The composition of central Javanese gamelan music chosen for analysis in this chapter exemplifies many of the techniques evolved in Java for distorting and enriching symmetrical, periodic melody. It is perhaps no surprise—yet nonetheless a wonder to contemplate—that this venerated large ensemble music, largely founded upon such elegant and logical binary structures, allows for them to be stretched to the limits of perception in ways that challenge and satisfy listeners and performers alike. We shall examine the extent of at least some of these distortions in one particular performance, relating them back always to their regular substrate and the conventions that govern the tradition as a whole, and in so doing provide a reading of the music as flexible, multidimensional, and, in many aspects, anything but regular.

The Indonesian island of Java is home to an enormous variety of musical traditions, including a number of regional gamelan traditions. In this country of roughly five thousand inhabited islands and more than two hundred ethnolinguistic groups, each with its own particular approaches to music-making, the Javanese represent the largest single group, numbering more than seventy-five million. The music under consideration is associated with the court city of Surakarta (known more familiarly as “Solo”) and the inland areas nearby; and if we visited regions within central and eastern Java remote from Solo we would likely find musicians playing at least some music in Solonese style, though other styles persist. If we travel to the western portion of the island, the province of West Java, we would encounter a substantially different set of traditions, not “Javanese,” but “Sundanese.”
The piece we explore, *Ladrang Pangkur* (CD track 13) is not attributable to any known composer, living or deceased. It is known to have existed in some (probably many) forms for several centuries at least, and many musicians have contributed to the actual shapes that it takes in performance. The performance here, dating from the 1970s, is by Condhung Raos, one of the top two or three gamelan groups of Java from the late 1960s through the 1980s, under the direction of master musician-composer-shadow puppeteer Ki Nartosabdho (1925–1985). The performance is part of a medley from an audio cassette commercially released by a company no longer in existence and widely available throughout central and eastern Java during the late 1970s and 1980s.

Although not every Javanese is intimately familiar with gamelan music, all have heard it in public ceremonies, family rituals (especially weddings and circumcisions), and through the mass media (radio, television, and recordings). The extent to which casual listeners are aware of the structure of the music—the relationships between the many parts heard simultaneously and the shape given by the musicians to the piece as it unfolds—is difficult to say. Although many Javanese would claim little or no “theoretical” understanding of gamelan music, most would know, for example, that the sounding of one of the largest hanging gongs articulates the largest phrases of the piece, that the musicians respond primarily to the drummer’s signals for changes in tempo and dynamics, and perhaps that the main melody (called *balungan*, lit. “skeleton,” “outline”) is generally played by some or all of the single-octave metallophones (*saron*). Many have had at least some instruction in gamelan music during primary or secondary school, and others may have more extensive experience. What we intend to convey in this chapter is something approaching what gamelan musicians themselves and knowledgeable gamelan music lovers would “hear” and “understand” in the particular rendering of a single piece of music. *Ladrang Pangkur* is one of the best known and most frequently played items in the entire repertory, which consists of several thousand pieces generally identified as “traditional” (i.e., known for at least several generations), and a rapidly growing body of new, mostly light pieces composed since about 1950 (after Indonesia gained its independence from the Netherlands).

As Tenzer points out (see chapter 6) with respect to Balinese gamelan music, Javanese gamelan music seems to play with our sense of time, stretching and compressing it through its unique approaches to rhythm and tempo. The performance we have chosen undergoes a number of shifts in tempo, both gradual and abrupt, leading the knowledgeable listener through eight succes-

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1. For a short biography of Ki Nartosabdho, told mostly in his own words, see Sutton (2002:307–312).
sive statements of a main phrase, followed by one statement of a (partially) contrastive phrase. In a variety of interesting ways, the underlying sense of repetition is constantly disrupted and obscured by changes in tempo, changes in emphasis on different instrument types and voices, and omission and substitution of melodic material. Indeed, in comparison to the way many Javanese pieces are performed, this one is among those that frequently undergo some of the most radically playful alterations, in which the basic framework is, as we have indicated in the chapter title, “flexed” (but not broken). A number of textbook descriptions of Javanese gamelan music\(^\text{2}\) stress the regularity and recursive-

2. Including a chapter by one of the current authors; see Sutton (2002).
ness of gamelan musical formal structure and performance practice, its binary symmetry and predictability. Indeed, the simpler renditions of the simpler pieces are remarkably regular, recursive (some would say monotonously repetitive), and predictable. Yet musicians of even modest accomplishment do not limit themselves to the simpler renditions of simpler pieces. Most would readily attest to the greater musical depth and aesthetic delight taken in playing and listening to pieces performed with changes in tempo and with melodic variation, pieces whose performance leads the listener through differing aural worlds, corresponding to different moods and different technical challenges.

**Javanese “Compositions” for Gamelan Ensemble: Gendhing**

Javanese refer to compositions for gamelan ensemble with the word *gendhing*. They may use the term *komposisi* (an Indonesianization of the *compositie*, the Dutch word for “composition”), but usually in reference either to the process of composing, or to a new work in which most or all of the parts have been determined by a composer. A printed collection of “compositions” would normally contain all the parts written out, perhaps with additional verbal explanation by the composer as to how parts should be realized. A *gendhing*, by contrast, takes its particular shape in performance. Multiple performances of the “same *gendhing*” can actually differ quite substantially from one another, but will share at least the same, or very similar main melody (*balungan*), and the same or very similar patterns of punctuation by the large gongs and other punctuating gong instruments. Details of melodic variation, number of repetitions, tempo, and dynamics are all at least partially determined in performance, often in response to the unique demands of the dance or puppet drama they accompany, though limited by a shared knowledge of prior performance conventions (what we might call a shared knowledge of the “tradition” of rendering that particular *gendhing* and others of similar structure and mood).

Javanese *gendhing*, as realized in performance, produce a complex texture that some have characterized as “stratified polyphony” (Hood and Susilo 1967) others as “heterophony” (Sutton 1993, *inter alios*). One useful way to conceive of the texture—that is, the nature of simultaneous sound structures—is to think of the following layers:

1. a main melody, or melodic skeleton (*balungan*), is usually played by single-octave metallophones;

3. Three performances of the Javanese *gendhing* *Ketawang Puspawarna* are compared in Vetter (1981).
2. This main melody is punctuated in a (mostly) regular, repeated pattern known to musicologists as “colotomic” punctuation, played on various knobbled gong instruments, some hanging vertically, others mounted in wooden cases;

3. Other melodic instruments, playing at faster densities (usually 2, 4, 8, 16, or 32 times faster than the beat of the main melody), provide melodic elaboration, in complex heterophonic relation to the main melody and to each other (and to the vocalists, if present);

4. (In many, but not all gendhing), voices and several non-percussion instruments perform less rhythmically rigid, sometimes florid melodic lines; these include fiddle (rebab), flute (suling), a florid vocal line performed by a solo female vocalist (pesindhèn), and a more rhythmically regular vocal line performed by male chorus (gerong), all in heterophonic relation to the main melody, to each other, and to the elaborating instrument parts;

5. One or two drums (out of three at the drummer’s disposal) sound patterns which may simply be gongan (the melodic phrase between consecutive strokes of the largest gong)-length ostinatos (played on the largest drum or a combination of the largest and smallest drum) or more complex and lively patterns, usually originating from dance or dramatic accompaniment (played on the middle-sized drum).

