

**The Politics of Participation:
An Ethnography of Gamelan
Associations in Surakarta, Central
Java**

Jonathan Roberts

Linacre College

**Thesis submitted in compliance with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (D.Phil.) at the
Faculty of Music, University of Oxford**

Trinity Term, 2015

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Abstract

Professional Javanese gamelan musicians and the way they think about and make music have been extensively studied by ethnomusicologists. This thesis shifts the analytical focus to the experience and practice of players in ‘gamelan associations’ for whom music is neither their primary occupation nor main source of income. It addresses two issues: firstly, who are these musicians and what does their way of playing and conceiving of music tell us about gamelan, and secondly, what opportunities and benefits does participation in these groups afford them.

The first section sets out the details and context of fourteen gamelan associations in Surakarta. It examines local terminology for different forms of musicianship, their practice in relation to factors such as recompense for playing, ability, repertoire, and training, and discusses the combination of rehearsal and social gathering which I claim is fundamental to these groups. I argue that, whilst there is significant diversity among gamelan associations and their members, they represent a unified category of musicians distinct from those who are officially employed to play and that the specific benefits they obtain from playing derive from this non-professional status.

The second section sets out these benefits in five chapters, relating respectively to gamelan’s implication in discourses of community at local and state level, expressions of cultural ownership, the display and negotiation of personal authority, access to power, and the production of public sound. I argue that these connections mean that participation in gamelan associations is not simply recreational but a potentially powerful way for Solonese people to create meaning and influence for themselves amidst the competing models of modernity and rapid political change of contemporary Indonesia.

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Introduction

Javanese gamelan: a brief introduction

Gamelan is a term used to describe a range of predominantly percussion-based ensembles found across Indonesia and Malaysia, and the music played on them. They are intimately connected with other performing arts such as dance, shadow puppet theatre (*Wayang*), and folk theatre and opera traditions (*Kethoprak*, *Arja*). Central Javanese gamelan, which is the focus of this thesis, has strong roots in both court ceremonial and village entertainment, and as a result is used to play repertoires that are classical and sacral, as well as popular and theatrical. The types of music historically performed on Javanese gamelan are now often referred to as *karawitan*, a term which sets them apart from contemporary popular genres played on the instruments and which is largely analogous to the broad conception of ‘classical music’ in the Anglophone world.

Much of the court music is based on the Hindu and Buddhist culture of the early dynasties, and most shadow puppet theatre re-tells stories from major Hindu epics imported from India (primarily the Ramayana and Mahabharata). After the defeat of the final Hindu-Buddhist kingdom c. 1527 CE,¹ the following kingdoms were Islamic in culture, most importantly in Central Java the Kingdom of Mataram, which later split, under pressure from the Dutch East Indies Company, giving rise to the four current royal courts (Ricklefs 2008, 138–39). This shift means that much in the performing arts which

¹ Javanese traditional history, and much theatre deriving from it, describes this in terms of the Sultanate of Demak defeating the remnants of the Majapahit empire in 1478CE but Ricklefs (2008) contests this, seeing a far more gradual collapse of smaller, remnant Hindu-Buddhist authorities by 1527CE.

was once liturgical or devotional in nature is not now directly connected to contemporary religious practice, although a strong strand of Javanese mysticism still maintains the importance of the older practices and teachings, reframed in an Islamic cosmology (J. O. Becker 1993). Thus, in contrast to gamelan on the island of Bali, which remains predominantly Hindu, Javanese gamelan is essentially a non-religious art music, with its contemporary importance and cachet deriving from its links to the exercise of royal power, and the validation provided by a long history of foreign fascination with the tradition.

Beginning with Kunst's (1973) exhaustive organological study there has been a large vein of academic literature focussing on Javanese gamelan within ethnomusicology and Southeast Asian studies. These have primarily focussed on the theoretical details of the music's production, with many explorations of how individual modes within the two primary scales are expressed and recognised (Hood 1954; Gitosaprodjo, S. 1984; Martopangrawit 1984; J. O. Becker 1980; Hastanto 1985; Walton 1987), investigations into the structures of gamelan compositions and how they relate to cosmological models of time (J. O. Becker 1979; J. O. Becker 1980, 105–44; Hughes 1988), and the vexed issue of where in the complex texture of the ensemble the melody is to be found (Perlman 2004). Aesthetic content and the discourses surrounding it have been studied more recently (Benamou 2010), as well as concepts of musical knowledge and its negotiation (Brinner 1995), and the political ramifications of gamelan music and its associated performing arts have been explored in historical context by Sumarsam (1995). This leaves the social life of ensembles, by which I mean both the interactions between players within groups and ensembles' relationships with wider discourses and institutions, largely unaddressed. This is particularly important given the context of rapid political and social change in contemporary Indonesia.

Since independence in 1945 Indonesia has moved from being a colonised conglomeration of kingdoms to the unifying charismatic leadership of Sukarno, who maintained an uneasy coalition between the three main stakeholders in the independence movement: secular nationalists with the backing of the army, Islamist groups, and the communist party, to the military dictatorship of Suharto's 'New Order', and since then to increasingly fractious and populist multi-party democracy (Ricklefs 2008). This means that a wide range of systems of authority, influence, and techniques for negotiating them that come from previous dispensations, remain vividly present even as new ones are layered on top. The dominant models of modern citizenship visible in Central Java are centred either on aspirational, urban wealth and consumption presented uniformly in national media and explicitly contrasted with more traditional or rural lifestyles which are positioned as backwards and embarrassing, or on increasingly assertive Islamic identities reacting against the perceived western and immoral nature of this type of modernity (Beatty 2009, 228; also Stauth 2002).

The position and attitudes of the Javanese, as the numerically and politically dominant ethnic group, are also changing as an increasingly self-confident national culture, rooted in the Indonesian language and Jakarta-based media makes the use of Javanese and commitment to Javanese cultural practices appear parochial and backward (Beatty 2009, 228). This, however, has somewhat freed Javanese culture from its historical connection to hegemonic power and opened up possibilities for it to be reclaimed, treated as something at risk of being overcome by 'external' influence,² and actively supported without the problems associated with being proud of and advocating for the trappings of privilege and cultural dominance. A resurgence in local social and cultural organisation alongside political decentralisation has been occurring throughout Indonesia since the end

² This is a common trope throughout much of Southeast Asia. For a thorough survey see Kartomi (1995).

of the New Order in 1998 (Davidson and Henley 2007, 1–3) but this has been somewhat slower and less dramatic in Java (*ibid.*, 37).

This project aims to build on the rich resource of technical information and historical contextualisation provided by previous scholarship in exploring further the social meanings and affordances that this music provides for those playing it in contemporary Surakarta. In particular I argue that it allows a means of personal and social validation for Solonese (this is the standard adjective for people or things pertaining to Surakarta) who do not have access to the resources necessary to fully engage with a model of modern citizenship based on wealth, consumption, and display, but also do not wish to resort to relying on a commitment to modernising and Arab-influenced definitions of Islam to counter this. In this sense, gamelan associations may also represent part of a Solonese response to a wider, national revisiting of traditional patterns of social and cultural organisation after the end of centralised, one-party rule.

The politics of participation

The title of this thesis invokes the idea that participation in music-making is something which is inherently political at both the micro and macro level. By this I mean that setting up and running a musical group, making music together, finding official support to sustain a group's existence, and arranging for it to perform in public, inevitably involve both interpersonal social politics and engagement with wider political discourses on the significance of group activity.

It is taken for granted in Javanese culture that group activities have profound significance, not only in creating and strengthening bonds between individuals, but also in providing models of interaction and sociality for society in general. This ability is assumed to lie in the fact that playing *karawitan* requires the conscious and flexible application of rules to

produce a successful outcome, something which includes not simply a pleasing rendition of a piece but also cooperative harmony and social flow. Taking part is assumed to be transformative for those involved and also for those who witness these interactions. I argue that participation in gamelan associations is political in that it is predicated on negotiation between the individuals who create and sustain groups, the social manoeuvring and negotiation that occurs within them, and the links that *karawitan* has to the historical expression of power in Java and the creation of national identity after independence.

Turino (2008) also uses the phrase ‘politics of participation’ as the subtitle of his book *Music as Social Life* and, although there are areas of overlap, the way I am using it is somewhat different. Turino sets out (ibid., ch.2) a division of musics into those which are participatory, actively including all in a given situation in their production, and those which are presentational, requiring an audience separate from those performing. He proceeds (ibid., ch.7) to argue that participatory musics are particularly amenable to being used in political ways, citing the examples of Nazi Germany and the civil rights movement in the United States. Javanese gamelan does not fit straightforwardly into either of Turino’s categories. As a bounded ensemble playing for audiences who are not directly involved in the production of sound, it is certainly not participatory in the fullest sense of Turino’s definition. The internal workings of the ensemble are, however, conceptualised as entailing the social interaction, cooperative negotiation, and multi-ability involvement that Turino describes. This form of participation is also considered to reach beyond the ensemble to include and affect those within its aural and social sphere even if they are not explicitly involved in the production of music. I contend, therefore, that, although gamelan performance is not participatory according to Turino’s definition,

the fact that it is embedded in discourses of social interaction, community participation, and national identity mean that it is still eminently political.

This thesis sets out the ways in which ideas of participation shape the setting up and maintenance of gamelan associations, and the reasons people have for participating. It argues that both the social interaction within these groups and the groups' interaction with external institutions are political and that this is a fundamentally important factor in making participation attractive.

Gamelan associations

I first encountered gamelan as an undergraduate studying Chinese at Oxford University. Having seen a poster encouraging people to 'come and learn Javanese gamelan' on my first day, I turned up for an introductory session. At the time the group met on two separate evenings, once for the on-going advanced players, and once for beginners. I had existing commitments on the day of the beginners' class and managed to negotiate access to the advanced group. This meant a steep learning curve but also immediately exposed me to a far greater range of repertoire than would have been the case in the beginners' group. The ensuing combination of confusion and wonder led to a love affair with the music which lasted for the four years of my degree and prompted me to apply for the Darmasiswa scholarship. This Indonesian government programme allows recipients to choose an institute of tertiary education in Indonesia and pays their fees to attend for a year along with a generous living allowance. Following in the footsteps of many of the UK gamelan community I chose to go to STSI³ Surakarta and studied there for a year, eventually extending my time there for another year.

³ This same institution was originally called ASKI, then STSI, and is now an Indonesian Arts Institute (ISI). I use all three names in this thesis depending on the context.

On returning to the UK, I built a career teaching gamelan for music services, universities, community groups, and music colleges, whilst also performing professionally. The vocal training I had previously received as a cathedral chorister meant that focussing increasingly on the sung component of gamelan music was a straightforward choice. After ten years of this, I decided to return to academic study, seeking conceptual frameworks for my knowledge and experience.

During the writing of my master's degree thesis on male vocals in Javanese gamelan, issues arose relating to the internal divisions within gamelan ensembles and different levels of training and participation. This led me to plan an ethnography of what I at first labelled as 'amateur' musicians for my doctoral research. The role of *gérong* or male chorus singer is one which is frequently filled by individuals with somewhat different social and musical backgrounds from the instrumental players. The role is not taken seriously enough for it to attract an ambitious musician and, outside of a very few teachers at the arts academies, there are almost no full-time specialists in male singing, the only examples I can think of being men who had previously performed in heavily song-based genres such as *Kroncong* who then move into gamelan music.⁴ Those men who do focus specifically on singing tend to be those with a university education, becoming involved through an interest in the intricacies of Javanese language and poetry. They usually only have the opportunity to dedicate time to music once they have stopped working, and thus the vast majority of *gérong* are retirees who move into, or come back to, music-making as a hobby later in life. In the main they do not play instruments, with a tacit understanding that this would be slightly beneath their dignity.

⁴ Pak S. who sings at the Mangkunegaran palace is widely reported to have said that he moved into gamelan singing from *kroncong* because *gérong* sat down while performing while *kroncong* singers had to stand.

This phenomenon did not become a major feature of my research at the time, but triggered a great deal of thought about the different types of individuals who play gamelan and the variety of groups available to those who wish to take part in making music in this particular way. As a student of gamelan music at the Performing Arts Academy in Surakarta (STSI) for two years between 1999 and 2001, I was aware of the existence of the gamelan groups outside the boundaries of what we were taught to consider as ‘good’ or ‘correct’ musical practice, but had very little exposure to them, only occasionally engaging with those taught by STSI lecturers who invited us along to gain extra experience. The discourse surrounding these groups was always couched in terms of undesirable qualities such as village-y (*désa*), coarse or vulgar (*kasar*), and unsophisticated (*lugu*), and since I was there to learn how to play gamelan it would obviously be best to avoid learning how to do it ‘wrong’. A number of encounters within the literature on music, along with a growing curiosity about the way that the male vocalists described above fitted into the broader picture of gamelan musicianship, however, led me to reconsider these groups and their importance.

I was aware from conversations with friends who were studying Balinese rather than Javanese gamelan that levels of participation were considered to be different there. The literature on Balinese performing arts (Tenzer 1991; Bakan 1999) also supports this anecdotal idea that involvement among all age groups and social classes in the performing arts is far more prevalent and considered far less exceptional. There are various factors involved in this, including the fundamental importance of traditional music and dance in the daily round of Balinese religious observance, and the integral role that they play in Bali’s tourist industry (Stepputat 2006; 2010). Both these elements contribute to a situation where the expectation is that the vast majority of individuals will contribute to their community’s religious and economic life by taking part in entertaining

both the Gods and ancestors, and visitors from abroad and other parts of Indonesia. Similarly Blacking (1973), in answering his fundamental question as to how musical ‘man’ is, described a situation among the Venda where non-participation in music was not even an option and where the notion of a professional musician made little or no sense. Baily’s (1988) descriptions of professional lineage musicians and the amateur players who work alongside them and the situation of amateur Chinese opera clubs in San Francisco (Riddle 1978), however, provide examples where the boundaries between different types of training and levels of engagement with music are clearly perceived even if they are occasionally flexible and porous. Finnegan’s (2007) study of what she referred to as ‘Hidden Musicians’ in Milton Keynes then provided the impetus to seriously investigate musicians who fall outside the usual expectations surrounding professional training and performance in a Javanese context. I chose to limit the study to traditional music as this was my area of expertise and the multitude of musical forms practised in Surakarta would render a wider study well beyond the scope of a DPhil project.

I had been aware of some ‘amateur’ groups in Surakarta from my previous time there and expected to play with possibly four or five which I would then use as case studies, but once I began to talk to Javanese friends about my intention to study this type of group, and once I was actually on the ground, I became aware of the astonishingly large number of groups that existed. These musicians were not really hidden but had been overlooked, leaving the literature on gamelan bereft of information on a large number of individuals playing gamelan on a day-to-day basis. The reason that they had been overlooked was that they were considered to lack training, skill, or finesse and therefore not to represent the tradition at its best. I argue that this narrow focus has arisen as a result of the way that gamelan studies developed in Western academia. The field was heavily influenced by

Mantle Hood's (1960) idea of bi-musicality and the importance of learning a music in order to understand it. This meant that almost all scholars of Javanese gamelan came to it from a position of practical study under the tutelage of those considered to be the guardians of the tradition: family lineage and palace players of the highest order, and their successors in the national arts academies. Although this led to several generations of scholars from the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Czech Republic, and Japan becoming proficient gamelan players, and in some cases also dancers and puppeteers, the angle of analytical vision has been held tightly focussed on the musicians who taught them and their worlds. The scope of gamelan studies has widened to acknowledge the huge array of regional styles (Kartomi 1973; Sutton 1991) and there are currently many studies of new composition for gamelan being undertaken by, for example, Ginevra House and Chris Miller, but the frame of reference is still the normative techniques of those musicians performing at the top of their field.

Having been trained in this way myself, it was initially straightforward to make the decision to study the other musicians who did not fall into this pattern, consider them as a monolithic block, and to label them as 'amateurs'. The problematic nature of this term, however, rapidly became apparent. A cursory review of the situation in Surakarta as I remembered it raised many challenges to the use of the word in relation to the musicians I was thinking of in terms of their ability and experience, and their relationship to performance and payment. Thinking through these issues led to my questioning exactly what I meant by amateur, whether this was an appropriate term for the musicians I intended to study, and indeed whether such a definition of amateur was actually an appropriate one for the Javanese context or an attempt to impose a foreign conceptual framework. The fact remained, however, that my experience led me to believe that there was a real distinction to be made between different forms of participation in music-

making in Java. This distinction is clearly also felt by musicians at all levels in Solo, as it shapes expectation and behaviour among players in very noticeable ways, but there is no clear single universally applicable way of describing it in Javanese or Indonesian. I explore the terminology used by musicians in Surakarta as part of the second chapter, unpicking the many words and phrases which are used to describe part-time or non-professional players. There are many such terms but most are not used as self-referents because they carry derogatory connotations.

In the period before Indonesian independence in 1945, the main centres for the transmission of gamelan playing were extended families who specialised in the performance of and accompaniment for *Wayang* or shadow puppet theatre, and the court ensembles who provided music for palace ritual, dance, and entertainment. These two groups were highly interrelated, as notable musicians from family lineages were employed in the palace ensembles whilst continuing to perform with their home group. At independence many intellectuals within the Nationalist movement called for the various performing arts traditions of the archipelago to be taken seriously as the foundations for a new national culture. This was slightly controversial as most of these intellectuals were from Javanese backgrounds and had to avoid charges of Javanese dominance. Ultimately national arts academies were established in each of the main officially recognised centres of culture. In Surakarta this was initially under the aegis of the Kraton or palace. The Indonesian Academy of Traditional Performing Arts (Akademi Seni Karawitan Indonesia: ASKI) was established in palace buildings, the teachers were taken from among the palace musicians and the students were mainly drawn from the village-based puppeteer family lineages. Eventually ASKI moved to its own campus, became fully independent from the palace and replaced the palace as the prime location for official musical training. The relationship between the academies and family lineages is complex and constantly

changing. When I was a student at the by then renamed Indonesian School of the Performing Arts (Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia: STSI) in 1999 to 2001 the majority of the students were from musical families, could already play, were already performing and were seeking official recognition of their skills in order to improve their career options or give them a chance of becoming the next generation of teachers at ISI or other arts academies around the country, a position which is a national civil servant role with the financial and social benefits that brings. The people teaching them were in the main also village and court musicians who had been employed for their practical musical skills.

In 2012/13 the situation is slightly different, with STSI having upgraded its status within the hierarchy of tertiary education to become an Indonesian Arts Institute (Institut Seni Indonesia: ISI). This means that all the teachers are required to have at least a Masters degree and optimally be working towards a PhD. The course now includes significantly more academic material and resembles a university music degree more than an academy performing qualification. The teachers and students are still essentially from the same backgrounds but the validation of their skill is framed in different terms now.

There is very little evidence for how widespread the phenomenon of gamelan playing by people outside of these training lineages was historically, as the writings of early Javanese scholars of gamelan (cf. Martopangrawit and Gitosaprodjo in Becker and Feinstein 1984) focus entirely on theoretical details of the music and explaining these in terms of abstract, metaphysical systems rather than describing who was playing.

Anecdotally, relying on my teachers' descriptions of 'how things used to be', many villages had groups of people who were not from performance families and whose main job was field or factory work, but who were skilled musicians and were part of puppeteers' troupes as a means of earning extra income. This level of involvement was not in any way universal, however, as is generally described in the case of Balinese

gamelan, where every village fields a couple of ensembles and most individuals are involved in a gamelan ensemble or a dance troupe. These players were also participating in professional performing troupes alongside lineage musicians rather than in groups specifically aimed at providing opportunities for non-professionals to play in a social setting.

During the post-independence era, groups referred to as ‘bapak-bapak’ (dads) or ‘ibu-ibu’ (mums) groups came into existence, where groups of older people would meet once a week to learn how to play in separate male and female ensembles. These were frequently organised under the aegis of the state⁵ as a way to encourage the arts and promote what were considered socially beneficial leisure activities in a way that was analogous to the teaching of traditional music to younger people in schools. The separation of men and women stems from a desire to avoid the stigma of ill repute which is attached to women who work in the performing arts, a phenomenon that I discuss in greater detail later. Also, because women playing instruments that involved hitting, rather than singing, was a largely new phenomenon it was felt necessary to give them a ‘fair chance’ by separating them from men who were assumed to be more naturally inclined to competence.⁶

Since the fall of Suharto in 1998 the intense top-down interventionism of the state has somewhat decreased but spasmodic bursts of funding for social projects involving gamelan still occurred, with some government departments and the post office in Surakarta being provided with both gamelan and sets of *kulintang*, an ensemble of marimba-style instruments from Sulawesi, as unsolicited gifts. More recently new legislation has devolved increasing amounts of responsibility for the collection and

⁵ In the majority of cases specifically by the Organisation for Family Welfare (Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga).

⁶ This discourse of the need to provide space for women to learn and play in less ‘threatening’ environments is also prevalent in Bali (Downing 2010).

spending of tax to the provincial level. In Central and East Java this has led to a noticeable upsurge in the amount of money being funnelled towards attempts to foster the performing arts by provincial and city government in more localised versions of the previous state model.⁷ In 2013/14 friends who are gamelan makers in the villages outside of Surakarta were regularly being commissioned by county and city leaders to produce dozens of gamelan sets to be sent out for use in primary schools, or in the public meeting halls attached to city districts (*Kelurahan*). The presence of gamelan sets in these official public spaces became more and more widespread during the time I was in Surakarta, but organising regular use of the instruments was left to the enthusiasm of individuals rather than institutional bureaucracy.

At the time of my fieldwork there were an extremely large number of groups in which people with varying levels of experience, but who were definitely not full-time or professional musicians, gathered to learn and play gamelan together. The historical models of skilled individuals from outside musical lineages who play with full-time musicians to supplement their income, and groups established to promote community cohesion through ‘wholesome’ recreation were still recognisable elements within the way these groups organise and conceive of themselves. However, the groups which I played with and studied are far more multi-faceted and complex in their membership profiles and relationships with sponsoring institutions and validating discourses than this. The first chapter of this thesis explores this in detail but I wish to initially explain my use of the term ‘gamelan association’ to describe these groups.

There is no single word in Javanese or Indonesian used to denote a gamelan ensemble, let alone describing the very particular type of ensemble which I am considering here. Terms

⁷ During my ten months of fieldwork I attended four officially sponsored events showcasing a myriad extremely local dance and music traditions which were being re-invigorated as a result of this.

meaning group and association (*grup, kelompok, paguyuban*) are used regularly in official names of non-commercial ensembles, but they also often follow the practice of commercial groups in using the word *laras*, meaning scale or harmony, or *karawitan*, which denotes traditional art music in a broad sense, with the collection of people involved in the endeavour being taken for granted. To talk about these groups in English it is necessary to choose a term which is both reasonably accurate in describing their complex reality, and yet which does not carry implicit associations for a reader unfamiliar with Javanese music and society, and thereby misrepresents that reality. I considered simply using ‘gamelan group’ but this was too nebulous and inexact and also made no distinction between the type of group I was studying and commercial ensembles. ‘Club’ initially seemed appropriate to me, as it seemed to capture the element of social interaction, relaxation, and belonging which is present in many of these groups but other readers felt that this had the potential to either evoke problematic assumptions in relation to class and exclusivity, or undermine the seriousness with which these groups operate. The term ‘association’ provides a sense of the concerted effort involved in organising and maintaining such a group and also brings to the fore the prevalent desire to formalise the groups’ internal structures and relationships to their sponsoring and supporting institutions.

The group: a major trope in thinking about gamelan

This discussion of gamelan has so far taken for granted a feature of the music which is of fundamental importance to this project. The fact that gamelan is an ensemble-based music with a structure predicated on highly stratified division of labour between large numbers of players means that it is readily linked to discussions of collective endeavour, effective group working, and the inculcating of social values across a wide range of areas

of life. The idea that belonging and being part of a community is both an incentive for joining a gamelan group and also a fundamental outcome of participation in the processes of gamelan musicianship and sociality is an extremely dominant trope in Javanese discourse. Musicians, journalists, and the general public in Surakarta very readily talk of training in traditional music or dance as automatically providing training in social, moral, and spiritual discipline, with the assumption that a significant part of the significance of the Javanese performing arts is their ability to encode, maintain, and pass on the wisdom of previous generations. Gamelan is, therefore, often presented as being ‘useful’ because it is considered to have an inbuilt power to ‘improve’ people and their ability to interact well with others and as a result enrich society at large. It is thoroughly imbricated in Indonesian discourses surrounding both small-group community belonging and the larger-scale but less intimate models of belonging that constitute national community.

This idea of gamelan as a music which inherently possesses the power to forge individuals into smoothly operating groups is both attractive and convincing enough that it has also been adopted and deployed enthusiastically by foreign practitioners in the United Kingdom. Whilst the gamelan scene in the United States is predominantly based in university music departments, where the ensemble allows students to engage in ‘bi-musical’ modes of exploring ethnomusicology, in the United Kingdom the instruments have been extensively used in primary, secondary and special needs education, community music projects, and in prison rehabilitation and skills training programmes.

This has in large part been facilitated by the use of these tropes of gamelan as capable of building community and making people socially skilful. The perceived allure of the gamelan ensemble in both countries and the way it appears to generate belonging has been noted and interrogated both in the academic literature (Mendonça 2002; Harnish 2004), in conversations amongst group leaders across Europe, and has also inspired a

country-wide video interview survey of gamelan players in the United Kingdom exploring their reasons for being involved (*The British Gamelan Trail: Introduction* 2011). Mendonça (2002) explores this phenomenon in depth, theorising the attraction of the gamelan ensemble as deriving in large part from a sense of *communitas* which is both genuinely generated in the shared experience of playing but also derived from consciously promoted perceptions of the forms of sociality that gamelan engenders as being qualitatively different from and preferable to those found in previous musical experiences.

This research project was inspired in large part by a desire to investigate what modes of belonging and community building might apply in the context of amateur gamelan groups in Java. Many of these groups have similar profiles in terms of membership to the UK ensembles which Mendonça (2002) discusses and with which I am familiar, having led several of them over a period of twelve years. Clearly, however, the situation of playing the traditional music of Java in a Central Javanese city is very different to playing it in the United Kingdom and investigating the motivations for participation and mechanisms of building solidarity and community in this context is one of the primary concerns of this thesis. I also seek to move beyond the dominant discourses surrounding the perceived social usefulness of gamelan in forming ‘model Javanese’ and uncover some of the more pragmatic and personal ways in which gamelan playing is useful for individuals and groups.

Why focus on gamelan specifically?

The musical landscape of contemporary Surakarta is incredibly diverse, and despite being a prestigious form with the weight of tradition behind it, gamelan is not a significant part of the musical experience of many people who live there. Indonesia is home to a large

number of nationally distributed, popular music genres such as *dangdut* and *kroncong*,⁸ vibrant internal pop, rock, and heavy metal industries singing in Indonesian and many local languages, and also imports large amounts of the latest popular music from the English-speaking world and India. This context allows us to focus more closely on the particular possibilities and benefits afforded to people in Surakarta by engaging with gamelan, rather than with music as a general category. Playing gamelan in Surakarta is a definite choice rather than simply the inevitable outcome of a desire to play music. Many of the members of gamelan groups that I met were very concerned to make me understand that they had chosen gamelan instead of the other musical options available to them as both participants and consumers, and that they considered this decision to be significant in a range of ways.

Why Surakarta (Solo)?

The research for this project was carried out in Surakarta (usually and hereafter abbreviated to Solo),⁹ and the surrounding towns and villages that form what is referred to locally as Greater Surakarta (*Solo Raya*) or ‘Solo and its environs’ (*Solo dan sekitarnya*), an area roughly coinciding with the historical area of the Sultanate of Surakarta. There are a number of reasons for this choice of location. The two court cities of Surakarta and Yogyakarta are the primary centres for the Central Javanese performing arts, both historically and currently. The aesthetics and performance practice of these two centres are widely taken as normative for gamelan playing throughout Central Java, particularly the tradition of Surakarta, which has been widely disseminated by means of the local branch of the national radio station and the output of Lokananta, a major music

⁸ See Weintraub (2010) for *dangdut* and Ferzacca (2006) for *kroncong*.

⁹ In Javanese speech this is pronounced *Sălă* but the written form is always Solo. This was the name of the original village where the court stopped on its search for a new base after the destruction of the previous palace at Kartasura.

studio based in the city. This has resulted in a situation where Solonese style gamelan has become the unmarked standard, with other regional styles, including that of Yogyakarta, being specifically marked and labelled as ‘different’. This means that basing research on Solonese style gamelan playing in Surakarta and the surrounding area provides a way to assess people’s involvement with gamelan music as a general category, rather than their commitment to a specific local strand within the tradition.

The Surakarta tradition also provides a more promising field for studying the ways in which people adopt, shape, and deploy traditional performing arts in that it has a number of different foci for musical authority, with the palace being one among many. Due to a number of historical events the Sultan of Surakarta and his court maintain no political power within the contemporary Indonesian state, whereas the Sultan of Yogyakarta is automatically appointed as the provincial governor of the Special Autonomous Region of Yogyakarta (DIY) which surrounds the city. This has led to ‘the traditional’ in Yogyakarta being defined by the current practice of the palace, whereas in Surakarta many institutions within different power structures support the performance of and innovation in the traditional performing arts (Purwani 2012).

Surakarta is a large city with a population of around 550,000 people. Apart from its position as a centre of court culture it is the centre of textile distribution and the production of batik cloth¹⁰ using both traditional and modern techniques, a major industrial centre, and the location for several important universities. This means that it is a city with inhabitants belonging to a full spectrum of social and economic groups who have access to both historical Javanese culture and contemporary commercial and political trends and values. Surakarta is also a location where ethnic Javanese subscribe to

¹⁰ Brenner’s (1998) ethnography of the batik producing families in Solo provides a fascinating insight into the weight of cultural stewardship which is very pertinent in understanding gamelan associations.

an array of different religious traditions. The vast majority of Solonese are officially registered as Muslim, in line with overall national figures for religious affiliation. This affiliation encompasses an enormous variety of styles of belief and practice, however, covering traditional forms of practice such as making offerings to ancestors and visiting the tombs of important figures, modern rationalist interpretations such as the influential Muhammadiyah movement, and the presence in the villages surrounding Surakarta of the extremist groups responsible for much of the internal terrorism in Indonesia. Solo does, however, have a large number of inhabitants officially professing other religions.

Christianity is well represented in the city with large numbers of Protestants and Catholics. There is also a far greater percentage of Christians working as professional musicians and lecturers at the music academy than in the population at large. There are also small numbers of Hindus and Buddhists, some originally from predominantly Hindu Bali, but also others who converted in response to a perceived increasing rigidity in definitions of Islam or a desire to reconnect with the more distant history of Java.

Unofficially there are also those who would describe themselves as practising *Kejawèn*, this literally means ‘Javaneseness’ and refers to a variety of more or less formalised spiritual traditions that may appear externally to be essentially animist, Hindu or Buddhist, or very similar to traditional forms of Islam.¹¹ All of which, however, are based on the idea of Javanese culture as an overarching, organising principle which draws in valid and effective ideas from elsewhere when required.

All of this makes Surakarta an ideal location for examining the ways in which musical identity intersects with other forms of belonging. It is a modern, urban environment, where the aspirations of Indonesia as a modern nation state are found side by side with other hierarchies of meaning and systems of authority. In short, Solo is a city where there

¹¹ *Kejawèn*'s relationship to Islam and national ideology is extremely complex and politically charged. For in-depth descriptions of this see Mulder (1998) and Beatty (2009).

are multiple models of modern Indonesian citizenship, and this thesis argues that gamelan playing is an activity that allows those who cannot or do not wish to engage with the dominant models of modernity to validate their position.

In a Javanese context, however, to study only groups based in a city would be to ignore one of the major internal discourses about sociality and musicality. The concept of *déså* or village in Javanese is used in a wide range of contexts as shorthand for a complex collection of stereotypes and assumptions. Most commonly *déså* is applied to people, things, or ways of being that are considered outdated, unfashionable, or simply of inferior quality, by those who wish to distance themselves from association with such characteristics. Despite this, *déså* also indexes a number of important positive tropes, particularly with reference to musical practice.

Asking a Javanese person where they come from is usually a two-part question: the first enquiry providing information as to where someone currently resides, and the second being where one's *déså* is. In this context *déså* being the place where you are 'really' from, where your family is based and where you spent your childhood. The first question places someone geographically and the second places them culturally, as one's *déså* carries implications for social background, linguistic competence, and norms of behaviour. Even if one now considers oneself a cosmopolitan urbanite, association with one's *déså* and mildly embarrassed, nostalgic affection for it is expected and unavoidable. The *déså* remains the place you came from and to which you can in theory always 'go home'. The village in this sense is the place where imagined Javanese communal living is situated, the archetypal community which one escapes from and longs for. This sense of the village as an original source is also very strong within discourses of musical style and authenticity. Whilst musicians in the city may disparagingly refer to someone's playing as being *déså* in the sense of unrefined or excessively simple, these qualities are

simultaneously put forward as examples of how the ‘village’ maintains a source of ‘pure’ Javanese art that is straightforward and uncomplicated by the sophistication of court, city, and nowadays the music academy.

The importance of considering this strand of musical practice in order to nuance our understanding of gamelan has been emphasised by Perlman (1998) and Weiss (2006).

The distinction between village and city music-making is also mapped onto other dichotomies, with village-style playing being associated with female approaches to music and instinctive, spontaneous interpretation, in contrast to an urban, male, systematised style as taught in state music academies (Weiss 2006). In order to cover both sides of this frequently invoked, although in reality rather porous, distinction, I also worked with groups outside Solo, including suburban areas, small towns that are barely separate from the city in physical reality, and two villages.

Methodology

Participant observation

This research is primarily an ethnographic study, relying on the use of live observation of people’s behaviour and conversation during rehearsals and other social activity associated with the groups. It is essential, therefore, to make transparent as far as possible the impacts that my presence as a researcher inevitably had on the very situations I was studying and the ways in which my position affected the process. This is an acknowledged necessity in ethnomusicological research after the publication of *Shadows in the Field* (Barz and Cooley 1997). My experience of playing, and knowledge of standard repertoire, meant that my active participation in most gamelan groups was expected and encouraged, rather than requiring much negotiation. It also meant that, on at

least one level, my presence in rehearsals was relatively non-intrusive, as there was no need for specific focus on meeting my needs as a learner. This level of familiarity with the usual musical and social procedures of music-making in Java, however, meant that the initial shock of confronting a new cultural setting, and the insights this generates, was very much lessened for me. It did, however, allow for a focus on the very specific details of each individual group, rather than the gross differences to be observed in Javanese approaches to music-making. The distinction between my previous experiences playing with professional, lineage musicians and the practice of these groups was also sometimes almost as surprising as encountering an entirely new tradition.

Over the course of ten months I played regularly with fourteen groups. In six of these I became a full-time participant, involved in all rehearsals, performances and also significant extra-musical, social events which the group, or elements within it, arranged. In the cases of the remaining eight I played less frequently either as a result of their not meeting on a consistent basis, my only discovering the group later in my fieldwork, or scheduling clashes with already established commitments to other groups. This meant that I attended at least one, and frequently two, rehearsals on almost every day of my time in Indonesia and spent considerable amounts of the remaining time socialising with individuals from these groups.

Long-term, regular attendance at rehearsals meant that in most of the groups I played with I came to be considered a member, rather than a visiting observer. This process of becoming part of a group allowed me to observe how the processes of assessment and integration of newcomers worked from the outside, and, subsequently, from the inside when new members arrived after I had already been attending a particular group's rehearsals for some time. Moving from the position of newly arrived novelty to familiar attendee happened remarkably quickly in almost all cases. Once this had occurred, the

internal dynamics of the group continued to play out without any apparent sense of needing to project a specific image for my consumption. Banter and gossip reasserted themselves after a couple of weeks and continued solidly from then on.

The process of becoming unexceptional was greatly facilitated by my ability to speak and understand Javanese rather than only Indonesian. This meant that I was able to understand and contribute to all conversations, discussions, and decision-making when appropriate, rather than having to wait until someone consciously decided to make the proceedings transparent to me by shifting languages.¹² The difference that this made to the degree of acceptance and involvement I had in some groups became very clear when other foreign students with good Indonesian, but no Javanese, were present. In these cases I was often put in the uncomfortable position of being expected to join in discussions of their playing ability, language skills, and even personal appearance, whilst they were present. I was always careful to make it clear upon arrival at any rehearsal that I could understand Javanese, in order to avoid the possibility of being seen to trick people into speaking frankly in front of me, but the fact that I could understand did not appear to cause people to self-censor, as I was witness to an extremely large number of arguments, fraught discussions, and character assassinations even after it was very clear that I was fully able to follow what was happening.

My access to all the groups I played with was also significantly facilitated by my particular gamelan training. As I will discuss further in later chapters, these gamelan associations do not usually have members who can play many of the instruments responsible for creatively elaborating on the melodic line, particularly the *gendèr*. This meant that I was immediately desirable as an addition to the line-up of a group, especially

¹² The impact of language competency on ethnographic fieldwork has recently been addressed by Tanu and Dales (2015).

since in performance I would be at the front of the ensemble, and, however unexceptional I had become in rehearsal, all the groups were sensitive to the extra interest provoked by my very visible presence when performing in public, and keen to capitalise on it. The general lack of *gendèr* players also meant that I was able to join groups without the negative impact of displacing an existing member and thereby changing the social balance. In some groups there was no regular drummer and in these cases I was instead called on to drum. The responsibility for choosing how to interpret each piece that this entails led to some of my more personally uncomfortable experiences, but provided a significant amount of material for understanding the assessment, assertion, and negotiation of competence and authority.

This ability to play the *gendèr* and to drum did, however, automatically position me in a very specific way within the overall framework of these gamelan associations. These roles are normally only assumed by individuals who are at the very nearly professional end of the amateur spectrum, or visiting professionals who are paid to complete the ensemble for performances. This position within a group gave me access to the frank discussions of players' abilities, choice of repertoire, and organisational strategy, which took place between the more senior members, but meant that I had to consciously adopt strategies to maintain engagement with those who were not part of this section of the membership.

In order to avoid becoming exclusively restricted to the category of 'visiting professional' I deliberately adopted behaviours which are not usual for this role: being at venues well before the rehearsal started, taking part in pre-session chatting, helping with any moving of instruments and setting out of beaters, notations, and mats, and always allowing time to talk rather than leaving punctually at the end of rehearsals. I also made a point of attending rehearsals regularly, even when there was no performance in the near future,

and being present even if there was a strong chance that not many people were going to attend. This allowed me to interact socially with players of all skill levels rather than just the more competent musicians, to convince members that I was not simply there for the chance to practice my own skills and extract information from them, and to be present for the extended conversations that took place when sessions could not go ahead due to lack of attendees.

Interviews and questionnaires

In order to supplement the information gained from direct observation, and allow for a more targeted exploration of issues that I wished to address, but which would not necessarily naturally arise in the course of rehearsals, and obtain basic biographical information about players, I planned to undertake interviews with all group members. I began this process with the group based in Pasar Gedhé, the main market, interviewing every member. As a flexible work environment where all the members were present in one location and able to take breaks when they wished, Pasar Gedhé provided an environment where interviews were relatively easy to arrange. They were also the most effective tool in this setting as many of the players had not finished primary level education and were far more comfortable explaining themselves verbally than dealing with written material. Interviewing in the market environment did present some difficulties, such as the need to dissuade other members of the group from listening in to their friends' interviews and attempting to direct answers or the flow of stories, but this also provided interesting insights into the ways in which people felt the group should be representing itself.

In addition to the Pasar Gedhé group members I also conducted formal interviews with Pak W. and Pak M. who lead the group, and Mas Da. and Mas S. who between them lead

four of the other groups with which I played. I also interviewed Pak J., Mas Dw., and Mas T. the individuals who support and facilitate three other groups. I rapidly realised, however, that this level of in-depth interviewing was not going to be possible in all cases. The number of players in the groups I played with rapidly became extremely large, and the format of rehearsals, where people were coming from widely spread locations for evening meetings within a limited time frame, meant that interviews would have encroached on the sessions and become extremely intrusive and disruptive. Also, as I explain in greater detail below, interviews were also not an effective way of eliciting information about motivation and intention in the vast majority of cases.

As a result I decided that for groups where levels of comfort with written formats were higher I would use questionnaires as a means of acquiring information such as how people had found out about the group, what encouraged them to join, what they felt they gained from being in the group, as well as basic details such as their age, primary employment, how far they travelled to attend rehearsals, and how long they had been involved with traditional music. I distributed these questionnaires in four groups and the vast majority of regular members, thirty-six in total, responded.

Over the period of my fieldwork it gradually became apparent that people's responses in questionnaires and interviews displayed significantly different emphases from their conversational responses to my questions, and that their reported attitude towards particular issues was not always borne out by their behaviour in practice. I do not believe that this in any way represents deliberate deception or misrepresentation, but rather provides an important insight into the different ways in which individuals rationalise and validate their participation depending on context. That people manage their image during interviews is a recognised phenomenon in the anthropological literature on interviews (Skinner 2012, 22), and the model of the interview itself can 'ignore native

metacommunicational skills and repertoires' (ibid., 31). Questionnaires and interviews elicited far more responses which reflected people's awareness of wider societal ideas about why they should be involved with the performing arts, and which showed a great deal of concern with how they and their group came across publicly. In one group this concern was so dominant that, after I had explained what the questionnaire was and distributed it to everyone present, the group openly started discussing how they should answer in order to present a consistent and positive impression. After some further explanation that I was specifically interested in individual, personal responses, and that the material was not intended to judge the worth of the group, they did agree to take the questionnaires home and answer them separately, although some of the more close-knit friendship circles within the group did return remarkably similar answers.

This disjuncture between opinions expressed orally and in writing and between what people are prepared to say when a permanent record of their words is being made is perhaps inevitable given that, at the personal level, Javanese culture relies strongly on oral agreement and an assumption of trust. Written material, usually only encountered in school and interaction with the state bureaucracy, inevitably carries implications of officialdom, permanence, and the assumption of critical scrutiny, that lead people to think about their responses in a slightly different way. It also became apparent that the methods and terminology of the social sciences and psychology are not in any way a part of media discourse and public conversation amongst the general public in Surakarta. When talking to anyone apart from the academy-educated group leaders, my questions about intention and motivation were frequently met with blank incomprehension or bald statements of 'because I like it' (*yâ, murga seneng*). Attempts to get beyond this answer always resulted in repeated spirals of the answers 'I like it because it's enjoyable' and 'it's enjoyable because I like it'.

For most players the notion of research (*penelitian*) was also initially completely unfamiliar and opaque: questionnaires were viewed in the same light as application forms for state documentation, interviews were treated as public performances in the style of television appearances, and making sure that I was viewed as a researcher, not just as another visiting player, so as to obtain informed consent for my work, was an ongoing process of repeated and convoluted explanation. I did engage in long conversations with a number of players, group leaders, drummers, and organisers who declined to be interviewed formally but were happy to speak at length ‘off the record’. All these individuals were extremely keen to have their opinions and ideas become part of my research but were very chary of having anything that appeared mercenary or contentious permanently recorded as attributable to them. This was particularly noticeable when interviewing the individuals who sponsor groups, where there was a complete refusal to acknowledge any possibility of self-interest or personal benefit accruing from this activity, even when they would refer obliquely to such matters with me in less guarded moments.

As a result of these issues, the sources that I am drawing on when discussing motivation and intent are of necessity predominantly outlines of conversations or particular, memorable utterances collected in my field notes, and analyses of people’s behaviour. In doing this I aim to interpret and analyse material deriving from interviews ‘according to its referentiality’ (Skinner 2012, 32). In order to make this transparent to readers I quote directly only when I am using material from interviews or questionnaires, or when I have a very clear recollection of precisely what was said, having recorded a particularly memorable turn of phrase. There are clear methodological issues when reading motivation or intention from behaviour, particularly in a culture other than one’s own. I have been careful to draw conclusions only from those patterns of behaviour which were

consistently demonstrated by particular individuals or groups, and where other group members have also explicitly assigned similar meanings to these actions.

The discrepancies between formally gathered information and the understandings I was coming to from observation and less structured discussions initially concerned me as a potential methodological problem to be overcome. Ultimately, however, it acted as an important prompt to investigate the distinctions between how people presented their involvement in gamelan groups when they were at ease and actually participating, and how they felt they needed to present this involvement when they were specifically conscious that they were providing information. I argue that the difference between the more personally focussed accounts of people's relationships to music and the accounts focussing on engagement with broader cultural discourses highlights the extent to which players are aware of their involvement in music-making having significance and aim to control how it is interpreted by others.

Linguistic and musical analysis

Although participant observation and interviewing were my main means of information gathering for this project, focussed on allowing an in-depth analysis of social interaction within groups, there are two other approaches which I deploy in order to present a more rounded picture of music-making in gamelan associations and its significance for those who take part in it. These are firstly a close attention to linguistic detail including analysis of the terminology surrounding gamelan groups and musicianship, and the textual content of those pieces groups play which have sung elements, and secondly detailed technical analysis of performance practice in order to explore the way in which the techniques of ensemble musicianship, and aesthetic assumptions fundamental to gamelan playing, interrelate with and influence social behaviour.

Javanese gamelan involves a significant amount of singing. Female and male singers sometimes combine separate but intertwining melodic lines, choosing texts from the corpus of Javanese poetic literature which fit the parameters of the musical form, with the melodic contours associated with poetic forms often providing the core material for pieces (Sumarsam 1995). At other times they join in unison choruses with specific lyrics which are relevant to, and tied to, a given piece. An analysis of which texts are chosen, the reasons for that choice, and who is doing the choosing, will provide a window onto how ensembles, and individuals within them, are trying to present themselves.

The case for making language an integral part of ethnomusicological studies has been set out by Feld and Fox (1994), and Feld's (1984; 1990) work demonstrates the importance, and analytical fruitfulness, of grounding studies of musical expression in wider networks of cultural reference, attributing meaning to music-making with reference to the way in which it is interconnected with mythology, history, and social behaviour outside of musical contexts. Sung texts in Javanese gamelan are a fertile ground for this approach as they explicitly reference mythological narratives, catalogues of cultural knowledge such as the complicated system of names for parts of plants and the young of animals and tie these into discussions of appropriate social behaviour. More recently composed texts are also heavily self-referential, describing what the various instruments of the gamelan are doing, and how this activity generates togetherness and community cohesion. Language use in singing is also part of more general patterns of linguistic performance which at first glance are not immediately linked to music. As Fox (2004) and Stirr (2010) argue, lyrics can be part of a continuum of verbal performance skills, including non-musical storytelling and social banter, which are an essential part of how speakers/singers define and project themselves socially, and have implications that reach well beyond an individual performance.

As this project is intended primarily to be an ethnographic study it may seem contradictory to argue for the importance of a specific focus on musical detail. There are two reasons, however, for my contention that this is an essential component of such a study. The first relates to the idea of ethnomusicology as a discipline, and the second to a fundamental commitment to the idea that all musical detail is inherently social, and as such, there is no such thing as 'purely musical' material. This point of view is, I argue, particularly relevant when dealing with Javanese gamelan.

There are ethnographic studies of musical forms and their links to political and social systems by anthropologists (Askew 2002; Openshaw 2002; Weidman 2006; Magowan 2007) who, although practising musicians who took part in the music they were studying, shy away from detailed description of the musical mechanics of its performance because this has not historically been one of the foci of anthropological enquiry, and would make the work opaque to those within the discipline without specific musical knowledge. The ethnomusicological literature on gamelan tends, on the other hand, to deal primarily with issues of musical form and theory without fully drawing out the way this intersects with social interaction. I believe that a more fruitful approach includes both the ethnographic and the musicological. The benefits of this combined method can be seen in work by Stokes (1992), Park (2003) and Weintraub (2010), which unite in-depth description of social and political context with similarly comprehensive descriptions and analyses of musical and textual content. These serve to fully illuminate the interwoven nature of musical form, performance aesthetics, reception, and the ways in which individuals and groups deploy music to create meaning. This approach is essential, since, as becomes apparent in Brinner's (1995) study of interaction in gamelan, that which might be described as musical or aesthetic processes of decision making are, in fact, simultaneously processes of social negotiation and dissembled exercise of control.

The results: outline of the thesis

In the context of all of the above the aim of this research project was to address two fundamental issues. Firstly, what are these gamelan groups? Who plays in them? How are they organised? What is distinctive about them in terms of repertoire, ability, style of playing, attitude to performing in public? How do they interact with and relate to the kind of musicians already described in the literature? How uniform are the answers to these questions across different groups? Secondly, what is it that motivates people to play in these groups? What makes participation worth the investment of time, energy, and resources that it requires? Are there any common threads to be found in the ways players and supporters across a wide range of groups engage with the learning and performing of a traditional music? These two sets of questions form the basis for the two main sections of this thesis.

