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# Jegog Gamelan and Dance

*in Sangkaragung Village, Negara Jembrana, Bali Indonesia*

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# Table of Contents

Abstract .....	iv
1 - Preserving and Promoting a Cultural Heritage.....	1
2 - The Instruments, Music, and Uses.....	5
3 - The Birth of an Art Form.....	9
Carving and Decoration .....	10
4 - Ecology, Influences, and Competitions in Jembrana .....	12
5 - Periods in <i>Jegog</i> History .....	15
Genjor Period (1912- 1945) .....	15
Suprig Period (1945-1965).....	16
Jayus Period (1965-Present) .....	19
6 - Gamelan <i>Jegog</i> Periods and the Functions of Performance.....	21
7 - <i>Jegog</i> in the World.....	27
Conclusion .....	30
Bibliography.....	33

## **ABSTRACT:**

### **Jegog Gamelan and Dance**

**In Sangkaragung Village, Negara Jembrana Bali Indonesia**

**By**

**I Gede Oka Artha Negara**

*Jegog* is a gamelan made of large-sized bamboo tubes, which are found in the western part of the island of Bali. Originally it was played as a social activity when people gathered to thatch a roof with straw (called *nyucuk*). The form was invented around 1912 in the village Sebuah, Jembrana by Kiyang Geliduh. Gamelan *jegog* history is divided into three periods, namely *Jegog* as practiced by Genjor (1912-1945), then as performed by Suprig (1945-1965), and finally the version done by Jayus (1965-present). *Jegog* used bamboo, because Jembrana is a vast forested area where lush bamboo grows to great breadth and stature. While bamboo orchestras may have originated in other areas of Indonesia or beyond, in Jembrana they achieved a larger size due to the local ecology. Jembrana citizens also value competition, as is evidenced by their folk games/ sports. This spirit of competition also is carried into *jegog*, which developed *jegog mebarung* (*jegog* competitions). This aesthetic has also caused a *jegog* version of the local *makepung* (buffalo races), another important and distinctive recreation of the region. *Jegog* has developed considerably during the period Jayus, because international performances and collaborations became possible. The art was presented in the Netherlands in the 1960s, and later toured, to Japan, (1970), Germany (1990), France (1998), and the US (1986). There are currently *jegog* groups in the Netherlands (Tropen Museum), in Germany (led by Martin Ramstedt), and Japan (Gamelan Sekar

Sakura) and two in America (Gamelan Sekar Jaya Berkeley and Gamelan Artha Negara of Santa Cruz).

# 1 – Preserving and Promoting a Cultural Heritage

This thesis is intended to document and preserve the history of the Indonesian *jegog* gamelan the large bamboo percussive ensemble used since the early twentieth century in music, theater, and dance of Negara in Jembrana regency, Bali, Indonesia. My method will be largely descriptive since very little has been available in English beyond short accounts and website information (for example, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gamelan\\_jegog](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gamelan_jegog), accessed 11 May 2016) that does little more than cite the locale and give broad ideas about the form. There are a number of sources in Indonesian, largely generated by researchers in Bali (Sukerna 2003, Dibia 1996, etc.) and I will draw on these sources as well as interviews and personal experience of the genre. I hope to deliver the information in a form that can make it accessible to those who lack background knowledge in Balinese music, language, and scholarship that the works often assume.

## Personal Statement

Documentation of the methods, skills, and repertory is needed to pass this art form on to future generations in Bali, as well as to facilitate growth in the art form internationally. The present generation in Bali appears to have little interest in carrying on this rich tradition, opting instead for rock bands with electric guitars, double pedal drums, and pop/rock singers. I hope this thesis cannot only inspire my countrymen, but also audiences around the world to appreciate the richness of *jegog* tradition and performance. Gamelan *jegog* and dance are not as well known as the more common bronze-keyed ensembles popularized from

the early twentieth century, such as *gamelan gong kebyar* (which is often toured internationally and played in a number of university programs around the world) and other Balinese ensembles that have attracted significant Indonesian scholarship.<sup>1</sup> *Jegog* is part of my family heritage and an important contribution to world culture and music. I will briefly outline my family's involvement as a way of clarifying my position as author of this paper.

One of the unique aspects of Balinese culture is the reliance on the arts as a form of community expression. Crafts, music, and dance are both spiritual and communal activities. One way that a traditional Balinese person can achieve respect has been through their skill in the arts. Rather than playing aggressive sports, Balinese communities have traditionally competed in the fields of music, dance, and artistry. When I grew up, without thinking about it, I learned gamelan and dance in the *banjar* (community center)—this is what Balinese children do and it is normal to have gamelan and dance activities as a part of everyday socialization. My parents of course taught me how to play gamelan *jegog* and how to dance, but mostly one learns not by formal classes, but by seeing and by hearing. A teacher will show you how to play or how to dance and you need to be able to follow him/her. I learned playing and dancing along with or emulating elders<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Pande Made Sukerta, *Ensiklopedia Karawitan Bali* (Indonesian Encyclopedia

