

## **Improvisation in Balinese Music: An Analytical Study of Three Different Types of Drumming in the Balinese *Gamelan Gong Kebyar***

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### ABSTRACT

*Gong kebyar* emerged in early 20th century and was initially an instrumental genre. In its later advancement, the ensemble became accustomed to accompanying dance compositions, which are decorated with miscellaneous dance improvisations corresponding to the characteristic style of *gong kebyar*. There are three types of Balinese drumming that are considered improvisational, in particular the styles that are played in the repertory of *gamelan gong kebyar*. *Gamelan gong kebyar* is the most popular and influential genre of twentieth century music developed in Bali. In *gamelan baru*, the function of the drum (in Bali it is called *kendang*) in the ensemble is more important than it was in older styles and it is considered to be the leader of the ensemble. Drummers are skilled musicians and usually teachers, who know all of the parts that are played by other instruments in the ensemble. *Krumpungan*, *Cedugan*, and *Gupekan* are examples of drumming style that gives incorporate the idea of improvisation, though in Bali we do not have a special term for improvisation. We do however have the same ideas and sense of the meaning of improvisation itself in the way some drumming is played spontaneously in the course of performance, by using drummer's abilities to create spontaneously new pattern on stage. There are some important aspects that need to be underlined in creating those patterns, such as: melody accompaniment, dancer's cues, good partnership (in *krumpungan* and *cedugan*), and the ability to lead the ensemble. Those aspects have the prominent role in the achievement of drum improvisation in the performance. Drumming improvisation remains something that has to be learned more comprehensively in the future. It is still an abstract concept for many musicians as well as Balinese gamelan lovers.

Keywords: improvisation, drumming, kendang, gong kebyar.

### ABSTRAK

*Gong kebyar* muncul pada awal abad ke-20 dan pada mulanya merupakan genre instrumental. Dalam perkembangan selanjutnya, ensambel tersebut menjadi terbiasa dengan komposisi tari yang menyertainya, yang dihiasi dengan improvisasi tari yang berbeda sesuai dengan gaya khas *gong kebyar*. Ada tiga jenis drum Bali yang

dianggap improvisasi, khususnya gaya-gaya yang dimainkan dalam repertoar gamelan *gong kebyar*. Gamelan *gong kebyar* adalah genre musik abad ke-20 yang paling populer dan berpengaruh yang dikembangkan di Bali. Dalam gamelan baru ini, fungsi drum (di Bali disebut *kendang*) dalam ensambel lebih penting daripada pada gaya lama dan dianggap sebagai pemimpin ensambel. Drummer adalah musisi yang terampil dan biasanya adalah guru, yang tahu semua bagian yang dimainkan oleh instrumen lain dalam ensambel. Krumpungan, Cedugan, dan Gupekan adalah contoh gaya drum yang memberikan ide improvisasi, meskipun di Bali tidak ada istilah khusus untuk improvisasi. Namun di sini ada ide yang sama dan rasa makna improvisasi itu sendiri dengan cara memainkan beberapa drum secara spontan dalam jalannya pertunjukan, dengan menggunakan kemampuan pemain drum untuk menciptakan pola spontan baru di panggung. Ada beberapa aspek penting yang perlu digarisbawahi dalam menciptakan pola-pola tersebut, seperti: iringan melodi, isyarat penari, kemitraan yang baik (dalam *krumpungan* dan *cedugan*), dan kemampuan untuk memimpin ensambel. Aspek-aspek tersebut memiliki peran penting dalam pencapaian improvisasi drum dalam pertunjukan. Improvisasi drum tetap sesuatu yang harus dipelajari lebih komprehensif di masa depan. Ini masih merupakan konsep abstrak bagi banyak musisi dan juga pecinta gamelan Bali.

Kata kunci: improvisasi, drum, kendang, gong kebyar.

## INTRODUCTION

In this paper I will analyze three types of Balinese drumming that are considered improvisational, in particular the styles that are played in the repertory of *gamelan gong kebyar*. *Gamelan gong kebyar* is the most popular and influential genre of twentieth-century music developed in Bali. In the Balinese gamelan classification, *gong kebyar* is considered *gamelan baru* (Sugiarta 2006, 66).<sup>1</sup> *Gong kebyar* emerged in early 20th century and was initially an instrumental genre. In its later advancement, the ensemble became accustomed to accompanying dance compositions, which are decorated with miscellaneous dance improvisations corresponding to the characteristic style of *gong kebyar* (Bandem 2006, 2). “*Gong*

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<sup>1</sup> *Gamelan baru* means new *gamelan*. There are three different categories according to age; *tua* (old), *madya* (middle age), and *baru* (new).

