

Balungan

by Rahayu Supanggah (translated by Marc Perlman)

Translator's Preface

In 1986, as I was conducting research toward my dissertation in Surakarta, Java, Supanggah gave me a copy of his original version of the present article. Recognizing its importance for my research, I asked for and received permission to translate it into English and to include it in my dissertation as an appendix. Supanggah also agreed to check the translation to make sure that it reflected his intentions as accurately as possible.

By early 1987 the translation was finished. As a result of my many minute questions, Supanggah had made several emendations, almost all on points of detail. (The only significant change was to the notation in figure 4.)

However, because it soon became apparent that my dissertation would not be completed in the near future, and because of the interest expressed in this translation by many Western students of *karawitan*, Supanggah agreed to publish it as a separate article.

Since this translation was intended as a supplement to my dissertation, where the ideas in it would receive extensive commentary, I did not supply extensive annotations. Therefore, to help the reader situate Supanggah's ideas in their context, I have added this prefatory note. In particular, Supanggah's claims that the notated balungan is not the "real" or "essential" balungan, and that the latter is not played by any one instrument, need to be read carefully. These ideas may strike some readers as identical to others that have been reported in the literature: notably, "inner melody" (Sumarsam 1976) and *lagu* (Sutton 1979). Indeed, readers may be puzzled to find that Supanggah uses neither of these terms.

Supanggah's omission of any mention of "inner melody" from this article is no doubt deliberate: he discusses it (and expresses his reservations about it) in his dissertation (1985). Suhardi's concept of *lagu*, and Sutton's article about it, were (I believe) unknown to Supanggah at

the time he wrote this article.

The main reason why these terms do not figure in Supanggah's article is surely that they are not immediately relevant to his ideas. First of all, these terms are not widely-known technical terms like *merong* or *ngelik*, with meanings familiar to all professional musicians. Secondly, it is not at all clear that the concepts they express form part of a traditional body of music theory, handed down through the oral tradition. Rather, these concepts are (at least in part) formulations of analytical insights by individual musicians. Working independently, these musicians have arrived at conceptions which are broadly similar, yet which differ significantly. How does this happen?

Various features of the melodic organization of *karawitan*, and the way it is traditionally learned, encourage the musician to postulate an "unplayed melody". The relationships between the melodic parts, as well as the partial melodic polarization of the ensemble around two axes (the rebab/voice and the bonang/saron) all suggest this. However, because of the differences in musicians' experiences and interests, not all musicians postulate such a melody; those that do ascribe rather different musical characteristics to it. I call all such ideas of unplayed melodies in *karawitan* "implicit-melody concepts".

Significantly, different musicians ascribe different epistemological status to their concepts of implicit melody. For some, their implicit melody is the essence of the *gendhing*; for others, it is a useful guide for the practicing musician, or simply a teaching tool. But it is important to recognize that, while the melodic organization of *karawitan* suggests the various implicit-melody concepts, nothing in it *demand*s them. A musician could learn to play all of the parts for all existing *gendhing* without postulating any unplayed melodies.

Consequently, the question of the "reality" of any implicit melody is complex, and too involved to be pursued here. Whether implicit melodies exist "in the music" or are analytical constructs; whether they are envisioned by the composer or exist "in the mind" of the performer, etc., are questions that must be addressed elsewhere.

It is clear, however, that we must not underestimate the extent to which these concepts are original contributions to the theory of *karawitan*. We must sometimes resist the temptation to treat musicians' statements as echoes of the anonymous voices of the past, or as representative samples

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of communal knowledge. In Javanese music theory as in Javanese music, distinguishing new from old is no simple matter. But we should at least study Supanggah's ideas carefully before we equate them with other musicians' concepts of implicit melody.

I hope this translation (and those in Becker and Feinstein [1984-87]) will help us hear the individual voices of Javanese musicians as they elaborate their theoretical ideas—a task in which they may achieve no more consensus than Western music theorists have managed. (MP)

[*Editor's note:* Throughout this paper, all translator's addenda and definitions are enclosed in square brackets. Parentheses indicate material that was parenthetical in the original manuscript.]

The term *balungan* almost always appears when we discuss karawitan, especially when we discuss its musical aspects. We also encounter this term in everyday life, as in the expressions "skeleton [*balungan*] of a living creature," "veins [*balungan*] of a leaf," "pit/pith [*balungan*] of fruits," "framework [*balungan*] of a house," "outline [*balungan*] of a shadow-play plot," as well as the *balungan* of *gendhing*. These *balungan* are all quite different: a living creature's skeleton is made up of bones; the framework of a house consists of beams of rigid materials (wood, bamboo, iron, steel, etc.) arranged to give the building its basic shape and to bear its weight. The outline of the plot of a shadow-puppet play consists of the sequence of scenes, the *dramatis personae* and their characters, the basic topic of the story and the broad outline of the events of the story, which will be developed by the *dalang* in performance. But the term "balungan" has nearly the same meaning in all of these cases: a framework, something which gives strength or basic shape, a foundation, a point of departure from which one can work. In what follows I shall discuss the term *balungan gendhing* in detail.

Balungan gendhing

The term "balungan" has at least two meanings in karawitan. The first we can identify, for now, as that of the framework of a *gendhing*; the second sense refers to a group of instruments (the *saron barung*, *saron demung*, *saron panerus*, *slenthem*, and *bonang panembung*). This group is perhaps so-called because the melodies played by these instruments (the *slenthem* in particular) are very close to the melody of the *balungan gendhing*, especially if we compare them to the melodies played by the other instrumental groups.¹ Indeed, several (ethno)musicologists such as Kunst (1949:167), Hood (1954:3,9) and Becker (1980:109,249) believe that it is these instruments that play the *balungan gendhing*, that the *balungan gendhing* is the same as the *saron* melody or *panembung* melody.

Differing somewhat from these Western scholars, Indonesian observers of karawitan say that the *balungan*

gendhing is what is written down in collections of *gendhing* notation and in the notebooks musicians carry with them.²

These two conceptions of *balungan* (especially the latter) are relatively unproblematic for the purposes of study, teaching, performing, and documenting karawitan. But if we are conducting more penetrating musical research and need to subject the *balungan* to analytical scrutiny (in the analysis of *pathet*, for example), then I believe that these conceptions of *balungan* should (so to speak) be put in quotation marks—or even given a question mark.

There have long been dissenting voices heard, claiming that the *balungan gendhing* is not the same as the *saron* part. This objection has been formulated by several Javanese musicians, among them Sumarsam (1976:8), Supanggah (1985:124), and Hasto (1985:39). One reason they all give is the limitation of the *saron* family's range—it is not wide enough to cover the range of the *balungan gendhing*, as we can see in figure 1.