<sup>2</sup> My uncle I Nyoman Jayus (1940- ) introduced gamelan and Balinese dance to audiences in the Netherlands in the early 1960s. My father, I Ketut Suwentra (1948- ), brought *jegog* gamelan and dance to Japan in the 1980s, and has continued to tour there to the present. In developing this research I will tap the memories of my relatives who have been significant practitioners of this cultural genre since 1950s, noting their

I have followed in my family's path as well: I was invited to the U. S. by Oakland's Gamelan Sekar Jaya, to teach *jegog* gamelan and dance in 2010. This opportunity resulted in my settling down in America, where I continue to work on spreading *jegog* internationally. Today there is one set of gamelan *jegog* in Amsterdam (acquired by Trophen Museum Holland in September 1960), one set in Munich Germany (1990), one set in Japan (Nagoya College of Music, 1992), and two in the USA—the above mentioned Gamelan Sekar Jaya (1986), and my own Gamelan Artha Negara in Santa Cruz (2015). My student musicians in California are starting to bring this latter *jegog* set to life under my guidance.

My goal in writing this is to piqué the interest of the younger generation in Bali and beyond to get involved in *jegog* gamelan and dance as a Balinese cultural asset and an international artistic resource, as this will keep *jegog* alive. I hope that by looking into *jegog's* past, I can inspire others to value the rhythm and sound, the rich history, and music-dance-theater performance which artfully weaves the martial arts, drama, dance, singing, and music into a whole.

To preserve memory I will explain the history and answer why *jegog* became so highly developed in Sangkaragung village in Negara county (*kecamatan*), Jembrana regency (*kabupaten*), Bali. This is the area where gamelan *jegog* was born, in the early twentieth century. To explain its popularity internationally I suspect Balinese music and dance may have been influenced by the *jegog* group's international touring and encounters with other percussion

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work in internationalizing the art. Their knowledge was gained from teachers of the previous generation.



ensembles which produced sound and dance performances, such as those of Japanese Taiko, European and African drumming, and popular music the U.S.

## 2 - The Instruments, Music and Uses

*Jegog* itself is unique in that the instruments are made from large bamboo tubes, cut into flat keys, with the natural culm or cane left intact as circular resonators at the base of each key. The bamboo is grown, harvested, and shaped by the farmers and artisans of the region. Each instrument is equipped with eight keys, usually of two octaves, with the entire orchestra spanning five octaves in pitch, including a spectacular base tones produced by bamboo culms measuring up to 3 meters in length, and 30 cm in diameter. The large array of bamboo keys creates an unusual combination of rhythmic drive and hypnotic sound, unlike any other ensemble.

The *jegog* scale is *pelog empat nada* (*pelog* scale in four tones): the names of the tones are *ndong*, *ndeng*, *ndung*, *ndaing* in *ding dong* (mouth syllable) notation or 2-3-5-7 (called by the syllables *ro-lu-mo-pi*) in *kepatihan* (a Javanese style) notation.<sup>3</sup> *Jegog* has both the largest instrument stands and resonators, making these the biggest instruments played in Bali.

A set of gamelan *jegog* includes fourteen instruments. They are made of a series of bamboo tubes cut to resonate appropriately when struck with a wooden hammer. The names of the individual instruments are *barangan*, *kancil*, *suir*, *celuluk/kuntung*, *undir*, *jegog*. *Barangan* is the melody keeper, *kancil* plays a *kotekan*/interlock, while the *celuluk* and adds rhythmic interest. *Suir* is tuned one octave higher than the *kancil* and also plays an interlock and has a rhythmic function. *Celuluk* assists *the barungan* in the function of melody keeper, and

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<sup>3</sup> See I Nyoman Sukerna, *Gamelan Jegog Bali*, Denpasar: Intra Pustaka Utama, 2003, p. 5

*undir* and *jegog* are the second deepest and deepest (bass) instruments, respectively. The keyed instruments are tuned to different octaves in which more dense patterns are played in the top registers and less dense patterns in the lower registers; following the traditional patterns for Indonesian gamelan orchestras.

The bamboo available in Jembrana makes all the difference in instrument building. *Tiyang petung* is a special type of bamboo that is especially abundant in western Bali. This type of bamboo is the best resource for *jegog* instruments. To cut this bamboo, instrument makers select a *dewasa ayu* (special day), ask permission from the local priest, and make an offering to the bamboo that will be cut, followed by the planting of another new bamboo sprout in the same place. *Jegog* requires exceptionally large-sized bamboo culms to build the keys, as necessitated by the low pitches required—especially with the large instruments, *undir* and *jegog*.<sup>4</sup> The size of the instruments has grown since the beginning of the twentieth century; prior to 1912, players sat in a chair while they played. Today, the players must stand because the gamelan now uses higher racks to support larger canes, which create deeper and more resonant tones.

