

The existence of faith's victory song in the congregation's sunday service at GKII Regional I Sulselbara



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ABSTRACT

The article investigates the evolution of Christian congregational worship, exploring the diverse musical landscape that includes psalms, hymns, and contemporary compositions. In the context of the Indonesian Gospel Tent Church (GKII), the "Nyanyayan Selamat Iman" (NKI), or "Victory of Faith Songs," stands out prominently, maintaining a significant role in Sunday worship. The study focuses on understanding the dynamics of NKI utilization within GKII Region 1, covering South Sulawesi and West Sulawesi. Specifically, it examines how NKI integrates into congregational worship practices amidst the rise of contemporary songs. Using a qualitative survey approach, the research delves into NKI's prevalence, significance, and contextual relevance in GKII Region 1. Data collection involves in-depth interviews with worship leaders and congregation members, along with an analysis of worship service recordings. Despite the influx of contemporary worship songs, the study uncovers a consistent demand for NKI within GKII's Region 1. Worship leaders and congregations stress the enduring spiritual and cultural significance of NKI in shaping the worship experience. The study concludes that NKI maintains a profound influence on GKII Region 1's worship practices, showcasing resilience amid changing musical preferences. Emphasizing the importance of preserving traditional hymns, the findings contribute valuable insights into the complex interplay between traditional hymns and contemporary worship songs in the Indonesian Christian context. The research serves as a foundation for future studies on the evolving landscape of religious musical practices.



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1. Introduction

The Victory of Faith Songbook, known as *Nyanyian Selamat Iman* (NKI), holds a central role as a congregational hymn within the Indonesian Evangelical Church (GKII). It is featured in various worship settings, including Sunday Worship (*Ibadah Minggu* or *Raya*), Household Worship (*Ibadah Rumah Tangga* or *Kefamilia*), Women's Fellowship Worship (*Ibadah Persekutuan Kaum Perempuan* or *Perkauan*), Men's Communion Worship (*Ibadah Persekutuan Pemuda Kaum* or *Perkaria*), and other ceremonial occasions. This diversity in usage underscores its significance within the GKII worship framework. The Songs of the Victory of Faith experienced a notable surge in popularity from the 1980s to the early 2000s, becoming a best-seller at the Kalam Hidup bookstore alongside the Bible. Currently, there are two circulating versions of the Victory of Faith Songbook within the congregation. One is a comprehensive volume featuring 304 songs with numerical notations designed for the four voices. The other is a condensed edition containing solely the lyrics of the 304 songs, complemented by an additional 18 spiritual songs that gained prominence in the 1980s. Despite originating in that

era, the Victory of Faith Songbook remains a cherished selection in the choir repertoire at GKII, affirming its enduring appeal sustained through collective memory. While the emergence of contemporary worship songs has marked the evolution of musical preferences in Sunday services, the Victory of Faith Songbook continues to maintain its resonance. Worship leaders and congregations highlight the enduring spiritual and cultural significance of NKI, emphasizing its integral role in shaping the worship experience at GKII. This study delves into the intricate dynamics of NKI utilization within GKII Region 1, spanning South Sulawesi and West Sulawesi, aiming to explore how NKI aligns with contemporary worship practices. Employing a qualitative survey approach, the research involves in-depth interviews with worship leaders and congregation members, coupled with an analysis of worship service recordings [1]. The findings reveal a sustained demand for NKI, underlining its resilience amidst evolving musical preferences, and advocating for the recognition and preservation of traditional hymns as indispensable elements of congregational worship.

