

# INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY: REFLECTIONS FROM THE ANTHROPOCENE

**Dr. Edward Herbst**

Principal Researcher and Director, Bali 1928 Repatriation Project  
Luce Foundation and Asian Cultural Council Research Scholar

We live in a new era in the history of our planet Earth, an era in which humans are the dominant influence on the environment and climate. Humans are in control, contrasting with other times when living species adapted to natural evolutionary conditions. Similarly, now is a time when the arts are more and more reflecting human identity, as humans are more and more alone and isolated, and less in tune with other life forms, seen and unseen, with whom we have shared the planet for tens of thousands of years. What brought me to Indonesia, and Bali in particular, as a twenty year-old in 1972, was a fascination with the acoustics of bronze and an understanding that art was as much about interacting with nature and unseen forces as it was about human interactions. I sense that Indonesia has something important to offer the world, if it is still able to do so, in part by looking far back to early innovations, inventions, and creative achievements that involved an intimacy with and sensitivity to our environment, seen and unseen. Nobel Prize- winning physicist Leon Lederman, who studied neutrinos, once said, "Human understanding of reality is largely over-rated."

What has been bringing me to Indonesia for the past fifteen years is *Bali 1928*, an ongoing restoration, research and repatriation project involving the first published recordings of music in Bali as well as related film footage and photographs from the 1930s. These are the only music recordings made in Bali and released prior to World War II, a diverse representation of new and ancient genres that were published on 78 rpm discs though quickly going out of print. Our project

has resulted in the release and distribution of a collection of five CD and DVD volumes published in Indonesia by STIKOM-Bali as well as CDs in the U.S. for international distribution, published by World Arbiter. The 1928 recording sessions were carried out by Odeon and Beka, and German artist and musician Walter Spies has been credited with having chosen and organized the *gamelan* ensembles and singers. But considerable evidence derived from my field and archival research suggests that the renowned Balinese dance master, Ida Boda (born in 1870), was actually the “A&R man” (artists and repertoire) for the Beka sessions, and that about 50% of the extant Beka recordings were made in 1929. Ida Boda’s wide network of students and fellow performers enriched the artist pool for the 1928 recordings, most especially the vocal music that comprises 50% of the extant tracks.

- Film: Ida Boda Mengajar *Légong* - 01:15

Between Odeon and Beka, Spies and Boda, almost every genre of *gamelan* and song was documented. So from the inception of this project during the nascent Dutch colonial era, Balinese creative agency and indigenous aesthetic preferences led to intercultural collaboration with Westerners.

Canadian composer and pianist Colin McPhee and his wife, anthropologist Jane Belo, first heard these 78 rpm discs in New York in the winter of 1930–31, and were inspired to leave soon after for Bali where they carried out research over the course of the next eight years. McPhee, in his memoir, *A House in Bali*, recalled how in 1931 one frustrated European shopkeeper entrusted to sell the records in Bali smashed his entire inventory in rage at their inability to sell. The records have since become extremely rare.

As we reflect on the impact of the 1928–1929 collection, it is sobering to acknowledge that – just as two salient examples – the extraordinary singing styles of Ida Bagus Oka and Ni Lemon would have been lost forever had not Ida Boda brought Balinese sensibilities to the Beka recording

sessions. The styles of vocal music that Walter Spies chose were all accompanied by a variety of gamelan ensembles. Similarly, McPhee limited his research and writings to instrumental gamelan. But song occupies a significant place in the Balinese musical world – whether it be romantic, didactic, spiritual, or humorous – and elders have described to us how in earlier times singing would evoke deep emotions resulting in *jering bulun awaké* ‘goose bumps’ (literally making one’s hair stand on end), and weeping amongst the audience, making these recordings all the more significant as aural evidence of expressive culture.

- Play 1928 Recording: *Puh Pangkur* sung by Ida Bagus Oka Kerebuak

*Iseng mangiket ipian, Playfully weaving a dream, ditu mapinda nepukin dedari,*

it is like seeing heavenly nymphs,

*miik maciri miik malepug,*

evidenced by the pervasive fragrance,

*magulem sarin pudak,*

of clouds of pandan flowers (*Pandanus tectorius*),

*ujan bunga, tambulilingan ngariyung,*

a shower of flowers, buzzing bees,

*mirib guruh sasih kapat,*

like thunder in the fourth month (October),

*anginé aris sumilir.*

the breeze blowing gently.

So what have been some key elements that nurtured such growth of the arts in Bali over the ages?

- Play 1928 Recording: *Solo (Gonténg Jawa)* by Wayan Lotring - 03:00

## Perspectives on Rasa as Taste, Sonics, and Feeling

Within the context of locating and hopefully illuminating the sonic world of 1928 I draw from multifarious references to music that reflect an ecology surrounded by seas, wet-rice fields traversing hills that descend from active volcanoes causing occasional tremors, and vegetation that can produce tastes ranging from the hottest of *tabia* ‘peppers’ to the sweetest of fruits like *manggis* (*garcinia mangostana*) and *wani* (*mangifera caesia*).

The word *ombak* ‘waves’ is used in all different vocal contexts ranging from Ida Boda’s *pupuh Adri* to the fluctuations in Ni Lemon’s *Wargasari* and the rippling effect in the *kakawin* of Klungkung. *Gregel* ‘fast, subtle, fluttering melodic waves’, or alternatively defined in Indonesian as *getaran halus dan cepat* ‘subtle, fast vibrations or tremors’, is another commonly-used term in Bali, possibly imported from Java in the

1950s. The verb form *ngregel* is commonly used today in discussion of all song forms including *tembang* (*pupuh*), *kidung* and *kakawin*. An unusual term for waves or fluctuations in a tone, offered by Ida Wayan Padang (1913–2012) of Budakeling, is *gegiwangan* or *gumi wang* ‘oscillation’ in Old Javanese. Pak Padang also gave the meaning as *bergoyang* ‘wiggling, changeable’. We must distinguish this from the

Balinese word *giwang* ‘earring’. Ida Wayan Padang also used the word *nglombang* ‘waves’ to refer to extended tones at the ends of melodic phrases.

Life in earlier times, and up until not so long ago, was much more oriented toward the creeks and rivers as places where everyone would bathe each morning and afternoon (although rivers can also be sources of spiritual danger). Cokorda Raka Tisnu of Singapadu recalls how a stroll around the village at such times would be within ear shot of singing everywhere, whereas nowadays one hardly ever hears casual singing in public, if at all.

*Kakawin* singer Ida Bagus Madé Gandem (1933–) of Cakranegara, Lombok, suggests a way of developing the voice is in the morning on an empty stomach and in the late after-

noon at a spring or below a waterfall of one or one and a half meters, with the water washing over you, and singing or screaming until hoarse with the throat swollen. When Ida Bagus Oka Kerebuak would bathe at the public spring in Klungkung, he often attracted a bevy of young women who would come close to listen to him singing from under the water's flow, and watch him as well, also offering to wash his clothing while he bathed. Oka, as is common amongst vocalists, also strengthened his voice by singing loudly while up to his neck in the cold *Tukad Unda* river. When Ni Nyoman Candri was first learning from her father she would sit in the river with water up to her neck and sing in her high register as loud as she could. After half an hour or so, she would lose her voice. A few days later the voice would return and she would be back at the river. After repeating this cycle over the course of time, the voice was strong and relaxed for singing *tembang arja*.