The uses of the ensemble are secular and social. Gamelan *jegog* is typically used for community events in West Bali for celebrations such as marriages, *otonan* (a child's birthday), inter-village competitions, local holidays, or group

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<sup>4</sup> The largest and second-largest instruments of the *jegog* orchestra, upon which the musicians must perch on a raised bench to play the exceptionally large bamboo keys.

activities such as roof thatching. These are communal and secular events—not spiritual or ritual use, occasions which normally employ bronze instruments in Bali. *Jegog* is the people's gamelan, locally made from relatively cheap and accessible materials (bamboo and wood stands). This contrasts with the imported bronze materials required for instruments for religious festivals.

A typical program at one of these events might be the following: "Tabuh Teruntungan" is the opening *gending* (song), and is dedicated to the spirits to get obtain blessings for a successful performance. Next comes "Tabuh Tegak" which is an Instrumental piece, followed by a *jegog* dance of some sort. Next, "Jegog Mebarung" (Competition), and perhaps some *joged* (couple's social dance) might follow. The closing piece is called "Teruntungan Penyuwud" (Finishing Song).

Dancers use regular Balinese-style make up and dance costumes appropriate to each dance. Male and female-style dances can accompany the ensemble, often including "Tari Pendet" (Welcome Dance), "Tari Gopala" (Cowherders' Dance), "Tari Belibis" (White Heron Dance), the previously mentioned "Tari Makepung" (Buffalo Races Dance) and the "Tari Joged" (Social Dance). All of these styles of tunes and performances are secular and aimed at pleasing the audience.

In contrast with highly ritualized ceremonial music, which might change slowly, the association with socializing and entertainment allowed for many innovations in *jegog*. For example our family's gamelan, Jegog Suar Agung, collaborated with the monkey chant group Kecak Puspita Jaya Blahkiuh on a

new *kecak* production in 2008 in Denpasar. We also collaborated in a performance with Japanese guitarist Show Seki and *Chakra* Dancers (a modern street art group) at the 2010 Bali Arts Festival. In 1998, we held another performance with the Senegalese artist/drummer Dou-Dou N'Dye Rose (1930- ). Other groups have likewise developed new styles; Gamelan Jegog Sakura of Japan created a performance they called *Café Jegog* with a group from Mexico that mixed *jegog* and Mexican rhythms.

The non-ritual nature of the ensemble also allows *jegog* to serve commercial interests. Currently gamelan *jegog* is commonly played at resorts and at tourist hotels and is found in places like Ubud and Denpasar, which are full of foreigners.

In this thesis I will eventually deal with the understanding of the history of the genre in local lore, then discuss how the instruments evolved over time, and show how dance and martial arts came be incorporated as part of a traditional Gamelan *jegog* performance. But first I will discuss the origins, or natural history of the *jegog* and how the colonial experience and natural resources of West Bali made such a unique art form possible.

### 3- The Birth of an Art Form

Unlike other styles of gamelan, which originated in the temples and palaces of the nobility, gamelan *jegog* has its origins as a folk instrument—the music of the people. Thus, it is very difficult to unravel exactly when and how the gamelan *jegog* was actually created. After researching the question and interviewing some of the leading *jegog* artists in Jembrana,<sup>5</sup> it is generally agreed that Kiyang Geliduh, a woodcutter from the village of Sebual, in Negara, Bali, invented the gamelan *jegog* around 1912.

Local tradition tells us that Kiyang Geliduh went into the woods looking for firewood. After collecting it, he lay down to rest and fell asleep. In a dreamlike state, he heard the sounds of bamboo canes striking each other in the wind. It was these natural sounds that inspired him to create a tuned *jegog* gamelan.

The earliest version of gamelan *jegog* was relatively small and made with wooden keys. The types of wood used for this form of gamelan *jegog* were called *panggal buaya* and *bayur* (types of trees). The sound produced by a wooden *jegog*, however, was too weak for Kiyang Geliduh's taste, and so he tried using bamboo instead. He was the one to discover how the local bamboo could produce sounds loud enough and deep enough to compare favorably with the traditional bronze-keyed gamelan. While the size, materials, and shapes of the *jegog* has changed dramatically over the years, what ties the genre together

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<sup>5</sup> From interviews I conducted during December 2015-January 2016 with the following artist: I Ketut Suwentra, I Nyoman Utama, and I Putu Sumiarsa.

is the unique tuning scale, rhythmic drive, and the rich, woody sound prized in all *jegog* orchestras.

The varieties of bamboo that are needed for this type of sound production are rare in other parts of Asia, but they thrive in large groves in Jembrana. The name Jembrana is derived from the words *jimbar* (spacious) and *vana* (forest), so Jembrana means a large forest that has abundant bamboo as a raw material for building *jegog* gamelan.

### **Carving and Decoration**

While bamboo is crucial for the ensemble's unique and haunting sound, the casings and carvings that support the keys are made from *nangka* (jackfruit), *suar* (*albizia saman*), and acacia trees (*fabaceae* family). Each instrument stand is decorated with elaborate woodcarving. Rising above the keys of each instrument is a carved fascia, called *tabing*, which artistically describes the feeling for nature, while the right and left sides of the casing are carved dragons' heads, called *punggalan*. These serpent heads are attached to the frame, which carries the serpentine form all the way down to the base of the gamelan.

