

TRADITIONS

Sundanese Dance Accompaniment: the Career of Pa Kayat

by Henry Spiller

Most of this article is drawn from conversations with Pa Kayat's grandson Undang Sumarna, a teacher of Sundanese music and dance in Santa Cruz, California.

Sundanese arts underwent a renaissance in the 1920s, when a generation of Sundanese artists revitalized existing genres and created several new forms. Sundanese artists have been remolding indigenous traditions, assimilating outside influences and creating new forms ever since.

Abah Kayat, one of these seminal artists, was a typical Sundanese innovator. He was steeped in his own tradition, open to any non-Sundanese art that appealed to him, and skilled at combining these into something new. Pa Kayat experimented with new pieces, set arrangements, and expanded instrumental techniques to reshape gamelan accompaniments for dance. He worked with Raden Tjetje Somantri, an influential choreographer who created a body of dances in the 1950s that profoundly changed the face of Sundanese dance (Soepandi and Atmadibrata 1976:96). Some innovations in the accompaniments Pa Kayat arranged for Pa Tjetje's dances became part of subsequent dance genres such as the currently popular *jaipongan*.

Music for Dance

Since 1920, several new dance genres have developed that combine materials from the existing Sundanese *tayuban* tradition, *topeng* traditions from neighboring Cirebon, and elements of Central Javanese dance. These genres have become the core of the Sundanese classical dance repertory.

Sundanese dances are accompanied by gamelan *salendro* (slendro) pieces that mirror the character and theme of the dance. The *kendang* plays a central role in Sundanese dance accompaniment. Sundanese dances, like Cirebonese *topeng* dances (cf. Suanda 1988), are constructed of short choreographic building blocks, called cyclical "movement units," that may be repeated a variable number of times, connected by transitional movements. For each dance movement unit the drummer plays a particular drum

pattern which usually has the same name as the dance movement unit. The pattern often emphasizes, enhances and provides an aural analog for the dance gestures and foot movements. Often the other gamelan instrumentalists—who generally realize their parts spontaneously by choosing from a personal repertory of appropriate melodic patterns—will choose a pattern that also emphasizes the dance movement.

Before Independence

Pa Kayat came from a family of musicians. His brother Ardi was known for his rebab playing, his brother Rabis for gambang playing and his brother Ato for bonang playing. Several of Pa Kayat's descendants (including Undang Sumarna) also became musicians.

While a boy of about twelve, Pa Kayat became intrigued with the performances of Pa Koncar, a Cirebonese *dalang topeng* (masked dance master) who was travelling and performing in the Bandung area. Pa Kayat followed the *topeng* troupe back to Cirebon on the north coast of Java, where he studied with them for several years.

When Pa Kayat returned to Bandung he gained renown as a *tayuban* drummer. *Tayuban* is a form of improvisational solo dancing performed by aristocratic men for their own enjoyment at special dance parties. As is typical for Sundanese and Cirebonese dance, each choreographic unit is associated with a particular drum pattern. The challenge for the drummer accompanying *tayuban* is to anticipate the dancer's next movement. Pa Kayat was acclaimed by the Dalem Bandung (the Regent of Bandung) because only he could follow the Dalem Bandung's dancing. (It's probably better not to speculate what this might say about the Dalem Bandung's dancing skills.)

Pa Kayat settled in the West Bandung area near the communities of Cimindi, Cimahi, and Padalarang and joined the *wayang orang* [dance theatre] troupe *Wayang Ibuk*, led by a dancer named Ibu Ibuk. During the struggle for independence, the troupe avoided harassment by travelling from *kampung* (neighborhood) to *kampung* to perform.

Following Indonesian independence Pa Kayat settled in the Babakan Tarogong area of Bandung and started his own *wayang orang* troupe with some of the members of *Wayang Ibuk* (Ibuk herself had passed away by this time).

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Goong/kempul	G	P	.	P	.	P	P	P	P	G						
Kenong	4		5		1		5			4						
Saron I	$\frac{3}{4}$ 4 4 4 4	3	5 .	5 .	1 .	1 .	3 .	1 .	2 .	5 .	2 .	5 .	4 .	4 .	2 .	4
Saron II	$\frac{3}{4}$ 4 4 4 4	3	.	4 .	.	.	5 .	4 .	2 .	3 .	1 .	3 .	1 .	.	.	3 .
Bonang	$\frac{3}{4}$ 4 4 4 4	$\frac{3}{4}$	.	$\frac{5}{5}$	$\frac{1}{1}$	.	$\frac{1}{1}$	.	$\frac{1}{1}$	.	$\frac{1}{1}$	$\frac{5}{5}$	$\frac{4}{4}$	.	$\frac{4}{4}$	.
Kendang																

Figure 1. Ngoreh section of Tari Merak.

Goong/kempul	G	P	.	P	.	P	P	P	P	G						
Kenong	4		5		1		5			4						
Saron	4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 2 1	.	4	1	.	1	2	3	4							
Bonang	$\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{5}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{5}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{5}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{5}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$	$\frac{4}{4}$	$\frac{3}{3}$	$\frac{2}{2}$	$\frac{1}{1}$.	$\frac{4}{4}$	$\frac{1}{1}$	$\frac{3}{3}$	
Kendang																

Figure 2. For the waliwis mandi movement, a fast moving bonang melody contrasts with gembyang style of octaves on the offbeat.