*kebyar* adopts an assertive and self-aware stance of independence from prior musical categories and functions, an attitude that is clearly audible in the music's gesture and rhythm, even at first encounter" (Tenzer 2000, 4).

In *gamelan baru*, the function of the drum (in Bali it is called *kendang*) in the ensemble is more important than it was in older styles and it is considered to be the leader of the ensemble. Drummers are skilled musicians and usually teachers, who know all of the parts that are played by other instruments in the ensemble (Tenzer 1998, 48). The lead drummer has the authority to lead all of the passages in the music by answering signals that are given by the dancers, underscoring their movements, and also directing beginnings and endings, controlling tempo and dynamics, and signaling repetitions and colotomic entries (Asnawa 1991, 20). It is my observation that in Balinese *gamelan baru*, the *kendang* is a leader in much the same way as the conductor of a western orchestra, except the conductor does not play in the ensemble.

Two studies have been done on Balinese drumming improvisation. One of those is written by Michael Tenzer, a foreign scholar who has devoted thirty years to studying Balinese gamelan. In his impressive book, *Gamelan Gong Kebyar; The Art of Twentieth Century Balinese Music*, he focuses on meter and Balinese drumming, including the possibility of improvisation in one chapter.<sup>2</sup>

He described and analyzed comprehensively all aspects of the style that are used particularly in *gamelan Gong Kebyar*. He also recorded many master drummers in the 1980s, as a part of his research. I was inspired by the way he uses his approach to examine and analyze Balinese drumming, particularly in terms of improvisation (Tenzer 2000). The other study that had been done on improvisation in Balinese drumming is an article called *The Mridangam of Southern India and The Kendang Gupekan of Bali: A Comparative Study*, by I Wayan Rai, S., a Balinese ethnomusicologist. In this article, Rai only focuses on one style of Balinese

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<sup>2</sup> In chapter 7 on *Gamelan Gong Kebyar; The Art of Twentieth Century Balinese Music*, Michael Tenzer talks about "meter and drumming."

drumming called *gupekan* and compare it with the *Mridangam* of South India. This comparative study shows the similarities and differences in the way that Balinese *kendang* players and the *Mridangam* players improvise in the course of performance (Rai 1994).

Balinese drums come in pairs, and the style that is using a pair drums together is called *kendang metimpal*. The lower-pitched of each pair is designated as *wadon* (female), and the higher-pitched is designated as *lanang* (male). The word *metimpal* means “to be a friend”, and refers to two *kendang* that direct the gamelan using composed patterns that interlock perfectly with each other (Bandem 1982, 45). Drumming styles that considered as *kendang metimpal* is *krumpungan* (in the ensemble of *pelegongan* and *pengarjaan*), *cedugan* (in the ensemble of *Gong Gede* and *Gong Kebyar*), *kekebyaran* (in the ensemble of *Gong Kebyar*) and *kendang angklung* (Sukerta 1998, 86).

There are three different types of drumming style that allow improvisation, known as *krumpungan* or *krempengan*, *cedugan* or *pepanggulan*, and *gupekan* (Sukerta 1998, 86). These styles are played in various kinds of repertory in many different Balinese gamelan ensembles.<sup>3</sup>

*Krumpungan* is a drumming style using two small *kendang* and performed by hands or fingers alone, never using a mallet. It is commonly used in the repertory of *gamelan pelegongan* to accompany a dance piece called *legong* and other related music, but also can be played in the repertory of *gong kebyar*. The term *krumpungan* comes from the root word “pung”, which is a vocal imitation of the drum sound. *Cedugan* drumming style incorporates the use of a mallet in the right hand, and is also played by two persons, but using two larger *kendang*. It is commonly used in the repertory of *lelambatan*, classical pieces for temple ceremonies, and played on the *gamelan gong gede*. This type is also often played in the repertory of *gong kebyar*. In both drumming styles just mentioned, there are certain musical situations that allow

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<sup>3</sup> Currently, at least thirty different types of ensemble can be found in Bali. See Sukerta. 1998, *Ensiklopedi Karawitan Bali*, MSPI Bandung Indonesia.

the two *kendang* players to improvise together, though some kind of agreement or rule should be followed by both drummers.

