

## Preservation of Hui Musical Instruments from Ngada Regency, Flores, Nusa Tenggara Timur

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### ABSTRACT

**Keywords:**

Hui Music,  
Cultural Preservation,  
Traditional Musical  
Instruments

*This study discusses the preservation of traditional Hui musical instruments in Bena Village, Ngada Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, as an integral part of the cultural identity of the local community. Hui music plays an important role in traditional ceremonies, the transmission of cultural values, and the formation of social cohesion. However, modernization and the lack of regeneration of the younger generation are major challenges in maintaining its sustainability. This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach with data collection through literature studies and limited field observations. The results of the study indicate that the preservation of Hui music requires the active involvement of the local community through training, traditional festivals, and integration into formal and informal education. In addition, the use of digital technology in documentation and information dissemination is a potential strategy in maintaining the existence of this traditional music. The conclusion of this study emphasizes that the preservation of Hui musical instruments is not only relevant as a cultural effort, but also as a strategy for character education and cultural identity in the midst of globalization.*

### INTRODUCTION

The Traditional music plays a very important role in preserving culture around the world. As one of the most significant aspects of cultural heritage, traditional music reflects the cultural identity of a society, provides a picture that enriches social experiences, and serves as a means of connecting between generations. In Chrysty's research, it is explained that traditional arts such as music can act as an effective tool in building character and love for local culture (Chrysty, 2024). There is other empirical evidence that shows that the integration of traditional music into education can strengthen the awareness of the younger generation regarding the cultural values that exist in their society (Tambunan et al., 2024).

Traditional music functions not only as part of entertainment, but also as a medium to express cultural identity and arts education. Through music, society can pass on cultural values and traditions, thus indirectly supporting character education. This is also closely related to aesthetic learning that can shape individual perceptions of their art and culture (Susandi et al., 2023). In the context of Nusantara culture, for example, traditional music such as bamboo flutes and Beleq drums can be used to educate children about their cultural heritage. Research shows that traditional musical instruments, when taught in schools, can have a positive impact on children's emotional intelligence (Ardipal et al., 2023), and are an effective way to instill a love of local culture in the younger generation (Setyawan et al., 2020).

In the context of preserving traditional musical instruments such as Hui from Ngada Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, the importance of introducing these musical instruments in arts education is very crucial. The people in the area have rich traditions that need to be preserved and introduced to children as part of formal and informal education (Saputra et al., 2021). Research conducted by Setyawan et al. explains that extracurricular activities involving traditional musical instruments will strengthen children's interest and participation in preserving their culture (Setyawan et al., 2020). Thus, preserving

traditional music and its instruments is not only an effort to preserve cultural heritage, but also to build a strong foundation for the identity and character of future generations. In an effort to preserve local culture, UNESCO and the Indonesian government have taken various strategic steps. One of the initiatives taken is Law No. 5 of 2017 concerning the Advancement of Culture which supports cultural preservation through the recognition and protection of various intangible cultural heritages, including traditional music (Atsar, 2017). Through this law, it is hoped that there will be an increase in public awareness of the importance of preserving local music (Idris et al., 2020). This approach is not only in the form of regulation, but also creates opportunities for local communities to be involved in the preservation process, as found in research in the West Sumba area regarding the betel nut culture which is recognized as an intangible cultural heritage (Dwinanto et al., 2019). With an inclusive approach, the preservation of local music becomes more relevant to modern society.

Various studies have shown the effectiveness of community-based preservation activities in maintaining local identity. For example, efforts to preserve the angklung in West Java show how important the role of the community is in maintaining the sustainability of this traditional art (Crysti et al., 2024). On the other hand, the preservation of Arja art in Bali is an example of an innovation that combines traditional art with contemporary cultural values in the form of a cultural village (Adiaya et al., 2024). Research on cultural preservation programs in various regions shows that the success of these efforts often depends on the active participation and support of the younger generation (Rahmi et al., 2021; Persada et al., 2022). Thus, the importance of involving all levels of society in cultural preservation efforts, especially through education and socialization, is vital to ensure that local music not only survives but can also thrive in a modern context (Septa & Salim, 2021).