These five layers are all interdependent and involve complex codes of interaction in performance, a topic thoroughly explored by ethnomusicologist Benjamin Brinner in his book on competence and interaction in Javanese gamelan music (1995).

Ladrang Pangkur

Rather than proceeding with further generalizations about gendhing we turn now to Ladrang Pangkur, or, to give its complete designation, Ladrang Pangkur laras sléndro pathet sanga. The full title of the gendhing conveys important information about formal structure (ladrang), the particular melody (Pangkur), tuning system/laras (sléndro) and mode/pathet (sanga).

The word “ladrang” tells us the pattern of punctuation used: the large hanging gong (gong ageng) plays every 32 beats, marking off the largest cyclic phrase unit, known as a gongan; the large horizontal kettle gong (kenong) plays every 8 beats, marking off the secondary phrase units, known as kenongan;\(^4\) a

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\(^4\) In Javanese and Indonesian, plural is not marked when implied from context; thus, we speak of a piece in *ladrang* form having four *kenongan* (not four “kenongans”).
smaller hanging gong (*kempul*) plays at the midpoint in the second, third, and fourth *kenongan*; and the small, single horizontal kettle gong (*kethuk*) plays on the second and sixth beat of each *kenongan*. Thus, the *kenong*, *kempul*, and *kethuk* each mark different levels of subdivision of the 32-beat *gongan*, interlocking to form a regular, recursive pattern as follows (with *t* standing for *kethuk*, *n* for *kenong*, *p* for *kempul*, *w* for *wela*, a “rest” in the punctuation, and *g* for *gong*, sounding simultaneously with every fourth *kenong* stroke): t w t n t p t n t p t n/g. The *kenong* strokes mark the quarter points in the cycle (*1/4* of the way through, *2/4* of the way through, etc.), the *kempul* (or *wela*) mark every other of the eighth points (*1/8* of the way through, *3/8* of the way through, etc.) and the *kethuk* every other of the sixteenth points (*1/16* of the way through, *3/16* of the way through, etc.). These audible guideposts make for a highly predictable sequence that, especially in more complicated pieces, can actually help musicians and dancers keep (or regain) their bearings, knowing “where they are” in the flow of the piece. As we will see in the analysis below, referring to these structure points is essential in understanding both the frame and the flexing thereof.

The word “*Pangkur*” identifies the main melody of this piece as distinct from the many hundreds of other such melodies with *ladrang* structure. In the narrower sense, this is the core title of this *gendhing*. By itself, the term *pangkur* refers to one of more than a dozen common sung poetical forms, differentiated from one another by verse structure (number of lines, number of syllables per line, and final vowel of each line) as well as melody. In fact, there are several different *pangkur* melodies, all with the same verse structure, each melody identified by additional words: *Pangkur Dhudha Kasmaran* (“Widower/Divorcé in Love” Pangkur), *Pangkur Ngrenasmara* (“Enjoyment/Pleasure of Love” Pangkur). Sometimes the *pangkur* that forms the basis of the *gendhing* we have chosen is referred to as *Pangkur Paripurna* (lit. “Whole/Complete” Pangkur) although there is nothing “incomplete” about the other *pangkur* melodies.

The words “*laras sléndro*” tell us in which of the two tuning systems (*laras*) the *gendhing* is played. *Sléndro* is a tuning system (in this case also a scale system) involving five tones per octave, separated by nearly equidistant intervals (each larger than a major second and smaller than a minor third). The other tuning system is *pélog*, comprising seven tones per octave, with uneven intervals, ranging from roughly a minor second to a minor third. Many whole pieces in *pélog*, or phrases within them, employ one of several possible pentatonic scales built of small (S) and large (L) intervals (e.g., S, L, S, S, L, etc.). In fact, *Ladrang Pangkur* can be played in two different *pélog* scales, with contours mostly similar, but intervallic structures markedly different from one another.

The final portion of the full title tells us the Javanese modal (*pathet*) category in which the *gendhing* is played. In *sléndro* there are three *pathet* in all (*nem*, *laras sléndro*...
sanga, and manyura), usually interpreted as differing in register (nem being the lowest, manyura the highest), but in actuality determined by a number of factors, including featured and avoided tones, contours, and their positions within the formal structure of the gongan. Although Javanese musicians and theoreticians discuss and argue more extensively about pathet than most other aspects of Javanese music, it is not essential for an appreciation of this performance. Had we time and space to analyze a large number of gendhing, questions of pathet designation would emerge naturally. Suffice it to say at this point that musicians whose parts are partially created as they perform must have a sense of the pathet of the gendhing in order to make idiomatic choices.

A great deal has been written and published already about the instruments of the Javanese gamelan and the singers that often join with the gamelan music for performances of gendhing such as Ladrang Pangkur; in fact, nearly all gamelan performances in recent times involve singers and a large combination of instruments, both “soft-playing” and “loud-playing.” Besides the punctuating gong instruments already mentioned, the “loud-playing” ensemble consists of three octaves of single-octave metallophones (saron), two kettle gong chimes (bonang), and a set of three drums (kendhang). The “soft-playing” ensemble incorporates the florid melodic playing of a two-stringed fiddle (rebab) and end-blown flute (suling), and the rhythmically regular and binary elaborating instruments: multioctave metallophones (gendèr), xylophone (gambang), zither (celempung or siter), and a soft-playing, single-octave metallophone (slenthem) that usually is also played for “loud-playing” style as well. Note that in current practice, the “loud-playing” instruments keep playing, albeit softly, for pieces or sections of pieces in “soft-playing” style. In most cases, when the soft-playing instruments are used, vocalists also join the ensemble, usually consisting of female soloists (pesindhèn) and a small male chorus (gérong).

**Treatment (Garapan): Realizing Ladrang Pangkur In Performance**

The performance we have chosen to analyze exhibits a number of features that are typical in most or all performances of this particular gendhing, or of all ladrang, or even of all gendhing. For example, nearly all gendhing begin with a melodic solo introduction (buka) joined first by the drum and then the other instruments at the first gong stroke. In many cases the buka identifies the gendhing to knowledgeable listeners; and in this largely oral tradition, musi-

cians may not be informed beforehand what gendhing they will be playing, or in what order, but will recognize the buka and play appropriately. The buka played for this performance is most closely associated with Ladrang Pangkur, but in fact can be used for several closely related pieces as well.

In the course of our analysis, we need to cover a number of topics. These include the following: tempo levels (irama), changes between levels (I, II, III, and IV), and resultant melodic expansion and contraction; various kinds of instrumental variation (simultaneous and sequential); contrastive drumming styles and signals; male and female vocal melodies, vocal solos, and vocal text; and the dynamics of interaction among musicians as the gendhing is performed. See the key to transcriptions for information.