The overall impression presented by the wood carving and decorations of gamelan *jegog* is that of a lush jungle atmosphere, with the *punggalan* depicting large forest snake heads (dragon or *naga*) while the front legs are carved like those of a delicate deer. A ferocious Boma mask is carved in the center *tabing* on

the largest instrument, the great *jegog*. Boma is the forest guardian, who resides in and protects the forest.



## 4 - Ecology, Influences, and Competitions in Jembrana

The word *jegog* is from *nyegogog*, which means something great and hard to move. Another etymology of *jegog* divides the word into two: "je" and "gog." "Je" is taken from the word "jegeg" (beautiful) and "gog" from the previously mentioned "nyegogog" (great in size): *jegeg nyegogog* then means something beautiful, great, and hard to move: a *jegog ensemble*.

1) Ecology. Certain preconditions prepared the way for gamelan *jegog*. I contend that the local ecology allowed bamboo to grow bigger in Western Bali, and that, as a result, allowed for more innovation in bamboo as a musical medium. Once the people of Jembrana encountered musical ideas from abroad, combined with the local culture of competition in the arts, they were able to develop a unique form of music using the medium of bamboo.

For building and maintaining a *jegog* orchestra, in which exceptionally large bamboo is required for sound quality, the ecology of place is very significant. Jembrana was historically less populated, and as a result, large bamboo forests continued to thrive, where many bamboo varieties grew to a size that is rarely found in other parts of Indonesia. Only the special ecological conditions of Jembrana could produce the very large tubes that create the deep sounds for which gamelan *jegog* is famous.

2) The idea of bamboo ensemble. It is also possible that the inspiration to build these instruments came from abroad. Bamboo is a common material for instruments in Southeast Asia. It is used in many different ways, for example

shaken bamboo rattles like *angklung buncis* for rice harvest festivals in West Java, or bamboo gamelan such as those of Banyuwangi, East Java. There we find a bamboo ensemble called *angklung paglak* ("hut" *angklung*), which has instruments of a smaller size than gamelan *jegog* and uses a different scale. Banyuwangi, of course, is directly across a two-mile stretch of ocean from Bali. It seems possible that this ensemble from East Java helped inspire the first gamelan *jegog*—but the size and musical tuning in Bali were like nothing that had come before.

3) Local culture. Finally, the cultural drive behind making and playing this ensemble may have grown from the peculiarities of local ways. Jembrana is a region of Bali that enjoys competition. This is seen in *jegog mebarung* (*jegog* orchestras "together", i.e. competing for audience attention), *kendang mebarung* (drum competitions), *mabente* (feet fighting), *mapentilan* (finger competitions) and other such contests. This love of trying out the strength of one's neighbor may be the result of the diverse peoples who have settled in the area, and the resultant competition between groups, which is not violent but rather played out in music, sporting events, and other playful ways of establishing superiority. Jembrana was historically not as heavily populated as many other parts of Bali, and so refugees from diverse regions migrated here.

At the time of the reign of the king of Jembrana in the seventeenth century, I Gusti Ngurah Pancoran practiced an "open door" policy, and many refugees of Bugis descent, from Makassar, or Malays from Johor and beyond came, seeking asylum from the encroachments of the Dutch East Indies

Company (VOC) or other colonial powers in the region. Thus Jembrana immigrants arrived with a drive to match and surpass others they encountered as they created a new life.

Many Muslims, who disliked the colonial strictures or perhaps even escaped imprisonment for their efforts to keep the Dutch VOC out, migrated to Bali (an area that was not taken over by the Dutch until 1906). In Jembrana they established a community in Loloan. Much as the United States is viewed as the melting pot of the world and has developed hybrid art forms, Jembrana in the early twentieth century was a mixing pot with diverse communities each establishing their place in this new land. Art, music, and dance provided the arena in which they chose to compete and innovate.

Thus three factors set the stage for gamelan *jegog*: 1) ecology, 2) the idea of bamboo ensemble (perhaps imported from Banyuwangi in Java), and 3) local culture. Groups felt a need to establish their reputation in relation to each other locally and a Jembrana identity in relation to other areas of Bali. And for these people, bigger was better. The bamboo in the area was ready to serve that image once the inspiration to craft a set of bamboo orchestral instruments was present.

## 5 - Periods in *Jegog* History

*Jegog* in Jembrana has changed considerably over the last hundred years, responding to the innovations of significant artists and the interests of the audiences of each era. In this development, there are three major periods, that followed after Kiyang Geliduh (Gamelan *jegog* founder 1912). The first period is called the Genjor period (1912-1945), in which the ensemble was purely instrumental and percussive. The second is the Suprig period (1945-1965), when martial-style dance was incorporated. The third is Jayus period (from 1965-present), when a greater balance between percussion and dance was achieved and modern styles from wider Balinese culture were incorporated.