The instruments of the *saron* family cover one octave plus two tones in *slendro*, while the range of the *balungan* in *slendro gendhing* covers two octaves plus two [or three] tones. The *saron* family instruments in *pelog* cover only one octave, while the *balungan* in *pelog gendhing* covers two octaves and three [or four] tones.

Besides this, there is another characteristic that distinguishes the *balungan gendhing* from both the *saron* melody and the *balungan* that is notated.

Balungan gendhing and gendhing

I mentioned above that the *balungan gendhing* is called the framework of the *gendhing*; but to understand what this means we must naturally be clear about what is meant by "gendhing". This is a general term for the musical compositions of Javanese karawitan. Among musicians, "gendhing" is also used to refer to those compositions of size *kethuk 2 kerep* and larger (that is, *gendhing* with sixteen or more *balungan* beats per *kenong*-phrase). For the purposes of this discussion, we can set aside this latter usage.

Gendhing and *balungan gendhing* are extremely difficult to separate out in the everyday life of karawitan, so much so that the meanings of these two terms are often confused. The notation written in books of *balungan*—a memory aid for the performing musician—or the notation written on a blackboard as a teaching device, is sometimes called the *gendhing*. However, in my opinion, what is written down as the *balungan gendhing*, and played by the *slenthem* and other *balungan* instruments, is in fact raw material that must be further processed or worked on—*garap* is the term usually used for this—by each gamelan instrument according to its idiom, and especially by the *garap* instruments (and singers, if present).³

It is the sound produced by the *garapan* of the entire ensemble that is called the *gendhing*. The *gendhing* exists only in the moment of performance. This perhaps distinguishes a *gendhing* from a Western (classical)

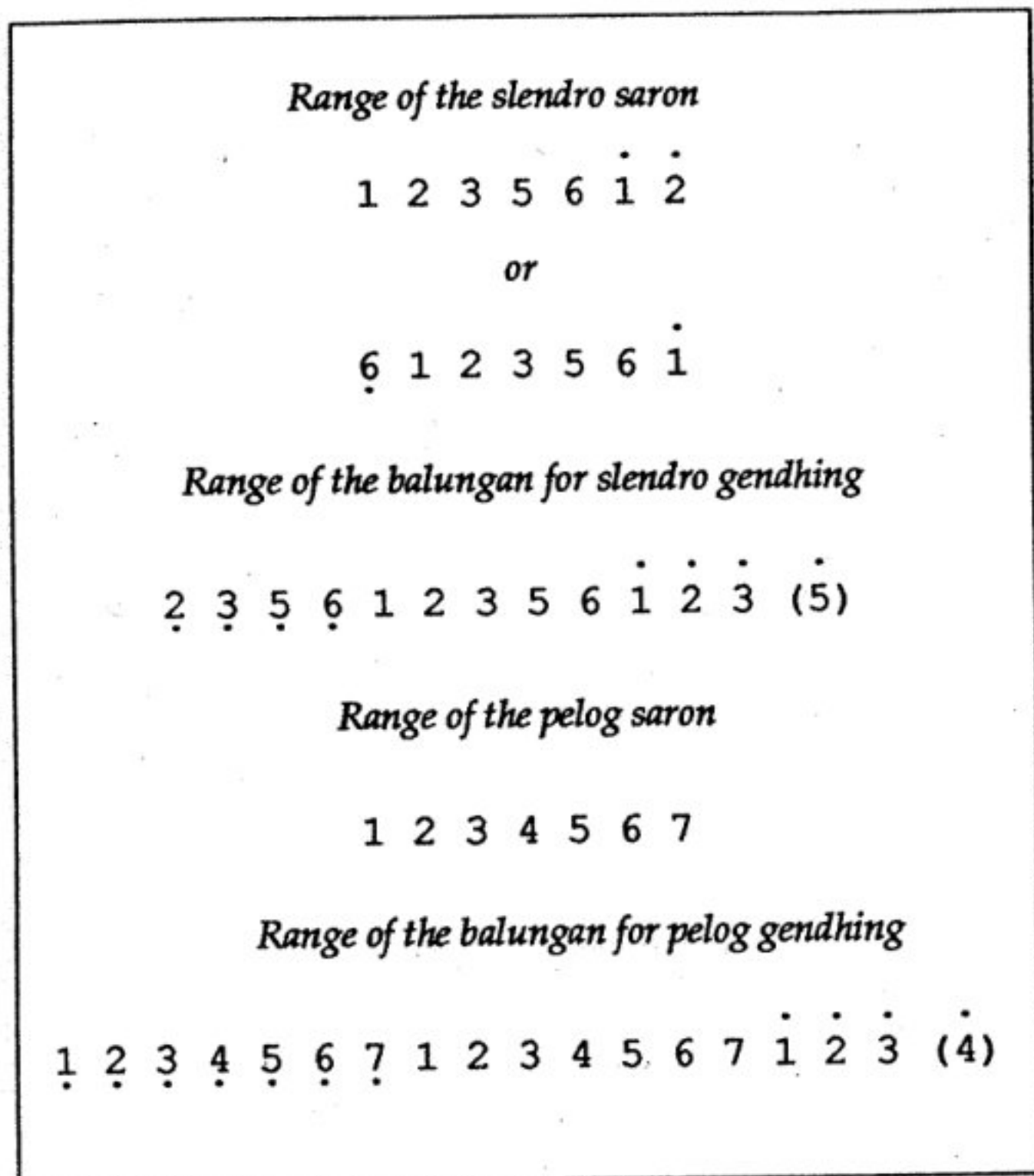


Figure 1. Saron and balungan ranges.

composition, whose score can be said to be the composition itself. The distinguishing feature here is the nature of transmission of the tradition in each case: Javanese karawitan is an oral tradition, whereas Western music is a written tradition.

As an oral tradition, karawitan allows the performance of a gendhing to differ with each occasion of performance. Such differences are determined by (among other factors) the function and use of the music performance. The functions of karawitan can be thought of under two headings: social functions and musical functions. Its social functions involve the use of karawitan in various social activities such as religious, state, family, or community ceremonies. Its musical functions involve the connections between karawitan and other art-forms, such as concert karawitan, dance karawitan, wayang karawitan, theater karawitan, and so on.

The differences between performances are also controlled by the musicians themselves. These differences are affected strongly by the musicians' general educational background, musical education, social and cultural environment, outlook, and sensitivity towards their surroundings (which includes the audience).

Although one performance of a gendhing will always sound different from other performances of it, people can recognize that they are all performances of one and the same gendhing. They can do so because of the essence of the gendhing, called the balungan gendhing. Although the gendhing sounds different in each performance, the essence of the gendhing stays the same. In other words, the

balungan gendhing is the essence, core [*inti*] or distillate [*abstraksi*] of the gendhing. The balungan gendhing is not played or sung by any one instrument or singer.