*Gupekan* is a style of drumming using large or medium size *kendang*, depending on the repertoire that is played. *Gupekan* drumming is played by only one person, using bare hands, and is also commonly called *kendang tunggal* (solo drumming). In this style, the *kendang* player can improvise, though usually degree of freedom may be limited and combined with other segments in which the drumming is fixed. However, the chance to choose patterns is still open and most players use the opportunity to train their powers of invention and use their skill.

The ability to create improvised patterns that are perfectly synchronized with the melody according to accepted Balinese aesthetic is the most important aspect.<sup>4</sup> Even if a *kendang* player plays very well and produces complicated patterns by himself (without melodic accompaniment), he would be considered a good player only if this patterns are unified with the melodic accompaniment. As my teacher always said to me, “yen mekendang didian luwung, sing karwan nden yen be misi gamelan nyak luwung, pang nyak nyelah ajak gendinge” (even if you can play *kendang* very well by yourself, that is no guarantee that it will sound good when you play it with the accompaniment of gamelan; it should be perfectly matched with the melody). Although most Balinese musicians are able to play the *kendang*, it is not easy to achieve recognition as a *kendang* player. To be a good drummer requires more than great dexterity and physical skill (Asnawa 1991, 22). The *kendang* player also has to coordinate the accents and dynamics of the gamelan with the movement of dance as well as achieve a balance between his own virtuosity and his role as coordinator or the music and dance; the two roles are inseparable.

Good drummers should train from a young age.<sup>5</sup> As John Kratus said in his article, *Growing with Improvisation*, improvisation is a highly sophisticated, technically demanding behavior and should be taught only after a student has

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<sup>4</sup> Something that I hope to have a chance to study more or doing a research in the future.

<sup>5</sup> Personal experience; chatting and interviewing many friends who are drummers in Bali.

developed their musicianship and performance skills to an advanced level (Kratus 1991, 35). This idea is possibly inapplicable for some other types of music, because students are sometimes taught to develop their skills of improvisation from the beginning of the process of learning. However, Kratus' idea relates to Balinese music. Students are taught basic composed patterns at the beginning and learn to improvise only after they have mastered those. It is important to stress again that patterns fit with the melody. Patterns produced spontaneously in the course of performance will be considered "right" if they fit with the melody. The characteristics of the melody itself are also important in determining what kind of drumming that should be created in order to match with it.

#### DISCOURSES ON IMPROVISATION

The term improvisation is not commonly used for Balinese drumming. In Bali we usually call it *bebas* (free), and the word *bebas* is also adopted from the Indonesian language but it has a different meaning than improvisation. Hardja Susilo wrote in his article *Improvisation in Wayang Wong Panggung; Creativity within Cultural Constraints*, he mentioned that the term improvisation is indeed western and, though used by some in its Indonesianized form (*improvisasi*), is imprecise in its application to what Javanese do (Susilo 1987, 11). He also point out that some of the term that are applied for Javanese gamelan, discusses in more appropriately to the words and gestures of dancer and actors than to the music performed by gamelan players and singers. In this section, I will discuss the definition of improvisation, referring to scholarly writing. Is it applicable for Balinese music?

Generally, musical improvisation is the spontaneous creative process of making music while it is being performed. This definition is specifically or implicitly accepted in all general discussions. As Philip Alperson said in his article; "it will probably be agreed by all that improvising music, in some sense, a spontaneous music making" (Alperson 1984, 17).

In an article about jazz, Gould cited Alperson's idea that even though

improvisation is widely understood as spontaneous music making, the most important aspect is going beyond the score (Gould and Keaton 2000, 144).

Many scholars and cultures have their own definitions of improvisation, which is based on the characteristics of music of each culture studied. The role and degree of improvisation in each culture is different (Bailey 1980, 3). Therefore, I prefer Neil Sorrell's cautious statement that is cited in the article about improvisation in Javanese gamelan by R. Anderson Sutton, saying that, "Because the word 'improvisation' has no absolute meaning it must always be used with care and myriad qualifications" (Sorrel in Sutton 1998, 70).