### Genjor Period (1912-1945)

Sebual village is where the *jegog* was first created, around 1912 by Kiyang Geliduh (b. 1872). Genjor was one of the key members of Kiyang Geliduh's *jegog* group and so the period gained the name of this early *jegog* artist. He developed this art for the people of Bali. During this early period, the structure of gamelan *jegog* was purely instrumental—not yet including dance and martial arts. Village communities would play *jegog* all night long to celebrate harvests, birthdays, or for entertainment. The repertoire at that time included "Tabuh Teruntungan", the opening song, discussed earlier, "Tabuh Ndung Gria" (*Ndung* Song at the Priest's House), "Tabuh Jaran Dauk" (Song of the Horse with Light Hair), "Tabuh Curing Bero" (Song of the False Bird).

During this period, gamelan *jegog* was played for entertainment at the end of a workday. The original set of instruments numbered eleven in all—there were three *barangan*, three *kancil*, two *kuntung/celuluk*, two *undir*, one *jegog* (see p. 8 for the function of each instrument). The size of the instruments however was smaller than a modern set, so the player of *barangan*, *kancil*, and *kuntung* would sit on benches or on the ground while they played. For the larger *undir* and *jegog*, it has always been necessary to sit on top of the instruments to play them.

Nearby to Sebul is Sangkar Agung, my home village. The village today has a population of 311,995 (Data from Jembrana City Council) (<http://www.jembranakab.go.id>, accessed 16 Jan. 2016) made up of farmers, day laborers, and carpenters. Many *jegog* musicians and dancers from the early days to the present come from Sangkar Agung. They were quick to adopt Genjor's innovation and were among the first to further develop the art.

### **Suprig Period (1945-1965)**

One of the first clear references in western literature to the genre highlights the innovation of this second period. Beryl de Zoete and Walter Spies in *Dance and Drama in Bali* state, “We must mention in connection with Pentjak [*pencak silat*, martial arts dance] a curious and beautiful dance till recently performed at Djembrana [Jembrana], in West Bali, accompanied by a unique bamboo orchestra, called Djegog, after the which the dance was named. The

orchestra consisted of twenty bamboo instruments of different sizes, decorated with fantastic painted nagas.” (de Zoete and Spies 1938 [1952]: 255)

Before WWII, martial arts were included in *jegog* performances. It is this combination of martial arts and *jegog* that marks what I call the "Suprig period" from 1945-1965, when a strong female artist by that name brought a combination martial arts dance and the *jegog* ensemble to full flower. Ni Suprig was born in Dlod Brawah village around 1930. In addition to being a housewife, Suprig was a fine dancer and athlete of *pencak silat*. She learned martial dance from her *pencak silat* teacher, I Made Jengkarak, from Mendoyo Dangin Tukad village. Mendoyo's *pencak silat* was taught beginning in the 1930s, but did not gain notoriety beyond the local region. Then around 1945, Ni Suprig's *pencak silat* became popular in Jembrana regency. This martial art uses dance to teach *jurus* (moves) and puts them together into choreographic sequences.

According to Suwentra (2016) the opening for a performance in the Suprig era would be a solo dancer called “Dag”, a term which supposedly came from and indicated a “Dutchman.” The Dutch, through the Dutch East India Company (1602-1800) and later as colonial overlords, ruled much of the Indonesian archipelago, though, as mentioned, Bali only succumbed in 1906. As a result, prior to the twentieth century, Bali was seen as a place of asylum for those who did not want to live under Dutch rule. In Jembrana, for example, there is a mangrove area called Loloan where Muslim immigrants from Sulawesi, Kalimantan (Borneo), and Malaysia live to this day. They fled the wars against

the colonial powers and sought protection from colonial exploitation from the King of Jembrana, I Gusti Ngurah Pancoran (who ruled, as previously noted, in the 17th Century). These refugees formed a small Muslim minority in Hindu-Buddhist Bali.

This Muslim group is associated with *pencak silat* and the costume and movement that Suprig made famous in this period drew from this more Islamic associated tradition. This heritage is reflected in the names of the dances: "Tari Stambul" (literally, "Istanbul Dance", but actually Dance [in the Style of] *Sambul*, an early 20th century theatre which used *The 1001 Night* stories in its repertory); "Titian Kawat" (Walking on the Rope), and "Ci Uler" (The Snake [a pose for *pencak silat*]) were done. Costume features, such as the *kopiah* (Muslim style conical cap), black leggings, a tie, and boots were likewise believed to be borrowed from Islamic styles.

During the Suprig period, *jegog* became a secondary focus to the featured *pencak silat* dance. The formats of these performances were divided into sections. 1) The Dag would introduce himself and the *jegog* group. 2) Two to four female and/or male dancers without weapons would enter the stage to demonstrate their skills. 3) A group of four or more dancers would entertain the audience with combat, showing off their skills with weaponry. Weapons included anything from bamboo poles, *chabang* (a pointed prong shaped metal baton), to *nunchaku* (two stick connected with a chain). This type of performance therefore falls under the Balinese performance category of *bali-balihan*, "for entertainment

purposes only". It was not considered to be of any religious or sacred significance.