Ketut Kodi<sup>1</sup> recalls hearing that the legendary *Cupak* and *Rangda* performer Gusti Ngurah Mokoh of Tegaltamu would fill his mouth with *lombok* 'hot peppers' soaked in water and scream until hoarse, while up to his neck in a river or stream. This would cultivate a *keras* 'strong' voice that could be heard for great distances. Similarly, Ida Cokorda Oka Tublen of Singapadu, legendary *tukang tapel* 'mask carver', master teacher of *arja*, and *Rangda* performer, would supervise his *arja* students as they were submerged in a creek on how to swallow whole (without chewing) a ball of *lombok* peppers that had been soaked in coconut oil. We have heard of such practices amongst singers and *dalang* 'shadow puppeteers' all over Bali in order to cultivate a *suara encak* 'broken, shattered, fragmented'. *Suara encak* (or *encak*) is most common with stylized or normal speech of

---

<sup>1</sup> *Dalang*, *topéng* and *arja* performer from Singapadu and teacher at ISI-Bali. Kodi was given this information by Aji Mokoh's student, I Madé Kengguh from Singapadu, a musician, *topéng* and *Rangda* performer who also specialized in the role of Matah Gedé, the witch in the *Calonarang* magic dance drama.

strong characters in *wayang* or dance drama rather than with singing. Yet *dalang* such as Wayan Nartha say that *suara encak* should not be forced, but worked on gradually. Supposedly, two of the great *dalang* of the earlier part of the twentieth century, Granyam and Rawa, had voices that were not very loud and strong, but conveyed *encak* qualities with less force and tension. A basic consideration is not to be pushing the sound out of the mouth, but keeping it resonating in the body.<sup>2</sup> And Ida Bagus Oka Kerebuak's preferred drink for nourishing his sweet, agile voice was boiled *biyu kayu*, literally 'wood banana' (but actually a normal variety) soaked in *santen* 'coconut milk'. He would have this drink, sing again, and alternate drinking and singing until tired. More common amongst singers is to have banana soaked in coconut oil.<sup>3</sup>

While it is clear that *taksu* 'inner spiritual energy made manifest that is perceptible by others' is often said (at least by people today) to come after a great deal of study and preparation, cultivation of the abilities and techniques to perform a specific artistic or other kind of task, *taksu* ultimately comes from nature and from a momentum greater than ourselves as human beings.<sup>4</sup> Inspired performance is often said to come from *sungsungan*, the verb being *nyungsung*, literally 'carrying on one's head' divinities that have descended to be honored and recognized.<sup>5</sup> Along with one's personal attention to skills within our control are other forces at work derived from *mawinten* 'ritual purification', *pasupati* 'empowerment of objects with divine energy',<sup>6</sup> as well as offerings and prayers to the deity *Betara Taksu* (*Déwa Taksu*). Essentially, both processes—learning and performing—in-

---

<sup>2</sup> Herbst 1997: 25

<sup>3</sup> Ida Bagus Pidada Kaut (conversation 2006)

<sup>4</sup> I Wayan Dibia (2012) offers a broader, more inclusive, modernized perspective on the nature of *taksu*.

<sup>5</sup> Conversation with Ketut Kodi (2014)

<sup>6</sup> "Pasupati: a form of Siwa, the name for the divine energy that is invited to "sit" in a power object or in ritual paraphernalia, especially keris, shrines, sacred texts; an offering given to invite such divine energy to enter an object or to recharge a magical object with power, which could also be thought of as "feeding" the object." (Wiener: 1995: 375)

volve *niskala* 'the invisible world' as well as *sekala* 'everyday reality'.

References to the tastes of food are considerable and diverse. *Lalah-manis* 'spicy- sweet' was rendered by Madé Pasek Tempo as 'fierce and sweet'. And the expression *mamanis suara* 'to sweeten the sound' (by shaping vowels and consonants) is ubiquitous. *Topéng* master, *dalang* and scholar I Ketut Rinda of Blahbatuh explained how spices for cooking also make tasty sounds, giving examples from the *wayang* characters such as *kunyit* 'turmeric' for Merdah's "eeee" coming from his teeth, or *cekuh* (*kencur*—the root of a palm-like plant in the ginger family), producing Sangut's "uuu", *jai* 'ginger' producing Delem's throaty sound and *gamongan* (*lempuyang*) 'wild ginger' giving Tualen his belly resonance.<sup>7</sup> And as the senses of smell and taste are intertwined, it should be mentioned here (and discussed further in this article) that a sequence of subtle vocal intervals can be described as *mabo* 'having the fragrance' of a specific *tekep* or *patutan* 'mode' as played by a *gamelan*. When *lebeng* is used to describe singing, it is a compliment meaning 'well-cooked' or 'ripe', which is indeed *luung* 'good' or even 'beautiful'.

## Sounding Bronze

One feature unique to Bali is a precise tuning system of *ombak* 'waves' (acoustical beats), also referred to as *getaran* 'vibrations' or 'tremors', responsible for the signature shimmering sound of Balinese *gamelan krawang*. Of course, in Java, gongs are tuned to produce *ombak*, but without acoustical beats). On Bali, instruments are arranged in pairs with each pitch of the *pangumbang* (from *ngumbang* 'humming', 'buzzing') – tuned between five and eight cycles per second lower than its corresponding *pangisep* 'sucker' mate (from *ngisep*, to suck, as with nectar), not coincidentally borrowing from

---

<sup>7</sup> Conversation with Ketut Rinda in Blahbatu (1980)

words associated with the activities of honeybees, *kumbang* (in Old Javanese). According to *pandé krawang* Pan Santra of Tihingan and Pandé Madé Gablérán of Blahbatu,<sup>8</sup> *kebyar* is generally tuned to an eight cycles per second differential, creating a consistently rapid pulse of vibrations even within slow, lyrical melodies. *Gendér wayang* is tuned to five or six *ombak* per second and *palégongan* six or seven. Composer Wayan Beratha, also a *gamelan* maker and tuner, concurs with these numbers, adding that he prefers *angklung*—most commonly associated with music for death rituals such as cremation—to be in the slower six *ombak* per second range so it resembles a person weeping.<sup>9</sup>

I am not aware of any other culture on this planet that has developed the art and science of acoustical beats, except for the experimental electronic works of Wesleyan University's Alvin Lucier, who began this musical exploration in the 1970s. Also, piano tuners listen to acoustical beats in the process of getting piano strings in tune, but the resulting perceptible musical result is not heard or perceived spatially as explicit acoustical beats. So the fact that Balinese gamelan smiths at some time in the distant past innovated, experimented and created a musical system with acoustical beats as its primary characteristic leads me to wonder: how and why did this evolution occur in this location? I am led to speculate that an instinct to reflect, imitate and be inspired by natural environmental phenomena is a Balinese trait (though universal within human cultures to a lesser degree). The ever-occurring earthquakes '*gempa bumi*' and tremors '*gejor*' or '*getaran*' take musical form in the gamelan. Now, it appears that a great many Balinese musicians take for granted, *kebiasaan*, and are not even aware of this acoustical science and art derived from observing nature, and my impression is that today's loud speaker amplification systems erase the kinetic experience of beats moving through space and into our bodies, rendering

---

<sup>8</sup> Both personal conversations, 1972 and 1980

<sup>9</sup> Personal conversation 2009



the beats merely as pulsations, like a common vibrato. In addition, medical studies have found that a large percentage of Balinese musicians lose their hearing, most likely as a result of rehearsing and performing inside buildings – enclosed spaces – whereas I've always felt that gamelan evolved to be heard in open, unenclosed spaces, surrounded by and amidst nature, so that we are perceiving human artistic expression simultaneous with the sights, sounds, fragrances, air flow and energies of the environment. Just as we may be so used to certain stimulations, such as the *ombak* or *getaran* of *ngumbang* and *ngisep*, we may also be so familiar with breathing that we do not perceive that either. At birth we come into the world breathing and do not notice it much at all, but the focus on pranayama gives us a way to be aware. Similarly, an awareness of the ancient innovations in science and art of acoustical *ombak* can inform our musicality and our medical health as well. In this presentation I will try to trace some other elements in the evolution, innovation and creative process inherent in this synergy of humans, nature, and survival.

