

Calung Banyumasan: Borderland Identity Through the Lens of Musical Technique

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Published online: 26 December 2023

Cite this article (APA): Hayward, S. & Kartawi, D. (2023). *Calung Banyumasan: Borderland identity through the lens of musical technique*. *Malaysian Journal of Music*, 12(2), 61-75. doi: <https://doi.org/10.37134/mjm.vol12.2.4.2023>

Abstract

The music of the Banyumas region in west Central Java contains a complex blend of cultural influences, spurred on by the influence of neighbouring regions, the institutionalisation of Javanese classical music and the spread of recording technology. The bamboo *calung* ensemble is viewed as traditional; however, most of the standard techniques, instruments and forms are relatively modern. Specifically due to this artificiality and resultant flexibility, the musical techniques that have become standard practice in *calung* can be used as a lens through which to view local identity and representation in a borderland culture. The music played by the *calung* ensemble distinguishes itself from the court music of Yogyakarta and Surakarta, while drawing on its techniques as a means for development. Elements of Sundanese music become forces for inspiration in the context of entertainment and commercialism, with expert musicians preferring incorporation above imitation. *Calung* thus acts as a site for the assertion of Banyumas cultural identity. Through interviews and musical analysis, the authors claim that Banyumas is not merely a blend of surrounding cultures, but rather a distinct sub-cultural group.

Keywords: bamboo music, Banyumas, borderland, *calung*, Javanese

Introduction

In the Banyumas region, a variety of musical forms are found. However, none can be considered more representative of regional culture than the bamboo *calung* ensemble. The *calung* ensemble is not so much a definitive marker of Banyumas culture due to its authenticity, but rather due to its history, flexibility, and even artificiality. Through the instrumental construction, techniques, and repertoire found in the *calung* Banyumas ensemble, we do not find a monolithic entity, but rather a complex convergence of musical ideas, heavily influenced by the music of neighbouring regions, educational institutions, and the spread of commercial recordings.

Banyumas lies in the westernmost part of Central Java province, along the border of Sundanese West Java. Ethnically, the resident population is predominantly Javanese. However, in many ways the Banyumas region is culturally distinct. The Javanese dialect used varies substantially from typical Javanese, often evading understanding by people from outside the area. While Banyumas culture is frequently referred to Indonesians from outside the region as a blend of Sundanese and Javanese cultures, the reality is much more complex. From the 1960s until the 1990s, *calung* experienced substantial growth and development alongside an increased interest in music from the *region*. The institutionalisation of *calung* often involved

development in the direction of Central Javanese court music, while developments toward entertainment and commercialisation have often tended toward Sundanese influence. These developments are received with varying degrees of enthusiasm by expert musicians, culture bearers, and casual enthusiasts. While most Javanese court influence is viewed as positive, Sundanese musical influence is viewed with caution and concern by many expert musicians.

The *calung* ensemble (Figure 1) marks an attempt to embrace, develop, and refine the unique characteristics of the region into an archetypal musical form. John Blacking described how people use music as part of a process of self-identification, “Thus music, which is a product of the processes which constitute the realisation of the self, will reflect all aspects of the self” (Blacking & Nettl, 1995). As such, it serves as a lens by which to understand how the people of Banyumas view themselves in a broader cultural framework. Performing arts act as a means for the communication and presentation of this identity both to insider and outsider audiences. While the classical gamelan traditions of the Central Javanese courts have been the subject of extensive research, Javanese regional performing arts traditions have received relatively little academic attention. Through retrospective analysis, we find the techniques that were adopted and somewhat standardised for use in the *calung* ensemble provide an image of cultural values and influences.



Figure 1. Calung Banyumasan

Methodology

This research was the result of two years of research in Banyumas and Surakarta from 2019-2021. For this project, we adopted a participant-observer methodology, described by DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) as “a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture” (p. 1) and engaged in substantial collaborative fieldwork as outlined by Justice and Hadley (2015). The authors in this case consisted of one culture bearer (Darno Kartawi) born and raised in the Banyumas musical culture and one cultural outsider (Sean Hayward) albeit with extensive experience in Java. During the process of research, the authors also maintained a teacher-student relationship. Our lessons included ongoing conversations about the cultural context of the music being studied; these conversations formed the basis for our fieldwork and analyses. Research methodology included direct musical study through lessons in instrumental and vocal performance, review of extant literature, extensive interviews, recordings, and subsequent analysis.