In its most basic, reduced form, Ladrang Pangkur (here in laras slendro pateth sangâ) consists of a 32-beat melody, often conceived and taught as a succession of eight measures (gatra) of four beats. (Slight variations of this melody exist, but this version is standard within the Solonese tradition.) For close to one hundred years, the notation system used most frequently to represent this and other gendhing basic melodies (balungan) is a cipher system. The main transcriptions we will analyze for the remainder of this chapter are given in standard Western notation, modified to accommodate, as best as possible, the musical features of gamelan music. But readers should know that Javanese almost never use Western notation to learn or study gamelan music. Instead they would write the basic 32-beat melody of this version of Ladrang Pangkur as follows, each line representing a kenongan of eight beats, that is, two gatra. A slightly larger space is given between the two gatra than between the individual numerals within each gatra, not to indicate greater rhythmic duration but simply to make it easier to see each gatra as one unit, comparable to a measure or bar in Western music:

\[
\begin{align*}
2 & 1 & 2 & 6 & 2 & 1 & 6 & 5 \\
6 & 5 & 2 & 1 & 3 & 2 & 1 & 6 \\
2 & 3 & 2 & 1 & 5 & 3 & 2 & 1 \\
3 & 2 & 1 & 6 & 2 & 1 & 6 & 5
\end{align*}
\]

This notation has not only proven very practical (compact, easy to read, easy to type or enter on a computer), but also shows the binary symmetry that characterizes the ladrang form. Indeed, most Javanese musical forms are based on

6. This “basic” version is the one played at the faster tempo levels (irama I and II); a more elaborated main melody, in some sections containing two melody tones per structural beat is played at the slower tempo levels (irama III and IV).
a comparable symmetry, with the number of beats per gongan equaling some factor of 2 (i.e., 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, or 256 beats per gongan).

The Macro-Form

Now, let us take a close look at figure 7.1, what we are calling the “macro transcription,” which shows the introduction (buka), and saron melody and colotomic punctuation as actually played for the entire performance. We are using the Western five-line staff but in many ways, because of the nature of gamelan music, our transcription requires some substantial explanation. First, we chose in the macro transcription to place the strongest beat at the end, rather than the beginning, in order to conform with Javanese conceptions of beat, identifying the strongest beat—that is, the one corresponding with the gong stroke—as the last, not the first beat. Thus, in ladrang form, the main melody beat heard simultaneously with the gong stroke is beat 32, not beat 1, even though Westerners not familiar with gamelan music would almost certainly identify this strongly weighted beat as the “downbeat” (or “first beat”).

We also chose to represent pitches that do not correspond exactly to the Western pitches implied by the notation. In the key to the transcriptions we provide fairly precise measurements of the actual pitches used, showing divergences from Western pitches in “cents” (one octave consisting of 1200 cents; i.e., 100 cents for each semitone of the Western tempered scale). Most important, however, is to realize that the intervals between what appear as major seconds are slightly larger than major seconds, and between what appear as minor thirds are slightly smaller than minor thirds, as this tuning system tends toward equidistant intervals (five per octave, as explained above). The “translation” we have used assigns the Javanese sléndro tones as follows: 1 = d; 2 = e; 3 = g; 5 = a; 6 = c. (Note: there is no tone 4 in sléndro; 3 and 5 are conjunct.)

7. The saron melody played here is nearly always what Javanese would identify as the main melody (balungan), the only exceptions being the quarter note (double time) variations played in the middle of sixth and seventh gongan (pitches [c e g a], leading to [c]) instead of what in this context would be half notes (pitches [c e g])—the standard balungan, as can be seen in comparable passages between kenong (n) and kethuk (t) at the same horizontal position in previous lines.

8. The omission of “4” in the ciphers for sléndro is very likely due to the Western origin of this notation system, in which the tone 5 (not 4) is a fifth above tone 1. In sléndro this interval is slightly larger than a tempered fifth, but is close. Also in older Javanese nomenclature, though the first three tones are barang (“thing”), gulu (“neck”), and dhadha (“chest”), the next two have long been known as lima (“five”) and nem (“six”).
Key to transcriptions.

A) Pitch
actual pitch 230 260 235 265 210 cents
\[\text{transposed pitch (used in transcriptions)}\]

B) Drum Sounds
- small drum head (for ciblon)
- large drum head
\[\text{mnemonics: tak tong lung ket dung ket or du} \]

C) Form
\[\text{= 32 structural beats/gongan} \]
\[\text{= note value of a structural beat} \]

D) Colotomic Events
- g = gong ageng
- s = gong siym
- n = kenong
- p = Kempul
- t = kethuk

E) Tempo
\[\text{= 48} \]
\[\text{tempo of the structural beat} \]
\[\text{in beats per minute} \]

F) Tempo Level (irama)
- I = irama tanggung
- II = irama dadi
- III = irama wiliet
- IV = irama rangkip

G) Interruptions
- // = a momentary cessation to the flow of the performance (andhegan)
- pes. = solo pesindhen following a halt

H) Timings
- 2:02 timing (elapsed)
- of an event
The *buka*, played by *rebab*, ends on pitch “a” (tone 5) at which point the full ensemble joins in, including the two most important colotomic punctuators: the large gong (*gong ageng*) and the *kenong*. The drummer enters part way through the *buka* to guide the tempo and confirm the formal structure. As shown, each of the subsequent lines of the transcription represents one *gongan* (full melodic phrase),9 which may take as little as nineteen seconds (the first *gongan*) to as long as three minutes sixteen seconds (the last *gongan*). This fact by itself gives you some sense of the degree to which the basic framework of the *gongan* can be flexed with respect to duration alone. This dimension of flexibility is generally talked about in relation to the Javanese concept of *irama* level. Observe that:

- The first five lines after the *buka* (i.e., first five *gongan*) are played in *irama* I (also sometimes called *irama tanggung*, meaning “in between” or “not yet settled”). The actual duration can vary slightly; what makes all of these “*irama* I” is the ratio between the main melody (the part shown in its entirety in figure 7.1) and the subdividing parts. Figure 7.2, which shows many (but not all) of the instrumental parts played in the first *gongan*, reveals that both the *bonang barung* (medium sized gong chime) and the *saron peking* (smallest and highest pitched single-octave metallophone) subdivide the basic melody (played by *saron barung* and *saron demung*)10 at a ratio of 2:1.

- In *irama* II, as shown in the first portion of figure 7.5 (and portions of figures 7.3 and 7.4; and sometimes called *irama dadi*, meaning “settled”) the main melody, played on the *saron barung* (and others not notated here) has slowed to about half of what it was in *irama* I, now shown as half notes instead of quarter notes, and the *saron peking*, playing at more or less the same rate as in *irama* I, and therefore shown as eighth notes, is subdividing the *saron barung*’s half notes at a ratio of 4:1. In this performance, it is only the middle portions of the sixth and seventh *gongan* that are performed in *irama* II.

- *Irana* III (also called *irama wilet*, meaning “intricate”—referring to the nature of the elaborating parts), as one might expect, is realized with a ratio of 8:1, with one beat of main melody represented by a whole note; and

9. We decided not to add bar lines but simply offer a time signature that shows relative tempo and the number of beats per *gongan*.

10. Not shown is the *slenthem* part, which also plays the main melody, but an octave lower than *saron demung*. 
Figure 7.1. Macro transcription of the performance of Ladrang Pangkur by Condhong Raos, Ki Nartosabdho, director (source: “Aneka Pangkur,” P.T. Wisanda cassette WD-508. n.d.).
Figure 7.1. Continued
Figure 7.2. Gongan 1 and 2, illustrating contrastive garapan (treatments) within irama tanggung (I).
• irama IV (also called irama rangkep, meaning “double density”) is realized at a ratio of 16:1, with one beat of main melody represented by a double whole note. Irama III and IV appear only during the last two cycles, as described later.