The diversity of culture and traditional music in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) is an important aspect in studying the richness of Indonesian culture. NTT is known for its diverse tribes and traditions that reflect the identity of each community group. Traditional music in this region not only functions as a medium of entertainment, but also as a means of communication and expression of social values. In a study by Kusumastuti et al., it was found that there was a shift in the cultural inheritance system from vertical transmission (intergenerational within the family) to horizontal transmission through social media and training, which created new dynamics in traditional art performances (Kusumastuti et al., 2021). The study also showed that the development of traditional arts such as Jaran Kepang can be divided into several types, including rituals, entertainment at weddings, and cultural festivals, which further enrich the portrait of cultural diversity in NTT.

Hui music, as one form of artistic expression in Bena Village, plays an important role in rituals, social identity, and cultural transmission of the community. This music is not only used in the context of religious rituals, but also in strengthening the identity of the Bena community group. In one study, it was revealed that Hui music functions as a social bond in cultural celebrations, supporting social cohesion among community members. In addition, Hui music also functions as a means of cultural education that is passed down from generation to generation, helping to maintain local values and traditions not only maintained, but also internalized in the daily lives of the Bena community. This shows that traditional music in NTT, especially Hui music, plays a central role in the process of preserving local culture amidst the increasingly strong current of globalization.

The traditional music practices of the Hui community in Bena Village, Ngada Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, show signs of decline due to rapid modernization. Modernization has brought about significant changes in people's lifestyles and cultural preferences, with many younger generations beginning to gravitate towards more global contemporary music trends, which are often considered more interesting and accessible than traditional music. This is in line with the findings revealed by Anwar et al. regarding the negative impacts of modernization on local culture, which emphasize that the lack of cultural adaptation in the face of technological advances and new lifestyles can lead to the loss of traditional arts and cultural practices (Anwar et al., 2023). In addition, as stated by Cahyani, this phenomenon of change can be seen as a form of neglect of cultural heritage that should be preserved, thus causing the community's identity to become increasingly blurred (Cahyani, 2023).

The lack of regeneration in Hui music activities also plays a significant role in the fading of this tradition. In many cases, the transition between generations of supporters of traditional music is broken, limiting the absorption of knowledge and skills. Research conducted by Darmayanti et al. illustrates that without proactive and interactive learning methods, children do not acquire the skills needed to continue the musical tradition (Darmayanti et al., 2022). The absence of supporting programs, such as courses or training involving the younger generation, further deepens the gap between the older and younger generations (Rosita et al., 2021). Adequate regeneration is key to maintaining tradition, and failure in this aspect can lead to the loss of authenticity and sustainability of Hui music.

Modernization affects not only individuals, but also the social structures that exist within the Hui music community. The new chapter in the global music industry shows that traditional music is often marginalized by pop music and other genres that are more in line with market tastes (Ruddin et al., 2022). With increasing connectivity through digital platforms and social media, this more modern music is gaining popularity that exceeds traditional music that is rich in meaning and history. Research by Tungkagi and Mokodongan highlights the importance of involving the younger generation in ritual practices to keep traditions alive; however, this is not well realized in Bena Village, adding to the challenges in efforts to preserve traditional Hui music (Tungkagi & Mokodongan, 2022).

Important as a cultural identity, efforts to document and implement Hui music in the educational curriculum are still very minimal. Research by Fikri shows the importance of preserving traditional musical instruments and their role in education to strengthen cultural identity in local communities, although the focus is mainly on the Beghu musical instrument in Nagakeo Regency, which is similar to the context in Flores (Fikri, 2025). Furthermore, a study by Khofsah et al. found that introducing local culture in early childhood education gave positive results in increasing students' awareness of cultural values, although this study focused on communities in Gresik Regency (Khofsah et al., 2023). However, in Bena Village, a similar approach has not been fully implemented, indicating a gap in integrating traditional music preservation into the educational process.