This form of interaction and research also serves as an extension of the bi-musicality described by Mantle Hood (1960). The outsider author previously mentioned endeavours here to not only become relatively fluent in the musical techniques of Banyumas, but also to actively participate in existing conversations about cultural identity within the region. The authors of this paper have chosen to work in this way for a variety of reasons. As researchers, we feel that insider knowledge allows for increased access through personal connections and relationships while simultaneously avoiding the potential missteps or

misunderstandings that may arise from a purely outsider perspective. Meanwhile, outsider knowledge allows for a broader range of opinions and a fresh look at material that may be taken for granted by active cultural practitioners. By combining our respective views, our goal has been to find a shared position that is both ethically sound and accurate.

Terminology

The term "gamelan" in this article refers specifically to the large bronze or iron ensemble associated with the Javanese courts of Yogyakarta and Surakarta. The term is occasionally used by Indonesian people to refer to *calung* as well (i.e., "bamboo gamelan"), but we will avoid this practice for clarity. When referring specifically to the gamelan styles of Yogyakarta and Surakarta, we opt for the term "court gamelan" as shorthand. For additional information on debates surrounding terminology and *calung* in general, see Anderson Sutton's book, *Traditions of Gamelan Music in Java: Musical Pluralism and Regional Identity*. (1991, pp. 72-73).

Gendhing is used as a general term throughout this article to refer to a piece of traditional music. *Lagu* refers to song. In Banyumas, these terms may be used somewhat interchangeably. For example, when a musician asks what *gendhing* will be performed next, they might ask, "*Lagunya apa?*" (tr. "What song?"). *Calung* is a term with many applications in other areas of Indonesia, and of relevance is the eponymous bamboo music of West Java. When *calung* is used by itself in this article, we are always referring to the Banyumas tradition. Banyumas is here used to refer to the Banyumas cultural region, stretching from the border of Pekalongan in the north, to Cilacap in the South, to Kebumen in the east, to the border with West Java to the west. The use of "-an" when attached to the name of a place is used in Java to denote a collection of styles or characteristics specific to that location. As such, the term *Banyumasan* will here refer to the musical styles of Banyumas. The use of double nouns i.e., *gendhing-gendhing*, *lagu-lagu*, etc. is a form of plural in Indonesian and Javanese which also implies distinct items in a set.

Performing Arts as Means for Affirming Identity in Borderland Regions

For any borderland region, artistic expression may serve as a means for asserting local identity. Kun (2005) writes about the US-Mexico border, "Outside of the grasp of the official border(s), yet informed by them, there arises a multiplicity of unofficial borders where borderness is voiced and rescued from the willful aphasia of official culture. Surely the aural border, the border that is narrated through sound, music, and noise is one worth taking seriously" (p. 144). In Banyumas, the unofficial border is an ethnic one, the separation between Javanese and Sundanese cultures is often blurred linguistically and aesthetically, but most residents identify strongly as Javanese. Despite hundreds of years of transmigration and communication, this border, unmarked by geographical barrier, plays an important role in the development of performing arts.

The aesthetics of such a region may fall decidedly on one side of the border or may express a more complex amalgamation of influences. Ayyagari's (2012) article about Manganiyar music along the border of India and Pakistan lays out how a complex intermingling of musical techniques and theoretical systems create a unique musical language and an apt representation of Rajasthan's geographical and cultural location. Because the music has almost exclusively been described in terms of Hindustani theory by other scholars, the characteristics which make such music unique have been misunderstood. Ayyagari (2012) writes,

Their music, while utilising elements of Hindustani *raga*, also draws considerably on Sindhi *surs*, a body of musical/poetic texts more closely associated with Pakistani music. The Manganiyar meld these musical systems into their own practices in order to assert their borderland identities, and ultimately complicate broader dichotomies and binaries in South Asian contemporary music (p. 3).

While assertion implies intentionality, these musical amalgams are created both consciously and subconsciously. A particular individual creates a piece of music necessarily as a result of the influences which they have been exposed to (a markedly wider frame of reference after the advent of recording technologies). However, the selection of particular materials for use will often involve conscious negotiation of suitable musical techniques, audience/patron preferences, and cultural context. When this process is extended to a wider community, the result is the affirmation of a particular identity or set of identities, reflective of the area's location geographically and culturally. Ayyagari (2012) goes on to say,

Because of these unspoken cultural links with transborder territory, songs, stories, and cultural imaginings are a way that Manganiyars articulate a relationship to a borderland for themselves and their patrons as well... Music allows Manganiyar musicians to actively and creatively maintain the cultural continuity that has been arbitrarily divided, marked, and nationalised since Partition (p. 23).

In Banyumas, the border in question is a provincial one and not a national one. As such, state narratives do not carry the same weight. However, the cultural and social divide along the border with West Java is readily apparent and figures strongly into the practice of performing arts. The process of cultural negotiation in Banyumas is most clearly visible through the *calung* ensemble.

