traditional non-diatonic tuning techniques, based on the tuner’s sense and feeling, have begun to fall out of use.

The results of tuning the sound of the *talempong* in several villages in Minangkabau during the initial research are presented in the following section. To determine the frequency in hertz, the “Matlab v7” software was used. The highest wave diagram on the vertical axis and the highest on the horizontal axis were aligned. Therefore, the frequency value appears in hertz and kilohertz.

This image provides an example of the data processing procedure.

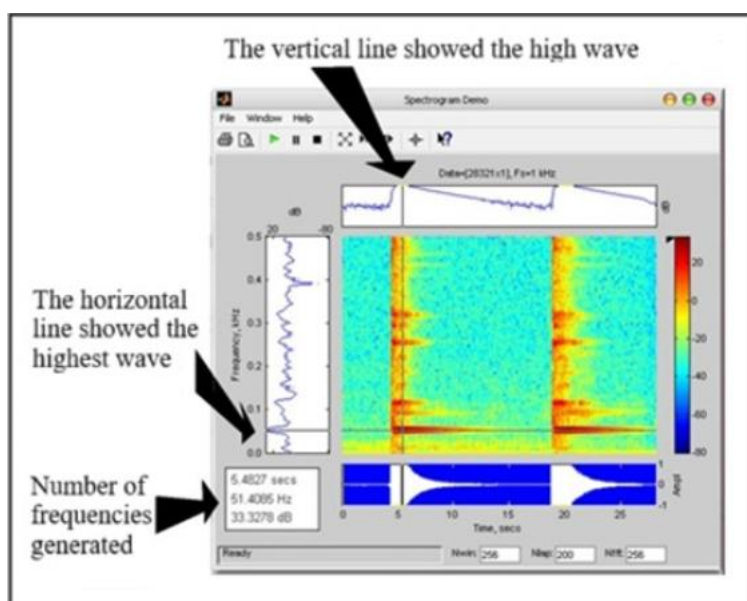


Fig 1. An example of a spectrogram for data processing. Image by Nursyirwan.

Talempong Music Performance

In modern Minangkabau society, *talempong* music remains popular, and fans continue to become integrated into the social and cultural system. The enthusiasm of the ethnic Minangkabau people for listening to or watching *talempong* shows is evident. *Talempong* performances that attract crowds do not create an atmosphere of discord or conflict among enthusiasts. Adam stated that the term *talempong* in Minangkabau refers to a type of idiophone instrument that comes in various shapes, sizes, and materials and is played by striking. In the most general sense, a *talempong* is a small gong-shaped instrument made from a mixture of various metals (brass, aluminium, tin, and copper) (Adam 1986/1987: 9-10).

In terms of materials and playing techniques—in a specific sense—in Luhak Nan Tigo (Luhak Tanah Datar, Luhak Agam, and Luhak Limopuluah Koto), other types of *talempong* are also known, such as *talempong sambilu* (bamboo splinter), *talempong batuang* (bamboo type), *talempong kayu* (wood type), and *talempong batu* (stone type). The *talempong sambilu* is played similarly to the *Sasando* musical instrument, but the sound source made from bamboo skin (*sambilu*) is struck with a special tool. *Talempong batuang* and *talempong kayu* consist of wooden bars or pieces arranged like a *kulintang* with seven-pitch levels, and they are played with both hands by striking (Sastra 2015: 2).

Talempong can be played either by a solo player or by three players with three separate instruments. In this context, it is better known as *talempong duduak* and *talempong pacik*. *Talempong duduak* refers to the *talempong* being placed on a wooden stand, with two parallel strings stretched across the stand, and the *talempong* placed on these strings. *Talempong pacik* refers to the *talempong* being played by holding it; the left-hand holds the *talempong* while the right-hand has a wooden mallet/stick.



Fig 2. Onam Salabuan sound *talempong Pacik* with *Onam* (six) played with the technique in seated position. Tolang Mau Village, Limapuluh Kota Regency, West Sumatra. Photo by Nursyirwan.