## **Zaman Perunggu**

Recent archaeological excavations (since Kempers's 1988 book<sup>10</sup>) conducted by I Wayan Ardika, Peter Bellwood, Ambra Calo and others – aided by new technologies for more accurately dating objects – led them to place the bronze culture of Bali and the rest of the Indo-Malaysian archipelago around 150 BC.<sup>11</sup> "This suggests strong links with the Indian subcontinent and Mainland Southeast Asia from the late first millennium BC, some 200 years earlier than previously

---

<sup>10</sup> Kempers, A.J. Bernet. 1988. The Kettledrums of Southeast Asia: A Bronze Age World and its Aftermath. Modern Quaternary Research in Southeast Asia, Vol. 10. Rotterdam and Brookfields: A.A. Balkema.

<sup>11</sup> "In Classical times, the Indian continent was central to a trading network that ran west to the Mediterranean world revolving around Rome: despite its name, the Mediterranean was not the centre of the known world. Another world opened eastwards from India, and there are many obscure references to its eastern fringes. Now a series of finds from Bali, in the Indonesian archipelago, gives the elusive direct connection of Indian traders to that farther east." Ardika and Bellwood 1991: 221.

thought.”<sup>12</sup> Bronze Age artifacts from the Dong Son ‘East Mountain’ culture of Vietnam dating between 500 BC–200 AD are seen as contemporaneous with bronzes found in Bali and elsewhere in island Southeast Asia.<sup>13</sup> Ramseyer wrote:

“Among the most striking elements of the Metal Age culture in Southeast Asia are the deep-rimmed kettle gongs, often misleadingly described as ‘bronze drums’,<sup>14</sup> various types of which may be found from Inner Mongolia through Indochina and Indonesia up to the Kai Islands. Archaeologically they can be dated back to 300 B.C. on the basis of the finds in the tombs of Dong s’on. The Balinese kettle gong of Péjéng—186.5 cm long and with a sounding surface 160 cm in diameter—is the largest known specimen of its kind.

In *The Kettledrums of Southeast Asia: A Bronze Age World and its Aftermath*, A.J. Bernet Kempers writes that “Indonesia stands out for the Pejeng type drums, headed by the Pejeng ‘Moon’... but the main centre of products that to all appearances are of local creation, is indisputably on the island of Bali.”<sup>15</sup> Earlier in the book, he speculates:

For the time being, it is virtually impossible to prove that individual gongs and gong-sets already existed prior to the invention of the kettledrum as a species of metallophones...On the other hand it can be proven that gong- sets were contemporaneous with at least some of the more elaborate kettledrums, such as the Tonkin drums and the Sangeang drum...And why

---

<sup>12</sup> Calo et al. 2015: 378

<sup>13</sup> Calo et al. 2015: 389

<sup>14</sup> Ramseyer 1977: 252 explains, “The kettle gong is not a membranophone (an instrument, like a drum, in which the sound is produced by a membrane stretched over a frame); it is an idiophone (an instrument made from a solid, naturally sonorous material),” with the entire instrument vibrating.

<sup>15</sup> 1988: 240

should they not? At that time metalworkers who created kettledrums of that type were skilled technicians, certainly capable of casting or forging things like gongs.<sup>16</sup>

And now we move from Bali's ancient, advanced metal technology to that of bamboo.

- Film: Ngoncang Ketungan, Nebuk Padi (McPhee) - 01:20

Colin MCPhee wrote<sup>17</sup>:

Pounding unhusked rice (nebuk padi) to remove the hulls is a daily task in the Balinese household. The work is normally done by women, although in wealthy families it is sometimes done by male servants. For the small amounts of rice needed for immediate consumption, the grain is generally poured on the ground. Two, three, or four women stand around the little heap, pounding with heavy, eight-foot poles. The pole is raised with one hand and dropped by the other with a downward thrust. As it bounces back the first hand catches it on the rebound and raises it. The poles are dropped in regular alternation. Since no two poles are exactly the same length or thickness there is a recognizable difference in the sound and pitch of the different poles. A variety of sound patterns can thus be created, from the simple alternating strokes of two workers to the more varied interplay produced by three or four poles. The normal speed at which each pole is dropped is around a stroke per second, and women will pound for hours with no apparent fatigue, taking pleasure in the different patterns they create.

While in the average small housed rice is usually pounded on the ground, larger households and most temples

---

<sup>16</sup> 1988: 60

<sup>17</sup> MCPhee, Colin. 1966. *Music in Bali*, pp. 359-362 (New Haven: Yale University Press; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1976).

may possess a long wooden trough, the *lesung*, in which large amounts of grain may be threshed at one time. The trough is free of the ground, resting at each end on a long set cross-wise, and is resonant as a drum when struck. While the sound of poles pounding rice on the ground is a dull thud, when dropped in the *lesung* the poles produce clear musical sounds of distinguishably contrasting pitch. In spite of the grain in the trough, which acts as shock absorber, the tones can be heard a mile away. The women, now invariably four, stand in a row or in facing pairs. From time to time the patterns change as a worker drops out for a while or a new pole sequence begins. A tone in the pattern may also take on a certain emphasis as one worker or another drops her pole with a more energetic thrust.

Continued indefinitely, sound patterns such as these provide stimulating work music. In certain parts of Bali, however, when there is much rice to be threshed, it is still the custom for boys and men to gather around the women and turn work into play by beating out lively polyrhythmic accompaniments on the sides of the *lesung*. Husking great amounts of rice for a great feast becomes a gay party, continuing from one moonlit night to the next. While the women maintain a steady beat as they pound the grain, a lively accompaniment, the *candetan*, is beaten out with sticks and short poles in polyrhythmic interplay similar to that of the cymbals in the gamelan gong...Different resonant parts of the *lesung* are sought, each with its characteristic sound. Each man performs his particular rhythmic pattern where it can be heard to best advantage, so that the wooden trough becomes a vibrant, many-voiced drum. As a resonant object the *lesung* is now generally referred to as the *ketungan*, from "*tung*," the sound of the *lesung* when struck with a wooden pole or stick.

When performed with *candetan*, the women's part in the ensemble is known by the differentiating term, *ngijengin*, the stationary, unchanging part (from *ngijeng*, stay, or remain in the same place). The *candetan* (from *nyandet*, make syncopated accompaniment) can be performed by two men

alone beating out interlocking rhythmic patterns. Six at least are considered essential to create a full and satisfying kilitan or "binding together" of different sounds. In the following diagram, which represents the lesung or ketungan in cross-section, characteristics candetan strokes are shown.

No. 1 shows the ngijengin stroke of the rice-pounders, who stand near the middle of the lesung (Fig. 101). The remaining strokes are made near the ends (Figs. 102 and 103). While these are all classified as candetan strokes, No. 2 represents the actual nyandet stroke, produced a) by knocking the stick against the inner side of the trough, or b) by dropping hot on the bottom, then knocking it against the side. The latter stroke is similar to the quick double knock of the Angklung. No. 3 represents the ngotek stroke, used in the rapid kotékan parts, beaten lightly on the outer edge of the trough. No. 4, the ngoplak or ngoplek stroke, is produced by holding the stick with both hands and knocking it sideways against the inner and outer edge. Additional strokes are the nacalin (salin, changed; contrasting rhythm), struck on the end of the ketungan, and the ngeteg, beaten on the edge. A heavy wooden mallet is generally used for these latter strokes (Fig. 103). Since the candetan performers number anywhere from two to six or seven, the rhythmic combinations are endless...