For scholars in musicology, the concept of improvisation involves the distinction and relationship between composed music and pre-composed music (Nettl 1998, 10). This concept shows that improvisation is an end product, which is based on the concept of musical work as a foundation to build on. As it is explained in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*: "The creation of a musical work, or the final form of a musical work, as it is being performed" (Horsley 1980, vol. 9, 31). Improvisations consists of simultaneous invention, and excludes fixed writing as well as the realization of an extant work; rather it can result from the practitioner or performer's characteristic as an individual person in the performance practice. As in Balinese drumming, drum players practice composed patterns in advance, and when they improvise, they usually use the same patterns they practice every day. However, skilled and experienced drummers use Balinese aesthetic feeling and ability to perfectly match patterns with melody spontaneously.

In another case, the definitions of improvisation found in music dictionaries and encyclopedias show that there are two conflicting views of improvisation (Nettl 1974, 2). Some sources state that in non-western, and particularly tribal music, the musicians learn by rote, or there is an absence of notation, and they thus consider this music improvised. Others have tried to limit the idea of improvisation to notated music, within which, the musician may improvise.<sup>6</sup> It is really hard to say which one is

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<sup>6</sup> See more about this issue in Bruno Nettl's *Thought on Improvisation: a Comparative Approach*.

correct or incorrect. Both ideas are dependent on how much latitude we will allow in defining improvisation. And also, “improvisation”, like “freedom” or “music”, is a concept or idea that brings us face to face with the formidable problems of translation (Blum 1998, 28).

Many scholars have tried to use language as an analogy to musical improvisation. “Much musical performance is much like a linguistic event” (Gould and Keaton 2000, 145). Both are in some sense utterances. Human have to learn all vocabularies in order to be able to talk with others or in some speech, they will “improvise”, based on all vocabularies and grammar. Similarly in music, musicians learn basic patterns or vocabulary of musical elements at first, in order to be able to start improvisation (Wollner 1963, 16). Those elements of music are combined, to form a unity that express the improviser’s concept and produce fluent music making. This idea is similar to what gamelan musicians are doing in order to start improvisation and this includes *kendang* players as well. In order to improvise, *kendang* players should have pre-composed patterns, completely naturally and easy in their heads, and when they perform, they order the patterns to fit with the melody and colotomic structure. *Kendang* player also have to create spontaneously composed patterns based on cues from the dancers. All of these activities are combined simultaneously to form what I call improvisation in Balinese drumming. However, I will use the term improvisation guardedly, because in some segments where freedom is allowed, there are further limitations that are created by the feeling of the given melody and meter.

## ANALYSIS OF *KENDANG* IMPROVISATION STYLES

In this section I will analyze those three drumming style mentioned above by using two examples, such as: basic and improvise pattern in each style. I will limit my discussion, using recorded samples of pattern recorded on multiple tracks by one drummer, and analyzing them in a comprehensive study based on my own experience as a drummer. I will also analyze some basic variations and

ornamentations that are commonly known and learned by *kendang* players, even though each *kendang* player has their own variation or style of drumming pattern. These basic variations are prepared and practiced everyday, and will be used as a foundation in improvising *kendang* patterns in the performance. At times the player has the opportunity to improvise, though his improvisations are limited by the melodic structure of the piece; the *kendang* part must fit within the structure of the repertory rather than being independent of it. There are certain rules that provide musical boundaries, but still give some opportunities to spontaneously create new patterns in the performance.

### Variations and Improvisation in *Krumpungan* Style

Improvisation in *Krumpungan* has some different names, such as *krempengan* (because of the important sound of *krempeng* in the left hand in the pattern of *kendang lanang*), *pengarjaan* (because it uses in the ensemble that is accompanied *Arja* dances drama), and *kendangan batel* (a drumming style called *batel* that uses two-beat cycles in its colotomic structure).<sup>7</sup> Balinese artists mostly do not care about the precise usage of these terms. Usually, in every place or village, musicians will use them depending on the repertory and which ensembles are used.

I will start my analysis in *krupungan* style by choosing one meter, called *gegaboran* (8 beats cycle), which can support my approaches to this style. This type of meter is usually used in the opening scene of *gambuh* dance drama, *calonarang* dance drama, and in the *legong* genre. In my examples, I will use a *krumpungan* drumming pattern that is accompanied by the melody from *legong jobog* dance, a *legong* dance based on a Ramayana story.

In *krumpungan* improvisation, *kendang lanang* leads. The improvisation part played by the *lanang* is syncopated, but the drummer always keeps a strong orientation to the beat with the “t (tep)” soft right hand strokes (see transcription).