The repertoire that is played by the *calung* ensemble is extraordinarily broad. The ensemble easily absorbs songs from folk, popular, and classical music. Pak Sudarso of ISI Surakarta, a scholar originally from Banyumas, writes that *gendhing-gendhing* Banyumasan can be divided into roughly three categories: *Kulonan* (Western flavour, derived from Sundanese music), *Wetanan* (Eastern flavour, derived from Javanese court music), and Banyumas *asli* (originally developed within the region). Pak Rasito, an expert musician and teacher highly revered in Banyumas, preferred to identify five directions of influence: Cirebon style to the north, Yogyakarta style to the south (through the traveling theatre groups along Java's south coast), Surakarta style to the East, and Banyumas itself (Rasito, personal communication, January 2, 2020). In interview with Pak Wargo, an elder musician who has been playing *calung* and its predecessors since 1954, he claimed that there were no such distinctions; all pieces played on *calung* were simply Banyumasan (Wargo, personal communication, December 1, 2020).

All these opinions are true in their own ways. The numerous interpretations and questions about what can really be considered original are fundamental to the nature of syncretism. While the specificity of Rasito's theory is useful for deeper technical study, Sudarso's (1999) three directions are sufficient for the positioning of *calung* as a cultural product. The remainder of this paper will proceed from Sudarso's notion of three directions and attempt to explain how the *calung* ensemble reflects Banyumas identity and incorporates influences from Sundanese music and from Central Javanese court music.

The three directions theory brings another important point to light. The reductionism often employed by the assertion that Banyumas is a blend between Sundanese and normative Javanese cultures ignores the innovations originating within Banyumas. The distinctions employed by Banyumas people when describing themselves serve as a means of differentiation into a third sub-cultural group, not as a means for navigating a simple binary. Campbell (2015) points out, individuals may feel freer to engage in particular kinds of cultural improvisations and multiplicities that transcend binary alterities or familiar forms of hybridity, in ways that are less possible in the "heartland" of each nation/state (p. 298). The flexibility that is afforded to Banyumas by not *belonging* entirely to either Sundanese or Javanese cultural groups allows for substantial variation and innovation, free from the constraints of cultural norms and traditions. Finally, this understanding leads us back to the truth of Pak Wargo's assertion that all influences, whether from outside or within are simply Banyumas itself.

Banyumas Asli: Distinguishing Facets of Regional Character

National identity and ethnic identity are not mutually exclusive (Nandi & Platt, 2015, pp. 2615–2634). Similarly, identifying with both a majority ethnic group and a minority sub-cultural group can occur at the same time. While most people from Banyumas are ethnically Javanese, most are eager to point out that they are substantially different in character from the archetypal Javanese coming from the cultural centres of Surakarta and Yogyakarta. These differences are complex, both in their presentation and in their perception. However, these distinctions can be summarised briefly by the following four characteristic tendencies of Banyumas people: egalitarian, agrarian, humorous, and direct in communication. These distinctions were repeatedly pointed out by all performers we encountered, and their opinions are shared by the authors. These characteristics extend to all parts of social life in Banyumas, including communication, ethics, and artistic expression.

The performance practice of *calung* music reflects these characteristics in numerous ways. Historically, the Banyumas cultural region is predominantly agricultural. A commonly repeated phrase goes as follows: *adoh ratu, cedhak watu* (tr. "far from the king, close to the rocks"). In particular, Banyumas is famous for bamboo production. Pak Yusmanto, a cultural researcher from Banjarnegara writes, "The

ordinary people of Banyumas are inseparable from the bamboo tradition. It is an important part of daily life, as a basic building material, a tool for aesthetic expression, and children's toys" (Yusmanto, 2006, p. 123). For precisely this reason, *calung* is considered by many to be more originally and authentically Banyumas than metal ensembles. This was also the reason that *calung* gradually replaced its iron predecessor gamelan *ringgeng* as the accompanying ensemble for the *lénggér* dance (Lysloff, 2002, p. 6).¹ Until the present, *calung* is very often performed by non-professional musicians who gain their income from farming. Unlike the elevated, regal nature of Central Javanese gamelan with texts often written in poetic high Javanese (*krama*) or old Javanese (*kawi*), the music played by the *calung* ensemble is for a general audience of all social strata. Song texts are also written entirely in the same Banyumas dialect used in daily life. All these factors make *calung* a worthwhile candidate for a symbol of regional identity.

