

Tradition and Innovation in Javanese Music

What does
'traditional' mean?

'Tradition' and 'Innovation'

- concepts are relative, highly subjective and often specific to the person who invokes them
- depends on age, social status, tastes in music, position in musical hierarchy, etc
- both terms can be used to validate or even to negate music in different contexts
- both elements are alive, changing, syncretic

Who is the composer?

- for most gendhing before mid-20th c., we do not know who composed them or how; occasionally royalty is credited in written sources (e.g. Ketawang SUBAKASTAWA), but this can be an indication of anything from patronage to real creative input.

JAVANESE GAMELAN is 'renewed'
in several different ways:

- KARAWITAN- composers working within 'traditional' framework
- WAYANG KULIT-puppeteers creating new pieces for dramatic purposes
- EXPERIMENTAL ACADEMY-BASED COMPOSITION

Innovation in Karawitan

- playing styles and contexts are always changing
- any innovations are generally not scored (i.e. notation is not the basis of the process)

Examples of composers working in karawitan

- Ki Nartosabdho (musician, composer, poet, dhalang) 1925-1985
- e.g. Ktw SUBAKASTAWA RINENGGA pl.nem (original SUBAKASTAWA transferred to pélog tuning, with new male-female gérong and poetic text)

Examples of composers working in karawitan

- R.L. Martopangrawit (musician, composer, music theorist) 1912-1986
- e.g. Gendhing PARISUKA pelog nem, piece in triple meter, also with contrapuntal two-part *gérong*.

Examples of composers working in karawitan

- K.R.T. Wasitodiningrat ('Pak Cokro') b. 1909
- e.g. Lancaran ORDRE BARU pélog pathet barang, composition in lancaran form, commissioned by Indonesian government in mid-1960s

Composers working in wayang

- Kí Anom Soeroto (dhalang, composer), b.1948
- Lagu AJA UMUK DANGDUT sl. manyura
composition for the middle part of the wayang,
in dangdut style (pop music based on 'dang-
dut' sound of tabla from Indian film music)

EXPERIMENTAL ACADEMY-BASED COMPOSITION

- patronage moved from the court to the academies from 1950s onwards. In late 1970s Humardani, head of academy in Solo, instituted new composition – ‘kreasi baru’ – as part of graduation requirements (with western models in mind)