TRADITIONS

Tembang Sunda Poetry

by Gary Young and Marcus Kaufman

The *tembang Sunda* ensemble consists of two plucked zithers called *kacapi,* a long bamboo flute called *suling,* and any number of male and female vocalists, called *Juru Mamaos.* The music is most often enjoyed at home in the company of family and friends. The translations are presented in a sequence typical of an evening performance.

Tembang Sunda (literally "Sundanese song") refers both to the musical ensemble itself and to the body of traditional songs performed by the group. Tembang are often epic in nature and record the activites of ancient Hindu-Buddhist gods as well as gods and spirits indigenous to Sunda. The songs conjure up images of Sundanese kingdoms long past, or sing the blues of lost or unrequited love. Other songs simply choronicle the daily life of the Sundanese people. All are a part of the immense cultural heritage of the people of West Java.

These poems are excerpts from our manuscript of tembang Sunda translations, presented here in the original Sundanese and in English. While the identities of the authors of older texts have been lost to antiquity, included here are two recent compositions, the love song *Angin Peuting* (Evening Breeze) by R. Barman Sachyana, and *Reumbeuy Bandung* (a regional recipe for bean salad) by the late Ibu H. Siti Rokayah. The other two poems were taught to Kaufman during lessons and rehearsals.

Tembang Sunda vocalists often begin an evening concert with the short invocation *Gusti, nadapitulung* or "Lord, help me." Sometime later in the evening the singer may offer another invocation, *Gusti, Abdi antosan* or "Lord, I'm still waiting." We have sought to combine in these translations the same playful humor and serious spirituality that permeates tembang Sunda. ◗

Gary Young, a poet and artist, is the author of several collections of poetry including Hands *and* Everywhere I Looked. *Since 1975 he has been an editor and designer at his Greenhouse Review Press. He lives in Santa Cruz, California.*

Marcus Kaufman is an international training consultant. He has been studying and performing the music of Sunda for 17 years. He was formerly a lecturer of Indonesian language at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

Suggestions for Further Reading on Tembang Sunda

English Language Sources

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1990 *The Urbanization of Tembang Sunda, An Aristocratic Musical Genre of West Java, Indonesia*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Washington.

Zanten, Wim van
1986 "The tone material of the kacapi in tembang Sunda in West Java." *Ethnomusicology* 30: 84-112.
1989 *Sundanese Music in the Cianjuran Style: Anthropological and Aspects of Tembang Sunda*. Dordrecht, Holland & Providence, R.I.: Foris Publications.

Indonesian Language Sources

Endang Suryana
1979 *Pangajaran Tembang Sunda*. Bandung: Pelita Masa.

Sukanda, Enip
1983 *Tembang Sunda Cianjuran*. Bandung: Proyek Pengembangan Institut Kesenian Indonesia, Subproyek Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia Bandung, 1983-84.

Wiratmadja, Apung S.
1964 *Sumbangan Asih Kana Tembang Sunda*. Bandung: Purnamasari.

Mupu Kembang

Sada gugur di kapitu
sada gelap ngadasaran
dur bedug neng locengna
ketuk sada sungkeut ungkeut
kendang sada ciang ciang
sada tepak Raden Sancang
jaman digenggong tarate
*
Metu ti lawang ping pitu
medal ti lawang ping sanga
monteng ti lawang Sakateng
dina iuh iuh tanjung
dina kalangkang katapang
mipir mipir katumbiri
mapay mapay kilat panjang

Bur burinyay bray baranyay
siga bentang kabeurangan
siga Ciibun maruntang
lain Ciibun maruntang
horeng Dewata keur leumpang
Dewa nyatana manusa, geuning
Dewi Asri tanding leuwih

— Traditional

Picking all the Flowers

Thunder in the seventh cloud,
lightning in the sky.
The crash of the bedug and the ring of a bell.
Hoot of the ketuk
and the cry of a drum:
the voice of Raden Sancang
in the Age of the Waterlilly.
*
She flies from the seventh
to the ninth doorway
and on through the palace gate.
She flies in the shadow of katapang
and tanjung trees
beside rainbows
and lightning.