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<sup>7</sup> The *batel* meter is also presenting when the *kendang* player is called to improvise. *Kendangan batel* is also used in other types of colotomic structure such as *bapang* (4 or 8 beats cycle) and *gegaboran* (8 beats cycle).

This is because of the function of *lanang* as a leader; the *lanang* has to focus more on the dancer, in order to receive all his cues, and transfer the cues to other players, as well as to lead dynamic changes, tempo, and beginning and endings. Logically, in this situation *lanang* does not have the chance to improvise on the pattern. This opinion contradicts with what Michael Tenzer's explanation in his *Gong Kebyar* book. In the chapter of that talk about *krempengan* style, he said, "*Lanang* improvisation is generally more syncopated than *wadon's* and, because of the ringing of p (peng) and U (pung) strokes, acoustically more prominent" (Tenzer 2000, 292). But, according to my teacher, I Dewa Nyoman Sura, even though the sound of *lanang* is more prominent, its does not mean that its patterns should be more syncopated. *Lanang* should still focus more on transmitting cues from the dancer and leading the ensemble.

The *wadon's* role is to offset the *lanang* with occasional D (dag) emphasis, and to improvise in a more syncopated rhythm. *Wadon's* patterns are dominated by the strokes k (kom), D (dag), and K (ka), and maintain close interaction with the patterns of the *lanang*. However, its figuration does not have to be perfectly interlocked, as long as there is a well directed conversation between *lanang* and *wadon* by emphasizing some connected strokes. For example: p (peng) and T (tut) in *lanang* and k (kom) and D (dag) in *wadon* should be well balanced and not play at the same time. Usually, the *wadon* will give an emphasis of D before the end of the cycle (gong), and *lanang* will answer it by giving an emphasis on T after the *wadon*, but still before the gong. This is an example of a basic pattern in which those strokes fit together:

The figure shows a musical score for three parts: Kandang lanang, Kandang Wadon, and Melody. The Kandang lanang part is in 2/4 time and features a repeating pattern of eighth notes with subpatterns 'a' and 'b'. The Kandang Wadon part is also in 2/4 time and features a repeating pattern of eighth notes with subpatterns 'a' and 'a''. The Melody part is in 2/4 time and features a repeating pattern of eighth notes with subpatterns 'k t t k t K t k' and 'k t t k t K t k'. Below the score, the beats are labeled: i, u, e, o, i, u, e, o.

Figur 1: Basic variation *kendang krumpungan* showing D-T interaction before gong (CD Track 1)

Note the subpatterns [tPtP/tpT] on *lanang* and [kttk/tKtk/] on *wadon* that are repeated, and used as a foundation of improvisation in both drums. Each drummer usually knows or can easily guess what kind of pattern that their partner will play; once that pattern is played by one drummer, the partner will readily recognize it and answer it with a proper interaction pattern to match with it. In this situation, drummers use deep musical feeling<sup>88</sup>, that usually can be achieved if you already have long experience playing drum with the same partner. This is an example of how drummers play improvisation in the same melody as figure 1:

<sup>88</sup> Something that I hope I will have a chance to explain it comprehensively in another research project.

The figure shows two cycles of improvisation. Each cycle consists of three staves: Kendang lanang, Kendang wadon, and Melody. The time signature is 2/4. The lyrics are: i u e o i u e o.

**Cycle 1:**

- Kendang lanang:** t P t P t p p T t P t P t p p T t p p T t p t p p T t p p T
- Kendang wadon:** k t t k t K t k k t t k d D t k d D t k t k k d D t t k d D t k
- Melody:** i u e o i u e o
- Beats:** G 2 3 4 M 6 7 8

**Cycle 2:**

- Kendang lanang:** t P t P t p p T t P t P t u u T t p p T t p p T t p p T p T p T
- Kendang wadon:** k t t k t K t K t K t k k d D t t k t k t k k d D t t k t k t k
- Melody:** i u e o i u e o
- Beats:** G 2 3 4 M 6 7 8

Fig. 2 Lanang and Wadon improvisation (CD Track 2)

This example shows improvisation in both parts developed from the basic variation shown in figure 1. As we can see in the *lanang* pattern, the sub pattern [tPtP/tpT] is used at the beginning of the phrase, and elaborated in the part that is close to the end of the cycle, occasionally emphasizing the p and T strokes before the gong. The same thing is happening in the *wadon* part. The sub pattern [kttk/tKtk/] is maintained at the beginning of the phrase, but there are more variations happening in the middle part through the gong (last cycle). As mentioned above, *lanang* should really keep the patterns synchronized with the beat, in order to keep the beat stable and send a clear signal. Because of this, it would be inappropriate for the *lanang* player to play in a too- syncopated rhythm. However, in the less intense interaction with dancers, the *lanang* player will have more freedom to elaborate their patterns with syncopated rhythms.