The lack of academic documentation and in-depth studies on Hui music further worsens the situation of cultural preservation. Research by Verawati et al. emphasizes the importance of developing learning tools to train students' critical thinking skills, which can also be applied to increase awareness of local culture in educational contexts

(Verawati et al., 2023). However, studies that focus specifically on Hui music in Bena Village are still lacking, creating a gap in the understanding and preservation of this traditional music. In addition, Maduriana and Gata emphasize the urgent need to integrate local wisdom into education to encourage cultural preservation, although their research focuses more on the conservation of biological resources based on local wisdom (Maduriana & Gata, 2021). These findings underline the importance of collaboration between educational institutions and the community to introduce and preserve Hui music in formal and informal education curricula, so that it not only functions as entertainment, but also as a means of regional identity and character.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach with an ethnographic orientation to explore the cultural and educational dimensions of Hui traditional music in Bena Village, Ngada Regency, East Nusa Tenggara. The study aims to understand the current state of Hui music practices, the challenges to its preservation, and the potential strategies for its revitalization through educational interventions and community involvement.

Data were collected using three primary techniques: (1) interviews, (2) participant observation, and (3) document analysis. Interviews were conducted with key cultural stakeholders in Bena Village, including traditional musicians, elders, community leaders, and local educators. These interviews aimed to gather insights into the traditional role of Hui music, generational transmission practices, and the community's perceptions regarding its future.

Participant observation was conducted during cultural ceremonies, informal music gatherings, and school-based cultural activities (where applicable) to observe how Hui music is performed, taught, and received by the younger generation. Document analysis included the review of local government cultural policies, previous academic studies, educational curricula, and community archives related to traditional music practices.

The study employed purposive sampling, selecting informants who are considered to have in-depth knowledge or direct involvement with Hui music practices. A total of 7 informants were engaged, including 5 traditional musicians and 2 cultural leaders.

Thematic analysis was used to process and interpret the data. The findings were categorized based on recurring themes such as: (1) the cultural function of Hui music, (2) intergenerational transmission challenges, (3) the impact of modernization, and (4) potential educational strategies for cultural preservation. NVivo software was utilized to support coding and data categorization.

To ensure the credibility and validity of findings, triangulation was applied by cross-verifying data from interviews, observations, and documents. In addition, member-checking was conducted by sharing preliminary findings with selected informants to ensure accuracy and alignment with local perspectives

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bena Village, located in Tiwuriwu Village, Ngada Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, has a strategic geographical position, with a fertile mountainous environment and rich in cultural traditions. Its geographical location on rocky land provides added value to its natural beauty and accessibility as a cultural tourism site. Bena has a unique cone-shaped

traditional house, which is a symbol of the cultural identity of the local community. Research conducted by Bata and Suryawan shows that Bena Village has developed ecotourism that focuses on environmental curiosity and local economic empowerment, which utilizes natural and cultural resources to attract tourists (Bata & Suryawan, 2022). Bena Village also has rich historical values, reflecting the heritage of ancestors that has been maintained from generation to generation, with traditional ceremonies and rituals that are still carried out today. The existence of this site is important for ethnographic and anthropological studies, and functions as a symbol of cultural resilience amidst modernization and the challenges of globalization (Bata & Suryawan, 2022).



**Gambar 1.** Strem Bass  
(Dok. Pribadi Kanzul 2025)

Hui music plays a very significant role in traditional ceremonies in Bena Village, Flores, as a medium of expression and a means of cultural communication. In a study conducted by Kadafi and Agustina, it was found that traditional musical instruments, such as drums and serune, not only function as accompaniment, but also as a spiritual link between the community and ancestors and transcendental powers that are believed to maintain harmony and ward off disasters (Kadafi & Agustina, 2022). Hui music, in this context, functions as a symbol of deep cultural identity, strengthening a sense of togetherness in the community, and as a means of remembering and honoring traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation.