### **Jayus Period (1965-Present)**

Jayus style *jegog* emerged with Suharto's New Order. In early 1974, my father, I Ketut Suwentra, a local artist from Jembrana, created "Tari Makepung". *Kepung* means "to chase" and *me* is a prefix meaning "to do". *Makepung* is a traditional water buffalo race that takes place in Jembrana during the rice-harvesting season. This event is an expression of happiness for the farmers and others in the village. They divide up into two competing teams. One team represents the west side of Ijo Gading River (which runs through the middle of Negara, the capital of Jembrana regency), and the other team represents the east side. "Tari Makepung" takes place once every six months, because rice harvests happen twice a year. A number of arts-related competitions have developed in conjunction with this event.

In *jegog mebarung* (gamelan *jegog* competition), two or more groups of gamelan *jegog* compete. They play simultaneously, and the one that plays louder and with better rhythmic cohesion is the winner. The audience is the judge. Likewise, in *kendang mebarung* (drum competition) two groups of drummers compete in a similar manner. Other events include *mapentilan* (finger fighting competition) and *mejangka* (arm fighting competition). By linking *jegog* to this



form of competition, I Ketut Suwentra helped raise the prestige and popularity of gamelan *jegog*, which by the 1970s was endangered and disappearing.

"Tari Makepung" was a choreography created around 1976, with the theme of abundant crops of rice and maize. My father, I Ketut Suwentra, under the name of Suar Agung (*suar* means light, *agung* mean big or great) formed his own gamelan group in 1978 along with Ni Nyoman Kazuko Makita, his Japanese wife, who served as manager of the group.<sup>6</sup> Through his artistry and her management skills, the group has been able to introduce gamelan *jegog* to national and international audiences alike. On a national scale Suar Agung has appeared several times at the presidential palace, Plaza Sarinah (a major store in Jakarta), and National Museum (Gedung Gajah), also in Jakarta. On the international stage, Jegog Suar Agung has toured to Singapore, Japan, the Netherlands, France, and Germany for events or festivals of gamelan and dance.

After this brief historical overview of periods, I now return to each of these periods to examine the function of the art in that time in greater depth.

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<sup>6</sup> By 1987 Suar Agung had become a foundation.

## 6 - Gamelan Jegog Periods and the Functions of Performance

### ***Genjor Period (1912-1945)***

I Ketut Suwentra (2016) stated, in an interview I conducted with him, that as a *jegog* artist from Negara, he felt the major function of gamelan *jegog* was traditionally to collect the villagers to conduct *nyucuk* (thatching house roofs with hay/straw). This is done communally as *gotong-royong* (mutual cooperation)—an important value of the people of Indonesia. *Nyucuk* includes entertainment and music to lighten the communal effort—this eventually led toward spectacle entertainment (*balih-balihan*) that was incorporated by the *sekeha-sekeha* (community groups, which also sponsored music/dance activities) in every village in Jembrana. In my analysis, this led to the original version of gamelan *jegog*. This was spearheaded by the music master, I Genjor (1912-1945), as instrumental music only. A lack of written sources or artists who remember information about I Genjor limits what we can say about the practices of this era. However, I Nyoman Sukerna (2003) and I Ketut Suwentra's memories (2016), both emphasize the importance of Genjor.

### ***Suprig Period (1945-65)***

Gamelan *jegog* in Ni Suprig's version (1945-1965) added, as previously noted, the pan-Indonesian martial art (*pencak silat*). The non-Balinese contributions to this tradition are seen in the costumes. Male clothing included a

Muslim style skullcap (*topi, kopiah*), boots (*sepatu boot*) and sash (*selempang*). Female dancers used dark colored leggings (*celana ketat/tait*).

As previously noted Ni Suprig learned martial arts with I Made Jengkrak (Mendoyo Dangin Tukad village) prior to making her innovations, which began about 1937. *Pencak silat* literally and ideologically means the “art of evading”, and uses the concept of *kelit* (evade an opponent). Ni Suprig became known for her martial arts skills, which people normally study through for the form *jurus* (patterns of movement/exercises). These moves are then developed into dances, which are often called the *bunga* (flower of the ideas from the *jurus*, i. e., dance) when they are linked together. Music accompanies the *bunga* dances, and then, as the tempo of the music speeds up, the group will perform improvised fighting in mock/practice battles that demonstrate their skills, as well as building the performers' abilities to fight should the need ever actually arise.

Of course, few people would chose to pick a fight with someone that they have seen dancing and improvising with great skill. Therefore the good martial artist rarely needs to actually fight. This martial arts training with *jegog* accompaniment became recognized as an art form and was called gamelan *jegog* Ni Suprig due to the centrality of this artist in development, training, and group performances. Besides doing *pencak silat* with bare/open hands, the group would do demonstrations with weapons that might include branches, bamboo sticks, chains, etc.

A distinctive trait of Ni Suprig's performance was that at the start of the event, the Dag appeared. (In Dutch, dag is the word for "day," but also a way of

saying hello or goodbye as in "Good day"). The Dag would wear a mask with a European-style nose, boots, vest, a European military hat, and carry a staff. He would perform "Tari Dag," a dance in what was considered a parody of a westerner. This Dag dancer acted as the host, dancer, and comedian who kept the audience entertained and kept the performance moving.