1.1. Get to know GKII Region I Sulselbara

The establishment of the Indonesian Gospel Tent Church (GKII) traces its roots to the vision of Dr. Albert Benyamin Simpson, the founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, which served as the precursor to the Indonesian Gospel Tabernacle Church [2]. Dr. Simpson propagated the Fourfold Gospel, now embodied in the GKII logo, representing Jesus as the Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, and the coming King. R.A. Jaffray, inspired by Simpson's teachings, committed himself to missionary service after hearing him preach [3]. Subsequently, Jaffray attended the Simpson Bible School, later becoming a missionary to China. Simpson from New York played a pivotal role in the ordination and installation service of R.A. Jaffray on January 20, 1896 [4]. Jaffray's missionary journey extended beyond China, reaching Vietnam, Indonesia (Dutch East Indies islands), and Borneo (Kalimantan) in 1928 [5]. Settling in Makassar in September 1930, Jaffray made it a ministry base for spreading the Gospel in Indonesia [6]. The establishment of Kalam Hidup Magazine in October 1930 marked the inception of Kalam Hidup Publishing, evolving into Jaffray Theological College [6]. The first Gospel Tent Church formed in Makassar on May 15, 1932, and these entities collectively contributed to disseminating the Christian faith in Indonesia [7]. R.A. Jaffray, a Japanese prisoner, succumbed in a Japanese prison camp in Tana Toraja on July 29, 1945 [8]. The impact of A.B. Simpson's Fourfold Gospel doctrine and the evangelistic spirit of Dr. A.B. Simpson and Dr. R.A. Jaffray persist in Indonesia. In 2022, GKII is organized into 14 service regions, including Eastern Indonesia centered in Makassar. GKII Region 1 Sulselbara, part of Eastern Indonesia, spans Makassar, Mamasa, Mamuju, Polman, and Southeast Sulawesi, encompassing over 40 local churches. The diversity in geographical locations, cultural traditions, congregational backgrounds, economic conditions, and the pastors' backgrounds influence the worship atmosphere in local congregations [9]. The contemporary era, marked by advanced technology and internet accessibility, has enriched church worship and music, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic [10]. In adapting to the new normal, urban congregations, notably in Makassar, offer onsite worship for the healthy and online alternatives for the elderly and less healthy. This presents a challenge for local churches to craft practical worship services catering to all age groups. The inquiry arises: "Is there continued demand for the Victory of Faith Song, and does it still hold a place in Sunday Worship at GKII Region 1 Sulselbara?"

1.2. Get to know NKI as the GKII Congregation Songbook

In general, the songs in the "Hymns of the Victory of Faith" (NKI) book are translations from the "Hymns of the Christian Life" (HCL) published by Christian Publication, Inc. The structure of the NKI book closely mirrors that of the HCL book. Some songs are in prose, while others are in poetry. Translating from English into Indonesian is a challenging process, especially to maintain the poetic form of the songs. Consequently, certain song lyrics incorporate Arabic words, such as NKI 1: "Ar-rahman Ar-rahim," meaning "loving - merciful"; NKI 119: "Hu," meaning He or God; and NKI 141: "to masyrik, to maghrib," meaning "to the east/towards the rising sun - to the west/towards the setting sun." These loan words may pose difficulty in comprehension, particularly for today's younger audience. Like most congregational songbooks, the NKI published by *Kalam Hidup*, a publisher under GKII, includes essential data: (1) Categories of congregational songs, (2) Names of congregational songs, (3) Poets, (4) Song composers, (5)

Copyright/rights ownership of songs, (6) Spiritual materials for worship, incorporating reading verses from the Bible based on specific themes. This section, including the Apostles' Creed, serves for personal or family reflection and can be used in the worship liturgy as Bible reading material. The songs in the NKI align with GKII's doctrine, adhering to the core teachings of the Fourfold Gospel. Drawing from Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, the apostle Paul urges believers to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to teach, admonish, and enrich one another in God's wisdom, ultimately glorifying God. Congregational songs can generally be categorized into three types: (1) Psalms (Psalm/Psalms), originating from the book of Psalms, sung with musical accompaniment, reflecting human freedom, trust in Allah, praise, and prayer, (2) Hymns/Songs of Praise (Hymns/Humnos), honoring God based on Greek literature, expressing experiences related to salvation and Christian teachings, (3) Spiritual songs (Ode), spontaneous individual expressions often conveying extraordinary experiences with God, sung solo with variations and improvisations. The songs in the NKI can be classified as hymns, as they discuss God, Christ, salvation, the Christian faith, Gospel preaching, and testimonies about God's love and goodness. Reynold & Price stress that hymns serve multiple functions: (1) Worship, allowing God to speak to His people and facilitating communication among believers. Some hymns function as prayers or calls to worship, (2) Evangelism, effectively conveying the Gospel to the unconverted and providing a means for them to respond to the message, (3) Educational, aiding in Sunday School, home Bible studies, and reinforcing Bible lessons, (4) Service, reminding believers of the need for engagement in service, (5) Fellowship, with many congregational song texts relating to the fellowship among believers [11].

