

## THE MUSIC OF THE SERIMPI "ANGLIR MENDUNG"

[Some musicological observations on Central Javanese ceremonial court dances.]

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### General

The basis for the author's observations is an uninterrupted tape-recording made in 1964 by Mr. N. Tirtaamidjaja in the Kraton of Surakarta during a full-length rehearsal of the serimpi "Anglir Mendung". Jaap Kunst in his Music in Java (The Hague, 1949), and other musicologists as well, rightly classify the music of both serimpi and bedaja dances under the same heading since these two classical ceremonial court dances have many musical elements in common that set them apart from other forms of Javanese dance and music. Yet there exist significant differences between them: both the origin and the associative function of the bedaja differ markedly from the serimpi. In fact they belong to different religious spheres, for an elucidation of which the reader is referred to the paper by Mr. N. Tirtaamidjaja in this issue of Indonesia. The present article is limited strictly to the musical aspects of these dances.

The preliminary character of these observations is indicated by the fact that the transcription below represents only a part (in the author's opinion the most characteristic part) of the complete dance, which contains successively: a) Introductory paṭetan played by the gambang, rebab and gender in the tonality of pélog paṭet barang. During this instrumental improvisation the 4 serimpi (dancers) appear between the columns of the pendapa. This instrumental paṭetan is brought to an end after 1 minute, to be followed after a short general pause by the next section; b) The choral section (sindèn) with only colotomic instrumental accompaniment, comprising 36 gong phrases, lasting 17 minutes. This section is represented in the transcription appended below; c) A second instrumental paṭetan, 40 seconds long, again in paṭet barang; d) A short vocal introduction (bawa) by the leading female singer (pasindèn); e) The gending proper, viz. ketawang "Anglir Mendung", played by the entire gamelan orchestra (however without the kemanak and only for the last part with the keprak), joined by the pasindèn and the female choir (gérongan). The duration of this section, during which the serimpi dance is continued, is 28 minutes; f) A short instrumental, improvised epilogue, played once again by gambang, gender and rebab. This ends the performance.

The transcription below is an attempt to reproduce the characteristic b section. The extremely slow speed, indicated in metronome numbers, is in accordance with the highly stylized, undulating movements of the four serimpi (or nine bedaja, for that matter). A slight, but important increase of tempo occurs, however, in the 24th gongan.

### The Text

Undoubtedly ancient, the text (in poetical Javanese) is sung in unison from a handwritten collection of copied texts, lying in front of the pasindèn. The version followed in this transcription is taken from the edition of Probohardjono.<sup>1</sup> It is in the matjapat form, the first two stanzas in the durma metre and runs as follows:

1. Anglir menḍung kang wadya-bala wus tata,  
anglar samja sumiwi,  
santana arampak,  
samja busana indah,  
nēka warna tinon asri,  
lir singa lodra,  
sadaja golong pipit.
2. Swara nata ingkang pangandika nata,  
Kangdjeng Sri Narapati,  
nitih rata retna,  
pangirid kuda hasta,  
binusanan murub adi,  
sunar gumbjar,  
prabanē anelahi.

### Minggah:

1. Tinon asri, enggih, kang mentas menang djurit,  
wong agung babo,  
wus pinastī dènira djumeneng Adji,  
suka kaduk luwih,  
wisikar nata ing bala,  
kang satrija mantjur kang tjahja awening,  
wong agung kang gawē mulja,  
tulusena mukti sari awibawa,  
tulusa suka wirjoa.

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1. R.Ng.S. Probohardjono, Primbon Langen Swara (Solo, Ratna, 1961): pp. 95-96. The poem is a fragment of a battle scene, probably from the Bratajuda Djajabinangun.

Translation:

1. Like dark storm-clouds the army stands arrayed,  
In wing-like formation, they pay homage together;  
The santana are all assembled,  
All in beautiful robes,  
Many-coloured, glorious to behold;  
Like rampant lions,  
All stand in close-set ranks.
2. The King's voice, the utterance of the King,  
His Majesty, the Ruler of the Realm (is heard),  
Mounted on his jewelled chariot,  
Drawn by eight horses.  
Clothed in glittering splendour,  
Sparkling light,  
His glorious emanation spreads its rays.

