[Article] The Original Hymnody of Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa: An Analysis of the Songbook *Nyanyikanlah Nyanyian Baru Bagi Tuhan*

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1. Introduction

A sound ecclesiology is essential to the flourishing of the worship arts.

—W. David O. Taylor[1]

Singing together is a communal, embodied act, and corporate worship is the site of meaning-making—where faith and identity are mediated. As a source of communal singing, hymnals mirror and motivate worship practice and theology. They embody sung theology and form congregations as they shape faith and identity. In studying a songbook, we gain insight into the context and beliefs of those who created it. Analyzing the songs of a church provides a window into what the church believes, and when the church also creates songs, those songs add new depths of cultural meaning and relevance.

Nyanyikanlah Nyanyian Baru bagi Tuhan (*Sing a New Song to the Lord*, abbreviated NNBT) is not only a songbook but also an act of creative expression and localization by Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa (GMIM), the Christian Evangelical Church in Minahasa, situated in the Indonesian province of North Sulawesi. Why and how this book came to exist, and what it contains, reveal the church's culture, theology, identity, and beliefs.

NNBT was first printed in 2002, and as a publication of GMIM, it is sung almost exclusively within the denomination. Now in its third edition, the latest printing was released in 2011. The preface to the first edition of NNBT begins with Psalm 98:1, which reads, in Indonesian, "*Nyanyikanlah nyanyian baru bagi TUHAN!*" and, in English, "Sing to the LORD a new song"; this verse became the title of the book.[2] NNBT answered an internal church desire to sing new songs in new styles. In the third edition, the preface reiterates the hope that the songs will significantly impact the church by using local artistic and cultural values (Badan Pekerja Majelis Sinode GMIM 2011, xii). GMIM plans to publish a second songbook (referred to hereafter as NNBT2) in the near future.[3]

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[1] W. David O. Taylor, *Glimpses of the New Creation: Worship and the Formative Power of the Arts* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2019), 103.

[2] Terjemahan Baru (TB) for Indonesian, and New International Version (NIV) for English.

[3] Conversations with GMIM's church music team indicated that they have already finished typesetting. As of early 2024, the book is completed, but funding is needed for the initial print run.

Analyzing the first NNBT, especially as an original creation of GMIM, provides a foundational viewpoint into how the leadership intends GMIM to worship, with implications for what they believe and how they act on those beliefs. Csikszentmihalyi (2014) and Balasundaram (2021), among others, have noted the importance of asking not just "*What* is creativity?" but also "*Where* is creativity?" An opportunity exists to study the artistic expressions of Minahasan culture and their localizing creative process: "concepts and values connected to newness and purpose" (Schrag and Van Buren 2018, 15). Minahasans are innovative and possess a vibrant culture, even after centuries of colonial subjugation by various Western nations, incorporation into the Indonesian state, and ongoing globalization. Amid this complex history, GMIM is an example of an actively localizing, creative environment with a strong cultural and ethnic identity: local creativity in a postcolonial context.

How and why does GMIM create artistically, especially for worship? To move toward an answer to this broader question, I undertook this research as a grounded analytical study that describes one aspect of the artistic creative process and environment of GMIM in North Sulawesi: the NNBT songbook. What is the cultural and theological identity of GMIM, as expressed in NNBT?

2. Situating NNBT

The geographical, historical, and cultural contexts are helpful in appreciating the significance of NNBT. The songs were not created or sung in isolation but rather in a specific time and place, and they allow us a glimpse into GMIM and its beliefs.

2.1 Indonesia and North Sulawesi

Indonesia is a nation of 17,000 islands spread across 700,000 square miles. The island of Sulawesi is located south of the Philippines and includes four large peninsulas. The province of North Sulawesi, home to the Minahasa cultural group and GMIM, is a long finger of land pointing northeast on the island's northern end.
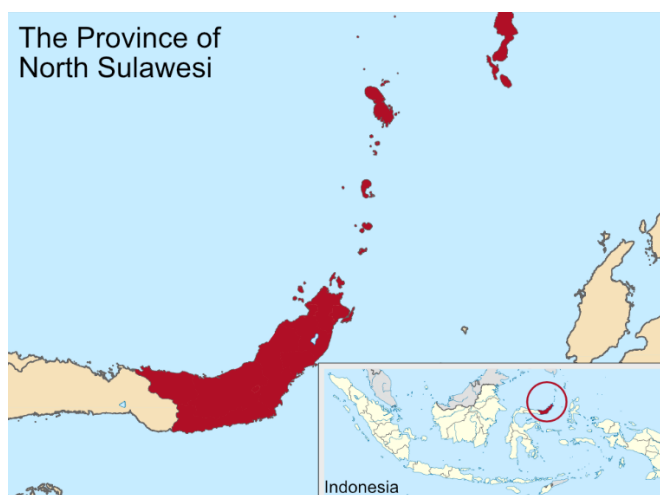

Figure 1. The province of North Sulawesi in Indonesia.

Christians (Catholic and Protestant) make up around 10 percent of the population of Indonesia. In a country of over 270 million people, this is a significant minority of twenty-seven million. The population of the North Sulawesi province comprises roughly 2.65 million, around 67 percent of whom are Christians (Badan Pusat

Statistik 2020; Pusat Data Kementerian Agama RI 2018). The high percentage of Christians in this province is significant in a majority Muslim country, and Minahasa culture and identity have become inextricably linked with Christianity.

2.2 Minahasa Culture

The written history of North Sulawesi begins in about 1615. The Spanish and Portuguese were the first Westerners to arrive and document the land and culture, followed later by the Dutch. The Dutch colonial empire was somewhat theocratic but tolerant of other religions, with a "live and let live" attitude (van den End and Aritonang 2008, 101). Many areas, North Sulawesi included, found silver linings in colonial oppression and profitable ways to work with the Dutch (118). The Dutch East India Company dominated the economy but left the religious sphere relatively untouched (130).

When the Dutch East India Company was declared bankrupt and Indonesia became part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Dutch began to focus not just on the economics and business of trade but also on humanitarian and religious concerns (137). Though missionization had always been present to some degree, this shift marked an intentional movement toward Christianization.

The Dutch appropriated the term "Minahasa" to describe eight related ethnolinguistic people groups (Ricklefs 2008). The term "Minahasa" first appeared in Dutch records in 1789 and did not appear on any maps until 1853; it was not used in a geographic sense until the nineteenth century (Henley 1995, 32, 40). It is a local word meaning "unity," "union," or "alliance," but most sources point to this unity between groups as emerging only through incorporation into a Dutch political structure (40).[4]

Minahasa is an imagined identity; Nas (1995) refers to it as a "colonial construct, negating the cultural differences and unifying Minahasa for government purposes" (61). Though the languages within Minahasa are distinct, the cultures and artistic expressions are similar, leading the Dutch to treat them monolithically. Noted Minahasan scholar David Henley (1995) observes that "In the mission schools . . . thousands of children from all districts were exhaustively instructed in the geography of Minahasa as a whole, which they were taught to regard as their common homeland" (40). Missionaries also encouraged a "gentle form of Minahasan patriotism" (41).

Colonialism left a lasting impact on the area, and Christian and Minahasan identities became closely linked at this time:

> There is probably no other region in Indonesia where so many people emphasize the close relationship between local or ethnic identity and Christianity. . . . The Christian character of Minahasa was the result of the drastic changes in social, economic and religious life during the period of the first inland missionary activities. (Aritonang and Steenbrink 2008, 421)

While it is easy to focus on cultural change and disruption through colonialism and exploitation, there is also a strong undercurrent of continuity during this time. Lundström-Burghoorn (1981) notes that

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[4] See also: Lundström-Burghoorn 1981, 20. The origins of the term Minahasa can be contentious, and this topic merits further exploration. Most academic sources consulted for this paper point toward the colonial origins of the cultural cooperation it describes. Still, local narratives (and some local scholarship) describe the concept of Minahasa as historic and predating the Dutch.