It is undeniable that those who have little practical acquaintance with karawitan or garap will not easily come to know this balungan gendhing, which is the most important aspect of gendhing. Therefore it is not so much that the musicologists' approach to the music of karawitan—via the balungan gendhing—is wrong; the problem is, rather, that it is not easy to determine what the balungan gendhing is.

I mentioned earlier that the meanings of "balungan gendhing" and "gendhing" are often confused. In fact, it is true that gendhing and balungan gendhing form a single, inseparable unity. As with the chicken and the egg, it is hard to say which came first. On the one hand, those learning to play karawitan tend to say that the balungan gendhing comes first, for they (at least nowadays) learn to play by using the balungan gendhing as a reference [*acuan*]. On the other hand, musicians and composers feel that, for them, the gendhing comes first. When they play their instrument or compose a piece, they have a kind of performance [*klenengan*] in their hearts, that is, a performance complete with the sounds of the garapan of all the instruments (and singers) involved in that piece. Later, in conveying [*penuangan*] the piece to someone else, the sound of the klenengan in the heart is expressed [*terjabar*] as *genderan*, *rebaban*, *siteran*, *sindhenan*, *bonangan*, *gambangan*, etc.

This is consistent with the traditional method of learning karawitan, before the written tradition became as widespread as it currently is. Then, one did not have to learn karawitan (or a specific gendhing) starting from any one particular instrument, or from the balungan gendhing, as is the case now. One could just as well start directly by learning the gender, rebab, bonang, gambang, or other instrument.⁴ However, we should bear in mind that, before playing any instrument, the student would usually pass through a stage of watching and listening, comparing the instrumental parts or listening to the gendhing until they got a global conception of the gendhing they were studying, and could "sing" it (imitate it with their voice). When "singing" a piece in this way, at any given moment they might sing the rebab part, or the bonang or kendhang parts, or the kenong, kempul, or gong strokes, or any sound inside them that would emerge spontaneously, jumping from one instrument to another and mixed together, imitating the sound of a klenengan.

With the increasing development of the written tradition, such a musician would have begun to consign the gendhing to writing, using music notation, which functions as a device for documentation, and as a memory aid. What they would write down could surely not represent the sound of the entire klenengan inside them (let us say that this klenengan is the gendhing); rather, it would be the fruit of one musician's attempt to note down a distillate [*hasil abstraksi*], or the essence of the gendhing, which we call the

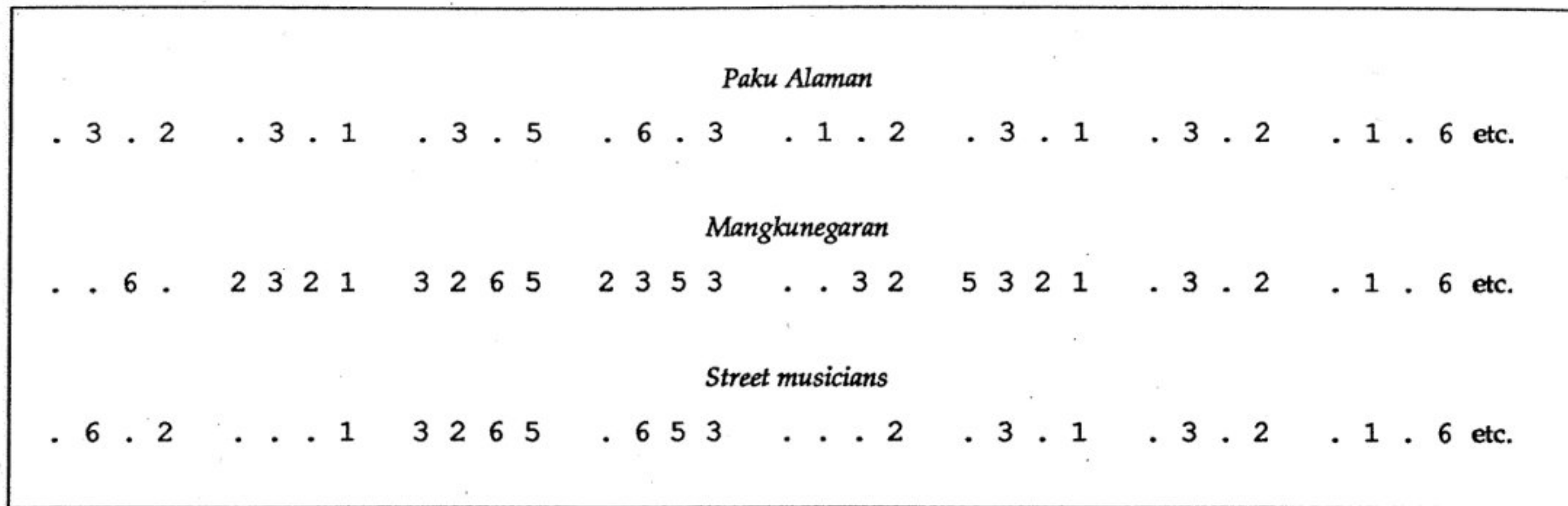


Figure 2. *Ketawang Puspawarna, slendro manyura* (from Vetter [1981:203]).

balungan gendhing.

Since performances of a gendhing may differ according to difference in function, use, occasion, situation, condition, musicians or the environment, the balungan gendhing which is distilled from the gendhing can also differ between performances, between individual musicians, between musical sub-cultures, and between geographical regions. Sometimes such differences in balungan gendhing can give rise to quite heated disputes between musicians from different backgrounds. The problem is aggravated nowadays by the view that some version of the balungan gendhing is absolute because it is written down, or comes from an authoritative source. This is one result of the development of the written tradition.

That which is notated and called the balungan—which was originally used only as an aide-memoire or documentation tool—developed into a device for teaching and disseminating karawitan, and most recently has been used in performances of karawitan.

In figure 2, I present an example of a few different versions of the balungan of a single gendhing.