At present, the Minangkabau ethnic community continues to value *talempong* music performances. In the modern era, as a developmental form of traditional patterns, daily life still supports the socio-cultural system developed as a cultural heritage of the past. It reflects an effort to preserve social and cultural systems that are integral to the identity of the ethnic Minangkabau and prevent their disappearance.

The importance of *talempong* musical performances in Minangkabau lies in their role in preserving art and artistry within the tribes. In the past, particularly in the 1960s and 70s, *talempong* musical instruments were commonly found in each *pesukuan* (tribe). Then in the 80s, several *Kenagarian* (village administrations) in Minangkabau began to experience a decline. It indicates that only a few *Kenagarian* possess a complete *talempong* musical group. There is a belief that if a tribe does not have a *talempong* group, especially lacking the musical instrument itself, they are considered impoverished. In ancient times, each tribe, in agricultural activities, usually joined to work in fields or gardens. Activities implemented jointly are typically accompanied by exciting entertainment, which can add zest to work as a music *talempong* game. Implementing entertainment activities during the walk to and from work in the fields or gardens. Now, a nephew in the tribal concerned is generally prepared to play *talempong*.

According to artists, community leaders, and traditional figures, the presence of *talempong* music is a source of immense pride and a cherished aspect of their culture. This pride is evident in the continued existence of several *talempong* music groups in various villages throughout West Sumatra, Minangkabau. They view this as a cultural heritage, evidenced by the community's dedication to preserving and valuing the ancestral cultural legacies. This pride also extends to the unique techniques of playing the *talempong*, which are still maintained and have been passed down to the current generation of inheritors.

Talempong music is highly cherished by the Minangkabau community, encompassing older people, the youth, and even children. This is demonstrated by the diversity of its members, which is not limited to the older generation, unlike other traditional groups, such as *saluang depending*, *rabab* groups, and other conventional arts groups.

In several villages, there are efforts to foster the younger generation's interest in joining as players and inheritors of the *talempong* art tradition. This mentorship is often showcased during performances at Indonesia's Independence Day celebrations. All forms of guidance aim to ensure the future development of *talempong* music. Continuous improvement in training, especially in mastering the material to play traditional *talempong* music proficiently, is a priority. The continuity of this guidance is maintained with the hope that various community sectors, whether artists, traditional leaders, or other community figures, will continue to support the next generation until they fully appreciate and own the tradition. Cultivating a character to maintain the existence of traditional arts, which may lead to rarity, is essential.

Furthermore, the community's perception of *talempong* music does not conflict with local customary laws. One aspect of accepting *talempong* music can be seen in the attire worn during performances. The community does not object to the style, color, or uniformity of clothing as long as it does not violate the color and dressing rules according to Islam and Minangkabau customs. An example of the costume worn is traditional, predominantly red, yellow, and black. A head-covering accessory complements the outfit. However, the *talempong* players' costumes have few accessories and may even be non-uniform.

On the other hand, it is also observed that during performances of *talempong* music, there is rarely any form of audience appreciation that leads to negative behaviors such as drinking alcohol or gambling. Alcohol, gambling, and similar activities are considered disturbances to the peace and enjoyment of others during *talempong* music performances. It can be said that *talempong* performances do not lead to conflicts.

Talempong music is deeply ingrained in the Minangkabau society, not only in urban areas but also in rural ones. This is because every individual has a musical sense, which is differentiated only by the level of musicality of each individual. The emergence of conflicts is not caused by the form of the art performance itself but usually by minor issues or individual disputes that have been suppressed but are not group-related.

The inheritance of the traditional “metal *talempong*” music in the Minangkabau ethnic community is no longer uniformly found in every village. Historically, *talempong* music was a trademark or an icon of traditional performance art that flourished in every town in the Minangkabau region. It can also be regarded as a cultural symbol of the Malay community. Furthermore, *talempong* music also serves as a regional identity marker in Minangkabau, which has been known since ancient times in the archipelago. However, the reality of its presence has diminished, and it may no longer be found in some remote areas or villages.