Furthermore, the performance of *calung* Banyumas is typically light-hearted, encouraging spontaneity and improvisation. Unlike Javanese court music, there are very few consistent practices (*pakem*) associated with the performance of a given *gendhing*. Pieces may stop and start in unpredictable ways, feature extreme shifts of tempo, spontaneous changes to text, unrehearsed vocal interjections. At first glance, *gendhing-gendhing* Banyumas appear relatively simple or basic, consisting of only a few lines (Sutton, 1986, p. 126). As a result, the tradition is sometimes viewed as slight by musicians of the court gamelan tradition which features lengthy, complex compositions. In accordance with the enormous variability found in *calung* performance, the line between correct and incorrect is substantially more flexible in Banyumas. While straying too far from standardised playing styles might be quickly labelled as *ngawur* (doing something haphazardly or while lost) in Surakarta, the same kind of deviance poses no problem in *calung* Banyumasan. The resultant complexity of *gendhing-gendhing Banyumasan* does not come from the content of the compositions themselves, but rather through the *garapan* (roughly translated to arrangement) or the spontaneous means by which the piece is worked out in live performance. This level of tolerance and flexibility is also what makes Banyumas music particularly rich in variety, open to outside influence, and vulnerable to shifting tastes. This vulnerability is sometimes bemoaned by older musicians, particularly with regards to the influence of Sundanese popular music.

***Kulonan*: Commercialism and the Sundanese Influence**

The influence of Sundanese music on the music of Banyumas is undeniable. Written records and the prevalence of Sundanese *calung* (a different but related instrument) across West Java make it likely that similar instruments first developed there before undergoing substantial transformation and adaptation in Banyumas. Although the incorporation of Sundanese repertoire and techniques are increasingly commonplace, the degree to which this should be acceptable is a matter of substantial debate amongst musicians. Some of the repertoire referred to as *kulonan* adopts only the melody of a Sundanese song, while other pieces combine even Sundanese and Javanese lyrics (songs such as *Renggong Manis* or *Blendrong Kulon*). Instrumentally, while there are certain, limited similarities to Sundanese *calung* techniques, there are no resemblances strong enough to imply direct transference or incorporation. The only exception to this is in the performance of *kendhang* (the barrel drums used to accompany music across Java (Figure 2).

For example, in Sundanese music, it is common practice to use the foot to pull ropes attached to the head of the *kendhang* to shift the pitch of the drum. While the pitch shifting technique has been present in Banyumas for a long time, it did not used to be considered an integral part of the style. According to Pak Tamiarji (Figure 3), an expert musician and builder of *calung* since the 1950s, in early periods, pitch shifting was only used sparsely as a form of coloration; the player did not use ropes but rather placed the heel directly on the head of the drum. The drum was positioned on a level stand, requiring the player to lift their heel off the ground to reach the head (Tamiarji, personal communication, December 5, 2020).



Figure 2. Kendhang Banyumasan



Figure 3. Mbah Tamiarji

However, all of that changed in the latter half of the 20th century. In the 1970s, a new style of music emerged from West Java: *jaipong*. This style features extremely intense drumming, using a large, rounded

drum (now referred to simply as *kendhang jaipong*). This drum lends itself to extreme changes in pitch while playing. In order to assist with this technique, the *kendhang* is placed at a slant, bringing the large drumhead to the ground, closer to the foot. Through cassette recordings, *jaipong* rapidly became popular throughout the archipelago, especially within Java (Sutton, 1985, p. 29).

During the 1970s, one *kendhang* player was influential in bringing this technique to Banyumas, Pak Sukendar (Figure 4). Although there were innumerable *calung* ensembles playing in Banyumas at the time, Pak Sukendar was running one of the most popular groups, *Langen Budaya*, performing almost every day. While in a recording session in Bandung, West Java, Pak Sukendar witnessed Sundanese musicians using this pitch shifting technique. Upon returning to his home in Banyumas, he began experimenting with pitch shifting techniques, placing the *kendhang* at a slant, and placing additional drums around his set up (Sukendar, personal communication, January 3, 2020). However, the patterns that he was playing remained firmly rooted in Banyumas tradition. This technique has since become a hallmark of talented *kendhang* players in Banyumas. By the 1980s, musicians were incorporating Sundanese instruments, particularly for pieces that were considered Western in style.



Figure 4. Pak Sukendar (left), with musicians of Langen Budaya

However, during the 1990s, as the display of flashy technique became more highly valued than adherence to a particular form or pattern, *kendhang* players began imitating *jaipong* directly, creating a disconnect from the *lènggèr* dance and the typical drumming patterns of Banyumas music. This departure from *kendhang Banyumasan* is frequently bemoaned by older musicians, who feel that the style is losing its character (Wargo, personal communication, December 1, 2020). While the ability to play *jaipong* music more or less directly is sometimes marketed as the ability to play in multiple styles, for expert musicians in Banyumas, the ability to incorporate rather than imitate is much more impressive and valuable.