The themes of the chapters of this thesis grow out of the primary concerns that became apparent during my fieldwork and as such are based primarily on the empirical findings of my research rather than being required by a pre-existing theoretical orientation. These themes of community, ownership, authority, power, and public sound do, however, represent some of the most significant ways in which *karawitan* is thought of, discussed, and is significant for Javanese people in contemporary Solo. I argue that they are some of the factors which form what Born (2013, 32) calls an assemblage around gamelan playing, consisting of the multiple associations, connections, and social relationships and negotiations that have condensed around it. Even though some of these connections and relationships are no longer directly functional anymore or are much reduced in strength and impact, I assert that they are what makes playing in a gamelan association useful to amateur musicians in contemporary Solo.

Section one: what are gamelan associations?

Chapter one: introduction to groups and some important themes

I first introduce, in some detail, the individual groups with which I carried out my research so as to orient the reader in the overall landscape of the Solonese scene and familiarise them with the groups to which I will be referring in the rest of the thesis. This also serves to demonstrate both the diversity found within these groups and also the consistent patterns and similarities which I argue justify studying them as a unified phenomenon. I also address some of the important sociological themes which cut across the thematic foci of the following chapters.

Chapter two: definitions of musicianship: Javanese practice, and discourses of amateur and professional

This chapter is an exploration of how these gamelan groups describe and define themselves, and how others in Solo describe and define them. I engage in an extensive discussion of the terminology and discourses surrounding these groups in Solo, focussing closely on who uses which terms, whether they are used for self-reference or only for others, the extent to which there is a single meaningful term for such expressions of musicianship, and how players and non-players use them to conceptualise and label the similarities and differences between musicians. I find that whilst there are many features that unite them and distinct recognised differences between these groups and professional performing troupes, there is no single way of describing them, but rather a network of designations and understandings which allow individual musicians and groups to place themselves realistically on a spectrum of ability and experience whilst still staking a claim to musicianship and avoiding obvious designations of being ‘lesser’. I then set these groups in the context of the wider literature on musicianship in a number of countries and musical traditions, and assess how the way they operate relates to

categories which have been discussed as markers of the distinction between different categories of musicianship. The three main areas which I cover here are systems of exchange, status, and musical issues such as ability, style, repertoire, and learning.

Systems of exchange

This section describes the extremely complex networks of exchange, recompense, and reward which allow and encourage individuals and groups to play or support gamelan. Financial reward is not a key element for most of the musicians I played with, but making music does provide access to pre-existing structures of exchange and generates some of its own. I look at this comparatively, drawing particularly on Baily's (1988) work on amateur and professional interaction in Afghanistan, and set it in the context of Stokes' (2002) and Qureshi's (2002) work on value and exchange in music and Cottrell's (2002) work on 'musical capital'. In doing so I argue that playing 'for fun' can still produce many kinds of value and connect players to systems of symbolic and material circulation.

Ability, style, repertoire, and learning

This section addresses some of the specific features of the way gamelan associations play, comparing this with the practice of professionally employed musicians, and demonstrating how these two worlds are thoroughly connected whilst still having some distinct differences. First I look at the issue of ability in terms of the range of knowledge, training, and experience displayed by individuals in gamelan groups, finding that these groups normally contain players with extremely varied ability levels and that this is extremely important for many of the connections and opportunities for negotiation that the associations afford. I then analyse the repertoire decisions taken by leaders and players in gamelan associations, exploring the complex interactions between personal taste, ideas of what pieces can be regarded as 'traditional' or 'classical', and the demands of public performance. I also look at the specific approaches to style and the production

of a sound that is considered satisfying and authentic found in these groups. Following Perlman (1998) and Weiss' (2006) work on village style, I argue that this represents a specific, meaningful, and analytically important strand within gamelan as a whole, which gives us crucial information about the way in which people hear, experience, and conceptualise *karawitan*.

Chapter three: the *latihan*

The *latihan* is the usually weekly event which forms the core of a gamelan association's existence. Consisting of a mixture of musical, social, and administrative interaction at various levels of formality it defies easy definition as rehearsal, party, or community meeting, whilst containing elements of all of these. I argue that the complex characteristics of the *latihan* are a fundamental factor in what makes gamelan associations capable of affording the possibilities for generating and negotiating social and cultural capital and as such are a key element in my thesis. Although somewhat variable across groups there is a basic pattern which is found in all associations and I give a description here of how *latihan* function by outlining the course of a hypothetical, 'ideal' *latihan*, drawing out the ways in which the specific features of these occasions structure and facilitate particular types of social interaction.

Section two: the uses of participation

The successful, ongoing existence of gamelan groups is reliant on the participation of a large number of interested parties, all making significant investments of time, money, and energy. In order to make the musical experience satisfying there is a need for regular weekly attendance by at least ten players; when membership consistently falls below this level groups rapidly begin to disintegrate. There needs to be an individual or institution committed enough to the existence of the group to provide a large amount of space which

can house the instruments on a permanent basis and also allow straightforward access for rehearsals. If the space used does not already house a gamelan set the group needs to secure the loan or hire of instruments through sponsorship or subscription. There needs to be someone, either from within the group or brought in from outside, who is sufficiently respected musically and socially to lead the rehearsals, and also someone who is capable of acting as the group's representative and spokesperson when dealing with official institutions. The commitment required by all of these forms of participation clearly requires significant motivation and in this section I set out five significant factors that encourage involvement which became apparent during my research. Two of these arise directly from explicitly articulated responses to my questions in interviews, and questionnaires, two more are based on attitudes expressed primarily in more intimate conversation and implicitly in players' behaviour in rehearsals and other social settings, and the last is based on a wider realisation of the importance of access to the production of public sound in Solo and how gamelan associations grant people access to this.

Chapter four: negotiating community

As gamelan music requires relatively large groups of people to perform,¹³ Javanese musicians, local media discourse, the general public, and also foreign players and teachers regularly link it to ideas of community endeavour, working together, and the building and deepening of interpersonal and group relationships. This has become an almost automatic part of any description of gamelan whether in newspaper articles in Solo or in the way foreign practitioners have sought to promote the use of gamelan in educational contexts in the UK. Members of gamelan associations and the people who support the groups also readily invoke these discourses of sociality when asked about

¹³ A full ensemble consists of approximately twenty-four players, although smaller numbers are viable.

their motivations for involvement, citing the desire to meet new people and expand their social circle or deepen existing connections as important factors. Rather than taking this apparently straightforward connection between public and personal discourse at face value, I explore in this chapter the practical ways in which players in gamelan associations build, manage, and restrict belonging and the extent to which these musically centred communities sit within, and interact with, other communities of belonging and allegiance. I contend that participants in gamelan associations deploy these discourses of community to justify and support their existence. I proceed to set this in the context of the political science literature on Indonesia which provides a useful model for analysing the ways in which state and informal models of organisation and leadership co-exist, interact, and develop pragmatic collaborations. I argue that gamelan associations function in very similar ways, bridging the space between grassroots organisation and official institutional support and using broad conceptions of ‘community’ as the basis for facilitating very specific and pragmatic benefits for those involved.

Chapter five: our music/my music, claiming, performing, and negotiating ownership of gamelan

The strand in their stories of involvement with gamelan that people were most comfortable to talk about officially was a sense of ownership of the tradition which both entitled and also obliged them to play. In this chapter I start by unpacking what ownership of music and tradition implies in Java. First touching briefly on traditional and contemporary approaches to authorship and rights to performance in Indonesia and contrasting these with models found elsewhere, I then move on to unpick some of the ways in which people expressed and conceptualised this sense of the tradition belonging to them and of their belonging to it. I analyse this in terms of two overarching themes which were repeatedly emphasised in my informants’ stories: communal ownership and

personal connection. These two strands reflect a model of ownership which is firmly located in notions of stewardship and obligation as much as entitlement, and which operates simultaneously at the level of ethnic belonging and intensely individual personal narratives. The accounts each player gave of their relation to *karawitan* reveal the extremely complex and varied pathways that lead to a decision to play gamelan but also the way in which these extremely specific bundles of motivation and entitlement are elided into and hidden beneath larger, impersonal narratives of motivation that people regard as more appropriate. I argue that this model of ownership allows players to engage with gamelan music as a result of deeply felt, personal connections but, with equal conviction and sincerity, to present this engagement as resulting from a more socially approved desire to maintain and promote their communal heritage.

Chapter six: displaying and negotiating authority and competence

An element of involvement in gamelan associations which was never explicitly expressed to me by any player, but which was clearly extremely important in the experience of all the groups I played with, was the scope the rehearsals gave for asserting, contesting, and negotiating authority in quite forthright ways. These behaviours are normally devalued in Javanese society and fall into the extremely disparaged cultural category of crude or vulgar (*kasar, déså*). Individuals who do not display this kind of behaviour in other settings often exhibit it in the setting of gamelan rehearsals and the negotiations and confrontations that occur are extremely performative, with those involved being explicitly stagey and those not directly involved often adopting positions that resemble those of an audience. In this chapter I analyse in detail the techniques and strategies used to assert authority and display competence and how these bids for recognition are assessed and managed by others. I argue that the opportunity to engage in behaviour which is otherwise seriously deprecated is a significant form of enjoyment afforded by being a

member of a gamelan association and that this is facilitated and rendered less socially dangerous by the structural features of the *latihan*.

Chapter seven: access to power: gamelan associations as sites for converting and exchanging cultural capital

As a result of the need for gamelan groups to seek out the sums of money required to rent or purchase instruments, spaces large enough to house them, and official sanction for their activities to take place in the public or commercial buildings where they usually meet, these organisations bring people from extremely different levels of society and organisational rank into contact. Expectations that contact between negotiating parties should be buffered by somewhat disinterested parties mean that serious discussion of the logistics of the group does not take place openly, but being affiliated with groups often draws those with extremely high rank and official clout into attending rehearsals occasionally. The particular social environment of the *latihan* allows for contact between all those present at a level of intimacy and informality which would otherwise not occur and gives those with extremely limited access to structures of power recourse to some of the most powerful individuals in their spheres. Becoming involved in gamelan associations also allows those with specifically musical resources to deploy these in seeking more concrete forms of social influence. In this chapter I focus predominantly on how access is negotiated to political and spiritual power through participation in gamelan associations, but also explore how supporting gamelan playing is of use to those with existing positions of political and social power. I argue that the opportunities for connection and mutual benefit generated in the collaborative process of setting up and maintaining a gamelan association result in their acting as sites where multiple forms of capital can be negotiated and exchanged.

Chapter eight: public sound: public sphere

In this chapter I set out the argument for access to the generation and amplification of sound in public being a matter of fundamental importance in the display of authority and power in Java. I explore the way sound is used to signal and signify in a number of spheres and the particular weight attached to being 'heard'. The choice to play in a gamelan association grants people access to this extremely important means of being noticed, making their public 'voice' part of the roar of a large percussion ensemble and also granting them access to electronic amplification. Playing gamelan gives people the chance to be publicly visible but also, more importantly, publicly audible. I argue that the ability to produce public sound through membership in a gamelan association grants individuals access to a particular type of Javanese aural 'public sphere' where they can engage with many of the dominant ideas, individuals and institutions shaping their existence.

Conclusion: the aims and argument of this thesis

This thesis aims to move our understanding of this extensively studied musical tradition beyond the realm of technical details and discussions of musical theory and into the realm of the social organisation of ensembles and the social implications of participation. It aims to add to our knowledge of gamelan in two main areas: conceptions of musicianship, and the value of music-making to those taking part.

In the first part I seek to broaden our understanding of how gamelan music is understood, felt, and practised by looking at the experience of groups of people who have so far been left out of academic consideration. I conclude that the musicians who play in gamelan associations are not at an earlier stage on the same trajectory to musicianship as professionals, but are engaging with music for a wide range of reasons which are not

necessarily tied to assessments of the quality of their performance or validation by the traditional sources of musical authority. I show also the level of fluidity and variety that exists in defining traditional music amongst groups not directly attached to the academies or palaces, and the different ways of producing a product that sounds, looks, and feels like gamelan in very different circumstances.

Because gamelan associations do not fund themselves through paid performance they require complex networks of intention and support in order to exist. The existence of these groups requires ongoing engagement and negotiation with a wider community of individuals who, whilst not playing themselves, enable and sustain music-making. This forces us to be aware of all the stakeholders in the endeavour of traditional musicking in a way which is easy to overlook when considering professional players. Because gamelan associations cannot assume or take for granted the systems of patronage which allow them to exist, I argue that they provide a clearer window into the multiple forms of capital that are generated and exchanged through involvement in traditional music.

Participation in gamelan associations provides people with access to engagement with an array of societal discourses surrounding tradition, community, and the generation and control of public sound. These discourses are fundamental in enabling the existence of gamelan associations being simultaneously used both to externally validate them and to elide the other extremely complex and less readily socially acceptable motivations people have for involvement.

Participation also allows people to engage in a number of behaviours which are not sanctioned by dominant expectations of Javanese behaviour but which are nonetheless enjoyed and sought out by some individuals. The heavy freight of association with tradition and community which gamelan carries uniquely positions amateur gamelan

rehearsals as places which can contain this. In an environment structured by the formal rules of socio-musical engagement that are built into gamelan it is safe to temporarily loosen other norms.

The gamelan associations in Solo that I discuss represent a particular moment in the ongoing interactions between musicians from different backgrounds and systems of recognition, and also in the continuing story of gamelan music's complex position in relation to institutions of authority and power. They provide a rich site for furthering our understanding of what Javanese people expect from and value in the processes and results of making music in groups. Stepping back from a tight focus on professional musicians allows us to see the negotiations that underpin the existence of gamelan ensembles whilst they are still in process. These groups afford players, supporters, and listeners opportunities to assert personal agendas, seek recognition, and sometimes simply brag and argue in an environment which remains safe and capable of containing these actions because it is structured by the socio-musical rules of playing gamelan and validated by the discourses of community and tradition that surround it.

I argue that gamelan's historical connections to the authority of the palace, the discourses of forging national identity during the independence era, and the cultural programmes of the Suharto regime, retain significance and social force even though these institutions no longer hold any official authority. This means that gamelan is redolent of engagement with authority and the shaping of fundamental ideas about citizenship and community but is not at present at the centre of such discussions. This makes it a powerful space for people who are familiar with the political and cultural technologies of previous regimes but do not have the resources or the ideological inclination to validate themselves through the currently dominant models of Indonesian citizenship based around the display of consumerist wealth or contemporary Islamic piety. The fact that the vast majority of the

members of gamelan associations are at least in their fifties and either working class or employed in state institutions, I contend, is consistent with this claim that Solonese people who do not feel able to affirm their worth in these ways are drawing on the array of affordances that adhere to *karawitan* to create communities where more familiar, more attainable, and more culturally specific social techniques provide both validation and social and political leverage.

Notes on Javanese pronunciation and orthography

Javanese is now written in Latin script. Although an older script, related to Indic and Thai writing systems, does exist, it is rarely used, being reserved for decorative purposes, and many Javanese cannot read it. Most consonants are pronounced similarly enough to English usage to not cause any difficulties, although there are some particular points to note: ‘c’ represents a ‘ch’ sound, ‘ng’ is always as in sing, never as in bingo, and may occur at the beginning of words. There are two sets of dental sounds in Javanese, represented by ‘t’, ‘th’, ‘d’ and ‘dh’, and the ‘th’ sound approximates closely to an English ‘t’, not a ‘th’ as in thin. Javanese vowels are uncomplicated apart from ‘a’ and ‘e’. There are three ‘e’ sounds and I have chosen to mark these, even though this is not usual in Java, as they sometimes differentiate words from each other. An unmarked ‘e’ is pronounced as in an unstressed ‘the’, ‘è’ as in ‘pet’, and ‘é’ as in ‘pay’. The sound written ‘a’ is normally pronounced as in ‘cat’, but in the prestige, Central Javanese dialect all ‘a’s at the end of words, or in open syllables preceding the end of words, change to a sound more like ‘awe’. I have marked this by using ‘â’. This is not done in Java but helps to signal the difference in sound for non-Javanese speakers and is used extensively among gamelan players in the UK. Javanese often replace ‘a’s that are pronounced in this way with ‘o’ in their names, in order to avoid mispronunciation by non-Javanese Indonesians and I have written names in this thesis in the way used by the individuals concerned or as they are most commonly spelt in the case of public figures.

Anonymity, names, and kinship terms

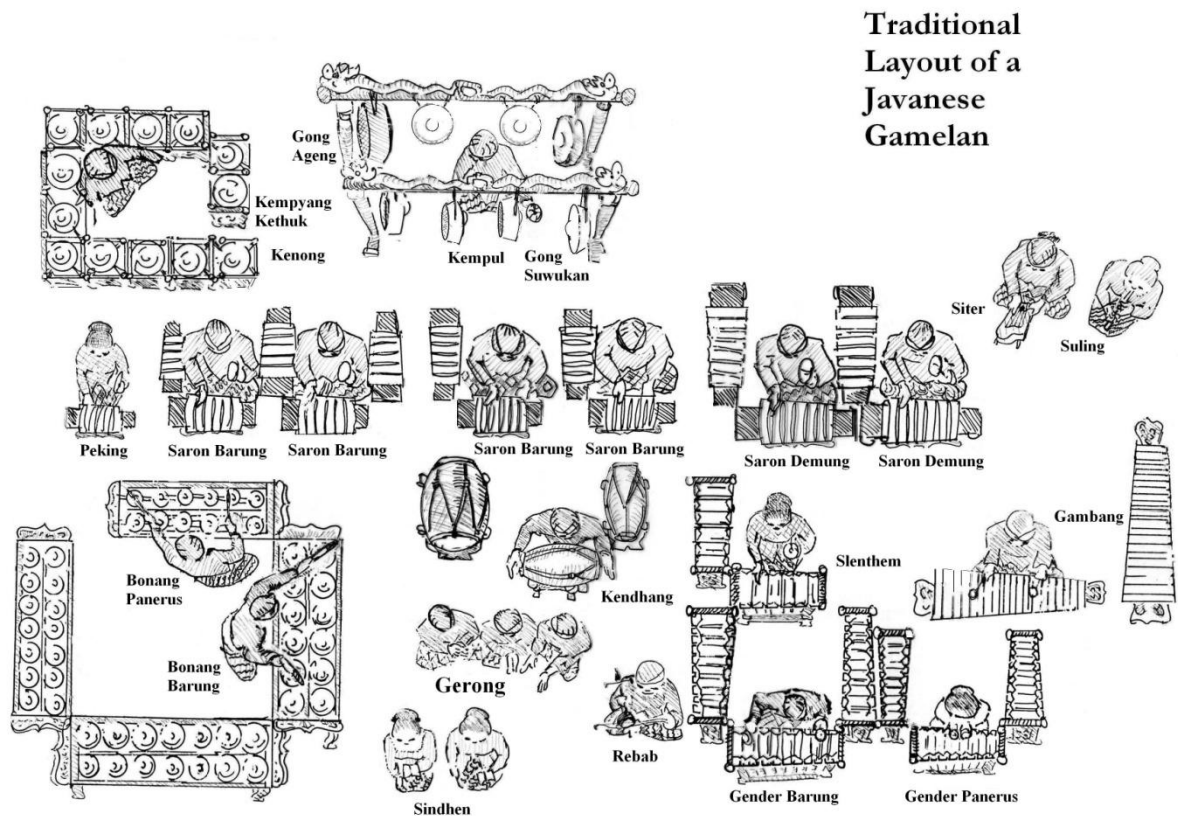
In order to protect the identity of individuals who contributed to my research either in interviews and questionnaires, or as a member of a group where I was observing *latihan*, I have obscured their names. I have done this by using the initial letter of their name in

combination with a Javanese kinship term. As many Javanese names start with certain letters I have distinguished between individuals who would otherwise be identical under this system by adding the following vowel. I have chosen not to substitute full, false names as this does not make the process of anonymisation transparent to the reader and is also impractical given the number of people concerned. It is extremely unusual to use names without attaching a kinship term in Central Java, doing so implying a high degree of intimacy, and it is actually very common to use kinship terms instead of names even when addressing close friends. Referring to people without a prefixed kinship term in a formal written context, therefore, would feel extremely disrespectful and presumptuous. The use of kinship terms also serves to provide some contextual information as to the gender and age of the individual concerned, and my relationship to them. The terms Pak and Bu, meaning respectively father and mother, are used of people who are roughly of the generation above me, but also for some younger people with whom my relationship is more formal or who are of a particularly high status. Mas and Mbak, meaning older brother and older sister, are used for those who are roughly of the same generation, but also for some older people with whom I am particularly close or who specifically ask for this term as a means of reducing formality. One informant is referred to by the title Gusthi, or Lord, as he is a member of the royal family and using a standard kinship term is inappropriate, and some players from the palace groups are referred to by their preferred title of Kanjeng, roughly equivalent to Sir or Lady.

An introduction to the structures and theory of *karawitan*, and some important terminology

In order to avoid fragmented sections of explanation spread throughout this thesis, I present here a basic introduction to the way in which gamelan music functions, and brief

definitions of some of the more important terminology that I will be using. The following illustration is included to provide some sense of the appearance and layout of the instruments.



(Drawing by Peter Smith)

Javanese gamelan is conventionally conceived of as formed of three main constituent groups: the tune instruments, the structural instruments, and what is usually referred to as the elaborating instruments. In this scheme, the tune instruments include the *slenthem*, *demung*, *saron*, and *peking*, often referred to collectively as the *balungan* or skeleton, which are all bar metallophones, between them spanning four octaves. They play the core melodic idea for a piece, which is either an abstraction of a tune more fully expressed elsewhere, or the clearest expression of the tune, with the *peking* playing at a higher rate than the other instruments. The structural instruments are the *gong ageng*, and *gong*

suwukan, hanging gongs of various sizes, voiced to produce harmonic beats; *kempul*, which are smaller hanging gongs that are voiced so as not to beat; *kenong*, or large, horizontally mounted pot gongs; and the *kethuk* and *kempyang*, smaller horizontal pot gongs. These instruments play at regular intervals throughout a piece, simultaneously accenting important notes, and structuring time with a hierarchical sequence of strokes which vary according to the many different *bentuk* or forms. The elaborating instruments consist of the *bonang barung* and *bonang panerus*, which are two-octave racks of small pot gongs, the *gendèr barung* and *gendèr panerus*, which are two and a half octave bar metallophones, the *gambang* or xylophone, *siter* or plucked box zither, *suling* or bamboo flute, *rebab* or two-stringed spike-fiddle, and vocalists. All of these instruments and singers *garap*, or interpret, the tune of the piece, building a layered web of melodies which relate more or less closely to the *balungan* line.

The *balungan* and *bonang* together with the structural instruments constitute the *soran*, or loud style, ensemble. The other elaborating instruments with the *slenthem* and structural instruments constitute the soft ensemble sometimes referred to as *gadhon*. Most of the repertoire uses all the instruments, but some pieces are specifically for loud or soft ensemble.

Theoretically, *gendhing*, the generic name for pieces of gamelan music or *karawitan*, are made up of progressions from one important tone to the next. These tones are called *sèlèh* notes, or notes where the melody is ‘set down’. At these places in the piece the majority of instruments will be playing the same pitch. *Sèlèh* notes come at the end of groups of four *balungan* notes which are called *gâtrâ*. The *gong ageng*, which is the largest of the gongs, marks the end of one iteration of the piece, and all the material between gong strokes is referred to as a *gongan*. A *gongan* usually consists of four *kenongan*, each of which ends with a *kenong* stroke.

The *kendhang*, or drums, control the speed of the ensemble, the character of the interpretation, and beginnings, endings and pauses. Most pieces start with the *balungan* moving at a fairly fast pace and then proceed to slow down. As this happens, the space between *sèlèh* notes becomes greater, meaning that the elaborating instruments have more space within which to *garap* the melody. This system of metrical expansion is called *irâmâ*; most pieces can be performed in four *irâmâ*: *tanggung*, *dados*, *wiled* and *rangkep* in increasing order of expansion.

A complete gamelan ensemble consists of two sets of all the instruments mentioned above: one in each of two tuning systems. *Sléndro* is a pentatonic scale, notated 1 2 3 5 6, with large fairly-equal spaces between each pitch. The *Pélog* instruments have seven pitches, but *pélog* is not a seven-note scale, rather a collation of two pentatonic scales, notated 1 2 3 5 6 and 2 3 5 6 7, with the note 4 being an occasional substitute for either 3 or 5. Some pieces can only be played in one tuning system, others are transferrable. In traditional performance the two systems are never used simultaneously,¹⁴ although it is possible to switch from one to the other for dramatic effect.

¹⁴ There is one exception to this. The piece *Kodhok Ngorèk*, when performed by a full gamelan, juxtaposes soft instruments playing in *sléndro* with an ostinato in *pélog* on the loud style instruments.

Section one: What are gamelan associations?

This section contains three parts which together seek to establish a clear description of gamelan associations in Solo and the type of musicians and musicianship found within them. Chapter one provides the specific details of each of the main groups with which I carried out my research, setting out their location, social and institutional setting, membership profile, regularity of meetings, approach to notation, repertoire, and definitions of what constitutes ‘gamelan music’, and the extent to which they engage with public performance. In chapter two I address the issue of how musicianship is constructed and talked about in Solo, looking in depth at the complex local terminology used to describe players in gamelan associations and setting this in the context of wider musicological discussions of how the amateur and professional might be categorised. I then explore in detail how Solonese gamelan associations relate to a number of the key issues arising from this literature: recompense, status, musical ability, repertoire, and training. Next, in chapter three, I describe and analyse the *latihan*, the distinctive combination of rehearsal, social gathering, and shared meal which I contend is at the core of a gamelan association’s existence.

Chapter one

Introduction to groups and some important themes

Here I will give some basic information about each of the groups that I played with during my fieldwork. This will provide an overview of the different ways in which such groups can be situated and organised, as well as some of the factors which are similar in many cases. It will also serve to introduce each of the groups so that when I refer to them later they will be recognisable and some elements of their individual character will be familiar. For each group I will address a number of areas that I feel are particularly relevant to the way they function and which will be important elements in my analysis in the following chapters. These will include the following: where and when the group meets; the type of people who play, support and lead the group; their use of notation, choice of repertoire, and the instruments played by the members; the level of attendance and attitude towards membership; the group's attitude towards public presentation through uniform and performance; and finally, how they balance the priorities of social experience and musical excellence. I have included some information, such as who provides food and drink, which may initially seem unimportant, but which is essential in demonstrating how the social organisation and interactions in these groups play out.

Having done this, I introduce four key themes in the social life of gamelan associations which cut across the specific issues dealt with in each chapter: gender, class, and religion and ethnicity.

The amount of time I spent with each group varied widely. In some cases this was because they met more or less frequently, in others because of when I found out about them, or in others because of the necessity of choosing between attending rehearsals that met at the same time. The amount of time I spent with a group obviously had an influence on how deeply I came to understand the way its members and supporters behaved. Once I had become familiar with the general trends, however, it was sometimes only necessary to visit a group a few times to become aware of its dynamics, and I gathered as much revealing material from brief intense interaction with certain groups towards the end of my research period as I did from the longer-term relationships I had with the groups which I played with for the whole ten months. I have listed the groups here in the order in which I began playing with them.

The detail I provide here shows the level of variation in practice between gamelan associations but I argue that at a fundamental level there are features shared by all of these groups which justify considering them as a unified phenomenon. All are based around the conjunction of a desire to play gamelan with an already existing network of association, whether this is a shared geographical area, workplace, or friendship group. Although some members have extensive musical experience and some groups perform in public reasonably regularly, their basic attitude towards making music is non-commercial. All the groups arrange for a more experienced musician to be present as a focal point for decision-making and instruction even though the level of ability and active involvement of these people varies dramatically. In whichever setting they meet all the groups also run their sessions along very similar lines: the combination of musical and social interactions which constitute a *latihan* which I discuss in detail in chapter three. I contend that many of these similarities are the result of an informal but widespread template of what is

expected in a gamelan association which groups are aware of and attempt to follow with a greater or lesser degree of conscious decision-making.

Karawitan Pasar Gedhé

A *latihan* at Pasar Gedhé can be seen at the following link:

<https://youtu.be/LgM-SW-XeV4>

Another can be heard at the following link:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-484593835/pasar-gedhe-latihan-21-11-12/s-QzMT0>

This is a group based in the main market of Solo. Pasar Gedhé is situated at the Eastern end of the main road which runs through Solo, standing within sight of the Town Hall, and straddling the main road which leads to the main Northern and Eastern suburbs and eventually out towards the major cities of East Java. The outside of the market consists of shops which are mainly owned and run by Chinese Indonesians, selling coffee, incense, prepared herbal medicines, and dried goods. The inside houses individual stalls selling fruit, vegetables, some clothing, raw ingredients for Javanese traditional medicine, and fish and chicken meat, both raw and cooked. There is also a secondary market of food and drink sellers, some with stalls and some ambulatory, who provide services to the vendors. Almost all of the people working in these capacities are women; the men who work in the market have jobs as cleaners, porters, and collectors of market dues.

The fact that it is women who carry out almost all buying and selling in markets means that Pasar Gedhé functions very differently in some respects from the traditional model of Javanese society. The husbands of market vendors are often referred to by their wives' names rather than the more normal practice which is the reverse, and the dominant models of feminine refinement and discreet, demure behaviour are abandoned in favour

of forthright, proactive, and explicitly commercial banter. Some vendors sell their own produce, or produce they have bought in the village in which they live, while others act as salespeople for larger enterprises who provide them with products to sell and then pay them a proportion of the profits in return for carrying out the face-to-face transactions. Money constantly moves between the sellers, who borrow goods from friends if a regular customer requests something they do not currently have in stock, buy food and drink from each other, and lend and borrow capital whenever someone has spare funds.

The gamelan group here has been running since 2010. It meets in the main market office which is above the front entrance. The gamelan is usually scrunched up against two walls of this space and is set up for rehearsals. Rehearsals take place three times a week from two until four in the afternoon. The office staff finish work at two, and most of the buying and selling has been done by now, so the members play before leaving to go home. The group is made up of a mix of women who sell in the market and men from the cleaning and portering services. The existence of the group is supported by the Head of the market who allows it to take place in the office, and Pak J. who owns a large proportion of the fruit selling businesses and was appointed by the Head as the official intermediary between himself and the group. The group was established by a core of three of the women, who asked some of the cleaners and porters who were known to play gamelan to act as rehearsal leaders. The group does not usually have food or drink, but if Pak J. is attending to talk to the group he provides trays of fruit as refreshments, and when public events occur the women's connections with other market vendors who sell snacks and prepared foods mean that there is a great deal to eat.

The expectation is that all members of the group attend all rehearsals, and this is usually the case. The core membership consists of the women, who have specific instruments which they play, and which are vacated for them if someone else has been filling in

before their arrival. The men's attendance is not as regular, as their work hours are more dependent on outside influences and they do not have the flexibility to choose when to work, or the option of entrusting their work to a neighbour, as the women frequently do. When they do attend there are specific roles that they take on a far more flexible basis, rotating between *bonang*, *demung*, *bonang panerus* and any instruments that are not otherwise being covered. One man, Pak W., always drums when he is there.



Informal performance at Pasar Gedhé 19/09/12

The repertoire is provided by two men who both lead and perform with groups where they live. There is a desire to play some traditional, classical repertoire, and this usually starts the rehearsal, but there is also a great desire to play popular song-led material, which allows the many singers to display their skills, and the male members of the group to display the knowledge of the loud, virtuosic *balungan* flourishes that intertwine with

the songs, which they know through playing in outside groups. Towards the latter half of the rehearsal this type of piece becomes dominant. There are also a number of pieces which are used for the group's many official appearances as representatives of the market, which include a song about the city's motto and a popular song with lyrics altered to be about the wonders of the market. The notation usage in the group is very mixed. The women have a collection of books and individual pieces of paper containing standard repertoire which have been provided by the men with connections to other groups, and some pieces are written up on a flipchart when they are first introduced. Most of the men do not use notation, preferring to play by memory and ear.

The instruments that the group uses are rented and are in a very run-down state. The keys are a mixture of brass and iron, rather than the more prestigious bronze, and the frames are mismatched and infested with woodworm. The tuning of the *pélog* set is reasonable but the *sléndro* is so out of tune that the group very rarely uses it. The only instruments played on a regular basis are the loud-style instruments, although all instruments are available except *gendèr panerus* and *siter*.

The group performs often and regularly, always within the context of official functions put on by or involving the market or city government. During my time playing with the group these included the market's public show of support for the city's mayor who was running for the governorship of Jakarta, the celebrations when he was elected, Chinese New Year, a celebration of the history of the district in which the market is located, and a regular, less formal, although still public, *klènèngan* on the eve of *Jumat Kliwon* every thirty-five days. The group has a number of uniforms used for performance. One consists of batik shirts and fitted tops in a variety of fabrics which are part of the official uniform of market and city functionaries; this was used for events which occurred during the working day and those which took place inside the market. The uniform used for more

formal events and those which involved the gamelan being moved outside to a temporary stage consisted of long-sleeved jackets and tops made of orange fabric which was unique to the gamelan group, with the men wearing *pecis*, the small black hat which is considered national dress for the whole of Indonesia. For the Chinese New Year celebrations the group was performing for most of the day in full public view and decided to wear full traditional Javanese formal costume.



Performance for invited guests at Pasar Gedhé 16/10/12

This group mostly emphasised the social nature of the rehearsals, and prioritised involvement and inclusion at the expense of excellence in performance, although this sometimes caused friction between the male and female members of the group.

Performances were always treated with the utmost seriousness, however, and there was

always a sense of being the public face of the market, and needing to balance presenting both the actual make-up of the market and honed musical skills.

The two groups based at Cakra

There are two groups which meet in a homestay (something between a Bed and Breakfast and a small hotel) in the *Kauman* area of the centre of town. This homestay was converted from a large, traditional Javanese house, centred on a courtyard. It is particularly popular with visitors who come to Solo regularly in order to attend meditation classes, learn Javanese performing arts, or take part in experimental movement workshops. The ethos of tradition is emphasised by décor focussing heavily on antique colonial-era furniture and fittings, and the existence of two *krobongan* rooms.¹⁵ The larger of the two *krobongan* rooms also contains a full gamelan set, specifically commissioned by the original owner of the homestay. This room can be used by individual guests or visiting groups for lessons and practice. The instruments are large, bronze and of a very high quality. They are kept tuned and are periodically serviced so as to keep them in peak condition. The upkeep of the gamelan is taken very seriously by the owner and staff of the homestay.

Marem

A Marem *latihan* can be heard at the following link:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-484593835/marem-latihan-12-10-12/s-qFaSg>

The name of this group is a complex pun, shortening the phrase ‘*marsudi renaning manah*’ which means ‘endeavour pleases the heart’ into the single word ‘*marem*’, which

¹⁵ The *krobongan* is an integral part of Javanese homes which seek to emulate palace traditions or the style of large multi-generational homes in the countryside. It consists of a recessed alcove framed by wooden figures of a man and woman in traditional clothing, which acts as a store for the family’s rice and the cloth which the bride brings with her as a dowry. It acts as a focal point for revering Dewi Sri, the goddess of rice production and growth, and also the family ancestors.

means contentment. It originally met in the house of a famous choreographer in the neighbouring neighbourhood of Kemlayan, but a series of practical and personal difficulties eventually meant that the group could no longer meet there and it migrated to Cakra. The group has an official manager who acts on its behalf in interacting with the city administration. Marem meets twice a week in the late evening although during my time in Solo this was reduced to once a week for a period when attendance temporarily became unsustainably low. The core membership of the group consists of men from Kemlayan who have been attending since before the relocation and a contingent of men who travel from Kartasura to attend, encouraged by the group's *sindhèn* who lives there. Nearly all of these men are in their late forties to early sixties and work as day labourers in the construction industry or as *becak*¹⁶ drivers. They are usually joined by an array of occasionally attending foreign students, long-term expats, ISI students, and professional musicians who have a personal link with the group or individual members. The *sindhèn*, Bu M., makes crackers for a living but was a professional singer as a young woman and sings with several groups each week. She is given an honorarium for singing with Marem. Attendance is extremely variable. On some occasions there is a full gamelan including dedicated singers, but on other nights there are not enough players for people to feel that the session will be satisfactory and after some chatting they disperse without having made any music.

The group's nominal leader and teacher is D. a lecturer at ISI who, as well as being an extremely respected traditional gamelan musician, also composes new music for gamelan and other ensembles, and is extremely active in the *kroncong* scene. He very rarely attends rehearsals because of other engagements, but the group is perfectly capable of

¹⁶ The pedal-powered rickshaws that are a diminishing but important component of the Solonese transport network.

running itself in his absence due to the level of experience of most members and the skill of the drummer. When he is present D.'s input tends to be mainly focussed on choosing which pieces to play and occasionally guiding particular players in their interpretation.

Tea is provided through a contributions system which also covers some of the group's expenses. It is ordered from a local stall and fetched by staff from the homestay. The group is a recipient of money from the city government's local development fund, which is organised by a member who has recently retired from a career in international insurance and was asked to organise the group's finances.

The repertoire played is contained in two books which have been gradually built up over the years of the group's existence, all chosen, written out in particular versions, and printed by the leader D. These books contain a large selection of the most common classic pieces arranged in popular suites, and some smaller livelier pieces including two new pieces for beginning and ending performances written by D. Marem is extremely unusual in having at least two members who can play *rebab*,¹⁷ but there is still not usually a *gendèr* or *gambang* player unless an ISI student or other visitor is there.

Marem rarely perform, other than being on show for guests at the homestay or tourists who have heard that they can see and hear gamelan here. The group is very adept at ignoring or welcoming onlookers as required, having had many years of doing this. There is no group uniform, although there is occasionally talk of organising one. The focus of the group is producing the best possible musical result whilst taking into consideration the abilities of all present.

¹⁷ I discovered later that one of these was a retired lecturer from the arts academy in Yogyakarta.



Marem latihan 2013 (Photo Rachel Hand)

Sekar Laras

This group also rehearses at Cakra, meeting once a week for about two hours. The membership is somewhat different from most other groups, with two women who play, and a few younger members, one girl of high school age, and two men in their twenties. One of the women, I., runs a canteen in a school and as a result, because she owns a large tea urn, provides tea for rehearsals instead of buying it in. The group was set up specifically to make use of a new city funding opportunity for ‘community cohesion’ projects, which is reportedly underused. The men who work at Cakra and set up the room and provide tea for Marem actually play in this group. The leader is S. a teacher from ISI who specialises in leading this kind of group. He is not always present, as Pak H. who drums for Marem also attends, and can ensure an effective rehearsal on his own. Most of

the members come from the neighbouring *kampung* of Kemlayan and are directly related to some of the most highly regarded court musicians of the previous generation.

Sekar Laras uses a collection of notation sheets which have been prepared for a previous performance and some individual copies of specific pieces. Very occasionally they use the Marem books which are stored in the gamelan room. The repertoire consists of three suites that link a large number of song-based compositions by Nartosabdho¹⁸ with a few *lancaran* and *kumudå*. At most rehearsals these suites are split up to make more manageable chunks. The decision as to what to play is made communally with the more experienced participants clearly deferring to the others in most instances. There are no soft instrument players in the group, although when I was there to play *gendèr*, S. would play *rebab* in order to make a fuller sound. Attendance is very erratic, with some weeks going by without enough players to make those present feel that a session was worthwhile.

Sekar Laras had performed at the Balai Soedjatmoko¹⁹ a year before I was playing with them and this was frequently referred to as a major achievement and landmark for the group. There were no other performances during my time with the group however, and no plans for any more in the future. The main focus of the group is on sociable gathering which also includes music.

¹⁸ A puppeteer and extremely prolific composer of new pieces for gamelan, active from the 1950s to the 1980s.

¹⁹ A small arts space which hosts musical events, including a regular amateur gamelan performance slot.

Pemkot Laras

This group meets in the main *pendhâpâ*²⁰ of the Town Hall. It is a weekly rehearsal of about three and a half hours. The members are predominantly current and retired civil servants from the city administration, but some players from the Pasar Gedhé group also play here, and a diffuse group of highly skilled musicians move in and out of attendance. The vast majority of the players are men, although there is one woman who plays and a group of female singers. The group plays on the Town Hall's gamelan set, and its status in relation to the administrative hierarchy was under development throughout my time in Java, moving from connected only through informal relationships to establishing a formal constitution and connecting officially. The instruments are bronze and of a fairly high quality, with some extra *balungan* instruments to allow extra participation and volume for loud-style pieces. The group provides its own tea and often food. The tea is always brought by one particular member and the food is brought by a small group of members who share this responsibility between themselves. The group is officially led by Mas Sun. who is an ISI graduate who worked for several years as a musician at the nightly dance drama (*wayang wong*) in Sriwedari, the city's main entertainment centre and then moved into the city administration, working in the tourism department. He is the default drummer but leads the group in a somewhat hands-off manner, allowing many decisions to be made by discussion amongst the membership.

Notation falls into two main categories: some members have books of pieces that they have acquired when playing with other groups or from their teacher whilst others use no notation for pieces that they have played before. There are also sets of notation that have been produced for specific performances which are still used as a source of repertoire at

²⁰ The prestige structure par excellence of Javanese architecture, consisting of a large sloped, square roof supported by delicate pillars and usually covering a raised, tiled area. *Pendhapa* are used as formal reception rooms and also frequently for artistic performance of all types.

general rehearsals. The performance notations are produced by Mas Sun, but much of the dedicated vocal notation is provided by Pak M. The repertoire is extremely varied and includes some of the most challenging pieces in the classical tradition; these are always played as suites moving from the largest form to the smallest form and are usually arranged so as to allow as much vocal involvement as possible. This means that a great deal of material composed or adapted by Nartosabdho is used. Smaller-scale pieces are used when the group is preparing for playing at a wedding, which is one of their most common performance opportunities. The group has players for all instruments other than *gendèr*, although there is sometimes no one to play *rebab*. There is always someone present who can play *gambang*, and there is a specialist *siter* player. Attendance is fairly regular amongst the core membership of people attached to the city government, but attendance by extra musicians who might be invited to play for a particular performance and then continue to rehearse with the group is less consistent.

The group played for three weddings during the year I was a member, and also played for a two-hour, live broadcast at the local branch of the national radio station and participated in a major three-day competition at the same radio studio. When playing for weddings the group wore full Javanese traditional costume with jackets provided by one of the members who runs a gamelan hire business, but does not have a specific uniform.

Rehearsals are always focussed on producing a polished musical result and there is even occasionally repetition of sections that worked badly on a previous attempt. Decisions on who plays which instrument at rehearsals are usually made communally, but for public performances official line-up decisions are made by Mas Sun.

PåKåSå

PåKåSå is an abbreviation of *Paguyuban Kawula Surakarta* (Association of Palace Servants in Surakarta), which is an organisation which acts as a cooperative, and in some ways a union, for palace servants at the Kraton Kasunanan.²¹ The group was established by a senior palace servant, Kanjeng P., who is in charge of organising the complex scheduling of servants, some of whom are full-time employees and some of whom are part-time volunteers who are only required for occasional large events. The rehearsal takes place once a week, on Tuesdays, at around 3.30pm, for about two hours. This arrangement allows members who work in the official offices to get to the rehearsal space after work finishes for the day and then to set out for home just before sunset. Rehearsals happen in the Småråkatå, one of the outer pavilions of the palace where one of the palace gamelans is housed and where the court musicians and dancers also practice. The layout has the *pélog* instruments facing forwards and the *sléndro* set facing sideways which is not usual. If, as is sometimes the case, the instruments have been taken to the Sithinggil, a performance venue just outside the palace walls, in preparation for a *wayang*, then the rehearsal takes place there instead. The instruments used are a historic set made in the time of Sultan Pakubuwånå X, which have some of the restrictions of older sets: very few *kenong* and *kempul* notes, *gendèr* which only reach to the pitch high 2, instead of the now standard high 3, and a general subtle dilapidation and need for tuning.

²¹ The primary palace in Solo, the seat of the rulers who take the title Pakubuwånå (Axis of the World).



Småråkåtå pavilion 26/03/13

The group has an ongoing difficulty in keeping a leader or teacher, and during my time playing with them there was a ‘temporary’ leader who was somewhat uncomfortable with this position and moved between attempting to assert his authority and acting to undermine it.

The repertoire of the group was defined by the contents of several flip-charts which were part of the accoutrements of the Småråkåtå. Towards the end of my research, a book of basic pieces which a couple of the more advanced players had was photocopied for the whole group. The pieces played consisted of *lancaran*, *ketawang*, and *ladrang* going into *iråmå wiled*. The normal instrumentation was a complete set of *soran* players with Kanjeng P. playing *gambang* and the occasional visit by someone who could play *gendèr*. This group had no internal drummer and, as a result, I usually filled this gap. Attendance

was very inconsistent, varying from around three to seventeen people. The group does not perform although there is often talk of putting together a programme of simple pieces to play as a pre-event concert when the palace puts on *wayang*. There is no official uniform for the group as they do not perform, but there is an unofficial dress code which grows out of the clothing expected of palace servants when on duty. This means that all the female members of the group wear long skirts, which is unusual in normal settings in Solo, and the men all wear batik shirts and *blangkon*,²² with a slim gold and red neck scarf (*samir*) as a mark of belonging to the palace establishment. The focus of the group is entirely on the enjoyment of taking part with very little reference to any external standard of musical quality, although there are some members for whom this is frustrating.

Sundays at the Kraton

Another group also meets on the Småråkåtå pavilion on Sunday evenings. This group has a very different membership profile, being made up of the personal staff and friends of one of the royal family, Gusti P., and a number of people who attend the *pambiwårå* classes that he also sponsors. *Pambiwårå* is a challenging art necessary for many Javanese events, particularly weddings, which combines the roles of master of ceremonies and toast-master: it requires extensive knowledge of formal and poetic Javanese, the vocal melodies used to recite specific sections of text, and the pieces of gamelan music that are appropriate to accompany each section of the ceremony. Gusti P. is the younger brother of the reigning Sultan and has responsibility for the palace museum and library, the guides who take visitors around the public areas of the Kraton, and the organisation of conferences and exhibitions that take place in palace buildings. He is one of the very few members of the royal family who still lives in the palace and takes a

²² A small stitched turban made of batik cloth which is characteristic of traditional male Javanese costume.

visible, active interest in traditional culture, sponsoring regular *wayang*, collecting *kris* and other heirloom weapons, and personally sponsoring and frequently attending the *pambiwâra* classes and gamelan group. One of the regular members, R., is the daughter of a *dhalang* who organises a group in their hometown, Karanganyar, just outside Solo and players from this group frequently come to increase the numbers of attendees and play soft instruments.



Smârâkâtâ showing Pakubuwânâ X gamelan 26/03/13

The group has an official instructor who is not always able to attend regularly. There are enough people in the group who are confident on key instruments, however, to allow rehearsals to happen in his absence. Gusti P. frequently joins in sessions, sometimes playing *rebab* or *gambang*, but also on occasion pointing at notation to keep people on track and shouting out information to those who get lost. Notation consists almost

exclusively of the same collection of flip chart booklets that the P&K&S& group uses, but the greater proficiency of this group means that more of the material is used. Some players bring their own books as well, but this is mainly so that they have their personal annotations available. The repertoire consists of *lancaran*, *ketawang*, and *ladrang* going into *ir&am& wiled*. Occasionally *gendhing* are played but usually only the very commonly played popular ones such as *Randhu k&entir* and *Kutut Manggung*. The instruments covered vary from week to week depending on whether or not players from Karanganyar are involved, but there are always players for all the *soran* instruments and also at least one *sindh&en*.