The primary objective of this research is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted roles undertaken by the "Songs of the Victory of Faith" within the contemporary context of the Gospel Tabernacle Church. The investigation aims to shed light on the evolving significance and functions that the Victory of Faith Songs book plays in the church's worship practices in the present era. By doing so, the research aspires to offer readers insights into the nuanced interplay between traditional hymns and the influx of contemporary songs, exploring how the Victory of Faith Songs book navigates and sustains its place amidst this dynamic musical landscape. A secondary objective of this study is to assess and establish the ongoing relevance of the "Victory of Faith Songs" book, especially considering the influx of contemporary songs that have become prominent in congregational Sunday services at GKII Region 1 in South Sulawesi. Through qualitative analysis and interviews with worship leaders and congregation members, the research aims to capture the prevailing sentiments and preferences regarding the use of Victory of Faith Songs within the diverse musical tapestry of GKII Region 1. Understanding the interplay between traditional and contemporary worship songs will contribute valuable insights into the evolving musical practices in the Indonesian Christian context. The ultimate goal of this research transcends the immediate context, aspiring to influence the residents of GKII across Indonesia, with a particular focus on Region 1 South Sulawesi. It seeks to inspire a deeper appreciation for the NKI book, encouraging individuals to recognize these high-quality songs as not only a cultural legacy but also a testament of faith passed down by the church founders. The research aims to foster a sense of responsibility among the GKII community to actively participate in preserving and cherishing the rich musical heritage embedded in the NKI book, ensuring its continuity for future generations of the church.

2. Method

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive methodology to comprehensively explore the current state of NKI book utilization in Sunday services within local churches in Region 1 of South Sulawesi. Qualitative descriptive methodology is an approach to research that focuses on providing an in-depth and detailed description of a phenomenon, situation, or context [12]. This methodology is particularly suitable for exploring the complexities and nuances of a subject, aiming to capture the depth and richness of experiences, perceptions, and behaviors [13]. In the context of the study on NKI book utilization in Sunday services within local churches in Region 1 of South Sulawesi. Data was gathered through a combination of observation and structured interviews involving 23 congregational pastors strategically selected as key informants to ensure a comprehensive understanding. The combination of observation and structured

interviews in research involves using both qualitative data collection methods to gather comprehensive and nuanced insights into the studied phenomenon [14]. These pastors collectively represented half of the local churches, offering a balanced cross-section of the diverse congregations, including both urban and rural settings. The careful selection of pastors aims to capture a holistic view of the practices and dynamics within the entire range of existing congregations. The data collection process prioritized direct interactions with pastors due to their roles as primary conduits of information regarding congregational worship practices. Structured interviews facilitated in-depth insights into the pastors' perspectives, experiences, and observations concerning the use of NKI books in Sunday services. This method not only provides qualitative richness but also ensures a focused exploration of the key aspects related to the research objectives [15]. Furthermore, the research design incorporates a temporal dimension [16], by emphasizing phenomena that have transpired over the past five years. This temporal scope allows for an exploration of changes, trends, and evolving practices, providing a nuanced understanding of the dynamic nature of congregational worship and the role of NKI books within this timeframe. In addition to primary data collection, literature studies have been employed as a crucial auxiliary tool [17]. The literature review serves as a theoretical framework [18], offering insights into existing knowledge and scholarly perspectives and contextualizing the study within the broader academic discourse on congregational worship and hymnals [19]. The integration of literature studies enriches the research with theoretical foundations and informs the analysis of empirical findings [20]. In summary, the combination of observation, structured interviews with key informants, a focus on temporal dynamics, and a robust theoretical foundation through literature studies collectively constitute a comprehensive research methodology aimed at providing a thorough and insightful examination of the utilization of NKI books in the congregational worship practices of local churches in Region 1 of South Sulawesi.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Need for the Victory of Faith Songbook