> If change is constant, cultural features are often surprisingly persistent. If change is a persistent theme in modern anthropological studies, continuity is a neglected but an equally important problem, especially if we aim to arrive at a full understanding of change. It is a prerequisite for more meaningful studies of change that we also understand what is durable, what derives meaning and significance from sources which go as far back in time as people can remember, and yet are maintained forcefully in contemporary society. (7)

Many Minahasan "cultural features" have persisted, and the relationship of NNBT with historical and cultural contexts is a critical consideration.

2.3 GMIM

In addition to the region's history, an overview of GMIM situates the songbook within the church as the creative impetus behind and the primary user of NNBT.

The Netherlands Missionary Society began mission work in 1831 in the Minahasa area (van den End and Aritonang 2008, 142; Kipp 2004, 603). Christianity proved a natural fit in the area, and by the 1880s, around 80 percent of the population had been baptized (Aritonang and Steenbrink 2008, 422). Over time, Dutch mission work became better organized as the *Indische Kerk* (Protestant Church of the Netherlands), which brought the local church under the administration of Dutch government officials in Manado. From a cultural perspective, although there was still "a vehement struggle for a new identity," Christianity had taken root (de Jonge, Parengkuan, and Steenbrink 2008, 425).

In 1934, the Dutch decided that, because of rapid church growth and the number of Christians in North Sulawesi, the church should be granted autonomous status: GMIM was established (van den End and Aritonang 2008, 175–176). Beginning in 1942, the leadership of GMIM was handed over to Indonesians primarily because of the Japanese occupation (GMIM 2021; van den End and Aritonang 2008, 179). GMIM remained organized and functional throughout World War II, and this taste of independence from the Dutch was to have a lasting impact. In 1942, A. Z. R. Wenas was chosen as the first non-Dutch chair of the synod. Financial ties with the Dutch government ended in 1950 (de Jonge, Parengkuan, and Steenbrink 2008, 436).

The Dutch did not encourage or support indigenous Indonesian theology. That theology has attempted to acknowledge and deal with syncretic practices, particularly since the 1980s (Prior and Hoekema 2008, 749; de Jonge, Parengkuan, and Steenbrink 2008, 440). GMIM began discussing contextualization in the 1990s and introduced Minahasa cultural elements into services, with mixed success (van den End and Aritonang 2008, 152).

GMIM is now a prominent, sizable church denomination in Indonesia. Beginning in the 1960s, it came to exercise significant sway in many spheres of local life, including government, with about three-quarters of the Minahasa population listed as church members. Currently, the denomination has 1,060 churches and around 830,058 members (241,493 family units), served by 2,478 pastors (GMIM 2022). Members occupy all strata of government and business in the area, and the church's influence is clearly felt in local life.

3. Research Process and Methodology

Deborah Haynes (2018) notes, "One goal of studying creativity at the intersection of art and religion is to challenge current definitions by demonstrating the importance of tradition and continuity alongside innovation and novelty" (101). Religious expression is an ideal location from which to study NNBT and its related cultural

dynamics. NNBT, as a locally created religious artifact, is an opportunity to explore these currents in the Minahasan context.

One purpose of this research was to develop a methodology for exploring a songbook as intended communication from the synod leadership to the congregants. Rather than using participant observation to explore performance practice, I was interested in the creative process behind why and how NNBT came to be and what its creators intended to accomplish. Grounded theory undergirded this analysis over and above any other frameworks, and I aimed for all coding, themes, and conclusions to arise from the data.

The three printed editions of NNBT, supplemented by interviews and other documentation from the leadership of GMIM, provided the primary sources. The research question lent itself to two kinds of related analysis: musical and lexical. Lexical analysis was the more critical of the two, supported by general musical analysis. What does the GMIM church sing about in the NNBT songbook? What does this communicate about the leadership's perspectives on their beliefs and theology?

3.1 Data Collection

3.1.1 NNBT

The analysis of NNBT was conducted over several months in 2023, using various methods but primarily qualitative data analysis of the songs. A naming system was necessary, and the following describes the encoding used in this paper. Each song record begins with "NNBT," and "1" was added to designate the songs from the first published NNBT.[5] Within the hymnbook, songs were numbered: for example, NNBT1-27 refers to the twenty-seventh song in the first NNBT book, entitled "Ya Tuhan, Engkaulah."

The analysis included several rounds of coding, with revisions and distillation for each iteration. Various sources provided different ideas for coding songs, but groupings primarily emerged organically from the data, following the principles of grounded theory. The analysis process was iterative and cyclical, similar to what Corbin and Strauss (2008) describe:

> Analysis leads to questions that lead to further data collection that lead to further analysis. That is why I am such a strong believer in alternating data collection with data analysis. I know that this is not always possible, but when it is possible, the process enriches the findings considerably. A researcher cannot possibly know all the questions to ask when beginning a study. (216)

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[5] In anticipation of the planned second songbook, the current book will be coded as NNBT1 and the second as NNBT2.

Data collection was initially straightforward since NNBT is a published artifact in three editions (Badan Pekerja Majelis Sinode GMIM 2009; Badan Pekerja Sinode GMIM 2010; Badan Pekerja Majelis Sinode GMIM 2011). What was added in each round, however, was additional perspectives. The second edition added four-part choral harmony and Western musical notation to the existing *not angka* (Indonesian cipher notation, using numbers), as can be seen in NNBT1-30.

Figure 2. NNBT1-30, "Allah, Tuhan KekuatanMu," in the second edition of NNBT.

The third edition was printed soon after the second to replace a song with copyright issues.[6] It also removed the Western musical notation, while keeping the four-part Indonesian cipher notation, and added scripture references alongside many songs. Each edition also included prefaces and other letters from GMIM leaders. This additional information added context to the songs, particularly concerning my primary interest: the motivations for creating (and updating) NNBT.

Interviews with theology professors, church musicians, and an NNBT songwriter helped situate NNBT. Many of the professors also served as GMIM pastors before appointments to UKIT (Universitas Kristen Indonesia di Tomohon, the Indonesian Christian University of Tomohon).

Finally, alongside the second edition of NNBT, GMIM published recordings of each song on a CD.[7] These recordings were intended to help congregations and worship leaders learn the songs, particularly the newly added

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[6] NNBT1-20 was replaced because of copyright issues. This is explained in the preface to the third printing (page xiii), with an apology and an explanation that a new song was inserted as NNBT1-20 so there is no issue with the numbering of the other songs.

[7] Although the physical CD is difficult to find, the recordings are available online in many locations, such as https://alkitab.app/NNBT.

harmonies in this edition. For my research, they became a valuable audio reference for analyzing the intended performance features of each song.

I used coding in a variety of ways to explore these data. My primary purpose was qualitative analysis, but codes also proved helpful for tagging and categorizing songs in other ways. Typically, in an NNBT hymn, I assigned one or two phrases per line with codes in the first round of analysis. The resulting codes were then categorized into various nonexclusive groups and relationships that emerged from the data, and some code groups were created for several types of action described in NNBT.

Later rounds of coding concentrated on larger themes, such as the directionality of worship, musical genres, and other dynamics. In addition to the qualitative coding of themes, I also used codes to tag songs for reference; I coded for features such as tempo, key, and composer for ease of searching and categorizing. This coding also facilitated my search for correlations, such as whether a musical style was related to a qualitative theme.

While the published NNBT is the primary source for this project, several other sources from within GMIM provided context for understanding the songbook. The following sections describe these additional sources.