The sound of this little percussion group is lively and exhilarating. Above the deep, resonant tones produced by the rice-pounding poles, the animated polyrhythmic accompaniment clatters with tireless energy. Pounding rice in this way is known in some parts as ngebuk ongang, pounding accompanied by ongang (or ongang-ongangan), any form of organized polyrhythmic sounds. The performance is constantly varied by changing suddenly from loud to soft, creating ombak or "waves."

Various forms of rice-pounding music are known in different parts of Indonesia. On Lombok, off the east coast of Bali, I witnessed festive performances by unmarried girls and youths which took place at the time of the full moon. The girls stood in line on one side of the trough while the boys

faced them on the other. A single pole was shared by each couple, boy and girls passing it back and forth in alternate strokes. Free, antiphonal songs were sung in unison, the girls singing one line or couplet, the boys the next.

- Film: *Munyang ketungan* (Selat, 2018) - 01:00

Another manifestation of *oncangan* that McPhee does not discuss is the ritual practice often referred to as *munyang ketungan* that sometimes precedes cremations and is also common during major ceremonies known as *karya agung*. Although *munyang ketungan* 'sounding the ketungan' does not involve rice, it still reflects its agrarian origins and kinetic energy expressed through sonic presence and power. But this power is directed primarily toward deterring *niskala* 'invisible' dangers, as *somia buta*, calming or neutralizing destructive energies, forces of decay that may be attracted to such ritual. *Karya agung* are ceremonies that are held at long intervals, such as every thirty or fifty years at Pura Sanggah family temples and community temples such as *pura désa* or *pura dalem*.

### **Perspectives on *Jogéd Bungbung* in Religious Ritual & Wet-Rice Agriculture**

- Film: *Joged Bungbung Nangkluk Mrana, De Maré* - 02:00

This film sequence shot by Colin McPhee<sup>18</sup> shows a long line of girls *ngoncang bungbung*, each holding a bamboo tube vertically and pounding what in combination results in interlocking rhythmic/melodic patterns. Meanwhile other girls in ceremonial dress are doing what could be a dance or what some Balinese friends suggested could be *mapeed* 'pro-

---

<sup>18</sup> On YouTube Channel Bali1928.net: *Jogéd Bungbung Déwa* accompanied by *ngoncang bungbung* 'bamboo tubes' during Upacara Nangkluk Mrana, Pura Bedha, Tabanan (circa 1933)

cession'. The scene opens up to reveal a *trajan* bridge leading to what clearly appears to be a *badé* (*wadah*) cremation tower with nine levels.)<sup>19</sup> However, in his book, *A House in Bali*, published in 1946, McPhee has a photograph of the same girls dancing and playing the *bungbung* 'bamboo tubes', with a caption, "Every afternoon for a week the young girls from twenty villages gather to dance at a harvest festival in Tabanan."<sup>20</sup> The two activities of cremation and harvest festival do not make sense, and in *Music in Bali*, published in 1966, McPhee has the same photo with a caption that simply reads *Jogéd Bumbung* (*Melayu* or Indonesian for *bungbung*). McPhee<sup>21</sup> also wrote of *bumbung*: "still used in parts of Bali to accompany the dance sometimes performed at harvest festivals which is known as *jogéd bumbung*." Nowadays, *jogéd bumbung* is only known as one of the dances involving *ngibing*, a flirtatious social dance, and a purely *balih-balihan*<sup>22</sup> 'secular entertainment' at that. The Old Javanese is *bungbung; wungbung; wungwung*.

But Beryl de Zoete and Walter Spies<sup>23</sup> wrote in the 1930s that *jogéd bungbung* was of a totally different nature from all other variations of *jogéd* – and from what they saw, with no *ngibing*. In fact, they describe performances in Tabanan where a group of dancers are accompanied by several bare-chested women playing long bamboo tubes/poles in an interlocking but subdued manner.

To slightly revise and simplify some of McPhee's terminology with what I have encountered, the playing of bamboo poles held vertically is directly derived from the activity of pounding rice *padi* and then *beras*. With bamboo poles it is done directly on the ground and called *nebuk padi* (*buk* is dirt, dry soil). The long wooden mortar is called

---

<sup>19</sup> A cremation *trajan* is often compared with the ladder and platform (*tingga*) built for Calonarang performances.

<sup>20</sup> McPhee 1946, reprint...Also in McPhee 1966, illustration 104 with the caption "Jogéd Bumbung)

<sup>21</sup> 1966: 23

<sup>22</sup> *Bali-balihan* is a classification introduced by Listibiya in 1972.

<sup>23</sup> 1936; reprint 2002: 248

*ketungan* (the stone one is called *lesung*) and when padi or beras is in it, the pestles are long poles called *lu*, fashioned from the wood of a coconut tree (tapered toward the center to allow the alternating hands a better grip) or even *lipi lu* ‘poles thin like snakes’.<sup>24</sup>

*Munyangketungan* ‘sounding the mortar’ is still played throughout Bali during *ngabén*, *plebon* rituals, the night before the cremation, for instance. Some in Bangli told me (and this is true in many regions) it is played all night to keep the *buta-kala* transfixed and diverted, away from the *roh*, spirit of the deceased. Arya Godogan from Marga, Tabanan told us it is to “send the soul on its way.”

In McPhee’s film of the ceremony, the many *bungbung* are being hit against one long, flat, strip of wood suspended about waist-high.<sup>25</sup> Nowadays, anyone playing vertical *ngoncang bungbung* in any shape or form is taken for granted to be *karya agung*- or *ngaben*-related. However, Wayan Madra Aryasa (1942–) from Subamia, Tabanan, watched the film and remarked that the *ngoncang* reminds him of *upakara panén* ‘harvest festivals’ when he was a child. Other people we consulted in Tabanan and elsewhere asserted that because of the cremation tower, this was not a possibility for the particular context of the film. And they insisted that musical *ngoncang bungbung* is only *ngabén*- related. Several colleagues called it *bumbung gebyog* (described by Bandem and deBoer)<sup>26</sup> with *rejang* dance, but *rejang* is for *déwa yadnya* such as *odalan* ‘temple festivals’. *Rejang* is a dance, as Nyoman Astita describes, as coming from above. So if this is not an *odalan* or such, these girls would not be doing *rejang*. We visited Ida

---

<sup>24</sup> McPhee’s films of these varieties of *ngoncang* can be viewed on the Bali1928.net channel on YouTube or accessed through the Bali1928.net website.

<sup>25</sup> Wayan Dibia has been told in many places that *gebyog* is actually the name for this “instrument” involving numerous *bungbung* pounded on a thin length of wood, and that *ngoncang* describes the activity (conversation 2015). However, the word *gebyog* has not elicited any affirmations in our own research encounters thus far—rather, the term *ngoncang* has been used to describe the activity and physical means of producing the sound. Clearly, further research will yield more diverse practices and explanations, especially in the Jembrana region of west Bali.

<sup>26</sup> 1981: 94



Cokorda Anglurah at Puri Tabanan and he suggested that this could be a *plebon* 'royal cremation' at Puri Tabanan and that such a dance was called *gambuhan*. This (*gambuhan*) would have been a terminology very specific to the inner-*puri* circle and not applied elsewhere. But it made no sense to him that they were on the *trajangan* bridge: nobody walks across or dances across it during a *ngabén* or *plebon*. He said the playing of *bungbung* was appropriate to a *ngabén*, and that the nine-story *badé* is appropriate to Puri Tabanan. He explained how the long *trajangan* bridge would be used to carry the *mayat* body of the deceased over the wall of the *puri* to the *badé* tower, since people were not allowed to bring the body through the normal *candi bentar* gateway.