Mas T.'s

Mas T. is a young gamelan smith who specialises in making bronze pot instruments, particularly *kempul* and *gong suwukan*, but also *bonang* pots and *kenong*. He originally worked as a tailor and embroiderer before marrying into a gamelan-making family, retraining with his father-in-law, and working with various other senior makers. He came to the UK to tune gamelan in 2007 and used the money from this to establish his own forge which is now highly successful. T.'s father-in-law had always wanted to set up a gamelan group for people in their village, and the extra space provided by expanding the forge and the extra capital coming into the business allowed the family to make a complete playable set that they could house. The village, Jati-teken, is just outside the city of Solo and is in the larger area of Bekonang which is the centre for the vast majority of gamelan-making in Central Java. The group met once a week on Saturday evenings for about three to four hours and was made up of a mixture of local young men who had not played before, older men from the wider area with experience in other groups, and a *sindh&en* who was given a small honorarium to attend. There were at least two men in the

group who worked in gamelan forges. This is extremely unusual as forge labourers do not usually play: their work hours do not sit well with playing late into the night, and they are normally exhausted by the evening

The group did not have a specific leader, but there were three men with varying but significant experience who led the group between them. Usually one would drum while the other two would sing and make sure the other players knew what they should be doing. Owing to the relatively large number of total beginners in the group they would sometimes give explanations of how a piece would be played before it started. Notations were written out on large sheets of paper or on the back of previous years' calendars and hung at the front of the room. These notations had been inherited from a previously existing group and consisted mainly of somewhat more advanced repertoire; simpler pieces were played from booklets that a member of the group had put together and photocopied. Rehearsals started with *lancaran* and other simple loud-style pieces which could be played before the more senior musicians and the *sindhèn* had arrived; later on they would move onto larger pieces and suites with a higher level of complexity and that required *ciblon* drumming. The decisions as to which pieces to play were made between the older men acting as leaders and one of the more confident younger players who also played in other groups. There were no soft instrument players in the group other than occasional sorties on the *gambang* if the loud-style instruments were all taken. Vocals other than *sindhènan* were provided by the senior men or sometimes, if enough people were present, a couple of men would form a *gérong*.

Attendance was very consistent, although the time people arrived was very flexible. The vast majority of players were local and the membership represented their existing social circle, so the beginning and end of sessions often blended into general social chatting and smoking. This also meant that, if a local event, such as a wedding or festival, coincided

with the rehearsal time, the rehearsal was automatically cancelled without any need for explicit notification, as everyone would be expected to attend the other event as a matter of course. The group did not perform and had no plans to perform or take part in any competitions. Ultimately the group dissolved during my year of research because the instruments were sold and Mas T. was too busy to replace them all quickly. He still intends to attempt to build up enough stock to allow the group to play again.

Benåwå

Benåwå is a small village just outside Solo. A large number of the houses here are owned by lecturers at ISI and the streets are named after traditional forms of music and dance. On the edge of the village is the house of Rahayu Supanggah, who was Rector of ISI between 1997 and 2002 and is an internationally renowned composer of new music for gamelan, particularly specialising in music for dance drama and theatre. He owns a full bronze gamelan which he uses for his experimental pieces and which is housed in the *pendhåpå* which stands immediately in front of his house. Although the gamelan has many modifications from the standard set in order to facilitate experimental contemporary music, including extra notes on many instruments, and an array of archaic instruments which are not now often used, it is still useable for playing the traditional repertoire.

Rehearsals are led by two other lecturers from ISI who live in the area, rather than Pak Panggah himself. Because of their many other commitments the schedule of rehearsals is somewhat irregular, although in theory the group meets once a week and plays for about three hours. The majority of members are from Benåwå or from other villages close by and are predominantly middle-class, working as teachers, administrators, or religious leaders. Because of the link with ISI there are sometimes foreign students who are

encouraged to attend, and occasionally Javanese students who study with Pak P. or Pak K. also take part in order to hone their skills on a particular instrument. The rehearsals are run in a very focussed manner. Once Pak P. is there he will usually start pieces with whoever has already arrived, with later arrivals slotting in when they get there. There is a dedicated pause for socialising and water about halfway through, but otherwise one piece is followed by another suggestion from the leaders without general discussion, so a great deal of repertoire is played in each session. Pak P. will often give specific advice on playing to individual players and choose pieces in order to allow someone to try out a particular skill or to push them.

Players are expected to be self-sufficient when it comes to notation and everyone has one or two of the books that are in circulation and some collections of pieces produced for past concerts. Repertoire is entirely from the classical canon of pieces as taught at ISI but often with the more popular interpretations of these pieces that are played for wedding receptions. Because there are dedicated singers, both *sindhèn* and *gérong*, pieces with major vocal components are often chosen, and *båwå* are regularly used to introduce pieces. The players from Benåwå cover all the *soran* instruments and also drum. Soft instruments are played by foreign students and other ISI staff who may attend rehearsals on an occasional basis. As the core of the group live so close by sessions are usually very well attended, and reasons for absence are always public knowledge, being passed on by neighbours if the leaders do not already know. When the ISI lecturers are busy, however, sessions can be cancelled at quite short notice and sometimes do not take place for months at a time. If Pak Panggah is preparing a new project the *pendhåpå* is also sometimes unavailable as he will use the space for his rehearsals.



Pendhâpâ at Benâwâ 2012 (Photo Samantha Brett)

The group has performed in the past but did not do so during my year playing with them. They have a group uniform of dark green jackets for use with traditional formal wear. The focus of rehearsals is primarily on musical matters as the members meet often in various other social settings in the area and this is not the only time that they come together.

Jetis

Jetis is a village to the north-east of Solo, about a thirty-minute drive from the city centre. The group here is made up primarily of local residents with some other musicians who live slightly further away but still within a ten-mile radius. I became aware of the group because it meets at the house of one of the market traders, Bu K., who plays at Pasar Gedhé. She also sings with the group and provides tea and a full meal for those playing as

well as the space. There is one man who leads the group and also drums. He talks players through how he is going to perform each suite of pieces, sometimes demonstrating the route through the different sections on the notation displayed at the front of the room. His expertise is mainly in the more classical repertoire and as the evening progresses and the style changes to include more upbeat popular genres other men take over on the drum and become more dominant although they do not guide the group in the same way.



Rehearsal with Pasar Gedhé group at Mbak K.'s house. Jetis 23/11/12

Notation is written up on a whiteboard at the front of the room and is often touched up when parts of a piece have become illegible or been wiped off. When new pieces are introduced they are written up during the session with reference to books and the collective knowledge of the group. Repertoire is largely chosen by the leader but his decisions are informed by requests and suggestions from players. All instruments are

covered apart from the *gendèr* and *rebab*; there is a *gambang* player and a large vocal section, including two *sindhèn*. Many of the men who are specialists in the *sragènan* repertoire that is played later in the night sing during the first section, allowing the less experienced and confident players to play whilst the *balungan* parts are straightforward. Attendance is regular and consistent and the overall feeling of the group is of a well-established social network that also meets to make music.

Whilst I was playing with the group they performed twice, but I was only involved in one of these events. Both were for village events which did not strictly require gamelan music but which gave the group an opportunity to demonstrate their skills to their wider circle of neighbours and contribute to making local events livelier.

Kosti Laras

Kosti is one of the biggest taxi firms in Solo. The company has a large depot area in Mojosoongo, a northern suburb of the city, which houses washing facilities for vehicles and people, a cafe, and some dedicated space for the many artistic ventures that the company supports its drivers in pursuing. The drivers organise a gamelan group, as well as a troupe that perform *réyogan* (a very popular trance-dance tradition from East Java which involves feats of strength accompanied by drums and shawms) and a *campursari* group.

The players are all men who work as drivers for the company, along with two *sindhèn* who both sing with the village-based group that one of the drivers runs. They meet once a week and play for about two to three hours, finishing at close to 1.00 in the morning. For some of the men this marks the end of their shift while for others it is the beginning. Arrival is quite spread out so the evening begins with a few people sitting at the cafe in front of the room where the gamelan is housed drinking, eating, and chatting. During this

time the group's de facto leaders, Pak M., Pak S., and Mbak G., talk through the planned repertoire and start writing any new pieces up on the whiteboard which is attached to one wall of the gamelan room. Pak S. drums most pieces, whilst Pak M. and Mbak G. explain how the pieces work to the rest of the group. When assistance is needed during pieces this is usually provided by Mbak G. who continues to sing *sindhèn* whilst also shouting out corrections to other players. Pak M. usually plays *bonang* or sings, frequently performing *bâwâ* as well as *gérongan*.

In addition to the notation for new pieces that is written on the whiteboard, the group also have multiple copies of one of the popular notation books that is in general circulation, which they use for core repertoire. The pieces played by the group are predominantly popular classical suites with the addition of a large selection of songs written by Nartosabdho. Towards the end of a session there will usually be requests to play whichever *sragènan*-style pieces are currently being regularly performed at weddings, but the session always finishes with *Ayak-ayakan Pamungkas*.

Kosti Laras did not perform during my period of research, but they had played for the Balai Soedjatmoko *klenèngan* two years previously and this was still a matter of great pride. They also performed for official company celebrations, when all the artistic groups entertain their colleagues and families. I am unaware of them having a specific uniform and do not know what they wore when they appeared in public. Rehearsals were invariably friendly, but very focussed on proficient execution of the pieces, with Mbak G. often demanding that certain sections be played again, and particular transitions or melodic lines be worked on in isolation until they were fluent.

Merpati Laras

This group is based in the main Post Office in Solo, The name refers to the postal service's logo, a white dove (*merpati* in Indonesian). It meets on Fridays after the congregational prayer in the enormous top-floor loft space of the post office building, which contains open plan offices and sorting machinery as well as the gamelan and a set of *kulintang*.²³ The group's membership includes people from all parts of the post office organisation, with a number of postmen, some counter staff, and managers at a range of levels. Although the post office employs many women, only men play in the gamelan, and the three women who sing are from outside the organisation but know people in the group. A large selection of snacks is brought along by one of these women along with a copious supply of tea, frequently iced as the room is extremely hot.

The group is led by one of the members who has a great deal of gamelan experience and also plays in another group where he lives. His son is a former student from ISI and sometimes comes to rehearsals in order to drum. Notations were the responsibility of another member of the group who had produced his own word-processed collection of the repertoire needed for an upcoming performance at a wedding. Some pieces were also written up on a pair of chalkboards next to the instruments as required.

Usually only the loud-style instruments were covered during rehearsals, and when I joined the group the *gendèr* had to be pulled out from a dusty corner and required a great deal of attention to be playable. The focus throughout my time with the group was the wedding of the daughter of one of the players. The gamelan group was going to play as the afternoon entertainment for guests, being replaced later in the evening by another, professional group. At this event two other musicians were brought in to play *gendèr* and

²³ This is a marimba-style percussion ensemble from Sulawesi.

siter and I moved to *gambang*. Both of these musicians were professional players who lived near the bride's family. An extra professional *sindhèn* was also invited to strengthen the vocal section. As the group has no uniform and was playing for the afternoon rather than the more formal evening event, we wore batik shirts.

Bengawan

The Bengawan building is owned by the city's ministry of works and acts as a hostel for visiting officials, as well as a club space for the ministry's staff. It houses a full gamelan set as well as a complete *kulintang* ensemble, both of which are regularly used. The members of the group that meet here are all staff for the ministry in senior management positions. In contrast to almost all other groups with which I played it is very common for married couples to play together here, and on occasion the children of members would also join in. There are three female members who play rather than sing, and they are also part of a separate women-only ensemble which meets in the same space, as well as playing the *kulintang*. The group meets on either Saturday or Sunday evening depending on the availability of the majority of members, starting at about 7.30 and always finishing before 11 pm. In place of snacks, small portions of hot food are provided by the building's caretaker along with tea. The funding for this appears to come from an internal ministry budget as there is no collection at any point during sessions.

The group is led and taught by S. who is a lecturer at ISI and also leads Sekar Laras and the SLB group. His style of teaching and leading is consistent across these three groups, focussing on achieving good ensemble listening skills in a relaxed manner. His emphasis is on learning to hear what the drummer is asking for, and the appropriate volume and style of playing for each form of piece. The repertoire reflects his passion for the music of Nartosabdho, consisting of large suites of this composer's pieces. S. has also composed a

piece for the group in this style to act as their theme tune when starting performances. U., who also plays with Sekar Laras, assists with this group, not leading, but assisting by supporting individual players who have got lost or confused so that the whole piece does not need to stop for explanations. S. provides all notation on paper sheets and some members of the group have bound and photocopied collections of past notations to allow easy access to their repertoire. Whilst I played with the group they were preparing to play at the Balai Soedjatmoko and each rehearsal consisted of a run of the entire program with occasional specific work on individual pieces or sections. Once this performance had happened the rehearsals followed a similar framework but with more chatting and more repetitions of individual pieces within the suites that were particular favourites.

Shirts and fitted tops in a uniform batik pattern were ordered specifically for the performance at the Balai Soedjatmoko and these were given, free of charge, to the extra musicians who were joining the group to play soft instruments and sing. These extra musicians were all friends of S.

SLB2 (Special Needs School No. 2)

S., who leads Sekar Laras and the Bengawan group, also teaches a weekly session for teachers at one of the schools in Solo for children with special educational needs (*Sekolah Luar Biasa*). The school educates children from primary level through to school leaver age, and its intake includes children with all forms of physical and mental disability other than blindness and autism for which there are dedicated schools. The school's music staff teach gamelan along with choral singing, *djembe* drumming, and a range of Western musical instruments, but the group that I played with was set up to allow the general teaching staff an opportunity to learn and play gamelan. Whilst I was playing with the group the focus of sessions was entirely on the upcoming open day in celebration of

National Education Day when the teachers were going to be performing as part of the entertainment put on by the school for its visitors.

The impetus behind the group came from Pak Mo. who had some experience with gamelan and wanted to expand his knowledge. When the school acquired a set he canvassed other teachers to see if there was enough interest to form a group. At the same time S. was approached by the head teacher and asked if he would lead the ensemble. The membership was almost entirely teachers at the school, seven women and three men, but also included I. who runs the school canteen and who plays in Sekar Laras. S. provided all notation, some printed and some on a whiteboard, and also arrived slightly early to give Pak M. individual tuition on the bonang. Many of the teachers had no previous experience of playing gamelan and were somewhat embarrassed at their lack of ability, frequently expressing this with dramatic giggling and avowals of incompetence during rehearsals. Their professionalism returned for the performance however.

Attendance was extremely intermittent as meetings and other school responsibilities often clashed with the rehearsal time and took precedence. As the sessions took place at the end of the school day pupils who had not yet been picked up would sometimes walk into the gamelan room and attempt to join in or engage teachers in conversation.

Pak Bambang Suwarna's group

Pak Bambang Suwarna is a lecturer at ISI in the shadow puppetry (*pedhalangan*) department. He owns a very spacious house in the Jagalan area of Solo and has a dedicated room for gamelan and puppetry rehearsal. This is used for rehearsals with his professional troupe of musicians, but he also uses it to host a community rehearsal. He is Catholic and this group is almost exclusively made up of people from the local area who are also members of his church although the two invited *sindhèn*, and one of the players

who is a puppetry student of Bambang, are Muslim. There are many women in the group, and Bambang's young son and son-in-law, who is a professional *wayang* musician, also play in rehearsal.

I only played with this group during preparations for one particular event. This involved three rehearsals at the usual weekly time and two extra meetings during the week leading up to the pre-wedding ceremony for which we were providing music accompaniment and a short *wayang*.

Pakarti

The name of this group is a shortening of the phrase *Paguyuban Karawitan Tari*, or 'Troupe for Music to accompany Dance'. It is based in the Mangkunegaran palace, which is the residence of the secondary royal lineage of Solo. This palace has historically taken the decision to be more open to the general public than the Kasunanan; it regularly hosts major arts events in its grounds and puts on a weekly dance rehearsal in its main *pendhâpâ* which has become one of the main tourist attractions in Solo. The group is run by Pak Hartono who is employed by the palace as its master of music and who also leads the official palace ensemble. His wife Bu Umi is responsible for the associated dance troupes. Pakarti meets twice a week and rehearses for around two hours. The gamelan players fall into three distinct categories. The first is three men who are part of the official Mangkunegaran ensemble: they live in palace accommodation as part of their payment and attend in order to ensure adequate coverage of instruments and detailed knowledge of the house style for each piece. The second is a core of foreign students of gamelan, some of whom are long-term residents of Solo who teach English as a foreign language as a means of remaining in the country, whilst others are on the Darmasiswa scholarship program, studying full-time at ISI. These foreign students all have private lessons with

Pak Hartono where he teaches them the unique Mangkunegaran versions of pieces and the drumming for dance. The third category consists of a number of individuals within the thirty-strong dance troupe who will play when they do not know the dance being rehearsed or it is not in a style that they perform. The dancers are a mixture of individuals with a passion for traditional dance but who are studying other subjects at university or working in a variety of different jobs, and those who are studying for a diploma at the Mangkunegaran's associated performing arts academy.

Notation is not provided in rehearsals as all the players either already know the pieces or have personal notation from their lessons with Pak Hartono. Because of the knowledge he has of every player's abilities Pak Hartono specifies who he wants to drum or play particular instruments for each piece and the rest of the group then move around as necessary to cover all the instruments. The main focus of rehearsals is providing stable accompaniment for the dancers but at the beginning of sessions, before all the dancers have arrived, the musicians play a *gendhing bonang*, and at the end they play one of a number of 'ending' pieces while the dancers change.

Pakarti performs very regularly, with a public event every thirty-five days and occasional appearances at other dance and music venues around Solo and Central Java. The group has a uniform which each member is expected to acquire, consisting of a dark green jacket or top as part of full Javanese traditional dress.

Some important themes

The topics of the chapters in this thesis reflect the specific dominant themes that became apparent during my fieldwork: those raised explicitly by members and supporters of gamelan associations, and those arising from my observation of the behaviour of individuals and groups. There are, however, some significant social issues which cut across

these topics and which need to be drawn out and elucidated on in the context of Solonese, Javanese, and Indonesian culture.

Gender

Issues of gender have a significant impact in this study as in a number of the groups described women play gamelan instruments alongside men: something which is traditionally uncommon.

Women's relationship to performing musically is a fraught one in many cultures, heavily implicated in the display, control, or negation of sexuality (Koskoff 1987). The playing of specific instruments is also often influenced by gender ideology with access and training heavily culturally policed (ibid.; Baily 1988; Doubleday 1999; 2008). The distinction between professional and amateur status can be crucial for women in determining whether their performance is viewed as morally problematic or virtuous (Baily 1988; La Rue 1994; Doubleday 1999; Weidman 2006), and even when women do perform as amateurs their level of ability and competence may be called into question (Downing 2010).

Playing gamelan has historically been the preserve of men with a few very specific exceptions such as the female relatives of *Wayang* puppeteers, particularly in Klathèn, the area between Solo and Yogyakarta, who are known for playing *gendèr* to accompany their husband, father, or brother.²⁴ Otherwise, however, female public performance is normally limited to singing²⁵ and dancing, both of which carry a heavy freight of social implications for the women involved. The level of stylised flirtation which is expected of a female performer in order to engage and maintain an audience's attention is

²⁴ See Weiss (2006)

²⁵ See Walton (1996)

simultaneously the cause of her being deprecated as provocative, potentially socially disruptive, and of dubious morals (Hughes-Freeland 2008).

Periodic attempts have been made to evade the stigma attached to female performers by changing the terminology used to describe them. The original term *lèdhèk*, which describes a woman who sings whilst dancing with men at formal events but is often assumed to imply sex-work as a corollary, is now rarely used. Similarly the term *pesindhèn*,²⁶ used to describe a female singer with gamelan who does not dance, was for a time replaced on cassette inserts with the terms *waranggâna* or *swarawati* which, as neologisms, avoid the existing associations of *sindhèn*, and which with their Sanskrit derivation attempt to evoke an air of cultured sophistication and literary allusion.

The women in gamelan associations have to contend with these issues on an ongoing basis, frequently having their relationships with music limited and compromised as a result of expectations surrounding gender and performance. Outside of the female-only gamelan groups established by the PKK, or at female-only competitions, it is still rare to see women playing gamelan instruments rather than singing. Amongst the gamelan associations that I played with on fieldwork there were only three groups which included significant numbers of women playing instruments alongside men, and one woman who, with particular individual force of character, played and held her own in an otherwise exclusively male group.

These groups were exceptional in being based in workplace situations where women were already in positions of significant authority: gamelan associations in general are definitely not spaces where the restrictions on female musicianship are radically challenged. I do argue, however, that as gamelan associations are not within the realm of the professional

²⁶ In common usage this, the formal, full form of the word, is abbreviated to *sindhèn*.

or commercial this means they can provide a conceptual space where women are able to participate in gamelan playing without having to confront these issues at full force. The link to government programs such as the PKK and Dharma Wanita²⁷ also lends an air of respectability and validation, albeit one based on being distanced from the expectations of professional performance. The experiences of these women are of particular interest when exploring what people gain from playing gamelan, as the stakes for female players in confronting this weight of convention are particularly high and the benefit derived from participation must be significant to make such engagement worthwhile.

Social interaction between men and women within gamelan associations was in line with the wider gender expectations of the particular context in which it was based, even if this was sometimes contrary to expected norms in Javanese society. In Pasar Gedhé the entrepreneurial wealthy women who run stalls have a clear social dominance over the men who move their wares around and collect the rubbish. This dynamic was reflected in their confidence in challenging the authority of the men in the gamelan group even though the men were acknowledged to be more musically knowledgeable. In the Bengawan group which was almost evenly split between men and women, the vast majority of the members held equally high-ranking positions in the civil administration and this was reflected in noticeably egalitarian gender relations.

Women were often expected to voice concerns or directly address difficult issues when the male members of a group would not risk their dignity by doing so, and they were not noticeably uncomfortable when doing so. This is not uncommon in Solo in my experience; women, even outside of musical situations, frequently act in this way. *Sindhèn* were,

²⁷ This is an organisation organised by the Suharto regime as a way to encourage women's engagement with the functioning of the state. It functions, in my experience in Solo, as something between a union and a social club for female civil servants and the wives of male civil servants, but this may not be representative.

however, particularly likely to take on this social task as their musical expertise granted them an extra level of respect within groups.

Class

Exactly how class is constructed in Java has long been a matter of academic interest. Geertz (1976) conceived of Javanese society as divided between syncretist landed aristocrats, orthodox Muslims involved in trade, and syncretists involved in agricultural labour. More recent research has focussed on defining the middle-class in Indonesia (Tanter and Young 1990; Leeuwen 2011; Klinken 2014). Here ‘attitudes towards wealth are a central point of differentiation’ (Siegel 1998, 81) but modern education and its display are also central (Leeuwen 2011, 16). Religious attitudes are also still relevant, with middle-class Indonesians being far more likely to be involved in reformist, Arab-influenced, Islamic movements rather than more traditional syncretist forms of Islam. Middle-class Javanese are also far less likely to have an interest in the traditional performing arts, focussing instead on either Western or Islamic musics. Conversations with middle-class people about my research invariably resulted in astonished horror that I, as a representative of the ‘modern’, ‘advanced’ West, could be interested in something so outmoded and parochial.

Gamelan associations are generally internally homogenous in terms of the class of members, with the vast majority of groups being predominantly working class. This essentially level social playing field means that people are quite happy engaging in their usual techniques of conversation, joking, and teasing. When people from widely differing class backgrounds do play in the same group, as happens at the Town Hall and in the two palace groups, the atmosphere is noticeably more formal. In most cases people who are from a clearly higher class act in accordance with Javanese expectations of gracious behaviour, not seeking to accentuate their position but also expecting suitable respect.

People of lower status usually remain quieter than they usually would, but, if they are particularly musically knowledgeable and confident in this knowledge, they sometimes take the opportunity to press the advantage by correcting their ‘superiors’. In my experience this was always taken in good part by those being corrected, who were willing to defer on musical matters in the context of a *latihan*.

Ethnicity and religion

Ethnicity was not a significant factor in differences between or within groups because all members of the gamelan associations I encountered were Javanese. I was told of a Chinese community gamelan group which would have been a fascinating area of enquiry given the historic links between the Chinese community and sponsorship of Javanese performing arts in Solo (Sumarsam 1995, 83–89). On further investigation, however, I discovered that it was no longer active. The idea of ethnic heritage and belonging was, however, noteworthy in responses to my questions as to why people wanted to play gamelan, and this is discussed in chapter five.

Religious diversity within gamelan associations was, however, noticeable. The majority of Javanese are Muslim but there is a sizeable Christian (both Protestant and Roman Catholic) population in Solo, and many of those who are officially registered as Muslim engage far more frequently in a range of ancestor-based spiritual practices, usually referred to as *kejawèn*, than they do in orthodox Islamic religion. Whilst religious difference is significant, and on the national scale often causes serious problems, Indonesia officially recognises six religions²⁸ and is officially committed to a pluralist and inclusive model of governance. This is enshrined in the first of the national constitutional principles (*Pancasila*) which requires belief in a supreme divine being

²⁸ Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Protestant Christianity, Roman Catholicism, and Confucianism. The latter also includes by default Taoism and other Chinese religious practices.

(*Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa*) but does not make any stipulation as to how this is to be expressed. The national motto, usually translated as ‘Unity in Diversity’ (*Bhinneka tunggal eka*), is also invoked frequently, providing an extremely strong ideological imperative towards tolerance, if not necessarily acceptance, of differing religious expression. Amongst the ethnic groups of Indonesia the Javanese are also particularly noted for their commitment to religious tolerance and this has been theorised as growing out of the syncretic practice of the courts and the continuing influence of Hindu myth in shadow puppet plays (Anderson 1965).

This stress on managing religious difference at the national and interpersonal level was apparent in gamelan associations. Religious affiliation was rarely alluded to except on my first encounter with a group, when the introductory questions inevitably included one as to where I was officially religiously situated, since all government documentation includes your religion, with no possibility of opting out. In the Pasar Gedhé group, where two of the women were Christian, my announcement of official Christianity led to attempts to further their claims to my attention based on this. Within a week, however, no further mention was made of it. In the palace groups, where rehearsals often overlapped with prayer times, some people went to pray whilst others did not. The group that did not pray included people, including Gusti P., who are officially Muslim but do not regularly observe prayer times, as well as palace servants who are Christian. This meant that there was no explicit fault line based on faith but rather a distinction between visibly devout Muslims and everyone else, regardless of their personal belief. The only group where a minority religion was in the majority was Bambang Suwarna’s predominantly Catholic group. Here too there was no explicit mention of religion, apart from the Muslim *sindhèn*’s protestations to me that she could not be expected to know certain songs that the group was preparing as they were ‘church songs’. This was, however, clearly based in

a fear of her knowledge of repertoire appearing lacking, rather than any specific religious discomfort.

It was rare for religious affiliation to impinge on social activity growing out of group membership. Javanese weddings separate the religious component from the reception, which is the culturally significant event, so people are almost never invited to attend an explicitly religious ceremony outside of their own beliefs. At times when major religious holidays occurred some mention would be made of this and good wishes expressed to anyone celebrating them. At times when a gamelan association wished to pray for some specific outcome or ask a divine power for blessings on the group, the standard disclaimer phrase used at public events was used: 'let us all pray according to our own beliefs'. Inevitably the numerical dominance of Islam in Solo means that more often than not Muslim prayers in Arabic are used alongside this, with little thought for whether or not this actually coincides with the beliefs of all present, but members of minority religions in Solo are extremely used to this. I was never aware of it causing resentment in a Javanese person despite being forcefully struck by the phenomenon myself and discreetly asking close non-Muslim friends about it.

Fundamentally, the type of Javanese person who is interested in playing traditional music is also likely to prioritise Javanese cultural models of inclusivity and tolerance rather than focussing on religious fault lines. Despite some contentious local and national religious discussions occurring during my fieldwork, these issues were never brought into *latihan*.

Chapter Two

Definitions of musicianship: Javanese practice, and discourses of amateur and professional

In this chapter I set out the various ways in which amateur musicianship has been defined and conceptualised in the social science and music literature, and some of the case studies presented in the ethnomusicological literature which provide a background within which to frame and assess my findings. I explore the local words and phrases used to describe the types of musician I was studying and unpick how their practice relates to the categories commonly used to define amateur musical status. Next I analyse some of the specific musical practices that are found in gamelan associations, examining how they relate to professional practice and why they are deployed. I argue that, although the term ‘amateur’ is not particularly useful in the context of Solonese gamelan musicians because of the range of local terminology and the many ways in which their practice cuts across the categories used to define it, there is a distinct category of predominantly recreational musicianship which is separate from, although intimately connected to, professional norms of learning and performing. This category is not formally labelled in either Javanese or Indonesian but is nonetheless widely recognised and acknowledged.

I argue that although gamelan associations often play gamelan in somewhat different ways from professional players, and often emphasise these distinctions, there is a unifying sound-world and aesthetic which they are aware of and seek to produce with the

resources available to them. As an ensemble involving relatively large numbers of players and roles of widely varying complexity gamelan necessarily involves collaboration between individuals with many levels of musical skill. I argue that this, in contrast to the far more homogenous ability levels found in professional groups, is one of the fundamentally important characteristics of gamelan associations, allowing for the meeting of individuals from different backgrounds and social positions in a unifying endeavour.

Various definitions from the literature

The idea of musical activity as something that requires specific training, and therefore also a specialised group within a society who carry it out at a higher level than others, is not universal. There are numerous ethnographies of societies in which participation in music, and often also dance, by all members is an assumed part of normal existence (Arom 1991, Blacking 1974, Feld 1990). In most societies, however, groups exist who spend more time involved in music-making than others, and perform for and on behalf of others in multiple contexts. This opens up space for a group of people to exist who are defined as neither musical specialists nor non-musicians but somewhere in between (Stebbins 1977). The question then arises as to what factors are used to distinguish these musicians and why it is felt necessary to do so.

The primary factor which is used to separate the specialists and these intermediate musicians is popularly taken to be whether or not they are paid to play. The issue of payment is, however, not always a clearly defined line. Musicians who have other jobs which provide their primary income may be paid for performing and yet remain outside the category of professional, being considered as 'semi-professional'. The ways in which musicians are financially rewarded are also often complex (Stokes 2002), and professional musicians are also involved in the generation and exchange of respect and

obligation amongst themselves (Cottrell 2002, Packman 2011) in an economy based on what Cottrell (2002) calls 'musical capital'. This raises questions of what value musical capital has for those people who are not functioning exclusively in the musical arena, and how it might be transformed into other forms of social capital (Bourdieu 1984).

The origins of the word amateur alert us to another of the factors by which musicians of different types can be classified. Coming from the French for a person who does something out of love for the activity, it carries strong connotations of individuals who have leisure time to invest in activities which are not directly financially productive but which they consider to be important for personal and social reasons. This meaning grows out of the phenomenon of the leisured aristocratic player of music in Europe, and the subsequent importance of music as an important social accomplishment for young women of the upper and middle classes (La Rue 1994). In both of these cases the term amateur served to insulate those involved from the stigma attached to professional performers, whilst granting them access to the opportunities for entertainment and the display of skill afforded by making music in company.

Dedicated historical surveys of amateur involvement in Western music exist (Shera 1939; Seaman 1966; Bruhn 2003; Service 1999). These examples all take for granted a definition of amateur which is based on individuals having less musical skill and proficiency than that achieved by players with a financial incentive to practice. They also describe situations where the performance opportunities open to amateur musicians are significantly different, being fewer and specifically marked as separate from the systems used to organise and promote professional concerts.

The intimate and essential connections between professional and amateur musicians, and, at the same time, the complex ways in which the boundaries between these two groups

are defined and articulated also feature in ethnographies of professional musicians in a variety of other musical cultures. Sharp distinctions in family background and instrument choice may be heavily policed but somewhat porous (Baily 1988). Professional musicians may act as models and teachers for amateurs, with amateurs providing informed audiences and pupils for professionals and occasionally moving into professional performance (Riddle 1978). Issues surrounding the social status of those engaging in public performance may also provoke radical alterations in who performs, with individuals previously classified as amateurs becoming the preferred performers (Weidman 2006).

The characteristics which are used to delimit amateurism in the literature discussed so far, therefore, are recompense for performing, level of ability and in some instances choice of instrument or repertoire, and social status. These distinctions are often made through positive or negative contrast to the more clearly defined class of professional musician, even though many of the studies discussed above reveal the line between these two groups to be somewhat elusive. The ways in which these definitions are deployed differ from situation to situation, but these areas of focus are fundamental.

Professional gamelan players in Solo and their relationship to gamelan association musicians

The musicians that I am considering as fully professional, in distinction to those who play in gamelan associations, are those who are employed as musicians by state institutions and who, as a result, have relatively straightforward and easily definable musical identities. In Solo these musicians work at the arts academy (ISI), the radio station, and the *wayang wong* troupe at Sriwedari. They receive salaries and a range of benefits, including the ability to take out loans against a reduction in monthly pay. The process of

applying for such a post is very competitive and success involves drawing on a wide range of resources: musical, financial, and social. The vast majority of people who succeed at this come from families with longstanding involvement in the performing arts, usually accompanying shadow puppet theatre performed by a relative, and have also been educated at the arts specialist high school SMKI, and ISI. There are some individuals from outside these families who play gamelan for *wayang* accompaniment alongside the lineage musicians whilst holding down other jobs as their primary occupation.²⁹ They are very competent musicians who perform regularly, but I do not include them in my category of professional musicians because they make their living predominantly from other types of work. These individuals do sometimes play in gamelan associations but they do not represent a significant proportion of the membership in any of the groups I worked with.

The state employment system allows people to focus entirely on developing musical skill and means that they are socially classified as both a musician, rather than for example a labourer who also makes music, and as a civil servant, with the prestige that entails. The combination of traditional family background in the performing arts and state employment provides a level of self-confidence and financial stability that is markedly different from the people who play in gamelan associations.

State patronage of *karawitan* has in the main replaced support for the arts provided by the palaces. When the arts academy (then ASKI) moved from the palace to its own campus the majority of the high-level musicians moved with it. Although informal connections remain strong, the training of new professional musicians is now entirely within the state system. Both the Kraton and the Mangkunegaran in Solo still engage musicians, but the

²⁹ This is particularly common in the county of Klathèn which spans most of the 37 miles between Solo and the other main court city Yogyakarta.

amount that they are paid is a token and almost all players also have other jobs. For some important events, such as the playing of the *sekatèn* gamelan, a large number of musicians from the academies are brought in to ensure adequate numbers and expertise.

The basic structures of how gamelan music functions do not differ whether it is played by professional musicians or gamelan association musicians. The hierarchy of instrumental control and the role played by each instrument is fundamentally the same; the only distinction is that gamelan associations do not usually have *gendèr* or *rebab* players and some of these instruments' leadership roles are taken on by the *bonang*. Decisions as to who should play which instrument, and thus have which position within the hierarchy of the ensemble, are generally stable and well-established in professional groups and this is also the case in gamelan associations. Negotiations as to who should play which instrument do occur in both types of ensemble when external musicians are visiting, when new members join, or when an event occurs which bring together musicians from a range of different groups. The values invoked in these negotiations may be different in professional ensembles and gamelan associations but the processes are very similar.³⁰

The vast majority of professional players have very little direct contact with gamelan association musicians but they do have a great deal of influence on them. Those gamelan association members who regularly listen to gamelan, whether this is live performance, recordings, or radio broadcasts, are always listening to professional players. This means that their understanding and expectations of what gamelan sounds like are shaped by professional practice, rather than that of other groups like their own. Professional players also act as leaders and drummers for gamelan associations in several groups, having a direct impact on the way that people learn and the repertoire that they play. Gamelan

³⁰ A fuller discussion of these negotiations can be found in chapter six.

associations do not, however, see themselves as attempting to become professional groups in terms of expertise or quality of performance. In some groups distinctly different models of aesthetic value and musical knowledge based in village or popular traditions are adopted and promoted, but this does not lead to general claims that this invalidates the status of professional musicians who are almost always capable of playing popular or regional styles just as well as the classical repertoire. People in gamelan associations are aware of, learn from, and position themselves in relation to professional players and ensembles, but, in my experience, professional musicians other than the few who lead groups have very little awareness of, or interest in, gamelan associations.

Gamelan associations are very aware of the level of support necessary to establish and maintain an ongoing ensemble, and make use of all available resources in seeking this. The existence of state sponsored ensembles has a significant impact here as it provides a model for the formalisation of ensembles in relation to official bodies which is often imitated on a smaller scale by gamelan associations.³¹ Groups which adopt this approach are primarily based in state-organised workplaces where the official hierarchy is familiar with the idea of state patronage of the arts. The management of places such as Pasar Gedhé and the Town Hall have an implicit sense of their responsibility when approached for assistance in running gamelan associations and have a readily available template for providing it. Those groups which do not have institutional support in this way often rely on older models of individual, wealth-based patronage, such as the groups at Cakra, Jetis, and Mas T.'s.

Thus, whilst the majority of professional players do not have much contact with gamelan associations, their musical practice and their ensembles act as a standard which can be emulated, pushed against, or invoked to attract support.

³¹ This phenomenon is described in detail in chapter four.

The Javanese situation: terminology and practice

Having explored the approaches to defining amateurism found in a variety of cultures and eras, and introduced the groups of musician I am I will now turn to the ways in which contemporary members of Solonese gamelan associations talk about themselves, and the labels they and others use to describe their level of ability and involvement in practice and performance. I will then look in detail at the three categories of recompense, ability, and status in the Javanese context and analyse to what extent the musicians I set out to study fit into any of these definitions of amateur.

Javanese terminology

Having initially framed my research question in English, whilst reading English- and European-language academic literature about different levels of musicianship it was very easy to allow this linguistic framework to colour my thought processes. I was constantly referring back to my experience in Solo ten years previously, but even though I had been aware of the type of groups I was planning on studying at that time I had not seriously considered what terminology was used to describe them. Even the process of applying for a research permit in Indonesian did not yet challenge this concept of amateurism since academic Indonesian is so heavily influenced by English and international classification systems. My research proposal had to be submitted in English and the gist of it was rendered into Indonesian by the staff of the Government Department for Research and Technology who issued the letters asking for my other documentation from other Departments. They used the word *amatir* in all cases, this being the most obvious European loan word to translate my use of amateur. They would in no way, however, have considered whether this was an accurate word to use or whether it would be meaningful to the individuals I was using it to describe, their job being simply to turn my words into an Indonesian equivalent for official consumption.

On arrival in Solo, as I embarked on the process of attempting to explain my presence to the members of the groups with which I was playing, the issue of what words to use in describing them became instantly pressing and somewhat fraught. The terms which I had remembered professional musicians using without any sense of self-censorship suddenly felt somewhat derogatory or condescending when I was thinking of using them about someone with whom I was actually engaged in conversation.

In the ensuing hunt for appropriate terminology I amassed a large collection of ways in which the groups I was studying could be referred to. For each term I will discuss its associations and connotations and explain in what contexts it is used and in what contexts it becomes either meaningless or inappropriate. It should be stressed that attempting to label the complete gamut of groups with which I played was almost never spontaneously undertaken by any Javanese except when I enquired. The exceptions were two of the teachers who led a number of groups and were also exposed to other types of gamelan ensemble, thus having a broad experience base for comparison, and other academics with whom I discussed my research. Most people either assumed the nature of the groups in which they participated to be the norm, or were uninterested in how other groups might differ.

Amatir

This is an Indonesian word which is a loan from English. It is used as a direct translation of the Western concept of ‘amateur’ but is more heavily loaded towards the sense of ‘lacking in ability’ than ‘enthusiastic skilled non-professional’. This word was never used by anyone of themselves and the only people who used it spontaneously when discussing others were university-educated individuals such as lecturers at ISI or other academics I met. It was a word which people did sometimes understand in a vague way but I almost never used it after becoming aware that it was not value neutral and was regarded as

academic jargon by the majority of Solonese. This meant that my use of it distanced me from them and led them to believe that, because they did not fully understand the terminology I was using, they could not engage with or contribute meaningfully to my research. Ultimately I stopped using this word entirely since it did not fully mesh with local understandings and categories and thus did not help me to explain my questions or elicit meaningful responses, nor did my use of it encourage people to spontaneously produce the terms they would have used in preference.

Bapak-bapak/Ibu-ibu

This is the term which is most frequently used in the academic literature on gamelan to indicate amateur groups. It literally means ‘Fathers’ or ‘Mothers’ and implies that the group is made up of people in middle-age of a somewhat staid and respectable nature. The image conjured by the use of this term is of one of the gamelan groups established in villages during the eighties as part of the New Order attempt to merge state organisation with local community. The Suharto regime (*Golkar*, a concatenation of *golongan*, explained below, and *karya*, work) attempted to present itself not as a political party or movement but as the collective organisation of all the naturally occurring social expressions of solidarity within Indonesian society (*golongan*). The most noticeable legacy of this era is the existence of all-women gamelan groups which were set up under the aegis of the PKK and aimed at providing a social and artistic outlet for women which would simultaneously promote values approved of by the regime. These terms are almost always used by people who are not playing in such groups. Professional musicians used it regularly, probably accounting for its frequent occurrence in the literature, and non-musicians also used it to separate these groups from those that they considered to be ‘proper’ performers, such as puppeteers’ troupes and other full-time performers. It was only used by people speaking of themselves and their own groups when they were clearly

adopting a deliberately self-deprecatory tone, never in unself-conscious speech. For these reasons I very rarely used this term to refer to an interlocutor's group, but it was extremely useful as a way of informing people of my interest in gamelan that was outside the usual bounds of a foreign student's interest.

This term grows out of the very specific history of political engagement with community music in Java, and this informs the assumption that all amateur musicians are somewhat older and are learning to play later in life rather than having absorbed the tradition since childhood. Although this is not universally true I did discover that there is a distinct tendency for involvement in non-professional gamelan playing to be limited to particular age groups. There are extremely large numbers of children and young people who play gamelan whilst still in the education system. Many schools have gamelan and often employ music teachers with gamelan knowledge or separate gamelan instructors, and there are also gamelan groups at a number of the universities in Solo whose membership consists of students from across the full spectrum of faculties. However, once people move outside the education system, where involvement in musical activities is more easily incorporated into the daily routine, there is a sharp drop-off in participation. In all of the groups I played with there were only five regular members under the age of fifty. The vast majority of individuals choosing to become involved in non-professional gamelan playing do, in fact, fall into the age category described by the terms *bapak-bapak* and *ibu-ibu*.

The element of staid respectability that is also attached to the use of the phrase is, however, not representative. Although none of the people I played with could be described as disreputable, most were not particularly financially comfortable, or of any social standing, and many did not have much formal education.

Désâ

Désâ is the Javanese for village and is used incredibly frequently and widely as a means of describing objects, people, behaviour, or attitudes as in some way old-fashioned, unsophisticated, uncivilised or crude. Originally this concept was based on the assumption that distance from the court would mean that villagers were not familiar with the more complicated systems of etiquette and language used there. This meaning still resonates, but the village is nowadays also seen as peripheral to the city as a centre of modernity, as well as of historical hierarchy. To be ‘village’ in the context of contemporary Solo is to be deficient in the ability to negotiate both the complexities of traditional manners and also the new knowledge and behaviours associated with modern urban life. ‘*Gamelan désâ*’ therefore literally describes gamelan groups based in village settings, but the very strong implication is that these groups are lacking in detailed theoretical knowledge of how the music works, and in sophistication of repertoire choice and playing technique. This definition of ‘*gamelan désâ*’ clearly ignores the troupes of musicians who accompany puppeteers, which are often based in villages but do not in any way match these descriptions.

The common usage of ‘*gamelan désâ*’, therefore, fits very closely with my intended focus on musicians who are not employed full-time and are not considered to be representative of the highest levels of ability. The extremely negative connotations of *désâ*, however, mean that this is not a term one can use easily, other than the strictly literal sense of referring to gamelan groups based in villages. It also cannot be used in reference to the associations based in the city.

Kampung

A *kampung* is a named section of a city or town comprising an area which is either geographically or organisationally bounded in some way. Nowadays all parts of a city are

classified as being in one or another *kampung*, but historically in Surakarta and Yogyakarta it was only used to refer to those sections of cities which were not part of the palace complex, namely the compounds of court officials, areas inhabited by foreigners and other outsiders, and areas inhabited by particular occupational groups (Sullivan 1986, 64). It is a slightly modified version of the implications of this historical usage which is still most often attached to the term *kampung* nowadays: an area which is not at the centre of what is important, cultured, and socially desirable. It is very similar in usage to the previous term ‘*déså*’ when referring to somewhere within a city, although not quite so disparaging. ‘*Gamelan kampung*’ is more frequently used than ‘*gamelan déså*’, as it is not as derogatory, and it is not uncommon for people to refer to their own groups in this way if it is in fact based in a specific *kampung*. I felt able to use this phrase to talk about groups without feeling that I was being condescending, and it was also understood by people from places outside Solo and even outside Java, as the term is identical in Indonesian and Javanese. It was not always applicable, as for example when discussing the many associations attached to places of work, but the basic concept of people from a specific residential area coming together to play gamelan outside of the formal institutions of music education and performance made it applicable in many cases and by far the most flexible term available to me.

Ning ora pati apik, lho! (But we’re not that good, ok!)

Although not a ‘term’ as such, this phrase was regularly used when individuals told me about a group that they played with and were encouraging me to come to a rehearsal. In the absence of a satisfactory way of referring specifically to groups which were multi-ability and focussed primarily on the social experience of playing rather than highly proficient performance, this sort of assertion served as a convenient way to express the concept whilst simultaneously appearing politely self-deprecating and deflecting

judgement. It was only ever used by musicians who had more experience and played with several groups or acted as gatekeepers for their ensemble. They were, therefore, concerned with managing the expectations of anyone they encouraged to become involved, as they were either pre-emptively defusing disappointment with their group as a whole or with themselves personally for having recommended it.

This obviously is not a phrase that can be comfortably used of a group by outsiders and does not really encompass the full range of variety of ability in the groups I was studying. It was often used by insiders, however, and the sense of defensive but proud awareness and acknowledgement of gradations in ability whilst still claiming the right to be considered as a group of real musicians is very revealing. They may not be ‘very good’ but they are still playing gamelan, the distinction being one based on ability, not on an exclusion from the ontological category of musician.

‘Gamelan liar’, ‘luar pakem’

I could readily describe the phenomenon which I was attempting to grapple with in a few sentences and it was instantly recognisable and comprehensible to people when I did so. There appeared, however, to be no single, already existent way of expressing this in Javanese or Indonesian, just as the term amateur in English was close to what I meant, but not ultimately satisfactory. Frustrated by this, I did once try to coin a neologism which would express the fact that I was interested in musicians who were outside the usual structures of musical training and production, and in groups which were frequently established by the members themselves before gaining any sort of official support. I experimented very briefly with using the term ‘gamelan liar’, meaning wild or non-domesticated gamelan, which provoked confusion or hilarity in most cases, but it did provoke the first ever spontaneous formulation of a novel description for what I was attempting to describe by someone else.

The training officer for the section of the police force which is responsible for the main market was in the market office for a meeting just before a gamelan rehearsal and spoke to me whilst we were setting out the instruments. After I had explained the focus of my research and used the phrase ‘gamelan liar’, making clear that it was my somewhat desperate and inadequate attempt to find a catch-all phrase, he thought for a moment and then suggested that ‘*gamelan luar pakem*’ might be another way of expressing what I was studying. This phrase means gamelan outside of the standard model, or off-script.³² This formulation is interesting because it alludes to the nature of these gamelan associations as being outside of the usual and expected, involving musicians who are not from the expected backgrounds and playing in places not normally expected to host such activities. The man who produced this phrase did not himself play, and so was unaware that internally these groups are very far from being outside the recognised framework, with members constantly referring to established sources of musical authority and being linked into extensive networks of other players. It was, nonetheless, a fascinating insight into the way that they are seen from outside, provided by someone who was extremely unusual in being prepared to engage creatively with the issue of definitions in this way.

Locating the individual group

Whilst all of these terms and phrases are used to talk about the phenomenon of individuals who chose to play gamelan predominantly for pleasure rather than profit, there is another method of referring to them, which is actually the most common approach used by both musicians and non-musicians in Solo to understand the nature of a gamelan group and the people who play in it. In the absence of a single unitary way to refer to them, the preferred technique is to use the place of rehearsal as definitive. This means that the extremely specific nature of each group is what allows people to place it in

³² A *pakem* is an abbreviated framework of a script or an basic template for elaboration.

their mental maps of musical life and thereby put it into more general categories. In order to convey the nature of the musicians I was working with, it was thus far more effective to name a few of the groups involved, rather than to use one of the phrases discussed above, none of which are wholly satisfactory. Within the closely interconnected world of Solo and its surrounding villages, stating the place where a gamelan association meets instantly provides an array of clues as to the nature of the players, their likely skill level, the repertoire they play, and the support networks available to them.

The terms used to describe these groups locally are, therefore, based on a number of interconnected systems of categorisation, which locate them by the age and perceived social status of their members, in terms of their level of competence, by their position within the heavily socially-imagined geography of Solo and its surrounding area, and by their relationship to institutional musical networks. These classifications sit within the categories of payment, status, and ability to a large extent but also cut across them, adding layers of nuance through precise local detail.