3.1.2 GMIM Liturgy

The GMIM liturgy is similar to most Reformed worship traditions. It is generally used in one of five forms, or *bentuk*, corresponding to the weeks of the month (with the fifth rarely used). Other special Christian holidays (such as Christmas Day, Good Friday, and Easter), as well as important local dates in the life of the church (the congregation's anniversary or an annual thanksgiving service, for example), will usually have a modified liturgy which still follows the basic form. I examined various Sunday service liturgies for GMIM from 2020 to 2022, but information on the liturgy also comes from my participant observation and field notes from attending numerous GMIM services since 2019.[8]

3.1.3 Interviews

In addition to ongoing participant observation, formal interviews and innumerable informal discussions contributed to this analysis.[9] I considered interviewing the NNBT committee but eventually focused on other perspectives.[10] In GMIM's hierarchy, the synod leadership directed the process and collaborated with Yamuger (Yayasan Music Gereja, the Indonesian Institute for Sacred Music) to execute their vision. The local committee

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[8] Many GMIM liturgies are freely available online. Some of the following liturgies were sampled from 2020, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, but they remain representative of the standard GMIM service. The additional fieldwork in GMIM churches from 2019 until the writing of this paper (2023) confirmed this and provided non-pandemic perspectives. For some specific examples of GMIM liturgy consulted for this analysis, see APP GMIM 2020a; 2020b; 2020c; 2020d; 2020e; 2020f; 2020g; GMIM Pinaesaan 2021a; 2021b; 2023.

[9] I have lived in Manado since 2019 and regularly attend a GMIM church. I also frequently interact with pastors, GMIM synod leadership, the current synod music team, songwriters, and other musicians, which has been invaluable to this research. My visa to live and work in Indonesia is sponsored jointly by two Indonesian church denominations: GMIM and GPID (Gereja Protestan Indonesia Donggala), located in Palu, Sulawesi, where I worked for eight years prior to moving to Manado.

[10] As I'll explain in Section 3.2.4, the choice of interviewing leaders and songwriters and not congregants was intentional, because this study set out to explore NNBT as an act of intended communication by GMIM's leadership. Exploring the reception and effect upon congregants is a separate subject.

collaborating with Yamuger was tasked with the logistics of organizing a songwriting workshop and technical editing but not with the overall vision for the project (Pongoh and Mamuaja 2024).[11]

One interview was with six theology professors at UKIT who discussed the NNBT, contextual theology in GMIM, and other topics (UKIT Theology Professors 2023). I conducted individual interviews with two theology professors for follow-up questions based on the first group interview and other questions that arose during the analysis (Sarimbangun 2023; C 2023). They provided the perspectives of former worship service planners and current theological leaders, now serving the church in a teaching role.

3.1.4 MTPJ

MTPJ (*Menjabarkan Trilogi Pembangunan Jemaat*, or "Describing the Trilogy of Congregational Development") is the weekly publication of GMIM, which provides everything needed for the Sunday worship service, including songs. I consulted the MTPJ for all services from the first documentation available on the GMIM website to the end of 2022 to gather data on NNBT song usage in the liturgy and its frequency of appearance in the worship services, resulting in 202 records.[12] Because this data set represents the synod's recommendations to churches, most significant was viewing MTPJ as a lens into the GMIM leadership's ongoing usage of NNBT to communicate church beliefs and identity.

The MTPJ data provided several insights. Of the 202 services analyzed, 173 (86 percent) included NNBT songs. MTPJ also confirmed which NNBT songs are the most frequently recommended. Song frequency can be a helpful tool for understanding theological emphases and other beliefs (Tippett 1967; King 2009, 44).

3.2 Methodologies and Analytical Tools

3.2.1 Seven Lenses

Schrag and Van Buren (2018) devised a helpful tool for viewing an artistic expression through seven lenses, dividing the event or performance into *space*, *materials*, *participants*, *shape through time*, *performance features*, *content*, and *underlying symbolic systems*. This methodology provided the initial framework for analyzing NNBT. For this analysis (and to keep the project focused and reasonable in scope), I considered NNBT outside the performance context as an ideal object: a static, written book of songs. This limitation necessarily emphasized some lenses over others.

Using this framework, the content and underlying symbolic systems lenses were most helpful in creating codes, and performance features such as poetic devices—specifically those related to meaning—supported the analysis (182).[13] For NNBT, the semantic elements provided the most information toward answering the research

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[11] I am especially indebted to numerous informal conversations with Renaldo Pongoh and Christian Mamuaja for helping me understand the process of creating NNBT and helping me direct my focus to the right places. They contributed context to NNBT and added to the background provided by the prefaces in each songbook edition. Christian Mamuaja wrote two songs for NNBT (9 and 46) and was present for the primary songwriting workshop at which NNBT was developed, so his insights were particularly valuable.

[12] At the time of this writing, data was available on the website starting with July 21, 2019. See Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa 2022.

[13] Schrag and Van Buren note a variety of poetic devices, as well as poetic devices related to meaning (181–182). Additionally, "Part C" of the section on analysis (198) describes several aspects of artistic expression that will be relevant to

question. I analyzed frequently used words, phrases, and themes, and the above lenses aided in identifying important elements in the texts. Performance features were primarily valuable for musical analysis. The content lens became the primary pathway for analyzing NNBT. The song texts were a conduit to understanding "underlying assumptions and cognitive understanding" (King 2019, 124).

3.2.2 Lexical Analysis

The lexical analysis focused on the Euro-American artistic domain of oral-verbal arts: "special kinds of oral communication that use words" (Schrag and Van Buren 2018, 171). The verbal elements of NNBT were analyzed outside their performance context (but not isolated from the music, as I'll explain in 3.2.3) by consulting all three editions of the published NNBT songbook.[14]

I used qualitative data analysis methods to categorize song texts and uncover important recurring themes.[15] In following the principles of grounded theory rather than an external system of organization, this lexical analysis used what Corbin and Strauss (2008) term *open coding*: "Open coding requires a brainstorming approach to analysis because, in the beginning, analysts want to open up the data to all potentials and possibilities contained within them. Only after considering all possible meanings and examining the context carefully is the researcher ready to put interpretive conceptual labels on the data" (160).

3.2.3 Musical Analysis

As much as possible, I treated music and language as a single communication event termed *musical-language*. Faudree (2012) observes that much is lost when only music or language is analyzed in isolation and observes:

> By viewing the boundary between language and music as even more thoroughly constructed and placing the burden of analysis on signs regardless of categorical distinction, we not only move away from our own assumptions about the division between language and music, but also heighten the visibility of boundaries between different expressive categories as ethnographic facts supported by specific cultural practices, institutions, and ideologies. Furthermore, viewing music and language as part of a full semiotic field will further ongoing conversations about how to decenter texts as a core unit of analysis, while providing the tools for examining them holistically and assessing their relative importance (and unimportance) by positioning texts alongside other collections of signs, sonic and otherwise. (520)

And later,

> Language and music are not merely separate expressive channels but part of a seamless semiotic complex, one calling for an integrated, holistic, unified analytic framework that takes as its most basic unit of analysis the socially situated, relationally understood sign, be it sung, spoken, written, performed, or embodied. (530)

Thomas Turino (1999) presents Peircean semiotics as an alternative perspective based on musical-language, an intriguing contrast to linguistics-based analyses of songs. The interaction of semiotics and the arts is a complex

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this project, such as identity and power, and subject matter (which includes community values).

[14] As mentioned elsewhere, my primary research interest is in NNBT as intended communication from GMIM leadership to congregants. This focus directed me away from participant-observation of performance practice and toward other kinds of analysis.

[15] I used the ATLAS.ti software program to gather, collate, and analyze the data.

topic and deserves deeper discussion than can be done here.[16] Still, for this research (and in a general sense), these ideas reinforced the assertion that song texts should not be divorced from the music; they represent a single, unified communication channel.

Because the second edition of NNBT notates the songs in Western and Indonesian cipher notation, transcription was unnecessary. My musical analysis primarily explored possible correlations to the lexical content. One focus of the musical analysis was the extent to which NNBT songs are localized, as well as performance features and song genre. Musical-language also clarified several themes (such as the directionality of songs) when the linguistic elements alone were ambiguous. I consulted audio recordings, especially the official recordings created for the second edition of the book. The GMIM synod music team prioritized congregations learning to sing the songs correctly, with the proper rhythms, melodies, and harmonies. I listened to the songs alongside the notation and texts (and the accompanying coding) to uncover relationships between the linguistic and musical contents.