I visited Anak Agung Ngurah Adnya Praba at Puri Kerambitan, who was also sure the ceremony was a *ngabén* but still suggested I visit the most *lingsir* 'oldest' people I could find at Pura Bedha<sup>27</sup> just by the sea coast in Tabanan. He said that the famous *pura* further north in the mountains, Pura Batukaru, that could stage big *upakara panén*, great *subak* ceremonies involving twenty villages (as McPhee described), did not have that authority in the old days. The only *subak* 'agricultural/irrigation'-related one that had a *kahyangan* 'conglomerate of *pura désa*, *puseh* and *dalem*' under its authority earlier in the century, and before that, was Pura Bedha. I suggested to him the possibility mentioned by Arya Godogan that it could be a *Nangkluk Mrana subak* ritual and *ngabén* 'cremation' for Jero Ketut (an honorific name for *bikul* 'rats').<sup>28</sup> He found this intriguing and suggested again that I look for the oldest people around the Pura Bedha to identify the activities in the film.

*Nangkluk* derives from *tangkluk* 'reject' or 'push away' (*tolak* in Indonesian). *Mrana* means 'pest' or 'pestilence'

---

<sup>27</sup> Popularly spelled Beda but the local spelling is Bedha, with an accent on the second syllable.

<sup>28</sup> Ketut Kodi and others have explained that rats have to be respected in Bali; you show them deference, so that they do not wreak havoc. Of course it is the same with *buta kala* 'destructive elementals' and a variety of invisible forces.

(*wabah*). I suggested to Nyoman Astita the idea that the *upakara* could have been both a *ngabén* and not a harvest festival as McPhee wrote – but a *Nangkluk Mrana* and cremation of Jero Ketut. He thought this a real possibility and mentioned that, in terms of the dance, even though *pitra yadnya* ‘death rituals’ are generically clearly differentiated from *déwa yadnya* ‘deity-oriented rituals’, the truth is that with *ngabén* the soul of the deceased is still present (so a dance like *rejang* is not appropriate). But the next in the series of rituals, *mukur* (according to Ketut Kodi deriving from *muk/buk/tanah* ‘earth’ plus *leluhur/kur* ‘ancestors’, meaning the soul has become an ancestor), a dance like *rejang* could conceivably be appropriate, especially in the past, because you would be dancing with the energy coming from the ancestors.

Looking for references to Tabanan in McPhee’s *A House in Bali*, I came across this:

“It had occurred in the wrong month (there were favorable months for earthquakes, it seemed), one already marked by drought and a plague of rats in the fields. Already there had been in Tabanan a great ceremonial burning of the rats. The land was “hot,” demons were abroad, and illness would surely follow.”<sup>29</sup>

Upon reading this we asked Ketut Kodi’s 90-year-old father, *tukang tapel* ‘mask-carver’ Wayan Tangguh, about *kekeringan* ‘droughts’ and *wabah* ‘plagues’ of rats, and he remembered the big plague when he was very young in the early 1930s. McPhee was not specific about time, but one can place the year somewhere around 1932 to 1935, according to his overall narrative. Pak Tangguh told us people had no food to eat and the government was paying anyone *kutus tali képéng* ‘eight strings of Chinese coins, each holding 1000’ to bring in a great number of rats. Tangguh said that he remembered hearing about a *ngabén bikul* in Tabanan.

So, if we were correct about this, McPhee was inaccurate by describing it as a “harvest festival,” but it was still a

---

<sup>29</sup> 1946: 139

huge USABA? *upakara subak*, an agricultural ritual, and a *ngabén* all in one. And if it was indeed a combined *ngabén* and *upacara subak*, then the *ngoncang bungbung* interlocking music was appropriate for both its *ngabén* attributes and the *jogéd bungbung* (according to Spies dan De Zoete) associated with *upakara subak*.

I was still not completely confident to call the girls' movement *jogéd bungbung* as McPhee did, until I revisited a Rolf de Maré film excerpt (shot in 1938) of the same dance style described by his co-documentarian Claire Holt as *jogéd bungbung*.

- Film: *Jogéd Bungbung Tabanan* (Rolf de Maré with Claire Holt, 1938) 01:00

Participating in a two-day seminar hosted by Listibiya that included a great many prominent scholars and performing artists, I showed both the McPhee and de Maré films and discussed the evidence of a sacred *jogéd bungbung* genre as well as my confusion over the *ngabén* ceremony. But no answers arose from the ensuing discussion.<sup>30</sup>

Eventually and entirely by chance, I met I Gusti Nengah Nurata and his brother, I Gusti Putu Bawa Samar Gantang, from the Jero Tengah in Banjar Tegal Belodan, Tabanan, associated with the Puri Tabanan.<sup>31</sup> They led us to Pura Bedha to meet I Gusti Nyoman Wirata, *Penyarikan Desa Pakraman Bedha*, and I Wayan Putra, Mangku Pura Puseh Luhur Bedha, who completely solved the mystery. The ceremony filmed by McPhee was indeed a *Nangkluk Mrana, ngabén bikul* 'crema-

---

<sup>30</sup> The seminar, organized by Nyoman Astita, was on *Revitalisasi Kearifan Lokal Joged Pingitan dan Baris Upacara Untuk Memperkuat Seni Tradisi* 'Revitalizing Local Knowledge of Joged Pingitan and Ceremonial Baris to Strengthen Traditional Arts'. Listibiya is the government-sponsored 'Council for Development and Promotion of Balinese Culture'.

<sup>31</sup> Gusti Nengah Nurata is a painter and faculty member at ISI-Surakarta and Gusti Samar Bantang is a renowned poet with extensive knowledge of history. Both were instrumental in the discussion that led to our collective understanding of the film's contents in relation to Pura Bedha and its ceremonial traditions.

tion of rats' that took place at Pura Bedha. The dance was *jogéd bungbung*, but can also be referred to as *Jogéd Bungbung Déwa*, when performed in any religious ritual context. The accompaniment of *ngoncang bungbung* was totally appropriate for the *jogéd*, and the dancing onto the *trajangan* was exactly as it was done.<sup>32</sup> Mangku Wayan Putra explained that the *jogéd* dancers accompanied the ceremoniously wrapped rats being carried across the *trajangan* to the *wadah* cremation tower and after the rats were placed there, the dancers performed with their *kipas* 'fans' as depicted in the film. The *jogéd* was to make the ceremony *ngraméang* 'celebratory and lively' as a means of bringing health and tranquility to the ricefields and the natural environment as a whole. Indeed, the ceremony was both a *ngabén* 'death ritual' and a *subak* renewal ritual. The *kahyangan* conglomerate of *Pura Puseh*, *Désa* and *Dalem* 'origins, contemporary community, and the dead' is here referred to as *kahyangan subak* because it is the irrigation system that unites the region. In the greater dimension, a *kahyangan* embodies the *padmasana*: *Pura Désa* as Brahma, *Pura Dalem* as Iswara (Siwa) and *Pura Puseh* as Wisnu.

This *kahyangan subak* is believed to have existed in the 4th or 5th century, well before the 7th-century reign of Mayadanawa. Historical records and stories link it with the 10th-century reign of Darma Udayana. The pura itself is full of stone reliefs depicting the life and work of Kebo Iwa, one of two *Patih* to Sri Bedaulu (Dalem Bedaulu), the last Balinese ruler before the advance of the Majapahit kingdom from Java in the 14th century.<sup>33</sup>

One relief shows a *Nangkluk Mrana* ceremony including rats running from the ricefields. Mangku Wayan Putra

---

<sup>32</sup> As a child, Gusti Nyoman Wirata (1940–) played *ngoncang* to accompany *jogéd bungbung* for ceremonies at Pura Bedha.