Glorious to behold indeed is He who has just won victory  
in battle,  
The great and mighty Ruler!  
His reign was foreordained in the order of things,  
His joy knows no bounds,  
He is named Lord of War;  
Like falling water the white radiance of his satrija  
sparkles,  
Great Prince, who makes sublime,  
Make perfect the fulfilment of power and might!  
Be perfect in happiness and valour!

The sung text, however, deviates on some points from Probahardjono's version, *viz.* in gongan 3 and 27 and in the second half of gongan 30. Furthermore, Probahardjono lists "Anglir Mendung" as a *bedaja* dance. The reason for these divergences may be that he makes use of a source apparently deriving from the Mangkunegaran.

Transcription

Only the first few bars have been transcribed in full instrumentation. Thereafter, it was not thought necessary to indicate the colotomic instruments (*viz.* the 2 kemanak, the gong, kenong, and ketuk) on separate lines; and the kemanak have even been omitted altogether, for the sake of surveyability. Their rhythmic pattern, played alternately by two musicians each with one single-tone kemanak, remains unchanged during the entire piece. A kemanak beat falls on each quaver like this:

[1] 2 1 2    [1] 2 1 2    [1] 2 1 2    [1] 2 1 2    [1] etc.  
 GN                    T                    O                    T                    N

The 'mute' kemanak clicks (i.e., the bracketed notes) structurally coincide with each of the other colotomic beats (G, T and N), in which case they are either drowned or not played at all. In such cases they are structurally unimportant and therefore transcribed with a quaver rest. However, when this 'mute' click coincides with the remaining colotomic beat, *viz.* the wela (i.e., 'rest', indicated by 'O' in the transcription), it is clearly audible and functional. Their tuning approximates respectively d sharp and e.

As indicated in the first line, the *keṭuk* does not limit itself to a single beat, but (with the exception of the very first beat which falls in the *bawa*) plays a tremolo at slow speed, now three, then four or even five notes. The *keṭuk* is tuned approximately to b flat.

The *kenong* never plays exactly on the beat, but slightly 'late'. This is a common feature of *kenong*-style in the performance of slow-speed Javanese ensemble music. In the present piece only one *kenong* is used, tuned approximately to f.

The *gong ageng* needs no further explanation. In the transcription G stands for *Gong*, N for *kenong*, T for *keṭuk*.

The *keprak*, a small rectangular wooden slit-drum akin to the Chinese wood-block, is never used in the actual performance of the ritual dances under discussion. It has become an increasingly indispensable tool during the rehearsals, as the dancers no longer possess an intimate familiarity with the tradition. Three different rhythmical motifs played on this little instrument with its penetrating, knocking sound, suffice for the dancers: (i) a quick, dotted two-note motif coinciding, e.g., with the *keṭuk* beats; (ii) a slow semiquaver motif of two notes, usually coinciding with the first beat of a measure, sometimes even played as slow as the first two notes of a triplet; (iii) the roll, or tremolo. The author has made two attempts at transcribing the *keprak* roll in gongs 1 and 5 to indicate graphically that, except for the first time, this roll is anticipated by four, dotted quick motifs succeeding each other with ever increasing speed, until this dotted motif makes place for a tremolo starting at high speed at first, but soon becoming gradually slower and slower, and ending with the two-note dotted motif. The effect is somewhat comparable to the rhythm of a bouncing ball, or rather a uniformly accelerated and retarded motion, performed with a sudden crescendo. The only comparable instance of such a rhythmic pattern known to the author is the Japanese drum roll named *shindo-byoshi*.

In the transcribed recording the keprak is played by R. Ng. Lebda pradangga, the learned kraton official who supervises the dances.

Only one drum is used in the Solonese serimpi and bedaja dances: the large kendang gending, played here by the kraton's leading musician, the aged R. Ng. Warsodiningrat. The drumming pattern, in conformity with the dance's colotomic structure (ketawang, i.e. 2 kenong and 4 ketuk for each gong) is named "kendangan gending," in Solo sometimes also called "Gadung-melati." Although the kendang has no definite pitch, the notes played vary strongly in pitch and tone color, hence the notation on three different pitch levels, one for each (type of) stroke. It should, moreover, be noted that the player in specific instances 'deviates' from the set standard pattern. In the ultimate measure of each gongan he always plays b . d tt b d t, and not the expected b t d t t b d t; the first ketukan is always played b.tt, instead of bttt; in the 2nd and 3rd measures the player usually omits the 2nd and 6th quavers when they are tong,<sup>2</sup> but these slight deviations are only differences in degree, not in quality. The kendang part from gong 27 onward (minggah) has been omitted from the transcription, partly to save space, but also because it follows the same pattern throughout, with no important changes, except for the penultimate measure where the usual closing pattern is played.