### Variations and Improvisation in *Cedugan* Style

Improvisation in *cedugan* style is called *batu-batu*. *Batu-batu* is played in *gilak* meter. It is right away open to improvisation after the gong in the meter. In a long repeated meter, each *kendang* player will alternate the function as an improviser or the leader; at the beginning, *wadon* will improvise and *lanang*, as a follower drum will support the improvised pattern of *wadon* by giving a short pattern that is repeated through the meter, and vice versa.

The figure shows three musical staves. The top staff, labeled 'Kendang lanang', has a time signature of 2/4 and a key signature of one flat. It contains a repeating rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The middle staff, labeled 'Kendang wadon', also has a 2/4 time signature and one flat key signature. It features a more complex rhythmic pattern with various strokes labeled 'K', 'D', and 'P'. The bottom staff, labeled 'Melody', is on a treble clef staff with a 2/4 time signature and one flat key signature, showing a simple melodic line. Below the melody, there are labels for 'Beats' and 'Gong' (G) and 'Pr' (Prayer) strokes.

Fig. 3. Basic variation of *Batu-batu* (CD Track 3)

This basic variation in figure 3 is commonly known to every drummer in Bali. The follower drum (*lanang*) provides a short repeating left hand part, in which all strokes fall either on beat or halfway between the beat [*..P./..P./P.../P.P.*]. The leader interlocks with this by placing the left hand strokes (*K* or *P*) unpredictably in a syncopated rhythm, and using more and more *D* or *T* stroke as the gong gets nearer. The most important idea in this *batu-batu* improvisation is the idea of keeping left hand strokes interlocked (between *K* and *P*) while the *D* stroke is like “dropping *batu*” (rock) in a “proper way”; putting *D* or *T* in a small sub patterns of one or two beats long. This is an example of *batu-batu* improvisation that is based on the basic variation (fig. 3):

Kendang lanang

Kendang wadon

Melody

Beats: G 2 3 4 G Pr 7 Pr G 2

6

Kendang lanang

Kendang wadon

Melody

Beats: 3 4 G Pr 7 Pr

Fig. 4. Batu-batu improvisation (CD Track 4)

### Variations and Improvisation in *Gupekan* Style

As mentioned before, *gupekan* style is commonly called *kendang tunggal* and is used to accompany a solo dance in which the dancer has an opportunity to give *angsel* cues spontaneously. In this analysis, I will only analyze *kendang tunggal* that accompanies one particular solo dance called *Jauk Keras*,<sup>9</sup> using *bapang* (8 beats cycle) type of meter. Melodic and colotomic instruments provide static repeating phrase in *bapang* meter, while the dancer and the *kendang* player provide the foreground in the performance and confronted each other like a contest. The *kendang* player will play his improvised part and has to be ready to respond to the

<sup>9</sup> Jauk keras is a mask solo dance. The characteristic of this dance is strong because is telling the story of the king of demon.

signal of *angsel* cues provided spontaneously by the dancer. *Angsel* responses should be placed in a special place that is related to the meter. For instance in *bapang* meter, the *kendang* player will give a signal by playing loud two beats before the gong, and starting on the gong all instruments provide *angsel* together and will suddenly stop before the next gong arrives.

In *kendang tunggal*, the basic stroke vocabulary consists of the right hand D (dag), t (tep), d (soft dag) and u (cung), and the left hand P (pak), d' (prolonging dag sound), and u' (prolonging cung sound). Also P and u, normally *lanang* stroke names, are applied to the *wadon* for solo drumming. The imitation or secondary sound of D and u can be produced on left hand (d' and u'), enabling the drummer to play a sequence of identical sounds by alternating hands. Playing in this way, there are often found pairs of consecutive u strokes in the right and left hand. Consecutive D strokes can also be achieved in this way, creating a prolonged bass resonance.