Amid technological advancements, contemporary urban congregations increasingly prefer practical approaches to worship. The utilization of LCD screens to project song lyrics during Sunday worship is a prudent choice. This not only enhances visibility for the entire congregation but also contributes to cost savings, as it eliminates the need to purchase physical NKI books. Approximately 40% of local churches have embraced this technology, with a majority located in the city of Makassar. However, the integration of LCDs does not diminish the importance of NKI books, as worship leaders and musicians still require physical copies containing essential sheet music. The remaining 60% of local congregations, predominantly in the Mamasa, Mamuju, Polman, and Southeast Sulawesi areas, have not yet adopted LCDs. In these regions, physical NKI books remain indispensable, particularly for older members who may not use smartphones like the younger generation. The interview results yielded intriguing findings. The data revealed that 88% of local GKII congregations in Region 1 South Sulawesi incorporate songs from NKI in their Sunday services, although some only include at least one NKI song. The remaining 12% of congregations that infrequently use NKI songs include those recently affiliated with GKII and congregations predominantly composed of younger members. Among congregations that steadfastly incorporate NKI songs, 17% exclusively use NKI songs during the first Sunday Worship Service, while the comparative percentage of NKI and contemporary songs during regular Sunday Worship is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparative percentage of NKI and contemporary songs

Percentage comparison		Percentage of local congregations
NKI songs	Contemporary songs	
80%	20%	4%
70%	30%	22%
60%	40%	39%
50%	50%	18%
40%	60%	9%
30%	70%	4%
20%	80%	4%

The data reveals a lack of uniformity or specific regulations governing the utilization of NKI songs in Sunday Worship. The incorporation of NKI songs in Sunday worship typically stems from decisions made during the General Congregation Meeting (RUJ), the highest decision-making body in the local congregation, convened once every three years. In addition to RUJ decisions, the role of the congregational pastor in guiding the congregation's use of NKI songs in worship is also noteworthy. Regarding the Bible reading verses at the back of the NKI book, integrated with songs numbered 305 to 348, it was observed that many congregational pastors, particularly outside the city of Makassar, are unaware of the function and existence of these Bible readings in the liturgy of congregational worship. In contrast, most local congregations opt for reading verses directly sourced from the Bible, adapted to the sermon theme, or based on notifications from the congregation's pastor. This assertion is substantiated by the outcomes of the author's interviews, indicating that 78% of local congregations abstain from using these integrated reading verses. Only 22% of local congregations still incorporate them, contingent upon the preferences of the worship leader (WL).

3.2. Song of Victory of Faith and Liturgy of the GKII Congregation

GKII stands out for the absence of a standardized liturgy uniformly adopted across all churches in Indonesia. Local congregations are granted the autonomy to determine the liturgical structure of their worship services, a decision influenced by the RUJ's resolutions and, if applicable, the pastor's policies, especially when the pastor holds the role of the "founder" of the local congregation. This diversity is evident in various local congregations, particularly in the city of Makassar and the Mamasa area. Generally, the Sunday Service liturgy within congregations encompasses the following components: (1) Opening/invitation to worship, (2) Testimony space, (3) Proclamation of God's Word, (4) Offerings, (5) Congregational message, and (6) Closing. From the interviews conducted during the research, several key findings emerged. Firstly, concerning the total number of songs in the NKI, which is 304, it was revealed that 30% of local congregations are proficient in fewer than 25% of NKI songs, while 56% have mastery ranging from 25% to 50%. The remaining 19% of local congregations master NKI songs above 50% to 60%. Notably, the song "Only Jesus" from NKI 110 has gained significant popularity and is considered the "national anthem of GKII." This song encapsulates the essence of the Fourfold Gospel teaching by A.B. Simpson, the founder of C & MA, which paved the way for GKII. While NKI contains multiple songs by A.B. Simpson with profound doctrinal and spiritual meaning, not all are mastered and regularly sung in congregational Sunday services. Secondly, only 9% of local congregations in GKII Region 1 Sulsebara adhere to musical notation when singing, while the majority (91%) attempt to sing NKI songs according to notation. Both facts indicate a decline in the mastery of NKI songs within local congregations. Pastors from the Mamasa and Mamuju areas noted that their congregations predominantly learn NKI songs through audio, by listening to elders or other local GKII congregations. Additionally, learning from YouTube is a prevalent practice. The third fact underscores a shortage of clergy and church members proficient in reading numerical notation. [Table 2](#) presents the detailed data obtained from the research results.