The methods used for this field research include observation, interviews, participant observation, and visual observation. The number of informants is approximately 24, consisting of various community members such as traders, farmers, laborers, fishermen, employees, and retirees. The strategy in the fieldwork method involves identifying key informants (individuals considered experts) or someone recognized as a long-time *talempong* musician. This finding is the result of research conducted from July to September 2008.

Talempong music, from the perspective of diversity issues, possesses unique characteristics and uniqueness regarding its tuning technique. The tuning technique found in traditional Minangkabau music generally uses a mood or feeling approach, ranging from diverse non-diatonic traditional music to patterned and systematic Western diatonic music.

The presence of *talempong* music in Minangkabau serves various functions, with its primary being associated with marriage ceremonies. The *arak-arakan* (procession) aims to accompany the bridal couple, known as *anak daro* (meaning bride/groom women), as they descend from the *bako* (meaning the family of the father/father’s female relatives) house. Alternatively, the procession may occur when the *marapulai* (meaning bride/groom) descends from the *bako*’s home to the wedding venue. *Talempong* music is occasionally used to enhance events on the evening preceding the wedding ceremony. The night before the wedding, *talempong* music creates lively sounds, boosting the morale of *urang sumando* (and *besan sumando*, meaning men who join the wife’s family as husbands in the bonds of marriage), busy working in the kitchen. This term is particularly associated with Minangkabau ethnic events like *gulai* (cooking curry and similar dishes for the inauguration/wedding the next day). Performing arts can be multi-functional, depending on the evolving patterns of community support, serving purposes such as fostering togetherness, acting as a communication medium, and more. In this regard, the function of performing arts is not limited by time constraints (Rose 1989: 85).



Fig 3. Salabuan Talempong rea, with the number thirteen, played in a standing position in the event of Talempong Goyang, the Mayors of Padang Panjang's official residence, West Sumatra. Source: Photo by Nursyirwan.

Talempong is often presented as *talempong duduk* (*talempong* is played sitting down). *Talempong* players sometimes take on the role of 'tukang masak' (cooks). While waiting for rice or goulash to be cooked, the *talempong* player may play again, serving as *parintang rintang-wakatu* (filling empty time) during the waiting period. It can entertain people engaged in various culinary tasks. In such events, music *talempong* can serve as both entertainment and motivation for work, as described earlier.

In Minangkabau, various other activities contribute to the functional aspects of *talempong*. In some Kenagarian, the sounds of *talempong* are sometimes blended with different musical instruments such as *gendang dol* (drum) and the *tasa* (One type of drum used in traditional Minangkabau music, especially in the ensemble known as *gandang tasa*, is the *tasa*. The *tasa* is a kettle-shaped drum (*wajan*) with a diameter of 14 inches, made from jackfruit wood and deer skin (Wardizal 2022: 340).

In Nagari Talang Babungo, the term used for *talempong* is 'cecek'. *Cecek* is also used to refer to the music accompanying the bride's descent from the *bako*'s house to the groom's house. The *arak-arakan* procession of *marapulai* is preceded by a *tari piriang* (platter dance) accompanied by *cecek* played by three women. The *arak-arakan* procession concludes with a musical performance presented by a *salawat* group. *Salawat* (Arabic: صَلَوَات), or *durood* (Urdu: دُرُود), is an Islamic phrase expressing reverence for Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), with the accompaniment of a *rebana* (Islamic tambourine ensemble) acting as a regulator of rhythm and tempo for music.



Fig 4. The *arak-arakan marapulai* and *anak daro* are walking accompanied by the *talempong* music group in black uniforms in Singgalang Village, Tanah Datar Regency, West Sumatra. Photo by Nursyirwan.