She is dazzling,
like a sleeping star in daylight
or a hanging dew-drop.
But this is not a dew-drop.
This is a goddess out walking,
a goddess in human form.
It is Dewi Asri and she is beyond compare.

Reumbeuy Bandung

Ari reumbeuy reumbeuy Bandung
ngareumbeuy dina jambangan
ari heureury heureury Bandung
heureury ge jeung ka sopanan

Sok resep ucing ucingan
ucing bikang nyangerengan
sok resep ulin ulinan
leumpang bari rerendengan

Ari reumbeuy reumbeuy Bandung
ngareumbeuy dina jambangan
ari heureury heureury Bandung
ulah sok di pasampangan

Sok resep ucing ucingan
ucing cantel di buruan
sok resep ulin ulinan
pacantel paduduaan

— Ibu H. Siti Rokayah

Reumbeuy Bandung

Take Reumbeuy Bandung
all mixed up in a bowl.
Take the jokes in Bandung —
be funny, but polite.

Go on, play tag,
that cat is mean and nasty.
Go on, enjoy your games,
go walking two by two.

Take Reumbeuy Bandung
all mixed up in a bowl.
Take the jokes in Bandung —
watch out where you play.

Go on, play tag,
the cat has a twisted tail.
Go on, enjoy your games,
go walking arm in arm.

Candra Wulan
Candra Wulan anu bendu
bendu turunan ti ibu
bantahan pusaka rama
ngalunjakna ti bubudak
pelit bawa ti aalit
  nyukcruk nyukcruk Cihaliwung
  mapay mapay Cipandawa

Susah mikir beurang peuting
ka mana abdi nyaneang
mun sumping ku anjeun bae
montong sok nganggo ogoan
sagala kudu di teang
manasina abdi angkuh
da moal di saha saha

Tengah peuting jemplang jempling
reyem reyem cahaya bulan
daun kalapa ngeresek
gumilap ku cahaya candra
siga siga nu talatah
sugan teh junjunan kalbu
nepangan nu keur tunggara

— Traditional

Angin Peuting

Cing atuh kuring deukeutkeun
jeung manehna tuh di ditu
sanajan raga paanggang
batin mah hayang padeukeut
hate tetep sasarengan
tapina kuharianeun
bulan teh nyumputkeun deudeuh
ninggalkeun kuring sorangan
dibaturan dibaturan
hiliwirna angin peuting

Cing atuh kuring tepungkeung
jeung anjeuna nu miasih
geus lami urang paanggang
najan batin mah da jauh
ngan hayang patepung teuteup
tapina ku teungteuingeun
beut jauh tina teurteupan
jauhna panyawang kuring
kuring keueung ngan sorangan
dibaturan angin peuting

— R. Barman Sachyana

Moon Goddess
Candra Wulan is angry
with a mother's anger
not a father's.
She was a stubborn baby,
an insolent child.
  Follow the river Cihaliwung
  Wander beside the Cipandawa

I never know, day or night,
where to find her.
She comes when she pleases
whether I ask her or not.
Everyone says
I'm a fool,
but I could never love another.

A quiet night,
just moonlight
the rustle of palms,
and a glimmer of Candra.
Suddenly
I think of loved ones
and my heart fills with sorrow.

Evening Breeze

I want to be
with her.
we're apart
and our souls reach out,
and our hearts reach out always.
I'm sick with love,
but she's hidden in the moon
and I'm alone.
My only friend
is the hint of an evening breeze.

I want to join
my love,
we've been apart so long already.
Our souls may be near,
but I want all of her.
I can't stand
her out of my sight.
I'm alone
with my only friend,
the evening breeze.