I will now turn to the specific, practical details of the ways in which musicians in the groups I studied relate to three key areas used in discussions of amateurism: recompense, status, and the issues of musical ability, style, repertoire, and training.

Recompense: money and other systems of exchange

The question of payment is one of the strongest candidates put forward in many descriptions as the primary criterion for defining the distinction between amateurism and professionalism. In order to explore whether this is a useful factor to focus on in the case of Javanese musicianship I will now describe the way direct financial payment is handled in gamelan associations, and the many other ways in which people are recompensed, or consider themselves to have received some form of return, for their involvement. This second factor is crucial as direct financial payment is not necessarily the most valued or sought-after method of recognition for musicians.

Money

Many of the groups have systems for collecting money from members which is used to pay for tea and snacks, and in some groups also as a way of collecting money to pay the leader and *sindhèn*, or to create a fund for the future use of the group as a whole when, for example, new notation books needed to be produced or uniforms obtained for performances. Far from being paid to play, therefore, in a great many cases people were actually prepared to pay to take part in the groups and to invest their own money in making rehearsals more enjoyable and musically satisfying and in making the group look smart and professional when performing publicly.

In the Pasar Gedhé group the way this was done was to have a collection at the end of each rehearsal. A gradually increasing handful of money was passed around the room with each member adding to it until it reached the singers, who counted it, recorded the amount collected in a notebook, and then kept it until needed. In this group the money is used primarily for the rental payments on the gamelan which they hire, as the rehearsals were in the mid-afternoon, not a time when people feel the need to have tea and snacks

available. Whenever the group put on an evening event that was organised by the members themselves, food and drink were provided by individuals, taking advantage of the extremely complex networks of obligation and reciprocity amongst the vendors to obtain good food for very little money. This was usually the responsibility of a particular group amongst the women who were keen to use this opportunity to appear canny, useful, and generous.

When the group performed for events organised by the market such as visits by important officials, city-wide celebrations, or occasional fund-raising appeals, extra musicians would be brought in to strengthen the line-up, usually a semi-professional *sindhèn* and a male vocalist, and these performers were paid for out of the group's funds. Although this was considered necessary for musical purposes it was often contentious as the group laid a great deal of emphasis on their being a market-based project and not needing outsiders to help. The women in the group also had a very ambivalent relationship to the visiting *sindhèn* whom they simultaneously admired for her skill, envied for her experience and ability to entertain, and loathed and denigrated for the techniques of self-presentation that she made use of in carrying this out.

The Town Hall group regularly played for weddings, as the leader's wife is a wedding planner and it is both convenient and economically sensible for her to hire a band led by her husband. Although there were no full-time professional musicians in the group every player was paid for performing as this is an expected part of the budget of a wedding. There was, however, some variation in the payments made to individual musicians, a practice which is usual amongst professional groups. Asking about details of payment is not acceptable but I was able to ascertain from players I knew better that most players were given Rp. 50,000 whilst those on the more prestigious instruments, *bonang*, *gendèr*,

and *rebab* were given Rp. 100,000.³³ These figures were representative of payment at most weddings I played at with a number of different groups. Specific judgements about competence and experience are also factored into the sharing out of an ensemble's fee: at the first wedding I played *gendèr* for with this group, after only one rehearsal, I was paid the same as the other musicians. After playing with them for several months, however, and having been judged to be capable, I began to be paid the higher rate given to soft instrument players.

Other goods

Food

Musicians invited to play for an event are always provided with snacks and drinks at the very least, and often a complete meal during the event. This is generally the same as that provided for other guests at the event, but the musicians are always fed first, are often provided with extra amounts of rice and normally receive any extra platefuls of the dessert that are surplus to requirements. They will also often be given a snack box containing cold, pre-cooked food to take home. This box (*sangu*) serves two functions. It is both an extra form of compensation for players and also serves as a means of involving the musicians in the formal circulation of financial and spiritual resources collected when putting on major events.

Cigarettes

As the overwhelming majority of musicians playing for public events are male the other way in which they are rewarded is the medium of cigarettes. Almost all adult male Javanese smoke the locally produced clove cigarettes (*krètèk*) in large quantities and, although they are not particularly expensive, the fact that one can buy them individually

³³ At the time this was approximately equivalent to £3 and £6 respectively.

in most shops and food stalls makes buying a whole pack seem like an investment. At many events where there was no monetary payment, the provision of food was supplemented by a pack of *krètèk* for each player. I initially did not fully appreciate the importance of this as a means of payment, but it was eventually brought home to me forcefully. I do not smoke and in most instances refusing cigarettes, although considered odd in an adult man, was understood as the peculiarity of a foreigner who might not be able to deal with the tar levels of *krètèk* or who might have been convinced of the health benefits of not smoking. At a wedding reception in a village outside Solo, therefore, I attempted to reject the pack of cigarettes that the organiser was handing out without thinking much of it. I was totally unprepared for the level of confusion and panic which this engendered, and attempting to maintain dignity in the usual Javanese manner, refused again. When other musicians started strongly encouraging me to take the pack I finally realised that this was a significant part of how we were being paid for playing, and my refusal to accept would leave the family feeling that they had not properly reimbursed their very visible foreign guest musician and therefore extremely embarrassed. From then on I always accepted cigarettes and then passed them on to other players once the necessary initial visible exchange had taken place.

Clothing

Another somewhat less obvious form of payment that is significantly more prevalent amongst music students at ISI, but which is also a factor in gamelan associations, is the giving out of clothing for performing. Having a uniform is a major consideration for any group that is going to be publicly visible as it looks smart and unified, and allows individuals to feel that they are a part of the larger collective. The wearing of uniforms is extremely common in Indonesia, with many organisations having several different variants for different days of the week. In the Town Hall, for example, there is a basic

national civil service uniform which resembles military or police clothing, having subtle variations to denote rank. On two days of the week, however, there are alternate dress codes. On one day all staff are expected to wear black trousers and batik shirts, and on the other to wear a slightly modified version of full traditional court dress. In both of these cases the batik cloth involved is a uniform pattern but each member of staff has it made up by a tailor to their preferred design. In the main market there are also several sets of uniform shirts and t-shirts that have been devised for specific events or for particular subsections of the workforce and these are sometimes used by the gamelan players for less formal performances.

At ISI, when musicians perform for other students' recitals, they are not only provided with food during rehearsals but also given a specially printed t-shirt bearing the name of the candidate, the date of the exam, and a picture. This serves as the official concert dress for the exam and most students eventually build up an extensive wardrobe of these t-shirts. Gamelan groups outside of ISI also sometimes pay for shirts or jackets for their players, and those with more financial means also have them made up for guest musicians to ensure a unified visual effect. Performing for such a group therefore allows one to build a wardrobe which records participation and belonging, and visibly marks musicianship.

Housing and other employment

The musicians who play at the Mangkunegaran palace, similarly to those at the main Kraton, are paid an extremely small amount of money for their official responsibilities which involve playing once a week for the high-level dance rehearsal which is open for tourists, and forming the backbone of the evening group, made up largely of foreign students, which accompanies the dance practice attached to the palace's internal arts academy. In addition to the tiny salary they are also offered better-paid positions as

guides for visitors to the palaces, and are also provided with accommodation in the palace's small internal housing estate.

Being noticed

For the large number of players who make a substantial addition to their established salary by performing, one of the most important factors in attending gamelan association rehearsals is the opportunity it allows for becoming more visible and audible to other musicians. Outside of the officially supported ensembles at the radio station and city entertainment complex (Sriwedari), all booking of musicians is done by means of word-of-mouth recommendation through networks of acquaintance. In order to be regularly asked to play, therefore, it is extremely important to be noticed and to have made good impressions on those who have the power to make suggestions or might be asked to comment on one's abilities. Playing in a committed way with a group which includes such people, even if it does not perform, is thus a powerful tool for self-promotion and an investment that appears to be considered worth making.

The group where this was most apparent was the Town Hall association. This group is mainly made up of very able retired amateurs, but the fact that the leader was originally a musician for the dance drama at Sriwedari means that it is very well linked into wider networks of paid performance. Because of the leader's connections in the wedding industry and the fact that one of the players works as a sound recordist at the radio station the group is often asked to perform in quite prestigious circumstances and often invites either retired professionals or semi-professionals with established reputations to play for these events to make sure that the performance is of a high quality. During my time with the group it became very clear that some of the part-time professionals who attended rehearsals in preparation for such performances saw them as a perfect forum for building a reputation and making themselves known to potential employers. Having realised that

many of the regular players were also leaders or organisers of groups in their home neighbourhoods, involved in gamelan rental for events, or tied into the civic bureaucracy, they decided to keep attending rehearsals even after the specific event was past. I witnessed many invitations to play being extended to such players in the breaks between playing and at the end of rehearsals, and there were times when this particular group felt like a labour exchange as well as a musical ensemble.

Strategic attendance at rehearsals is also a method employed by students at ISI. There is a requirement on some courses for final-year students to take part in outreach or community enrichment projects. In most cases this consists of a discrete, specifically arranged project involving a group of students creating a one-off performance with a targeted demographic that may not usually play gamelan. Some students, however, choose to attend rehearsals with one of the established associations that are led by lecturers. This allows them the opportunity to make a favourable impression on the particular lecturer, gain experience in how to lead and teach non-specialists, and also make themselves known on the non-professional circuit. For those who are not necessarily expecting to be amongst the top performers of their cohort this is a significant way of increasing their options for employment after graduation.

Status of musicians

The issue of status in defining what it means to be an amateur is very complex in the Javanese setting. Musicians have historically been considered as low status because of their links to travelling performance and direct requests for payment. This still continues to an extent with the *siteran*³⁴ ensembles that ply their trade along the streets where the most popular food stalls are at night. This tradition of street performance originally included dancers as well (*gambyong*, *lèdhèk*) but no longer does in Solo. The idea of using roving musical performance as a means to earn has also given rise to the phenomenon of *ngamèn* where individuals or groups who are asking for money differentiate themselves from outright begging by playing some form of music. This often consists simply of a basic sistrum, or a collection of rubber bands of different thicknesses stretched across a cardboard box to provide a form of bass line to sing over. A colleague at ISI joked that the *ngamèn* might, in fact, be the only full-time professional musical performers in Solo, as everyone else makes some part of their living from teaching.

Musicians who play in palace ensembles may gain some small level of respectability and respect from outsiders through their connection to royalty, but within the palace their position is not much higher than any other palace servants (*abdi dalem*) and their salary is the same extremely small token payment; these *pangrawit* are skilled functionaries but they are still definitely servants. Recent political struggles within the palace have also made many Solonese cynical about the authority and prestige of the royal family, reducing the respect afforded those who still choose to serve. When palace ensembles play publicly for major festivals the general public is also more interested in the instruments than those playing them, as it is the physical substance of these ancient

³⁴ These are small portable ensembles consisting of a number of *sindhèn*, one or two *siter*, a drum, and a bamboo tube used to generate a gong sound.

objects and the compositions played on them that contain power, the musicians simply serving to bring it out.

The situation of musicians working as lecturers in the national arts academy or as performers at the radio station and city entertainment park is very different. These individuals are employed by the state as civil servants, a position which brings significant benefits in addition to a sizeable salary, and also commands a great deal of social cachet. Their status as civil servants removes them to a great extent from the problematic associations of being a musician. This allows male lecturers to use terms such as busking (*mbarang*) and the now outdated and somewhat derogatory term for gamelan players, *niyågå*, to refer to their activities with irony and bravado. Women in this situation do not do this because the terms associated with historical forms of female performance are still too heavily loaded with connotations of prostitution to be used comfortably, even in jest.

Intermediate players who have jobs other than music but also regularly play for weddings or shadow puppet theatre are not considered as musicians for the purposes of working out their social status but are placed by what is considered to be their primary employment. This is also true of those who play purely as a hobby whilst working in some other field or after retirement. They may, however, gain a level of respect for being involved in maintaining the traditional performing arts which are now considered to be worthy of admiration even if those who have traditionally practiced them are not. Thus these non-professional players avoid the residual stigma of being a musician through associating themselves with new discourses surrounding local culture and the importance of preserving it.

In Solo today, therefore, the status of full-time gamelan players predominantly comes from the relative prestige of the institution which employs them rather than simply from

the idea of being a musician per se. The fact of playing directly for money is still seen as slightly disreputable but this is lessened if one is being paid as a lecturer or as an employee of a government institution. For people who are not employed on a regular basis these concerns are less pressing as their musical involvement does not constitute their primary social persona. Playing gamelan as a hobby may, in fact, allow people to cultivate a reputation for being cultured and demonstrate a willingness to be involved in the project of sustaining Javanese identity.

The issue of personal status within groups and the negotiations that this entails are also extremely important and I will address this in the chapters which deal with individual's motivations for joining gamelan associations and the internal politics of the groups. The level of musical ability, training, and experience that any individual has may be radically different from the forms of status which they hold outside of a gamelan association and the use of musical knowledge and capital to modify or rework existing social standing is a significant part of the social work undertaken in gamelan groups.

Ability, style, repertoire, and learning

I now turn to the third conceptual category used to define amateurs: the specifically musical, in which I include issues of ability, repertoire and use of notation, and approaches to learning and performing. The structure of a gamelan ensemble is perhaps uniquely suited to allowing people with very varied musical abilities and levels of experience to play together. There are a number of instruments which play at very sparse intervals within a piece, thus allowing ample space to think before playing, or which play regularly in a manner which is fixed for all pieces in a particular form. There is then a sliding scale of instruments with increasingly complex and more interpretative roles. Even the most apparently simple of these roles is, however, an integral and fundamental part of the structure and character of a piece, locked into the other parts, simultaneously being guided by them and supporting them. These roles are also undertaken by professional musicians with no sense of them being unimportant or excessively straightforward. This means that players at all stages of learning can make music together and no one need feel over-stretched or under-stretched.

In all of the groups I played with during fieldwork this spread of abilities was a noticeable feature. The precise range of talent was variable but there was not a single group where everyone was equally able. At the upper end of the ability scale were full-time professional musicians who were leading the sessions or helping out because of specific personal connections, then individuals who played gamelan regularly whilst having official employment in some other field and whose knowledge of pieces and technical skill were equivalent to many full-time professional musicians, although they do not play *rebab* or *gendèr*. There are people who have extensive repertoires of memorised pieces but always play a *balungan* instrument, and those who do not know any pieces by heart but are very competent at playing a variety of instruments at sight from notation. There

are also some players who are neither particularly able nor confident but for whom participation in the group is their main focus. There is also the slightly separate category of singers who are highly competent when it comes to vocal parts but often do not play instruments at all. No group consists exclusively of people from one ability level: some have players from across the spectrum, others are biased towards one level, but in order to have a functioning gamelan ensemble it is necessary to have a range of ability in the membership.

The range of overall ability amongst groups as combined units was also extremely wide. Some groups, such as the Tuesday group at the Kraton, played very basic repertoire, yet apart from a couple of more experienced players who played *bonang* or *demung* there were many members who struggled to keep up, frequently becoming lost or not realising that a transition to a new section had been signalled. Other groups, such as the Town Hall association, played extremely challenging repertoire consisting of full-scale suites travelling from *mérong* to *inggah*, *ladrang*, *ketawang* and then often finishing with *lancaran*-based songs or *srepegan* with *palaran*. All of the players in this group were capable of following the chain of transitions on their chosen instrument and the only occasions on which problems occurred were when someone suggested a piece which a majority did not know by heart or have notation for. All of the other groups fell somewhere between these two extremes.

In terms of ability, therefore, there are players in Solonese gamelan associations who might readily be labelled as amateurs due to limited experience, knowledge, and skill, but there are also players who are extremely competent and, apart from their official employment status, are not easily distinguished from professional players. Ability in itself does not serve to fully differentiate amateurs as a class of musicians in Solo, but the range

of ability found in gamelan associations is different from professional groups where every single musician is highly proficient.

Practice: the ways in which these people musick differently

Because of the stress placed on the musical practice of professional and lineage musicians there is a distinct tendency in the literature on gamelan, and also amongst most players in Java, to take their musical practice as normative, with other approaches being labelled in some way that denotes their inferiority. There are, however, certain specific musical practices which are specific to gamelan associations which reveal a great deal about what is considered fundamental to the social and aesthetic experience produced by the ensemble. These are extremely prevalent and if one did not have any prior experience playing in full ensembles with academy or palace musicians they would not appear to be in any way exceptional. They relate to the practicalities of ensembles which do not have players for certain instruments, but also represent playing styles which evoke and interact with popular musics and traditional entertainment, and which are not usually adopted in other contexts by professional players. I will now set out these differences, looking first at the instruments played and then the specific playing techniques found in gamelan associations which differ from professional practice.

Instrumentation: soft instruments

One of the major dividing lines between gamelan players as individuals is whether or not they are able to play any of the soft instruments. The category of soft instrument is generally used to refer to the *rebab*, *gendèr*, *gendèr panerus*, *gambang*, *suling*, and *siter*. Playing these instruments requires a significant level of technical skill and technique, which is not the case with the loud-style instruments. Whereas the learning process for the majority of gamelan instruments is focussed on acquiring listening skills and

absorbing signals and the appropriate response to them, learning to play one of the soft instruments involves extensive time spent mastering efficient and effective playing technique as well as the learning of a vast repertoire of melodic material and methods for varying and manipulating it. This means that usually these instruments are the preserve of individuals who have had time to dedicate to doing this, and access to some degree of tuition. In practice the only people who fall into this category are those who come from performing arts family backgrounds or who have studied at the performing arts high school or arts academy.

There are, however, some noticeable anomalies in the way different soft instruments are approached by the musicians in gamelan associations. The *rebab* and *gendèr* are almost never played in these groups unless by a visiting musician or a group leader; the *gendèr panerus* is not always played even in professional ensembles; and the *suling* is generally ignored except for recording sessions, radio broadcasts, or events when more musicians are present than there are available instruments. The *gambang*, however, is regularly played in gamelan associations and a small number of amateur players have learnt the *siter*. These two exceptions shed light on two of the fundamental issues involved in unpacking the idea of amateur musicianship: the convincing portrayal of competence, and specialisation.

Gambang

Although the *gambang* plays relatively fast, and is played with both hands, unlike the *gendèr* there is no complex damping involved in its technique as the wooden keys do not ring on in the same way as bronze keys. The melodic lines that it plays are almost entirely in unison octaves and have never been formalised or linked to formal theories of mode (*pathet*). It is one of the soft instruments that is not taught formally at ISI, the assumption being that with the knowledge gained from learning to play *gendèr* and an awareness of

the vocal line of any piece one can produce a viable *gambang* line. This means that someone with a reasonable amount of experience listening to gamelan can play *gambang* convincingly without ever having had to learn formally, and only a highly trained musician would be able to critically assess what they were producing. The most important factors are that the sound is continuous and that the overall tessitura is in agreement with the vocal line. Thus the *gambang* provides a space for people to be seen and heard playing a soft instrument without the associated responsibility for informed interpretation that comes with playing the more prestigious *rebab* or *gendèr*.

Siter

The *siter* is a somewhat different case. Although now formally part of a full gamelan ensemble, the *siter* has origins in the realm of itinerant busking groups where its portability and incisive sound are extremely useful. The palace ensembles to this day do not include *siter* but have a larger, deeper-pitched equivalent called the *celempung* which is not associated with street music. The *siter* is taught at ISI, but this is largely as a result of many of the lecturers there either being from musical families that had at some point been involved in *siteran* ensembles or having an interest in instrument making, the *siter* being one of the instruments that is most readily open to experimentation in production. The classes are not taken particularly seriously by most students.

Anyone that does invest any amount of effort in learning to play the *siter* becomes almost by default a specialist. As a result of this a number of musicians outside formal music education seek out lessons and this gains them a particular niche within the amateur scene. It is not at all common to have people playing *siter* in rehearsals unless there are a very large number of players present, but it is very much in demand when groups perform. As the only plucked string sound in the gamelan it is clearly noticed when present and considered to give an element of liveliness that is highly desirable for weddings and more

upbeat repertoire. Thus playing the *siter* makes one part of a very small number of individuals who can be called upon to increase a group's potential for public performance, making it an ideal instrument for those wishing to earn extra income through performing without taking on the responsibility associated with other soft instruments.

Drumming

Drumming is usually classified as a soft instrument in theoretical discussions of gamelan as it is involved in leading, embellishing, and interpreting, the primary functions of this family of instruments. I am going to consider it separately here, however, as in practice it is impossible for an ensemble to play without a drummer and there is always someone who is willing to make an attempt at producing what they can remember of drumming that they have heard, or that they learnt as children. Drumming patterns are also largely consistent across all pieces within a particular form, meaning that the material to be memorised in order to play for a large repertoire is significantly less than the melodic material for the other soft instruments.

Classical Javanese drumming consists of two repertoires of technique and sound produced by a family of three drums, all double-headed and hand-struck. The *kendhang gedhé*, a single very large drum, is used on its own for the largest forms of piece and also in conjunction with the *kethipung*, a much smaller drum, for smaller pieces. The *ciblon*, which is of intermediate size, has a contoured internal surface allowing a wider variety of distinct tones to be produced and is used to produce the drumming that accompanies movement in either dance or shadow puppetry. The drumming for the large and small drums is referred to as *kendhang kalih*, meaning two drums, and is almost completely standardised. The patterns used for the most commonly played forms are familiar to many non-musicians, and many players can produce them accurately in the form of the verbal

mnemonics used to represent drum sounds, even if they never actually touch the drums. Any errors made in this form of drumming are instantly transparent to a large majority of people in Solo and will be corrected openly.

Ciblon drumming is somewhat different. There are standardised versions of the many patterns (*sekaran*) which accompany the repertoire of movements involved in Javanese classical dance, but these are normally only learnt through direct tuition, either at the arts high schools and academies or in one-to-one lessons. These patterns also fall into the category of material which players are expected to vary, embellish, and personalise, so they are almost never heard in the standardised versions. Far fewer people, musicians included, have a good knowledge of all these patterns, although those which are structurally important, marking specific locations within the structure or announcing changes in interpretive style are universally recognised and noticed if absent. This means that with a small amount of confidence and an awareness of the fundamental patterns it is actually easier to bluff *ciblon* than *kendhang kalih*. For styles such as *langgam* and *dangdut*, which are not considered to fall within the classical repertoire but are frequently played on gamelan, the drumming is even freer, with an appropriate aesthetic flavour being more important than specific combinations of sounds.

Specific musical techniques prevalent in gamelan associations

Apart from these differences in orchestration and prevalence of particular instruments in the makeup of ensembles there are two categories of distinctive interpretive choice which are found in gamelan associations. The first relates to techniques, some of which are also found in the practice of professional musicians, which I argue are used to compensate for elements felt to be lacking in circumstances where there are very few soft instruments

playing. The second is a tendency to ignore changes which professional players would make in order to acknowledge the mode of a piece.

Filling in the gaps

One: techniques to fill in the higher levels of rhythmic subdivision

One of the most keenly felt lacks when there are no soft instruments is the sense of dense rhythmic saturation found in a full gamelan ensemble. This phenomenon generates a great deal of the excitement and liveliness that Javanese people seek out when engaging with gamelan music, and there are several techniques employed to generate it through alternative means.

The most readily deployed of these, and the most obviously apparent when joining a group and attempting to play *gendèr* with them, is to increase the overall speed of all pieces. In some groups such speeds are so normalised that they are no longer felt to be fast, although they are at the upper level of playability for soft instruments. These speeds do occur in professional playing but only for specific purposes such as accompanying *srimpi* and *bedhåyå* dances, or when a piece is at its most expanded rhythmic level (*iråmå rangkep*); in gamelan associations they are commonly used for all repertoire.

Density of sound is also sought through extending specific techniques for adding excitement beyond their range of use in fully staffed ensembles. The style of playing adopted by the *peking*, called *selang-seling*, involves playing each pair of notes in the underlying melody in advance of the *balungan* instruments, serving to simultaneously pre-iterate the contour of the tune and compensate for the rapid decay of the small keys necessary to produce the highest pitches in the ensemble. In many groups this style of playing is adopted by one or more of the *saron* players when pieces are in *iråmå wiled* and *iråmå rangkep*. This not only adds density but also allows players to avoid getting

lost in these sections, where the distance between the relatively widely spaced *balungan* notes can be difficult to judge. Using *selang-seling* allows them to play almost constantly, thereby keeping track of their place in the piece more easily, whilst still using material which is within the expected texture of *karawitan*.

A related and similar phenomenon is the addition of *pinjalan* to pieces which are not normatively considered to warrant its use. *Pinjalan* is another form of *balungan* elaboration where the *demung* and *slenthem* play alternate notes of the *selang-seling* pattern mentioned above, extending this subdivision of time into the lowest register of the ensemble and destabilising and complicating the overall rhythmic feel of a piece by moving the *slenthem* onto a usually unstressed position in the texture. This technique is usually used in the accompaniment for *srimpi* and *bedhâyå* dances, where the overall speed is high, the vocalists are singing extremely drawn-out and sustained melodic lines, and the aim is to produce tension through the contrast between the tautly stretched song and a very rapid and densely populated instrumental underlay.

Pinjalan is often used in gamelan associations in pieces which are never played in *bedhayan* style, as well as in pieces which are open to this interpretation but when the singers are not using *bedhayan* vocals. Even more noticeable is the use of *pinjalan* in the *ngelik* section of *ladrang* which is then abandoned in the next *ompak* and taken up again in the ensuing *ngelik*. Professional musicians and most teachers maintain that once *pinjalan* has started it should be applied consistently throughout a piece. It is clear that, for some players, *pinjalan* is so closely linked to their memory of certain pieces that they use it automatically even in circumstances where it is not strictly called for. Some players do, however, appear to consciously use it to generate added excitement, even adding it to those *ladrang* which are played with *ciblon* in *iråmå dados*, where there is already an

added layer of subdivision provided by the *bonang* and *bonang panerus* playing fast interlocking couplets and florid melodic embellishments (*imbal* and *sekaran*).

Two: balungan and bonang taking on responsibilities of soft instruments

Another gap which is left by the absence of soft instrument players is the role of the *gendèr* in providing notes for singers (*thinthingan*) when they are performing the introductory unaccompanied vocal introductions to certain pieces (*båwå*) or the *sindhèn* lines which bring the ensemble back in after strategic stops during *iråmå rangkep* (*andhegan*). This is an essential component of the *gendèr* player's role and owing to its exposed nature is far more noticeable to and more readily commented on by the majority of musicians than the more complicated but less obvious elaboration during full ensemble playing. Singers almost always sit separately from the instruments, which means that they cannot provide notes for themselves, and even when they are close enough to do so I have never seen a singer do this. In an ensemble without soft instruments the highest level of responsibility for melodic elaboration falls to the *bonang* and in the majority of cases the *bonang* player will provide *thinthingan*. The fact that the *bonang* has a two-octave range also allows it to provide exactly the right note, rather than an octave above or below. In cases where the *bonang* player does not know which notes to provide or is not quick enough in doing so *balungan* players sometimes take over. It is peculiarly rare for anybody to sing the notes required unless they are extremely confident, possibly for fear of leading the singer astray, although giving the wrong note on an instrument is extremely common.

The vast majority of the classical repertoire has instrumental lead-ins (*bukå*) played on the *rebab*; in groups where there is no *rebab* player this is usually shifted to the *bonang* player as most of the remaining pieces have *bonang* introductions. There are pieces for which the *rebab* introduction is extremely awkward to adapt for the *bonang* but these are

not generally part of the repertoire of gamelan associations and, if they are played, the piece may be started simply with the drum introduction or the leader may sing the *rebab* part instead.

When pieces are at their most expanded, in *irâmâ rangkep*, there are many vocal melodies (*senggakan*) which highlight the melodic contour and connect the extremely sparse *balungan* notes. In the playing style of the palaces and arts academies these *senggakan* are taken up to a certain extent by the soft instruments and weaving them into one's normal playing is a sign of good musicianship. When used to accompany folk theatre (*kethoprak*) these parts are often more emphatically stressed through being played on the *balungan* instruments as well; this is very common in groups without soft instruments, even when pieces are not strictly being played in *kethoprak* style and the singers may not be vocalising the *senggakan*.

Responsiveness to differences in *pathet*

The need to be aware of the mode of a piece and engage practically with this knowledge in playing is considered of fundamental importance by professional musicians and forms a large part of their training. Acting on this knowledge is integral to playing any of the soft instruments but is also extremely important for the *bonang*, the *peking*, and also for the *kenong* and *kempul* players all of whom have to take decisions about what notes to play in order to maintain or strengthen the modal flavour of the piece. Essentially the only players who are thought not to need to adjust what they are playing in deference to mode are the *balungan* players since the modal content of their part is already fixed. The extent to which players engage with modal distinctions in gamelan associations is extremely variable and the way in which this is handled reveals a great deal about their aesthetic priorities. Here I discuss primarily the ways that mode can be handled on loud-style

instruments since the soft instrument players in gamelan associations are usually professional.

Bonang

The only time that the *bonang* players are potentially required to make contextually sensitive responses to the mode of a piece is when the drummer is using the *ciblon* and the *bonang* are playing the pattern referred to as *imbal* and *sekarang*. This is a system formed of a combination of interlocking notes which generate a rippling effect (*imbal*), followed by brief melodic phrases (*sekarang*) which lead towards the most important notes which come at the end of phrases in the underlying melody. Among professional players both the notes used for the interlocking section and the melodic phrases vary depending on the mode of the piece and also change in order to recognise the overall tessitura of the melody at any given point. This serves to strongly reinforce the melodic content of the piece and focuses attention on this element of the music. Amateur players frequently completely ignore this element of *imbal* and *sekarang* and use the same interlocking notes regardless of mode, although they do often change in response to variations in tessitura. They also commonly only know one or two *sekarang* for each final note which they use regardless of whether it is modally appropriate to the piece or not. When *dangdut* is played on gamelan the *bonang* also produce a similar interlocking pattern and the same differences in attention to mode are found in this case.

I argue that there are clearly discernible reasons for this which are based in the aesthetic priorities and repertoire choices of the majority of gamelan associations. The auditory effect of *imbal* is to generate an additional surge of liveliness in the ensemble by adding to the number of instruments playing at higher rates of metrical subdivision and providing more immediately recognisable and audible interplay between instruments. The *sekarang* then provide well-defined and catchy melodic material on the otherwise relatively opaque

surface of the piece's texture. Whilst professional musicians clearly recognise this as a function of *imbal* and *sekarán* they are not willing to let it override the desire to display awareness of differences in pitch and mode and to maintain a primary focus on every instrument contributing to outlining the melodic movement as accurately and fully as possible. For amateur players the most important factor in *imbal* and *sekarán* is the lively rhythmic texture produced and the excitement of the short bursts of tune; whether or not these conform fully to the underlying melodic contour of the piece is largely irrelevant to their enjoyment of these features. In groups where players who do not prioritise modal context are exposed to teachers who do, they may begin to adjust how they play, but I have never seen someone deliberately play in a way that was less responsive to mode than they were capable of. The excitement of *imbal* and *sekarán* is still present when it follows the rules of *pathet* but these rules are not necessary to make it exciting. In all circumstances the *bonang panerus* player is expected to follow the *bonang barung* player whichever approach they take and this can cause difficulties if the *bonang panerus* player is either far less or far more experienced. I have regularly seen *bonang panerus* players in this position either becoming confused as to why the *bonang barung* player is changing all the time or becoming frustrated by not being able to demonstrate their own full capabilities.

Kempul and kenong

Although they are normally classified as structural instruments there are actually a number of ways in which the *kempul* and *kenong* can respond to melodic contour. Some of these are directly linked to *pathet* whilst others pre-empt changes of direction in the melodic contour.³⁵ The choice of which note to play on the *kenong* or *kempul* at any given structural point in a piece may directly follow the note that the *balungan* are

³⁵ This is called 'slipping' (*plesedan*) or 'letting know' (*tuturan*).

playing at this point or may serve to emphasise the mode of a piece. In many pieces in the mode *sléndro sângâ*, for example, even when the *balungan* note on a *kempul* stroke leading up to the end of the piece is a 6 the *kempul* may play pitch 5 in order to strengthen the appropriate sense of cadence. If the piece were in *sléndro manyurâ* the *kempul* would follow the *balungan* and play a 6. When a *kenong* stroke falls on the pitch 1 there is a similar choice to be made: if the *kenong* plays a 1 this reinforces a feeling of *pathet manyurâ* whereas a 5 would imply *pathet sângâ*. Certain *kempul* are not used except in exceptional circumstances, the pitch 3, for example, is only played when the underlying melody is in the lowest octave, otherwise it is replaced by a 6.

Almost all gamelan players without formal training do not apply these rules³⁶ and when they do it is because they have been told at some point that this occurs in a particular piece rather than having an explicit theory of how to make such decisions themselves.³⁷ For most listeners these subtle distinctions in what the *kempul* and *kenong* are playing are almost completely irrelevant to their appreciation and enjoyment of a performance. The structural function of these instruments is what is fundamental and for a large number of players and listeners any extra level of musical sophistication is an addition rather than an essential component.

Peking

The *peking* plays at a far higher rate of frequency than the other *balungan* instruments. At the very least it plays twice for each *balungan* note but at higher levels of expansion this can be increased to a ratio of sixteen to one. Moving at this rate allows the *peking* player extra musical space in which to elaborate on the melodic contour and thus puts it in a position to potentially act in the same way as a soft instrument. This becomes particularly

³⁶ Even first-year students at ISI often do not use these techniques to begin with.

³⁷ These decisions can also vary dramatically amongst professional musicians and sometimes cause lengthy arguments.

clear when there are ‘rests’ in the *balungan* part where no new note is struck. The *peking* has to keep playing continuously and therefore has to decide what to play in these conceptual ‘gaps’. Musicians with any experience of playing soft instruments will consider what is happening at these points in terms of underlying *cèngkok* and what the *rebab* or *gendèr* are playing but large numbers of players in gamelan associations use quite different strategies as this is not part of their knowledge base. The most common strategy used by amateur players is to adhere closely to the *balungan* which appears on printed notations. This does not require any additional knowledge and as long as they keep playing and do not deviate radically from the notated part no one but a professional player would notice what they were doing.

Karawitan is extremely amenable to being played and listened to at various levels of sophistication. As long as certain fundamental features are maintained the vast majority of audiences will not notice the difference between professional and amateur renditions of the same piece as long as the female singer is competent. The elements which appear to be essential are the sense of textural fullness provided by stratified subdivision of the underlying pulse, awareness of the formal structure of the piece and its expression on the gongs and *kenong*, and techniques that generate liveliness. Many of the ways in which amateur musicians play grow out of the repertoire which they play most regularly; the fact that amateur *bonang* players almost exclusively use the versions of *imbal* and *sekaran* that are appropriate for *sléndro manyurå* even when playing in other modes is clearly linked to the massive predominance of this mode in the most popular pieces in the repertoire. This phenomenon is also driven by an approach to learning to play which prioritises achieving the necessary functional knowledge for commonly played pieces rather than encyclopaedic theoretical knowledge which covers the entire repertoire. I will

now turn to the distinctive repertoire and approaches to learning which are found in gamelan associations.

Repertoire and what constitutes 'gamelan' music

All of the associations that I played with use standard gamelan sets³⁸ without the addition of keyboards or drum kits, stress that they are playing traditional music, and are very definite about the boundaries between what they were doing and other forms of popular music in Solo. The repertoires that they play are, however, extremely varied and their assumptions as to what constitutes traditional music or *karawitan* in different groups do not necessarily coincide. There are a number of approaches to defining what is considered to be canonical, and what is accepted as belonging to this category in one group might be strongly excluded in another. The higher the ability of the players and the more input the group has from professional players the more likely they are to tightly restrict the definition of gamelan music. The background of the particular professional musicians does however also have an impact, with those who are still active as performers being more pragmatic and more likely to be able to play and teach contemporary popular pieces. The ways in which traditional music is defined in amateur gamelan groups provide some profound insights into how tradition is conceived not simply in official discourses or the colonially co-produced canons of the academies, but by a far wider body of Javanese music makers.

The most restrictive definition of what constitutes *karawitan* can be found amongst the official palace musicians and the older ISI lecturers. Both of these positions involve stewardship of a specific repertoire which is formed by the bounded body of palace heirloom pieces or by the creation of syllabi for instruction and examination. In these contexts *karawitan* is considered to consist of only those pieces which fall into the classic

³⁸ The quality of the instruments was very variable but they were always complete standard sets.

forms (*bentuk*) and which are capable of being interpreted (*garap*) by the soft instruments using only their usual technique and standard *cèngkok*.³⁹ Even though ISI is a centre for the composition of new music for gamelan these pieces are always kept categorically separate with different lecture and examination strands devoted to them. This is absolutely not to say that musicians with these backgrounds do not play or even teach other forms of gamelan music but that they have a very clear sense of what belongs in their category of *karawitan* and what does not.

None of the gamelan associations with which I played limited their repertoire to this definition of *karawitan*. Even those which played extremely sophisticated pieces to a very high standard extended it to include pieces composed by Ki Nartosabdho and other famous composers of the early independence era. The reasons for this are manifold. For the vast majority of people playing, leading, and teaching in amateur groups this was the popular music of their youth, dominating the airwaves and still making up a huge percentage of all the gamelan music available on recordings. A large number of these pieces are re-workings of existing traditional repertoire which had fallen out of use and so are capable of being interpreted by soft-instrument players without any difficulty. They have been made more accessible and lively, however, by the addition of a great deal of extra vocal material with lyrics reflecting everyday life, and some particularly attractive playing techniques from other forms of gamelan both regional and national. These pieces were so widely disseminated that for most non-specialists they represent what traditional music sounds like.⁴⁰ The group at the Town Hall and both of the groups at Cakra Homestay, which are by far the most restrictive in the range of music they play, have

³⁹ This includes some pieces which were composed in the 1930s and 1940s but which fully follow the rules of *pathet* as understood by the academy.

⁴⁰ Professional and academy musicians refer to this body of pieces as Semarangan, after the city where Nartosabdho spent most of his career.

repertoires based around ‘serious’ traditional pieces with varying degrees of admixture of Nartosabdho pieces.

Another approach to defining a working canon of gamelan music is found in the groups which have a looser connection to institutional music-making and whose attitudes are informed by hearing the latest popular music at weddings or on the radio. These groups, the Pasar Gedhé association, Jetis, and the two groups at the Kraton, for example, include anything that is capable of being played on gamelan instruments and which has lyrics in Javanese. The extremely popular *dangdut* has interacted with *karawitan* for so long that there are well-established standard techniques to orchestrate songs for gamelan usage; *langgam*, although not usually falling into the category of ‘classical’ music, are described and notated within the structures of traditional form (*bentuk*); and *campursari*, with its roots in mixing electronic instruments with gamelan, is eminently amenable to being played on gamelan instruments alone.⁴¹ The decisive factor in what is considered appropriate in these groups, I argue, is the use of Javanese in the vocal parts. The vast majority of *dangdut* pieces are in Indonesian and even when they are incredibly popular these are never played by gamelan associations; instead the focus is on *dangdut* which already has Javanese lyrics, or on giving Javanese-language songs a *dangdut* interpretation. A *langgam* can, for example, be performed in the standard way for the first repetition of the song and then be turned into a *dangdut* for consecutive repetitions. This allows for the upbeat drumming and *demung* riffs that are essential to *dangdut* on gamelan but still allows the group to frame their repertoire as traditional because the use of Javanese serves to keep it within the range of the local. This shows the extent to which, for a large number of Javanese people, the categories of traditional and local are conflated.

⁴¹ As most *campursari* is performed diatonically nowadays, however, some songs can seem somewhat strange when brought into *pélog* or *sléndro*.

Members of groups are sometimes aware of the repertoire decisions of other associations and do comment on them in a comparative way. These discussions can involve some degree of judgement, with groups that focus on pieces considered to be classic sneering slightly at those that stress more popular material, and these groups in turn regarding the more serious groups as lacking a sense of fun and enjoyment. Such discussions are couched in terms of competing sources of validity for traditional music and are used to solidify and cement the ethos of a group and to stress one's adherence to that association's norms, rather than being an attempt to invalidate the musicianship or cultural validity of the other players. Any individual musician may not like or approve of the repertoire and interpretive decisions that another makes, but all of these possibilities are seen as valid options within their specific frameworks and cannot be totally dismissed. Where one stands in relation to arguments about what constitutes gamelan music or how a piece should be played is, for most people, shaped by the decisions taken by their group's leader rather than through conscious personal consideration. Because of the considerable overlap between existing social groups, whether geographical or workplace based, and gamelan groups there is also usually a generally homogenous attitude to such issues in each association. Some players, however, have a desire to play a wider range of pieces than is practiced in one particular group and deliberately seek out other associations where they can engage with contrasting material, especially if they feel that the group would not be amenable to altering its current practice or that their standing in the group would not allow them to make such a request. Almost all of the highly mobile amateur players that I met played in groups with very different repertoires and styles rather than seeking out other similar associations.

Decisions about repertoire and what a group can play in *latihan* are intimately connected to their use of notation. The use of notation is also often used by professional musicians

as a defining characteristic of less experienced players, making it an important issue to consider when examining definitions of amateur musicianship. I now turn to the ways in which gamelan associations choose and use notation.

Notation

In groups with an active and knowledgeable leader repertoire decisions are based on their taste, preferences, and sometimes their perception of the ability of the group. This may be an ongoing dynamic process of choice or decisions made in the past may become formalised and systematised. In the Town Hall group decision as to what pieces to play are made on an ad hoc basis a great deal of the time with players expected to have memorised standard repertoire or to have their own collections of notation which will allow them to join in without slowing down the proceedings. In the run-up to important performances printed copies of the playlist will be photocopied and distributed in order to ensure identical *balungan* and standardise interpretation, and these sometimes act as playlists for subsequent rehearsals as the leader knows that everyone will have a copy of these pieces. If someone wishes to play a particular piece they will sometimes bring notations but this is usually only the case with vocal parts or for pieces that are extremely rarely played. At the KOSTI *latihan* the group of leaders brings new pieces each week and makes this available by writing them up on the whiteboard at the front of the room. Core repertoire is, however, also available in a photocopied booklet of pieces which was produced at an early stage in the group's existence. Because Marem's leader is not always present the group has two large booklets of collected notation which now form the totality of their repertoire. These were put together by the leader and provide a very large pool of options when deciding what to play. The ease of not having to produce and photocopy new notations on a regular basis means, however, that even when he does attend rehearsals he only chooses pieces from these booklets, guaranteeing that everyone

will have a copy. Decisions about repertoire have been taken and fixed through the medium of notation in this group. The problem of the leader's frequently not being there to make choices is dealt with by him providing a comprehensive, pre-made decision which will last for the foreseeable future. I was never aware of Marem ever playing a piece which was not in the booklets, and the possibility did not seem to ever be considered.

Notation collections in various forms are extremely important in forming the repertoires of associations and this can be the case even when the origins of the notation have no connection to the specific group. The Tuesday group at the Kraton only ever played pieces that were available on flip charts that were stored in a room next to the gamelan. Who had produced these and how old they are is unknown but they contained enough of the level of piece that the group could play that they became the default source. The Sunday group also used these flip charts but the more advanced members chafed somewhat at this limitation and decided to create a new booklet containing pieces they felt were missing and raise funds to print it for the group. Fundamentally, however, notation is extremely important to the functioning of gamelan associations as the members do not usually have the experience of playing required to allow the building of an extensive memorised repertoire. The only situations in which notation is not used in the groups I played with are the playing of standard wedding pieces in the Town Hall group and when playing *dangdut* in Pasar Gedhé or Jetis. Even players who do not use notation when playing themselves are conversant with its use and employ it to pass on information to other members of their group. The only material that is never notated is the brief bursts of *balungan* tune used to ornament *dangdut* (*jengglèngan*). These vary dramatically between groups and are jealously guarded by those who play them. Their

mastery is seen as a rite of passage and as proof of authentic musical ability within the context of male village playing.

At the higher levels of ability notation is seen as unnecessary; indeed reliance on it is seen as hindering the responsiveness needed to interact contextually with other players. This attitude has also become prevalent in discourse amongst people teaching and playing gamelan in the UK and US, with the ideal of notation-free playing being held up as an ideal even while almost every group uses notation. In the academic literature on gamelan, playing without notation is often assumed to be the normative model for *karawitan*.

Becker (1980), for example, goes so far as to cite the use of notation, which she sees as a completely imported phenomenon, as being the potential cause of the ultimate destruction of traditional gamelan playing. In gamelan associations, however, notation is a fundamental tool in allowing people with varied ability levels to make music, and thus allows for the continued existence of a broad base of gamelan musicianship and engagement with the tradition. Playing without notation is not representative of the experience of the vast majority of individuals who make music on gamelan instruments.

People in gamelan associations are very keen to engage with ‘traditional’ music and are also very adept at producing definitions of this which allow them to include the types of piece that they most enjoy playing and listening to in this category. The decision as to what constitutes traditional music and what a particular group will play is determined by the overall consensus of a group and individuals do sometimes consciously choose which group to play with based on this. This consensus is, however, in the vast majority of cases, dynamic, with constant slight adjustments made by group leaders or those with the self-confidence to suggest additions or alterations. Notation is often used because of the convenience and flexibility it affords when choosing what to play in *latihan*. Collections of notation can provide a core repertoire for each group but can also become fixed and

potentially limiting when they are given excessive authority or when moving beyond them seems to involve too much work. The use of notation is, nonetheless, a fundamental constituent of music making in gamelan associations.

Learning how to play

Another major difference between the vast majority of players in gamelan associations and full-time employed musicians is the way in which they learn how to play. All professional players have at some point had specific training involving either one-to-one tuition on particular instruments or discussions of theory and practice with older and more experienced players. Although some of the older generation of players would not describe themselves as having had ‘lessons’ as such, and have acquired much of their knowledge through watching and listening to other players, the ability to play soft instruments professionally always involves some form of deliberate, personalised transmission process. For players of younger generations this process now almost always includes some time at either the performing arts high school (SMKI) or ISI. The experience of players in gamelan associations does occasionally involve this kind of teaching but also includes several different approaches. The approaches I witnessed in gamelan associations prioritise allowing the *latihan* to remain a socially comfortable space over efficient and specific functional training and rely heavily on group-oriented sharing of material rather than direct instruction from a teacher.

It is taken for granted in gamelan associations that newcomers will join in immediately if there are *balungan* instruments which are not being played. There is, however, never any attempt made to explain how to play the instrument, how to damp keys when playing the next note, or how to read the notation. The assumption is that anyone in this situation will make themselves aware of what is going on around them, attempt to derive rules for the

situation by observation and imitation, and remain watchful in order to correct any mistakes made in this process. Individual players may attempt to ask advice from existing members, and this is sometimes given, but the group leader never provides information to individuals at this basic level. In both Marem and Sekar Laras the leaders will often momentarily halt the rehearsal to give pointers to the whole group on issues of overall aesthetic, volume balance between instruments, or the specific flow between sections of a piece. These may be as a result of a general need but are also frequently used in response to a very specific individual error or problem as a way of avoiding having to directly confront or single out the person concerned.

The only context in which group leaders give direct correction or advice is during the performance of a piece when someone is lost to the extent that they are disrupting the overall stability of the ensemble. Leaders never explicitly draw attention to the individual concerned by naming them but sing the relevant instrumental part, in the hope that the player will be aware of their being lost and use this information to return to the correct place in the texture of the piece. This stands in stark contrast to how leaders relate to professional musicians or those with formal training less senior than themselves that are playing with the group: such people will sometimes be engaged in direct discussion about what they are playing or even told to play in a specific way. This appears to reflect an understanding that musicians who have been formally trained are used to being corrected and explicitly taught and will not consider that this damages their social position.

Amateur players do not operate within the same systems of hierarchy and are perceived as being more likely to treat such interventions as personal slights.

Performing: preparation and presentation

There are some noticeable features of the way musicians from Sriwedari, RRI, and the official palace ensembles behave in the context of performance which clearly mark them as not belonging to the same category as the majority of players in the groups I was studying. Their attitude to rehearsal is extremely different, as is the way they approach preparations for performances and being on stage. My attention was drawn to this during preparations for a wedding reception which I played for. The father of the bride was a member of several gamelan associations, including the Town Hall group. He decided to have several members of that group play for the reception, with the rest of the ensemble made up of players from Sriwedari. This allowed him to have some of 'his' group playing but also guarantee the quality of the performance, particularly as there were a number of dances to accompany and several tricky, non-standard, popular pieces had been requested.