The distinction between incorporation and imitation is viewed as key to avoiding the loss of cultural identity. Younger musicians operating outside of the institution may view this as an outdated, conservative attitude and will often note that musicians must adhere to a changing market. However, it seems that the loss of local identity feared by older musicians is a valid threat. The departure from musical norms in Banyumas has become more radical with the spread of another popular music: dangdut. As a result, combinations with drum set, keyboard, bass, and other Western instruments have become more and more commonplace, in some cases even replacing traditional ensembles.

From this example, we can see that the height of *calung* performance and technique was accelerated by the incorporation of Sundanese influences. However, that same tolerance has resulted in a perceived watering-down of the tradition and for many older musicians, a loss of local identity. The extent to which such incorporation is acceptable varies from one musician to the next. Thus, influence of Sundanese music is treated somewhat cautiously and even viewed as a corrupting force. When looking to the east, we do not

find the same phenomenon. The classical music of Central Java has been looked to consistently for inspiration and development since the 1960s. The incorporation of musical techniques, instruments, and styles has not been seen as a threat, but rather to elevate and expand the vocabulary of the ensemble.

Wetanan: The Influence of Javanese Court Styles and Institutionalisation

Before the 1960s, *calung* was a relatively simple, village art form. The ensemble was smaller, consisting of only two *gambang* (a horizontal xylophone with suspended bamboo keys, in Figure 5), *kendhang*, and a *lènggèr* dancer (also serving as the vocalist or *pesindhèn*). The other instruments of the *calung* ensemble, including the *dendem*, *kenong*, *gong bumbung*, and additional *gambang*, can be considered to a certain extent, auxiliary. By accounts of all elder musicians interviewed, all these additional instruments came to their current state of development at some point before the late 1960s. Many musicians claim that their addition was itself an attempt to elevate the respectability of *calung* to that of the gamelan, while others argue that the additions were in simple service of volume, vibrancy, and strength of accented unisons (*cem-ceman*) (Yusmanto, personal communication, August 4, 2020).



Figure 5. *Gambang calung*

Expansion of the Calung Ensemble

By the accounts of Pak Wargo and Pak Tamiarji, the earliest *kenong* typically had only three keys (Tamiarji, personal communication, December 2, 2020; Wargo, personal communication, December 1, 2020). This instrument played a simple repeating pattern which did not change according to the *gendhing* being played, but rather served only to mark out the form, create a rhythmic overlay, and keep time. In contrast, the modern *kenong* has six keys (Figure 6). This arrangement allows for the lowest key to function as the *kethuk* (a single kettle gong), and the other five keys to function as the *kenong* (a series of larger bossed kettle gongs), in direct imitation of their bronze correlates in court gamelan. Although it is entirely common for a single player to be responsible for both the *kethuk* and *kenong* in Javanese gamelan, their combination into a single horizontal array seems to be unique to Banyumas. A similar arrangement can be found in the gamelan *ringgeng* ensemble (the iron gamelan which preceded *calung* as the primary accompaniment for *lènggèr*).



Figure 6. Kenong calung



Figure 7. Dendem calung

The *dendem* is the most recent addition to the *calung* ensemble (Figure 7). This instrument is responsible for playing the *balungan*, a skeletal version of the melody in each piece of Javanese music. The concept of the skeletal melody itself is a direct influence from Javanese court style gamelan. In *calung Banyumasan* (as in other forms of Banyumas music, the vocal line is considered to be the primary melody and there was never a strong need for any form of reduction)(Tamiarji, personal communication, December 5, 2020). The concept of *balungan* was projected onto Banyumas music from Javanese court music, and its integration only became stronger with the founding of SMKI Banyumas (to be discussed later in this article).



Figure 8. *Gong bumbung*

One of the most unusual instruments of the *calung* ensemble is the *gong bumbung* (Figure 8). Rather than being a struck instrument, this is an end-blown bamboo tube gong. It consists of two bamboo pipes, one smaller tube that functions as a mouthpiece inserted into a larger tube that functions as a resonator. Similar blown gongs can also be found in Bali, Madura, and in East Java. In *calung*, it serves the function of a large gong, marking the end of each cycle in the musical form. Despite its fascinating construction and playing technique, one of the most interesting aspects of the *gong bumbung* is how often it is omitted. Without amplification, the instrument itself is relatively quiet, almost inaudible beneath the rambunctious struck percussion.