Talempong music has specific names for each type of instrument, which is a source of pride for its supporting community. The types and descriptions of these are as follows:

1. Metal *Talempong*: A melodic percussion instrument made from a mixture of brass, tin, and copper, resembling the *bonang* in the shape of the *gamelan* ensemble.
2. *Talempong Batu* or *Talempong Sambilu*: A melodic percussion instrument made from old bamboo. The sound source comes from the vibrations of the bamboo slats.
3. Wooden *Talempong*: A type of melodic percussion instrument with a sound source and beater made from wood, resembling a xylophone.
4. Stone *Talempong*: A type of percussion instrument made from stone. It is played by striking the stone's surface, with the beater also made of stone.
5. *Tolang Mau Talempong*, *Unggan Talempong*, *Jao Talempong*, and *Sitawa Talempong* are melodic percussion instruments named after the regions and people who developed them. *Tolang Mau*, *Unggan*, and *Jao* are village names, while *Sitawa* is a personal name.
6. *Talempong Anam*: Refers to the number of *talempong* played in the ensemble, which is six.
7. *Talempong Sikatuntang*: *Sikatuntang* means stamping feet or pounding a pestle on a wooden block next to a mortar hole, producing a *tun-tang* sound.
8. *Talempong Pacik*: A type of metal *talempong*. It is played by holding it in the left hand and striking it with the right hand or vice versa. It can be played in a standing, sitting, or walking position.
9. *Talempong Duduak*: A type of metal *talempong*. It is identical in shape and size to the *talempong pacik*. It is played by placing the *talempong* on two stretched cords (low *rea*) or the floor, with five or six pieces. It is played in a sitting position.
10. *Talempong Rea*: A type of metal *talempong*. It is played by placing it on two stretched cords (high *rea*) with varying numbers of pieces. There can be five, six, eight, or thirteen pieces in one *rea*. It is played in a standing position.

The terms *talempong pacik* and *talempong duduak* refer only to the playing position or technique, while the *talempong* used is the same type. The same *talempong* used in *talempong pacik* is also used in *talempong duduak*, but they differ from *talempong rea*. The kind of *talempong* played in *talempong rea* is significantly different, as the notes played also differ. Still, in terms of shape and size, they are the same as *talempong pacik* or *talempong duduak*. Typically, the notes played on *talempong rea* align with other musical instruments' standardized notes.

In Nagari Bukik Kandung, *talempong* music not only serves as a musical accompaniment to the *arak-arakan* procession but also accompanies the key events during a marriage celebration. The *talempong* music group's performance is not limited to regular cast members; anyone who can play may join, taking turns to appear in the wedding crowd. The players' positions can be aligned with the audience or on a stage that has been prearranged. The type of *talempong* played in this context is *talempong pacik*.



Fig. 5 The *arak-arakan marapulai* and *anak daro* with a *bendi bugih* (uncovered horse-drawn carriage) accompanied by *pasumandan* (the bride's family) and *urang sumando* (son-in-law) in Padang Japang Village, Limapuluh Kota Regency, West Sumatra. Photo by Nursyirwan.

Another function of the existence of *talempong* involves its role in the *arak-arakan* music for the appointment ceremony of the new *penghulu*, the head of the inner tribe in the Kenagarian region with the title 'paired.' *Talempong* music is played during the *arak-arakan* procession of the *penghulu* descending from their respective *rumah gadang* (the main house of the tribal leader's family) to the *Balai Adat Kenagarian* (a gathering place for tribal leaders, intellectuals, and community leaders, where the *penghulu*'s inauguration is held or centered). The type of *talempong* played in this context is *talempong pacik*. If *rumah gadang* is interpreted literally as "big house". The term "big" here not only indicates the place but also signifies the functions, rights, and obligations associated with it. Thus, obtaining a title requires adherence to customary rules that have been established.