<sup>33</sup> A favorite theme of *topéng* mask dance drama includes the other *Patih*, Pasung Gerigis, and tells the story of the defeat of Dalem Bedaulu to the invading minister from Majapahit named Patih Gajah Mada.

explained how the relief depicted the *subak* (members) asking for help from *Ida Betara yang malinggih di pura*, *Sang Hyang Widi* 'the deity who resides in the temple, actually the Supreme Divinity'. Kebo Iwa is portrayed as the facilitator of this activity. This was the origin of the *Nangkluk Mrana* ritual, and because it was efficacious – as the next relief shows – the people were able to have a successful rice harvest. The next reliefs depict Kebo Iwa and others engaged in rice farming as well as in constructing, along with helping villagers, a *jineng* 'building for rice storage', a *balé* 'temple platform' and other structures. He was known as an *undagi* 'architect', as a huge human figure and a large statue of him is also within the *pura*.

An important aspect of this and other rituals involves the *raja* of Tabanan, who has a spiritual responsibility for the *subak* system under his domain. In the 1930s it was Cokorda Ngurah Ketut Tabanan, who had been *disélong* 'exiled' to Lombok by the Dutch, and returned to Bali in 1917 at the time of a great earthquake. The role of the *raja* was (and is still) to exert his *sakti* 'spiritual power' to heal and purify the agricultural system. He has a *kris* 'dagger' named Ki Biru Gajah that was brought from the kingdom of Mataram in Central Java (when Surakarta and Yogyakarta were united). The interpretation provided by Gusti Nengah Nurata is that *Biru* 'blue' signifies the majesty of the sky as a source of purity and *keinginan jiwa* 'limitless hope' and *Gajah* 'elephant' alludes to greatness in spirit and *cinta kasih* 'love'. The *raja* of Tabanan submerges his *kris*, Ki Biru Gajah, into the water from a sacred spring, Pancuran Mumbul in Banjar Dukuh, in order to purify the dagger. A *pedanda* is not necessary for this but a mantra is said over the *kris*. He then walks throughout the ricefields and may place the *kris* into the water of the ricefields or the land where water should be, and the power of the *kris* is believed to cleanse and empower the forces of healing and growth in the *subak*. This ritual can be done in seasons of drought and also in the case of pestilence such as one necessitating a *Nangkluk Mrana*.

*Jogéd Bungbung* at Pura Bedha is accompanied nowadays by *gamelan gong*. One version is for *pemuda-pemudi*

‘young people’ and includes *ngibing*, but in a very polite and ceremonial style. Another takes place at the end of an *odalan* ‘temple ceremony’, during what is called *mabiasaan*, *macugaran*, wherein there will be *jogéd* with *kesurupan* ‘trance’ similar to *Sang Hyang Dedari* except that it is based on *jogéd bungbung*, but again accompanied by *gamelan gong*. *Jogéd Bungbung Déwa* is still performed for *odalan* in nearby Bongan Jawa. And *Nangkuluk Mrana* and *ngabén bikul* ‘rat cremations’ rituals continue to be performed in other regions of Bali in relation to contemporary agricultural life, but without *jogéd* or *ngoncang bungbung*.

So here we have documentation and personal recollections of *jogéd bungbung* as a ritual dance (at least in Tabanan) before it was transformed, whereupon it usurped *ngibing* dance genres as an entertainment, most certainly during the Japanese occupation, soon to be de-eroticized during the post-Independence Sukarno era – the KOKAR-Bali conservatory era – due to “a new and somewhat moralistic concern for public propriety,”<sup>34</sup> but still remaining pure fun.

### **Fertility, Eroticism and Well-being: *Jagadhita* in Gender, Cross-dressing and Androgyny in 1930s Archival Films of Balinese Dance-Drama and Ritual**

Films by Jane Belo, Gregory Bateson, Colin McPhee, Miguel Covarrubias, and Rolf de Maré with Claire Holt document a time when both male and female roles were performed by men and boys in all dance-dramas. With the exception of *légong*, which originated in 1880, girls and women danced for religious rituals as well as *jogéd*, the solo form performed for entertaining guests within some palaces and surrounding communities. But even these female dance roles were very popular as performed by boys (*gandrung*). Then beginning in the 1920s, women and girl dancers began to replace many

---

<sup>34</sup> Bandem and deBoer 1981: 93

of the men, taking on both female and many male dramatic roles. And androgynous *kebyar* styles emerged that combined male and female qualities. In the film footage from the 1930s we see boys and men performing female and androgynous roles, females performing for rituals (including *Jogéd Bungbung Déwa*) and young women performing female and male roles. Balinese dance and music have fulfilled goals of *jagadhita* in part by stimulating erotic impulses in the service of fertility – propagation of species – in humanity, agriculture – and nature more generally – celebrating the sacred in male-female union as well as in *arda narésuari*, a single being or divinity, half-male, half-female. A question arises as to how the original *Jogéd Bungbung* fit into the concept of *jagadhita*, and the speculation that the *bungbung* represent the male principle.

### Perspectives on *Gandrung* and *Jogéd*

- Film of *Gandrung* Madé Sarin - 03:00

*Gamelan pajogédan* (*gandrung*) features a collection of *rindik* 'bamboo xylophones with flat keys' each of which are suspended above bamboo resonators and played with two wood mallets. *Gandrung* and *jogéd* are as close as traditional Balinese genres get to a social dance and existed in regions throughout Bali.<sup>35</sup> While most generally considered entertainment, both can also have a role associated with *déwa yadnya* 'ceremonies directed towards deities and ancestors' and occasionally other religious rituals.

*Gandrung* is a female role performed by a young male dancer, *jogéd* being its equivalent, performed by a female. They are both related to the more formalized *légong* and performances would, in the past, and still may begin with an abbreviated selection from the *légong* repertoire, sometimes involving two or three dancers. But most crowd-pleasing and unique has always been its *ngibing* 'pairing' sections in which

---

<sup>35</sup> Other dances in this genre included *léko*, and *adar*. *Léko* is still extant in regions including Tabanan (Pan Suka of Tumbak Bayu, conversation 2014).

audience members are invited to dance (and flirt) with the performer.<sup>36</sup> *Jogéd bumbung*, a dance only performed by females, is the genre now most prominently associated with *ngibing* and a bamboo *gamelan* (using the fully round bamboo tubes tuned to *saih gendér wayang*, which has more recently come to be known as *sléndro*), but as we shall see, its history is far different.

I Madé Sarin (1918–2012), *gandrung* dancer in Ketapian Kelod, Denpasar, on various occasions gave the meaning of *gandrung* as *tergila-gila* ‘infatuated’ or ‘delirious’, *cinta* ‘adoring’, *gila cinta* ‘crazy in love’, and *rindu* ‘longing’.<sup>37</sup> The word it self conveys the erotic appeal of the dance event. A Balinese dictionary defines *gandrungan* as, “males who are *tergila-gila* ‘infatuated’ with other males.”<sup>38</sup> Ketapian musician I Wayan Kanda (1935–) heard that in the old days when Madé Sarin was still young, a man viewing from afar at what appeared to be a beautiful girl could immediately fall in love. After a performance at least ten men might linger for as long as three days in the village to visit Sarin and *ngobrol* ‘hang out and chat’, just to be near him, sleeping at the *balé banjar* just across from Sarin’s home.<sup>39</sup>

In pre-1940s Bali, *gamelan pajogédan* was the same as *gamelan gandrung*, except that one accompanied a girl *jogéd* and the other accompanied a boy costumed and performing as a female. The *jogéd* of earlier times is now called *Jogéd Pingitan* or *Jogéd Pingit*, as differentiated from *Jogéd Bumbung*.<sup>40</sup> Different contemporary scholars contextualize *pingitan* in different ways. Bandem and deBoer write: “*Pingit* means ‘secret’ or ‘selected’ and originally designated

---

<sup>36</sup> *Ibing* connotes the (more often) male volunteer dancer from the audience.