Additionally, when there are not enough players, it will typically be the first instrument left out of the ensemble. This presents a stark contrast to the grand importance of the gong in gamelan. This once again points to the primacy of the vocal line in *Banyumasan*. The flow of a composition is fundamentally determined and felt through the structure of the vocal line, not the structure of the *balungan* or the formal structure of the *gendhing*. In modern performance, amplification is commonplace. The *gong bumbung* is often amplified to a ridiculous degree, imitating the often over-driven, distorted, booming tone of the metal gong in village gamelan performances.

All these additions reveal the influence of court music and the intention to create a grander, louder presentation, pushing *calung* beyond its humble beginnings. As Pak Yusmanto explained, these instruments were added in order that the ensemble could be played in the *pendhapa* (a large roofed platform in Javanese architecture, typically used for performances of gamelan). In other words, the additional instruments were intentionally added to allow *calung* the opportunity to play in a more formal context where gamelan might normally be used, rather than for pure entertainment. The development of *calung* and its popularity directly led to its imminent institutionalisation.

Development of Musical Techniques through Institutionalisation

Anderson Sutton was one of the most active scholars studying the music of Banyumas in the 1980s. Sutton (1986) describes a process of standardisation and development which occurred in the traditional arts of Banyumas in the late 1970s and 80s; indeed, this period is now considered by many musicians to be the peak of Banyumas performance practice. . In particular, the *calung* ensemble and the *lènggèr* dance that it accompanies reached the height of their popularity at that time, coming to serve as symbols for Banyumas culture. The crystallisation in question occurred in part due to the spread of recording technology and their

use as teaching materials, and in part due to the development of educational institutions teaching Banyumas-style music.

In the 1970s, the popularity of Banyumas songs exploded in Java, largely due to the influence of Ki Nartosabdho, a *dhalang* (shadow puppeteer) and ensemble leader originally from Semarang, Central Java (Petersen, 2001). The popularity of Ki Nartosabdho's recordings and performances, along with several successful efforts by Banyumas groups in gamelan competitions, led to a growing interest in the region as a source of cultural wealth. This led to the development of SMKI Pemda Banyumas (now known as SMK Negeri III Banyumas), a high school entirely devoted to the arts. The select artists who were chosen to lead this school played a strong role in the development and institutionalisation of arts in Banyumas.

One such individual was Pak Rasito (Figure 9). In the early 1970s, Pak Rasito was tasked with recording ten full albums of Banyumas music. Despite being born in the Banyumas Regency, Pak Rasito's education and expertise was entirely focused on court style gamelan. In order to fulfil this request, Pak Rasito travelled around the Banyumas area for six months collecting regional songs. Shortly thereafter, he was tasked with organising the founding of SMKI Banyumas (Rasito, personal communication, January 2, 2020). To this day, the curriculum offered at SMKI consists of 50% Banyumas style, and 50% Surakarta style. During our research in Banyumas, we rarely encountered a young *calung* musician who was not a graduate of SMKI.



Figure 9. Pak Rasito

Although practice courses were available for Banyumas and Surakarta style classes, theory classes were only offered for Surakarta-style gamelan, and as a result, the nomenclature from this style was increasingly applied to Banyumas art forms (despite in many instances not being entirely appropriate/applicable). The simple fact that all musicians trained in *calung* are also being trained in Surakarta court-style gamelan along with the openness to variation and innovation in *calung* playing, virtually guarantees that the styles will be closely linked. Since the inception of SMKI, the forms and patterns of Banyumas music have undergone substantial standardisation, only furthered by the introduction of Banyumas-style courses at the arts university in Surakarta. When the same material is taught to a larger number of students, as in the case of a high school or college class, the resultant modes of playing generally tend to be more similar than what might occur in traditional teaching contexts. This is made more pronounced by the increased use of notation (as opposed to oral transmission) within educational institutions.

The primary melodic instrument of the *calung* ensemble is the *gambang* and its common playing techniques form a particularly apt example of the court influence. There are two identical *gambang* used

but are referred to as either *gambang barung* or *gambang panerus* based on the role they play in the ensemble during performance.²The standard playing techniques of *gambang* fall into one of three categories: patterns that imitate/develop upon classical Javanese *gambang* patterns, patterns that originate uniquely in Banyumas, and patterns that are the spontaneous invention of the player themselves. These styles of playing are often combined within a single piece, and their relative frequency is determined by the overall feel and regional flavour of the *gendhing*.