Table 2. Research results

Percentage of the number of Servants of God and the Congregation who are able to read numerical notation	Percentage of Local Congregations
< 10%	48%
10% - 20%	22%
20% - 40%	13%
40% - 60 %	13%
60% <	4%

Certainly, this limitation hinders the congregation from acquiring new songs. In the NKI book, numerous songs brim with profound spiritual teachings crucial for the congregation's faith growth. Consequently, the congregation tends to sing the same songs in Sunday Worship or only their local favorites. Fourthly, 91% of local congregations have incorporated NKI songs into their Sunday worship liturgy, fitting seamlessly into their context. This underscores the vital role of congregational pastors or Servants of God/workers who comprehend liturgy in

guiding worship leaders to select and determine NKI songs. Moreover, the NKI book's table of contents, organized by themes or song categories, serves as a valuable reference for song selection. Fifthly, 87% of interviewed respondents conveyed that the congregation struggles to grasp the meaning of loanwords from Arabic present in several NKI songs. Examples include "Mukhalis" (NKI 82, 240) denoting Savior/Jesus Christ, "Alif" (NKI 159) representing the initial/first Arabic alphabet, and "Hu" (NKI 299) signifying You/God. Many such words pose difficulty for the congregation unless preemptively explained by the congregation's pastor. Recognizing this challenge, Kalam Hidup has introduced a "Dictionary" at the back of the NKI book, elucidating loanwords or complex terms for congregational understanding. This solution proves beneficial for all GKII congregations that cherish NKI songs. Lastly, while overall respondents affirmed the congregation's sustained enthusiasm for NKI songs in Sunday Worship, 26% of congregational pastors candidly admitted that the GKII youth in Region 1 of South Sulawesi exhibit a preference for contemporary songs. The rationale cited is that contemporary songs are easier to learn, memorize, and evoke deeper emotions, resonating more with the souls of young people. Recognizing this trend, the role of church musicians becomes crucial in adapting NKI songs to a contemporary style, ensuring both the lyrical and musical aspects are appreciated, guiding the congregation to offer praise as an authentic expression of their hearts and worship to God.

4. Conclusion

In the growth of the congregation within the Indonesian Gospel Tent Church's purview, the Victory of Faith Songbook has played a multifaceted role, serving as a medium for worship, evangelism, education, service, and fellowship. For GKII residents, the NKI cannot be dissociated from the Bible. Several years ago, a Bible was printed, equipped with the NKI, paralleling the Bible with the Song of the Congregation. Despite the emergence of contemporary songs by various spiritual artists, which have garnered attention among GKII youth and are utilized alongside NKI songs, for the senior group or those aged over fifty, songs from NKI remain favorites and continue to be popular in Sunday Congregational Worship. In conclusion, the author observes that firstly, songs from NKI retain a significant place in the congregation's Sunday Worship and endure in the hearts of GKII residents in Region 1 South Sulawesi, particularly among the "senior group," who are more familiar with NKI song lyrics. Secondly, the lack of proficiency in reading numerical notation among God's servants and congregants has led to a limited repertoire of mastered NKI songs and the challenge of learning quality songs rich in spiritual teachings. Thirdly, the incorporation of NKI songs into the congregation's Sunday worship liturgy is inseparable from the pastor's role in motivating and directing church musicians to actively engage in using and producing musical accompaniments or arrangements for NKI songs while considering the soul of the song. Considering the field situation post-research, the author hopes the younger generation of GKII will continue to cherish NKI songs, singing them not only in the congregation's Sunday Service but also in other worship services. Appreciating NKI songs involves producing creative musical accompaniments to attract the interest of young people. Secondly, the church, led by the pastor and the Congregation Management Body or Council, should encourage the congregation to learn the "new" songs in NKI, collaborating with local congregation musicians. Thirdly, by learning NKI songs according to notation, the congregation is expected to sing each song well according to its spirit, making NKI songs more interesting and sung with enthusiasm. This ensures that NKI songs are not merely sung because of provisions from the pastor and BPJ but because the lyrics' meaning is understood, impacting the congregation. Finally, the author encourages readers, especially GKII residents, not to be excessively fanatical about NKI songs without understanding the lyrics' meaning. Genuine love for NKI involves attempting to comprehend every lyric, embodying the teachings of the songs, and offering them to God as a holy and pleasing offering, recognizing that hymns are essentially sung sermons. Additionally, it is essential to remember that God reigns over the praise of His people.

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