The eighth gongan is in irama III and, as can be seen in figure 7.1, is characterized by a combination of some whole notes, representing a slowed down version of the same melody we have heard in all the previous gongan ([e d e c e d c a]; or 2 1 2 6 2 1 6 5), followed by a passage with more varied rhythm (half notes, dotted whole notes, and even quarters at the end of the gongan) and a melodic contour that, while tracing the same basic path as in irama I up to near the end of the line, diverges somewhat.

The main melody (and hence all the other melodic parts) in the ninth and final gongan of this performance contrasts markedly with those in all the previous gongan. This ninth gongan is referred to as the lik (verb form ngelik, lit., “to get small”; that is, to go up to the high register). It is, strictly speaking, an optional section, one that is only played in response to a signal from the lead melodic instrument, the rebab, which goes “up” (Javanese say “gets small”) to high [d] (tone 1) near the end of the previous gongan, between the final kem-pul and kethuk strokes (at 5:09). The other instruments and voices follow, the pesindhèn and gérong clearly singing in the high register and the saron instruments playing the ascending scalar passage of quarter notes approaching the end of the line (see last line of figure 7.6). Thus, one of the important ways in which the frame can be flexed is for this contrastive gongan to be played. Another is the slowing of the tempo in this gongan in approach to the first kenong stroke (at 5:51, melody on pitch [a], tone 5). At this point the irama level drops from irama III to irama IV and the elaborating parts double their density, even though the tempo of the main melody in irama IV has not dropped to half that of irama III. Because the subdividing parts must therefore play faster in irama IV than in any other irama level, this is often considered the most challenging for the musicians playing those parts. Also, because the gongan is stretched to such a remarkable length (more than three minutes) it can be more of a challenge not to get lost at this irama level than at the others.

Toward the end of the ngelik gongan, beginning with the last gatra of the third kenongan (c.7:45) and continuing through most of the fourth kenongan, the main melody, still in irama IV, is identical to that of the “normal” Ladrang Pangkur melody of irama III (eighth gongan). The acceleration of the tempo in approach to the final gong prepares for the end of this stretched-out irama-IV playing, but instead of going back to the regular irama-III gongan, the rebab plays a high [d] (tone 1, at 8:34) and the drumming changes just before the
gong beat to lead without interruption into *Ayak-ayakan laras sléndro pathet sanga*, and from there to still other pieces, before finally ending (*suwuk*).\(^{11}\)

Rather than let each line of figure 7.1 represent roughly the same amount of clock time, we chose to let each one present the *saron* melody for one *gongan*. This was to facilitate comparison between the various *gongan*, the first five of which consist of identical *saron* lines in *irama* I, the next two of which involve some interruptions and passages in *irama* II (shown here as half notes). In each line, the prevailing *irama* level is given in the time signature: 32 over a quarter note means 32 “*irama*-I” beats per *gongan*; 32 over a half note, as found right after the first gaps in sixth and seventh *gongan*, means 32 *irama*-II beats per *gongan*. Although the “value” of the beat may change (i.e., to use Western notation terminology, from a quarter to half-note, etc.), these changes in *irama* are never predetermined by a composer, however, but rather are signaled during performance by the drummer, who can decide to change tempo by playing a particular combination of drum strokes, which must in turn be heard and correctly interpreted by the musicians. Without the specific signals, the musicians would not change *irama* level, but simply keep repeating the *gongan* at the same tempo. Similarly, to end (*suwuk*) or proceed to another *gendhing*, the musicians also follow the tempo lead of the drummer, and a lead melodic instrument player (*rebab* or *bonang barung*).

An important aspect of the performance that leaps out at us from the macrotranscription (figure 7.1) is the appearance of gaps part way through the sixth, seventh, and ninth *gongan*. These represent short time intervals, leading up to which the instrumental music has been brought to a halt by the drummer’s special pattern and during which the *pesindhèn* sings a short solo, only to be joined again by the instrumentalists just a bit further on in the *gongan*. Listen again to the sixth *gongan*, and look at figure 7.3. Analytically we can see that the *pesindhèn* fills a portion of the *gongan*, her short solo replacing a *gatra* (four beats) of the normal measured rhythm we have heard in the main melody, its elaborators, and the drumming through the first five *gongan* and in most of the subsequent ones as well. This coordinated halt in the middle of the *gongan* is known simply as *andhegan* (lit., a “stop”) and is an intentional and playful interruption of the regular and predictable binary rhythm that has led up to it, and will return following it. Socially, an *andhegan* is a time for spe-

\(^{11}\) They could have ended their performance with a return to the regular *irama* III *gongan* of *Ladrang Pangkur*, or even gone back to *irama* I (*kébar*). But here the *rebab* and the drum signal *Ayak-ayakan*, not a surprising choice for those knowledgeable of the range of performance possibilities. (Because of time limitations, we have not included the subsequent pieces of this medley on the book CD.)
cial focus on the female singer, whose voice, and often whose dress and manner, are often found to be appealing, even erotic, by the many male audience members. Musicians and seasoned listeners (again, mostly male) often sigh at the end of the pesindhèn’s solo, simultaneously marking the transition from free, florid time back to measured instrumental rhythm and expressing a kind of stylized, flirtatious appreciation for the pesindhèn’s melody. (A bit more will be said in relation to figure 7.3.)

Before turning our attention to the particular details of this performance that are shown in the subsequent transcribed figures, let’s consider what else is evident in this macrotranscription. For most of the first line, we see the standard colotomic punctuation pattern for ladrang, but toward the end of even this line, in addition to the kempul (p) sounded on the fourth beat (pitch c) after the kenong beat (its “normal” point in ladrang structure), we see two additional kempul strokes: one on the very next beat (pitch e) and another in between the following pitches (d and c). This livelier kempul part is not simply an arbitrary choice made by the kempul player, but rather is a response to the change in drumming style from the calmer ladrang ostinato, played on the large and small drums (kendhang gendhing and kendhang ketipung, referred to in combination as kendhang loro, lit. “two drums”) up to the third kenong stroke, to the much livelier dance-oriented drumming played on the middle-sized (ciblon) drum from that point until the end of the piece. The kethuk part also becomes somewhat more active just before gong in the sixth and seventh gongan, sounding on the half beats immediately before and after the kempul stroke. We will say more about this as we scrutinize figures 7.2 and 7.3 more closely. Finally, although the large gong (gong ageng) only plays at its appointed colotomic point, the final beat of each gongan, we hear the slightly smaller gong (gong siyem (s)), play at certain other points in some gongan, for example, a low [c] (6) at the end of the first and second kenongan of irama III (eighth gongan, at 3:54 and 4:22) and at end of the first kenongan in the ngelik gongan (the moment of “arrival” at irama IV; 5:51). These additions enrich the sound with their deep, resonant tones, often stressing the main tone in the passage immediately following, but do not articulate formal structure.