Balungan: Structure and Change

Setting aside the question of the absolute character of the balungan, we must understand that the balungan which

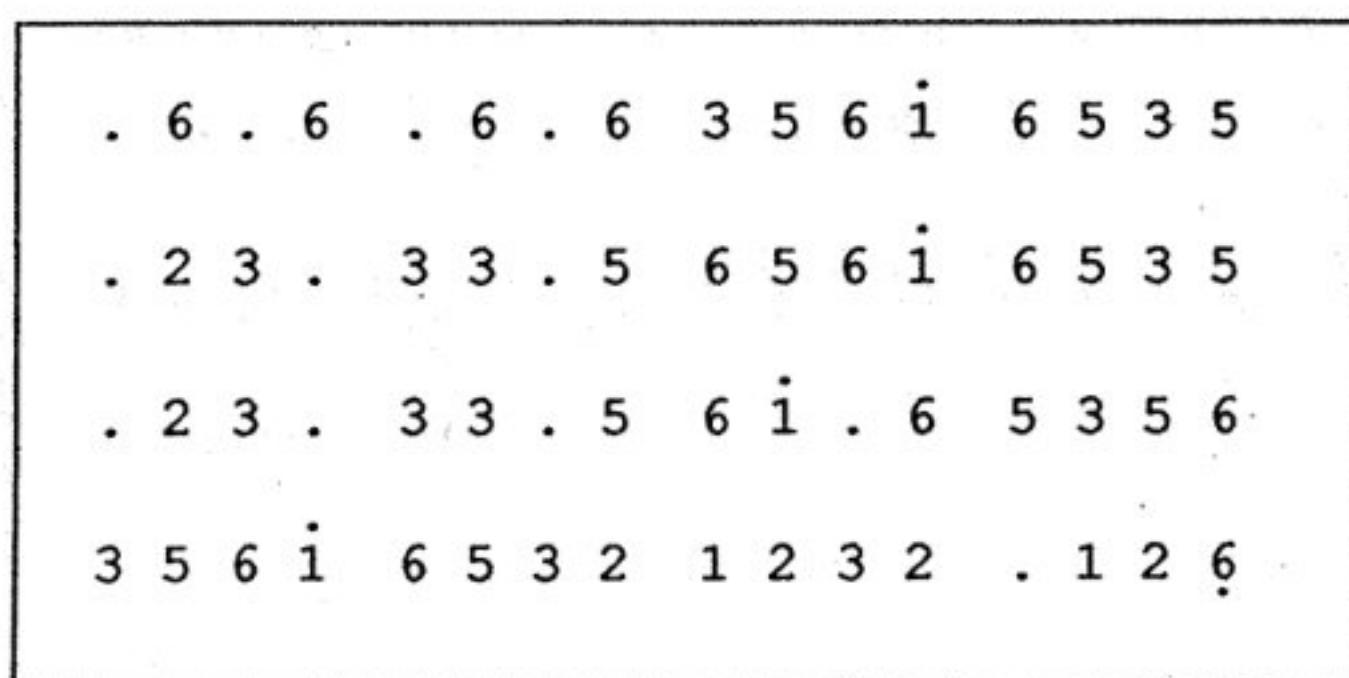


Figure 3. The *ngelik* section of gendhing *Cucurbawuk, slendro manyura*.

is notated or commonly played by the balungan instruments is actually a modified balungan gendhing, one which has been adjusted [*dibesut*] for aesthetic and practical reasons, so that it can lie well on certain instruments (in particular, the balungan instruments and/or the bonang). The example in figure 3 [one gongan of the merong of gendhing *Cucurbawuk*] can perhaps clarify the modifications made to the essential balungan to turn it into the balungan that is usually played by the balungan instruments.

If we examine the melodies played by the garap instruments [for this section of gendhing *Cucurbawuk*], we see that the course of their melodies [*alur lagu*⁵] actually does not always follow the balungan as it is written in figure 3. The closest possible melody [*alur lagu*] that we could extract [*rangkuman*] from the playing of the garap instruments is as shown in figure 4.

If we were to play this melody extracted from the parts of the melody instruments (and which we will consider to be the essential balungan [*balungan esensi*]) just as it is, it would obviously sound unpleasant (or, as it is usually expressed in karawitan, *kau* [Jav. awkward, ungainly, ungraceful]). Furthermore, this sort of balungan would be very unprofitable for the bonang, because of the large amount of *gembyang* [Jav. octave] playing it would have

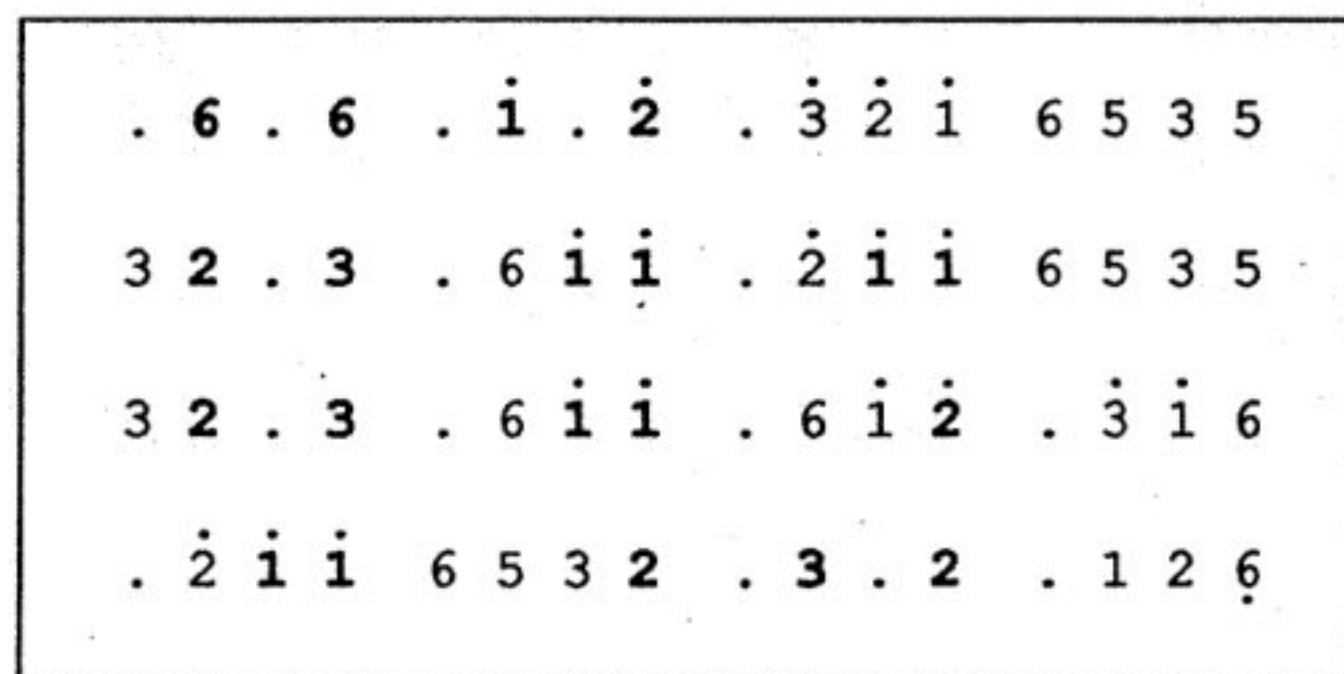


Figure 4. The *alur lagu* extracted from the playing of the garap instruments in *Cucurbawuk*. Balungan kembar phrases are in boldface.