The *kendhang* determines the overall tempo, and the *gambang* player chooses their playing technique accordingly. The *gambang barung* typically has three choices depending the style of the piece, and on the tempo at a given moment (from fastest to slowest): *mbalung/ngelagu*, *imbal*, and *gambangan*. In general, the *gambang* player will opt for the fastest technique which they are able to play at any given moment. In other words, if the tempo is slow enough and the *gambang* player is capable, they will opt for a technique involving a more rapid division of the beat. In turn, the *gambang panerus* chooses their playing technique according to the technique of the *gambang barung*.

In *mbalung/ngelagu* technique, the *gambang barung* plays the pitches of the vocal melody or the *balungan*. It is critical to point out that a talented player will always opt to follow the vocal melody rather than the *balungan* when possible and will refer to this technique as *ngelagu*. In interview, Mbah Tamiarji confirmed this and stated that *mbalung* was not, in fact, a technique used in *calung* playing, but that the player is actually following the vocal melody (Tamiarji, personal communications, December 2, 2020) This is a specific instance of classical terminology being applied to folk arts (and in this case, in a potentially misleading fashion which may have influenced the technique itself). This is now the least frequently used of the three techniques, usually only occurring momentarily in unison with the voice, or at the beginning of a particularly fast section (Figure 10).³

Balungan	⑥ . i . 6 . i . 5 . i . 5 . i . ⑥	
Gambang Barung	⑥.6.i.i.6.6.i.i.5.5.i.i.5.5.i.i.⑥.6	Mbalung

Figure 10. Mbalung technique

The most predominant and characteristic playing technique for *gambang calung* is *imbal*, an interlocking technique between the *gambang barung* and *gambang panerus* (Figure 11). This technique is said to imitate the *imbal* in Central Javanese gamelan, but the patterns played are exclusive to the *calung* ensemble. There is a dominant basic *imbal* pattern and numerous common variations. The variations used are not typically discussed beforehand but occur spontaneously during performance. The live improvisation of new patterns during performance is also common.

<u>Irama I</u>		
Balungan	. i . 6̇ . i . 5 . i . 5 . i . ⑥	
Gambang B.	.i.5.i.6.6.3.6.5.6.3.6.5.i.5.i.⑥	
Gambang P.	6.6.3.6.5.5.2.5.5.5.2.5.6.6.3.6.⑥	

Figure 11. Imbal technique

The source of the standard *imbal* pattern most frequently used in *calung* is unclear. However, two possibilities are the most likely: 1) the pattern developed originally within the *calung* Banyumasan ensemble, or 2) the pattern originally developed in the earlier gamelan *ringgeng*. Mbah Wargo, a *ringgeng* and *calung* musician active since 1954, asserted with equal confidence that both were true (Wargo, personal communication, December 1, 2020). Most of a typical *calung* performance will be dominated by the *imbal* technique.

If the tempo is relatively slow, or the piece is Eastern in style (drawn directly from court-style gamelan), the *gambang barung* player may switch to *gambangan*. The two hands of the play long octave-unison lines approaching important tones in the vocal melody (Figure 12). These patterns or *cèngkok* closely resemble *gambang* playing in court-style gamelan (occasionally even identical). According to Mbah Tamiarji, the use of *gambangan* is an entirely modern innovation, spurred on by the increasing influence of court gamelan. In periods prior to 1965, the *gambang* played only *ngelagu* or *imbal* (Tamiarji, personal communication, December 2, 2020). The increase of the *gambangan* technique in *calung* performance is undoubtedly due to the institutionalisation of Banyumas style music and the growing number of trained gamelan musicians involved with its practice. However, there remain some key differences between how this technique is used in *calung* as opposed to the gamelan.

Balungan	.	i	.	6	.	3	.	2
Gambang B.	6̣6̣6̣1	2356	356i	6̣2̣ị6̣	2̣ị6̣3̣	3̣3̣3̣3̣	ị2̣6̣ị	2̣ị3̣2̣
Balungan	.	5	.	3	.	2	.	①
Gambang B.	6i2̣3̣	2̣3̣2̣3̣	i2̣65	3653	6532	1265	3561	632①

Figure 12. *Gambangan* technique

The primary differences for *gambangan calung* are the following when compared to court-style *gambang* playing:

1. In *calung*, the two hands tend to remain together more often and have less independent movement. However, should the player have extensive experience in other styles of music (or simply get bored), they will often interject patterns with greater variation between hands.
2. The repertoire of *cèngkok* contains more extensive variation in *calung* Banyumas. Many musicians have their own patterns and there is still a relative lack of standardisation, despite the increasing number of musicians with formal education. This is partially due to the prominence of the *gambang* in the *calung* relative to its role in gamelan. *Gambang* players in *calung* naturally develop their abilities and patterns so as to remain continually interesting to both the audience and themselves.
3. Hanging patterns (*gantungan*) are used less frequently, and the player will typically opt for continual motion. While in court gamelan, a general sense of stability with motion toward an important goal tone is acceptable, *calung* requires the feeling of constant momentum and drive.