In some *nagari* (villages), *talempong* music also serves for rice harvest parties, *turun mandi* (one of the purification rituals in the *akikah* ceremony) and *akikah* (a thanksgiving ceremony for the birth

of a baby boy or girl), circumcision ceremonies, enlivening events like *pacu itiak* (duck race), parades on the 17th of August (Indonesian Independence Day), arts and culture weeks, and funerals. In funeral ceremonies, *talempong* performances are often seen in some *nagari*, while the tradition is still maintained in others. For example, in Nagari Panta Pauh, Matur Subdistrict, Agam Regency, this study was unable to obtain documentation supporting the oral information conveyed by community leaders.

Ritual ceremony activities take the form of ceremonies governed by procedures established by consensus among *ninik mamak* (a traditional leader or elder in the community who holds an important role in the social structure of Minangkabau society) and the *penghulu* in a Kenagarian, or they have been determined by customary law. Types of ceremonies such as wedding ceremonies, the appointment of *penghulu*, *turun mandi* for the first child, circumcision ceremonies, house-warming ceremonies, funerals, *anak Nagari* or villagers' crowds, and various other ceremonies are guided by customs in Minangkabau.

Talempong music is sometimes used to animate the evening before the wedding ceremony begins. This event is closely associated with the Minangkabau term *masak'an gulai* (curry dishes), which refers to preparing dishes like *gulai* and other foods for the wedding reception the next day. Performance art can be multifunctional depending on the supporting community's development patterns, fostering togetherness, being a communication medium, and more.

In other activities in Minangkabau, the function of *talempong* music varies. In some villages, the sound of *talempong* is sometimes combined with drum instruments like the *dol* drum and the *tasa* drum or other instruments. Based on the interests of this research, the procession studied includes those in Nagari Singgalang, Kecamatan X Koto, Kabupaten Tanah Datar; Nagari Singkarak, Kabupaten Solok; and Nagari Talang Babungo, Kecamatan Iliran Gumanti, Kabupaten Solok.

Applying the tonalities approach in the case of sound: *Limo* and *Onam Salabuan*

The diversity of sounds produced by the traditional musical instrument called *talempong* has several causes, including (1) the sound tuning, determined by the tuner; (2) the raw materials used to make the *talempong*; (3) the measurement or size of the mixture of raw materials in the making of *talempong*; (4) the striking technique of the *talempong*; (5) the tool used to strike the *talempong*; (6) the tuning tool used; and (7) the situation that occurs during sound measurement.

The tuning work of *talempong* is still quite simple or conventional, making it difficult to achieve precise pitch. The tuning results are only approximate. The technique to find higher pitches involves striking the inside of the *talempong* with wood, while lower pitches are achieved by striking the top of the *talempong*. The tuner uses instruments like a small accordion or Pianica to find the desired pitch. Other *talempong* players still maintain this technique in various regions and villages in Minangkabau. The Indonesian Institute of the Arts (STSI/ISI) Padangpanjang and the Music Department at Padang State University (UNP) use the same tuning methods employed by tuners at Pondok Karajo Saiyo. This tuning technique relies solely on the ear for listening and on the sense of feel or intuition.

In *Talempong* performance, two conceptual models apply traditional music: *Limo Salabuan* and *Onam Salabuan*. These conceptual models are found in the tuning concept that follows local aesthetics rather than diatonic tuning. According to the artist group's perspective, *talempong* music cannot be standardized. It is due to the Minangkabau community's aesthetic concept of traditional music. A clearer observation of the song pattern of the *Onam Salabuan* music concept can be seen in the case of the song titled "Cak Tun Tun".

"CAK TUN TUN"

Ciptaan : N.N
Tranper : Nursyirwan

Allegro

The image shows a musical score for the song "Cak Tun Tun". It is written for five instruments: Tip. Dasar, Tip. Pacahan, Tip. Paningkah, Gandang, and Tambowin. The tempo is marked as "Allegro". The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the initial rhythmic patterns for each instrument. The second system, starting at measure 5, includes a "tonalities approach" section where the instruments play sustained notes with wavy lines above them, indicating a shift in pitch or tone. The third system, starting at measure 69, shows the continuation of the rhythmic patterns, with some instruments playing chords or specific rhythmic motifs.