Furthermore, the function of music in traditional ceremonies is not only limited to the spiritual aspect, but also creates a deep emotional nuance for the participants. In a study by Dua et al., it is explained that in the context of the Go Laba ceremony, music contributes to a sacred atmosphere and provides a magical feeling that directs the attention and participation of the community in ritual activities (Dua et al., 2021). Through the flowing melody, the people of Kampung Bena can feel an emotional closeness to the history and traditional values that are upheld, so that music becomes a bridge between the past and the present, and between individuals and their communities. Traditional Hui musical instruments are a rich representation of cultural heritage that combines lyrics and instruments to create a unique musical experience. The musical structure of Hui songs often consists of lyrics that describe daily life, folklore, or the deep philosophy of the Hui people. According to Rulyansah et al., the preservation of traditional musical instruments, such as the bamboo flute, shows the importance of the melody conveyed in the lyrics of the music, where extracurricular learning of this instrument is used as a means to introduce and preserve the traditional musical heritage

of Rulyansah et al. (2022). The results of the same study also showed that the use of lyrics rich in meaning can increase appreciation for culture, which proves that the components of lyrics and instruments in Hui music go hand in hand to express the cultural values of its people.

In addition to lyrics, the instruments used in Hui music also play a crucial role in building the overall musical structure. Traditional musical instruments such as strings and wind instruments have unique characteristics that give their own color to the presentation of Hui music. According to Kurniawan, wind instruments in this musical tradition have a close relationship with ecomusicology, which underlines the importance of sustainability between culture and nature Kurniawan (2023). Further research by Totuuk et al. underlines that the use of musical instruments in performances such as Batong shows how these instruments are not only melodic accompaniments, but also carry the social and cultural identity of the Hui community Totuuk et al. (2023). Thus, the harmony between the lyrical structure and the choice of traditional instruments creates a deep and evocative auditory experience, which is in line with the values and identities desired by the community.



**Gambar 2.** Exercise Time  
(Source: Youtube Veerle Vianney04)

The preservation efforts of traditional Hui musical instruments in Bena Village, Flores, rely heavily on community initiatives involving youth training and holding traditional festivals. This training is not only aimed at maintaining the skills of playing traditional musical instruments, but also at fostering a sense of love and appreciation for local culture among the younger generation. Traditional festivals serve as a forum to showcase learned skills, strengthen cultural identity and increase social cohesion among community members. Support from institutions such as the cultural office and traditional institutions is also a key factor in realizing these preservation programs. The existence of these institutions provides access to resources, funding and networks needed for the sustainability of preservation efforts. provides access to resources, funding and networks needed for the sustainability of preservation efforts.

In addition, digital and audiovisual documentation plays a significant role in the preservation of traditional Hui musical instruments. By utilizing modern technology, such as the development of applications and recording devices, information about musical instrument playing techniques and the cultural values contained therein can be disseminated more widely. This helps educate the younger generation and create greater awareness of the importance of preserving cultural diversity in Indonesia. Through this



documentation, traditional knowledge can be archived and easily accessed, thus facilitating collaboration between local communities and authorities in further preservation efforts (Mewengkang & Ngodu, 2023; Farhani et al., 2024).

## CONCLUSION

Hui traditional music in Bena Village, Ngada Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, serves as a vital form of cultural expression that reinforces social identity, community cohesion, and the transmission of local values across generations. However, the growing influence of modernization, the lack of cultural regeneration, and minimal integration into formal education have emerged as significant challenges to its preservation.

The findings of this study indicate that although there remains a strong appreciation for Hui music within the local community, the practice of intergenerational transmission is gradually weakening, particularly among younger generations. The absence of structured educational support, limited academic documentation, and the decline in community-based cultural activities contribute to the increasing vulnerability of this tradition.

Therefore, the preservation of Hui music requires not only community-based cultural efforts but also systematic integration into formal and informal education. Engaging the younger generation through extracurricular programs, traditional music training, and digital cultural content development can serve as effective strategies to ensure the sustainability of this heritage. Collaboration between local governments, educational institutions, cultural leaders, and researchers is essential to ensure that Hui music does not merely survive as a static cultural artifact, but continues to thrive as a dynamic expression of identity for the Bena community in the face of rapid globalization.

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