<sup>37</sup> Conversations in 2003, 2006, 2009

<sup>38</sup> Sukayana 2008: 247

<sup>39</sup> Conversation with Wayan Kanda 2014

<sup>40</sup> *Jogéd bumbung* is often in *saih gendér wayang* tuning, but the tuning in Jembrana, West Bali, is more often *saih gong (pélog)* The *kréasi* ‘creation’ by I Nyoman Rembang of Sésétan and the conservatory KOKAR, was also a “*pélog*” version. The music of *jogéd bumbung* is not made by hitting *rindik*, bamboo keys, basically flat but with a slight curve. Rather, the bamboo are rounded tubes often referred to as *grantang* (also suspended horizontally and each hit with two wood mallets).



the *Jogéd* dancers reserved for royalty. Nowadays, because of the association of the word with the sacred head-dress, it has acquired a connotation of 'holy' or 'sacred'.<sup>41</sup> Nyoman Suarka goes further to suggest that *Jogéd Pingitan* refers to the dancers being selected for a circumscribed religious context by a *betara* or *déwa* 'deity' to perform a sacred dance.<sup>42</sup> According to I Gusti Nyoman Wirata and Mangku Pura Puseh Luhur Bedha (Wayan Putra), *pingit* means, "within the specific space of a ritual or *pura*."<sup>43</sup> These are all in their own ways in agreement with the Balinese dictionary<sup>44</sup> definition as 'secluded, restricted' but which might also include 'secret'. However, Gusti Nengah Nurata (who is with us today) explains that the term is still used in Java and that in Javanese it connotes *tidak boleh keluar dari lingkaran itu yang suci* 'one is not permitted to go outside of the sacred circle or area'. Certainly, the *gelungan* 'headpiece' used by *Jogéd Pingitan* performers is most often *mlaspas* and *masupati* 'endowed with spiritual energy' and stored in a *pura*. This is frequently the case with *gelungan* for various dance genres (kept, at least, in the family household *sanggah* or *marajaan*), and includes *gelungan gandrung* kept in the *pura banjar* of Ketapian Kelod.

Both *gandrung* and *jogéd* feature the *ganderangan*, the last dance and main attraction during which members of the audience may take turns dancing with the *jogéd* or *gandrung*. In the case of *jogéd*, it is most often the dancer who chooses from amongst members of the audience. In earlier times with *gandrung*, men did not need any coaxing from the dancer, but instead would eagerly approach the dancing boy and even interrupt a previous volunteer engaged in *ngibing* with the *gandrung*. *Ngibing* can provide a chance to dance very close

---

<sup>41</sup> 1981: 90

<sup>42</sup> Paper presented at Listibiya seminar: *Kesenian Sakral: Tari Jogéd Pingitan dan Baris Upacara* (2014)

<sup>43</sup> Conversation at Pura Bedha 2015. I Gusti Nyoman Wirata is *Penyarikan Désa Pakraman Bedha* (Tabanan), *sekrataris* 'administrator' and local historian especially with regard to Pura Bedha which has an ancient history of *jogéd*.

<sup>44</sup> Yayasan Pustaka Nusantara 2008: 538

to the *gandrung* or *jogéd* and *ngipuk* 'flirt', 'seduce' or 'woo'.<sup>45</sup> The ultimate goal (within the dance itself) is *aras-arasan* 'kissing' wherein dancers would bring their faces close together without lips touching, but more as if inhaling each other's fragrance with a sinuous head movement. This occurs between two *légong* dancers in the *légong* Lasem story, or in any of a number of other dance dramas but, as can be seen in the McPhee film, a *gandrung* dancer does not allow it to get to that point.

De Zoete and Spies write (1938/2002: 242–243):

The characteristic feature of Djoged, which distinguishes it from all other Balinese dances, is that anyone may enter from among the onlookers and dance with the soloist, after she, or in the form called *Gandroeng*, he, has finished the long *Legong* solo. Old women, young women, men, and boys may all take their turn, and give free play to their personality within the limits of the style imposed by the *ngibing*, which is a quite definite one, but lends itself to comic or serious expression according to the personality or gifts of the *Ngibing* dancer. Sometimes the dance is willfully grotesque and parodistic, sometimes only by mistake. The onlookers will not be slow to show their feelings, but the *gandroeng* or *djoged* keep a perfectly grave face, and dances quite patiently with all. We need not describe again the *Legong* solo, with its birdlike turns and quick fluttering of fan and fingers, rapid gliding side-steps and ceaseless vibration, sudden folding together and expanding in height like a spring, its dazzling dance of hands...

The Dutch scholar Van Eck, who wrote in 1880, described the public dancers of the period (and is quoted in Bandem-deBoer 1981: 87):

After the course of every important cockfight there is for great and small the opportunity to test one's luck

---

<sup>45</sup> *Pangipuk* is a choreographed love-making sequence in any dance genre and in *wayang* as well.

at cards or dice. And on these occasions the public girls, or joged tongkohan are not lacking; they are sent out by their masters—the princes and headmen—for common account, to save the men and adolescents the trouble of carrying their still remaining coins home. The principal fun consists then in that one, in local fashion, may ngigel (dance) for a few minutes with such a joged tongkohan (they are called ronggeng in Java).

Thereupon there follows another freedom... After the dance has run its course, the dancer separates himself and sits among the many spectators; the girl follows him in order to get her payment, which usually consists of five to six Balinese coins, and for that wretched sum she is obliged to sit on the laps of the dancer and his friends and receive their caresses. It is disgusting to see how such a girl during half the night is pulled hither and thither and regularly tormented with the kisses and embraces of great and small, young and old, without her being permitted to resist.<sup>46</sup>

Bandem and deBoer<sup>47</sup> continue:

Jacobs, a Dutch medical doctor who traveled in Bali in 1881 on government assignment... reported that the traveler who was a guest of a Balinese prince for the first time might discover, with surprise, that the Joged dancers had dawdled after the performance to see if other entertainment, of a more intimate nature, were required. These 'private' dancers do not seem to have performed the ngiging improvisation with their audiences.

In pre-colonial times, *Jogéd Pingitan* would be performed in the *puri* accompanied by a *gamelan Semar Pagulingan* but a bamboo-keyed *pajogédan* could also be used in this setting. Outside the royal courts *jogéd* would be accompanied by bamboo *pajogédan*. The *selisir* tuning for both

---

<sup>46</sup> Van Eck 1880: 9 (2): 14

<sup>47</sup> Bandem and deBoer 1981: 88

*pajogédan* and *gandrung* is *saih gong* 'like *gamelan gong*', with a sequence of intervals, or scale, nowadays referred to as "*pélog*."

Made Sarin told us the *gamelan* from Banjar Pagan recorded in 1928 was organized and taught from the 1920s into the 30s by Nyoman Kalér, as was the nearby *gamelan* of Ketapian Kelod. Kalér, of course, was a famous *légong* teacher and creator of *kebyar* dance and music repertoire. Sarin told us he was already dancing *gandrung* at age nine (which was around 1927), and that his partner was Wayan Rindi. According to Pak Sarin, Pagan preceded Ketapian in *gandrung*, but the dance form did not take hold there and did not remain extant for long, as it did in Ketapian.