. 6 . 6 . 6 . 6 3 5 6 1 6 5 3 5

Figure 5. The first kenongan of Cucurbawuk after the buka.

. . . . 6 6 . . 3 5 6 1 6 5 3 5

Figure 6. The first kenongan of Cucurbawuk, subsequently.

to do for the many phrases of *balungan kembar* (ones in which a single tone appears two or more times in a row; see the boldface tones).⁶

The *ngelik* of gendhing *Cucurbawuk* provides us with yet another clue to the existence of aesthetic considerations in the arrangement and re-arrangement [*pengubahan*] of *balungan* gendhing phrases. Notice the first kenong-phrase of the *ngelik*. After the *buka*, the *balungan* gendhing is played as shown in figure 5. This *balungan* gendhing will change on subsequent repetitions of the *merong*. When repeated, it will be played as in figure 6. The *balungan* gendhing in figure 5 (played, as it is, relatively faster than that of figure 6) is intended to convey a feeling or impression that is *greget*, *kenceng*, and *gagah* (energetic, tense, and bold).

The existence of changes in *balungan* made for aesthetic and practical reasons is made even clearer when a gendhing is transposed between tuning-systems. Several Central Javanese gendhing can be played in more than one *laras* or *pathet*. In such cases, it is not uncommon to find changes in the form [*susunan*] of the *balungan*. Let us examine a few examples of changes in *balungan* caused by change of tuning system.

The *balungan* phrases listed in column (a) of figure 7 will, when played in *pelog*, usually change to their counterparts in column (b), and vice versa (note that this is not an exhaustive list). Let us see how this applies to a sample gendhing.

In [the two versions of *ketawang Langen Gita* presented in] figure 8, the boldface *balungan* tones are the ones altered in the change of tuning system. In this case, only a relatively small portion of the whole *balungan* is affected, but were this piece to be played in *pelog pathet barang*, much more drastic changes in the *balungan* would occur.

Changing the *laras* and *pathet* of a gendhing from *slendro sanga* to *pelog barang* is usually done by transposing the entire *balungan* up by one tone (*nglereg sewilah* [Jav. shifting by one slab/key]), then replacing each occurrence of the tone 1 (*penunggul*) by the tone 7 (*barang*).

To facilitate the comparison, and to set in relief the changes usually made when this piece is played in *pelog barang*, I have juxtaposed in figure 9: a) the *balungan* of *ketawang Langen Gita* *slendro pathet sanga*; b) a hypothetical *balungan* for *Langen Gita* *pelog pathet barang*, being a strict

Slendro	Pelog
2 3 2 1	3 5 6 7
2 3 2 1	6 5 6 7
2 1 2 6	2 7 5 6
3 5 3 2	3 2 1 2
1 6 5 6	1 2 1 6
6 1 6 5	6 5 4 5
. . 6 1 6 5 3 5	. . 6 5 3 5 6 5
2 2 . 3 5 6 5 3	2 2 . 3 5 6 5 4

Figure 7. Examples of how *slendro* *balungan* phrases transform into *pelog*.

a) . 2 . 1 . 2 . 6 . 3 . 2 . 6 . 5	b) . 2 . 1 . 2 . 6 . 3 . 2 . 6 . 5
a) 6 1 6 5 1 6 5 6 5 3 1 2	b) 6 4 6 5 1 2 1 6 5 4 1 2
a) 6 6 . . 6 1 6 5 1 6 5 6 5 3 1 2	b) 6 6 . . 6 5 4 5 1 2 1 6 5 4 1 2
a) 1 1 . . 3 5 3 2 . 6 2 1 6 5 3 5	b) 1 1 . . 3 5 3 2 . 6 2 1 6 5 3 5

Figure 8. Two versions of *ketawang Langen Gita* in (a) *slendro pathet sanga* and (b) *pelog pathet nem*.

transposition of the *slendro sanga* *balungan*; and c) the *balungan* of *ketawang Langen Gita* *pelog barang* as it is actually played. In figure 9 we see extensive modification of the *balungan* gendhing, amounting to nearly seventy-five percent (eleven out of sixteen *gatra*; see the boldface notes. A *gatra* is a musical unit consisting of four *balungan* beats).

The practical and aesthetic considerations which cause these drastic changes in the *balungan* of *ketawang Langen Gita* are not limited merely to the *balungan* instruments and