Usually, *kendang* players will have their composed pattern or favorite pattern that they prepare or learn in advance. These patterns are like a foundation or vocabulary that drummers will choose from while they improvise in the performance. Below are eight different kinds of short composed patterns (1 or 2 beats long), that I recorded myself, playing my basic solo drumming pattern:



The figure displays a musical score for 'Kendang tunggal' (CD Track 5), showing eight basic variations. The score is organized into four systems, each consisting of a 'Kendang' staff and a 'Melody' staff. The 'Kendang' staff uses a double bar line and rhythmic notation to represent drum strokes, with specific patterns labeled as the 6th, 7th, and 8th patterns. The 'Melody' staff uses a treble clef and a key signature of one flat, with lyrics (a, i, o, u) written below the notes. The variations are as follows:

- System 1 (Measures 18-21):** Labeled '6th pattern'. The Kendang staff shows a sequence of patterns: t P P t, t P t P, P t t P, t P P t, t P P, u u u, and t P d D P d D. The Melody staff has notes for 'a i o u a i o u'.
- System 2 (Measures 22-25):** Labeled '7th pattern'. The Kendang staff shows patterns: t P d D P d D, t P d D P d D, t P d D P d D, and t P d D P d D. The Melody staff has notes for 'a i o u a i o u'.
- System 3 (Measures 26-29):** Labeled '8th pattern'. The Kendang staff shows patterns: u D u u d D d' D, t P t P t P P D, and t P d D P d D. The Melody staff has notes for 'a i o u a i o u'.
- System 4 (Measures 30-33):** The Kendang staff shows patterns: D D D D, d D d' D, t P t P t P P D. The Melody staff has notes for 'a i o u a i'.

Fig. 5. Eight basic variation of *kendang tunggal* (CD Track 5)

The patterns in the first three cycles (measure 1 until 12) are related because they are developments of the first pattern [.tPu/.tPu/], adding different strokes one beat before. The fourth [PtPt/PtPt/] and fifth pattern [tPtP/PttP/tPpt/] in measure 13 until 21, are related as well, because the fifth pattern a development of the fourth one. The last three patterns (measure 21 until 33) are related to each other as development of the sixth pattern [.tPd/DP. D/].

Based on these basic patterns, according to my experience, drum players will



Fig. 6. *Kendang tunggal* improvisation based on the basic variation. (CD Track 6)

This improvisation part is obviously showing its motive relation to the basic variation part. In the third cycle (measure 9 until 12), those patterns [.tPu/.tPu/, .tPD/.tPu/, and .D.D/.tPu/] are chosen and arranged it in one eight beats cycle, and in the fifth cycle (measure 17 until 21), using the same pattern as the fifth pattern on the basic variation's part in figure 5 (measure 17 until 21). Some development of the pattern is added, like at the beginning through the second gong cycle and using this particular pattern [.dDd'/D.tP/tPtP/Puuu/] often used at the end of the segment. For instance: on the 6th and 7th pattern (measure 21 until 29), both are using this same idea of it ending (on the 6th one, showing the different at last beat after the gong). This is the idea of how *kendang* player develop their ability to improvise, by learning basic composed patterns taught by their teacher, and developing them spontaneously in the performance. However, experienced and skilled *kendang* player may not depend on basic variations. They usually expressed and used their

sensitivity to melody and all dancer cues, and respond to them in a proper pattern based on accepted Balinese Aesthetic. There is much more about this particular drumming style that needs to be learned and discussed, due to the constrain of time, I will not talk about *angsel*, the idea of how drumming patterns answering cues from dancer and can be matched with melody, in Balinese sense, by giving an accent or underlining dance movement.

## CONCLUSION

*Krumpungan*, *Cedugan*, and *Gupekan* are examples of drumming style that gives incorporate the idea of improvisation, though in Bali we do not have a special term for improvisation. We do however have the same ideas and sense of the meaning of improvisation itself in the way some drumming is played spontaneously in the course of performance, by using drummer's abilities to create spontaneously new pattern on stage. There are some important aspects that need to be underlined in creating those patterns, such as: melody accompaniment, dancer's cues, good partnership (in *krumpungan* and *cedugan*), and the ability to lead the ensemble. Those aspects have the prominent role in the achievement of drum improvisation in the performance.

Drumming improvisation remains something that has to be learned more comprehensively in the future. It is still an abstract concept for many musicians as well as Balinese gamelan lovers. How to construct the pattern that are perfectly synchronized with melody according to accepted Balinese aesthetic? Thus, we can not really tell how much the concept of improvisation in a western sense is applied in Balinese drumming in general. Hopefully, I will have a chance to write about improvisation more deeply in a different occasion.

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