This, according to Sarin, was a result of its sacred function in the local community. *Gandrung* is still performed regularly upon the occasion of *odalan* at the *pura banjar* that falls on *Tumpek Wayang*, and occasionally in other contexts, also at the *batwos* 'request' of *ida betara* 'deities' that *sungsung* 'descend' and *makayunan masolah* 'wish to dance'. This request is conveyed through members of the congregation who experience *kerauhan* 'trance' or *pemuus* during which Sang Hyang Ida Betara *menyusun* 'the deity descends'. During the actual *odalan* ceremony members of the congregation may experience *kerauhan*, including young people who have been trained as *gandrung*. This is an unconscious state of possession, or visitation, by a deity or spirit, and may result in an unconscious and very brief variety of dance. The spiritually charged *gelungan* are present and available for such a request by a deity. If the *betara* "*makayunan masolah*" for *gandrung* in particular, a performance with *gamelan* will follow the next day, *manis odalan*, in the *jaba pura* 'area just outside the temple', which also happens to be in front of the *balé banjar*. Performed with a *gelungan* 'headpiece' that has received *mlaspas* and *pasupati* empowerment, a *gandrung* dancer might not be entirely in trance, *kerauhan*, but will still not be *sadar* 'in a conscious state'. Commonly, at the end of a dancer's performance and immediately after the *gamelan* stops playing, the *gandrung* will experience *kerauhan* and be car-

ried back to the temple for *tirta* 'holy water' from a *pamangku* 'priest'.<sup>48</sup> This is the most common sacred function of *gandrung* nowadays, but in earlier times, it was more common for the dance to be performed as *ngupah*, a ceremony in 'payment' for the fulfillment of a family's prayer for some kind of recovery of health or ability to conceive a baby and *masesaudan* or *masesangi* 'promise' to perform such a ceremony.<sup>49</sup> In the current era of medical doctors and hospitals, the practice of *ngupah* is less common, resulting in fewer sacred contexts for *gandrung* and other genres such as *barong* and *Rangda* with an assortment of *jauk*, *omang* and *sandaran* (*télék*). *Masangih* 'tooth-filing ceremonies' were, in the past, another opportunity for *gandrung* performances.<sup>50</sup>

Outside its ceremonial role *gandrung* can be performed as *balihan-balihan* 'entertainment' in a variety of contexts.<sup>51</sup> In earlier times, *nglawang* was an opportunity for performing *gandrung* and other dances such as a variety of *barong*, often, for as long as a month following the ten-day sequence of ceremonies between *Galungan* and *Kuningan* held every 210 days. *Nglawang* 'door-to-door' involves traveling by foot from village to village to perform on the road for voluntary monetary contributions. The *gandrung* group of Ketapian would *nglawang*, circling a wide area that included relatively nearby Sanur. They would also perform in hotels, especially in Sanur during the 1970s. Even in a completely "secular" performance situation, and without a specially sanctified *gelungan*, a *gandrung* dancer can experience *kerauhan* if the *betara* and forces of nature operate in such a way. Amidst these various functions, *gandrung* has always shown a variety of ways to be *nganutin* 'in accordance with' *désa kala patra* 'place-time-context'.

---

<sup>48</sup> According to Dé Ama, *gandrung* dancer and great-grandnephew of Madé Sarin (conversation 2015)

<sup>49</sup> Conversation with *gandrung* musician I Ketut Wadja in Ketapian (2015)

<sup>50</sup> Conversation with Wayan Kanda (2014)

<sup>51</sup> A formal classification created in 1972 by Listibiya uses the term *balih-balihan*.

*Gandrung* was still performed by boys until soon after 1942. It was during the Japanese occupation of World War II that girls began to perform *gandrung* and also, that *jogéd bungbung* transformed from a ritual dance to the sexy entertainment, principally for tourists and official guests, that we know today. Madé Sarin suggested that the Japanese soldiers were more interested in female beauty and that the leaders of the Japanese occupying forces thought that sexy boy dancers would undermine the morals of their soldiers, so *jogéd* was celebrated and male *gandrung* shunned.

Wayan Rindi was a unique artist and well known as one of the very few male *condong légong*, performing with Ni Nyoman Sadri and Ni Luh Cawan as *légong Kelandis* and *légong Lebah*. His niece and student, Ni Ketut Arini describes some of his background. Rindi had earlier studied *nandir*, the male precursor of *légong*, with Gusti Bagus Djelantik (of Puri Saba) at Puri Blabatuh, Anak Agung Rai Perit and Déwa Putu Belacing in Sukawati. Rindi also took on the role of being a *pajangan* 'display', sometimes in *légong* costume, during *upakara* 'ceremonies' such as at rice harvesting time. This practice continues to the present at wedding ceremonies, but the *pajangan* are now always female. Rindi happened to be considered spectacularly *jegég* 'cute', 'beautiful', so just sitting was enough to give people pleasure.

Rindi's son, Madé Netra, described that when the young Rindi was preparing to leave his house to perform *gandrung*, a throng of men from the hosting village would be waiting just outside the doorway of his home compound. They would not allow his feet to touch the ground outside, but as a group would carry him to the location of the ceremony and performance. Rindi told his son that he felt peculiar and uncomfortable as men would push and hit each other in order to get closer to their object of adulation, so as to touch him.

Indeed, *jogéd* and its male counterparts were, in the time of Bali's ruling kingdoms, associated with erotic entertainment that commonly led to sexual favors bestowed on

guests of a *raja*, or members of a less formal audience outside the *puri*.

Musical structure and themes of many *gandrung* compositions were (and continue to some extent) related to *légong*: *Jobog*, *Lasem*, *Kupu-kupu Tarum*, *Candra Kanita*, and *gandrung penyalonarangan* 'variations on *Calonarang*' such as the witch of Girah story or *Semarandana*, also incorporating the Rangda mask as the deity *betara* Siwa. But the dance style reflects the specific quality and techniques of the *gamelan gandrung*, as every *gamelan* has its distinctive style and way of playing. As musician Madé Arnawa has pointed out, the *rasa* 'feeling' of *gandrung* dance and music remains unique and distinct from *légong*, responding to the timbre and energy of the bamboo instruments and characteristic *gegebug* 'mallet technique'.

## Sampih

Madé Sarin was friends with Wayan Sampih of Sayan, Ubud, who had also studied *gandrung* with Nyoman Kaler, but very briefly. Sampih was Colin McPhee's *anak angkat* and after several attempts to teach him, Kalér declared that, "This one is like a wild animal, rough like a strong wind. But his mouth is good, and his eyes are beautiful. He will never dance well, but he could be perhaps an actor of strong parts." After some time, Sampih refused to continue with Kaler, and McPhee brought him to study *gandrung* with fourteen-year-old Ni Camplung from Bedulu, whose gentle, patient style was more compatible with Sampih's temperament. Once Sampih joined the *gong kebyar* of Peliatan, they invited Gusti Raka of Penebel, Tabanan, to teach him *Igel Jongok* (*Kebyar Duduk*), and his first major performance was at a *plebon* 'royal cremation' at Puri Gianyar.

- Film: Sampih with Gong Peliatan (Colin McPhee) - 03:00

Just as Marya had been a *gandrung* before combining male and female dance qualities in creating his kebyar dances, Sampih's training with Camplung and Gusti Raka gave him the same *bebancian* virtuosity.

Bapak Madé Sarin passed away in 2012 and we visited his 20-year-old great- grandnephew Dé Ama in 2013. Madé Sarin's daughter-in-law described how in his last year, the always energetic 94-year old, already confined to his bed, not able to walk, would hear the *gamelan gandrung* rehearsing at the *balé banjar* just across the street from his house, and would dance in bed, waving his arms and hands in the air – *gandrung* 'infatuated' till the end!