By maintaining these distinctions, the patterns of court-style *gambang* playing retain their Banyumas character and are fully incorporated into the ensemble. The close relationship of *calung Banyumasan* and court-style gamelan is mostly due to the backgrounds and fluencies of the players. At the present time, there are almost no *calung* musicians who do not also play gamelan, and none were encountered during our fieldwork. Despite this closeness, there seem to be no concerns on behalf of Banyumas musicians (at least not expressed to the authors) that the tradition will be lost or corrupted due to the influence of Javanese court music. Banyumas is Javanese and the intermingling of *calung* with Javanese court styles presents no existential threat, unlike the concerns expressed regarding Sundanese music. Through the development of *gambang* techniques and the addition of numerous instruments related to Javanese court-style gamelan, we find that the *calung* ensemble has drawn substantially on the other tradition, in particular Surakarta. However, this influence is not perceived as a problem, but rather as a means to strengthen and expand the vocabulary of the ensemble. This is an affirmation that Banyumas people consider themselves to be firmly Javanese, simply distinct in character than the Javanese of Yogyakarta and Surakarta.

Conclusion

The Banyumas area is home to a complex intermingling of cultural influences and ideas. The reality of how this blending emerges as a discrete local identity is different from region to region, era to era, and even

person to person. While sometimes described as a mix between Javanese and Sundanese culture, how these influences are expressed and incorporated into an entirely distinct cultural identity reveals greatly subtlety in how the people of Banyumas view their position in the cultures of Java. In looking at the *calung* ensemble, we find a condensed representation of how the artists of the Banyumas region wish to view and present themselves. Tradition is often thought of as something solidified over time, but in certain instances it can just as easily be a modern creation (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2012). *Calung* is an artificial tradition to some degree (presented as a traditional ensemble, but only coming to its current form in the late 1960s); just as the Banyumas identity is a construction, a shared belief in a set of characteristics and ideals. Similar to what Ayyagari (2012) observed in Rajasthan, “As musicians create their own musical and cultural boundaries from the bottom up, defying those national boundaries determined from the top down, music is then symbolic of those struggles over defining geopolitical boundaries” (p. 6).

The *calung* ensemble presents Banyumas people as firmly Javanese through their direct relationship to the courts of Central Java. In the 1970s and 80s, this influence was emphasised and became much more readily apparent through Banyumas music. At the current time, most of the terminology used to describe the instruments and their techniques are directly taken from Javanese gamelan. We also find a large amount of material that has been developed locally in Banyumas, with a strikingly different character from the music of Surakarta and Yogyakarta.

While Sundanese influence can be heard using pitch shift in *kendhang* playing and the use of Sundanese songs, these elements undergo substantial transformation when used in *calung*. Anytime Sundanese musical elements are directly imitated in *calung* Banyumasan performance, this is viewed by older musicians and experts as a degradation and a corruption of local identity and character. By maintaining a certain degree of distance from Sundanese material and emphasising incorporation over imitation, the culture of Banyumas asserts its relationship to the border with West Java. As such, Banyumas positions itself at once as Javanese, but distinct from the “other” Javanese. *Calung* forms a site for Banyumas people to emphasise the ways in which the culture differs from other Javanese subcultures through the use of spontaneity, exuberance, humour, and an overall attitude of egalitarianism and inclusiveness. In this sense, *calung* is a microcosm, a lens through which we gain a better understanding of the intricate complexities of Banyumas culture.

Acknowledgements

The authors express their sincere gratitude to Institut Seni Indonesia Surakarta, California Institute of the Arts, The Fulbright Program, AMINEF, and Paguyuban Ebeg Banyumas, for their sponsorship and support during this research. Additional thanks to the musicians and cultural researchers interviewed, in particular to Pak Rasito and Pak Sukendar for their boundless expertise and generosity.

Endnotes

¹ *Lènggèr* is the most popular form of traditional dance in Banyumas. In earlier periods, the dancer also acted as the vocalist or *pesindhèn* during performance.

² In earlier periods the terms used varied widely. The now-standardised use of these terms is, in itself, reflective of court gamelan influence where the terms *barung* and *panerus* are used in a variety of situations.

³ Note regarding notation: when only one line is written, it is referring to the right hand. The left hand plays the same tones, one octave lower. When the hands differ, two lines will be written out. The notation used here is the *kepatihan* notation typical for Javanese music.

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