It was agreed that some rehearsals would be necessary but the rationale for this was different in the two different groups. The town hall players thought that this would be helpful in letting them get to know the pieces that were going to be used; the Sriwedari musicians thought of it entirely in terms of checking the interpretation that the dancers were intending to use. As they rehearse and play together every day the Sriwedari musicians did not use these occasions to interact with each other socially, but simply arrived, did what was required of them, and then promptly departed at the end. The only conversation that took place was between town hall musicians who were sitting near to each other, and the discussions between the drummer, wedding planner, and choreographer.

On the day of the reception the musicians gathered in the performers' dressing room area. The town hall players were clearly slightly excited and nervous and were checking

notations, and already thinking about getting changed into the standard performance outfit of wraparound batik cloth, jacket, and turban-cap (*kejawèn*). Putting on the unsewn lengths of batik cloth (*jarik*) requires a fair amount of skill and for most Javanese is something that only happens for very important events when there will be salon staff to dress them. The Sriwedari players sat around the food provided, eating and drinking; none of them were using notation anymore, as they had rapidly memorised the new pieces required for the dances, so they did not need to prepare these, and their *kejawèn* was still stowed away in bags. Having taken their time to get dressed and adjust the various wrappings that hold everything together, the town hall players began to seem a little worried that we weren't going to be ready in time. At precisely five minutes before the official stage-call the Sriwedari musicians stood up and got dressed effortlessly whilst still chatting to each other about the previous night's football match. Within three minutes they were dressed, had stowed all their belonging into their bags, and were walking out to the stage leaving the town hall players to catch up.

Once on stage, whilst everyone remained calm and professional at all times, the Sriwedari players were completely unflustered by the minor alterations to schedule made by the master of ceremonies during the event, but this occasionally alarmed the town hall players. The Sriwedari musicians also had a very different approach to dealing with other musicians. In the town hall group (and also in other associations) when I was required to provide pitches for singers and didn't know the piece in question people were reluctant to accuse me of ignorance by emphatically telling me which notes were needed. During the wedding, however, when a *langgam* was requested that was not on the original setlist and I did not know the vocal introduction, without any compunction the *rebab* player who was the nearest to me started signalling the necessary information until I was back on track. For players whose full-time job is performing, the need for the ensemble as a whole

to appear competent and for there to be no audible flaws in presentation completely supersedes any desire to spare the feelings of other musicians.

Summary

Definitions of amateur that rely on factors such as the receipt of financial payment, assessments of musical ability, or the social status assigned to those playing do not individually suffice to encompass the enormous variety of people who make up the gamelan associations that I studied. There are no musicians who do not derive some form of benefit from playing, however personal or abstract it might be. Players of all abilities play in these groups and the types of competence that individuals display can be radically different and not readily compared. The status of musicians, although still partially linked to historic assessments of respectability, is now complicated by new, official forms of support for the arts, as well as political and social discourse about the importance of local culture within Indonesia.

Ultimately I argue that, although there is no clear, easily defined distinction to be made amongst the vast majority of the people who play gamelan in terms of amateur or professional, there is a very distinct and well understood separation between those who are employed in a full-time capacity by the state to play and perform, and all other musicians. Thus the meaningful separation is not between those who earn money through playing and those who do not, those who are extremely capable or not, or those who are of low status or not, but rather between those who have a guaranteed income associated with their music-making and those for whom the issue of payment is either completely unimportant or a matter of one-off, constantly fluctuating and negotiable additions to their overall income from a variety of employment. The issues which are fundamental in the way Javanese musicians classify themselves are not ability or recompense, but rather

whether or not their musicianship is officially validated by a state or palace appointment and whether their income from music is stable and guaranteed.

The people who play in gamelan associations in Solo fall into this category of musicians who are not supported by the state. Apart from the very few lecturers from ISI who lead groups, no civil servant musicians play regularly in gamelan associations, only appearing occasionally to assist in performances. It might be possible to classify the majority of the individual players in these groups as amateurs in the simplistic sense of people who are not particularly skilled and play for fun rather than for money. As I have shown, however, this would both fail to take into account the complexities of musicianship in Java and fail to give a full picture of the membership of the groups. Although there are many people who can be described as amateur musicians in Solo, and they make up the vast majority of players in gamelan associations, Solonese gamelan associations cannot be viewed simply as 'amateur groups': rather, they are groups made up of people with a huge range of abilities, with very varied attitudes to recompense for playing, and who balance multiple sources of authority to validate their desire to make music together.

Chapter Three

The *latihan*: social gathering, musical rehearsal; musical gathering, social rehearsal

There is one key element which unites all the groups which I am discussing. Despite the very varied nature of the backgrounds of those involved, the locations in which they meet, their reasons for playing, and whether or not they present the results of their playing together publicly, they all employ a very particular format and style of meeting. This is usually referred to as *latihan*. It is very easy to translate *latihan* as rehearsal and conflate the two terms, but although this is not entirely inaccurate, it fails to fully encompass the range of activities that are part of a *latihan* and also carries implications of a level of goal-oriented focus which is not necessarily a part of the Javanese phenomenon. The specific flavour and feel of a *latihan* is such that the word is also frequently used by gamelan players in the United Kingdom, United States and Japan with backgrounds in Western Art Music to refer to their meetings, and thereby distinguish them from the types of rehearsal they are familiar with from that tradition. I claim, ultimately, that there are very particular elements of the way the *latihan* is situated in the wider Javanese cultural landscape which mean that it can act as a setting for the working out of important ideas about social responsibility and cohesion, and for the subtle testing and pressuring of conventions of interaction.

In order to fully explain the nature of a *latihan* I will first explore the word itself, along with other words which sometimes replace it, unpacking some of the connotations that they carry. I will then describe a *latihan* in some detail, drawing out the specific practical features that distinguish the concept.

Terminology and its implications

The word *latihan* is actually originally an Indonesian term which has become almost universally adopted by Javanese speakers when speaking Javanese. It literally means the process of doing something repeatedly in order to master it or improve one's facility in carrying it out. It is used in multiple contexts including music, team sports, martial arts, breath control and meditation practices, and learning to drive. It can be seen therefore that the word covers a wide range of semantic material all of which contribute to its meaning when used to describe a gamelan 'rehearsal'. When used in reference to music, *latihan* can mean practice in the sense of solitary drilling of technique or memorisation of material. This is not commonly the case when describing gamelan music as individual practice on one's own is extremely rare, only occasionally occurring when students are starting to learn the soft instruments. It is also used for full-group rehearsals by a band or ensemble. In the context of sports it is used for the individual practice of skills and any playing of the game which is not an official match. The use of the word in the case of martial arts, breath-control and meditation techniques encompasses physical and mental effort aimed at attaining skills which give one an understanding of how the body and mind work in order to consciously control them to some end, usually one conceived of as contributing not only to individual development but also to the greater social good.

The use of *latihan* for learning to drive serves to highlight the implication, already present in the previous examples, of doing something repeatedly in order to gain a level

of automaticity which subsequently allows one to use the skill spontaneously and creatively without being hampered by technical limitations. *Latihan* thus encompasses the meanings of training and practising, both as an individual and as a group, and also carries implications of the development and profound internalisation of not only directly practical skills but also social and spiritual capabilities.

Gladhi

The Javanese equivalent of *latihan* is *gladhi*. This term is not commonly used by any musicians amongst themselves except in the term ‘*gladhi bersih*’ which directly correlates to the idea of ‘dress rehearsal’. I heard it used only when people needed to refer to a *latihan* in a situation where they were making a conscious attempt to speak exclusively in High Javanese without using Indonesian loan-words. This is not a usual occurrence in Solo, where such borrowing is extremely common, but arose in two particular situations which I witnessed. The first was the gamelan groups that were based in the Kraton. Many Solonese regard the Kraton as the last bastion of pure, refined Javanese, and the people who chose to play in these groups were extremely keen to seize the opportunity to speak in a very elevated form of High Javanese that would appear stiff and excessively mannered if used in daily life. The palace servants who were formally sponsoring the groups would sometimes make small speeches to stress the need to attend regularly or to ask that everyone contribute regularly to the drink fund, and they would always refer to what the groups did as *gladhi*. The other was at the Balai Soedjatmoko arts centre, which ran a monthly evening event where gamelan associations from Solo and the surrounding area could perform. When the impresario introduced these events he would always refer to them not as performances but as ‘*gladhi bareng*’ or practicing together. This was part of the very consciously traditional elements used in presenting

these events, which were in stark contrast to the somewhat un-traditional notion of having what amounted to a gamelan ‘concert’.

Although not commonly used, the term *gladhi* does bring out some of the complex conceptual underpinnings of the meaning of *latihan*. As highlighted by its use for ‘dress rehearsal’ it carries a very strong sense of activity in preparation for something else, and this ties in with the idea that *latihan* prepare one for performance not only of music but of appropriate social behaviour. This idea is explicitly referenced by senior musicians who are extremely comfortable thinking and talking about gamelan playing in abstract terms, but is also cited as a reason for involvement by players of all ability levels and can be seen in their approach to group dynamics which I will explore more fully elsewhere.

Olah

Latihan is often replaced when talking about sports or spiritual practice with the word *olah*. *Olah* means to work on something, to mould it or shape it from an original natural but unrefined state. *Olah rāgā* means to do this with regard to your body (*rāgā*) and is the standard word for physical exercise that is not directly sports-related, such as weight training or jogging. *Olah rāsā* is to carry out a similar process on one’s sense of *rāsā*. *Rāsā* is a complicated term which at its core means to feel or sense, but which also contains elements of conscious, perceptive awareness of one’s physical and social surroundings, and ideas of being able to exercise aesthetic judgement. *Olah rāsā* is a process often linked to the performing arts and is something that can be undertaken as both a practitioner and as an engaged audience member.

At first, I had an understanding of *olah rāsā* as being somewhat esoteric and fuzzy, but, after conversations with gamelan musicians and dancers that were fraught with misunderstanding, came to the realisation that it is, at its core, an extremely practical and

clearly defined approach to absorbing the aesthetics of the Javanese tradition. It involves extensive attention to gamelan music, Javanese poetry, dance and puppetry until one has internalised a spectrum of norms which can then be used to assess subsequent experiences. Importantly, however, it also develops the ability to pick up on the signalling that occurs in all these art forms, understand what is being asked for by the puppeteer, drummer or dancer, and have possible suitable responses in mind. Developing this ability to sense what is being asked for, or what is appropriate in a particular situation, and behave accordingly is regularly claimed by musicians and non-musicians alike as eventually extending to all social situations and interactions. The very strongly held assumption is that someone who has developed their aesthetic faculty will, in the process, have developed their ability to negotiate social life elegantly, smoothly, and graciously.

Pelatih

The importance of the term *latihan* in understanding gamelan associations is reinforced by the fact that it is also part of the term used when referring to the people who lead and teach the groups. There are many possible terms which can be used to refer to a teacher in Indonesian and Javanese. *Guru* is the standard word used for teachers in primary and secondary school and, although it does not automatically carry associations of mystical learning in this setting, it is also used to describe the individuals who teach meditation and ancestor-contact practices. It is used to describe gamelan teachers only when people are having individual private tuition on particular instruments with them, and never in the context of group learning. *Dosen* is the term for a lecturer in Javanese and Indonesian, and although a number of the men who lead gamelan associations are in fact lecturers, this word is never used to describe their role in non-university settings. The word that is universally used for the person who takes on the responsibility of taking charge of guiding and leading sessions is *pelatih*. This consists of the root word *latih* combined

with the *pe-* prefix, which generates a noun with the meaning of someone who actively performs the action of the root verb. A *pelatih* is, therefore, someone who carries out the process of *latihan* on people, with the most appropriate translation being ‘trainer’. I argue that this choice of word serves to emphasise the sense of *latihan* being conceived of as training sessions rather than taught classes, an idea which I will further explore below.

What makes a *latihan*? Part one

Having explored some of the multiple meanings that are evoked by the use of the word *latihan*, I will now describe a *latihan* in some detail in order to draw out the defining characteristics. This description will be a generic one, based on bringing together a great many actual examples in order to show all the features I wish to in one snapshot portrait. Thus, while it is not a faithful description of one particular *latihan*, it consists entirely of details and events that occur regularly in all *latihan* and are drawn from specific genuine examples.

Arrival and preparations

Arrivals at the *latihan* are spread over a very broad period of time, loosely centred on the figure which people quote as the official start time. Arriving early and having to wait for other people to get there is a position that no one likes to be in, and so usually the only people who are here ‘on time’ are those who have a specific responsibility to set-up or open a building. This evening, at a *latihan* which formally begins at 8.30, the only people here at this time are the *sindhèn*, who comes from quite a distance and feels a strong responsibility to be punctual as she is given petrol money, one man who works at the venue and is around anyway, and a foreign researcher keen not to miss the start.

Gradually more and more players arrive in ones and twos, one man who regularly drums for the group appears briefly to check if there are enough people present to begin and

when this is not the case quickly vanishes again to sit at a tea stall until numbers are higher.

A dedicated subset of the group makes sure that instruments are set up, put mallets out, and collect the big trestle frame used to hang the notations that are written on the back of a series of old calendars. Meanwhile, everyone else takes the opportunity to catch up on the week's news, discussing national politics, the health of mutual friends or old members of the group, and gossiping about those who haven't arrived yet. The drummer appears to check numbers again and, satisfied that it is worth making a start, saunters over to hold court for a moment, before encouraging people to move onto instruments and get ready to start. Some players have instruments that they play every week and they go there straight away, whilst those who are not sure or want to be considered for specific roles dawdle until someone either tells them where to go, or until it is clear no one else intends to make a bid for the position they were after and they can take it up without any need to explicitly stake a claim.

Playing

This group has a specific *pambukâ* or starting piece which they use at the beginning of every *latihan* and which serves as their signature tune when playing in public and this means that everyone knows what to play first without the need for any discussion. The group's familiarity with this piece means that it is played without any problems and there is a general sense of achievement and getting down to business. In order to keep the momentum going, the drummer straightaway suggests the next piece. One man leaps up to put the right sheet on the notation board, and others flick through their collections of notation to find their personal copy. Once this is done there are some small pockets of discussion as people talk through how they remember this piece going and the drummer

might then explain how he intends to shape it this time. The *sindhèn* takes the opportunity to briefly tease the *gendèr* player in the process of telling him how she wants him to play a particular section in a way that will make her part easier.

The drummer lightly taps to call everyone to order and the piece starts. After a transition between sections one of the players on the *slenthem*, a structurally important instrument, has become lost. The drummer winces slightly as it makes his job harder, having to ignore the very instrument he would normally rely on to anchor him, but says nothing. Some of the other players on the *balungan* begin to worry that they are wrong because they are not with the *slenthem* player. Eventually the *sindhèn* stops singing her part and pointedly sings note names at the *slenthem* player until he is back on track. At no point does the piece stop, and anyone who was in a different place adjusts to the new consensus even if they thought they were in the right place. As the final section comes to a close there is a flurry of embarrassed laughter among the *balungan* players as they express their solidarity in having either gone wrong or not being confident enough to stay with what they thought was right. The *sindhèn* and drummer exchange slightly weary raised eyebrows and attempt to draw the *gendèr* player into their silent expressions of exasperation, but don't make any explicit recriminations.

The tea break

Once people start to feel that they have played enough for the time being there are murmurs of 'let's have a drink first' (*ngumbe sik, yâ*) or 'how about some tea?' (*wédang yâ*). The drummer, as the default leader, sits back slightly and the tea break is officially launched. People stay at their instruments for this with a couple of players moving around to hand out glasses. Conversations take place throughout the room. Some people chat quietly with those near to them or move to sit next to someone they wish to talk to, while

others, particularly those who feel confident in the setting, engage in banter with people quite far distant, calling across the room. When these conversations become amusing enough they attract the attention of others who might join in or just observe admiringly. When one goes a little too far and becomes uncomfortable everyone else immediately studiously ignores it, leaving the protagonists to disentangle themselves. After a while individuals start to signal that they feel that it is time to start playing again. Someone starts trying out something on their instrument, the drummer ostentatiously tunes the drums, someone else starts flicking through a notation book, and a few suggestions as to the next piece are called out.

Finishing up and leaving

After a few more pieces have been played suggestions for the next choice begin to dry up and people are expressing less enthusiasm for continuing. Someone calls out a well-known phrase from musical theatre with the words ‘What’s the time now, now what is the time?’ (*iki wis jam pirâ, wis jam pirâ iki*), letting it be known that he feels it’s getting late without having to be too direct. The drummer suggests a final piece, the group’s signature tune, written for them by their teacher, and to reinforce that they feel this should be the end of the *latihan* a number of the players finish their glasses of tea before finding the right notation. As the last gong note begins to fade everyone starts shuffling notation booklets into a pile, collecting personal belongings, putting beaters away and moving towards the door. Several small knots of conversation form amongst people who know each other slightly better, one or two people quietly ask around for a lift back home, and those leaving in the same direction make up convoys as they set off. A younger musician who plays with the group stays behind to talk to the drummer, asking him about subtleties of interpretation while he finishes his last cigarette before setting off.

What makes a *latihan*? Part two

Having given this condensed description of how a *latihan* usually unfolds I will now draw out some of the features which make it distinctive from both taught lessons and rehearsals in professional contexts.

Practicing rather than being taught

There is never a sense of a *latihan* being a class where people come to be taught to play gamelan, although people do come to them in order to learn to play. The expected method of acquiring knowledge is a process of observation, repetition, and careful attention to the reactions of those around you. The assumption that the learner is responsible for most of the work involved is expressed in the language surrounding music education. The word study (*sinau*) is far more often encountered than teach (*mulang, ajar*), and the phrases used for seeking out knowledge are heavily weighted towards the idea of an active seeker and a passive source of wisdom: drawing up knowledge as if from a well (*ngangsu ilmu/kawruh*), and seeking someone out as a teacher (*ngguroni*).

The fact that *latihan* are always communal events with many people present also prevents them from becoming explicitly tuition-based, as the whole group must be engaged. On the few occasions when a senior musician decides to actually engage in teaching one individual during a *latihan*, even if this is before a quorum has gathered or during the tea break, it is regarded with some suspicion by the other players and if it goes on for longer than they are comfortable with the atmosphere can rapidly become tense. Group leaders who are used to teaching at ISI will sometimes address the whole group with information about interpretation of a specific piece or general rules for appropriate aesthetic decisions, but this is not the norm.

The expectation that people are responsible for their own learning and adjusting to what they see and hear unfolding around them is one of the most common causes of tension within groups. When individuals fail to notice what they should be doing, or what others are trying to steer them towards, this generates a considerable level of discomfort amongst those who are trying to guide them unobtrusively. The situation leaves them with a choice between either accepting incorrect or inappropriate playing, or proving themselves to be ineffective at leading by inference by resorting to more explicit means. Despite the frustrations this causes it usually proves preferable to remain impassive and allow those who are not 'getting the hint' (*nanggap sasmita*) to appear clueless in the eyes of those who can judge such things.

The only times when I saw people readily challenging others' lack of circumspection or awareness of implicitly imparted information were when this was done across gender lines. In the market group the majority of members were women but there was a core group of men who also played in the group. These men had more experience playing, if not necessarily much more knowledge, and they never held back in telling the women in the group where they were going wrong, or where they had missed a signal from another player. In the group at the KOSTI taxi depot and at both of the groups that meet at Cakra homestay the *sindhèn*, Mbak G. and Bu M., are very knowledgeable and have no compunction in correcting male musicians. This is particularly often the case when the senior men in the group are all desperate for something to change but do not wish to openly correct someone; eventually the *sindhèn*, well aware of the situation, will do what is required. In general it appears that men are not willing to criticise other men publicly, whereas women, particularly *sindhèn*, have less compunction about doing this. In the Tuesday palace group the two women who occasionally attended sometimes upbraided the whole group when the male, official leader of the group had not felt able to say

anything, and Bu Dar., in the group at the Town Hall, regularly stepped in to say what needed to be said when none of the men were prepared to do so.

Lack of repetition

A major distinction between a *latihan* and other forms of rehearsal is that pieces are almost never repeated in a *latihan* even if there has been a major problem whilst playing it. Even if the decision is taken to play something again it is the entire piece that is repeated, there is no attempt to isolate the problematic section and play it on its own. Even when a group is preparing for a public playing event the method of practicing pieces consists of regular, complete versions of each item. The only times I witnessed specific transitions or individual elements of pieces being practiced separately or drilled were in groups led by professional musicians from either ISI or Sriwedari, who do sometimes rehearse in this way in order to save time.

The tea break

Whilst the provision of food and drink is a fundamental part of organizing any rehearsal in Solo there are distinct differences between the way this is integrated into a gamelan association *latihan* and how it is handled by professional groups. All professional rehearsals that I have attended involve food and drink but consumption is usually limited to the end of a session, once serious work has been achieved, and people eat rather quickly and without talking. This is very different from the companionable sharing of snacks and tea at the mid-point of a *latihan* which is a part of the evening's entertainment rather than a functional reward for work done. Also, when professional musicians rehearse the food and drink provided is paid for by whoever is employing them whereas gamelan associations share in providing refreshments, either by individual members donating them or by a system of regularly collecting contributions from the whole

membership which are then used for this purpose. In a professional rehearsal any socialising is kept resolutely separate from the time designated for playing, and eating and drinking are functional and part of a contract of employment. In contrast in a *latihan* socialising and the communal provision and sharing of food and drink are key components.

Summary

The *latihan* as described here is the specific institution which I argue frames the existence of gamelan associations in Solo. An analysis of the word itself unpacks many of the defining characteristics of this particular mix of social and musical activity: a *latihan* is concerned with training and practicing, preparation, and development of personal and interpersonal skills of interaction, responsiveness, and aesthetic judgement. Whilst the term is also used by professional musicians the *latihan* as practiced by gamelan associations is distinct in several ways. The focus is on learning through practice and absorption rather than direct teaching, there is no isolated repetition of specific material to refine or hone it with mistakes being regarded as part of the process rather than errors to be corrected, and with sociable partaking of food and drink as an integral element rather than a functional addition.

Summary of Section One

Gamelan associations in Solo are complex organisations based on the collaborative involvement of a great number of individuals. Across the city and the surrounding area there are a large number of such associations in a wide range of settings and with very varied membership profiles. The membership of each individual association is also usually internally diverse, including players with very different levels of musical skill and experience, and from different social backgrounds, even if there is a core group brought together by some unifying factor which acts as a nucleus. This variety is also reflected in the wide range of terms, phrases, and circumlocutions used locally to refer to these groups. Despite this variety there are however specific characteristics which unify these groups, distinguishing them from professional and commercial groups, and which justify studying them as a unified phenomenon. These groups are all based within an existing community framed by geography or occupation, members are almost exclusively in their fifties or older and have not had any formal training in the performing arts since their childhood if at all, and whilst many of them do perform in public they tend to focus on social interaction and inclusion in their meetings rather than rigorous rehearsal or quality of musical output.

There are a number of ways in which the *karawitan* played in gamelan associations differs from the practice of lineage and academy musicians. Although some of these differences do represent a commitment to different stylistic emphases and non-classical genres within the broader spectrum of music played on gamelan instruments, they are mostly a result of techniques adopted to sustain the sound aesthetic and musical functions of a full ensemble without members capable of playing certain of the soft instruments.

The *latihan* is the defining characteristic of gamelan associations, uniting all groups whether or not they perform in public, and regardless of all other differentiating features. It is different in approach and content from professional rehearsals with its blend of osmotic learning without explicit teaching and dedicated social times within the structure. This means that *latihan*, and by extension gamelan associations in general, are frequently implicated in discussions of community, belonging, and productive collaboration, a theme which I explore in more depth in the next chapter.

Section Two: The Uses of Participation

Section one provides a comprehensive description of gamelan associations, using profiles of individual groups, and analysis of how members and outsiders perceive and define them, how their musical practice relates to that of professional players, and the way in which they organise and structure their meetings. In section two I move on to the reasons that people have for their participation in gamelan associations and the possibilities and benefits that their involvement affords. I present this material in five chapters each focussing on one of the major themes which arose in the course of playing with, observing, and talking to musicians and sponsors: gamelan's intimate connections to ideas of community, the expression of cultural ownership and stewardship, the display and negotiation of musically-mediated authority, obtaining access to powerful individuals and institutions, and the importance of participation in the aural sphere in Java.

Chapter Four

Negotiating community

In this chapter I set out the idea of community as a fundamental organising principle in how both participants and outsiders discuss playing gamelan. I argue that in an Indonesian context the idea of community not only includes specific personal and local groups but is also heavily implicated in discourses of national belonging which adds significance and weight to participation in gamelan associations.

I begin by setting out some of the ways in which music, and specifically making music in groups, has been theorised as involved in building and expressing belonging and community, arguing that Solonese gamelan associations are spaces where community is created, nuanced, and performed in ways ranging from intense personal connection to almost anonymous companionship. I then set out the ways in which indigenous models of communal behaviour have been idealised and adopted by the Indonesian state and argue that this creates a conflation between community sociality and national belonging which profoundly affects how gamelan players in Solo today conceive of their participation in traditional music-making. Then I move on to ethnographic studies of residential communities in Central Java⁴² and the ways in which interactions with official, institutional structures articulate or shape their concerns and needs. I contend that the techniques of managing constructive interaction between the state and local models of

⁴² Focusing primarily on the work of Guinness (1986; 2009) and Sullivan (1992) in Central Java, although the issues they discuss have also been studied in other areas of Indonesia (Antlöv 1995; Cederroth 1995; Warren 1993)

governance described here are also used in building the support necessary for the existence of gamelan associations and in deriving benefit for those involved.

To support these arguments I present two sections of ethnographic material focussing respectively on how gamelan associations build belonging and how they seek to formalise their existence as communities within institutional structures. These forms of community are sometimes expressed and performed through the classically recognised means of Javanese social bonding, the *slametan*, but also involve other means such as the exchange of wedding invitations. Ultimately, however, I argue that the gamelan association *latihan* acts as a more regular and less tightly bounded form of *slametan*. The idea of ‘community’, whether conceived of as tight-knit, bounded groups, or as larger and less intimate structures of belonging, is a fundamental part of how players in gamelan associations conceive of themselves, manage their groups’ ongoing existence, and gain from participation.

Music’s specific role in making and shaping community

Ethnomusicologists have frequently sought to tease out the ways music is implicated in the construction of communities above and beyond the mechanical solidarity of shared economic and social need described in early anthropological descriptions,⁴³ which leave little space for considering the quality of relationships within groups and the dynamics within them. The specific ways in which music forms communities of belonging have been explained in evolutionary terms, as the result of shared, coordinated muscle movement (McNeil 1995), psychologically in terms of the bonds formed in shared performance (Goffman 1990) and becoming part of a ‘community of practice’ (Lave and

⁴³ The classic example of this is Bradfield’s (1973) ‘Natural History’ of community.

Wenger 1991), or socially in terms of groups formed through descent, dissent, and affinity (Shelemay 2011).

These approaches all have something to contribute to the study of gamelan associations: gamelan playing involves repetitive, physical activity which is strongly linked to discourses of social coordination, and these groups are fundamentally based on the inculcation and performance of shared musical and social behaviours.⁴⁴ Issues of descent, dissent and affinity are more complex as these musicians, I contend, are engaged with the tradition in all three ways simultaneously. They regard themselves as heirs to the tradition through ethnic affiliation; they are, I contend, using participation to exert some degree of agency in confronting larger definitions of their sociality; and they are also members of these groups through attraction to the sounds, activities and social interactions that they afford.

At an individual level musical choice can be used as a ‘technology of the self’ (DeNora 2000), a way of manipulating mood in oneself and others, or as a way of defining oneself through specific choices and membership in a community of connoisseurship (Hennion 2001; Ollivier 2006) which nonetheless is fundamentally linked to a desire to attain previously experienced transcendent states associated with that music. These discussions of how music affects the individual ultimately return us to the social settings in which these assertions of identity and belonging are meaningful. In existing groups music can serve to express their unity (Blacking 1973), patrol the borders of identity, defining this more by who is outside than what is inside (Stokes 1994), or assert one’s separation from a cultural mainstream and the establishment of a smaller group identity (Slobin 1992,

⁴⁴ Keeler (1987) responds to Goffman by suggesting that in Javanese contexts ‘we should not see social interaction as performative but rather look at performance as social.’ This would imply that being involved in a musical community affords the pleasure of gaining specific knowledge in conjunction with others, which can then be displayed both within the group and to those outside it.

Solis 2004). Participating in performance can, therefore, be part of the process of creating, maintaining, and enforcing social norms (Small 1998). This, however, also leaves open the possibility of musical communities using these same mechanisms to rehearse and perform different and new social attitudes and interactions and potentially promote these to others, becoming what Turino (2008, 111) calls ‘cultural cohorts’.

The responses of musicians to my questions about their motivation for joining gamelan associations demonstrate that their participation is intimately linked both to personal responses to *karawitan* and what choosing to play gamelan signals about them, and also to relating to others in complex networks of friendship and solidarity which they feel need to be practiced and demonstrated. Players frequently link the specific and personal pleasures and responsibilities of involvement to a desire to operate within far more wide-reaching norms of desirable communal behaviour. These are referred to with the assumption that they are straightforwardly and traditionally Javanese. Such normative notions of what constitutes Javanese behaviour have, however, been formulated in the context of colonial and post-colonial Indonesia (Pemberton 1994) and are far more contingent than is usually acknowledged. I turn now to the development of these ideas in order to establish the discursive environment which the individuals who are involved with gamelan associations take for granted as a frame of reference.

‘Community’ in Java

Community has been a major concern of social science studies of Indonesia, and there are two interlinked areas of focus which predominate within this body of research. The first is the adoption of the concept and language of community by both the Sukarno and Suharto governments in their attempts to forge a national identity for post-independence Indonesia. The second is the complex way in which existing structures of social and

geographic organisation relate to state structures of governance, what size of group can be considered a real community, and how the internal politics of a group is contained and harnessed.

National ‘community values’

The need to create a national identity from the various ethnic groups and indigenous kingdoms formerly only united by their shared colonisation by the Dutch led to a number of Javanese terms relating to community activity being formalised, given slightly new meanings and rolled out as national models of behaviour, which could nonetheless be regarded as, in some way, authentically Indonesian. The most important of these terms was *gotong-royong*. Originally a term for certain types of communal labour project, this was adopted as a catch-all phrase to denote a generalised and virtuous attitude of mutual aid and cooperation, and proposed by Sukarno as the basic value underlying the national ideology of *Pancasila* (Darmaputera 1988, 152). The adoption of phrases like *gotong-royong* can clearly be seen as misrecognitions (Bowen 1986, 558) which have gained enormous leverage in the national consciousness. It is still used regularly in Java, but almost always with the particular tone of voice that implies the quotation of political Indonesian rather than everyday use of Javanese. Under the Suharto regime there was a further move towards a privileging of Javanese culture in the national field. This was not an explicit strategy but is implicit in the architecture and layout of national museums and monuments, and in the staging of the national multi-ethnic celebrations which were a feature of this era (Hellman 1998; 2003).

Thus ideas of what it means to be a Javanese community based on idealised village and court life, have been taken up by government, re-calibrated for the production of a national ethos of belonging and contributing, and displayed in the cultural arena as the

privileged mode of being Indonesian. Despite the dominance of Javanese culture on the national stage in terms of assumed behavioural norms, and visual forms such as architecture and formal dress, the sounds of being Javanese, language and music, were not similarly co-opted, with musics that used the national language and had more obviously multi-ethnic and cosmopolitan roots, such as *kroncong* and *dangdut*, being favoured (Weintraub 2010), particularly for celebrations of Independence Day (Hatley 1982). The explicitly political uses of music to construct a national imaginary, such as that described by Askew (2002) in Tanzania, or the national, middle-class gentrification of traditional culture in South India (Weidman 2006) are not predominant features of gamelan's position in Indonesia. I argue that this leaves the realm of 'Javanese sound' uniquely available as an arena for people to reclaim and explore ideas about Javanese identity and community. The overall dominance and prestige of Javanese culture, however, means that, unlike *Arabesk* in Turkey (Stokes 1992), the performance of gamelan does not directly contradict dominant constructions of national identity. It is in a position somewhat closer to that of *enka* in Japan (Yano 2002), part of the national consciousness, but not entirely consistent with its current, mainstream, modern expression.

Gamelan and political ideas of community

Despite not being a primary site for the creation of a national identity, Javanese gamelan has been intimately tied to these notions of Indonesian community as founded on cooperation and mutual assistance, and radically intertwined with group endeavour. The first two presidents, Sukarno and Suharto, readily used concepts from their Javanese backgrounds to project their legitimacy and power, both collecting sacred heirlooms and visiting the graves of former kings and spiritual leaders to ask for blessings and endowments of spiritual power. Such practices were clearly personally meaningful but

also served to project a suitable image to the roughly forty percent of Indonesians who are Javanese. The continued use of traditional techniques for acquiring and demonstrating authority also occurred in the musical arena with many composers of the post-independence era taking it upon themselves to assume the role of court poets (*pujånggã*) by writing enormous amounts of music promoting government policy. This has had a lasting effect on the way people think and talk about gamelan groups.

The most prolific among these was Ki Nartosabdho, who produced hundreds of new pieces of gamelan music and wrote new songs for hundreds of existing *gendhing*. His oeuvre contains a large number of pieces specifically promoting government programmes in health and social policy, and explaining the new political rights and responsibilities of citizens in a modern nation state, for example: ‘The magistrate comes to the village’⁴⁵ explaining the processes of the new legal system, ‘Tourism’⁴⁶ encouraging internal leisure travel, ‘The agricultural census’⁴⁷ explaining the importance of taking part, ‘Pulling together’⁴⁸ and two pieces⁴⁹ which set out and explain the five constitutional principles of the Indonesian state, the *Pancasila*. Even in pieces which are not as explicitly political there are many texts which reference the tropes of communal activity as fundamental to authentically Indonesian organisation and specifically tie these ideas to gamelan playing. Frequently used examples of this include a song for the *kébar* section of *ladrang Pangkur* which includes the lines: ‘May this piece be a means for us to come together both physically and spiritually’ (*mugã dadi sarãnã manunggal lahir terus ing bathin*), ‘slicing a cucumber; come on let’s build up the nation’ (*timun sigarané ayo mbangun negarané*), and ‘two three four five six; the country develops, the people are

⁴⁵ *Jaksa masuk desa*

⁴⁶ *Pariwisãtã*

⁴⁷ *Sensus Tani*

⁴⁸ *Gugur gunung*

⁴⁹ *Silã Limã and Pancasila*

calm and peaceful' (*loro telu papat limå enem; negårå pådå maju, rakyaté ayem tentrem*). Nartosabdho also famously incorporated musical techniques and melodic ideas from other regions of Indonesia into his compositions, generating a way of performing national harmony through the medium of Javanese gamelan.

Do players in contemporary gamelan associations invoke this discourse?

When I raised the question with Indonesian friends and acquaintances of why people might wish to play in a gamelan association there was an almost universal first response. Whether I was explaining my area of interest to the officials at the Ministry of Internal Affairs making decisions about my research permit, talking to taxi drivers, putting out feelers in conversation with my former teachers at ISI, or engaging directly with the individuals concerned, there was an assumption that the answer was already obviously apparent, and known to my interlocutor, and that surely researching a thesis on this topic was rather redundant. It seemed utterly obvious to all these people that gamelan associations provided their members with opportunities for building and strengthening relationships as a group and as a result learning techniques for interpersonal relationships which would make them 'better' people at an individual, local, and national level. The terms used to describe this varied from person to person and with which language they were speaking to me in at the time but all held the same fundamental import: being together in a way which provides opportunities for both enjoyment and mutual support and validation. This was variously framed in terms of pseudo-familial relationships (*kekeluargaan, persaudaraan*), bonds of friendship (*kekancan*), deepening knowledge of others through shared experience (*keakraban, srawung, bergaul*) or simply as 'togetherness' (*kebersamaan*).

Enjoying being in social contact with others is clearly a genuine and compelling component of the desire to play in gamelan associations, not simply an ungrounded

assumption. In interviews and questionnaires almost every single respondent's first response to the question 'why did you join a gamelan group?' was along these lines:

'To meet people.' (*Untuk srawung*) Mas U.

'Because it's easy to get to know people there.' (*Gampang bergaul*) Pak Y.

'For a sense of togetherness and as a place for socialising.' (*Kebersamaan dan tempat bersosialisasi*) Pak Par.

Some of these answers, although brief, also direct our attention towards important features of the type of sociality being sought in gamelan associations and how it is generated. Pak PM. suggests an added level of intensity in the friendships he has formed in a gamelan group: 'We are very close to our friends [in the group], linked by a tie of brotherhood' (*kami akrab sekali dengan teman demi tali persaudaraan*). Pak SJ. says that 'taking part in activities together on a regular basis generates genuine intimacy' (*kegiatan bersama berkali-kali menimbulkan keakraban yang benar-benar*). The particular sense of belonging and togetherness involved in playing gamelan together can, however, run counter to usual expectations of what friendship entails, with Pak SJ. adding: '(In the gamelan group) we are always adding new friends, even if we often forget their names and don't yet know where they live' (*kami setiap saat tambah teman meskipun nama sering lupa rumahnya juga belum tahu*).

Other answers also reveal that the form of sociality practiced in gamelan associations is not simply a means to acquire a wider circle of friends but is also seen as providing the opportunity for personal development in the context of interaction with other people. Pak Dar. says that he joined his group in order to 'increase my friends and my ability to interact appropriately' (*tambah teman dan tata krama*), and Bu Dar. says that she takes

part in order to ‘increase my knowledge and friends’ (*menambah ilmu dan teman*). Bu Su. specifically invokes the idea that the performing arts are a particularly efficacious sphere for this type of endeavour: ‘Yes, it’s easy to become intimate through art’ (*yå gampang akrab lewat seni*). This demonstrates a pervasive link in people’s minds between engagement with the traditional performing arts and developing the type of social skills which are seen as desirable more generally in Javanese society.

The notion of gamelan as capable of creating community and unity through its musical processes is an extremely pervasive concept, acting as a means of justifying continued government support for traditional music. As such it was commonly invoked by the first generation of ISI lecturers to encounter and teach foreign students, eager as they were to present a positive image of *karawitan* and its potential social benefits. As a result the unifying and socialising effect of gamelan playing has become the dominant discursive trope attached to it in non-Indonesian countries, particularly when promoting the music in educational contexts. Having myself trained at ISI, and used gamelan as an educational resource having to fight for the funding to do so, I am heavily influenced by this way of thinking and it was extremely easy to unquestioningly assume its validity and relevance in the current Javanese context. This particular moment appears to have passed with the changing political situation in Indonesia, however, and very little reference was made to explicitly political versions of these ideas when I was talking to the members of gamelan associations. Their concerns were far more focussed on individual links to the performing arts, representing their particular community, whether residential or workplace based, or maintaining a specifically Javanese form in the face of perceived Indonesian homogenisation rather than using the power of the Javanese arts to support national cooperation and integration.

The dominance of national media produced in Jakarta seems to have led to a situation where local performance traditions in Solo and the surrounding area are being used to assert regional identity against a dominant centre rather than lend support to a central power that is not yet secure. This comes at a time when the central government has been devolving large amounts of executive and financial authority to regional government, in response to calls for independence from provinces such as Aceh and Papua Barat. I arrived in Solo in 2012 to find a city full of billboards advertising the fact that a number of the major taxes which had been administered centrally before were now being collected and spent at a provincial level, and this coincided with an explosion in the funding of extremely local performance traditions. Within the first four months of arriving in Solo I had seen three enormous dance and music spectacles in the city centre, with every county of the surrounding area sending its own troupe to perform their somewhat rapidly discovered ‘traditional’ dance form. A sense of the importance of maintaining and being proud of local culture, even within the context of the national administration, has been fostered by the former mayor of Solo, Joko Widodo (now President of Indonesia), who made a specific policy of encouraging the use of traditional clothing by uniformed officials and the use of the Javanese language in administrative situations where historically only Indonesian would have been allowed.⁵⁰

The desire to deploy powerful forms of regional performing arts in supporting the newly independent nation of Indonesia and disseminating new political ideas, has given way to a sense that these performing arts now need to be used in re-asserting local identity in the face of an overly powerful centralised government and culture industry. This shift in government policy means that when individuals or groups wish to invoke grand societal discourse to justify the importance of gamelan associations they now refer to this

⁵⁰ This seems to be part of a resurgence in interest in the ‘locally traditional’ (*adat*) since the fall of Suharto. (Davidson and Henley 2007)

phenomenon, rather than using the previously accepted model. Gamelan associations are still thought of as communities that can carry out important social roles but their role is no longer to act solely as models of unity and pulling together, rather as models of locally inflected autonomy and specificity. The importance of this lies in demonstrating how flexible and skilful gamelan players can be in using wider societal ideas of what is important to justify and validate what they are doing, even when their individual motivations for involvement are often extremely complex and not directly related to such discourses. The idea of gamelan as creating and fostering group feeling has not completely disappeared in Solo but it has been superseded by a focus on specificity which is more aligned with the current political situation. As I will discuss in Chapter six the notion of gamelan associations as sites for generating uncomplicated feelings of unity and smooth social interaction is also not an accurate reflection of the actual practice of most groups.

As a theoretical framework for further investigating the articulations between official notions of community and lived experience, and the way in which gamelan associations relate to official institutions and organisations in order to make their existence secure I now turn to the social science literature on community in Indonesia.

Local community in interaction with the state

The lived experience of communities in Indonesia and the negotiations between local and national structures of authority have been the subject of a number of ethnographic studies, mainly focussing on various locations throughout West (Antlöv 1995), Central (Guinness 1986; Sullivan 1992) and East (Cederroth 1995) Java, but also including Bali (Warren 1993). These studies all stress the strategic importance, for both local communities and the state, of allowing, but carefully managing, the overlap and interaction between

different sources and models of authority and leadership. Having a locally authoritative individual who already evokes allegiance and respect become part of the local state apparatus brings the two systems together in ways that are potentially beneficial for all concerned, even if not always completely uncomplicated. The state gains by incorporating officers with locally relevant experience, thereby becoming more locally relevant and efficient, while the local community has its existing structures of authority validated by the state and the individuals involved gain extra backing for and protection of their role and community by formalising them as part of the state system.

The extent to which local and national understandings and definitions of community overlap and support each other in Central Javanese cities is the central question posed by Guinness (1986; 2009) and Sullivan (1992). Both worked in low-income, urban communities in Yogyakarta living and studying *kampung* neighbourhoods, which constitute the large areas of urban housing not directly facing onto main roads.

Guinness's first book (1986) deals primarily with the ways in which norms of behaviour structure the *kampung*, with membership of the community being predicated on participation in informal, but nonetheless rigorously observed, exchanges of money, labour, and deference. He puts forward here a model of Javanese community that is based on a geographical location. This geographic space is, however, also bounded by economics and ideology. Although by no means homogenous in terms of income or employment type, the *kampung's* population is neither as wealthy and powerful as the inhabitants of the roadside houses nor as poor and powerless as the inhabitants of the riverside. They also share a commitment to particular ideas of what respectability and responsible community life entail, attempting to maintain a balance between self-interest and contributing to the collective. The description Guinness gives is one of a specific bounded locale, where shared social norms allow large numbers of people with varied

religious affiliations, social statuses, and economic situations to feel solidarity with those that live around them. In his analysis community can exist in an area which equates to an administrative unit. The administrative unit does not entirely define the community, but insider understandings of the area map onto the official division in a way that allows inhabitants to appropriate its terminology in referring to their community.

Sullivan (1992) worked in another *kampung* in Yogyakarta and provides a very different view of the size of group that can be considered to be a community. His ethnography is more focused on where fractures in the *kampung* occur than what unites it as a group. He addresses the same forms of classic Javanese inter-familial social interaction that Guinness does: looking at the pooling of female labour in the production of food for particular family celebrations and also the preparations for larger-scale public events, organised at the level of administrative units. Rather than focussing on the desired, and often achieved, outcome of smooth cooperation, however, he highlights the fragmentation and self-interest that the ideology of community collaboration serves to temper and obscure. He ultimately concludes that larger groupings such as *kampung*, *RT* or *RW*⁵¹ do not constitute true communities. He proposes a much smaller unit, which he calls a 'cell', as the locus for meaningful personal commitment and loyalty. The interactions between these cells amount to a form of thinly disguised warfare, where each attempts to maximise its own benefit whilst still maintaining a close enough adherence to the norms of collective behaviour to avoid becoming pariahs. This focus on the micro level of community structure, and the struggle for dominance and gain that it reveals, is a necessary corrective to the tendency to view Javanese social interaction as based on striving for harmony and collective benefit. I feel, however, that Sullivan's model underestimates the cohesion shown by groups larger than the cell, and moves towards a

⁵¹ RT and RW are administrative subdivisions of a *kampung*.

definition of community that excludes anything short of extremely high levels of emotional and practical dependency.

Both Guinness and Sullivan view communities as being essentially defined by geographic location and physical proximity, even though they may be constructed and maintained through social interactions and a range of ideas about participation. Guinness' later book, however, returns to the same riverside *kampung* looking in closer detail at the way in which different communities of belonging cut across the proximity-based relationships. He is keen to emphasise the multiple worlds that people belong to: showing the ways in which religious affiliation forms smaller groups within *kampung* which are nevertheless part of wider networks of solidarity that reach well beyond its confines. In all of this, he determinedly emphasises the possibility of community being found in rather large groups which are not necessarily grounded in being neighbours or family, citing, for example, families in which each generation professes a different religion. He does not see Sullivan's 'cell' as exhausting the possibilities for defining community.

In the wider literature on Java, the presence of community has often been predicated on participation in a communal meal called a *slametan*. This involves women in a particular residential area pooling and preparing large amounts of food, which is then blessed and redistributed in low-key ceremonies attended and presided over by their husbands. Geertz (1976) uses this as the defining characteristic of communal life in Java, but his characterisation of *slametan*, and assessment of their importance, has since been called into question by Guinness (Guinness 2009, 151–52), who draws attention to a decline in frequency of the events, and Brenner (Brenner 1998, 172–76), who charts a gradual increase in female involvement as men no longer take part. *Slametan* are not often particularly visible or emotional events but do nonetheless serve to transform the

entanglements of sharing physical space into something culturally and spiritually mediated.

These studies provide a wealth of ideas about how one might approach community in Java, and what one might consider to be markers of the existence of community. None, however, address the role of music in the formation, maintenance and finessing of community relationships. Guinness refers in passing to people taking part in locally based gamelan rehearsals, and Sullivan briefly mentions young people's involvement with national trends in new popular music as a means of distancing themselves from the attitudes and aspirations of the older generation. The specifically musical literature on gamelan in Java, therefore, does not explore the idea of community, and the literature on community in Java leaves the topic of gamelan unaddressed. There are studies of musics in Indonesia which deal with issues of affinity and group formation, but these are in the realm of non-gamelan, popular music such as Weintraub's (2010) study of *dangdut*, or of religious recitation and related Islamic genres such as Rasmussen's (2010) work on women's voices in Qur'anic recitation.

How do gamelan associations constitute themselves as communities?

Guinness and Sullivan's focus is on the life of residential areas and is therefore naturally concerned with geographically bounded spaces and the communities that they may engender and house. In the context of Javanese cities this also generally means communities of which one is a member without conscious choice, as most people are born or marry into the *kampung* in which they live. Although they are, inevitably, normally based on a specific location which houses the instruments, gamelan associations are not of necessity communities formed by shared residence. To what extent, therefore, are place and already existing communities fundamental to building and sustaining

gamelan communities? Guinness' descriptions of how individuals from marginal groups attempt to become part of pre-existing communities also raise the question of how this occurs in gamelan associations. How do people join groups, whether as part of a cohort or as an individual? How is belonging negotiated, and giving due regard to Sullivan's notion of the cell, how are smaller subsections and fractures within groups dealt with?

Whilst most groups are only able to come into being because of the existence of a core membership that is sufficient to play satisfactorily, there is always turnover in membership and thus the occasional need to recruit players, a need to encourage players to stay in the group and attend regularly, and, sometimes, ways of leaving. Inviting someone to join a group can be somewhat sensitive since, as described above, they tend to be located in quite specific social niches. Despite the importance of such decisions I never witnessed them being discussed openly or by the group as a whole. Whenever a new player was brought to the group it was through personal invitation by a senior member of the group who had external connections with other musicians. Such invitations were usually made to fill positions that the group could not adequately cover internally and which would not require any direct disturbance of the existing line-up.