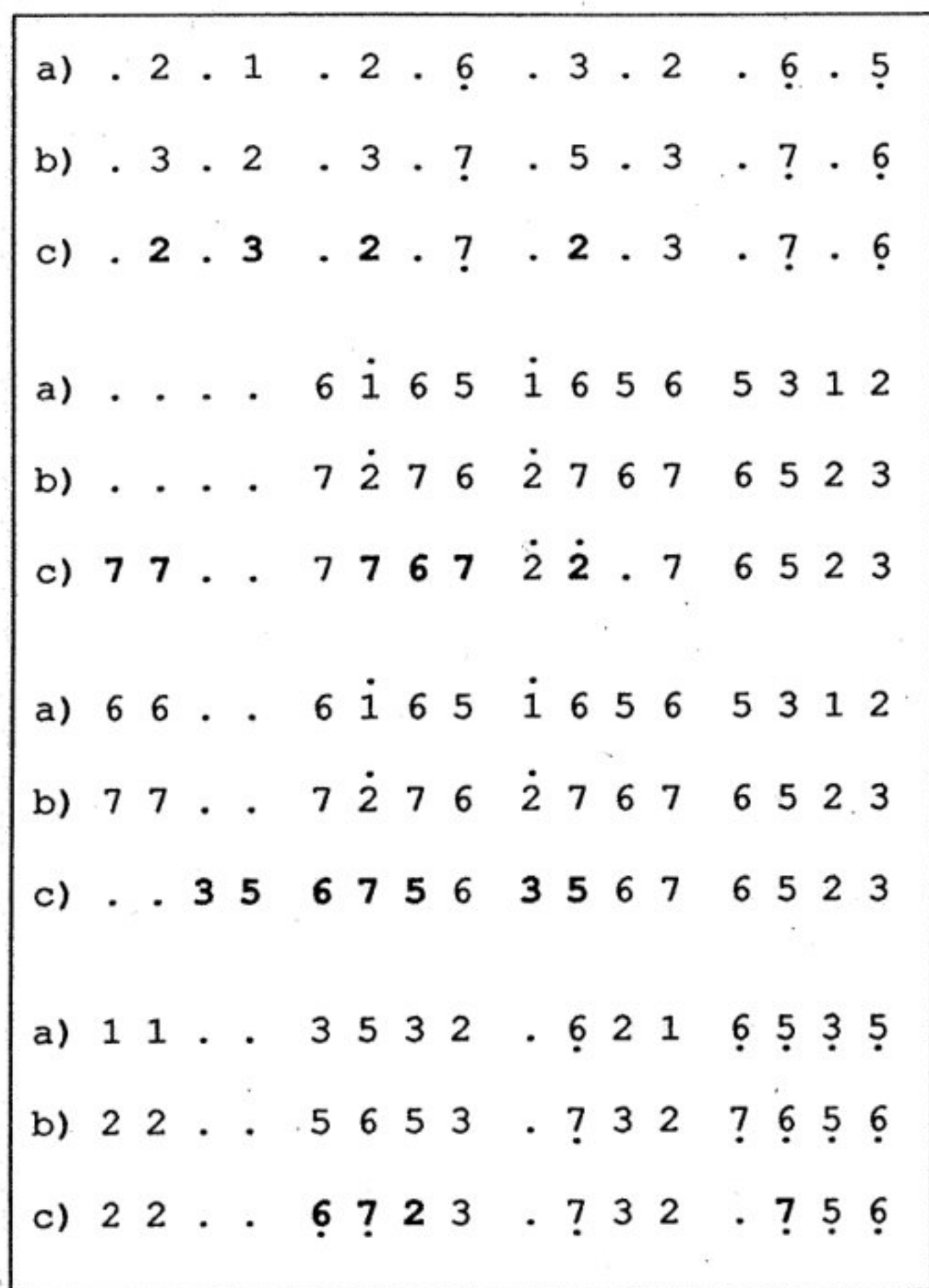


Figure 9. The balungan of *Langen Gita* in a) *slendro sanga*, b) *pelog barang* (hypothetical translation), and c) *pelog barang* as actually played.

bonang, but take the other instrumental parts into account as well, especially those of the *garap* instruments. Basically, any change of the *laras* or *pathet* of a *gendhing* will effect modifications in the instrumental parts—modifications beyond a mere change of *laras* or strict transposition up or down by an interval of one or more tones. Before we leave the topic of changes in *balungan* and their relationships to the *garap* instruments' parts, let us examine a few more cases of changes in *balungan*.

As the reader may be aware, there are several *balungan* formats in traditional Javanese *karawitan*, such as: *balungan mlaku* [moving, walking], *balungan nibani* [lit. to fall on; a *balungan* of end-points or cadence-tones], *balungan nggantung* [hanging], *balungan pin mundur* [rests on the downbeats], *balungan maju kembar* ["upbeat twins"; i.e., the same pitch occurs on the two upbeats of the *gatra*], *balungan mlesed* [slipping, missing], *balungan dhe-lik* [low-high; i.e., rising an octave], *balungan ngadhal* [moving with the wiggling gait of the *kadhal* lizard; i.e. twice or four times the density of *balungan mlaku*], and so on.

Each type of *balungan* demands and determines its own *garapan* on the other instruments. Certain *balungan* formats can sometimes modify the feeling of cadence, of

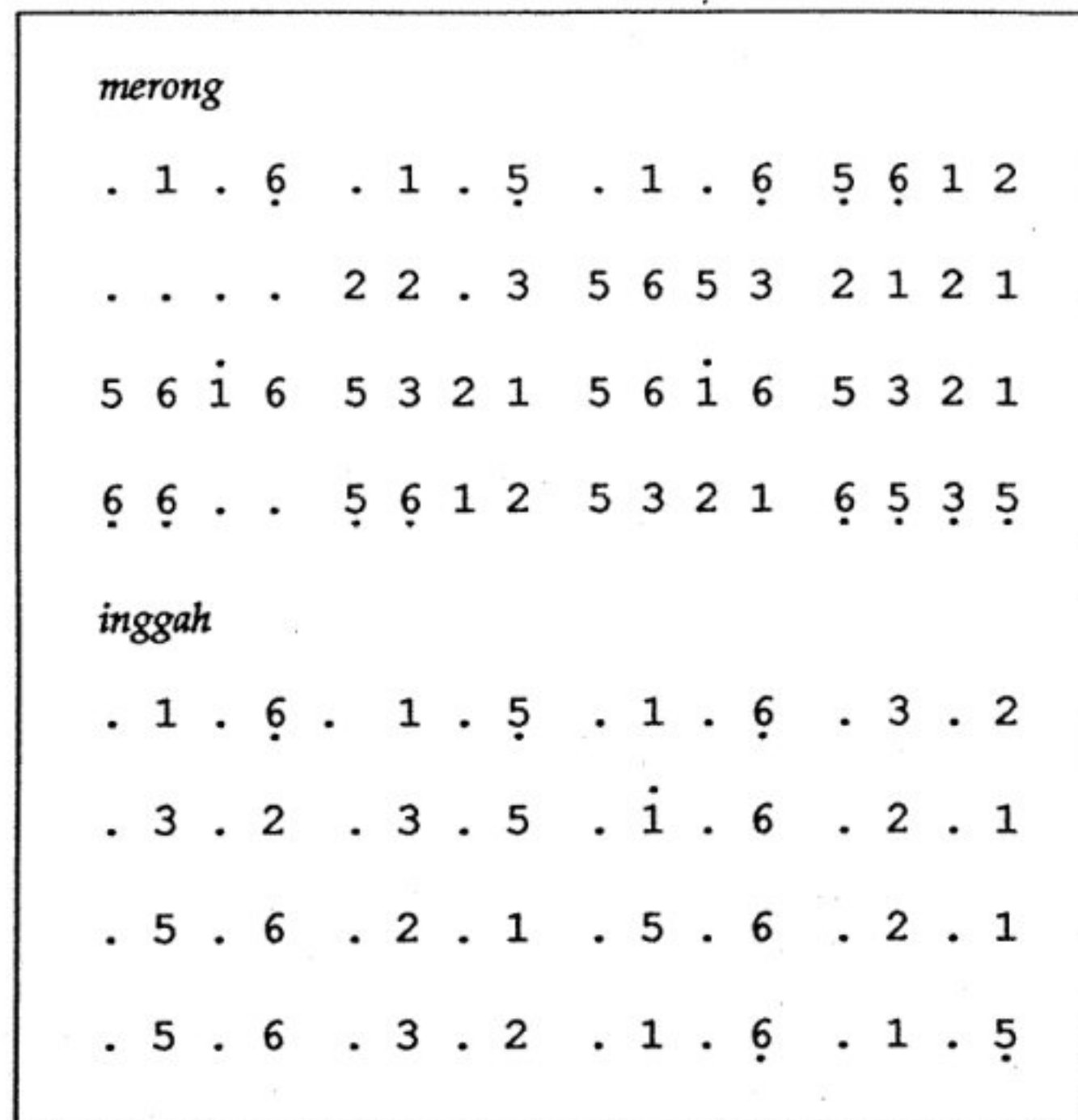


Figure 10. *Gendhing Pancatyana*, *slendro pathet sanga* (Mloyowidodo 1977:55)

pathet, etc. (see Martopangrawit 1972:60 [Becker & Feinstein 1984:89]). In this way, the *balungan* influences the player and directs him toward the specific musical ethos [*karakter*] and feeling of a *gendhing*. Therefore a single *gendhing* might require changes in its *balungan* for certain needs or purposes. Figures 5 and 6 present a good example of this.