The rendition of the vocal part, sindèn, in Western staff notation proved to be very problematic, the main difficulty of course being that the various Javanese intervals cannot be molded properly into the rigid Western notation system. The author's compromise is as follows: the scale sequence of the notes:

bem-gulu-ḍaḍa-pélog-lima-nem-barang-bem-gulu, etc.,

has been conceived as a sequence of:

$\frac{1}{2}$  - 1 -  $1\frac{1}{2}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  - 1 - 1 -  $\frac{1}{2}$  - 1, etc., tones.

Such a sequence might be the nearest approximation to this non-European scale, none of whose intervals actually conforms to European intervals. The accelerando in gongan 24 introduces a musical feature which may be termed modulation. Until the ketuk preceding the 25th gong, the choir has been singing unmistakably in paṭet barang, but quite unexpectedly (apart from the increase in speed) the choir shifts, modulates, to paṭet

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2. Solonese terminology is used here, with the strokes named bem, dung and tong. See for further data the extensive section on Javanese drumming in J. Kunst, Music in Java (The Hague, 1949), pp. 202-212.

nem. The vocal line becomes livelier than before, the tessitura higher, and the singing more syllabic.

Modulation from one *patet* to another is not uncommon in Javanese music, but it might be labeled as characteristic of the unaccompanied choral singing which goes with *serimpi*- and *bedaja*- dances. Kunst makes mention of various forms of modulation.<sup>3</sup> However, a very fascinating peculiarity in this type of music is a method of transposition, referred to by Kunst only in passing, with regard to the music of the *Bedaja Ketawang*. He writes that not the choir, but the pitch of the *kemanak* seemed to change during a performance he once witnessed!

In his own words:

"... at another moment the pitch of the continuously beaten *kemanaks* appeared to have got lowered by a semitone, which impression could be given only if one felt the tonality of the melody as having been raised by a semitone. It will probably have to remain an impossibility to investigate these phenomena more closely, since the *Bedaya Ketawang* is so sacred that it is only very rarely performed in public . . . and will probably never be allowed to be recorded on a phonogram."<sup>4</sup>

However, the very *serimpi* under discussion, "*Anglir Mendung*", shows a similar feature. The tape-recording reveals that at certain points, usually on long, sustained notes, the singers very carefully lower these notes by a semitone in an almost imperceptible glissando. This striking peculiarity is indicated in the transcription by the replacement of the last part of the note in question by its neighboring lower semitone which has been linked to it by a wave line, a bow and the word *gliss(ando)*. In other instances, however, the transposition by a semitone is not effectuated by this smooth, imperceptible glissando but rather by a leap, after a long pause between two words which is filled in only by the tense sounds of the colotomic and agogic instruments, a pause long enough for the listener to forget the pitch of the preceding phrase.

In the beginning of the transcribed section these lowerings, transpositions, seem to occur with convenient regularity, *viz.* at the ultimate *ketuk* beat preceding every other gong beat, such as:

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3. Kunst, op.cit., pp. 91-100.

4. Kunst, op.cit., p. 100 n. 1.

Gongan 3, measure 4 (leap);  
 G.5, m.4 (leap);  
 G.7, m.4. But the line is continued less regularly there-  
 after;  
 G.8, m.3 (leap);  
 G.9, m.1-2;  
 G.11, m.4;  
 G.15, m.1;  
 G.16, m.3;  
 G.18, m.3;  
 G.23, m.1;  
 G.24, m.4 (leap) (the modulation);  
 G.26, m.1;  
 G.27, m.1;  
 G.30, m.1;  
 G.32, m.4 (leap);  
 G.34, m.2 (leap);  
 G.35, m.4 (leap);  
 G.36, m.1-2.