Place and existing communities

A number of the groups I studied were based on specific places but it was actually relatively rare for this to be a residential area or for membership to be based on living near a particular rehearsal venue: only four out of fifteen groups fell into this category. The group in Jetis, a satellite village of Solo, meets in the house of a local gamelan player who came into enough money to build a space suitable for housing a gamelan. The group had been meeting in an RT building up until this point but this was regarded as unsatisfactory as it was very small and the gamelan needed to be moved before being

played. The group describe themselves as being from this particular RT, an area taking in three or four streets, and the majority of the group do indeed live here. The rehearsals, however, attract significant numbers of players from the surrounding area who enjoy the unusually lavish hospitality and contribute specific skills to the music-making, without which it would be less enjoyable for all. This was one of only two groups which I played with where people from the surrounding area who were not playing would use the *latihan* as a meeting point and place to socialise. This was facilitated by the amount of space available in village settings compared to within Solo and the fact that both groups met in the house of a local resident who was only of slightly higher social status than most inhabitants.⁵²

When gamelan associations are established in a particular location or workplace there are inevitably people who do not become involved and thus end up outside the specific boundaries of this smaller community within a community. As a result of clearly being part of these groups myself I very rarely had access to unvarnished opinions about membership from those outside. The one place where I did gain some perspective on how the togetherness forged by playing gamelan was perceived by those who were not part of this endeavour was in Pasar Gedhé. Here there were both other musical groups and a large number of market traders who did not play gamelan but could not fail to be aware of the group's existence and who were not shy in giving me their opinions if I was in the market outside of rehearsals. The small group focussing on the more popular but less prestigious genre of *orjen tunggal* often engaged in staged, vitriolic complaints about the dominance of the gamelan association when music was involved in public events and clearly felt excluded and sidelined. Other traders who were not part of the group spoke

⁵² The perceived status of the person housing a *latihan* has a major impact on how comfortable others feel in attending if they are not playing. Being in this position means that you have to either be confident enough in the location to 'feel at home' or deal with being a guest for the entire evening with all of the formality that this entails.

about those who were members somewhat condescendingly, regarding them as self-promoting and over-keen to impress the market hierarchy.

How important are place and existing communities?

For all of the groups I encountered, place, either place of residence or place of employment, is a fundamental organising factor in their existence. Although very few groups have memberships which are exclusively drawn from one location the fundamental identity of the group is still predicated on a specific place. Gamelan associations, in the main, grow out of and flourish in existing communities based on bonds created through proximity of residence or employment. The groups which do not have this type of background, such as the Sunday group at the palace, often struggle to maintain enough internal cohesion and institutional support to survive. A shared location does not, however, guarantee an effortlessly smoothly functioning musical community. These place-based communities contain people from many different social backgrounds and statuses and, although the gamelan groups within them are made up of those who have chosen to make music together, this does not guarantee any level of homogeneity, as *karawitan* engages with and is attractive to so many different elements within Javanese society. The existing strategies which communities of place or institutional organisation have in place to deal with difference and stratification help to make this process easier in their associated gamelan ensembles, which makes them more stable than groups which do not exist within such established structures. The vast majority of groups, however, do not only consist of people from one 'place', with players from outside the core constituency being fundamentally important to their functioning. The extent to which these individuals are brought into the existing community, and the ways in which this is done, reveal how the boundaries of community are set and how musical needs and ideology influence this process.

I will now, therefore, explore the ways in which gamelan communities manage both internal difference and also the presence of players who are not members of the predominant community. I will explore these issues in terms suggested by Guinness' (1986) descriptions of individuals asserting belonging through demonstrating adherence to specific local systems of shared values. I will also examine the specific areas of difference that he addresses in his later book (Guinness 2009) as a means of investigating the extent to which the affinity groups formed by making music together overcome some of the major fault lines within Javanese society.

Managing community: techniques of belonging and sociality

Shared values: the role of music in unifying gamelan associations

Choosing to join a gamelan association involves engaging with two separate and different sets of shared values. The first of these is the complex of aesthetic and behavioural rules which are learnt in order to play gamelan music, and the second is the particular ethos and value system of the individual group. Whilst the first set of values are often spoken of as being clearly defined and monolithic, they are actually also highly dependent on context and vary dramatically from group to group. The types of repertoire and interpretation of pieces that are treated as 'gamelan' or '*karawitan*' by each association are very broad and is one of the characteristics that non-members are often aware of. Individuals who play in more than one group also frequently deliberately choose groups with contrasting styles in order to broaden their playing experience, although there are players who choose two or three groups with very similar repertoires. In this section I explore the extent to which a commitment to shared musical values from across the

spectrum of what is considered to be *karawitan* serves to unify gamelan associations, the extent to which shared musical affinity can suspend or elide other forms of social difference, and where the limits of community generated by shared musical experience lie. I do this by presenting three examples of how these issues play out in specific associations and a more general exploration of the issues surrounding wedding invitations, an important indicator of social obligation and cohesion in Solo.

Pasar Gedhé

The Pasar Gedhé group has a strongly popular slant to its repertoire which is a direct result of the preferences of the majority of members, even though the men who lead and drum are familiar with the more popular classical pieces and regularly attempt to include these in the group's collection of standards. Each rehearsal always starts with a few of the very regularly played classical pieces such as *Wilujeng*, *Randhu Kentir* going into *Ayun-Ayun*, and *Asmarandâna*, and this may last for around forty-five minutes of the session. After this there is usually a rapid change to an exclusive focus on *langgam* performed *dangdut* style with *sragènan* drumming which lasts for the rest of the two-hour rehearsal. This aesthetic divide allows the group to satisfy two distinct desires within the group. The classical section means that the men with experience in other gamelan groups who have knowledge of these pieces are able to display this, and that the other members of the group feel that they are learning 'real' gamelan, satisfying the overall desire within the group to acknowledge the tradition and show that they as market traders and cleaners are a part of this prestigious practice. The move to *dangdut* is based on the very strong desire on the part of large numbers of the members to play music which they hear regularly at weddings and other social events in their villages and to allow those who wish to sing to do so. The group has many players who are also keen singers but who do not have the training to sing *sindhènan*. The predominance of *langgam* with *bâwâ*, therefore, means

that many people can sing at each rehearsal and the repertoire consists of fixed songs rather than pieces which require the contextual interpretation of traditional music. Giving a *sragènan* interpretation to the *langgam* also allows the men who have no formal training in classical technique, but are experts at the florid interjections on *balungan* instruments (*jengglèngan*) that characterise this style, a chance to display their skill and prowess.

These two aesthetic strands form the distinctive musical make-up of the group, and because of its regular performances in front of the market, on one of the most important junctions in the city, many Solonese are familiar with this particular blend of repertoire. The combination serves to satisfy the complex bundle of interests amongst the membership and thus gives cohesion to the complex collection of musical ability, taste, and experience present.

In terms of shared social values this group brings together two distinct systems. The uniquely large female presence in the group stems from the predominance of women in small-scale trade in Java, and their self-confident assertiveness grows out of their daily experience in a world where they are in control and where informal, female-led networks of interaction are the norm. The men in the group are largely employed in the official market administration which links the world of the market into the formal, male-dominated world of local government but most of them are in low-paid positions which, although salaried and uniformed, are service adjuncts to the women's work, so none of them makes as much money as the women. The unusual gender relations in this group can also be seen in the number of married couples who play together, generally with a musically informed husband who does not work in the market attending rehearsals with his wife. I was never able to satisfactorily understand why this is so common. It is possible that it is a way of chaperoning one's wife during rehearsals and performances

but this seems unlikely given the normal level of autonomy of market traders. It is perhaps indicative of a sense of unease around the bringing together of the two gendered worlds of the market in the context of the performing arts. The sense of community building, which is so prevalently seen as a beneficial and healthy function of playing gamelan together, may also take on a more problematic hue when it is bringing men and women together in a close-knit team outside of the normal bounds of workplace interaction and in the context of the performing arts, an area where women are particularly at risk of moral censure.

The gamelan group at Pasar Gedhé unites two distinct social systems which are otherwise connected but not particularly well integrated. The levels of connection and access to the administration that gamelan-playing women have are markedly superior to that of women who are not involved in the group and this does on occasion cause resentment. An idea of the ‘market community’ as a single unit is generated by this group, which is enjoyable and socially strategic for those who play in it, and also provides the city administration with a flagship group of workplace cohesion and commitment to tradition which can be displayed to visiting dignitaries and the general public at live events and through the media.

The Sunday group at the palace

Another group which brings together people from a very wide cross-section of Javanese society is the Sunday group at the palace. In stark contrast to most of the associations I played with, this group did not draw its members from any one easily defined social group. The players included a retired school teacher, an agricultural labourer, a wealthy woman with aspirations to local government election, an official from the environment protection agency, palace servants, wedding planners, and salon owners. This group was also remarkable in the range of religious affiliation among members, with some devout

Muslims who would break to pray during rehearsals, some Muslims who never joined them, a number of Christians of several denominations including a Seventh Day Adventist and a Jehovah's Witness, and a few who explicitly described themselves as practicing *Kejawèn*.⁵³ What brought all of these people to the group was a desire to have a level of access to and contact with the palace which is otherwise not easy to obtain. Although they all had some degree of interest in *karawitan* the levels of ability and experience were extremely variable. It was clear that in a majority of cases being recognised at the palace gate as someone who had the right to enter unchallenged and belonging to a group which allowed social contact with the royal family was the primary motivation for attendance. The fact that gamelan playing was not the primary focus for many attendees meant that the number of people who came to rehearsals was extremely variable and the group regularly became unviable. This was a cause of frustration to those few members who had joined in order to make music and, as many of them also played in other groups, they gradually stopped coming. The lack of a specific commitment to *karawitan* amongst many of the members meant that gamelan playing could not become a unifying factor for a group of people who had very little in common other than respect for the palace. The instability of attendance also means that the same basic pieces are played constantly without any improvement or increase in familiarity, resulting in a situation where the group cannot make any particular set of pieces or stylistic approach its own. Although having access to the world of palace life is highly attractive for some Javanese, playing in this group requires very specific forms of social interaction which arise because of the setting, and attempting to conform to these norms can become onerous and

⁵³ This is a syncretic mystical tradition which, although it falls under the aegis of Islam for administrative purposes, involves ancestor veneration, animist beliefs about sacred objects, and patterns of ritual and meditative practice that owe much to Hinduism and Buddhism.

render attendance uncomfortable. There is a clear distinction here between the two palace groups and the level of comfort members have with protocol. The Tuesday group is made up entirely of people who work for the palace in some capacity and who as a result know exactly where they stand in relation to each other in terms of seniority, appropriate forms of address, honorific language usage, and levels of familiarity. These relationships are performed on a daily basis and there is no sense of a need or possibility of changing them during rehearsals. For the people who play on Sundays the situation is far more complicated and potentially disorienting. In the first instance these are individuals with a great deal of investment in the idea of the importance of the royal family and therefore in behaving correctly in the palace, particularly in the presence of Gusti P. They are, however, far less practiced in the niceties of speech and physical protocol than palace servants, as they are only exposed to it on a weekly rather than daily basis. The presence of a number of Gusti P.'s own staff makes this situation even more confusing: one might think that as palace insiders their behaviour would be a safe model to emulate, but the level of familiarity and intimacy that they have with their employer is obvious and clearly not appropriate for outsiders. Most of those who attend the Sunday rehearsals regularly are either self-confident enough to brave this situation, or manage their perceived inability to navigate the situation by only engaging in matters of musical protocol or by engineering situations so that those few who are confident act as an interface with Gusti P. for them. In this group the demands of attempting to engage with the social values that are assumed to apply frequently outweigh the pleasure of playing gamelan and this leads to membership being incredibly unstable.

Pemkot Laras

One group where musical concerns do clearly act as a uniting factor amongst a very wide range of players is Pemkot Laras at the Town Hall. This group adheres to a definite

musical aesthetic which is distinctive in both repertoire and approach to playing, and this brings together musicians from across lines of class, age, place of employment, and musical background in a way which is unusual. The focus of the group is on performing a range of pieces which runs the gamut from some of the most complicated and serious large-scale *gendhing* to extremely polished versions of the currently trendy popular songs. This choice of repertoire is a result of a combination of factors within the group. The leader, Mas Su., is an ISI graduate and former professional player at the dance-drama troupe and has, therefore, a detailed knowledge of a vast array of pieces and interpretive styles, combined with the ability to drum anything the group wishes to play. The middle-class and highly educated background of the majority of the members leads to an emphasis on repertoire that is considered part of the classical tradition and which is assumed, therefore, to represent the best of Javanese culture. This in no way results in an exclusively classical repertoire, however, as the group's regular engagements to play for weddings necessitate playing a wide range of popular numbers on request. The fundamental attitude of the group is one of performing whatever is being played to a very high standard regardless of genre.

This heavy emphasis on quality of performance is relatively unusual in gamelan associations. In the vast majority of the groups I encountered the quality of social interaction was the primary focus and stressing musical quality at the expense of this was perceived as undesirable. The particular make-up of Pemkot Laras allows it to combine the two: the membership consists of people willing to make this a priority, and the fact that this is the case attracts other players who relish the opportunity to function at such a high level. Making music together to the highest possible standard and discussing the finer points of interpretation are types of social interaction that people in this group appreciate and enjoy. It is the factor that forms community in this group rather than a

potential disruption to it. Although the group is predominantly made up of current and retired town hall employees, this community is extremely open to the involvement of anyone who can contribute to this focus on musical quality.

Wedding invitations

The extent to which the community built within a gamelan group is carried into other circles of belonging and ritually circumscribed community is very variable. The most obvious demonstration of this was how invitations to weddings which were not also group performances were handled within different groups. Invitations for Javanese weddings are usually extremely numerous: most events I attended would have involved several hundreds of people attending, and events are of necessity, therefore, held in large venues with professional caterers providing hundreds of tiny portions of appropriate food. The large number of invited guests does not, however, mean that invitations are indiscriminate or that the process of deciding whom to invite is not extremely socially charged. Attendance entails having to give a gift of money which helps to defray the extraordinary expense of the event (*sumbangan*), and because of this it is considered bad form not to attend if you have been invited. Being invited to a wedding is, therefore, simultaneously an honour and an obligation, and handing out invitations in group settings can become fraught as who has been invited becomes readily apparent. In the Pasar Gedhé group invitations were always extended to all of the regular members. This was done during rehearsals and the actual distribution was carried out by Mbak Sr., who acts as social secretary for the group, rather than the actual event sponsor. Attendance at members' social events was always organised as a group activity, with transport being arranged collectively and arrival and departure being coordinated. This level of overlap between gamelan group and external social events is unusual and, I believe, based on the shared, somewhat anomalous status that all the members have within their home

communities as ‘market people’. This sense of shared obligation for making each other’s events well attended is definitely consciously cultivated, and seen as a responsibility which overrides any of the internal rivalries within the group.

In the Pemkot Laras group wedding invitations were handled very differently. Invitations were definitely not given to everyone but, as the group was the only point of contact between some of the members, rehearsals were the only time when they could be distributed easily in a context where postal addresses do not really exist for most private houses. This meant that those with invitations to distribute resorted to turning up early in order to meet people individually as they arrived and then getting to the car-park area first at the end of the *latihan* in order to catch those they had missed earlier as they left, whilst attempting to minimise the visibility of this to those who were not invited. These attempts at camouflaging potentially divisive decisions were never truly successful, as even when the distribution was relatively subtle those who had received invitations would not necessarily hide them during the ensuing rehearsal and break, leading to them being seen by most other players. The higher overall age of the players in this group did mean that most of them had already hosted their children’s weddings by the time I was playing with the group. The sense of reciprocal obligation to attend and contribute was, therefore, less sharply in evidence and as long as some attempt at discretion was made no one was offended. The extremely different social groups brought together by a shared musical endeavour in this particular group also meant that there was less expectation that everyone would be invited.

The politics of handling wedding invitations are often compounded when dealing with gamelan groups specifically because of the involvement of music. The possibility of inviting friends from a gamelan group to play at your child’s wedding brings their attitudes towards the status of hired musicians, and their own possible inclusion in this

category, into extremely sharp relief. Some people who play gamelan enthusiastically and have performed quite happily at other public events balk at the idea of being seen playing for a wedding, particularly if it is happening in their home *kampung*. This may be because of status issues but also because of a desire to not be on duty at an event and be able to enjoy being a guest with no extra strings attached. This issue arose only once during my research but it did so in spectacular fashion, ultimately involving three separate groups and generating a significant amount of ill feeling amongst neighbours and causing the end of a gamelan association.

Pak Win. plays with Pemkot Laras and played with both groups at the Kraton; he also arranged, housed, and sponsored a gamelan group in his own home for the local residents. When he and his family began to make arrangements for their second daughter's wedding he was determined that there should be live gamelan for the main reception, rather than recordings or *campursari*. He decided that he wanted to invite his local group to play and asked the group if they would be willing to do this, on the understanding that this would replace their *sumbangan*, the financial contribution they would otherwise be expected to make as guests. Every single member of the group decided that they would rather be invited normally and make *sumbangan* rather than sit on stage throughout the ceremony, visibly acting as staff rather than guests, being cut off from interacting socially with other guests, and having no autonomy over when to arrive and leave. For these people the pleasure and community spirit of the gamelan group did not outweigh the social losses they felt they would suffer in their wider home community if they played for, rather than attended, the wedding. Piqued by the lack of commitment he felt they were showing, Pak Win. decided that he was no longer going to house the gamelan or host the rehearsals and this marked the end of the group.

In order to still provide a live gamelan for the wedding using his personal contacts, Pak Win. proceeded to hire a core group of professional players from the Sriwedari troupe with the assistance of Mas Su. from the town hall group, and then asked members of this group whom he wished to invite whether they would be prepared to play to make up the rest of the gamelan. Once enough people had agreed that they would do this, he had inserts printed for the relevant invitations which stated that the recipient was asked to perform in place of a *sumbangan* and gave details of rehearsals and dressing times before the ceremony. Because the players from the town hall knew Pak Win. but had no other social links to the wedding they were quite happy to attend in this capacity, gaining another performance opportunity, not needing to make a direct financial contribution, and also getting far more food than most of the guests.

Showing a commitment to a shared set of values is a fundamental feature of how gamelan associations organise themselves. These shared values do not always necessarily relate directly to music, sometimes having more to do with representing a particular workplace or gaining access to the particular social setting within which the group operates. A shared dedication to gamelan playing is capable of bringing diverse groups of people together within geographical areas or organisations and also of allowing people from outside to become part of these communities, but it is not universally successful at doing this, particularly when there is no other overarching unifying factor in the group.

Performing community: the *slametan* and its contemporary analogues

Having explored some of the ways in which gamelan associations constitute themselves as communities and the role music plays in this, I now turn to the institution of the *slametan* which has historically been theorised as the mark, par excellence, of a functional community in Java and a fundamentally important constitutive performance of

shared communal values (Geertz 1976). This ritualised production and sharing of food is based on the pooling of female labour to produce food and the formalised sociability of men who gather to pray over the food, ritually divide it amongst themselves as representatives of the community, and then take it back to their respective families. As mentioned above, however, the continued importance and even existence of the *slametan*, and the forms it takes, have also been called into question (Brenner 1998, 172–76; Guinness 2009, 151–52). In examining how gamelan associations relate to Javanese concepts of community it is necessary to briefly discuss the current position of *slametan* in Solo and in these groups in particular.

When I was studying in Solo for the first time, at the turn of the millennium, I was too young and not well integrated enough into my *kampung* or other adult social environments to be involved in *slametan*, other than knowing of the existence of the concept and occasionally hearing that one was taking place. Even at this time, however, *slametan* in the classic sense were not a regular occurrence in the area where I lived.

What did regularly occur was similar collective endeavour in preparation for the celebration of births, weddings, circumcisions, and post-funeral commemorations of the dead. Whilst varying in scale, with weddings being astonishingly complicated and labour-intensive compared to any other event in Javanese life, these all involve many of the features of *slametan* but are somewhat different in that they are attended either only by women and other children in the case of *bancakan* for births and birthdays, or both men and women in the case of weddings and memorials for the dead.

Returning to Solo in my late thirties meant that I was suddenly eligible for the social duties of an adult man. This was not only the case in the *kampung* which I returned to live in but also in all the gamelan groups I played with and the other social circles in which I moved. Speaking Javanese and having long-standing friendships and formal connections

also contributed to my being seen as obliged to take on the social roles of a Javanese man rather than a foreign boy. This meant that I attended and took part in a significant number of formal events outside of the usual schedule of playing for weddings and took my place in the welcoming lines and amongst the men praying over food. During a period of ten months I attended many *slametan*-type events but none of these fitted the standard definition as they were organised in the workplace rather than residential communities, were attended by both women and men, and the food was often catered or bought by one individual rather than produced by shared group labour.

Slametan and related events such as *bancakan* were in no way a usual part of the social activity of gamelan associations. The only times when they overlapped were when there was a specific event that the group was supporting which called for these activities, and this was always in relation to external concerns rather than aiming to bring the group itself together. In Pasar Gedhé the celebrations for New Year included performances by the various musical groups based there, but there was also a formal *slametan* for the well-being of the market held just before the main public events of the evening. This involved some members of the gamelan group who have connections to the administration, but not the majority, and was extremely close to being a fully traditional *slametan* apart from the presence of a couple of women amongst those praying over and consuming the food.

Pemkot Laras at the town hall discovered that the Javanese cyclical birthday of the Provincial Secretary falls on the day of the week when they rehearse, and for reasons which will be discussed in later chapters, decided to celebrate this once every thirty-five days by bringing food and having a *bancakan* for his benefit which he regularly attends. Although sharing many characteristics with *slametan*, this was purely aimed at praying for one individual rather than a community, consisted of bought food, and was simply appended to the usual rehearsal rather than being a separate event. At the *Kraton* neither

gamelan group ever held such events for themselves but there were occasions when *slametan*⁵⁴ had taken place in the inner court and excess food was brought out to be shared among the players. This, however, falls firmly within the usual practice of blessed material from the palace being distributed to the general public, rather than representing the groups' own practice of *slametan*.

I contend that *slametan* do not take place in gamelan associations because the usual practical and social arrangements for *latihan* and the culturally mediated social interaction that takes place during them mean that they effectively already fulfil the function of a *slametan*. Gathering to engage in a group activity which is conceived of as fulfilling important social functions such as generating harmony and unity, honouring traditional mores, and allowing all of this to pour out to the wider community is a fundamental feature of both practices. Attending a *latihan* invokes the same perceived community benefits as attending a *slametan* but occurs on a weekly basis, rather than sporadically, and allows one to combine this with personal satisfaction in making music and more general informal socialising.

Formalising community : seeking 'shelter'

One of the features of gamelan associations that initially surprised me was a very strong desire amongst members to achieve some form of official status for the group. Even in groups which had already achieved this by the time I was playing with them the story of how they managed to secure formal recognition was often recounted in interviews. The importance of being recognised in this way became clearer the longer I spent playing with gamelan associations: the need to secure instruments, venues for *latihan*, performance opportunities, or funding made this essential, but even in groups which had independent

⁵⁴ In the palace *slametan* are usually referred to as *wilujengan* which is the honorific version of the same term.

access to some of these resources the urge to formalise their position was extremely prevalent. The means of gaining recognition varied slightly between groups but usually involved a combination of some form of written constitution with the appointment of an individual who was to act as an intermediary between the group and outside authorities. These individuals were often referred to as *pengayom* or ‘shelterers’ and this, along with the protective function that official status provides, leads me to refer to this process of establishing formal representation and recognition as ‘seeking shelter’. I will explore here some of the examples of ‘seeking shelter’ that I witnessed before drawing out some of the implications of this.

By the time I joined the group at Pasar Gedhé it already had official status as well as a *pengayom* appointed by the market authorities. There was no official constitution document, but it was considered necessary to hold periodic business meetings at which group business other than musical rehearsal was carried out. This generally involved a report from those responsible for collecting subscriptions as to how much had been collected over a given period and the public transfer of these funds to Pak W. who paid for the gamelan rental and any visiting musicians who joined the group for performances. These meetings were clearly modelled on market management meetings, of which all those present had some experience, and were clearly designed to demonstrate the serious and reliable nature of the group to the market hierarchy who were often still present in the office where the *latihan* take place. This level of formal organisation was in stark contrast to the means of negotiation and interaction that the female market traders in the group use in their day-to-day business interactions and in some organising for the gamelan association. They were, however, extremely fluent in this other organisational ‘dialect’ and well prepared to use it when appropriate for achieving specific aims.

Pemkot Laras at the town hall had existed for many years before I joined but had not yet been formally constituted. I was witness to a discussion held during a *latihan* where the group's membership considered the benefits of taking this step, and a further discussion when those deputed to look into doing this reported back to the group, explaining the position of the town hall authorities and what would be required to achieve the desired outcome. These discussions were extremely frank and goal-oriented. Many members stated that they felt official status and formal affiliation were essential to promoting the group's continued existence as it would force the town hall authorities to consider them as a public face of the institution and provide logistical and financial backing. The town hall authorities were quite happy to grant the group a formal status but had a number of requirements that needed to be fulfilled first, including the writing of a constitution document, the establishment of a system for decision making, the election of officers who would be named in this document, and certain expectations of how the group would present itself in public. This would allow the authorities to treat the group as an integrated part of the existing town hall bureaucracy. The importance of this process on an emotional as well as practical level was brought home to me when I collected questionnaires from this group much later in my time with them: the perceived stability provided by formal recognition was explicitly mentioned as a reason for playing in this particular group. "I like it [this group] because it's official, as if it's protected by a legal entity, it's structured and peaceful" (*senang karena legal seakan terlindungi oleh badan hukum, dan disiplin, dan rukun.*)⁵⁵

The group at the KOSTI taxi depot had already achieved formal recognition by the time I joined but had managed this process slightly differently. The group's organisers told me that KOSTI had an established fund for social activities to which drivers could make bids.

⁵⁵ Pak SG. in questionnaire response.

The money to initially buy a gamelan set was raised in this way and as recipients of this funding the group automatically became part of the company's internal recreation structure with regular mentions in newsletters and continued interest from management. Once this was in place, however, the members of the group decided to make their position stronger by collecting money amongst themselves to completely pay off the loan they had received to buy the instruments. This left them with official recognition and support but without any financial debt to the company and with complete control over their gamelan.

This desire to formally constitute gamelan associations shows that for many groups the Suharto era technique of co-opting communities on the ground into collaboration with state organisational structures is still recognised as being a means to engage with and gain protection from larger systems of authority. As the previously discussed literature on this process shows, however, the existing structures that are validated in this way are not without influence and power. Actively reaching out to 'seek shelter' makes gamelan associations appear proactive and engaged and brings them to the attention of those in authority.

Summary

Making and deepening friendships, socialising, and finding togetherness are clearly genuinely felt attractions of gamelan association membership, and the bonds and relationships formed in these groups are significant whether they remain entirely within the framework of the *latihan* or grow beyond them. Each individual gamelan association has its own model of community, based on multiple sources of solidarity and many different ways of encouraging and managing belonging. They all, however, relate their own situation to wider discourses of community in order to gain access to resources and

to legitimise their personal and group priorities. In the same way as each individual group member ties their reasons for involvement in gamelan playing into the mould of the associations they play with, the groups also fit into the extended network of associations throughout the city and the surrounding villages. The greater system of gamelan associations acts as a community of communities, connecting the individual, highly specific groups into a shared conceptual framework. Because the Indonesian state has historically co-opted local ideas of community to shape national belonging and concepts of citizenship, participating in activities which are perceived as relating to community gives individuals access to an important tool for negotiating their place in their local communities and as citizens in contemporary Indonesia.

Gamelan associations in Solo are not counter-cultural enough to be spaces based on a sense of *communitas* that obscures existing hierarchies. When they do operate somewhat outside of the conventional norms of Javanese society this is because their members have an existing socially anomalous status such as that of the women who work in *Pasar Gedhé*. Social status distinctions within groups are frequently muted, with musical knowledge being privileged, but they are still recognised and acknowledged. For Solonese gamelan associations to genuinely challenge existing social structures would mean losing the very real benefits to be gained from deploying the historical and political weight carried by the discourse of community in contemporary Java.

Chapter Five

Our music/my music: claiming, performing, and negotiating ownership of gamelan

Among the reasons that gamelan association members gave when I asked about their motivations for involvement there was one concept which stood out because of how commonly it was cited but also because of how variable its individual expressions were when investigated further: this was the idea of ownership. As an initial explanation for being interested in *karawitan*, almost every single person I spoke to talked about the fact that they were Javanese and that therefore this was a tradition that was in some way theirs. This assertion of attachment through ethnicity initially sounds very close to Shelemay's (2011) concept of communities of descent, where connection to a musical tradition is based on belonging through birth. Although this is true in a general sense, the stories that individuals proceed to tell once they have stated this initial claim make the situation significantly more complex, consisting of a vast array of interwoven narratives of ownership spanning the communal and the intensely personal. I argue that when members of gamelan associations describe their sense of ownership of *karawitan* as based on models and discourses of communal responsibility, stewardship and preservation, this is genuinely felt but also serves to elide and legitimate the more intimate, personal, and affective links they have to the music that might be perceived as self-centred or self-indulgent. I contend that the intertwining of deeply felt personal connections to *karawitan* with a powerful narrative of collective stewardship means that gamelan associations can

act as sites where one's hobby is simultaneously an engagement with notions of Indonesian and Javanese identity.

In this chapter I set out two models of ownership operating in Solonese gamelan associations based on specific case studies of both groups and individual players. I also draw on situations when different models of ownership collided in and between groups I played with, situations which made these models and people's investment in them particularly clear.

Musical ownership

The types of ownership I am discussing in the Solonese context are very specific, centred fundamentally on a sense of entitlement or obligation to play. This is only one of many different ways in which the idea of ownership of music can be conceptualised and expressed, so it is important to briefly discuss first how the examples I will be giving sit within a wider framework.

Ownership can be thought of in terms of a legal right to perform, pass on, or benefit from the use of a particular genre, repertoire, or piece of music. This legal right may be one supported by internationally enforced copyright law or it may be one supported by more locally based networks of law. The right enshrined in copyright law is one of ownership through creation and as such is usually vested in one or more individuals responsible for the production of a discrete piece of music. The right to benefit exclusively from something which one has created is often reliant on the sharing of these benefits with those who assist in its dissemination and also, therefore, in the enforcement of these rights.

More culturally bounded traditions of ownership exist which base the right to perform a particular repertoire on birth in specific, complex networks of kinship (Marett 2005; Magowan 2007). Here the right to perform a given piece is not a right to benefit financially from its use but a right to take on the responsibility of performing one's specific repertoire in conjunction with others. This is a view of ownership which emphasises stewardship rather than possession. Although there is a clear feeling that *karawitan* is a cultural artefact belonging to the Javanese this level of specific cultural ownership does not apply in Solo: some individuals may be born to families with long-standing traditions of performance but they do not have a monopoly on learning and playing.⁵⁶ I argue, however, that a sense of stewardship is fundamental to gamelan associations as a way for people to justify their involvement and to draw on institutional support.

The issues that arise when there is a meeting of these two forms of ownership, which Aragon (2014) refers to in the Indonesian context as 'law and lore', have been the subject of a significant amount of concern within ethnomusicology, particularly in regard to the movement of material from the sphere of indigenous systems of musical authorship and re-use to the sphere of the international recording industry (Slobin 1992; Feld 2000; Stokes 2004).

Javanese gamelan does not operate within a framework of copyright ownership even though the relevant legislation has existed in Indonesia since 2002 (Aragon 2014). Once a piece has been written people will remember who it is by but will play it freely with no

⁵⁶ The only repertoires I encountered where there are such restrictions were particular melodies for poetic recitation which are not allowed to be performed outside of the palace. Within the palace walls, however, anyone who is interested may learn and sing them.

expectation of financially recognising the original creator⁵⁷ and often reinterpret it for their own use.⁵⁸ Collected works of some particularly famous or prolific composers (Nartosabdho for example) are published and sold but these also rapidly become part of the culture of photocopy sharing that is universal among musicians. Even within popular music, cover versions by other performers are on the market within days of an artist releasing a new tune.⁵⁹

In general, individual musical ownership within *karawitan* operates in the field of individual interpretation and reworking of material rather than at the level of the ‘work’. The differences in any given performance of a piece lie in the highly contextual and personal variation in *cèngkok*. These bounded yet flexible delineations of musical contour reshape and vary every repetition of a *gendhing* in a way which is stylistically recognisable on both an individual and lineage level. It is possible to recognise a particular *gendèr* player and also whom they studied with or listened to when forging their style;⁶⁰ with *sindhènan* it is also possible to recognise the characteristic *cèngkok* of a particular singer even when they are being sung by a different voice.⁶¹ This model of ownership through interpretation and variation is commonly found in discussions of traditions where an existing repertoire is in place and the skill of a musician is in ‘making

⁵⁷ There is no performing rights agency in Indonesia that collects revenue on behalf of composers and recording artists.

⁵⁸ The tension between respecting the rights of those who produce popular and nationally significant music and the general populace's feeling that these pieces are somehow 'theirs' has also been described in the Ghanaian context by Beeko (2011).

⁵⁹ A number of performing groups and gamelan associations in Solo have signature tunes composed by their leader which could in theory be adopted by any other group, but recognizable melodies and highly individualised lyrics referring to the group's name, history, and ethos render any such borrowing bizarre and I have never seen it other than in the context of humorous parody.

⁶⁰ Javanese musicians have accurately identified both of my formative *gendèr* teachers (with whom I last formally studied over ten years ago) simply through hearing me play and I also saw this happen with Javanese students during my fieldwork. There is even one individual pattern which I use that is instantly recognised by other players as belonging to a famous female *gendèr* player Bu Kris.

⁶¹ The classic example of this is Supadmi whose *cèngkok* are widely emulated by younger singers and whose use of high notes in her melodic contours is highly distinctive.

it their own' through ornamentation, variation, and physical assimilation of technique and repertoire.⁶²

Because of the skill and knowledge needed to partake in this enterprise of balancing variation with the constraints of remaining within a tradition, it is largely the province of more experienced musicians. Ownership amongst the less experienced or less highly trained players in gamelan associations may, however, equally arise from involvement in creation and interpretation or simply playing a specific piece regularly.⁶³

The extremely mixed ability range found among players in gamelan associations means that the ways in which individual members conceptualise their ownership of the tradition is similarly varied. There are however two main strands within the answers that I was given when asking players about their motivations for involvement which I will now set out.

Types of musical ownership in gamelan associations: communal and personal

A basic division between the 'communal' and the 'personal' became apparent during my observation of groups and conversations with players about their sense of ownership of *karawitan*. By communal ownership I mean the sense of entitlement or obligation to be involved in gamelan playing which individuals describe feeling as a result of their membership of particular groups varying in size from specific families to the entire

⁶² E.g. Folk musics from Ireland (McCullough 1977; Cowdery 1984; Fleming 2004), Norway (Johansson and Berge 2014), Bulgaria (Rice 1995, 271), and the classical traditions of India (Weidman 2006; Vijaykrishnan 2007, 293) and Iran (Nooshin 2015).

⁶³ The use of group composition and improvisation in educational work can give rise to a sense of ownership of material which is extremely meaningful and rewarding for those involved, particularly if they have not previously been afforded access to such experiences (Henley et al. 2012; Mota and Araújo 2013).

Javanese ethnic group. By personal ownership I mean a sense of entitlement or obligation to play gamelan which is born out of specific individual experience and personal history. Clearly the two models are not exclusive of each other: players' personal and communal experiences overlap and interpenetrate and most musicians use a mixture of the two when talking about the reasons they play, compose, or teach. What makes them useful and meaningful categories, however, is that they represent a real distinction as to which motivations people are comfortable revealing when questioned formally and informally, and which they see as being worthwhile or respectable enough to mention to a researcher. These two models also interestingly cut across such conceptual divides as professional and amateur although the level of comfort professional musicians have in discussing their personal motivations was always noticeably higher. In practice these different ways of expressing ownership give rise to certain distinct types of behaviour, and ways of relating to gamelan music. After providing examples of the two models I will also describe how individuals assert their particular claim to ownership with each other inside gamelan associations, and how differing claims are balanced and negotiated.

Communal ownership

There is a strong sense that gamelan is something which is part of the birthright of all Javanese people, along with the whole interrelated complex of Javanese literature, dance, puppetry and etiquette. People use a wide selection of discursive tropes in relation to this notion, including *warisan leluhur* (an inheritance from our forebears), *budâya éyang-éyang* (the culture of our grandparents), *pusâkâ* (heirloom), and the less commonly used idea of the 'red thread' of traditional culture.

The notion that the tradition exists and people are entitled to claim it is however not entirely straightforward. There is a constant sense that this inheritance is subject to

ongoing attrition, expressed regularly in the phrase ‘Javanese people have lost their Javanese-ness’ (*jåwå hilang jawané*) which is used almost daily in the print media and everyday speech to bemoan anything from a perceived lack of manners in the younger generation to corruption amongst officials, a lack of adherence to religious norms, an unseemly attachment to religion, or people showing more interest in imported culture than Javanese traditions. This contributes to a pervasive feeling of panic about the way in which Javanese identity, as expressed in traditional culture, is being left behind by the young, the wealthy, and the sophisticated, in the rush to be more modern which entails being more cosmopolitan, more orthodox and Arabic in your Islamic practice, and less obviously proud of coming from the dominant ethnic group. Despite this sense of universal ownership, however, there is also no element within the traditional performing arts which claims universal participation in the way that the *Tshikona* dance does among the Venda (Blacking 1973).

This claim to communal ownership of gamelan is most frequently expressed as a sense of responsibility for maintenance or stewardship. This sense of *warisan* or inheritance which can be protected or wasted is a prevalent idea in Javanese culture and has also been described extensively in more directly financial terms in the case of batik cloth makers in Solo by Brenner (1998). This sense of having a responsibility to play gamelan so that it does not disappear is very widespread and was expressed by almost every single musician that I met. A classic formulation of it was provided by Bu Da. from the town hall group when she expressed the opinion that maintaining gamelan playing is ‘crucial for the next generation, so that it doesn’t become extinct’. Although it is clearly a response which is expected of people and might be considered a cliché, it does, nonetheless, seem to be genuinely felt and was never used ironically to my knowledge. Often it was also backed up by the idea that gamelan encodes a uniquely Javanese philosophy and set of social

values which are timeless, but also very relevant to the current situation, and that it would be irresponsible to allow this to vanish. Claiming the musical tradition and keeping it alive is an entitlement, but it is an entitlement which simultaneously entails responsibility. Owning gamelan music in this way allows people to enjoy both making music and also the pleasure of feeling that they are contributing to the maintenance and continuation of something important.

The positioning of gamelan as something to be precious from the past which is to be protected does potentially run the risk of moving it from the realm of living culture into that of the important but no longer current. Different groups have distinct approaches to this issue, some using the idea of preservation as their main reason for being, whilst others confidently assume the ongoing strength and vigour of the tradition.

I will explore the model of communal ownership and the way in which groups position themselves in relation to ideas of preservation by examining in detail the practice and experiences of a number of groups and individuals who explicitly or implicitly reference these ideas in their way of relating to the tradition. I will be focussing on those groups and individuals where this sense of communal ownership is particularly relevant or important, but this does not mean that it was not present in the way almost every single person I talked to presented their relationship to gamelan.

Karawitan Marem and Sekar Laras

Two of the groups that I played with meet in the dedicated gamelan room of a city centre hotel. One group, Marem, was originally established in a neighbouring area of the city called Kemlayan but had needed to relocate after several years under somewhat tense circumstances. They were taken in by the hotel and are now a fixture there. The other, Sekar Laras, was founded later as a learning group for less experienced players as a way

to increase the level of musical activity at the hotel and to take advantage of new funding opportunities for ‘community projects’. A large number of the players in both groups are originally from Kemlayan or live there now. Kemlayan translates as ‘the place of the *‘mlâyâ’*’, one of the two titles used to reward senior court musicians, and this was the area where such individuals were granted land and houses during and after their service. As a result many of the families living in this area have historical connections to court musicianship and a large number of the members of both groups are the children or near relatives of some of the most famous and respected senior musicians of the previous generation, from both the palace and the radio station. In Marem, Mas R. is the grandson of Mloyowidodo, a celebrated musician famous for his *bonang* playing. Mloyowidodo’s niece also plays in Sekar Laras along with Mbak I. who is the niece of Pak Pr. a well-known teacher of dance, movement and meditation originally from a traditional dance background, and Mas Ja. who is the son of a leading radio station musician of the previous generation. None of these individuals work professionally with music themselves, or have any ongoing connection to the palace, but continue to play because as they say: ‘otherwise I would be ashamed in front of my ancestors’. Even those players from the area who do not have a direct family link feel that as residents of Kemlayan they share a collective responsibility to maintain these traditions to uphold the name of the neighbourhood.

This strong sense of obligation to the past and the tradition of gamelan does not, however, mean that there is a consistent commitment to a specifically ‘traditional’ repertoire in these groups or any sense that the tradition they are maintaining is fossilised. This, I argue, is in large part due to the connection to the world of ongoing, professional gamelan performance and composition that is provided by the leaders of the groups. Repertoire decisions are led by their individual preferences in conjunction with any members of the

groups who have definite views on the matter. The consistent presence of interested foreign tourists as observers and participants in these groups also serves to bolster a sense of the ongoing relevance of what they are doing at an international level.

The sense of communal ownership can also be expressed by individuals as much as it is by groups of people, especially by those who are in a position which means that they feel obligated to act as an exemplar or figurehead for a particular section of society.

Mas Dw.

Mas Dw. runs the hotel which houses the two groups mentioned above and plays a very active role in supporting and promoting them, although he himself does not play. His investment in gamelan activity is very multi-layered, combining personal, social, and business considerations. His father refurbished the family compound for use as a hotel which opened in the year 2000 and ordered an extremely high quality, complete double gamelan from Pak Tentrem as part of the studiedly traditional furnishings for one of the large guest areas at the front of the compound. Mas Dw. took over the business on his father's death and has increased the atmosphere of Solonese tradition by furnishing more of the shared spaces with colonial-era furniture and other symbols of aristocratic Javanese life. On a personal level making use of the gamelan carries on his father's personal legacy and concept for the hotel, but it also ties in with his broader residual sense of the gentry's obligation to support gamelan with the significant resources of space and money which allow them to buy and house instruments. On a business level, positioning the hotel as a centre of gamelan playing culture helps him market it as a 'traditional' place to stay for tourists, and there are now a large number of foreign visitors to Solo who study dance, gamelan, or meditation who have become loyal repeat customers. The fact that the groups which practise here are both conceived of as amateur community groups, albeit at different skill levels, means that visitors are able to take part whilst they are in residence,

providing a level of engagement and sense of connection to the local which are not readily available elsewhere.

This triple-layered commitment to gamelan activity means that Mas Dw. actively encourages groups to play in his hotel, negotiating Marem's initial transition from its previous home, taking every opportunity to engage with the group to find solutions when attendance drops as it does on occasion, deploying his staff to provide drinks and snacks for players, and encouraging them to take part in the groups. He regularly attends playing sessions, which makes the players feel valued and allows him to invite guests to sit with him whilst doing so, thereby creating an atmosphere of cordial hospitality, fitting in with the notion of the hotel as a family home that happens to be open to 'close friends'. His sense of ownership of gamelan music is based on respecting his father's vision for the hotel, maintaining a familial commitment to notions of aristocratic behaviour, and promoting his business in the highly specialised tourism environment of Solo.

Gusti P.

Gusti P. is a younger brother of the current Sultan of Solo, from the same mother, and is, therefore, part of the branch of the family which is currently dominant in palace politics and administration. He lives in the palace, which is not the norm amongst the royal family, and is officially in charge of the library, the museum, and public use of external palace buildings for performances, trade fairs, and exhibitions. He has a staff who are directly responsible to him in this role and also has a personal assistant who is employed with a real salary rather than the usual token amount paid to palace servants who are effectively volunteers. All of the royal family of his generation were trained as children in dance and gamelan music in order to fulfil their responsibilities for involvement in court ritual. This is for a very specific set of dances and pieces, however, and they are not expected to become proficient more generally as musicians, as the official court

musicians are low-status commoners. This means that his generation of royalty has a very specialised but limited ability to play and dance, combined with a very definite sense of their fundamental right and obligation to be involved in these activities. This is balanced by a strong disinclination to play seriously or publicly, as this would entail a serious loss of dignity. Some of the royal family who have been marginalised in palace politics do perform as puppeteers as this is a performance role which still contains a significant element of control and command, and which occupies a place of awed respect in Javanese society. Thus, although Gusti P. is an individual, his position with regards to gamelan is representative of a wider communal sense of ownership. He does stand out as having a deep, personal commitment to tradition and the performing arts: sponsoring regular *wayang* performances, collecting sacred daggers (*kris*) and being one of the royals most devoted and serious in visiting ancestral graves, but because of this he has become the guardian of such things for his less involved siblings and a rallying point for those outside the royal family who still wish to view the palace as a centre of power and culture.

Gusti P. established a gamelan group in the palace on Sundays, explicitly stating that encouraging the arts is an important part of his role as custodian of the palace archives and head of public engagement. He is also the official sponsor for the course in the skills required for being a master of ceremonies at weddings and other public events that take place in the palace, encouraging a number of the students to play in his gamelan group as well. He personally oversees gamelan rehearsals, exhibiting a curious mix of engagement and studied detachment. He always turns up quite late, not wishing to be seen to be waiting for others, and often has his personal assistant ring him once a quorum has been reached. During rehearsals he sometimes takes a very proactive role, standing at the front of the ensemble pointing at the notation with a stick in order to keep the group together, shepherding players who get lost back to the correct place, and offering advice to *kenong*

and *peking* players when they go wildly off track. At other times he will play *rebab*, something which clearly puts him in a leadership position within the group, but in a way which is completely opaque to the vast majority of the members who do not have the knowledge or experience to assess his ability or connect what he is playing to their part.

He never explicitly controls the group, always taking a role which helps the drummer to keep the rehearsal smooth enough to be enjoyable. He sometimes asks for pieces, or suggests players move around, but never drums himself, only taking on roles which are directive but not explicitly controlling. He is, however, always a presence, encouraging attendance by offering the privilege of playing and chatting with royalty. He also strongly encourages his staff to play and sing in the group as part of their role as his assistants in promoting the historical and cultural heritage of the palace.

Towards the end of my time in Solo the group started to fall apart after several weeks of big palace events that meant rehearsals couldn't take place and an escalation in an ongoing palace feud which made people wary of attending events and thereby running the risk of unknowingly appearing to support one faction or other. Gusti P. was quietly devastated by this and chose not to attend a meal which had been organised by all the major stakeholders in the group in an attempt to re-launch it, rather than have to face the dissolution of his project publicly. Mutual friends reported that he felt he had failed to fulfil his responsibility to promote and facilitate the practice of gamelan playing.

Gusti P. therefore carries a sense of ownership and responsibility in relation to gamelan which is simultaneously personal and communal: because of who he is as an individual he assumes a role on behalf of 'the palace' and the royal family. As keeper of the heirlooms of the palace (*pusåka*) he is responsible for conserving the historic instruments but extends this to include the playing of them as well. His attitude to this conservatory

role, however, puts a strong emphasis on a definition of gamelan playing that is very broad and inclusive rather than focussed on preservation. The official palace musicians (*pangrawit*) are the repository of the distinctive palace repertoire and style of playing so Gusti P.'s own group does not have to fulfil this role. The repertoire they play consists entirely of small, popular classics with the addition of some *langgam* if there are enough female singers present. What this group preserves is not a canonical type of performance but rather the notion of the palace as attractive to outsiders and capable of being inclusive, and the notion of people playing these instruments together as being valuable, regardless of precisely what they are playing.

How does this form of ownership affect behaviour?

For the members of Karawitan Marem and Sekar Laras as a whole, and Mas Dw. and Gusti P., their involvement in gamelan grows out of a sense of social obligation based on family background combined with an additional layer of personal interest. This communal model of ownership leads to a sense of the need to maintain gamelan playing but surprisingly does not necessarily lead to a conservative approach to repertoire. What is to be preserved is the fact of people coming together in a particular place to make music on a set of heirloom instruments and enacting the specific types of social interaction that this entails.

Personal ownership

The other form of claiming ownership that I encountered amongst my informants was the personal sense of having earned a right to call this music their own in some way. This led to very different ways of relating to the tradition than the communal ownership narratives that I have already discussed. Inevitably they are very much more diverse as they relate to individual players' personal experiences and life-stories, but there are some frequently

encountered patterns of which I will present a couple here. The first is the phenomenon of individuals, largely women, with childhood experience in the performing arts which was frustrated and which they revisit later in life. The second is the way in which the lineage musicians who lead and teach gamelan associations relate to the tradition.