Music for Pa Tjetje

Perhaps Pa Kayat's most significant contributions to Sundanese music are the accompaniments he created for Raden Tjetje Somantri's dances. Pa Tjetje had studied and taught *tayuban*, *keurseus* (set dances derived from *tayuban*), and *wayang* dances for many years, and also had studied *penca silat* (Sundanese self-defense dance) and dances of Cirebon and Yogyakarta. After Indonesian independence, Pa Tjetje synthesized these influences into a body of work that comprises a large part of the present standard repertory of Sundanese dance. Many of his students are today's influential choreographers, including Irawati Durban and Indrawati Lukman.

Pa Tjetje expanded the themes, materials, and movement vocabulary of classical dance beyond that used in the existing *wayang*, *tayuban*, and *keurseus* dances. Some of his dances used traditional themes (characters from Sundanese and Indian mythology); others pictured bird and animal scenes, or had nationalistic themes. Pa Tjetje also choreographed solo and group dances for women dancers. The post-Independence climate in Indonesia provided a fertile niche for Pa Tjetje's creations, which were patronized by the government and President Sukarno and performed in the Istana Negara (President's palace) and other prestigious venues, as well as abroad (Durban 1986, 1988).

Pa Kayat's innovations involved several aspects of dance accompaniment, including repertory, drumming, and orchestration. For many of Pa Tjetje's dances, Pa Kayat

selected pieces from the standard repertory of *lagu alit* (short pieces), believing that the simplicity of these pieces was appropriate for the musically naive female dancers (Durban 1988). He composed drum accompaniments for the dances that drew from the existing drum pattern repertory, and he created new patterns when appropriate or necessary. For example, the movement *trisik*, in which the dancer flips an end of the *soder* (dance scarf) over each hand and arm and slowly walks in a circle on tiptoes, was probably borrowed from Central Java (Durban 1988), and thus there was no existing drum pattern to accompany it. Pa Kayat's drumming style was more fluid than the sometimes abrupt *tayuban* drumming style, in keeping with the feminine character of many of the dances. Finally, he fixed some of the gamelan instrument parts—traditionally realized spontaneously—for some parts of the dances, and several of the instruments would play these fixed parts in unison. With this technique, the layered polyphonic texture of some movements contrasts with the melodic and rhythmic unison texture of others.

Tari Merak [Peacock Dance] includes several dance movements that have special gamelan parts. The *ngoreh* movement, for example, depicts the peacocks stamping their feet in a triplet pattern. The drum accompaniment for this movement is characterized by five strokes of the lowest pitched *kendang*, the first stroke of the pattern always coinciding with a *goong* stroke. When the *ngoreh* occurs, the *bonang*, *saron*, and other melodic instruments loudly

Goong/kempul P . P . P P P G
 Kenong 5 1 5₃ 3₃ 3₃ 3₃ 3₃ 3₃ 4
 Saron/Bonang .4 . 4 3 .2 . 3 4 .3 . 2 1 .2 . 5 1 .3 . 2 1 .5 . 4 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 . 4
 Kendang

Goong/kempul P . P . P P P G
 Kenong 5 1 5 3 3 3 3 3 3 4
 Bonang .4 . 4 3 .2 . 3 4 .3 . 2 1 .2 . 5 1 .1 . 1 5 .1 . 2 3 .4 . 3 2 .3 . 2 4
 Kendang

Figure 3. Two examples of special melodies and uneven triplets to accompany the trisik movement.

Goong/kempul P P G
 Bonang 1 3 2 1 1 3 2 1 1 5 1 2 3 1 2 $\frac{1}{3}$ $\frac{1}{3}$ $\frac{1}{3}$ $\frac{1}{3}$ $\frac{1}{3}$ $\frac{1}{3}$ 1 5 2 . 1 . 2 . 3 . 4
 Gamelan 3 3 3 3 3 3 1 5 2 . 1 . 2 . 3 . 4

Goong/kempul G G
 Bonang 2 1 3 4 1 3 2 1 3 2 1 5 1 2 3 4 1 3 2 1 4 2 3 4
 Gamelan 4 tremolo ...
 Kendang

Figure 4. Two examples of expanded pangkat for the piece Gendru. The upper example includes newly composed material unrelated to Gendru, and the second quotes a rebab melody from Macan Ucul.

play the goong pitch in the same rhythmic pattern as the drum then return to their usual patterns. Figure 1 shows a part of the ngoreh section of Tari Merak (transcribed from transcription source 1).

Another Tari Merak movement, *waliwis mandi*, shows the peacocks bathing and moving very quickly. The drum accompaniment is a fast sixteenth-note pattern played with alternating hands. For this movement, the bonang breaks from its usual *gembyang* style of playing octaves on the offbeats and undertakes a fast melodic phrase, also played with alternating hands (see Figure 2, transcribed from transcription source 1).