12. Although many individual Javanese pesindhèn rebuke flirtatious advances by male audience members, their appearance at events that often last all night, such as shadow puppet (wayang kulit) performances or all-night gamelan concerts (klenèngan), with instrumentalists who are all, or nearly all, male continues to suggest a degree of sexual availability greater than that of most Javanese women. And the historical antecedents of the Javanese pesindhèn are the talèdhèk (or ronggèng), female singer-dancers who often served the sexual desires of their male audience members (see further Sutton [1987], Walton [1996], Tohari [2004]).
Figure 7.3. Gongan 6, illustrating trommel rem treatment with andhegan.
Enriching the Form: Tempo Changes, Interruptions, and Irama Shifts

Gongan 1 and 2

Figure 7.2 offers a detailed look at the first two gongan, both played in irama I, but contrasting in a number of aesthetically significant ways. Since it is the drumming style that is the primary determinant of the stylistic orientation employed in many of the other instrumental and vocal parts, let us look at that part first. Up to the third kenong stroke (at 0:21) the drummer plays a standard ladrang pattern on the large and small drums, at a fast steady tempo. But at this point he switches to the medium-sized (ciblon) drum and slows the tempo a bit (with no irama change), thereby signaling a shift to what is known as kébar treatment. The drumming in the following gongan, as can easily be seen in the transcription and heard on the CD (starting after 0:26), is much livelier and more varied than the highly repetitive drumming motif used over and over again in the standard ladrang drumming. This same style continues through the third, fourth, and fifth gongan, and into the sixth gongan until it is interrupted by an andhegan. Kébar drumming might sound lively and spontaneous, but it is actually a mostly fixed accompaniment for the kiprah (preening) movements of the flirtatious female dance known as gambyon g. Even though no dancer is present, the drummer here, and in much of the remainder of the performance, plays gambyong dance patterns, following, as it were, an imagined choreography.

Let’s consider now what this change to kébar style (or kébar “treatment”) means for the other parts. Though some saron (the lower pitched demung) continue to play the main melody, the two saron barung play in a lively interlocking style (imbal), the composite of which is four times the rate of the main melody (here the imbal is shown as sixteenth notes against the quarter notes of the main melody). One saron barung plays on each beat of the main melody and half way in between (“on beat”), as the other saron barung plays in between those beats (“off beat”). The resultant melody is mostly conjunct, and follows the melodic contour of the main melody quite closely, pairing two notes at a time.

The two bonang (barung and panerus) for most of the first gongan have employed a technique known as pipilan (lit. “pick off one at a time”), in which each one varies the main melody two tones at a time by playing each pair in alternation, one at a time (the panerus at twice the rate of the barung). However, in response to the ciblon drum, the two bonang switch just after the gong stroke at 0:26 to an imbal technique, playing interlocking octaves with the bonang barung mostly anticipating every second tone of the main melody and the bonang panerus playing the tone one step (or, more often, one octave and

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one step) above that of the \textit{bonang barung}. Despite the octave transposition, the ear tends to hear these two parts as creating mostly conjunct interlocking, like the \textit{saron barung}, as the lower tone of the \textit{bonang panerus} is always conjunct with either the higher, or (more rarely) the lower tone of the \textit{bonang barung}. Together the two styles of interlocking (both generally referred to as \textit{imbal}) create a very lively feeling Javanese would identify as \textit{sigrak} (“lively”), \textit{lincah} (Ind., “lively,” “light-hearted”), even a little \textit{urakan} (“unmannerly,” “rude,” “bawdy”).

Adding to the lively feeling of this \textit{kébar} passage are the vocalizations of the male chorus, here mostly vocables (syllables with no lexical meaning), such as “o é o” and “a é”, the phrase \textit{sing sayuk, sing rukun} (lit., “that which is congenial, that which is compatible/harmonious”). In addition to vocalizing, the male chorus members perform interlocking handclapping to add to the liveliness. The \textit{pesindhèn} also enters, singing light-hearted, didactic verses in a form known as \textit{wangsalan}. The \textit{pesindhèn} inserts short phrases (\textit{abon-abon}) between the lines of the main \textit{wangsalan} text to fill the \textit{gongan}. Her melody floats over the steady beats of the instrumental parts, guided by the structural framework, but partially obscuring it or, as it were, softening its edges, by arriving at the important goal tones (usually those at the end of \textit{gatra}, i.e., the \textit{kenong} tones and the tones half way in between) late. This delayed arrival creates a layer of heterophony much appreciated by Javanese musicians and listeners, who will criticize a \textit{pesindhèn} who arrives “too soon” at those goal tones.

The main melody in the \textit{kébar} passages remains the same as beforehand, although it is only the \textit{saron demung} (and \textit{slenthem}, an octave lower, not shown) that continue to play the main melody, the \textit{saron barung} having switched to \textit{imbal} technique. The colotomic punctuation still articulates the \textit{ladrang} form, but the \textit{kempul} part becomes more active, playing on the fourth and fifth beats of each \textit{kenongan} (instead of only the fourth beat of only the second, third, and fourth \textit{kenongan} that characterizes the basic form and “standard” playing). And near the end of the fourth \textit{kenongan} it also adds a syncopated stroke between the sixth and seventh beats, right before the gong beat. Thus, even among the instruments whose function is generally described as the articulation of formal structure, the \textit{kempul} playing responds to and enhances the livelier mood with added strokes.

\textbf{Gongan 5, 6, and 7}

In the midst of what begins as the fifth \textit{kébar gongan} (the sixth \textit{gongan} in \textit{irama 1}), the drummer’s signal brings the musicians to an abrupt halt just before the first \textit{kenong} stroke (2:02). He has hinted at his intentions by accelerating the tempo towards the end of the previous \textit{gongan}, and confirms it by the special
pattern he plays for the second half of the first kenongan. The instrumentalists drop out and pause before playing the kenong beat, seemingly floating in measureless time. This kind of acceleration and fast first kenongan in irama I, leading to a sudden halt is sometimes referred to as trommel rem, which translates literally as “drum-brake(s)” —a pun on the word trommel (borrowed into Javanese from Dutch) as it is the ciblon “drum” which, as it were, slams on the brakes (rem in Javanese, also borrowed from Dutch) in this playful flexing of the gendhing.

After a moment of silence, the pesindhèn then enters alone and the drum soon resumes, inviting the other instrumentalists to join in again, but now at irama level II (main melody shown in half-notes). No sooner have they done so than the drummer signals yet another stop, and the main melody instruments respond with a double time (quarter-note) ascending passage (2:13–2:16), at variance with the standard main melody. The progression of measured musical time stops again, the pesindhèn sings, and again the drummer enters and brings the other instrumentalists back in, playing in irama II up to the end of the gongan.

Figures 7.3 and 7.4 show in more detail some of the parts played in this frame-flexing sixth gongan. Figure 7.3 shows the pesindhèn’s part (the sindhènan), along with the main melody (here shown on slenthem) and the colotomic punctuation. Here we can see clearly how the vocal part floats rhythmically over the instrumental playing, in the same florid style whether in the moments of instrumental silence (the andhegan) or with the instrumentalists playing. The words are in a light, playful poetical form known as rujak-rujakan because each couplet begins with a description of one or another form of rujak (a spicy salad snack food, often sold by street vendors).

The play of irama level is a bit tricky here. Following the first halt and the first few syllables of the pesindhèn’s short solo (“rujak dlima”) the drum, colotomic (and some other) instruments join in, now suddenly in irama II. The main melody ([d g e d], now in half notes) is implied, but not actually played by any instrument. When the main melody instruments rejoin, they play the variant melody [c e g a c] as the drummer signals a second halt. After the second halt, again the pesindhèn sings a few syllables (“sarwa cethå”) at which point all but the main melody instruments join back in, in irama II, the main melody instruments joining at the end of this third kenongan on [d] (tone 1) and continue in irama II up to the final beat of the gongan. At this point, if the tempo has neither been gradually slowed nor gradually accelerated, one might normally expect the musicians to continue by playing the next gongan in irama II. Figure 7.4 shows that the irama level suddenly shifts back to irama I at the gong stroke (2:36), for a second trommel rem (drum brake) passage. This is in response to a slight acceleration and particular configuration of
Figure 7.4. *End of gongan 6 and beginning of gongan 7, illustrating shift from irama dadi (II) to irama tanggung (I).*
drum strokes, which tell the musicians that at the gong stroke (2:36) the irama level will suddenly shift back to irama I. Here the saron barung (and other main melody instruments) jump back to the faster tempo characteristic of irama I. The peking reverts to its irama I style, merely sounding and echoing the main melody tones, and the gambang (along with other soft-playing elaborating instruments) drop out altogether.