We can find another example of this in the *gendhing* sections called (*m*)*inggah kendhang*. *Gendhing* of size *kethuk 2 kerep* and larger usually have sections called (*m*)*inggah*. There are two varieties of *inggah*, *inggah kendhang* and *inggah gendhing*. The difference between them is that the melody [*alur lagu*] of an *inggah kendhang* is usually relatively similar to the melody of its *merong* (the first section of a *gendhing*, played after the *buka*), while the melody of an *inggah gendhing* is completely different from that of its *merong*. The *inggah* is considered a field [*ajang*] or arena in which the *garap* instruments appear with *garapan* that is more *moncer* (colorful [*bersemarak*], varied, alive, elaborate). To permit this, the *inggah kendhang* (whose melody is similar to that of its *merong*) must be given a setting [*wadah*, lit. receptacle] for *garapan*, a form of *balungan* that does not tightly constrain the *garap* instruments: in other words, *balungan nibani*, which contains tones only on even-numbered beats. Figure 10 presents an example of the change from *balungan mlaku* to *balungan nibani* in a *gendhing* with *inggah kendhang*.

Changing a *balungan* format from *mlaku* to *nibani* is not simply a matter of removing the *balungan* strokes that fall on odd-numbered beats. Rather, it must take aesthetic and practical considerations into account, so that the resulting *balungan* is a new melodic phrase which lies well

a)	.	.	.	.	2	2	.	3	5	6	5	3	2	1	2	1
b)	.	.	.	.	.	2	.	3	.	6	.	3	.	1	.	1
c)	.	3	.	2	.	3	.	5	.	1	.	6	.	2	.	1

Figure 11. The *balungan mlaku* of *Pancatnyana* (a) should become (b), but actually becomes (c).

on the instruments and sounds good. Look, for example, at the second kenong-phrase of gendhing *Pancatnyana* (figure 11). The *balungan* is changed to that of line (c), not only because of aesthetic and practical consideration of the *balungan* instruments, but also as an attempt to distill (find the melodic essence of) the *garapan* of all the *gamelan* instruments.

The changing of *balungan* format from *mlaku* to *nibani* can be found, not only in gendhing with *inggah kendhang*, but also in the playing of the *bonang panembung* in *gamelan Sekaten*, and the playing of the *slenthem* in those parts of gendhing which are played in fast tempo (figures 12 and 13).

Density of *balungan*

The analyses above have shown that the density of the *balungan* can determine the amount of interpretative leeway the *garap* instruments have. *Balungan nibani* allows them more latitude. Similarly, when one and the same *balungan* is played in a different *irama*—for example if it is changed from *irama dados* to *irama wilet*, so that the distance between one *balungan* stroke and the next becomes longer—this additional spaciousness will offer more opportunity for the *garap* instruments to fill in with their interpretations [*isian interpretasi*].

Contrariwise, we could also say that genres of *karawitan* in which the *garap* instruments are not customarily given (or, by the nature of the case, do not need) such latitude can use a denser kind of *balungan*. Whereas genres of *karawitan* that emphasize the interpretative scope of the instruments will use *balungan* formats that allow such scope (such as *balungan nibani* or *nggantung*), or even will do without *balungan* altogether, giving only indications of the *seleh* [goal or cadence] tones, as in the genre *palaran*. Certain gendhing genres which allot a special role to the *garapan* of certain instrumental or vocal parts may sometimes be given *balungan* only with difficulty—or at least, several interpretations may exist, yielding several different versions of the *balungan*. This phenomenon occurs in the genre of *gendhing sekar*, gendhing based on [the melodies used to recite classical Javanese poetry] (*sekar* or *tembang*), such as the gendhing *Sinom Parijatha*, *Pangkur Dhudhakasmaran*, *Sinom Logondhang*, and so on. It also occurs in the genre *jineman*, where the *garap* instruments and voice play equally important roles: that is, sometimes the

the *balungan* part (not just the *slenthem*):

.	2	.	3	.	1	.	6	.	6	.	5	.	6	.	1
.	1	.	2	.	3	.	1								

the normal *balungan*:

5	6	5	3	2	1	2	6	2	1	5	3	.	5	6	1
.	.	1	2	5	3	2	1								

Figure 12. The beginning of gendhing *Lambang Sari*, Yogyakarta-style (Sukardi 1976:29).

balungan:

3	1	2	3	5	6	5	3	5	6	5	3	2	3	2	1
2	3	2	1	2	3	2	1	etc.							

slenthem:

.	3	.	1	.	2	.	3	.	5	.	3	.	2	.	1
.	2	.	1	.	2	.	1	etc.							

Figure 13. *Lancaran Tropongan*, *pelog pathet lima*.

instruments accompany the voice, sometimes the voice fills in, ornaments, or interprets [*menggarap*] the *balungan*. Similarly, this often occurs in children's songs, *gendhing dolanan*. Indeed, there are even genres of gendhing that do not need *balungan* gendhing because they feature the vocal parts, as in the genre of *gendhing bedhayan* that use the *gamelan kemandak*.

Considerations of this sort, I believe, form the background (or at least, the musical background) for the existence of regional variants in *balungan* such as those found in the major styles of Surakarta and Yogyakarta. The Surakarta style seems to give greater priority to the latitude of the *garap* instruments (especially the *rebab* and *gender*) to do *garap*, whereas Yogyakarta style gives greater priority to the *garapan* of the *balungan* instruments. This is clear from the physical shape of the instruments, the forms of *garapan*, and the technical terms for *garapan* in the two styles. I do not intend to make a detailed comparison of these two styles along all of the dimensions of contrast I mentioned above, but I will give a few illustrations.