Revisiting blocked opportunities

Another somewhat different trajectory, linking the worlds of professional and association musicianship, is one that I encountered most regularly, although not exclusively, amongst women playing in gamelan associations. Traditionally there are only two roles available to women in a gamelan ensemble: singing, or playing *gendèr* to accompany your puppeteer husband. There have been all-female groups set up as part of government-sponsored community creation projects,⁶⁴ but, in general, there are still very few women who play instruments professionally or in amateur settings. Three of the groups I played with had female members: two with only one or two individual members, and the group based in the main market which was predominantly made up of women but with some male market staff as well. Many of these women and some men describe a sense of ownership of gamelan that grows out of intense experiences with music or the associated performing arts when young; this involvement was disrupted in some way but they have now found ways to make a new connection.

Bu N.

Bu N. sells fish in the main market and has done since she was in her teens. She didn't finish primary school because her family could not afford to pay for her to continue. As a young girl she was a keen dancer and often took important roles in local performances of dance dramas accompanied by gamelan (*wayang wong*). Her teacher, who worked with

⁶⁴ This has historically been under the auspices of the Organisation for Family Welfare (Paguyuban Kesejahteraan Keluarga or PKK).

the radio station troupe, secured her the offer of a post there but her older brother and father decided that this move into professional, rather than purely local, performance would be damaging to the family's reputation and forbade her from taking the place. She continued to sell fish, raised three children, and had given up on being involved with dance and music until a group of the market traders started a gamelan association in the market office. She took a leading role in setting the group up and expends a great deal of energy on keeping it functioning: buying and serving food and drink for events, engaging proactively with visitors, and rallying players when they are slow to come to rehearsals. She also positively seeks out further opportunities to play gamelan or be in musical environments. During the year I was in Solo she joined the group at the town hall, which has some membership overlap with the market group, and made moves towards joining one of the palace groups. She talks passionately about music and dance as activities that were always important to her, and she always went to watch *wayang* and dance performances when possible. She is now able to be involved directly again as her children are independent and she has built a secure enough financial base that she feels able to leave her stall to go upstairs and play gamelan on three afternoons in the week.

Bu M.

Bu M. was a rising star as a *sindhèn* when she was in her late teens and frequently won prizes in radio station sponsored competitions. As a result she was offered a coveted position as a full-time employee but at the same time her husband was offered a posting to a city in Sumatra and she followed him there, becoming a civil service wife rather than a professional singer. After many years she returned to Central Java and, now a widow in her seventies, supports herself by preparing and selling crispy fried snacks. She spends every moment she can spare from this in singing for gamelan associations across the city. She is sometimes paid for this by groups who value having a very experienced singer

who turns up consistently and is willing and capable of singing for anything they want to play. This payment is often extremely limited, and usually presented officially as ‘petrol money’, but it is extremely important to her as recognition of her position as a ‘real musician’. She also reinforces her position as a serious musician by somewhat ostentatiously engaging other knowledgeable or experienced players in the group in conversations about matters of musical interpretation and theory.

Taking up her position as a singer again is something that Bu M. talks about as a personal vindication and a validation of the skills she initially had to put aside for her family. She describes her participation in the many groups for which she sings, however, not just in these personal terms, but also as the discharging of a duty to others and to the tradition as a whole which comes with her knowledge and experience. Although not always particularly sociable during sessions with those whom she does not consider to be her musical equals, she takes the overall social health of groups extremely seriously. Because she is involved in so many groups she is able to regularly recruit additional players for groups which are having difficulties and thereby make them attractive again to people who have fallen away due to poor numbers. She obtains the phone numbers of everyone who plays and often spends the first ten minutes of a session sending text messages and phoning people to make sure that they are going to attend. On several occasions when the group was going through periods of low attendance she and I were the only people who had arrived to practise and I asked her why she was always there even if she suspected there would not be a quorum. I had long been puzzled by this as most *sindhèn* in gamelan associations would not even consider setting off until they were sure that there was going to be a rehearsal. She said that it was a combination of the desire to sing as much as she could and a real sense of how much difference having a singer present makes to the enjoyment of everyone else playing. Without a *sindhèn*, she said, playing most of the

repertoire was like unsweetened tea (*nek ora ânâ sindhèn, nabuh gendhing-gendhing kâyâ ngânâ rasané tawar waé*). Her singing not only gives her pleasure but makes the experience better for everyone else, thus her presence brings her enjoyment in her craft and also in the sense of a worthy obligation discharged.

Mbak I.

I. was a talented dancer as a girl, coming from a family of musicians and dancers, and participating in top-level competitions; she is even pictured on the front of a widely sold cassette recording of dance accompaniments. Despite family connections to some of the pre-eminent performers of the preceding generation, I. decided not to continue professionally, got married, and soon had a child to look after. Her son has special educational needs and looking after him became her main focus. Eventually, as he got older she took a job running the canteen at his school, which allows her to earn whilst still keeping an eye on him. She has no desire to dance again, being very conscious of the contrast between her skill, fitness, and looks as a girl and how she sees herself as an adult woman who has not had the time to keep practising. Playing gamelan with Sekar Laras provides her with a chance to re-engage with performance in a slightly different field. Her extensive exposure to dance accompaniment means that she has a well-trained, seemingly instinctive response to drum signals, and her performance experience means that she has no sense of embarrassment about being visible or audible, which many women cite as a reason for being reluctant to play. I.'s sense of ownership of gamelan is based on family background combined with personal talent and training. As is often the case with women who have danced as children, this sense of ownership also transfers quite readily from dance to music without any sense of disconnect.

Pak H.

Although predominantly a female experience, because of the economic and social pressure on women to focus on their family rather than their own passions, this narrative of a frustrated and then revived involvement with the performing arts is also part of the story of some male players. Pak H. was a dedicated and extremely talented dance drummer as a young boy. He learnt and performed with many of the famous dancers, choreographers, and drummers of the time, when there was a surge in the creation of new dances, and the development of a new form of dance drama. Family and economic pressures meant that instead of moving into drumming professionally Pak H. took a respectable office job with a good salary. This left him feeling unfulfilled and eventually he took early retirement with a decent pension. This allows him to focus on drumming as much as he wishes. He is now the default drummer for Karawitan Marem as well as regularly being involved with mid-level dance performances across the city: unexpectedly discovering Pak H. drumming or mentoring drummers at events was a regular feature of my time in Solo.

Pak H.'s sense of ownership of *karawitan* is profound but he is extremely chary of expressing it forcefully under most circumstances. He appears to be very aware of the gap in his drumming career as a block to his fulfilling the promise he had as a young man and so does not put himself forward at the level at which he is capable of performing, preferring to steadfastly provide high-quality drumming for Marem and also act as the de facto leader and decision-maker when Mas Da. is not present. He will not comment on how other instruments should be played but will patiently re-run sections of pieces to allow people a chance to re-think what they did. Despite being extremely refined in demeanour and speech he is often very playful in his drumming, maintaining a straight face whilst leading the group through break-neck speed or *irâmâ* changes, or signalling a

segue into a new piece at the end of another when the notations the group use do not provide one. This is never malicious or aggressive, however, as is the case with some drummers, and he never does it without an assessment that the current line-up is capable of responding without the piece falling apart.

His reticence in talking about himself made it hard to directly discover much about Pak H.'s motivation for playing in gamelan associations. One evening when he and I were the only two people who had arrived for the rehearsal, however, provided an opportunity to talk about what he found important about drumming for this group. He spoke of the joy and exhilaration he found in playing gamelan and a concomitant sense of obligation to use the skills and experience that he had been given to allow others to experience this too. Doing what he loves in this particular setting of a mixed-ability group also affords him the pleasure of facilitating other people's enjoyment. There is a fine balance, however, in how far he will allow this sense of obligation to override his desire to exercise his skill to his own satisfaction. He generally arrives at rehearsals towards the end of the period during which players are still gathering, or if he arrives earlier will go to get tea at a stall where he is not visible to those arriving but where he can track how many people are attending. This is not to avoid socialising with the other members, he does this very readily and is a laconic and amusing raconteur, but to avoid having to drum for a session where he feels there are not enough players to make it enjoyable. If a session starts early with a few players, and then nobody else arrives, he will announce that he is going to buy cigarettes and then not return.

Bu D.

In contrast to the experiences of women who started their engagement with gamelan through dance and only returned to practical involvement later in life, there is one woman I met who has been an instrumental player throughout her life despite having no direct

family connection to music. Bu D. had always been interested in gamelan since childhood and had taken private lessons with a well-known academy musician, Pak Sutikno,⁶⁵ who lived near her parent's house. She has been playing gamelan with a number of groups ever since, throughout her life. Bu D. sells food for a living, comes to rehearsals at the Town Hall group with which I played, and is also a stalwart member of the Town Hall's women-only group. Because she had specific tuition from a formally trained musician, rather than purely learning to play through absorption while participating, she is able to play instruments that are normally only played by the most experienced members of amateur groups, *bonang* for example, and at a level which is considerably more sophisticated and theoretically informed than many male musicians. She also took the unusual decision to have lessons in playing the *siter* which makes her very much in demand for performances with all-female groups throughout the area. Being the only woman to play instruments in the Town Hall group and being a food seller amongst retired civil servants requires a high degree of self-confidence. Although her musical competence is in itself more than adequate to justify her participation Bu D. also makes people take her seriously by refusing to engage with any of the normative expectations of female behaviour, acting socially in the group in the same way as knowledgeable male musicians. This is in stark contrast to the female singers in the group, and Bu D. is never to be seen in the conspiratorial huddle of interaction at the front of the gamelan.

Bu D.'s ownership of gamelan is based on the sense that her participation is something she has personally chosen, worked at, and continues to fight to validate. Her musical education means that she is conscious of herself as a better-trained musician than many of the men in gamelan associations and, although she enjoys playing and performing with

⁶⁵ He also taught in the UK as part of the embassy's former practice of employing musicians and dancers in the education department to help the growing gamelan community develop.

all-female groups, it is in the context of the main Town Hall group, holding her own amongst confident male players, that she can fully express her sense of entitlement and stake her claim to belonging.

How does this form of ownership affect behaviour?

These individual stories with all of their specific and personal detail demonstrate three important strands in the way people conceptualise their ownership of gamelan.

For Bu N., Bu M., Mbak I., Bu D., and Pak H., their sense of ownership of gamelan music is grounded in an intense commitment to and involvement with Javanese performing arts starting in childhood. In the case of all but Bu D. their level of commitment in the gamelan associations where they now play can, I believe, be attributed largely to their desire for opportunities to express an important part of their history and how they think of themselves that had been silenced. For Bu D. this commitment is no less significant or strongly expressed but, as she had never stopped playing, the most significant factor is not a return to something lost but a desire to demonstrate that her claim to musicianship is just as strong as any man's.

For Bu N., Mbak I., and other women whose initial contact with gamelan music was as a dancer their ownership of the music is also something kinetic and embodied. The way they know and own the music is as much in their ingrained physical responses to the flow of the piece and drumming patterns as it is to melodic material. When just one or two former dancers are in a group this is somewhat visible but it becomes shockingly clear when there are many. One of the groups with which I did not play regularly but watched rehearse once and perform once was Kembang Setaman the all-female group based at ISI. Everyone in this group is employed at ISI in some capacity, including lecturers, administrative staff, and canteen workers, with the overwhelming majority being teachers

from the dance department. Watching the way in which a roomful of dancers played gamelan, the way in which they responded to drum signals, lifted their beaters, and coordinated as a group, was revelatory. It was noticeably different to the way professional musicians who are not dancers behave: although not breaking the Javanese norms of non-demonstrative playing, this difference was one of a visibly physical interaction with the music rather than a basically sound-production-based approach. How apparent this difference was surprised me give that gamelan playing is fundamentally a physically engaged process. It was clear though that dance training leads to a form of ownership of *karawitan* that is more visibly centred in the body.

For Bu M. and Pak H., as highly skilled musicians who through exigencies of life were prevented from becoming professional, ownership of gamelan means seeking out every opportunity to use their skills and revelling in the exercise of their competence, but also a deeply-felt responsibility to sustain the groups that allow them to do this and to help others feel the same pleasure in playing that they do.

Lineage musicians

A significant number of the men who lead gamelan associations in Solo as drummers and teachers are professional musicians from performing arts families who were also trained at the academy and most of whom are currently employed as lecturers there. These men have validation of their individual status as musicians from both the traditional system of inheritance and the state systems of higher education and civil service employment. They derive credibility as performers and teachers from both traditional and modern systems of education, and as civil servants they avoid the association of gamelan playing with low or marginal social status.

Two of the men in this category are Mas Da. and Mas S., who between them lead the two groups at the hotel mentioned above. Mas Da. is a respected player of traditional gamelan music whose father was also a dance drummer of note. He is, however, also heavily involved in other forms of music and originally planned to join the army rather than become a musician. He performs as a violinist in *kroncong* bands and promotes this genre at a local and national level, and is also a prolific composer and performer of new music which is heavily informed by the tradition whilst not remaining within it. Mas S. learnt to dance as well as to play as a child and has spent a considerable portion of his career accompanying puppetry. He also writes new music, but this is always within traditional forms, inspired by the works of the composer and puppeteer Ki Nartosabdho. He also has a reputation for a high level of skill in creating *penataan*. These are long connected suites of pieces that are chosen and arranged to provide a subtle interaction between continuity and contrast in thematic material and mood.

How does this form of ownership affect behaviour?

The most obvious difference that these men display in their attitude to gamelan music is an unashamed sense of having an active right to adapt the tradition, compose new pieces and make significant decisions about interpretation of existing repertoire. In both cases the sense of ownership of the tradition is a complete given. Neither Da. nor S. express any sense of reticence in this regard. Their ownership is utterly secure, coming from an internal awareness of their knowledge and ability and also external validation from both traditional and contemporary power structures. This leads to them being very effective leaders and teachers of gamelan associations as they are able to choose appropriate material from the vast repertoire they have mastered, explain the interpretative decisions they are making or asking others to commit to, and produce satisfying arrangements of pieces both as suites for enjoyment in rehearsals and as convincing performance

programmes. At the same time their level of confidence and expertise means that, under normal circumstances, they do not engage in the otherwise ubiquitous projection, challenging, and assessment of authority, although they do act as umpires if it threatens to destabilise the rehearsal or the social health of the group. Decisions about what to play next in rehearsals and who should play which instrument, normally negotiation trouble-spots, are also referred to them and their choice is taken as binding. This situation is very rare as most groups have leaders who are far closer in overall ability and experience to the rest of the membership and who do not, therefore, stand outside this jostling.

Negotiating claims to ownership across the wider community of groups

There were occasions on which different ways of owning gamelan collided within groups. If the overall ethos of a group was clear and a dominant model in place then this did not cause any major difficulties. In some instances, however, if the split was numerically equal, or had equally authoritative backing in the group, ongoing negotiations about the appropriate way to relate to the music could become a regular source of friction and conflict. These issues surrounding ownership within groups were often part of the negotiations of competence and authority which are so much a feature of gamelan associations and which will be addressed in the next chapter. Distinct from these internal negotiations, however, were groups' discussions of which amongst the panoply of associations had a stronger claim to represent the 'true' tradition of gamelan playing.

There are multiple possible claims that can be made as to where gamelan music truly belongs, in the sense of what social context it grows out of, what type or player is an authentic gamelan musician, and thus what type of group has the best claim to owning the tradition. This arises historically because of the distinction between the players accompanying *wayang* and dance in a village context and the palace ensembles. More

recently, since the separation of the arts academies from the palaces, this situation has become more complex, with a national system of training and validation which is linked into the two previous networks but is distinct from them both. There is an unspoken question as to whose music *karawitan* is: does it belong to the palace, the people, or the academies? Although this question is literally unspoken (I have never once heard anyone articulate it) it seems to be assumed implicitly and it is very common for people to give their answer to it without it having been asked.

The Pasar Gedhé group and the way it and certain of its individual members interact with other groups provide a classic example of how this broader concept of ownership can be claimed and contested. Pak Wi. who drums for the group is an experienced village musician who has had no formal training. He is extremely voluble about the authenticity of his musicianship in conversation but in many settings the way he acts belies this and appears to demonstrate a lack of self-confidence in his ownership of *karawitan*.

Having once met Gusti B., a younger brother of the Sultan by a different mother, at a musical event he asked for permission for the Pasar Gedhé group to be formally recognised by the royal family in some way, in order to increase its prestige. The agreement reached was that the group would be given the right to wear *samir* when performing. These are small strips of tasselled cloth worn around the neck which denote allegiance and belonging to a particular palace and the right to its protection. For Pak Wi. this was a major vindication of his personal ability to negotiate effectively on behalf of the group but also, in his eyes, validated the group by allowing it to appear in public with visible signs of palace endorsement. At every concert the group performed Pak Wi. would arrive with a large bag of *samir* which he handed out. The vast majority of the other members of the group were notably unimpressed with this, feeling that their village-based musical knowledge and upbeat, popular repertoire did not need any external

validation, and certainly not from the palace. *Samir* were worn but often only after several reminders from Pak Wi. and with a notable lack of grace.

This desire to stake the ‘ordinary’ people’s claim to *karawitan* was also expressed in the performance uniforms they had chosen. The combination of wrapped batik cloth, formal jacket and pre-stitched turban-hat (*blangkon*) that is both formal wear for Javanese social events and the standard costume for musicians is commonly referred to as *kejawèn*, or ‘Javanese style’. The Pasar Gedhé group did not wear *blangkon*, however, choosing to replace them with *peci*, the truncated velvet fez which is associated with both the post-independence Nationalist movement and, increasingly, with Islamic piety. I was told forcefully by several people on separate occasions that what we were wearing was ‘true’ *kejawèn*, the costume of the Javanese people, and not what was mistakenly referred to as *kejawèn* but which was actually the costume of the palace and feudal monarchy.

These issues surrounding performance costume reflect a feeling among the majority of players in Pasar Gedhé that in a modern, democratic, nation their right to ownership of gamelan playing as ordinary working-class citizens is every bit as real as, indeed perhaps more genuine than, the claim of the palace.

Interactions between the Pasar Gedhé group and the Town Hall group further reveal how complicated claims to ownership can become. Because a number of the men who play in the Pasar Gedhé group were once also members of the original city administration group, which was the basis for both of the current ensembles, there is still some movement of personnel between the two groups. One of the Town Hall players who regularly comes to events at the market is Pak Y., who works as a civil servant but also continues his father’s gamelan instrument rental business on the side. He has not had any formal gamelan training but has been connected to the performance community since childhood and is an

extremely experienced player with a vast memorised repertoire. To this extent his musical knowledge seems largely similar to that of the men in the market group, but there are two significant differences. Whilst both Pak Y. and Pak Wi. learnt to play in regularly performing groups focussing on wedding reception music, the location of this experience is different: Pak Y. grew up in a *kampung* which, although not central, is indisputably in the city of Solo whereas Pak Wi. comes from a distant village which has now become part of the suburban sprawl of southern Solo. The general assumption is that this geographical distinction will mean that Pak Y.'s knowledge is more refined and sophisticated and therefore superior. The village-trained musicians in the Pasar Gedhé group are obviously resistant to this idea but they find it significantly harder to challenge than the idea that they should defer to the palace. Pak Y. may be from the city but his musical trajectory is in every other regard the same as their own: he has learnt by playing rather than being taught, can function entirely without notation, and is also well versed in popular genres such as *sragènan* and *dangdut*. In practice, although some members appear to feel somewhat sidelined when Pak Y. is present at performances or rehearsals they do defer to him and often ask him to drum. Since his ownership of gamelan is based on the same categories as theirs, they cannot challenge his position without destabilising their own, even if they would prefer not to be upstaged in their own group.

The situation is very different when Pasar Gedhé players attend rehearsals at the Town Hall. Here the leader, and usual drummer, is a graduate of ISI who was also for several years a professional player for the dance-drama troupe at Sriwedari and the majority of the players are middle-class, middle to high ranking civil servants who see it as natural to defer to the authority of someone trained at a national institution. The overwhelming sense in this group is that the ownership of *karawitan* is located firmly in ISI, Sriwedari, and the radio station, places whose musicians have been chosen by, trained in, and

employed by official bureaucratic bodies dealing with the arts. Pak Wi. also plays here because of the historical ties between the two groups, but his profile within the group is entirely different: he only plays *gambang*, an instrument which is considered to be the preserve of skilful non-professional musicians, and never makes any suggestions as to repertoire or interpretation. He owns the right to play but not, in this group, the right to take decisions or lead, this being in the hands of formally trained and employed musicians.

Non-Javanese gamelan players and ownership

The complex ways in which ownership can be claimed and how these claims are received by others is thrown into relief by the reaction of Javanese players to the large community of non-Javanese people who learn, play, and teach gamelan and Javanese dance. Whilst people who do not play are frequently simply astonished to see a foreigner playing gamelan, musicians, of all ability levels and backgrounds, take a proven commitment to *karawitan* as granting just as much entitlement to involvement to someone Japanese, American, Hungarian, or British as to an Indonesian. In my experience a foreign player's ownership of gamelan is assessed on exactly the same terms as any Javanese player's: how and where they learnt, and their demonstrated ability and knowledge of repertoire. This shows the extent to which personal reasons constitute a claim to ownership: training, passion, and involvement can be taken just as seriously as claims based on communal background. This is perhaps assisted by the very strong sense that being 'Javanese' is in many respects a learnt behaviour rather than an automatic result of birth. This can be seen in the frequently expressed notions of 'Javanese having lost something of their Javanese-ness' (*jåwå hilang jawané*), of children being 'not yet Javanese' (*durung jåwå*) and of foreigners being capable of reaching a state where they are sometimes referred to as

‘already like a Javanese person’⁶⁶ (*wis kâyå wong jåwå/ wis njawani*). Because being ‘Javanese’ is contingent to a great extent on behaving in appropriate ways it is possible to do this whilst not being ethnically Javanese and for this to generate just as much of an entitlement and responsibility to gamelan music and the related performing arts.

Summary

Karawitan is a tradition which historically and currently is learnt and played in a variety of social contexts and has a number of aesthetic frameworks which are distinct but always exerting mutual influence. Because of this, the models of ownership that people playing gamelan in Solo describe in conversation and express in their behaviour range from those based on highly personal connections, to others based on far larger categories of belonging such as place of origin or ethnicity. There is no single universally acknowledged or legally enforceable model of ownership but a wealth of claims based on interaction with three main sources of authority: the palace, the networks of players in villages and *kampung*, and the national music academies. All the musicians I played with, and talked to about their reasons for playing gamelan, laid claim to the music using a variety of means, with most people describing their desire to play as stemming from a combination of communal ownership and responsibility and very specific individual connections. These different claims are deployed strategically and in ways which are highly context-sensitive with people presenting whichever claim to ownership they feel will be most well received or most convincing in the particular circumstances. Even though musicians as individuals or as groups may strongly support the idea that their model of musicianship and ownership is a superior one, there is no corresponding sense that others are invalid, simply a constant, context-based negotiation of claims. The extent

⁶⁶ This is also used, somewhat problematically, of ethnic Chinese Indonesians in Solo who behave in ways which Javanese people consider culturally acceptable.

to which ownership of *karawitan* is negotiable can be seen in the reception of foreign players. Their involvement and right to claim the tradition are assessed on the same grounds as in the case of any Javanese player. Discussions of learning history and demonstrations of experience, knowledge, and commitment function in the same way for Javanese and non-Javanese players, even if the foreign musician is not aware of exactly what the rules of engagement are. Laying claim to gamelan music in the ways I have described is a fundamental component of many players' understanding of why they play and also how they present and justify their participation to others.

Musicians in gamelan associations do not claim ownership of *karawitan* through self-confident mastery and competence in the way that the lineage musicians who teach them do, but rather through broader claims based on ethnic belonging and also fine-grained personal claims centred on personal history, individual enjoyment, and embodied experience. These claims are just as meaningful to them as the claims of professional musicians even though they often acknowledge the distinction. Gamelan associations provide a space where these ways of relating to gamelan music are dominant and are taken seriously. The fact that this is framed by the players themselves in terms of cultural preservation in the context of the Indonesian nation-state and a globalised world shows the importance of official, public validation of the social 'usefulness' of gamelan associations for all those who take part. Engagement with this discourse also grants gamelan associations a position of conceptual importance, recognised both inside and outside the group, which renders participation socially significant on a scale wider than that of providing personal enjoyment.

Chapter Six

Displaying and negotiating authority and competence

Standard Javanese performance practice for gamelan playing is famously impassive and un-emotive with no scope for personal virtuosic display or direct visual presentation of anything other than calm, ordered, and smoothly unified concentration. This is consistent with the often made normative assertions that Javanese culture is fundamentally based on collaboration, refinement, and seamless, imperceptible assertions of authority. Playing gamelan is, therefore, often discussed as showing this cultural preference in action and as a way of training people to work well in this paradigm. The systems of signalling and control within traditional gamelan are indeed designed to function in a way which is efficient without being apparent; thus in performance, gamelan ensembles almost always appear to be models of effortless, cooperative endeavour where everyone knows their role and follows instructions in a graceful and uncomplicated manner. This somewhat utopian vision has been destabilised slightly by Brinner's (1995) work on interaction amongst professional players. He describes the convoluted and tense processes of deciding relative seniority, skill, and importance when musicians gather and thus who will play which instrument and be in a position to control or constrain others' musicianship (*ibid.*, 304-308). He also sets out the ways in which highly skilled musicians can and do push against and subvert these systems of authority and control whilst playing without allowing this to become apparent to anyone but other players (*ibid.*).

Such specifically musical tactics of confronting and challenging authority are far less common in gamelan associations. Only highly trained professional players are capable of engaging in and understanding this behaviour; thus in the context of an amateur group it would either not be noticed or would be interpreted as an error and would, therefore, be rendered pointless. The focus on providing an enjoyable experience for all members in order to maintain regular attendance also militates against deliberately undermining the smooth performance of pieces: experienced players are expected to be supporting others in advancing their knowledge and learning how to navigate the structures of *karawitan*, rather than using them to assert their own ability. The assertion, negotiation, and challenging of authority is, however, an absolutely fundamental part of gamelan association *latihan*. Although this is not done using the musical techniques available to professional players the fact that these social manoeuvres are taking place in a space bounded by the aura of traditional music makes them far more acceptable than is usually the case in Javanese society and renders their potential outcome less damaging.

I argue that the opportunity to engage in these negotiations is one of the most basic reasons that people have for engaging in amateur gamelan playing, allowing them to engage in normally discouraged behaviours because they are occurring in this particular context. The gamelan *latihan* is a space firmly rooted in tradition and the expression of Javanese-ness and is also structured very clearly by the rules of interaction between instruments that make up the knowledge required to play *karawitan*. This creates an environment which is so strongly framed as Javanese and formally controlled that it can afford opportunities to behave in ways which would otherwise deeply contradict the norms of expected social activity. Playing in a gamelan association is an activity which shares some characteristics of social effervescence (Durkheim 1915) with the pleasure and seriousness generated by shared ritualised behaviour, but the sheer variety and weight

of personal social benefits which participants seek and gain through involvement mean that it is not simply a case of forging and cementing a group identity. The extent to which societal norms are challenged is, however, never a real threat: no one is actually attempting to overturn them, and the norms and relationships that are being tested are framed as remaining within the sphere of the musical rather than directly affecting wider societal structures. Gamelan associations do not act as anti-spaces in Turner's (1969) terms, since they are very definitely not designed to comprehensively subvert or break down the standards of normal Javanese social interaction, and the importance of this distinction can be seen in the seriousness with which cases are dealt with when arguments do become serious enough to affect social interaction outside of the group. More appropriate ways of understanding the way individuals use these groups are Bakhtin's (1984) notion of carnivalisation and Geertz's (1972) notion of deep play: gamelan association *latihan* are environments which allow individuals and groups to behave in ways which are normally discouraged and considered disruptive but are nonetheless alluring. These behaviours can, however, be contained within the strongly ordering framework provided by the practice of a traditional performing art, which serves to ritualise and formalise them, thereby rendering them meaningful but not dangerous.

The approaches to displaying authority and knowledge I observed in gamelan associations all rely on either direct verbal or clearly visible means, as this does not require all of those observing to have the level of specialist awareness needed to understand these interactions when they are carried out purely musically. This is not to say that musical forms of authority are ignored entirely in these processes: broad understandings of how musical authority is supposed to be exerted do play a part but at a significantly less subtle and opaque way than among professionals. A great many of the moves people make to display knowledge also rely on there being players with a range of

abilities in the group so that they can position themselves on this spectrum by distancing themselves from or stressing their commonality with specific individuals. Players who are professional or who have high levels of ability and experience are often co-opted into this process whether they wish to be involved or not but generally try to remain as neutral as possible.

In this chapter I set out the ways in which authority is claimed in gamelan associations, the ways in which these claims are assessed, and how competing or overlapping claims are negotiated. I then look at the ways in which these displays of social flexibility are different from cases of genuine conflict, arguing that they are a similar phenomenon to the pleasure taken in correctly negotiating the complex speech levels of Javanese to elicit as much respect as possible whilst giving away the minimum (Siegel 1986; Keeler 1987; Errington 1988). Such social manoeuvring is common in Java but is less pronounced in professional gamelan groups as relative musical status and knowledge are more readily apparent and the purpose of rehearsal more directly goal-oriented.

Asserting authority

One of the most common ways of claiming authority in gamelan associations is to display knowledge. It is assumed that those who are most knowledgeable will be deferred to in decision making and the display of musical knowledge is a way of gaining respect within a group. Verbal discussions make this universally apparent to all members of the group and engaging in discussions of technical details of pieces and their interpretation is the primary way of doing this. The most common occasions for this to take place are at the moment that the next piece is announced, before starting to play, or immediately after a piece has finished, when assessing the performance allows ample opportunity to show how perceptive one is. In the Pasar Gedhé group every time it was decided that we were

going to rehearse *Lancaran Manyarsewu* this was the cue for whoever wished to assert themselves on that particular day to respond with a question as to which tuning we were going to play it in, thus drawing attention to the fact that they knew this piece could be played in either. If someone else wished to put in their own bid for recognition they would ask whether or not we were going to add another piece on to the end in order to make a suite. This was ultimately a redundant question since the group always played the same suites for each piece and the drummer signals whether or not this is going to happen during the piece, but it allowed people to draw attention to their knowledge. In Marem rehearsals the *sindhèn* Bu M. would always comment on each piece to be performed, either drawing attention to a particularly difficult or notable portion of her part, or checking that the *slènthem* player and *gendèr* player knew what they were doing and would not put her off by making errors. In the Town Hall group the flexibility of repertoire means that much more is to be decided before starting to play; those who are confident enough will suggest options for pieces to follow initial *gendhing* choices, propose particular interpretations such as playing a piece in *wayang* style rather than the usual version, or request alternative vocal possibilities such as a specific Nartosabdho chorus in place of the usual *gérongan*. This technique of asking about interpretation is clearly distinct from the occasions when players ask questions because they genuinely require information or are unsure, being noticeably performed to a degree which can on occasion become stagey.

Apart from simply asserting one's own opinion directly it is also very common to invoke the opinions of others, which serves both to bolster one's argument and to demonstrate the breadth of one's experience in having been exposed to these alternative possibilities. In the Pasar Gedhé group there was a small subset of the women who also regularly sang with a group in a nearby village, run by a *dhalang* and impresario who had turned his

house into a studio. One of these women, Mbak S., was particularly keen not to have her status as a musician overlooked by the men in the group and would frequently question material or interpretations based on her experience in this other group. The authority she was making use of was not directly her own but that of a well-known figure whom she clearly believed to be more knowledgeable and more trustworthy than the men in the group. In the Town Hall group the leader of the vocal team, Pak Ma., regularly proposed alternative chorus parts which he had learnt in other groups, sometimes even actively dismissing the suggestions and preferences of other players and the leader of the group. He did this on the basis of his voluntary position accompanying the municipal folk theatre troupe (*kethoprak*) where there is an enormously rapid turnover in repertoire and a strong emphasis on vocal material to carry dialogue and entertain the audience. In Marem Mas R. would regularly make suggestions for the interpretation of pieces and especially the way the *bonang* should be played. This was based on the fact, which he frequently reiterated to the group, that his grandfather was the famous *bonang* master Mloyowidodo, of whose playing he had recordings at home. Whether or not he had ever listened to these, or the suggestions he was making were based on them, mentioning them was clearly intended to bolster his authority through connection. The most indirect means of drawing on external authority, but one which is fraught with potential for further disagreement, is to produce an alternative notation for a particular piece and claim that this should take precedence over the version someone else has provided. Here the claim is either that a written version is more likely to be accurate than someone's memory or that whoever produced this notation is more reliable than the source of the existing one the group is using. This shifts the argument away from the relative knowledge and status of people within the group to an argument about the relative authority of written information and embodied intersubjective memory.

Showing off to specific members of the group: ‘I am better than these others’

Another way in which players can assert their credentials in a more focussed way is to show in some way how their musical behaviour, taste, or training is similar to the most advanced players in the group and of a different calibre than the majority of the association’s membership. This relies heavily on there being people in the group who will be able to assess competence at a higher level and who are willing to take part by acknowledging this bid for inclusion in the ranks of the group’s ‘elite’. There must also be a perception that the benefits of demonstrating status in this way are worth the risk of alienating those from whom one is distancing oneself. Showing off in this way is common amongst all members of a group but the processes of sifting competence and ability are thrown into particularly sharp relief when a player from outside the group arrives, either to assist with a particular performance or as a new member of the group.

In groups which have a strong focus on more popular repertoire, the most prevalent approach is to demonstrate a commitment to, or knowledge of, classical repertoire and styles of playing. In the Pasar Gedhé group the normal emphasis was on extremely lively, loud-instrument-heavy renditions of the most well-known *gendhing* and a great deal of *dangdut*. There were a few players in the group, however, who, aware of my training at ISI, wished to let me know that this was not the sum of their competence, even if it was what they were called on to do most often. At the start of a rehearsal when most of the women had not yet come upstairs to the office but the most experienced men were already present they announced that we should play *gadhon* style,⁶⁷ and play a piece which would never normally feature in the group’s repertoire. This allowed them to

⁶⁷ This involves only using the soft instruments with *gong* and *kenong*, in what might be described as ‘chamber gamelan’.

showcase their skills for me and to stress that they were aware of and proficient in techniques and material that I would otherwise never have seen them engaging with. Once the rest of the group began to arrive we stopped playing but everyone involved talked at length to each other and to the late arrivals about how pleasant it was to play *gadhon*. This was not done in an attempt to convert the rest of the group to playing this style, as this would not have been practical or appropriate, but it served to highlight the fact that this particular group of men could play at a far higher level than it might have been assumed and that this was something which they actively enjoyed. Because of the absence of musicians with institutionally validated authority in the group it was my presence at the *latihan* which made this possible, with my position as an ISI-trained player and foreign researcher allowing them to use me as a focus for the display of their more elevated taste.

In the Kraton associations there is one player, Mas R., who also plays regularly in a very active group in his village and as a result is aware of many of the current trends in creating small suites, where shorter more lively pieces are attached to the end of one that is more refined and classical. This practice is used by many groups to demonstrate a commitment to prestigious repertoire whilst also keeping enough popular material in their repertoire to be attractive to audiences. Because the notation flip-charts used by these groups only have one piece on each sheet of paper the default position is to play a single tune at a time and then hunt through the stack of paper for another. Mas R. clearly found this very frustrating as he was used to playing combinations of pieces and missed the excitement of coming towards the end of one piece and then segueing into another more lively number instead of drawing to a close. As a result he would always suggest a *lancaran* to attach to any larger piece the group played and, frustrated by the limitations of the flip-chart for doing, this went so far as to photocopy the notation collection he had

from his home group, which contained these suites fully written out on one page, for other players. He did this to increase his enjoyment of playing in the group, by giving him a chance to play *bonang* for pieces that he usually played *balungan* for in other groups, but it also served to clearly mark him out as a more experienced and knowledgeable musician than the majority of those present.

In Marem, where the standard of playing is very high and the repertoire used already extremely sophisticated and delimited by the notation booklets, these approaches to demonstrating one's knowledge and taste are not as effective. Here more subtle tactics are deployed but they are nonetheless equally focussed on drawing attention to one's skills and the authority they give one. At the beginning of rehearsals there is a brief window of opportunity for staking a claim to be taken seriously, afforded by the process of choosing which instrument to play. The way this is done is very similar to the picture Brinner (1995) provides of professional musicians gathering for a *klenèngan* or recording session. Individuals make their intentions known before definitely committing to a particular place and check to see if there is any opposition, disapproval, or competition shown. On occasion disapproval may not actually hold someone back if they make the judgement that occupying a particular place will still make them appear skilled to the majority of the group. Mas R. often decided to play *rebab* when the usual player was not present and, despite very clearly expressed horror from the *sindhèn* and the drummer, would stubbornly assert his right to play this prestigious role very badly, saying that it was essential to have a *rebab*.

During the *latihan* another common approach is to audibly and visibly assist another player, either helping them when lost or encouraging them to alter their interpretation so as to be more in line with the piece's *pathet* or the specific drumming being used. Both of these ways of displaying knowledge are not common in amateur groups: I only

encountered them in Marem and Sekar Laras, and occasionally in the Town Hall group. I argue that this is related to these two groups having greater exposure to professional players but also having leaders who are firmly grounded in music education as well as performance. Explicitly teaching and guiding other players as a valid way of showing knowledge and asserting authority is not generally considered appropriate in other groups, but can be found in associations where the leader and primary musical role model regularly relies on pedagogical models derived from the experience of formally teaching students. In these groups the assumptions about how a ‘real’ musician behaves include giving explicit instruction and so people wishing to make themselves appear more authoritative engage in this also.

Such assertions of authority are extremely context-sensitive. The systems of assumptions about repertoire choice, and taste that might mark one out as a knowledgeable player in the Pasar Gedhé or Kraton groups would not in any way mark one out as exceptional in Marem or the Town Hall group, where the ability to play soft instruments and suggest alternative interpretations, or the knowledge and confidence to publicly correct others are far more convincing. These displays of behaviour linked to a particular type of professional player would likewise have very little traction in groups like Pasar Gedhé or Jetis, where the display of an ability to play loud and fast riffs on the *demung* is far more important.

Retreating to show control

Another way of asserting status which uses a completely opposite approach and sits more easily within normative notions of Javanese behaviour is to ostentatiously disengage from decision making and refuse to take a stance. Although this might be read as a refusal to be dictatorial or to assert authority it is just as much of a claim to power in a Javanese

context, and potentially just as antagonistic as making an outspoken comment. This approach is usually used by those who have an established level of respect and whose position is not in reality in question but who still feel the need to make this clear to the rest of the group; essentially they emphasise how important and useful their contribution is by withholding it temporarily. It also has the potential to be far more disruptive to the smooth functioning of a group than positive boasting. A low-grade example of this occurred on a regular basis in Marem. On the frequent occasions when D. was not present the default position of the group was to look to the drummer Pak H. for guidance and leadership. Although he was perfectly capable of leading *latihan*, Pak H. strongly resisted being put in this position, preferring to simply drum whatever piece was decided on, without having to think through the ramifications of how appropriate that choice was given who was playing which instrument, and then enforce a sensible decision. Not taking charge also gave him an opportunity to be visibly modest and show that, although the group members might think him knowledgeable enough to make such decisions, with his level of experience he knew himself to be inadequate. Usually Pak H. would simply refuse to speak when it was suggested that a decision should be made, but would eventually join in with a discussion once other people had made suggestions and removed the sole responsibility from his shoulders.

A far more serious and disruptive example occurred in the Town Hall group during the preparations for a two-hour, live broadcast on the local branch of the national radio station (Radio Republik Indonesia Solo). At that time the group had no regular *rebab* player, which was not a serious issue during *latihan* but was a major problem for a public performance of this magnitude. I had just begun playing with the group and the leader asked me if there was a foreign *rebab* player who could join us for the event. I suggested someone on the basis of hearsay rather than direct personal experience and they came to

rehearsals for a few weeks in preparation. It rapidly became apparent that a large number of the more knowledgeable players did not think this person was good enough to be playing *rebab* for a radio broadcast so moves were made to find another player, with the plan eventually being to move someone who had been invited to play *bonang* onto the *rebab* instead. Problems arose when this player, who was a retired professional *rebab* player from Sriwedari, decided that he wanted to display his annoyance at being moved from the *bonang*. At the next rehearsal he refused to play *rebab* and announced that he would play *suling* instead⁶⁸ and also announced that, in his opinion, the foreign *rebab* player was perfectly good enough. This produced a very tense atmosphere with the leader and several other members of the group attempting to persuade him to use his skills in the best interest of the group rather than demonstrate his importance in this way. The foreign *rebab* player, not speaking Javanese, was not sufficiently aware of what was happening to realise the importance of voluntarily retiring from the *rebab* so as to be replaced by the ex-professional. This short-circuited the usual way in which such situations would be resolved and meant that, as no one was prepared to tell the foreign player that they were not suitable,⁶⁹ they ended up playing for the broadcast, with the professional player ostentatiously playing *suling* at the back of the room.

Assessing newcomers

The extent to which any member of a group is granted authority on the grounds of such assertions is highly contingent on the particular way in which that group assesses competence, ability, and, therefore, the weight behind an individual's claims to knowledge. The techniques that any given player uses to assert authority in their normal

⁶⁸ Although a necessary part of a complete gamelan ensemble the *suling* ranks very low in the hierarchy of instruments.

⁶⁹ I was also not brave enough to make this clear, hoping that the leader would take the initiative. I was frequently reminded of and taken to task for my part in this situation for the rest of my time with the group.

playing environment may not have any likelihood of success in a different group which may refer to different systems of validation. The level of trust invested in players affects which instrument they play in a group and, once established, these positions are relatively stable also including clear understandings as to who will replace an absent player on each of the most important instruments. As a result, the only occasions on which I was able to directly observe the process of assessment were when guest musicians joined a group for a performance, or when I first started rehearsing with a group and they were attempting to place me.

The most straightforward way in which new players were judged was when they were invited by an existing member. Although it was never explicitly discussed there was an assumption that the group would be informed in advance, if not asked, before people were invited, and during this process the existing member would explain who they were and how their skills fitted into the needs of the existing group. Because most groups already have established players for most instruments, this usually only happens when there is a need for extra singers or soft-instrument players for a performance. It is not usually acceptable to bring along extra *balungan* players unless it is a single occurrence which people are prepared to accommodate by vacating their normal places for one session. When musicians were invited by established authority figures they were normally accepted as a matter of course and assumed to be competent. In Marem Bu M. recruited two male singers to bolster the vocal component of the *latihan* and this was accepted without any hesitation or unease. In Pasar Gedhé, however, the drummer Pak W. would always invite a singer from his home group to add strength to the *gérong* for public performances and, although this man was clearly a talented singer with a large repertoire of *båwå*, his presence caused some tension as the group already had several men who considered themselves to be the official singers. This man's competence was assumed

and not called into question, but the need to add another male singer was taken to be slightly insulting to the existing members.

When I attended some gamelan association rehearsals as a student in Solo first learning to play gamelan the appropriateness of my presence and my ability to keep up was guaranteed by the teacher from ISI who had suggested that I join. They were also responsible for managing any displacement caused by my being there. As a researcher playing with groups where I had no previous connections I rapidly became very aware of the ways in which players weighed up the ability of a ‘rogue’, non-sponsored musician who was suddenly part of their group. Because of the lack of soft-instrument players in amateur associations I was able to avoid displacing existing members by playing *gendèr* and this led to important insights about what constitutes proof of competence among amateur players of different levels of expertise. When I play *gendèr* amongst professional musicians, judgements of my competence are made based on playing technique, appropriate melodic choices, and knowledge of specific details of individual pieces. In the vast majority of gamelan associations, however, none of the players know enough about *gendèr* playing to be able to make these judgements. As a result, the fact that I was playing *gendèr* served to show that I was trained and knowledgeable, but in a way which they could not assess to their own satisfaction.

In the Pasar Gedhé group I started by playing *gendèr* exclusively for a month during which period the other players saw me as an interesting addition to the group but did not feel able to comment on my musicianship in any way. This situation was very unfamiliar and disconcerting as I was used to immediate and brutally honest comments on my playing. Finally there were a series of *latihan* when a number of the senior male players could not attend and the group jumped at the chance to see whether I could play *bonang* and drum. When I demonstrated that I could indeed do this there was a sudden, dramatic

change in my position within the group as they had now seen me perform in an idiom which they understood and could judge to some extent, although their assessments of my *bonang* playing and drumming seemed to be based far more on what they knew about my training than on the actual details of what I was doing.⁷⁰ When I started playing with KOSTI Laras this process was accelerated by the fact that the group had no *gendèr*, so after playing *balungan* until the full complement of members had arrived I was immediately forced onto the drum in order to demonstrate the level of my musicianship. In the group at the Post Office I was also required to drum for a rehearsal when the senior players who usually took this role were not present and, despite my having played *gendèr* with them for several months, there was explicit discussion of the fact that they would now get to see ‘how good I was really’ (*saiki iså nilai nek pinter ora*). The emphasis on *bonang* playing and drumming as evidence of ability in these groups shows the importance of being able to judge ability and therefore feeling able to accept or reject assertions of authority. This is just as much a factor in amateur groups as it is amongst professional players but the terms of reference are, of necessity, different.

The somewhat camouflaging nature of playing soft instruments amongst non-specialists was used to great effect in the Kraton groups: senior officials would play *gambang*, *gendèr*, or *suling* in order to reflect their position in relation to the rest of the members, who were far lower-ranking palace servants. I was well aware that what they were playing often bore no relation to the piece in question but the fact of their hands moving and producing sound on one of these prestige instruments provided a semblance of authoritative activity. Group members who are not able to judge soft instrument playing are not oblivious to this ploy, so although there is an acknowledgement of the theoretical

⁷⁰ All of the comments revolved around the perceived refinement and ‘correctness’ of my playing style which was attributed either to my having studied at ISI or to my assumed links to the Kraton. These judgements were basically positive when made by the women in the group but, for the men, marked me out as belonging to a different tradition of musicianship.

importance of the *gendèr* or *gambang*, and respect is granted to those playing them, it is the *bonang* player and drummer who are looked to when information or guidance is required and who are trusted to make musical decisions.

Negotiation of authority

All of these methods of demonstrating knowledge and competence in order to assert authority rely heavily on comparison with others and a claim to being better in some way than other members of the group. It is inevitable that this leads to contentious episodes when those who are being co-opted into involvement in one person's bid for regard decide to block or confront it. This process is also dependent on the group having ways of assessing competence, particularly when someone new plays with the group and the level of authority to be granted them is as yet undecided. Whilst the chance to assert knowledge and authority is clearly enjoyed by many players in gamelan associations, the sometimes intense wrangling that ensues and which allows for a normally unthinkable level of competitiveness and aggression is if anything even more fundamental to people's participation. Gamelan associations provide a space where explicitly negotiating authority is acceptable in a way which is never condoned in normative models of Javanese behaviour. It is, however, important to note that if arguments move beyond a certain point and become potentially truly damaging to social cohesion, immediate and concerted attempts are made to defuse them and if this fails enormous amounts of energy are expended in trying to restore peace. I explore here some of the primary areas of contention and the ways in which these are navigated and negotiated by group members individually and as groups.

As mentioned above notation and proof of personal playing experience are commonly used as indices of authority. These two sources of validation often come into conflict,

however, particularly in groups with memberships which encompass musicians who have taken very different routes into gamelan playing. A regular source of arguments in the Pasar Gedhé group was precisely this issue of privileging either notation or a combination of memory and contextually informed guesswork. The women in the group do not play instruments outside of the market association: their only external gamelan experience is singing well-known songs or playing thoroughly notated new material. As such they rely entirely on notation booklets or the flipcharts used for more complicated repertoire. For the classical pieces this creates no tension with those men, the majority of whose experience is entirely based on learning and playing very specific styles of piece by ear in village groups, as they have no alternative version in their memories and are quite happy to defer to the notation. When pieces such as *langgam* or *dangdut* are played, however, they are far less willing to be led by notation. For this type of repertoire there are often no standard versions of the *balungan*, simply an array of possibilities which follow the contour of the song more or less closely. Many of these have been collected into books but every single collection contains radically versions from the others. In order to feel capable of playing for these pieces and to avoid the usual phenomenon of all the women vacating their instruments at the point in the *latihan* when such pieces were played, many of the women obtained these highly variable notation books and attempt to use them. This provokes a great deal of annoyance among the men, who feel that the territory within the *latihan* where they can demonstrate their particular skills is being encroached on, and they actively deprecate the use of notation, sometimes quite aggressively. On one occasion Mbak S., who is determined to play on the same level as the men, had become frustrated with not being able to follow the *balungan* for a song because Pak Mi. was confidently playing a very different version on the *demung*. She decided to take him to task for not playing it ‘properly’, which provoked a long, fraught argument about the

relative authority of notation and experience. Pak Mi. eventually claimed that the whole point of rehearsal was to be exposed to new ways of doing things and to learn from this. He was clearly positioning Mbak S. as the one needing to take on new information in this case. Ultimately there was no definitive decision taken about how this conflict would be resolved but the implicit outcome was that this was not an argument that could be satisfactorily adjudicated on and so space would be made in the *latihan* for both types of musicianship.

