

Indonesia: Javanese Gamelan Music

Gamelan Outreach Project
Center for South East Asian Studies
University of Michigan

Prepared by: Dr. Vera H. Flaig



Indonesia

- Consists of an archipelago of several thousand islands of which Java is the largest.
- During colonial times Indonesia was known as the Dutch East Indies
- Consists of many diverse languages and cultures.
- The development of a common national language “Indonesian” made it possible to build the unity needed to win the revolution against the Dutch (1945-1949).
- Major religions include: Hindu/Buddhism; Islam; and Christianity.



Gamelan Tuning and Modes

Laras (tuning system)

Slendro: a five-note (pentatonic) tuning

Pélog: a seven-note tuning

Pathet (Modes)*

Slendro Nem

Pélog Nem

Slendro Sanga

Pélog Lima

Slendro Manyura

Pélog Barang

*Modes correspond to Wayang Kulit performance:

Nem from 9:00 PM to Midnight;

Sanga from Midnight to 3:00 AM;

Manyura from 3:00 AM to 6:00 AM.

Gamelan Musical Structure

- Colotomic Structure: based upon a circular perception of time.
- Reflects the persistence of Hindu-Buddhist conceptions of time introduced to Java during the first millennium C.E.
- All instruments in the gamelan must play important structural or “auspicious” notes together. These “coincidences” carry important meaning in Javanese culture.

Gamelan Musical Structure

- The sounding of the *gong agung* with the *kenong* marks the musical instance of the greatest weight or importance. It is at this point that the *gendhing* may begin or end.
- Lesser points of coincidence also exist (listed in order of importance):

Kenong stroke

kethuk stroke

Kempul stroke

Gamelan Texture

Three layers:

Structural: gong and kenong as well as kethuk/kempyang

Balungan: basic melodic content

Elaboration: realizes “inner melody”

Sarons: Balungan Instruments



Saron Panarus or "Peking"



Saron Barung



Demung

Punctuating Instruments



Gong Agung & Siyem

Kempul



Kenong

Punctuating and Time Keeping Instruments

Kethuk



Kempyang



Kendhang

(Played by the conductor of the gamelan Orchestra)

Elaborating Instruments: Melodic Leaders of the Gamelan



Bonang Barung and Bonang Panarus



Rebab

“Soft-Style” Elaborating Instruments



Gender (three tunings)



Four Sulings (different tunings)

Gambang



Lancaran bubaran **Kembang Pacar**, laras pélog pathet nem Balungan Level: *Sarons*

Buka

5 3 5 • 2 3 5 6 2 4 5 4 2 1 6 ⑤

Ompak

[3	6	3	5̂	3	6̂	3	5̂	3	6̂	3	5̂	6	5̂	3	2̂
	6	5	3	2̂	6	5̂	3	2̂	6	5̂	3	2̂	5	3̂	5	6̂
	2	1	2	6̂	2	1̂	2	6̂	2	1̂	2	6̂	3	5̂	3	2̂
	5	3	5	•	2	3̂	5	6̂	2	4̂	5	4̂	2	1̂	6	⑤

Lancaran bubaran **Kembang Pacar**, *IRAMA Level: Bonang Barung*

Kettles on bonang:

4	6	5	3	2	1	7
1	7	2	3	5	6	4

Bonang Playing in *Bubaran Kembang Pacar*:

balungan: 3 6 3 5 3 6 3 5 3 6 3 5 6 5 3 2

bonang: 3 6 3 6 3 5 3 5 3 6 3 6 3 5 3 5 3 6 3 6 3 5 3 5 6 5 3 5 6 . 6 .
2 2

balungan: 6 5 3 2 6 5 3 2 6 5 3 2 5 . 3 5 6

bonang: 6 5 3 5 6 . 6 . 6 5 3 5 6 . 6 . 6 5 3 5 6 . 6 . 5 3 5 3 6 6 6 .
2 2 2 2 2 2 6

balungan: 2 1 2 6 2 1 2 6 2 1 2 6 3 5 3 2

bonang: 2 1 2 1 5 6 1 6 2 1 2 1 5 6 1 6 2 1 2 1 6 6 6 . 3 3 3 . 2 2 2 .
6 3 2

balungan: 5 3 5 . 2 3 5 6 2 4 5 4 2 1 6 5

bonang: 5 3 5 3 5 5 5 . 2 3 2 3 5 6 5 6 2 4 2 4 5 4 5 4 2 1 2 1 6 5 3 5
5