It seems justifiable to assume that this uncommon method of transposition, impossible to perform on instruments with a fixed pitch, is executed on purpose, and that it is ruled by a musical tradition inherent in serimpi- and bedaja music. In most cases the transposition leads the choir a semitone lower. A look at Gong 15 and its preceding measure, at which point a literal repetition of the entire section starts (G.1-9 = G.15-23), is a striking example of this procedure. In both instances the melody, in Solonese cipher notation, runs: 3 5 5 3 3 7 7. In the introductory bawa the pitch of 3 (dada) is e, whereas the same note, (3, dada) in G.14, m.4, sounds g sharp, which means a downward transposition of a sixth, reached step-wise, semitone for semitone. This shift of 'tonal center' must be what Kunst meant in the paragraph quoted above.

Kunst, in the same section of his book (p.100), refers to a modulation from pélog to sléndro vice versa, within the same piece (the Bedaja Ketawang). This very rare form of modulation, it should be noted in passing, does not occur exclusively in the Bedaja Ketawang. Although Kunst does not mention it, a comparison with other serimpi and bedaja pieces, reveals the same feature, only in a much lesser degree. For example, the Bedaja "Doradasih" contains chromatic transpositions of the kind described above, as well as a modulation from pélog to sléndro. The Serimpi "Angun-Angun" and "Sangupati" only feature chromatic transposition and modulation within the pélog tonality, with no modulation from pélog to sléndro. Perhaps the latter feature is characteristically reserved for the bedaja and does therefore not occur in serimpi music. Much systematic musicological research has to be done before a clear picture of the above-mentioned phenomena can be arrived at.

In the recording, the leading female singer is Njai Lurah Kudakara, seconded by two other female singers and one male singer, R.Ng. Warsodiningrat. (?)

The author abstains from further analysis until more data can be gathered on these highly revered, but rarely performed ritual dances at the Javanese courts. They may very well vanish forever within one generation. On the other hand both serimpi and bedaja dances, in pocket-size versions (lasting no more than a quarter of an hour, with the choral singing omitted altogether!), do now form part of the curriculum of the Jogjanes and Solonese Conservatories and Academies of Music and Dance.

A final note on the transcription ends these observations. To most students of Javanese music it may seem sheer sacrilege to put the gong and kenong on the first beat of every measure, contrary to Javanese notation custom, which usually places the gong (and therefore the kenong) beats at the end of the measure. The argument is traditionally that the final gong beat means the end, the ultimate resolution towards which all other instruments are striving. *Mutatis mutandis* this holds true also for the kenong beats, which themselves often anticipate what should follow. Placing the gong and kenong beats right after the bar-line, however, as is done usually in conventional Western staff notation with accented beats, does not change this fact at all. It has, on the contrary, the advantage of facilitating understanding among those students who have adopted the Western staff notation of non-western music as their standard. It has also another advantage, namely that it reveals more clearly the off-beat function of the ketuk in the total colotomic organization of Javanese gamelan music. While this is of no importance at all in the slow-speed ladrang, ketawang and gending forms where other instruments take over this off-beat role (*viz.* kemong and kempjang or, for that matter, the kemanak), the off-beat function of the ketuk and the kempul against the beat function of the gong and kenong becomes all the more apparent in quick pieces, like the lantjaran and srepegan forms.

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# SERINPI "ANGLIR MENDUNG"

Intro. (bawa), fem.solo voice. Mixed choir, (sindèn).

[♩ = 123 MM.]

ritenuto -

1. ANG- LIR MEN- DUNG

2. KEMANAK 1.2.

Kenong

Ketuk

Gong

Keprak

Kendang

tong  
bung  
bem

mf

f sempre

kang

wa - -

sempre

trem.

mute

3

5

8va b.

[♩ = 98]

2

GN

- dya

(a)

ba- la

(a)

wus ta-

3 GN T T N T T T

ta (a) (a) a

4 GN T T N T T T

- nq'a ar sa - m'ja (a) su - mi-

5 GN [72] T T N T T T

- wi,

6 GN T T N T T T

- ta na a - tra

Handwritten musical score for four systems, each labeled with a measure number and "GN". The notation includes treble and bass staves, various musical symbols (notes, rests, accidentals, dynamics), and lyrics in Indonesian.