I Ketut Surung (70 years old in 2016) from Mendoyo Dangin Tukad was a very important Dag dancer, who remains recognized for his contributions to gamelan *jegog* development. Surung has been important in teaching and training children to be dancers for gamelan *jegog*. In this type of performance the gamelan *jegog* functions only as an accompaniment for a martial arts show of three to four hours. After the Dag introduced himself, the *pencak silat* artists performed in groups.

In one gamelan *jegog* ensemble there would be eighteen players/musicians and eight to ten dancers. The structure of a performance began with a solo male- and female-style dance, then group dance, and finally ended in combat with or without weapons. This performance is considered entertainment and can be performed everywhere—the *banjar* (community pavilion), on the street corner, or in an open field.

### ***Nyoman Jayus Period (1965-present)***

In 1965, dance drama (*sendratari*) was introduced to *jegog*, which made that genre quite popular. *Sendratari* is a wordless/mimed dance that became popular all over Indonesia at that time. The genre soon became a normative

presentation of classical dance, which instead of highlighting martial arts, uses character types: such as refined females or fierce warriors. This *sendratari* style was only unusual, compared to other Balinese dance dramas, in that gamelan *jegog* was now the accompanying music. This was in contrast to most areas of Bali where *gong kebyar* (the previously noted, large, modern brass instrument/gamelan set played with lightning speed) had become popular.

Around 1974 my father, I Ketut Suwentra, created a dance/theatre episode that was more locally distinctive: "Tari Makepung", which described/presented the local tradition of buffalo racing. The word "makepung" means "siege" or "chase" and the prefix "ma" (do) means to compete in a chase—a kind of running/fighting with these large and sometimes dangerous animals. Suwentra is the younger brother of the previously discussed music master Jayus who continued to supply the musical innovations and do the instrument building. The pairing of Suwentra and Jayus's creativity marked a new period for *jegog*. This was a family collaboration, which has continued to this day.

I Nyoman Jayus was a dancer, choreographer, and ensemble music director, as well as an important village leader in Sangkar Agung. As previously noted, he was born in 1940 the third of eight brothers whose father was I Nengah Ruba who was himself a teacher at Konservatori Karawitan (Conservatory of Music [the secondary school of the arts in Denpasar]) in 1977. Jayus was also a lecturer at ASTI [Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia, Indonesian Academy of the Arts [tertiary level]] in Denpasar, from 1960 to 1978. He also served as director of the

Balinese dance classes—at the organization Ganda Kumara in Negara, taught in Denpasar, and even taught as far away as Surabaya on the north coast of Java. Jayus' artistic expertise led to experiences abroad. In 1960, he went to the Netherlands to perform, in 1968, to Bangkok, in 1970 to Singapore and Australia, in 1971, to West Germany, and in 1977, to India, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong and Tahiti.<sup>7</sup>

In *Jayus' jegog*, dance and gamelan had a good balance—the gamelan played throughout, and the dance now drew from classical Balinese traditions rather than the martial arts. So dancers use *agem* (stance) and other moves that are fundamental to Balinese basic classical dance.

I Nyoman Jayus developed the instrumentation further, even as he adopted a new (if classical) style of dance. At the time he started, the instruments consisted of three *barangan*, three *kancilan*, three *suir*, two *kuntung/celuluk*, two *undir*, and one *jegog*. Jayus added instruments that normally accompany classical dance: two *kendang* /drums, one *tawa-tawa* (kettle gong), one *ceng-ceng* (small brass cymbals), and finally the *suling* (flute), as a melodic sweetener to complement the *gending* or song. This instrumentation allowed the dances of *gong kebyar* to easily enter the repertoire. Jayus showed high skill in adapting the songs of *gong kebyar*, which has a five-tone *pelog*, and he transferred this music to a four-tone *jegog*.

Jayus in his transpositions showed he was capable of reading the current market of the Suharto era, and, as a result, his group performed in many places

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<sup>7</sup> Jayus Nyoman, *Teori Tari Bali*, CV Sumber Mas Bali, 1980, p. 67

around Bali, across the nation, and entered the international area. For example, due to this use of mixture of older *jegog* with features from the *gong kebyar* repertoire, Jayus was invited for the first time to the Netherlands, as was reported in my April 2, 2016 interview with I Putu Sumiarsa, who is the son of Jayus. Audiences at home, as well as abroad, felt Jayus' innovations made *jegog* more interesting as they abandoned older variants and embraced his new work.

## 7 – *Jegog* in the World

Surprisingly, little scholarship has been done on the subject of *Jegog*. Researchers into Balinese music, such as Michael Tenzer, (US/Canada), Martin Ramstedt, (Germany), Yukie Kurihara (Japan), have tended to study Balinese gamelan as a whole, with a focus on the forms of music that were developed for temple and royal ceremonies. Few details have been presented on the origins and development of gamelan *jegog*. Often they have written only a few paragraphs, speaking generally about the existence of gamelan *jegog*.

From the above review, I have concluded Kiyang Geliduh created that gamelan *jegog* in the village Sebuah, Negara, Bali around 1912. The origins and early form of gamelan *jegog* are difficult to ascertain, due to limited information and books that discuss gamelan *jegog*. Information about its early development has largely been obtained from interviews, while some discussion of its musical elements can be found in a book written by I Nyoman Sukerna (2003).