The trisik movement is generally accompanied by a slow, uneven triplet pattern. The other instrumentalists replace their usual patterns with a special melody, in unison, for this movement. Two such melodies are shown in Figure 3 (the first is transcribed from transcription source 1 and the second from transcription source 2). The piece in both examples is *Gendru*.

The famous composer [Mang] Koko Koswara coined

a term for these techniques: *wanda anyar* [new style]. They are used extensively by contemporary Sundanese gamelan groups for dance and instrumental arrangements. Sundanese listeners consider arrangements that include *wanda anyar* to be exciting and dynamic and believe this approach is evidence of quality in musicianship and arranging.

In Pa Kayat's style the bonang is the most important instrument for performing *wanda anyar*. The bonang player follows the kendang player and the other melodic instruments follow the bonang player's lead. In performances Pa Kayat played bonang and his son, Pa Kandi, played kendang. Other bonang techniques used in Pa Kayat's style include very fast melodic patterns and tremolo.

Dance accompaniments often begin with an expanded *pangkat* [introduction], with special melodic material and orchestration. Typically, Sundanese *pangkat* are short phrases (seven notes or so) played by saron or rebab that end with the piece's first goong stroke. Two expanded

pangkat for Tari Merak are shown in Figure 4. The first (transcribed from transcription source 1) includes newly composed material unrelated to the piece *Gendu* that follows. The second (transcribed from transcription source 2) states a fragment of the melody piece *Macan Ucul*, typically played by the rebab while the gamelan plays *Gendu*, followed by a dramatic tremolo phrase. Following a drum signal, the bonang plays a more typical pangkat for *Gendu*.

Later Accomplishments

In the 1960s, Pa Kayat worked with the choreographer Enoch Atmadibrata to create music for Pa Enoch's *sendratari* [dance drama] *Lutung Kasarung*, which tells a Sundanese legend of a god who came to earth in monkey form. Pa Enoch's vision for this piece was for all its components to emphasize indigenous Sundanese elements. He chose to use *degung* and *tembang Sunda*, genres unique to Sundanese culture but never used for dance accompaniment, rather than *gamelan salendro*, which was always used for dance accompaniment but derived from Central Javanese models. Pa Kayat incorporated dance drumming into the *degung* pieces and also arranged some Cirebonese pieces for *gamelan degung*, such as *Kodehel*, which he had learned during his boyhood sojourn in Cirebon. Pa Kayat also worked with Pa Enoch and *Teater Bandung* as musician and composer/arranger on other dance productions, such as *Geusan Ulun* and *Kaman Daka*.

Pa Kayat taught Sundanese music for several years at KOKAR (high-school level conservatory of traditional music) in Yogyakarta. There he became friends with K.R.T. Wasitodiningrat (Pak Cokro), a noted Yogyanese composer and musician, who also taught there. Pa Kayat arranged some Javanese pieces he learned during this time for Sundanese *gamelan salendro* and *gamelan pelog*, such as *Taropongan* (Rasta 1981). Pa Kayat passed away in 1967.

Pa Kayat's Legacy

Since the renaissance of Sundanese arts in the 1920s, Sundanese artists have been remolding indigenous traditions, assimilating outside influences, and creating new forms. Pa Kayat's experiments with new pieces, set arrangements, *wanda anyar*, and expanded instrumental techniques set directions that contemporary artists still follow in today's new choreographies.

Pa Kayat's family continues his legacy. His son Pa Kandi formed the group *Sekar Binangkit*, and Undang Sumarna, who is Kayat's grandson and Kandi's nephew, has brought Pa Kayat's music and style to scores of students in the United States. ▀

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Transcription Sources

- (1) *Tari Klasik Sunda: Kandagan Cindelas*. Padepokan Tari Irawati Durban. Dian Record (no date).
 (2) *Tari Merak*. Yayasan Badan Bakti Guru. SP Record (1977).

Notation

The notation in this article uses Western rhythmic notation and a one-line staff for relative pitch notation for the *kendang* examples. Sundanese *kendang* usually include one *indung* (large drum) and two or more *kulanter* (small drum). Both heads of the *indung* are played; usually only one end of each *kulanter* is played. "x" noteheads indicate *tepak* (slapping) technique, which is done either on one small *kulanter* (x's above the line) or on the smaller head of the *indung*. Round noteheads are used for the various other techniques, placed according to approximate relative pitch. The lowest pitched sounds come from the large head of the *indung*, and other, higher pitches from the various *kulanter*.

For the other instruments, Sundanese cipher notation is used. The rhythmic notation is the same as Javanese cipher notation, and a bracket for triplets has been added. While both the Javanese and Sundanese systems use numerals to represent pitches, the numbers are assigned in a different order. The Sundanese pitches are numbered 5 4 3 2 1 from low to high. Pitches in the middle octave of an instrument have no dots. Pitches in the lower octave have dots above the cipher; pitches in the upper octave have dots below the cipher. This is the opposite of Central Javanese cipher notation.

Sunda	2̇	1̇	5	4	3	2	1	5̇	4̇
Central Java	5̇	6̇	1	2	3	5	6	1̇	2̇