Some songs are explicitly labeled with local artistic communication genres in the book: NNBT1-17 is *maengket*, NNBT1-18 is *gaya Minahasa* (Minahasa style), and NNBT1-19 is *masamper,* a style from the Sangir-Talaud islands to the North of Sulawesi (and the Sangir are a significant minority ethnicity within GMIM). Three other songs are in a local pop style known as *pop rohani* ("spiritual pop").[17]

Musical analysis helped situate some songs. For example, understanding *masamper* clarified that some songs are localized and not as Western as they seem. Two songs, NNBT1-2 and NNBT1-3, are not labeled with a genre but are influenced by the Sangir-Talaud *masamper* style, which is prevalent throughout the region.[18] Figure 3 shows NNBTI-2 as an example of an NNBT song that's stylistically unlabeled yet full of *masamper* performance features.

Several performance features point to a connection with *masamper.* First, the melody is pentatonic, using a scale (degrees 1, 2, 3, 5, 6) common in some parts of Eastern Indonesia. Although the harmonization is not exclusively pentatonic, the song maintains an overall pentatonic feeling; listening further clarifies this intuition.[19] Second, the accented, syllabic vocal style (audible in the recording) is shared with *masamper.* Finally, the ending "haleluya" is repeated—in this arrangement, by the alto and tenor parts. This repetition at the end of a section is a clear link to a performance feature of the *masamper*.

Ingalls, Reigersberg, and Sherinian (2018) propose "musical localization" to describe "the processes by which Christian communities worldwide adapt, adopt, create, perform, and share congregational music" (3). The authors "seek a concept that gives agency to the communities we study who use a variety of musical and cultural forms to assert meanings and affections that they believe to be 'Christian,' irrespective of whether ecclesial authorities, missionaries, or Christian groups elsewhere judge these expressions to be 'orthodox' or appropriate" (7). Julia Byl (2022) notes how understated localization can be:

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[16] For more exploration of this, see Connor 2022 and Turino 2014.

[17] While this genre uses the common term "pop," the performance features of this style are best understood as a localization of imported Western pop styles.

[18] Audio examples of these songs can be found here: *NNBT1-2:* http://www.bibleforandroid.com/NNBT/2; *NNBT1-3:* http://www.bibleforandroid.com/NNBT/3.

[19] The official recording of NNBT1-2 can be heard online at: http://www.bibleforandroid.com/NNBT/2.

Even the charge that conventional pop Batak songwriting is nothing but three easy chords—reserving the complex harmony and voicing for those who have studied Western music and can write it on staff paper—is far from the truth. Moreover, this assumption misses how the tradition of Toba Batak songwriting has been conditioned by the local aesthetics. (55)

NNBT1-2 displays localization in the scale, rhythm, and singing style. A complete analysis of *masamper* is tangential to this NNBT analysis.[20] Still, understanding the musical context of NNBT assists in situating the songs and identifying cultural influences. A deeper look at NNBT reveals subtle, conservative localization in many of the Western choral hymns, which I might otherwise have discounted because of my biases.

Figure 3. Notation of NNBT1-2 from the second edition (2010).

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[20] Further description of *masamper* appears in Section 4.1.5, alongside an examination of NNBT1-19.

3.2.4 Dynamic, Intended Communication

Roberta King (2009) describes David Berlo's work on the communication process and divides it into *source, message, channel,* and *receiver* (35). These categories are helpful for studying the concept of intended communication. For this analysis, the source (transmitting the information) is NNBT and not the original song composer, since that information is not typically available to congregants as they participate in worship. Most interaction with NNBT is limited to the worship service. Although recordings are available online, the primary sources I considered are the lyrics and the singing during the worship service; musical notation is not typically displayed for congregants.[21]

In terms of the seven lenses, the *message* is the content of the NNBT song (musical-language). The *channels* used are hearing and seeing, since words are in a songbook or displayed on a screen in most GMIM services. Lyrics are typically presented via a projector, and worshipers do not use physical copies of the songbook.[22]

In building on the research focus on NNBT as intended communication, I did not consider the *receiver* in this analysis. Roberta King (2019) comments that "the receiver perceives the content through his/her own eyes and thus is the one who determines the actual effect of the communication event" (37). Thus, within the deliberate limits of this study, NNBT intends to communicate, via musical-language, GMIM's theology and beliefs to its members. Without analyzing NNBT in practice, the effect is aspirational and remains latent, ideal, intended artistic communication.[23]

Songbooks are exceptional in that they communicate in different ways at different times—this represents active, dynamic, local theologizing. NNBT is an ideal object and a potential communication channel; however, personal and group narratives relate to and interact with it when realized through performance. Each enactment is uniquely realized in its performance features, context, and location. As King notes,

> The arts are not static. Rather, they dynamically interact within lived human experiences, providing arenas of reflection for bringing God into a people's context. Engaging the arts in the creative process promotes active theologizing in the quest to know and relate to him. . . . Contextualized arts promote active theologizing in relevant and meaningful ways. The process provides means for moving deeper into a people's worldview in ways that foster a growing understanding of God's dynamic presence among them. (111)

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[21] A quick search online for "NNBT 19," for instance, uncovers multiple links to the official reference recordings, video tutorials which teach the song part-by-part, and recordings of live performances. The purpose of most recordings seems to be for reference and teaching, and not casual listening for enjoyment.

[22] In my fourteen years of experience in reformed, liturgical churches in Indonesia (the most recent five years in GMIM), the only songbook most congregants might possess is the *Kidung Jemaat,* which is often published in one volume with the Bible. Other than church leaders and musicians, individuals rarely own supplemental songbooks, such as NNBT.

[23] As mentioned in Section 3.1.3, analyzing NNBT in this way determined who would be interviewed and what documents would be consulted, which resulted in a focus on the leadership of GMIM (rather than the end-users of NNBT, the congregants).

4. Analysis of NNBT

Through applying the above methodologies and techniques and centering on the intended communication of NNBT by the GMIM leadership, my analysis revealed three significant themes. First is the underlying directionality of worship in NNBT, which I discuss through a two-axis diagram for considering the songs from horizontal–vertical and individual–group perspectives. Second is the strong emphasis on sin and related concepts within NNBT. Confession, forgiveness, and the problem of sin are significant themes within NNBT, as well as the life of GMIM. Finally, in Section 5, I offer an extended exploration of the theme of NNBT as a creative expression of GMIM and its status and identity as a Minahasan church denomination.

4.1 Four Dynamics of Worship

While analyzing NNBT, I observed two dynamic polarities for describing worship: horizontal–vertical and group–individual. During the analysis, NNBT songs converged around these four dynamics:

- **Group:** Singing as a collection of people to God or one another, using terms such as "we."
- **Individual:** Singing as a single person to others or God.
- **Horizontal:** Singing to one another about God or the community.
- **Vertical:** Singing to God about what God has done or in supplication.