The priority which Surakarta-style *karawitan* is thought to give to the *garap* instruments' parts [*garap*] can be seen from (among other things) the frequent use of the sparser types of *balungan*, such as *balungan nibani*, [*balungan*] *nggantung*, and of "smooth" [*lembut*] *balungan* (which moves by steps, not skips). Also, this can be seen from the fact that the *balungan* is played softly. This brings

out the parts of the *garap* instruments and gives them more interpretative scope [*leluasa*]. This conclusion can also be confirmed if we look at the stock of *garap* techniques in Surakarta style (which, limiting ourselves only to the *rebab*, includes *milah*, *nduduk*, *kosok wangsul*, *sendhal pancing*, *mbesut*, *ngikik*, *ngicrik*, *ngecek*, *tumpang sari*, *mlurut*, etc.) and the terms for the use of *cengkok* and *wiletan*, such as *dudukan*, *puthut gelut*, *ora butuh*, *ayu kuning*, *bandhulmu*, *minur*, *salah gumun*, etc.

The tendency of Yogyakarta-style *karawitan* to give priority to the *balungan* instruments is indicated by those instruments' use of showier [*moncer*] playing techniques such as *nggenjot*, *ngecek*, *gemakan*, *imbal*, *pancer*, *kinthilan*, and combinations thereof, and also by the fact that the *balungan* is played relatively loudly (compared to Surakarta-style). This is supported by the form of the *balungan* instruments, which in Yogyakarta are usually made larger and with thicker keys, and of the *tabuh* (mallets) which are larger, and made from hard wood to produce a clear, loud tone.⁷ The prominence of the *balungan* instruments is also evident in the tendency to use full, dense forms of *balungan* without many rests (for example, Surakarta-style *karawitan* uses *balungan* such as 33 . . for *balungan nggantung*, but in Yogyakarta style such a passage would tend to be played as 3523, etc.) Indeed, it uses a great deal of *tikel* (double-time) *balungan*, as in virtually all of its *ayak-ayakan*, and several *ladrang* and *ketawang*. This form of the *balungan* will necessarily influence and determine the parts of the *garap* instruments to some extent. I have even seen its influence on the *gerongan* (a melody sung in unison by a male chorus, though nowadays often sung by women also), which, in Yogyakarta style, seems to stay close to the *balungan*.

I should emphasize that my intention in making these style comparisons is not to make value judgments. As we know, the quality of a type of music is not determined by its musical complexity pure and simple, but must be judged from its total expression and its relation to its socio-cultural context, use, customs, and purpose at the time and place of performance. My juxtaposition of these two styles is merely intended to illustrate how performance style [*gaya garapan*] can crucially influence the form of the *balungan gendhing*.

Conclusion

Let me repeat once more the points I have tried to make in the foregoing discussion.

1. The *balungan gendhing* is an important—if not, indeed, the most important—factor in the practice of *karawitan*, because as the framework of the *gendhing* it gives a composition its basic shape, and is used as a frame of reference and point of departure for the playing of the *gamelan* instruments [*menggarap*].

2. However, I believe there are deficiencies in the concept of the *balungan*, particularly as it has been used by certain theorists who are not well acquainted with the details of musical practice in Javanese *karawitan*. As a result, their theories, which start from the *balungan* and all of its

aspects (such as contour, cadence-points, or tonality) are ultimately unsatisfactory.

3. The *gendhing* and *balungan gendhing* form an inseparable unity. The *balungan gendhing* is the essence of a *gendhing*, being a distillate of the *gendhing*, or of the entire sound produced by all of the *gamelan* instruments and singers when they play a given composition. The *balungan* can change over time and can differ between musical sub-cultures, in keeping with the fact that performances of *gendhing* can always be different according to differences of function, use, situation, condition, purpose, application, place, time, and environment.

4. The real [*nyata*] *balungan* (which I also call the essential *balungan*) is, in fact, abstract. No one instrument or singer plays (or sings) this *balungan*. We are often misled [*terjebak*] to consider the notated *balungan* to be the real *balungan*; but for me, the notated *balungan* is in fact a pseudo-*balungan* [*balungan semu*] which does not reflect with complete accuracy the essential *balungan*. The notated *balungan* is in fact constructed through a long process whereby it is shaped with aesthetic and practical consideration of the performance techniques of the instruments (especially the *balungan* instruments and *bonang*). With the rapid development of the written tradition, this *balungan* tended to become "fixed" (standardized), and it developed not only as a memory-aid but also as an educational tool, an aid in performance, and a means of disseminating *karawitan*.

Therefore, understanding the *balungan gendhing* is not easy, since it requires that we be aware of the matters I have analyzed above, especially those connected with the details of *garap* in *karawitan*. ▀

Notes

1. We can classify the instruments of the *gamelan* by musical function into three groups: (1) *balungan* instruments, which play melodies very close to the *balungan gendhing*: *saron barung*, *saron demung*, *saron panerus*, *slenthem*, and *bonang panembung*; (2) *garap* instruments, which *menggarap* (work on, interpret, treat) the *balungan gendhing*, and whose interpretations are expressed in their individual idioms: *rebab*, *kendhang*, *gender*, *gender panerus*, *bonang*, *bonang panerus*, *siter*, *suling*, *gambang*, *sindhén*, and *gerong*; (3) structural instruments, whose combined parts form a structure which is based on, or determines, the form of the *gendhing*: *kethuk*, *kempyang*, *engkok*, *kemong*, *kenong*, *kempul*, *gong*, *kecer*, *kemanak*, *keplok alok*, and also *kendhang*.

2. Note, however, that the *balungan* that is written down is not the same as the *saron* melody.

3. By "garap" I mean the creative activity, manifested in the playing of a musician, of interpreting a *gendhing* or *balungan gendhing*. ["Garapan"—what is played or sung—is the result of this activity. This term is also used to refer to performance practice in general.]

4. See further the section in Supanggah (1985) on "Teaching *Karawitan*."

5. [The term "alur lagu" refers both to the overall contour or direction of a melody and to its character, e.g. *prenes* (flirtatious, enticing), *gecul* (humorous), *regu* (solemn), etc. It is a more general term than "lagu" (melody), since two distinct melodies may have the same "alur lagu". I know of no equivalent English term, and have translated it as "course of a melody" or simply "melody."]

6. [To the best of my knowledge, not all of the boldface tones in figure 4 would be given *gembyangan* treatment by the *bonang*. Unfortunately, I did not bring up this point in my discussions with Supanggah.]

7. The following question, however, has occurred to me: Why do Yogyakarta-style *balungan* instruments have only six keys, which limits their melodic possibilities compared to their Surakarta counterparts, which have seven or even (in the case of the *saron wayangan*) nine keys? This fact is inconsistent with the shape of the Yogyanese *rebab* bow, which is short and hence unsuitable for making *wiletan* and variations [which are not important in Yogyakarta style. But the *saron* is required to play elaborate variations; why was it not given extra keys?]

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