Because villages in this part of Jembrana tend to be closely adjacent to each other, a small cluster of villages is the birthplace of many significant *jegog* musicians, craftsmen, composers, and dancers. Sangkaragung, a sub-village, is where *jegog* itself was developed, and many important artists, like my grandfather I Nengah Ruba and his sons, I Nyoman Jayus and I Ketut Suwentra, are from this locale. More recently, Tegal Cangkring village has also become one of the villages where the art form continues to develop and thrive. The important artists from Tegal Cangkring are I Wayan Gama and I Nyoman Utama.



*Jegog* gamelan initially functioned as entertainment in the culturally important activity of “mutual aid” (*gotong royong*), in which neighbors come together and do activities such as thatching roofs. This would explain why the initial Genjor version was purely instrumental. Perhaps due to increased amounts of leisure time, Gamelan *jegog* evolved to become a form of performance, rather than just background music. Its popularity increased when performances incorporated *pencak silat* (martial arts) in the Suprig version around 1945, and then evolved into a *jegog* gamelan accompaniment to dances in Jayus' version, which added dances from *gong kebyar*, with the addition of two drums, *ceng-ceng duduk* (small cymbal), and *tawa-tawa* (melody keeper).

In modern times, gamelan *jegog* has been used to accompany the dance “Makepung”, created by Ketut Suwentra, which is considered a masterpiece in the Jembrana district. It is commonly danced at every performance of gamelan *jegog* in such places as Denpasar, Sanur, and Ubud, which are all tourist destinations as well as cultural sites.

We have seen how 1) the natural environment including large stands of native bamboo, 2) the musical environment—with its reliance on group cohesion and rhythmic intensity, and 3) the culture of competition (spanning from martial arts to buffalo racing to excellence in the arts in the district of Jembrana) combined to form this unique musical genre. Despite competition from other forms of entertainment, such as western rock music, television, and the Internet, *jegog* continues to gain acceptance and popularity within Bali and abroad. Tourists arrive in Bali and are captivated by its powerful sound and have taken

these ideas home with them. Abroad we find a growing demand for new *jegog* ensembles and international *jegog* performances.

## Conclusion

One approach for the "theoretical framework" could be to discuss *jegog* in terms of religion and spirituality in Balinese music. *Jegog* is unusual in that it does not have a ritual component. Even court music, like *semar pegulingan*, normally has a spiritual and ritual purpose—you are not just entertaining an audience, you are also making offerings to the gods.

While *jegog*, like anything done in traditional Balinese culture, has a spiritual component; it is among the most "secular" of the Balinese musical forms. This distinction is reflected in the way *jegog* has been utilized and modified over time. There is less of a pull towards tradition, and more toward entertainment, and groups have had more freedom to innovate and evolve.

I think the bronze material used most gamelan is a crucial distinction. If I were to extend this thesis I would explore the possibility that metallic sound are often known in traditional genres as linked with the spiritual realm. We see that in Christian church bells or angel trumpets, Buddhist cymbals and bell ringing, gong cultures where gong and the ancestor's bones or "voice" are somehow linked. It is in a number of places believed that the sound of metallophonic instruments chase off bad spirits, but are appreciated by the good spirits (consider Lion Dance or rituals that use metal orchestras in Bali-Java). This is an area which further research and study would be necessary before conclusions can safely be drawn.

If this assumption were true it seems that the ritual/religious uses of some bronze Balinese music and dance has perhaps locked those styles into more ritual forms. (However their are, of course, many examples of bronze gamelan music used for non-ritual purpose.) The music in some of those events must be played the way it was always played. The goal in ritual music is that all things are done correctly, to the satisfaction of the gods. *Jegog* music on the other hand is played for the satisfaction of the audience. Since *jegog* does not use bronze materials, in Jembrana at least, it is spiritually neutral, and therefore has not been tied to any specific religious tradition or ritual use. Thus, in a uniquely Balinese way, *jegog* is for people, the human audience. It is effectively secular music, similar to pop music in the West.

Historically, this has allowed for innovations in the music for strictly entertainment purposes. The emphasis has been on showmanship, competition, and entertainment.

The implications for the future of *jegog* are that the art form is free to continue evolving and changing to the tastes of future audiences. Instead of "preserving" the music as a cultural artifact or sacred ritual, *jegog* should be "promoted", brought to the masses for their enjoyment. We should encourage the development of new music and new ways of enjoying the sounds and rhythms of a bamboo gamelan.

This means that *jegog* should not be presented to the world as a "cultural relic" or a spiritual tradition that must be maintained in its original form. Instead, people should be encouraged to enjoy the music for its own sake, experience the special tonality of an all-bamboo orchestra, compose new music, improve on the design, and incorporate it into other forms of music and dance. Just as Rock and Roll has been adopted around the world to take on new forms in many diverse cultures, so should *jegog* be promoted and adapted to the tastes and interests of people all around the globe.

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