Figure 4 shows the interplay of these four dynamics of worship.
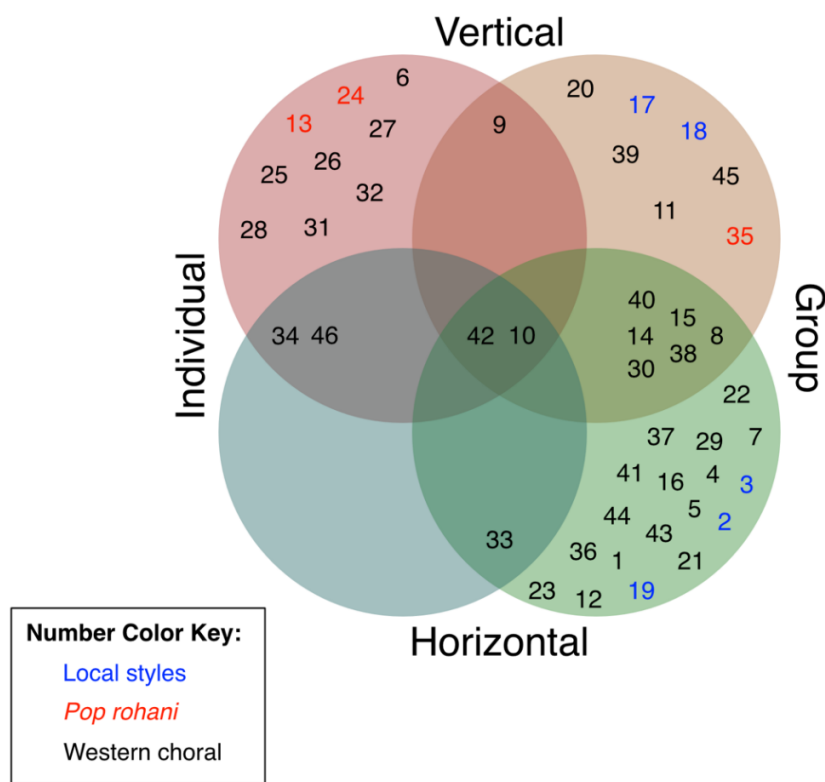

Figure 4. NNBT songs plotted to show the interactions of the four different dynamics of worship.

Figure 4 plots the dynamics of worship into a four-quadrant Venn diagram displaying the interaction between two axes: individual–group and vertical–horizontal. The numbers refer to NNBT songs 1–46 (47–50 are excluded, as they are simple "Hallelujah" and "Amen" choruses). As part of the analysis, songs were categorized into musical genres. The red numbers identify songs in a local pop style called *pop rohani* ("spiritual pop"; three songs). The blue numbers represent a variety of other local song styles, such as *masamper*, *maengket*, and *gaya Minahasa* (five songs). Most numbers are black, representing Western choral-hymn-style songs (thirty-eight); Krabill (2012) would label these "imported" (144–50).[24] The four circles gather similar songs in categories (vertical–group, horizontal–group, horizontal–individual, and vertical–individual), and the overlapping areas show how songs often defy neat categorization. Within the quadrants, relative distance from the center is unimportant.

4.1.1 The Vertical–Horizontal Axis

NNBT contains a mix of songs directed upward toward the divine and outward toward fellow worshipers. The Sankey diagram in Figure 5 shows the split between vertical and horizontal worship for different musical genres. The division is relatively even, with a slight preference for horizontal worship, except for *pop rohani.* In NNBT, *pop rohani* songs are exclusively associated with vertical worship. Only three are included in the book, so this is a small sample from a corpus of forty-six songs. It is remarkable, however, because it lines up with my anecdotal experiences with the style elsewhere in Indonesia and recent studies of the global phenomenon of Contemporary Worship Music, which *pop rohani* is similar to and likely influenced by.[25]
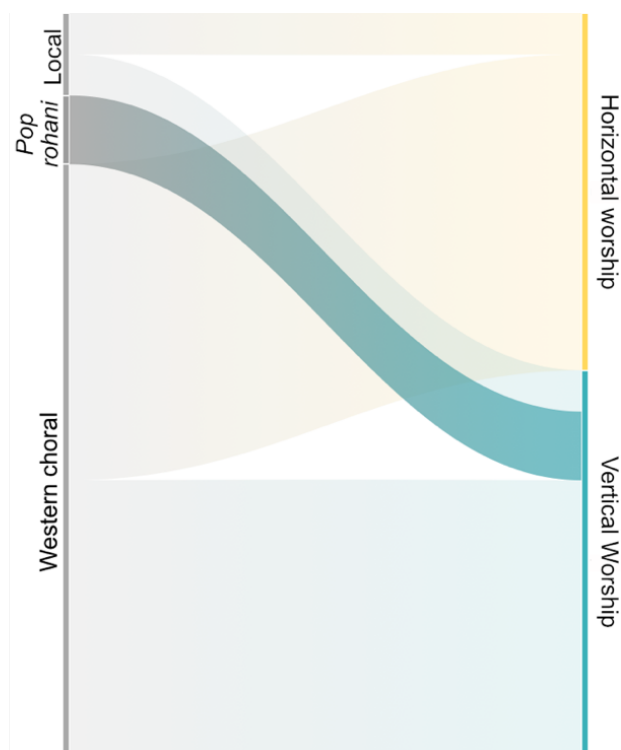

Figure 5. *Pop rohani* is exclusively associated with vertical worship in NNBT1.

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[24] All of the musical genre categorizations are my own, based on analysis of the musical notation and official audio recordings of NNBT.

[25] See, for example, Ingalls and Yong 2015; Ingalls 2018; Lemley 2021; Lim and Ruth 2017; and Ruth and Lim 2021.

4.1.2 The Group–Individual Axis

Table 1 describes how the NNBT refers to people. It was helpful for the analysis because it uncovered some directionality and aligned with the Minahasan cultural tendency toward collectivity and togetherness. When *kami* and *kita* (the terms for "we," exclusive and inclusive, respectively) were combined, there were eighty-nine group-response versus fifty-seven individual–response instances. When other terms of third-person address in Table 1 were added as indirect ways to refer to a group, the group-response total increased to 114.

Table 1. Terms of Address for People.

Indonesian	English	Count
Kami	We (exclusive)	60
Aku / ku	I	57
Kita	We (inclusive)	29
Umat / Umatmu	People of God / Your people	13
Manusia	Humankind	12
Kamu	You (informal, to people)	5

4.1.3 The Vertical–Individual Quadrant

The top left region of Figure 4 is vertical–individual; these songs are sung to God by a single person. NNBT1-25 is an example of this quadrant.

NNBT1-25 "Ketika 'Ku Bangun" with English Translation[26]

Ketika 'Ku Bangun

1.
Ketika 'ku bangun
'ku sujud menyembah,
Dihadapan takhtaMu,
'ku tinggikan Kau
Memohon perlindungan
di sepanjang hari
Semoga diselamatkan.

Ref.
KasihMu Bapa ajarku mengerti
Untuk memahami pengorbananMu,
Kau sahabat dan aku mencintaiMu
Ajarlah 'ku taat padaMu.

2.
KasihMu Bapa mengajarku mengerti
memahami pengorbananMu bagiku
kaulah sahabatku,
Engkaulah yang 'ku cinta
ajarku taat padaMu.

When I Awake

1.
When I awoke
I prostrated myself,
Before your throne,
I exalt you
I ask for protection
all day long
Hopefully [I am] saved.

Ref.
Your love, Father, teach me to understand
To understand your sacrifice,
You are my friend and I love you
Teach me to obey you.

2.
Your love, Father, teaches me to understand
Understand your sacrifice for me
You're my best friend,
you're the one I love
teach me to obey you.

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[26] All English translations of NNBT songs in this paper are my own.

These songs embody a more personal relationship with God. Nine songs fit this category; notably, two are pop and none are local style.

In the top middle of Figure 4 is one song, NNBT1-9. I placed this song here because it speaks to God, but the lyrics switch between an individual and group orientation.

4.1.4 The Vertical–Group Quadrant

The top right quadrant of Figure 4 is vertical–group: songs directed toward God and sung from a communal perspective. The following example is NNBT1-17, one of the local-style songs (*maengket*). The central "trio" section could be labeled horizontally oriented, but the song focuses primarily on singing to the Lord (vertical). The section could also be interpreted as directly addressing God, using indirect terms. As with many songs, the orientation is mixed and not always exclusive.