**System 7:** Labeled "7 GN". Lyrics: -mpak, sa - mja bu - sa - na i- gliss. T

**System 8:** Labeled "8 GN". Lyrics: -ndah, ne- ka war trem. T

**System 9:** Labeled "9 GN". Lyrics: -na ti - non a T

**System 10:** Labeled "10 GN". Lyrics: Sri, é- T

11 GN [1=68] T

lir si- - nga lo- trem.

12 GN T

- dra sa- da-

13 GN T

- ja go- long pi-

14 GN T

- pit. 2. Swa-ra na- trem.

15 GN

g/135.

-ta

(a)

-ing-

kang

pa-

16 GN

T

T

N


gliss.

ndi-

ka na na

17 GN T N T T

ca- them. kram-

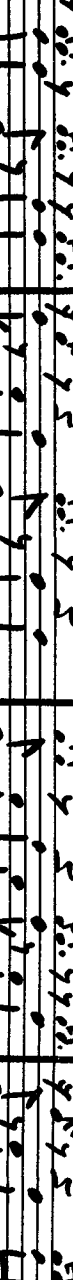


AGNUS DEI

Handwritten musical score for 'Agnus Dei' in D major, 3/4 time. The score is written on four staves. The first staff is for the vocal line, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (D major). The second staff is for the piano accompaniment, starting with a bass clef. The third and fourth staves are for the vocal line, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (D major). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p' (piano) and 'f' (forte). The title 'AGNUS DEI' is written at the top right of the first staff.

[illegible]

20 GN T ° T N T ° T



Handwritten musical score for guitar, numbered 20 GN. The score is written on a single staff with a treble clef. It consists of four measures. The first measure has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The second measure has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The third measure has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The fourth measure has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The notes are written in a stylized, handwritten manner. There are some markings above the staff, possibly indicating fingerings or techniques. The score is divided into four measures by vertical bar lines.

21 GN

na - pa - ngi - rid - ku - da nas - stem.

The musical score is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked 'Allegretto' and the time signature is 3/4. The score consists of 21 measures, grouped into four measures per line. The lyrics are written below the staff, with some words appearing above the staff in certain measures. The lyrics are: 'na - pa - ngi - rid - ku - da nas - stem.' The word 'nas' is written above the staff in the 18th measure, and 'stem.' is written above the staff in the 21st measure. The score ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

22 GN T T N To VI T

ta, bi - nu - sa - -

23 GN  $[^{\circ}72]$  T

giss. - nan (a) mu - rub a -

24 GN T

- di, (a=72) accelerando (a=84) su -

25 GN T

- nar gume- (ê) (ê) (ê) (ê)

26 GN T

(ê) -bjar, giss. pra-- ba - né a-ne - la -

27 <sup>GN</sup> <sup>MINGGAH</sup> <sup>T</sup> <sup>N</sup> <sup>T</sup> <sup>28</sup> <sup>GN</sup> <sup>T</sup>

- hi. (Tinon asri, enggih, kang mentas menang djurit, wong agung) ba-bo,

<sup>T</sup> <sup>N</sup> <sup>T</sup> <sup>trem.</sup> <sup>29</sup> <sup>GN</sup> <sup>T</sup> <sup>N</sup> <sup>T</sup>

wus pi-na-sti de-ni-ra dju-me-neng A-

<sup>N</sup> <sup>T</sup> <sup>30</sup> <sup>GN</sup> <sup>T</sup> <sup>N</sup> <sup>T</sup> <sup>N</sup> <sup>T</sup>

- dji, su - - ka ka - duk lu win, (...)

<sup>31</sup> <sup>GN</sup> <sup>T</sup> <sup>N</sup> <sup>T</sup> <sup>N</sup> <sup>T</sup> <sup>N</sup> <sup>T</sup>

wi - si-kar na - ta ing ba -



32 GN T N T N T GN 33 T GN

la, kang sa-tri-ja ma -

34 GN T N T GN T N T

- - - ntjur kang tjah-ja a-we- ning, wong

35 GN N T GN T N T

a - gung kang ga-we mul - ja, ritenuto - -

36 GN T GN T N T GN

tu-lu-se-na muk-ti sa - ri a-wi-ba - wa tu-lu-sa su - ka wir-jo- a.

Transcr. by E.H. after a tape rec.  
in the Kraton at Solo, 1964.