In the subsequent (seventh) gongan the same treatment occurs again, but with the pesindhèn taking slightly more of the unmeasured time in between the “stop” (andhegan) and the reentrance of the instrumentalists. And instead of speeding suddenly back to irama I yet again, the drummer slows the tempo gradually, and the performance makes a seamless transition from irama II to irama III.

Moving Between Irama Levels

This kind of seamless shift is a hallmark of Javanese rhythmic treatment and is difficult to show accurately in staff notation. Different instruments shift their ratio of subdivision of the main melody beat (i.e., their irama level) not all at the same point, but where it is “comfortable” (kepénak) for the individual player and the idiom of his particular instrument. Look now at figure 7.5, which shows the transition from irama II to irama III at the end of the seventh gongan. The drummer directs this transition with a special sequence of drum strokes, beginning at the third kenong stroke (at the very beginning of figure 7.5, just before 3:10, and continuing to the gong beat at the end of the fourth kenongan, at 3:27). This leads directly into the first of a number of ciblon patterns (repeated sequences of strokes, ranging in length from two to six main melody beats) that fill out the gongan in irama III. This first one is called lam-pah sekar (lit., “flower walk/movement”), the first portion of which appears in the latter part of figure 7.5 (3:27 to 3:35). In longer performances of this and other comparable ladrang pieces, each gongan in irama III involves a different main ciblon drum pattern, corresponding, as in kébar, to one of the dance movements of the female dance gambyong. In this performance, we hear the second pattern (pilesan) in the final gongan. Integrated into the main pattern of each gongan, transitional drum patterns—mostly the same from one gongan to the next—articulate the formal structure, leading to kenong strokes, the final kempul stroke, and a new drum pattern just before the gong stroke.

The point by which one could say that the performance has fully reached irama III is the beat at which the gong plays (the [a] just slightly before 3:27). From this moment on, for this gongan and the first part of the next, the subdividing parts have all shifted to the level of subdivision appropriate for irama III. We show in the transcription a shift from 32 half-note beats per gongan to
Figure 7.5. End of gongan 7 and beginning of gongan 8, illustrating shift from irama dadi (II) to irama wilet (III).
32 whole-note beats per gongan, as the tempo of the main melody structural beats by this point has slowed to about half of what it was in irama II (in the first part of figure 7.5) to accommodate the shifts in subdivision. But some instruments, including drum and gambang, have shifted a few beats beforehand. It is perhaps easiest to hear, and to see in the transcription, the moment where the rhythmically regular playing of the gambang has slowed to the point that the player feels comfortable to double his speed, moving from an irama II ratio (8:1 with the main melody) to irama III ratio (16:1 with the main melody). At the moment that this happens, the gambang playing literally jumps from a speed that is rather slow (for gambang) to one twice as fast, but which will undergo immediate, steady ritard until it has reached the “comfortable” range for gambang. We show the gambang part shifting (at 3:21) from sparser and sparser sixteenth notes to tightly crunched thirty-second notes. By the gong stroke, however, where we commence to show the main melody in whole notes, we adjust the gambang notation back to sixteenth notes, to show that the gambang speed is the same or similar to its speed in the steady portions of irama II immediately preceding.

Varying the Main Melody

Also note the shift in the peking part, which plays at a ratio of 4:1 with the main melody in irama II, to a ratio of 8:1 in irama III. The peking plays simple variations of the main melody. In irama I it almost always just sounds the main melody, but articulates each tone twice: once on the beat, and once “echoing” it a half a main-melody beat later.13 In irama II, as you can see in the first half of the passage shown in figure 7.5 the peking part takes two successive tones of the main melody, reiterating one, then the other, then the first again, then the second again, ending this little figuration just one peking beat after the second main melody tone has been played. After the first tone (kenong beat, melody tone [d]) the main melody sounds [g] and [e], then [d] and high [c]. The peking, in the octave register above the saron barung, takes these tones, a pair at a time, playing [g g e g e e], and then [d d c c d d c c] (c’s high). When the peking shifts to irama III, right at the gong beat (3:27), it becomes a little more independent from the main melody, still playing peking style [x x y y], but adding tones other than the main melody tones to create figures leading to isoperiodicity.

13. In the regional styles of Yogyakarta (south central Java), and Semarang (north coast of central Java) the peking “anticipates” by sounding the main melody tone a half beat before the main melody beat and then reiterating it on the beat (no echoing after the beat).
each tone of the now slow-moving main melody, beginning with \([g\ g\ e\ e\ g\ e\ e]\) to lead to main melody pitch \([e]\), then \([g\ d\ d\ e\ e\ d\ d]\) to lead to main melody pitch \([d]\).

This variation, though still quite limited, gives us a glimpse of the simplest kind of melodic \textit{garapan} or variation treatment that characterizes many of the elaborating and vocally oriented (freer rhythm) parts. Although not “flexing” the frame in the sense of rhythmic alteration, the many layers of \textit{garapan}—from the simple \textit{peking} variations to the more elaborate meanderings of the \textit{gamelan bang} (shown here) and other instruments, including \textit{gendèr}, the zithers, \textit{rebab}, \textit{suling}, and the vocal parts—flesh out the main melody, which, you will recall, the Javanese appropriately have designated by the Javanese word for skeleton (\textit{balungan}). We can think of these melodic variations as yet another flexing of the basic melodic frame, in the dimensions both of pitch and of melodic density.

Before we focus in on the particulars of instrumental playing in this expanded \textit{gongan}, mention should be made of the vocal texts here and throughout this performance. In the first \textit{gongan}, \textit{irama} I, we only hear the \textit{pesindhèn} enter following the drummer’s switch to the lively \textit{ciblon} drum, and she sings different kinds of texts (\textit{wangsalan}, \textit{abon-abon}, and \textit{rujak-rujakan}) that are typical of many \textit{gendhing} performances, but bear no relationship to the particular sung poetic form from which this piece takes its name (\textit{pangkur}). Finally, in the first \textit{kenongan} of \textit{irama} III (c.3:27 to 3:54), the \textit{pesindhèn} sings the first line of a famous \textit{pangkur} text, from the nineteenth century didactic treatise known as the \textit{Serat Wedhatama}. Following the first \textit{kenongan}, the \textit{gérong} join in and sing the remainder of the verse in a rhythmically measured melody, with the \textit{pesindhèn} singing the same text, but in a much more florid, rhythmically free style, heterophonically trailing the \textit{gérong}. The text of the first verse, with English translation by the Javanese language scholar Stuart Robson is given below (Robson 1990:20–21):

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{Mingkar mingkur ing angkara} & Turning away from selfish motives, \\
\textit{Akarana karenan mardi siwi} & As one is pleased to give instruction to sons, \\
\textit{Sinawung resmining kidung} & It is cast in the form of a delightful song, \\
\textit{Sinuba sinukarta} & Finely finished and well turned, \\
\textit{Mrih kretarta pakartining ngèlmu luhung} & In the hope that they may prosper in their practice of noble sciences, \\
\textit{Kang tumrap nèng tanah Jawa} & That pertain to the land of Java,
\end{tabular}
\end{center}
As the spiritual tradition adhered to by its kings.