NNBT1-17 "Ya Tuhan, Tuhan Kami" with English Translation

Ya Tuhan, Tuhan Kami	**Oh God, Our God**
1.	**1.**
Ya Tuhan, Tuhan kami,	Oh God, our God,
betapa mulia namaMu. (2x)	how glorious is your name. (2x)
KeagunganMu, Tuhan,	Your majesty, Lord,
dinyanyikan bangsa-bangsa. (2x)	sung by the nations. (2x)
Trio.	**Trio.**
Apakah manusia	What is humankind
sehingga Tuhan ciptakan	That [the] Lord created [them]
Makhluk yang termulia	The supreme creation
segambar dengan Pencipta	is in the image of [the] Creator
2.	**2.**
Langit dan cakrawala,	Sky and firmament,
bulan bintang ciptaanMu. (2x)	[the] moon and stars [are] your creation. (2x)
Kambing domba dan lembu,	Sheep and cattle,
juga binatang di padang. (2x)	also the animals in the field. (2x)

This song closely mirrors Psalm 8 (acknowledged in the song credits), adding a mental connection with scripture to the cultural associations of the musical style.

In the right middle of Figure 4 are six songs sung from the group perspective, which switch within the song between singing to God and one another and thus were placed in the overlap.

4.1.5 The Horizontal–Group Quadrant

The bottom right quadrant of the figure is the largest, with a horizontal–group focus. The following example, NNBT1-19, is another local-style song, a *masamper*.[27] This song is clearly horizontally oriented. Categorizing this song as group-oriented, however, also requires an understanding of the musical style, demonstrating the

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[27] An audio example of this song can be found at http://www.bibleforandroid.com/NNBT/19. For additional reference, a popular Christian *masamper* outside the NNBT, "Bersyukurlah," can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9bhyCgo_Bo.

importance of the musical-language concept. *Masamper* would not be sung as a solo and is often an interactive singing experience, meaning that even though the text alone is ambiguous, musical-language reveals the group-oriented nature of this song.

NNBT1-19 "Allah Besar Agung NamaNya" with English Translation

Allah Besar Agung NamaNya	**God is Great, Great is His Name**
1.	**1.**
Allah besar agung namaNya,	God is great, great is his name,
pujilah Dia segala bangsa.	praise him all nations.
Bernyanyilah dan bermazmurlah,	Sing and sing psalms,
angkat pujian bagi namaNya	raise up praise to his name.
Allah besar agung namaNya,	God is great in his name,
terpujilah Dia selamanya	praised be him forever
Ref.	**Ref.**
Allah besar, Allah besar,	God is Great, God is great,
Allah besar agung namaNya	God is great [and] great is his name.
2.	**2.**
Allah besar Maha kuasa,	God [is the] great almighty,
pujilah Dia hai s'luruh dunia	praise him, O all the world.
Masyhurkanlah keagunganNya,	Praise his majesty,
sungguh besar kemuliaanNya.	great is his glory.
Terpujilah Allah di sorga	Praise God in heaven
sebab besar kasih setiaNya.	because great is his loyal love (faithfulness).
3.	**3.**
Allah t'lah datang ke dunia,	God has come into the world,
menebus dosa umat manusia	[to] atone for humankind's sins.
Di Betlehem tempat lahirNya,	Bethlehem is where he was born,
dalam palungan yang amat hina.	in a very lowly manger.
Sambutlah jurus'lamat kita,	Welcome our savior,
membawa damai dan sejahtera	bringer of peace and prosperity.

At the bottom of Figure 4 is NNBT1-33, sung to one another, which switches between the individual and group perspectives within the lyrics.

4.1.6 The Horizontal–Individual Quadrant

The bottom left quadrant of Figure 4, horizontal–individual, is empty. When considered within the broader context of the lyrics and from the perspective of musical-language, personal pronoun usage leans toward a group focus. No songs in the NNBT are clearly and exclusively sung from the individual perspective to others. Two songs (NNBT1-34 and 46) are sung from the individual perspective but switch between speaking to God and others and thus are placed on the axis.

4.1.7 Conclusions

NNBT shows a clear preference for group worship versus individual, reflected in the terms of address and the songs' themes. Figure 4 shows a substantial emphasis on collectivity and togetherness. Singing to one another about God or how to respond to God (horizontal worship) is also common. The notable exception is that the individualistic songs are almost exclusively vertically oriented. However, twenty-six out of forty-six songs include at least a partial horizontal–group focus.

Honor and shame, alongside patronage, are important Minahasan cultural dynamics. These concepts contribute to an increased emphasis on the group, and this analysis revealed how NNBT aligns with this cultural milieu. When analyzing the music alone, we could view many performance features of NNBT as imported Western hymnody. However, the horizontal and group orientations, reinforced by musical-language, point to an underlying continuity between NNBT and the surrounding culture.

4.2 The Focus on Sin: Confession and Forgiveness

Following the honor–shame theme above, sin emerged as a significant topic in NNBT, also reflected in GMIM's liturgy and local theology. Reformed worship traditions typically include confession in their liturgy, and GMIM is no exception; however, the analysis of NNBT points to an extra emphasis in this area.

4.2.1 Confession, Forgiveness, and the GMIM Liturgy

NNBT songs appear throughout the liturgy; Table 2 presents the frequency of NNBT song usage in liturgical functions as recommended by MTPJ for the years 2019–2022.

Table 2. Frequency of NNBT usage by liturgical section in MTPJ 2019–2022.

Liturgical Function of NNBT (as designated by MTPJ)	Frequency in MTPJ
Confession	51
Call to Worship	49
Pronunciation of Grace/Forgiveness	36
Closing	36
Scripture Reading	36
Offering	26

Other less frequent functions include general praise, singing a creed, and reading the law. Of note is the division of confession into two categories of songs in Table 2: songs functioning as *confession* and *pronunciation of grace/forgiveness* combined become eighty-seven total uses of the NNBT under this theme.

Coding and analysis revealed this topic as a significant emphasis within the NNBT songs, in addition to its other liturgical uses. It is also referred to in some of the introductory material for the NNBT (particularly the second edition), implying that some songs were created to fill this liturgical need in the church.

Ten NNBT songs (NNBT1-8, 10–12, 23, 27, 29, 31–32, 36) were recommended for singing during the liturgical time of confession within the MTPJ during the three years analyzed in this research. NNBT1-8, 10, and 11 are songs explicitly written for confession. NNBT1-18 is the Lord's Prayer, which, while not listed in the above MTPJ recommendations, includes the confession of sin within that prayer. Other songs also refer to sin and describe forgiveness, redemption, and freedom from it.

4.2.2 Horizontal and Group Orientations

In NNBT, confession is mainly a group activity, as shown in the Sankey diagram in Figure 6. The diagram displays all the parts of the GMIM liturgy and their orientation toward group or individual songs within the NNBT. Much of the confession in NNBT is oriented toward the group. "We" confess our sins to God.
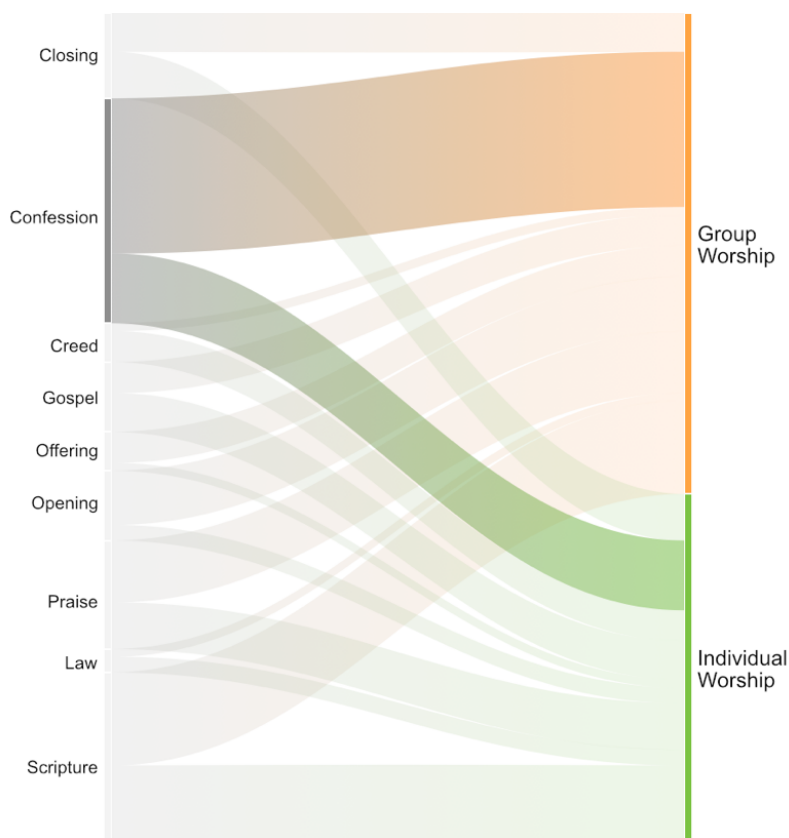

Figure 6. NNBT for confession in the GMIM liturgy tends toward group worship.