Fig. 6 The transcription of the Cak Tun Tun song with a tonalities approach. Image by Nursyirwan.

The skills possessed by *talempong* musicians are generally acquired naturally or not through formal education. They may play the *talempong* based solely on their hobbies, motivating them to practice. This practice often begins with playing the *talempong pacik*. Rarely do they conduct direct and scheduled rehearsals. This concept is based on the idea that playing *talempong* music will only happen if someone requests a performance.

During a *talempong* performance, several things can be observed directly. The players look to the left and right while striking their instruments. Looking to the left and right serves as a control for the balance of sound, responding to the styles or rhythms presented with playful patterns, call and response. By observing each other, the players can control each other to create a good playing pattern. The impact for the audience is a joyful and sometimes applause-worthy interaction, cheering, and more.



Fig 10 The rhythm of the end of a song. Image by Nursyirwan.

From the song’s beginning until the final measure, the rhythmic pattern played by each section is monotonous. However, in the interplay between the basic and broken patterns, some motifs complement each other. Such rhythmic patterns, in ethnic music terms, are referred to as interlocking.



Fig. 11 The combination of three *talempong* patterns when it is played in interlocking. Image by Nursyirwan.

The interlocking rhythmic patterns can be observed overall in the instruments *talempong* one, two, and three or in the motifs of the basic, broken, and fraction rhythms.



Fig. 12 The interlocking rhythmic patterns of all the *talempong* instruments. Image by Nursyirwan.

The interlocking play of the *talempong* in the song “Cak Tun Tun” is primarily focused on the technique of the song’s progression. It heavily depends on the situation and conditions concerning the time provided by the audience to enjoy or interpret the *talempong* performance. Consequently, each time the *talempong* is played, the number of measures or the duration differs. This is because the score for *talempong* music is generally never written down. Traditional performances sometimes lack a clear concept, as stated by Barbara Krader (1955: 22):

One fundamental principle is that traditional music or music that is not notated, due to its conditions, will always change. These principles imply an understanding that music collected from isolated communities, and even music used for ritual ceremonies or magical ceremonies, cannot automatically be assumed to be pure and representative of thousands of years ago without change, or even unaffected by other cultures or communities.

Conclusion

The technique of playing *talempong* is referred to in the Minangkabau dialect as the *salabuan talempong pacik* (a set of *talempong* that is held) or the *salabuan talempong duduak* (a set of *talempong* that is placed on the ground). *Talempong* can be played while walking or seated. Playing *talempong* is not limited to holding it (*pacik*), but also involves placing it on two stretched cords, with five or six *talempong*. The place where the *talempong* is placed is called a *rea*. Initially, the *rea* was low in height and was called *rea rondah*. Over time, it evolved into a higher form called *rea bakaki tinggi* (high-legged *rea*).

Several factors cause variations in the tuning techniques of *talempong* sounds. First, the tuning of the *talempong* is determined by the tuner, so the resulting sound aligns with the mood and feeling of the tuner. Second, the raw materials used are usually scrap metal. Third, the mixture proportions in making the *talempong* rely on habitual measures rather than proportional standards. Fourth, the technique of striking the *talempong* affects the sound color. Fifth, the tool used for striking impacts the resulting sound. Sixth, the tuning tools used are not uniform in manufacturing techniques, leading to different results when the *talempong* is used. Finally, the environment during sound measurement, whether indoors or outdoors, affects the sound outcome.

Talempong music is not considered sacred, and its sound is not regarded as ritualistic, so appreciation varies among individuals or ethnic groups. These differing perspectives are often linked to the system of feeling, which is inherently subjective and difficult to standardize. These factors underscore why *talempong* music lacks standardization.

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