In *irama* I, and the portions of the sixth and seventh *gongan* in *irama* II, the basic melodic contour of the main melody and, consequently, the vocal parts, has been derived from the melodic contour of the usual *pangkur* melody associated with this piece (*pangkur paripurna*). But not until this *irama* III *gongan* are the text and the vocal melody both “fully” *pangkur*, and for this reason many Javanese musicians consider this more expanded (*irama* III) *gongan* to be the “real” *Ladrang Pangkur*, the *irama* I (and II) being like something of a condensed introduction, although sometimes played without ever slowing and expanding to *irama* III. In the *ngelik gongan*, which in contemporary practice nearly always proceeds to *irama* IV toward the end of the first *kenongan* and thereby eliminates the possibility of a *gérong* part (never present in *irama* IV), the vocal melody sung by the *pesindhèn* follows the contours of this variant main melody and thus can be said to be “not *pangkur*” (melodically) even though the text is *pangkur* (second verse), and the section is identified musically as “the *ngelik* section of *Ladrang Pangkur*.” Javanese listeners place great importance on the vocal parts, particularly the florid patterns of the *pesindhèn*.

Many of the *garapan* instruments cover a range of several octaves, and players conceive the *balungan* part in multioctave format, even though its manifestation on the *saron* is, as it were, folded in. Thus, a pattern of main melody such as the final four beats of the *gongan* in *Ladrang Pangkur* ([e d c a]) is conceived of as a conjunct descent from [e] down to [a], though on the *saron* and *slenthem*, limited as they are to one octave (or just slightly more, ranging from [c] up to [d] in the higher octave), the part is played with a leap up from the [d] to the [c] above, followed by conjunct descent to the [a].

The thick texture of Javanese gamelan music makes it difficult to hear all of the *garapan* parts completely, as most of them involve dense and constant activity, often overlapping and coinciding with one another. Moving in diverse directions between predictable points of repose (described by some musicians as *nunggal-misah*, lit. “join and separate”), this kind of texture is a defining fea-

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14. Final syllables with an open “a” vowel and penultimate syllables with “a” preceding these final syllables are pronounced “aw” and rendered in the transcriptions for this article as “å,” but here we reproduce the text as it would normally be written in Roman alphabet (and as given in Robson [1990]).

15. In fact, all competent musicians recognize that acceptable *garapan* sometimes diverges from the *balungan*, even in its multioctave form. Some have theorized about an inherent, conceptual melodic line, referred to by Sumarsam and others as “inner melody.” (See Sumarsam [1975], Sutton [1979], Sumarsam [1984], and Perlman [2004].)
ture of good Javanese ensemble playing. The melodic patterns performed by most of the garapan instruments and voices are known as céngkok, some of them identified by specific names, others simply by the final tone (and the pathet) of the passage in which they are used. Several book-length studies have been devoted primarily to the theory and practice of garapan and céngkok; here we would like to draw your attention to a few examples in the gambang part. Javanese explain that the garapan parts “lead to” a particular tone, or that they “fill” a particular melodic context, usually a gatra (four beats of main melody).

As an example, we can talk about the gambang céngkok going to 6 (c) filling the gatra 3 2 1 6 ([g e d c]) in sléndro pathet sanga by scrutinizing the pattern filling the first gatra shown in figure 7.5 (the first gatra of the fourth kenongan, seventh gongan), and compare it to the gambang part played for the same passage, same irama level (II), of the previous gongan (the first gatra of the fourth kenongan, sixth gongan) as shown in figure 7.4. The transcriptions both begin with the third kenong tone [d] (tone 1, which is actually the last tone of the sixth gatra of the piece), followed by this gatra [g e d c] (3 2 1 6 in Javanese cipher notation). We can see in figure 7.5 that the gambang part (like the peking part) starts from the main melody tone at the kenong (tone d), but climbs more than an octave over the next eight sixteenth notes to sound a high [e] (tone 2) simultaneously with the next main melody tone [g] (tone 3). By the next main melody tone [e] (tone 2), it has descended an octave to join the main melody in unison, then proceeds down to a low [g] (tone 3) with the main melody tone [d] (tone 1) and finally up to join the main melody again at the end of the gatra, on [c] (tone 6). In the “same” passage in the previous gongan (figure 7.4), the gambang climbs to [a] (tone 5) against the first main melody tone [g] (tone 3), rather than all the way up to high [e] (tone 2). On the remaining three beats of this gatra, the gambang part actually articulates the same pitch degree as the main melody ([e], [d], and [c]; or 2, 1, and 6), but it soars up to high [a] before descending more almost two octaves to land at the end of the gatra on a low [c]. In keeping with the constraints of the modal system (pathet), the gambang cèngkok emphasizes the prominent tones of pathet sanga (5, 1, and 2, here [a], [d], and [e]) and avoids giving emphasis to the weak or “enemy” tone (3, here [g]). The gambang’s [g] (tone 3) against the main melody’s [d] (tone 1) in figure 7.5 actually does not emphasize this “enemy tone” as it is immediately followed by three successive [e]s (2’s).

Thus this “same musical context”—that is, the “same gatra”—is realized differently in successive occurrences in the gambang part. Some musicians would

say the gambang player chose a slightly different céngkok. Others would say
that the two are similar enough to be called the same céngkok, since they start
and end on the same tone and have other similarities in shape, but are, instead,
different wiletan (i.e., different “meanderings,” from the same Javanese word, wilet, used to refer to irama III, where playing can become intricate and wind-
ing around). As is characteristic of the gambang, and most other garapan parts, the melodic motion is continuous. Thus, it does not rest (or sustain) even
for one brief subdivision, but instead continues immediately into the next céngkok.

Other instrumental parts work in similar ways to the gambang, stringing variable céngkok together, one after the other, in a seamless progression through
the gendhing as it unfolds. Vocal parts also consist of céngkok, in two contrast-
ing styles: (group) gérong and (solo) pesindhèn. The male chorus (gérong) sing melodies that exhibit regular, proportional durations, almost always ending
their phrases on the same tone as the main instrumental melody at the same
rhythmic moment that the instrumental parts reach the same tone (albeit in
different octave registers, depending on the tessitura of the instrument). The
gérong part moves heterophonically with the main melody, tracing a similar
contour overall, but often contrasting in motion between these moments of repose (sèlèh, in Javanese). The exact melodic shape and rhythmic particulars
are variable, at least in some instances, but because it is sung by a small chorus
of voices, and expected to sound as a single melodic line, the gérong part is usu-
ally worked out prior to the moment of performance, rather than being sung spontaneously (although exceptions to this occur). The pesindhèn part, though
based on extant céngkok, is more variable, with individual preferences and
spontaneous decisions determining the shape and sequence of céngkok. Figure
7.6 presents the vocal parts for the entire eighth gongan, in irama III, where the
first verse of the pangkur poem is sung. We have identified the repose (sèlèh)
tones of the main melody, encasing each in a shaded box, and similarly identi-
tified the ends of each vocal phrase in both the gérong and the pesindhèn parts.