A slight bias toward vertical worship is visible in Figure 7, but I was surprised by the near equality with horizontal worship: singing about forgiveness to one another. The Sankey chart in Figure 7 displays the directional split between singing about confession and forgiveness to one another versus to the divine.
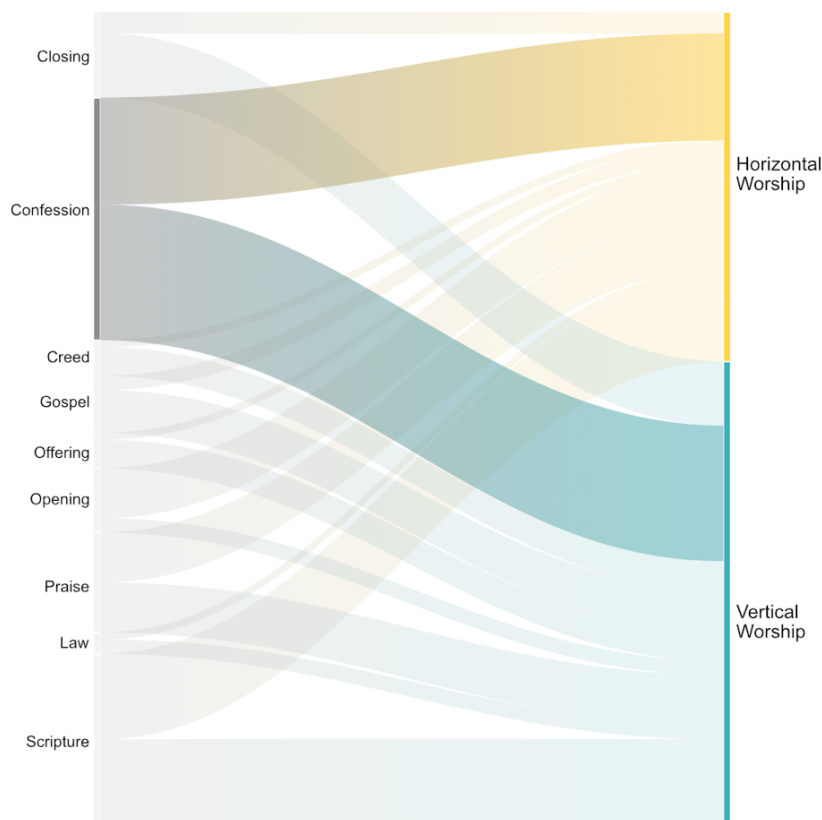
Figure 7. Confession is frequently sung about to one another and God.

NNBT1-8 is an example of a primarily horizontal song, which sings about forgiveness (horizontally) for three verses before switching to address Jesus (vertically) in the final verse.

NNBT1-8 "Banyak Orang Suka Diampuni" with English Translation

Banyak Orang Suka Diampuni	Many People Like to Be Forgiven
1. Banyak orang suka diampuni, tapi tidak rela mengampuni Tak berguna mohon pengampunan, jika kita mengeraskan hati	**1.** Many people like to be forgiven, but are unwilling to forgive It is useless to ask for forgiveness if we harden our hearts
2. Tapi Yesus Tuhan Maha kasih, mengampuni orang yang berdosa Jika kita ampuni sesama, kitapun akan diampuniNya.	**2.** But Jesus, the Lord of love, forgives sinners If we forgive others, we too will be forgiven by him.

3.	3.
Wujudkan kasihmu dengan sungguh,	Truly show your love,
untuk mengampuni yang bersalah	to forgive the guilty
Kar'na Allah adalah kasih,	Since God is love,
kasih itu juga mengampuni	love also forgives

4.	4.
T'rima kasih kepadaMu Yesus,	Thanks to you, Jesus,
atas anug'rahMu yang sempurna	for your perfect grace
Dosa-dosa kami diampuni,	Our sins are forgiven,
kamipun mau saling mengampuni.	we also want to forgive one another.

5. Connecting NNBT to the Broader Context: Creativity and the Status of GMIM

Local theologizing represents one aspect of creativity within GMIM, and this analysis explores many of those ideas and demonstrates the close alignment of many of NNBT's theological concepts with local Minahasan cultural values. But though prefaces and interviews mentioned theology, few specifics emerged about what was meant, and the interviewees did not discuss the theological content of the songs. One professor commented that many NNBT songs seem easy to learn but lack depth of meaning (C 2023). They feel NNBT does not have the same impact as other songbooks, and sometimes people have difficulty relating to the songs. NNBT1-32 was mentioned as an example: the first line translates as "The world is getting foggier, the darkness is scary." This professor described themselves as optimistic and felt this song was inappropriate and unrelatable; people did not perceive the world becoming worse and more frightening.

Ideally, GMIM would create songs to "more richly form them in triune life in a way that remains integral to their context and tradition" (Taylor 2019, 24). NNBT would encourage a more robust congregational life, as the prefaces and interviews aspire to. However, sources de-emphasized any specifics about theology and formation. One professor (Sarimbangun 2023) said little about the theological content of the songs during interviews. His three main emphases were on the ability of GMIM to create a songbook and thus provide a creative outlet for talented musicians in the church, the status that publishing a songbook would bring to GMIM, and the contextualization issues in NNBT (namely that it is still heavily Western or imported in style). An NNBT songwriter confirmed those perceptions when describing what he understood as the primary purpose of NNBT: new songs written by GMIM musicians for use in GMIM worship (Pongoh and Mamuaja 2024).

In the analytical process, the significance of NNBT began to shift away from intended theologizing to other themes: a link emerged between status and creativity. More important than theological specifics and formation through worship was the status of GMIM as a church with the ability to create, publish, and use its own songbook. Over and above the importance of the songs' theological content is their mere existence as a realization of internal creative potential, raising GMIM to the status of other church denominations and organizations in Indonesia that have also published songbooks. The prefaces and introductory remarks in the three printed editions of NNBT also confirmed this. Unsurprisingly, they described the needs of GMIM but also focused on the necessity of local creativity and the issue of localization (identity and status).

For GMIM, theology and music have historically been imported, and GMIM created NNBT as a local response intended to assert their identity and creative ability. It accommodated creative musicians within the denomination

by providing a new expressive outlet. It aspired to prove that GMIM could create Christian songs at the level of other major churches in the country. Having NNBT did not mean GMIM did not sing from different sources, but it catalyzed the dormant potential within the denomination.[28] Even though NNBT might lack "local flavor," this does not damage its effectiveness as a status marker (and increased musical localization is something the soon-to-be-published NNBT2 hopes to resolve).

Roberta King (2019) notes the triad of symbol, story, and ritual as central to worldview. For her, worldview transformation requires re-symbolization, re-storiation, and re-ritualization (170). The domain of liturgy in GMIM (the nearly exclusive context in which NNBT is used) is full of historical and local symbolism. The acceptance of NNBT into the domain of GMIM worship means that the new, local songs are also now associated with other Christian rites: baptism, Eucharist, Christmas, Easter, and more.

 In addition to the gospel narrative contained within the liturgy, there is also the historical narrative of GMIM to consider (described in Section 2.3). The creation of NNBT was also an attempt to revitalize and rewrite the triad of symbol, story, and ritual. King writes, "Offering rival stories is one of the strongest ways to bring about such transformation" (170). While her ideas focus primarily on Christian witness and evangelism, they equally apply to this re-storying within GMIM: a "rival story" to reshape their identity. Another way of viewing the creativity of NNBT is to understand it as an effort by the GMIM leadership to re-symbolize, re-story, and re-ritualize the worship practices of the denomination.

Creativity often implies novelty and newness, but there is also a dynamic of stability and malleability in changing some things but not others to maintain a link to the past—that is, what if creativity is cautious and represents innovative ways of revitalizing what is old?[29] Csikszentmihalyi (2014) defines creativity as "an idea or product that is original, valued, and implemented" (326). Based on his systems model of creativity, we can evaluate NNBT as to whether it is a forgettable novelty or a successful creative act:

> Simply introducing novelty does not, of course, constitute an act of creativity. Many new ideas are generated every day and are quickly forgotten or ignored. To be creative, a variation must somehow be endorsed by the field: a group of experts entitled through their own accomplishments or position to decide what should or should not be included in the domain. The field is the social organization of the domain. It consists of gatekeepers—teachers, critics, editors, museum curators, agency directors, and foundation officers—whose role is to decide what should and should not be added to the existing set of knowledge and passed on to subsequent generations. (413)

NNBT represents creativity in several ways. At the smallest level, each new song (novelty) was accepted into the NNBT by GMIM (the field) for use in GMIM worship (the domain).[30] On a grander scale, the integration of

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[28] NNBT represents only one of around five or six regularly used songbooks in GMIM. Also, other churches do not typically sing NNBT; it is exclusive to GMIM and a unique part of their identity.

[29] According to Csikszentmihalyi, nothing is ever entirely new; it always builds on something from the domain. In this sense, there is always an element of the old within a creative act. Schrag describes his ideas about the stable–malleable dynamic, in which artistic expressions can be viewed through what must remain stable in performance and what can be changed (Schrag 2021). This idea uncovers how and where creativity occurs in an artistic performance. Optimal Distinctiveness theory explores how communities (applied here to creative acts) find the Goldilocks-like balance between being just different enough to stand out while still being similar enough to others to remain acceptable (Leonardelli, Pickett, and Brewer 2010).

[30] We could also consider the field to be GMIM congregants who will choose whether or not they will use NNBT songs and

NNBT as a songbook into the liturgical worship of GMIM is evidence of its success and acceptability and, therefore, its status as creativity, contributing to the domain. The field of gatekeepers integrated the novel NNBT into the domain of GMIM's worship practices. In a final, more intriguing sense, NNBT is a creative element in a movement of re-symbolizing, re-storying, and re-ritualizing within GMIM—but in this sense, there is a subtle conservatism in which the field is endorsing something not entirely new to the domain: a hybridized process of localization as the church refines its identity. The individual songs may not be very novel, but NNBT as a songbook is.[31]

Ingalls, Reigersberg, and Sherinian (2018) note the importance of a broader, nuanced perspective toward change and identity with their helpful term "musical localization." They consider the role of local agency in that process: "Rather than viewing instances of rupture or the adoption of new styles precisely because they are perceived as 'foreign' as signs of local subjugation to hegemonic forces, many of our contributors interpret them as contextualized evidence of local agency" (13). In agreement with them, I view the creativity represented by NNBT as evidence not of continuing neocolonial pressure but of an ongoing, revitalizing process of musical localization within GMIM. While creativity might be seen to imply only newness, here, musical localization is a cautious, conservative creativity, re-expressing the old in new ways.

For GMIM, this creativity is closely linked to status and distinctiveness; creativity is an assertion of identity. The narrative of GMIM as a robust and creative church is strengthened through the publication of NNBT. Their local creativity is conservative, evidenced not primarily in the "new" local musical styles of NNBT1 but in the status it enhances and the localizing process it represents. While NNBT1 is a clear status marker, the forthcoming NNBT2—expected to include more local-style music—is anticipated to be an improvement. NNBT1, as an act of creativity, has raised GMIM's status, and NNBT2 is intended to continue strengthening and communicating GMIM's Minahasan cultural identity. Ingalls et al. describe how musical localization is "inherently relational; through it, a community positions itself in historical and cultural relationship with—not just distinction from— often multiple others" (14). The system of creativity within GMIM intertwined with the process of musical localization generates a process in which the church redefines its identity and asserts its agency to situate itself in regional, national, and global Christian contexts. Viewed in this way, musical localization is a different kind of novelty. It is not the field pushing the domain forward through the acceptance of novelty but rather revitalizing the existing, stable contents of the domain to be expressed in new ways and for new purposes.

6. Conclusion

Hymnals like NNBT both reflect and revitalize worship practice and theology. They are not simply references but also living theology. They reiterate the past and reveal the present at the time of publication: NNBT reflects the history of GMIM and the current cultural context. Superficial observations by an outsider—especially considering the unfortunate negative bias frequently encountered toward colonially influenced artistic expressions—point to a dismissible songbook comprising imported Western-style hymns. The truth, however, is much more intriguing.

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accept them into the domain of worship. In this case, however, the focus of this research on NNBT as intended communication from GMIM's leadership identifies them as the field.

[31] The songs are new, but, as demonstrated by the analysis in Section 4, most of the songs are in older pseudo-Western musical styles (seemingly not very innovative). When viewing cultural creativity at this higher level, though, the boundaries of the systems model's ideas about novelty are forced to be malleable. The focus is less on the novelty of the individual songs and more on the novelty of the songbook as a whole.

This paper described the methodology and process of analyzing a songbook as intended communication. Based on grounded theory and through various frameworks, I examined the lexical and musical aspects of NNBT as a part of GMIM: it communicates something from the leadership about what they believe and how they desire congregants to behave. My qualitative analysis pointed toward collectiveness, both in trends toward group worship and horizontally singing to one another rather than only to God. Further analysis revealed the emphasis on sin through the themes of confession and forgiveness. All these themes link to significant Minahasan cultural values.

My analysis considered NNBT to be a localizing, creative expression made by the leadership of GMIM. It was—and remains—an act of local theologizing and dynamic, intended communication, but over that was the creativity visible in the process of musical localization. NNBT is much more than a songbook: it is a creative artifact of a local church denomination, actively influencing the status and identity of GMIM and defining the boundaries with other churches. The analysis proved enlightening and surprising, and the forthcoming NNBT2 will continue this process and provide a further unique perspective on the creative culture of GMIM.

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Appendix A: Abbreviations

GMIM: *Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa*, or the "Evangelical Christian Church of Minahasa."

NNBT1: *Nyanyikanlah Nyanyian Baru bagi Tuhan*, or "Sing a New Song to the Lord." It is the first songbook, published in three editions in 2002, 2010, and 2011. In this paper, it is also frequently referred to simply as "NNBT."

NNBT2: The upcoming second part of the original NNBT. It is unclear if it will include the fifty songs from the original NNBT and add to it or if it will be an all-new collection of songs. The publication is projected for mid-2023.

MTPJ: *Menjabarkan Trilogi Pembangunan Jemaat*, or "Describing the Trilogy of Congregational Development." This is the weekly publication of the GMIM synod office, which provides everything needed for the Sunday worship service, including songs.

UKIT: *Universitas Kristen Indonesia di Tomohon*, or "The Indonesian Christian University of Tomohon." The school is associated with GMIM, and the interviews for this analysis project were with theology professors from this school.