17. Wiletan can be understood as the precise realization of a céngkok in all its details, variable in performance. But musicians do not agree universally on just how different two passages have to be to constitute a difference in céngkok rather than “merely” a difference in wiletan. One often hears musicians say something to the effect that so and so plays the same céngkok as someone else, only the wiletan are different, or that a single player en-
riches his performance by playing different wiletan of the same céngkok for passages that repeat in performance. Maximum variation is not the goal, but exact repetition in gam-
bang and other garapan parts is considered overly rigid and the mark of a beginner (on variation in gamelan performance, see further Vetter [1981], Sutton [1993], Sutton [1998], Perlman [2004]).
There are six phrases in the gérong part, two in each of the last three kenongan of this gongan. (By convention, only the pesindhèn sings in the first kenongan of pieces such as this in irama III, the gérong joining in the second kenongan.)\(^{18}\)

The transcription shows the gérong phrases, two per system (as each system presents one kenongan), ending on the same pitch degrees as the main melody at those points: [d] and [c] in the second kenongan, [d] and [d] in the third, and [c] and [d] in the fourth.\(^{19}\)

These are not the only moments at which the gérong part is in unison with the main melody (and, of course, with many of the other instrumental parts as well). The first gérong phrase (second system of the transcription) begins on pitch [c] while this same pitch is being sustained in the main melody. Near the middle of the second phrase, on the syllable “bå” (of “sinubå”) both the gérong part and the main melody sustain pitch [e] before moving, each in its own idiom, to the phrase final [c]. Similarly, both the gérong and main melody sustain pitch [e] near the middle of the fourth phrase, on the syllable “ning” (of “pakartining”). The fifth phrase (first part of the fourth kenongan) shows an even closer relationship between these two parts, as the gérong melody moves through each successive pitch of the main melody [a c e d a e d c], albeit with auxiliary tones that make it an idiomatic gérong céngkok. The sixth and final phrase is a response to the rebab’s signal, beginning just after the previous sèlèh tone [c], directing the singers and players of multi-octave instruments to proceed to the upper register, ending on pitch [d] with the gong stroke, in transition to the ngelik gongan.

In contrast to the gérong part, with its proportional and metric rhythms and its arrival at repose tones simultaneously with the main melody, the pesindhèn part seems to float freely over the measured rhythms of the other parts, in parlandos style, always arriving at phrase-ending tones well past the moment when the main melody, the gérong, and most other instrumental parts have reached the end of their céngkok. We have inserted arrows in the transcription to link the final tone of each pesindhèn céngkok with the main melody tone that guides her singing. In most cases her céngkok is rather independent of the intermediary main melody tones, but in all cases except one, she sings a céngkok that ends on the same tone as the sèlèh. Because the pesindhèn phrase lags behind the others, as it were, we have had to draw arrows between systems to show, for ex-

18. This is very likely so because in most ladrang pieces, irama III, the gérong text is set in a poetical form consisting of six lines of eight syllables each (kinanthi), each line conveniently filling one half of one kenongan, ending with the last syllable coinciding with the gong stroke at the end of the fourth kenongan.

19. The final phrase ends on high [d], rather than the usual low [a] because the rebab has signaled a transition to the ngelik gongan.
Figure 7.6. Gongan 8 in irama wilet (III), illustrating contrastive vocal styles (female and male) and their relationship to one another and to sëlh (goal) tones.
Figure 7.6. Continued

* rebab to high register 1 [d] (ngelik signal)
ample, that the pitch [c] she reaches in the first part of the third system, is actually determined by the final [c] in the main melody of the previous system. The exception occurs at the beginning of the second system, in which, instead of ending her phrase on the final pitch of the first kenongan, pitch [a], she makes a “slip” (plèsèd) to pitch [c], as it assumes special prominence in the main melody at this point, being both reiterated and sustained for the first quarter of the second kenongan.

We can get a sense of the variability of vocal céngkok by comparing the successive approaches to pitch [d] in the third system. In both the gérong and the pesindhèn parts the céngkok contours for the first phrase differ significantly from those for the second. The differences are partially a result of the contrasts between the main melody in each half, and also between the implied, underlying or “inner” melody for each half (see footnote 15). Of the two, the gérong is more constrained by these contrasts than the pesindhèn, whose céngkok choice is determined mainly by phrase final and by personal preference. In this gongan, for example, note that the very first pesindhèn céngkok, starting on pitch [d] and descending somewhat circuitously to pitch [c] in the lower octave, is nearly identical to the first phrase in the last kenongan, even though the main melody is different. Through their choice of céngkok, then, the singers, like the instrumentalists, contribute to flexing the melodic framework of this piece in terms of pitch and, in the case of the pesindhèn’s later arrival at sèlèh tones, also in terms of rhythm. The ways in which these two vocal styles vary the main melody and contrast with each other constitute an important dimension in gamelan musical aesthetics.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have taken a Javanese musical piece that might be analyzed solely in reference to its main instrumental melody, whose abstract structure presents a binary symmetry typical of nearly all Javanese pieces but whose particular sequence of tones belongs to this piece alone. Javanese writing for other Javanese do this routinely, but can assume of their readership a familiarity with the many processes that come to bear as the piece is realized by an ensemble of performers. Writing here for readers who mostly have little or no familiarity with such processes has made it imperative for us to foreground these performance processes, and we have done so in reference to a particular performance. This rendition of Ladrang Pangkur proceeds in just over eight minutes through four different tempo (irama) levels, each with characteristically different treatment by melodic instruments, singers, and drummer. In several places the in-
strumentalists stop altogether, with only the female singer continuing, later joined by the ensemble to finish out the phrase as if the loss of beat and momentum were only a passing memory. Transcriptions have illustrated aspects of interplay between melodic instruments, contrasts in drumming style, and laid out some of the various changes in tempo and treatment that make for an aesthetically rich and exciting performance, maintaining the integrity of the formal structure but roaming wild within it. Symmetry is never sacrificed; rather, it is radically offset by changes in tempo, melodic shape, and a whole range of factors that at times may seem intended to obscure or even obliterate the formal frame. What these techniques in fact do is intensify the power of the music by stretching the cognitive capacities of its performers and listeners, creating a magnificent, hardworn experiential realm unlike any other in Java or the world. The music’s range and depth of expression, fully accessible only to practiced insiders, is the product of centuries of sustained generational collaboration and transmission among Javanese artists.

It is hardly surprising that scholarship on Javanese music, by Javanese and foreign scholars alike, has emphasized—even celebrated—formal balance and regularity, as this importantly models the music’s simple, elegant basis. Many musics in the world can be described in terms of such conceptually clear, often fundamentally binary and periodic structures. But this level of understanding does not reflect the more human, artistic, and culturally specific properties of music, which are shaped over time (the time of history, musicians’ development over lifetimes, and the time of individual performances) by a predilection to seek diversity and proliferation of possibilities within a system governed by simple constraints. This performance of Ladrang Pangkur illustrates a Javanese response to this imperative. And although some young Javanese musicians now engage in radical new forms of composition and playing techniques, the approach to performance we have encountered here—flexing what is at core a binary, symmetrical frame—continues to be the measure of good musicianship and a source of deep aesthetic delight.

References