In the context of gamelan associations the vast majority of these negotiations occur verbally rather than musically but there is one musical form of authority which regularly becomes directly involved: the authority and responsibility ascribed to the drummer. The ways in which people relate to the drummer's right to determine what is happening also shows the extent to which musical rules are regarded as completely binding in *latihan*. As the drummer is usually one of the most experienced musicians in the group, and frequently also the leader and teacher, his exercise of authority is normally uncontroversial. There were occasions, however, on which the decisions made by a drummer were challenged dramatically, but in ways which did not admit the possibility of directly disobeying the drum whilst playing. The drummer for the Pasar Gedhé group, Pak W., is an extremely experienced self-taught musician, but not confident enough or afforded enough respect by the other players to act as teacher and leader, a position which is taken by another man. During almost every rehearsal there would be at least one piece where the leader or other members of the group would feel that Pak W. was drumming something in a way that was not as they would wish. This would result in them shouting at him to do it differently in extremely direct and often very rude terms, whilst simultaneously continuing to play exactly as his drumming called for. Even while

screaming that the specific drummer's interpretation was erroneous they were not prepared to disobey the drum.

Clashes between drummers and official group leaders are fairly common especially when there is a perceived imbalance in status between the two. The Tuesday group at the palace had an official '*pelatih*', or rehearsal leader, who had been recruited by the senior palace official who set up the group. He came from a family with strong links to the performing arts, with brothers and cousins who work as puppeteers and musicians, but did not perform professionally himself. He was also clearly very aware of the fact that this group had historically had difficulties finding a leader who was both considered eminent enough to take the job and would also continue to attend regularly given the unstable and sometimes frustratingly variable nature of the membership. He was capable of drumming the patterns using two drums for the most basic of repertoire, but had no experience of the *ciblon* drumming which is necessary for the vast majority of pieces considered in any way 'exciting' or 'fun'. Even though the overall level of this group was quite low the players were always requesting repertoire which needed *ciblon* drumming. When I joined the group, invited by a player I knew from the Town Hall, the leader was suddenly in the position of having to manage the situation of there being someone who could drum *ciblon* in the group whilst still attempting to maintain his own authority. This was particularly marked as I was considerably younger than him and obviously not Javanese. I tried as hard as possible to avoid making any attempts to steer the *latihan* or impinge on his authority by making decisions unilaterally, but constantly asking what he wanted to happen would have drawn attention to the dynamic between us and could have been perceived as my highlighting his inability to lead from the drum. My retreat into simply drumming and not explicitly engaging with decision making left him no chance to directly assert his authority. This led to a weekly ritual where something that had gone

wrong in a piece was officially blamed on my drumming incorrectly so that I could be publicly instructed as to how it should be done. This allowed him to reinforce his authority in the group by controlling and teaching the drummer. This approach ultimately proved extremely uncomfortable for me but any attempt to move away from the drum to a less controversial position was thwarted by the rest of the group's insistence that they wanted to play pieces involving *ciblon* drumming.

The decision as to who drums in a particular group is clearly of great importance. If the drummer is not the leader or teacher of the group it has to be someone whom the leader trusts implicitly to drum well and in a manner which is appropriate to the ability of the other players. The drummer may become a stand-in for an absent leader, as happens at Marem rehearsals, or they may be specifically invited to drum by the usual drummer for particular pieces or for a whole rehearsal so that the usual drummer can fill another role in the group. The latter is common in the Town Hall group; however, switching from the usual drummer, an academy trained professional used to leading groups of mixed ability, to a self-taught musician used to drumming for folk theatre and whose focus is primarily on displaying his own skill and enjoying the chance to push the boundaries of speed and interpretation, sometimes causes moments of tension. It is normally the case that the drummer in gamelan associations takes the ability of the players into account and does not make decisions that would cause the piece to fall apart by requiring more of them than is possible.

When the drummer is either a visiting professional who is not used to educational playing environments or someone who is learning and is using the opportunity to try out something which they are not completely certain of themselves, problems can arise. I witnessed this on many occasions, particularly in Marem where Mas U., a young player from a musical family who is unusually interested in and committed to engaging with

amateur groups, often managed to manoeuvre himself onto the drum before the usual drummer had arrived and caused consternation and confusion with his sometimes audacious and sometimes simply inappropriate interpretations. Bu M., the *sindhèn*, would always seek to make it clear that the difficulties were being caused by the drumming, in order to reassure the players that it was not their fault that things had fallen apart, as the presumed onus is on instrumentalists to follow the drummer. Mas U. was always unapologetic: he wanted a chance to put into practice something he had been mentally rehearsing during the week and was only concerned with making this happen and displaying his skill. Those drummers who are truly respected in gamelan associations, however, are those who display the very particular skill required to drum in a way which fulfils expectations of creativity and a certain level of virtuosity whilst still facilitating an enjoyable experience for the rest of the players.

Musical authority in dialogue with other forms of authority

In all of the associations that I studied the most musically knowledgeable and authoritative figures were of clearly lower social status than a number of the other players. These situations required careful management: the musically knowledgeable need to feel confident enough in their position to effectively lead and instruct the group, whilst those with higher social status need to find ways of enabling this without feeling that they are allowing their position to be compromised. These issues were normally dealt with by having a strict division of responsibility within the group. Those with musical authority were granted full rein in this sphere, with any higher status individuals either simply choosing never to offer opinions on musical matters or making regular avowals of their ignorance. They, in turn, were very likely to be asked, or simply expected, to take leading roles in helping the group interact with external authorities, negotiating with providers of

instruments and venues, seeking funds, and speaking for the group in public settings. When senior members of organisations played in gamelan associations with their employees, as is the case in the Post Office group and the Town Hall group, there were very clear attempts made to emphasise their participation whilst still remaining realistic about their abilities. The most common way this was done was to include them as part of the vocal team and have them sing well-known songs or vocal introductions at strategic rehearsals or performances.

Members of gamelan associations take this form of balance very seriously and often explicitly act to maintain it if it is threatened by external influences. In the Sunday group at the Kraton one member, Pak Wi. is a retired schoolteacher which grants him a level of social status significantly higher than most of the other regular members. He was also far more confident in addressing the members of the royal family who sometimes attended, which meant that they in turn often chose to speak to him rather than other players and regularly directly invited him to give an opinion when there was any musical indecision. He would always skilfully deflect the decision towards those with greater knowledge and personal investment in their status as musically knowledgeable. The risk of the internal hierarchies of the group being disrupted by an outsider who was unaware of them was significant enough that he would always do this with a performance of mortified embarrassment aimed at the group, and on occasion flatly contradict the royal person involved.

Negotiation in contrast to genuine conflict

The forms of performing authority and competence and the jostling and banter resulting from them that I have described here are, however, distinct and separate from instances of genuine conflict. These assertions of knowledge and concomitant belittling of, or

confrontation with, other players' knowledge and opinions are contained within the group without any serious, socially damaging consequences. I was present, however, on two occasions when truly disruptive arguments occurred. These transgressed the normal limits of discussing musical interpretation and knowledge and had genuine social ramifications for those involved. As a result they were dealt with extremely seriously by the groups concerned, clearly falling into a different category from the usual exchanges of heated discussion. In both cases the issue involved the damaging of reputation in a way which would be felt more widely than simply within the gamelan association.

During a performance in the market office for the visit of a senior official from Jakarta, the Pasar Gedhé group was provided with several trays of *dawet*, iced coconut milk decorated with palm sugar and multicoloured tapioca shapes. These were a gift to the group from one of the market traders who didn't play and were expected to be shared with the visitor when he arrived. There were a number of journalists and other visiting individuals in the room but everyone present knew that the *dawet* was only to be eaten when the official arrived. A friend of one of the players decided to come up to the office at this point, started talking loudly and disruptively and made to take a bowl of *dawet*. This prompted other members of the group to stop her, at first quite gently, but then increasingly angrily as she began to argue that she had just as much right to the food as anyone else. Some players began to tell the player whose friend she was to stop her, which she refused to do, and eventually one of the men in the group addressed her very forcibly, telling her to stop her friend from shaming herself and the group in front of the visitors. This culminated in a three-way stand-off with the group member annoying the rest of the group by not controlling her friend, simultaneously irritating her friend by refusing to side with her, and the male player becoming enraged that all of this was happening in front of outsiders. Finally things escalated to the degree that the male player

actually threw a mallet at the floor, the friend made to hit him, and the market security guards physically removed her from the room.

There was no more explicit mention of the incident from that moment on, but just before the next rehearsal I was sent a text message telling me that it had been cancelled. When the next meeting was also called off I decided to ring some players up and find out what was happening. I was told that, because of the level of rancour displayed and concerns that the incident had seriously compromised the group's ability to work together peacefully and represent the market to outsiders, rehearsals had been cancelled for the next two weeks.⁷¹ A meeting had been scheduled with the group, the group's official manager, and the market authorities, in order to find a way of moving forward. I had been somewhat shocked at the fact that the argument had very nearly involved physical violence, which is otherwise exceptionally rare in Java, but was somewhat nonplussed as otherwise the actual exchange of words and level of heat had not been any worse than many previous arguments I had witnessed in the group. Clearly the opportunity to engage in quite vigorous arguments is desirable as long as it remains framed within the safe parameters of musical detail and does not jeopardise the group's position as a trusted representative of the market as an institution or endanger the privileged access to the political hierarchy and media exposure that group members enjoy.

The second instance of genuine conflict was less dramatic but held far more potential to seriously endanger the existence of a group. Mas U., the young musician with an interest in learning how to lead groups, attended Sekar Laras rehearsals regularly and frequently visibly and audibly chafed at the bit when the leader, S., was taking things slowly in order to allow the less experienced members to keep up. Although keen to be involved in music education at a community level, U. was sometimes unable to restrain his desire to

⁷¹ This meant cancelling six rehearsals in total, a very significant matter.

perform at his level and to display the skills that he was developing and honing. His desire to be taken seriously and to be seen as a musician worthy of respect and capable of leading a group occasionally led to him undermining S.'s authority by mocking his habits of speech and behaviour or drawing attention to the simplifications he was making in the music in order to facilitate beginners' involvement. Sekar Laras was usually a fairly boisterous social environment, having several outspoken female members who were not averse to using flirtation and innuendo when dealing with S., and all of this was normally taken in good part by all concerned. On one evening, however, U. started to tease S. and drew some of the women into the joke, an insulting play on words relating to S.'s name and a shadow puppet character that he somewhat resembles. For some reason this particular instance moved from being perceived as light-hearted teasing to a demonstration of genuine disrespect and resentment. S. became visibly, genuinely angry and upset but not before U. had pressed his advantage and the involvement of others too far. Someone cracked an unrelated joke to break the situation and the rehearsal continued for that evening. Neither S. nor U. appeared the next week, however, and a number of phone calls by various members of the groups had to be made before finally S. returned and then after a suitably managed gap U. also returned, with his behaviour being kept firmly in check by the senior women in the group. This situation became serious because U.'s position as an independent professional performer, albeit relatively junior, meant that his intervention had the potential to genuinely undermine S.'s authority as a group leader. His disrespect contained the implication that other 'real' musicians outside of the group would also not take S. seriously in a leadership role, something which is a particular sore point for S. as he has consciously made a commitment to focus primarily on teaching community-based groups rather than seeking fame as a player or composer, even though he does also perform at the highest levels. Rather than remaining at the level of jostling

within the group, this particular occasion of negotiating authority moved into the territory of potentially serious social discord because it raised sensitive issues with implications that reached well beyond the space of this particular group.

Summary

In all of these circumstances the opportunity to make and negotiate claims of authority is centred on musical matters. Details of technique, knowledge, experience, and learning trajectory are both the framework in which these moves are located and also the principal material used to make them. The gamelan association *latihan* provides a space where people can be boastful, argumentative, and contentious; indeed these types of behaviour are to a great extent expected of musicians in a tradition where individual interpretation and engagement with the interpretation of others is fundamental. The structuring rules inherent in *karawitan* are strong enough, and taken seriously enough in this setting, to allow for relaxation of the normal rules of social behaviour. The fact that playing gamelan is considered to be definitively Javanese means that participants can engage in other behaviours normally considered un-Javanese, safe in the knowledge that their very involvement already demonstrates a serious commitment to traditional values.

The issues in relation to which argument and negotiation occur and the ways in which they are handled demonstrate clearly that, even when decisions are made and one person's authority is validated at that time, everyone is still aware of the existence and potential validity of other options that may have their place on another occasion or in a different context. Gamelan has multiple centres of authority and the often varied makeup of gamelan associations' membership and their location in communities centred on allegiances that are non-musical means that these systems meet and interact here more than in professional groups where membership is often predicated on adherence to a

particular style, musical director, or shared training. Whichever approach a group takes, clear efforts are taken during *latihan* to prioritise musical authority and knowledge over other forms of social status even whilst these are acknowledged. Gamelan associations, with their wide range of ability levels and learning histories, make the processes of negotiation, recognition, and dynamic accommodation of differing authorities more readily apparent than established, professional groups with players from broadly homogenous backgrounds.

Chapter Seven

Access to power: gamelan associations as sites for exchanging and converting cultural capital

In this chapter I set out the case that one of the most pragmatic benefits provided by playing in a gamelan association is that it affords individuals or groups with otherwise limited access to official decision making and self-determination an opportunity to interact and engage with sources of power and authority. This may take the form of providing otherwise impossible access to individuals in positions of responsibility, or of allowing people to establish or strengthen their own position directly. The social setting of a *latihan* facilitates this by being relaxed and informal enough to open up the possibility of meeting and talking to figures who would otherwise be unapproachable, but it is still enough of an established structure that doing so does not feel inappropriate or overtly socially risky. The sources of power that players seek to access may be in the realm of the political and administrative or of the cultural and spiritual, and the historical connections between the performing arts and these forms of power in Java contribute to their remaining a particularly potent tool for doing so even if not one entirely congruent with ideals of national modernity.

A helpful starting point for exploring the way in which people use involvement with music to access, build, display, and assert power is the idea of cultural capital set out by Bourdieu (1984). Involvement with the traditional performing arts in Java is clearly a way

in which people mark out their allegiance to specific social ideals and assert their belonging to particular status groups: it is a way of ‘distinguishing’ themselves from others. The fact that the existence of gamelan associations of necessity brings together those rich in quite different forms of ‘capital’, cultural, financial, and social, means, however, that far from simply being places where people display their status, they act as sites which facilitate the creation of power through the spending of and, even more importantly, the exchange and conversion of these different forms of capital.⁷²

The way in which musical knowledge, performance, and innovation can act to create structures of capital which are specifically musical has been explored at the institutional level by Born (1995) and also at the personal and individual level by Cottrell (2002). These examples, however, focus on worlds where ‘the musical’ is the privileged organising category. In the case of gamelan associations, despite being a fundamental feature, ‘the musical’ is also used as a means to engage with structures of power which are not primarily framed in these terms. The political manoeuvrings described here, and in other ethnographic studies,⁷³ are familiar from both Brinner’s (1995) descriptions of professional gamelan players in Solo and my own experience and reflect situations where musical authority and reputation map onto position within institutionalised musical power structures in relatively uncomplicated ways. I contend that the fact that gamelan associations are predominantly amateur groups means that specifically musical forms of power and authority are frequently used here as bridges to other forms of influence and social traction rather than being an end in themselves.

⁷² As Jenkins (1992, 148) suggests, there is a risk of interpreting Bourdieu’s theorisation of capital generation and exchange as something mechanistic and straightforward rather than something which is contextually complex and involves negotiation and risk. Whilst I am arguing that in Solo conversions between cultural, economic, and social capital with relation to gamelan music are familiar and far from extraordinary, they are certainly not achieved without effort or the possibility of failure.

⁷³ Particularly the example of Afghan musicians conceptually distancing themselves from the popular music they are required to play for profit (Baily 1988).

The intersection of music and power is often described in terms either of musicians helping to create or support existing political structures (Askew 2002; Dave 2014; Hellman 1998; Hellman 2003; Mills 2003; Sorce Keller 2007) or of the music of resistance, protest and rebellion (Rose 1989; Nooshin 2004; Sakakeeny 2010; Weintraub 2010). I argue that the use of music to engage with power found in gamelan associations is different in important ways from both of these narratives. Playing gamelan draws on forms of cultural validation and patronage which are well established but which are no longer the official structures of power in contemporary Indonesia; gamelan is certainly not used to directly support leaders except at the most local level. Seeking access to current structures of authority in this way is however by no means counter-cultural, since it exploits norms and expectations that already exist and are culturally validated, even if not completely 'modern'. The players in gamelan associations are not seeking to challenge systems of authority but to gain access to them by appropriating the residual connections between the traditional performing arts and power. These connections allow gamelan associations to act as gateways to influence which are still valid and functional, despite having been largely forgotten and left unexploited.

This way of looking at traditional music as a means to achieve social benefit, despite being one based on long-standing traditional ways of using the arts in Java, resonates with Yúdice's (2003) characterisation of a contemporary shift to conceiving of and dealing with culture as a resource. Culture very definitely is a resource in Java and is 'managed' by the authorities in ways which coincide very clearly with Yúdice's (2003, 20) analysis of this process in the Americas (Hatley 1982; Peacock 1987; Harnish 2007). In the case of gamelan associations, however, we have an example of individuals and groups of people who do not fall into the categories usually considered to use music in this way. The members of gamelan associations are not state officials manipulating

cultural production and expression for national political ends, nor are they oppositional groups using music as a way to confront or seize power. Instead, I argue that they create and occupy spaces where the interests of the establishment and their own personal concerns are tied together in a collaborative use of traditional music-making as a resource.

‘Power’ in Java

Before moving on to specific examples of how making a contribution to the existence of gamelan associations functions in the ways described above, it is important to set out some of the ways in which power is conceptualised in the Javanese context and the connections that exist between the performing arts and its exercise. The Indonesian state established after independence was based explicitly on the model of the ‘nation state’ with a unifying language, bureaucracy, and mass media (Anderson 1991) and as a result consists of structures of power familiar from most Western and postcolonial democracies, with a bureaucratic state system staffed and controlled by elites formed through access to education and wealth production. Traditional ideas of power remain extremely influential, however, as a background to the ostensibly modern structures of governance.

Anderson (1991, 20) proposes a Javanese model which regards power as something objectively present in people and objects rather than something abstract, as a finite resource which can be accumulated at the expense of others but can also be distributed once collected, and as mechanically available through specific practices regardless of the moral status of the one acquiring or wielding it.⁷⁴ The way in which this traditional form of power was exercised was intimately tied to specific forms of artistic practice and the physical objects used in their performance. The Javanese state was what Geertz (1980)

⁷⁴ The residual effect of this understanding of power can be seen in the way the first two Javanese presidents of Indonesia, Sukarno and Suharto, sought to bolster and legitimise their rule through the acquisition of sacred weaponry and formal visits to the graves of historical leaders to ask for transmission of the mandate to rule.

calls a 'theatre state', where power was created, just as much as displayed and legitimised, through pageantry. The resolutely modern and multi-ethnic nature of the contemporary Indonesian state does not grant official space to such specifically traditional and Javanese linkages, and as a result gamelan and the associated performance arts have ostensibly been decoupled from power in the political sphere. These historical connections are nonetheless still present in the minds of contemporary Solonese⁷⁵ and make playing gamelan a possible way to engage with power for those who do not have easy access to the structures of its modern expression in Indonesia.

I set out here specific examples of how playing in or supporting a gamelan association provides access to structures of power and allows the conversion between various types of capital. This might take the form of using cultural capital, in the form of musical ability and knowledge, to gain access to the production of social capital, or the use of financial capital to build cultural and social capital. I start with the sphere of political authority, looking at the benefits available to players in positions of structural powerlessness and also the advantages to be gained by those in power who visibly support amateur music-making. I then move on to the sphere of specifically spiritual power.

Access to political power

Benefits for the players

The clearest example of gamelan playing providing contact between people without any formal power and those with a great deal occurred when members of the Market group started coming to rehearsals at the Town Hall. The market and Town Hall are within sight

⁷⁵ Davidson and Henley (2007) make a strong case for a resurgence in interest in the traditional or *adat* as a way of reclaiming authority and control over land in various regions of Indonesia.

of each other and are linked by both being part of the civic administration. Many of the officials from the market office frequently attend meetings at the Town Hall and whenever there are important official visitors they are taken to the market to see it in operation and often to be entertained by one of the resident musical groups. Historical connections between the two groups mean that some of the officially employed market workers play in both groups, and when larger events happen at the market some of the more experienced musicians from the Town Hall group come along to help out. During my time with these groups this flow of players also began to operate in the opposite direction as well. One of the main figures from the Town Hall, having seen me play there, invited me to come along to their rehearsals, and in the following weeks also began to invite other individuals who he thought would either gain from the experience or bring something to the town hall group.⁷⁶

Although the market traders are exceptionally confident and authoritative within their own sphere, their status is entirely limited to that world, and so when attending the Town Hall rehearsals they felt it necessary to bring their husbands with them in order to present themselves in the way that they felt the more middle-class group members would expect of them. Shortly after these women had started playing with the group it was arranged that once every thirty-five days the rehearsal would be held in honour of the Regional Secretary⁷⁷ on his *weton*.⁷⁸ This meant that towards the end of the evening's session the Secretary would arrive with some of his staff and there would be a brief prayer followed by the distribution of the particular food used for these occasions (*bancakan*). The

⁷⁶ It is probable that these invitations and the ensuing additional movement between the groups was triggered by my presence and might not otherwise have occurred. The ensuing benefit that the market traders were able to obtain from this is, however, still indicative of the possibilities afforded by membership of gamelan associations and the way in which they are grasped when available.

⁷⁷ This is a senior administrative position within city government, reporting directly to the Mayor.

⁷⁸ One's Javanese 'birthday', which occurs once every thirty-five days, when the same combination of seven-day week and five-day week occurs as at one's birth.

distribution of the food fell exclusively to the women in the group and took some time as each portion has to be individually assembled. During the time people were waiting for food, or once they had finished, it was possible to chat although in a somewhat more subdued way than usual. I did not realise at the time but discovered later that this provided the men accompanying their wives with an opportunity to approach the Secretary and discuss a number of issues that they felt were not being dealt with properly within the usual channels at the market. One of them specifically said to me later that if it were not for the gamelan group he would never have been able to bring their concerns directly to such an important person within the city administration.

This situation was also of great importance to the members of the town hall group who were still working there or had retired from the civil service. The chain of command within Indonesian bureaucracy is very hierarchical and even those players who had held quite important positions would not normally have engaged with the Regional Secretary in anything other than an extremely formal exchange. His presence at rehearsals on a monthly basis provided an opportunity for people to communicate with him in a far more relaxed and informal setting. Even though the events were in his honour the fact that the gamelan group was hosting them and explicitly playing, praying, and sharing food for his benefit meant that a relationship was built which required him to be attentive to the group. During my fieldwork there was no sense of a particular agenda behind this, but the sense that honouring someone in power in this way would be a worthwhile investment was clearly crucial in the establishment of this tradition. Setting up this monthly event did not require much extra work for the group but effectively provided them with a powerful ally should the need arise in the future.

Even in their home context, taking part in the gamelan association allows the Pasar Gedhé players to gain a far higher profile with the market administration than would

otherwise be easily achievable. Because the rehearsals take place in the main office, right at the end of the working day, assembling for the *latihan* automatically makes members of the group noticeable to the market manager and his staff. Being visible in this way three times a week means that these individuals are significantly more likely to come to mind when market traders are required to represent the market, whether this is meeting important visitors or being asked to engage with the media. The women who play gamelan are always among those seen and quoted in newspaper articles or on television reports from the market, and they are usually involved whenever there is a fund-raising drive that involves reaching out to the general public; choosing to perform in the gamelan group marks them out as committed and reliable performers on behalf of the market. I am not aware of any of the players having used this additional level of familiarity with the administration or contact with important visitors to achieve specific ends, but there is a definite feeling that being seen regularly working on behalf of the market in this way builds a reservoir of favour that may be useful at some point. There is also the possibility that being visible to the general public makes people slightly more likely to buy from you when they are shopping in the market.

Joining a gamelan association attached to an institution or geographical area positions players as de facto representatives of that place whenever they appear in public. The idea of musicians carrying the reputation and honour of an institution and displaying and building this through their performances is an integral part of palace practice in Java; it is also a phenomenon recognisable in other contexts worldwide such as regimental military bands (Reily and Brucher 2013), brass bands associated with particular mines or factories in the UK (Herbert 1991), or taxi firms in West Africa (Keil and Feld 1994), and community bands in New Orleans (Sakakeeny 2013). What is particularly interesting in the Javanese context are the ways in which spontaneously organised associations within

organisations and communities and the formal institutional structures that exist there interact to create systems of support and representation which are beneficial for all parties. The gamelan *latihan* is a type of event which is uniquely suited to enabling such interactions, building as it does on traditional models of patronage and clientelism, and given the links of gamelan music specifically to the performance of power.

Benefits for those in authority

The discourses on the importance of the traditional performing arts mean that it is also beneficial in various ways for those in authority, or with money, to be seen to support such groups. Supporting gamelan associations is also one of the few options for making a regular commitment to this: sponsoring a *wayang* is extremely expensive⁷⁹ and as a result cannot be done on a regular basis, and professional musicians are usually already supported by state institutions. Thus, as well as groups seeking out powerful allies, it is also common for people with power or money to actively look for opportunities to enable *latihan*. This form of patronage is one of the major factors in allowing groups to exist: without such support it is extremely difficult to maintain a gamelan association in the long term.

During my period of fieldwork the mayor of Solo, Joko Widodo, was elected as Governor of Jakarta and his deputy, Rudy, took over as mayor. This was somewhat controversial as Rudy is Catholic and a number of the hard-line Islamic groups in Solo objected to having a non-Muslim in charge of the city. Tensions were particularly high at the time as the army and military police had been carrying out a massive anti-terrorism campaign with several groups and individuals arrested with the material to make enormous bombs in their houses, and a number of retributory attacks on police stations. Rudy clearly decided

⁷⁹At the time of writing, sponsoring a wayang in Solo with a well-known, but not superstar, puppeteer and including musicians, costs around 55 million Rupiah (approximately £3500) for one night's entertainment.

that continuing the stress on Javanese tradition and inclusivity that his predecessor had begun was the best policy and promoted a wide range of cultural events including traditional dance, batik design, and also performances of devotional Islamic song.⁸⁰ In a less public move he also invited the Town Hall gamelan association to rehearse at his official residence, which houses a set of instruments, once a month instead of using the Town Hall. This clearly represented an attempt to assert Rudy's position of authority and to demonstrate his Javanese-ness, despite being Christian, by demonstrating his engagement with traditional models of patronage. It also happened after the group had made the decision to celebrate the Regional Secretary's *weton* and had thereby signalled their readiness to become involved in such relationships.

In order to allow a smooth relationship between groups and the official management of the institutions which house them it is very common for an intermediate figure to be appointed, chosen with some degree of cooperation and collaboration between the two parties. In the Pasar Gedhé group the person chosen to undertake this role was Pak J. an extremely successful businessman who had gone from one stall to a leading role in the sale of all the fruit in the market and the supply chain for most of the supermarkets in Central Java. Pak J. comes from a musical family background, with his eldest brother playing *karawitan* and his second brother being the leader of *Sangga Buana* an extremely popular ensemble performing *campursari*, a gamelan-based popular music. Pak J. played drums, sang and acted as master of ceremonies for this group before moving away from his job as a teacher of economics to direct participation in the business world. Having left the arts behind in order to focus on his career he now uses his position of influence within the market and his extensive financial resources to support music-making by other traders. This is clearly beneficial for the gamelan association, since the backing of such a well-

⁸⁰ This relatively new genre is called *Sholawat*. One of the most well-known exponents, Habib Syech Abdul Qodir Assegaf, who is a descendant of the prophet Muhammad, lives in Solo.

known figure makes their profile higher and he also provides fruit and other food for rehearsals on a regular basis. The relationship does, however, also significantly benefit Pak J. in both personal and business terms.

When I interviewed him about his links to the gamelan group Pak J. spoke at length of a sense of having achieved his significant success, in both contemporary music and business, through moving away from what he saw as Javanese traditional values. “I now feel disappointed that I didn’t join in with the gamelan side of things: I feel that I lost out.” I also regularly met him at the book stalls on the palace square where he was looking for books on formal Javanese for public speaking. He spoke of this as growing out of a desire to reconnect with traditional culture which “sets one’s heart at peace”, but it also allows him to sound more cultured at the meetings of the many committees on which he sits, bolstering his financial clout with the appropriate cultural trappings. Now that he had achieved considerable success he was very keen to use the financial capital that he had accrued to rebuild his cultural capital.

The process by which he became the figure with responsibility for managing the musical groups in the market is slightly unclear. He says that he was “chosen by the musicians” but members of the group talked of him having been head-hunted by the market manager as a suitably weighty figure. This responsibility covers all the groups that have been started by market traders and includes a *campursari* group and an *orjen tunggal* group as well as the gamelan association. Pak J. aims to be even-handed in promoting all of these groups, describing himself as a “bridge to the government on behalf of all the activities going on in the market”, and tries to steer clear of becoming involved in the latent rivalries between them. The gamelan group is presented at far more events, however, because of its prestige status as a traditional rather than popular music and Pak J. says that he regards *karawitan* as the “form of entertainment that is most conducive to

harmony and peace”. Whenever this happens the extremely visible and audible gamelan ensemble is subtly linked to Pak J. in the formal speeches, and his role as a patron of the arts is thus broadcast to as many people as possible. On occasion this connection is rather overstated for the taste of the players: at the celebration for an anniversary of the area of the city where the market is situated, the group, which consists almost entirely of individuals who sell in the main Eastern building rather than the Western ‘fruit market’, was introduced as the ‘Fruit Market Gamelan Ensemble’ with Pak J. resplendent in the costume of a high-ranking palace official heading the procession and providing the fruit mountain that was later to be ceremonially torn apart by those present. This caused an understated but definite wave of annoyance among the group and a number of the women were still alluding to it weeks later, although never outside of the group.

Although supporting the gamelan association and other musical groups in the market gives Pak J. the opportunity to convert his wealth into cultural value it is still also extremely beneficial to his position within the organisation. Being so prominently referenced at any large-scale event has buttressed his authority. During the year I was in Solo he was chosen to represent the market traders on a consultative committee set up by the Town Hall and was also invited to join the newly established panel on managing inflation. Visibly supporting the performing arts allows Pak J. to feel that he is reconnecting with Javanese values and in doing so he provides performance opportunities for the gamelan association. He talks about these performances as an important means of advertising for the market and the traders:

“When traders are playing gamelan there might be people walking by on the main road with no intention of stopping but when they hear that there are people playing gamelan they become curious and so stop, stop to watch. Once they’ve watched a bit,

despite not really planning to buy anything, they buy something.... It increases sales and makes the selling go with a swing.”

He is very keen to emphasise that this is part of the work he does to help traders improve their business, alongside organising a credit cooperative and representing their interests on city committees. All of this serves at the same time to make him more noticeable and promotes him as an engaged social leader who is therefore considered for even more positions of authority. Although this situation is sometimes commented on wryly by the members of the gamelan association they are very aware that their connection to Pak J. is fundamental to their continued successful existence and are more than happy to be occasionally misrepresented to maintain the relationship.

The use of financial assets to build social capital through supporting gamelan associations can also occur on a less dramatic but no less significant level than in the case just described. Mbak K. is a market trader, specialising in fried chicken, who plays in the market gamelan association. Having come into a large amount of money through inheritance she and her husband decided to extend their house in nearby Jetis, adding a very large, multi-purpose room to the side of their property. Mbak K. already sang with the gamelan group in her village and she saw this as a perfect opportunity to provide a permanent home for the precariously housed instruments.⁸¹ This generosity puts her in the position of sponsoring the group and raises her status within both the gamelan group and the local area. The large-scale cooking operation that she runs professionally also allows her to provide food for the rehearsals which is extremely lavish in comparison to the usual offerings but does not actually involve much extra expenditure on her part.

Being able to provide support for the group in these ways has significantly altered Mbak

⁸¹ These had reportedly been awarded to the village as a prize for best uptake of contraceptive implants in the local administrative area (Kelurahan).

K.'s role at public events. Before inheriting the money she exclusively focussed on singing at rehearsals and was not particularly prominent as, although she has a good repertoire of *langgam* and popular songs, she cannot sing *sindhènan* and the group always invited at least two very experienced *sindhèn* to make the *latihan* vibrant. Hosting the group radically changed how visible she was both at rehearsals and when the group performed publicly.

The first major outing of the gamelan association after it had moved into her house was playing for a blood donation drive organised by young people from the village, some of whom were nursing students. A donation unit was set up in a small communally owned building at the edge of the rice fields with trained nurses, student nurses and other young people acting as recruiters and assistants to encourage donors to come forward. Those wishing to donate had to undergo anaemia tests before being allowed to register, which meant that there was a rolling crowd throughout the day, arriving, waiting to be tested, then waiting again to donate and finally being observed for a while before leaving. It is common at events like this to provide some form of entertainment which serves to attract people in the first place, encourages them to stay for a reasonable length of time, and which makes an otherwise relatively quiet occurrence into something fun, lively, and audibly social. This is referred to as 'making successful' (*sukseskan*), and the level of buzz and excitement around the event is considered just as important as the number of people who specifically engage with the project in question.



Blood donation drive performance. Jetis 23/12/12

On this occasion the gamelan group decided that they, as a local organisation, would provide the entertainment for free. This gave them a public forum for performance which did not require moving the instruments very far, allowed them to show off their skills to the wider community, and also made them appear public-spirited and generous in helping to make the event successful. For Mbak K. this was a very significant performance: instead of sitting amongst the other singers and having a rather insignificant role behind the more experienced women, she was able to move between sitting in the front row of seats and coming up onto the gamelan platform to chat with the players, conspicuously encouraging them to drink the tea and eat the snacks. She also arranged that her husband would come and pick me up for the event so that the foreign guest musician was seen to be provided through her agency.



Blood donation drive performance. Jetis 23/12/12

The fact that her house had become a bona fide gamelan rehearsal space also meant that she could invite the Pasar Gedhé group, where she also plays, to come out to her village for a rehearsal on a better quality gamelan in the lead up to a major public performance. This meant that all of her colleagues from the market who had not yet been to her village were made thoroughly aware of her position as a sponsor of gamelan, not just a *kenong* player, and, because this was a major event in the group's calendar, a large number of the most important market administrators were included in the convoy of vehicles organised to get everyone to Jetis. Thus Mbak K. provided a pleasant rehearsal space for the group and provided them with a lavish meal but, in doing so, also forcefully demonstrated her standing in her home community to her colleagues and the market hierarchy, and brought them into a relationship of expected mutual hospitality which would not have been easily achievable otherwise.

This social manoeuvre was not entirely successful: after two *latihan* had been held at Mbak K.'s house a number of the other women from the market group decided that they were not going to be manipulated into thinking of her as someone of importance by this transparent display of largesse. It was, however, successful in making her and her husband better known to the senior market officers and in alerting the men who lead the market group to her desire to be taken seriously as both a singer and a player. As a result her husband became involved in a minor committee and she was regularly invited to leave the *kenong* and sing or play *bonang* for simpler pieces.

Gamelan associations, therefore, act as sites for the connection of individuals and groups to sources of authority and power and also for the conversion of social and financial capital into cultural capital. This might be in the straightforward sense of those with little agency being able to come into contact with people who have established positions and authority and seek their assistance and support, but in other circumstances involvement as either a player or sponsor can also directly generate authority and social standing in ways which benefit multiple parties in some way.

Access to the power of sacral objects, places, and people

For individuals who chose to play in the groups based in the Kraton the power to which they gain access is of a very different nature. The Kraton has no real political or administrative authority nowadays,⁸² but there are many Javanese who still take the authority and mystique of the Kraton extremely seriously on a personal level and also believe that the activities of the palace help to maintain order at a cosmic level. Many

⁸² Two of the current Sultan's sisters are involved in local and national politics as elected members of the Regional Representative Committee (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah) and the National Parliament (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat), but this is in no way analogous to the situation in Yogyakarta where the Sultan is automatically the official State Governor of the Yogyakarta Special Region (Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta).

such people who live in the Solo area become palace servants (*abdi dalem*) if they have no other fixed employment because this allows them to be part of the remaining elements of palace protocol and pageantry, gives them access to areas of the palace buildings which are off limits to the general public, and affords the possibility of direct contact with members of the royal family. The desire to do this is fuelled partly by pride in the former glories of the palace and thus Solonese culture in general, but also by the fact that Javanese mystical thought asserts that merely to be present in certain places, at certain events, and with certain people allows one to bathe in the power they give off and be made more spiritually aware and powerful. These ideas came to the fore in the answers players gave when asked why they chose to join the palace gamelan associations in particular:

“Because they contain history” “Because it can bring blessings” “I want to maintain Javanese culture, and its source is in the Palace.”

One of the responsibilities of the Sultan is to collect and husband spiritual energy (*kesaktèn*) which is then released through specific practices. Although this release of power theoretically affects everyone within the Palace’s jurisdiction, being closer to the source is considered more beneficial. For those who are not able to act as *abdi dalem* there are a number of other activities sponsored by the palace which grant them access in similar ways, amongst them the Sunday gamelan association, the school for masters of ceremonies, and the small groups that recite poetry, pray, and sing in front of the royal residence on Thursday nights.

Members of the Sunday gamelan association, for example, gain the very visible right of being recognised by the gatekeepers at the business entrance to the palace and can, therefore, walk in unchallenged even while others are being stopped. They also play on

one of the palace's heirloom gamelan sets,⁸³ and spend two to three hours with Gusti P., who is one of the major figures of the current royal family, and hear him talking about history, self-cultivation, and his take on current affairs. Members of the Tuesday group, which is made up entirely of members of the palace servants union (*Paguyuban Kawula Karaton Surakarta*), would initially seem to have less incentive to seek access to the palace in this way. It is striking, however, that even for them the chance to be further inside the palace than their usual responsibilities require and to personally play one of the palace gamelan holds a significant attraction. On a number of occasions at the end of the Sunday rehearsal one of the senior palace officials would bring food from the inner court which had been blessed as part of the regular cycle of ceremonial and distribute it formally to the players. This took place because there had not been enough people in attendance at the original ceremony and it is necessary for the majority of the food to be eaten in order to make the blessing effective and meaningful.

Regular involvement with this group also opens up the possibility of becoming part of the inner circle of commoners who are invited to join the royal family's entourage on formal occasions such as the anniversary of the reigning Sultan's coronation, the celebrations for the Prophet's birthday, or on trips to pay respects and make offerings at the royal tombs or the palace-controlled beaches on the South Sea coast. Attending palace events involves considerable outlay on either buying or hiring the appropriate clothing for one's rank but means that one gets to witness live performances of some of the most spiritually potent pieces and dances in the repertoire which are still not performed outside the palace compound. Being part of the convoy of palace vehicles on an away visit means that one can simply drive or walk through the gates of some of the most important historical and

⁸³ Made in the reign of the tenth Pakubuwana (1866-1939), during whose reign the Solonese court was at its peak of power, and when most of the major historic buildings remaining in the city were built.

religious sites in Java, places which are extremely difficult to access if one is not a member of the royal family. Even at those which are open to the general public, visiting under the aegis of the palace is considered to massively increase the likelihood of one's petitions being heard favourably, since you are surrounded by the direct descendants of the former kings and queens whose prayers you are asking for, and also means that the usual somewhat restrictive opening times are waived as the porters are employed directly by the palaces.

Summary

Despite no longer being directly, formally attached to the exercise of power by the state in contemporary Indonesia, the residual associations of gamelan music and the traditional performing arts with the authority of the palaces, and the leadership strategies of the first two Presidents after independence, provide a context in which involvement with this particular form of music is a fertile site for mutually beneficial meetings between those who hold power and those who seek to influence them or gain some form of power themselves. Playing in a gamelan association can bring players into privileged personal contact with decision makers and also raise their own profile within organisations and communities by making them more visible to both those in power and the general public. Individuals can, therefore, convert musical capital, in the form of their ability to play *karawitan*, into other forms of social and cultural capital. For those who are rich in social or financial capital supporting a gamelan group affords the possibility of deploying these resources in a way which makes them more culturally acceptable in the local context. The stigma attached to obvious personal wealth and status in Central Java can be neutralised if these assets are channelled into models of patronage which evoke the aristocratic paternalism of the imagined Javanese past.

For the majority of gamelan associations, which are based in workplaces or government institutions, the type of power being brokered is pragmatic and political. In some, however, predominantly those attached to the palace, playing gamelan is used to gain access to objects, people, and places which contain and radiate spiritual force. Although this may appear to be a far less practically useful form of power, many Javanese people consider it to be just as important and effective as a way of achieving agency and furthering their personal aims. Fundamentally Gamelan associations facilitate the exchange of musical and other forms of capital, granting those without influence access to power and allowing those with power and money the opportunity to use it in culturally validated ways.

Chapter Eight

Public sound: public sphere

This chapter addresses the importance and significance of public sound production in Java and how gamelan associations engage with this in *latihan* and performances. First, I explore the part sound plays in communicating, instantiating, and asserting sociality and authority in Java. I then move on to investigate how these ideas relate to the way gamelan associations produce and use public and amplified sound. I argue that participation in a gamelan association is a way to engage with the symbolic soundscape of Solo and an aural public sphere which is alluring because it is replete with past connections to power. Access to making public sound does not currently offer specific, concrete benefits or influence for gamelan associations, but it does offer a sense of direct involvement in the aural environment, something which has historically been the preserve of those in authority and their representatives: performing publicly generates a feeling of being part of the machinery of power.

The importance of public sound in governance has a long history stretching from Plato⁸⁴ (1908) and Confucius⁸⁵ (Provine 2007, 13) to its use by totalitarian regimes (cf. Sorce Keller 2007). Attali (1985) theorises the particular importance of the auditory, and of paying attention to the full array of sound, which he calls ‘noise’, saying that the world

⁸⁴ Plato advocated carefully limiting the modes used in his ideal republic because of music's power to affect political life.

⁸⁵ Chinese dynastic succession involved the establishing of a new fundamental pitch and the re-measuring of the state scale, a move rooted in Confucian conceptions of the link between ordered sound and polity.

“is not legible but audible” (ibid., 3), and that sound is fundamental in asserting one's place as it “indicates the limits of a territory and the way to make oneself heard within it” (ibid., 6). This approach is very pertinent when examining the sound-saturated environment of Solo and I argue that the idea of sound as a site for staking a claim to be heard is applicable to gamelan associations' deployment of musical sound. Attali, however, theorises noise as violence, seeing music as focussed, controlled violence, as ‘sacrificial’ in Girardian terms⁸⁶ (ibid., 25-26). This sits less comfortably in the Javanese context where noise is constructed, both discursively and in practice, as something positive and even desirable. In Javanese and Indonesian the term *ramé* describes an enjoyable situation created by the presence of large numbers of people and the resulting noise. *Ramé* makes no comment on the aesthetic value of the sound involved other than assuming that it is loud and that it signifies large volumes of positive social interaction. Feld (1994), building on the insights of Schafer (1977), proposes that the soundscapes that surround us provide richly patterned webs of meaning, orientation, and understanding. I argue that this way of hearing meaning is implicitly highly operative in Javanese society and that gaining access to a culturally significant means of actively contributing to Solo's soundscape is an important affordance of gamelan association membership.

More recently, Ochoa (2006) proposes that music and sound act as elements in the formation of an ‘aural public sphere’, and the construction of modernity. She sets out how the aural shapes public thought in Colombia through cycles of the purification and re-contextualisation of traditional music in intellectual discourse and the media. The detailed mechanics of this process are not the same as in Java: the traditional performing arts were

⁸⁶ Girard's (1977) concept of sacrifice is based on the ritualising of violence, turning it towards a scapegoat victim in order to allow for its distancing and subsequent, temporary removal from society.

an important element of the intellectual reconfiguring of Indonesia during the struggle for independence,⁸⁷ but local ethnomusicologists, journalists, and intellectuals have not been considering the role of gamelan in this way recently, leaving it at a distance from the discussions and negotiations of the Indonesian national public sphere.⁸⁸ Public performance on gamelan instruments is also not an arena where purification currently occurs; a mixture of serious classical repertoire and popular pieces and genres occurs in both commercial performances and the performances of gamelan associations. I contend, however, that Ochoa's idea that sound, and music in particular, are constitutive of a sphere where ideas of nationhood, citizenship, and modernity can be worked out, is still implicitly present in Solonese people's collective consciousness.

The ways in which sound acts to create an aural public sphere in Solo can be more precisely understood in terms of Born's (2013) work on the use of sound in constructing publics, and how 'music and sound can articulate spatial and socio-spatial as well as temporal boundaries' (ibid., 14). This is clearly the case in Solo where the notion of *ramé* assumes a unity between aural phenomena, spatial inclusion, and social enjoyment. Born theorises 'musical publics' as 'aggregation(s) of the affected' (ibid., 35) and the collective social enjoyment derived from attendance at *ramé* events clearly falls into this category of affective response to sound. Pemberton (1987) examines the seemingly contrasting phenomenon of the controlled and detached demeanour of wedding guests whilst hearing refined style *karawitan*, claiming that 'gamelan sound' exhibits a 'trance-like control over people' (ibid., 29), helping them to behave appropriately through a long and tedious ceremony. Both of these responses, however, show the affective power of gamelan sound in facilitating and shaping public response.

⁸⁷ Predominant here was Ki Hajar Dewantara who went on to found STSI Surakarta and has the main road it is located on named after him.

⁸⁸ The role of religious sound in Indonesia's soundscapes (cf. Hirschkind 2006; Rasmussen 2010; Eisenberg 2013) is, in contrast, much discussed.

I argue that gamelan sound, in particular, is important in the Solonese aural sphere because of its association with the expression of authority, and because it is associated with responses that are framed as socially beneficial, in contrast to the potentially suspect unity and excitement produced by popular genres such as *dangdut* (Weintraub 2010, 15, 230).

Sound in Java

The presence of noise in Indonesia is so pervasive and overwhelming when arriving there from other countries that a description of the aural barrage is now almost a cliché in any writing about the country, whether or not it focuses specifically on sound. This has now reached the stage where writers preface their descriptions of this phenomenon with disclaimers of how standard it is, but still cannot bring themselves not to mention it (Sutton 1996, 251). I contend that this shows quite how important sound and particularly public sound is in Indonesia, not simply in the way it contrasts with the relative quietness or perhaps more tightly controlled soundscapes of researchers' home countries, but also in what I take to be a fundamental orientation towards aural signalling and the use of sound to project power. The idea that modern Western cultures have privileged the visual over other modes of communication is often cited,⁸⁹ which perhaps accounts for some of the shock of predominantly Western anthropologists and ethnomusicologists encountering many Asian sound environments. Visual media are by no means unimportant in Indonesia either historically or currently, but the use of sound to project messages of any kind automatically allows them to travel beyond lines of sight, reaching out to those not yet engaged and making them aware of whatever is being offered.

⁸⁹ Schmidt (2000, 7) claims that this derives in the main from the work of McLuhan. It is frequently cited in the sound studies literature as requiring a corrective in the form of an aural turn (Pinch and Bijsterveld 2012; Sterne 2012); see also Attali (1985).

Sound signalling is also by no means an unknown phenomenon in the West historically, with examples such as the street cries of hawkers in cities, the bells used by town criers and church towers, and musicians busking. It has, however, come to be considered something which is potentially invasive and capable of infringing on a right to quiet, and therefore needing to be controlled and managed (Gibson and Homan 2004; Bywater 2007; Sakakeeny 2010). In Indonesia sound is regarded as a sign of the presence of other people, and is thus seen as reassuring rather than intrusive. The idea of requiring silence in order to fall asleep is completely alien and many people put on radios or televisions in order to help them fall asleep (Sutton 1996, 260). In this chapter I will explore some of the ways in which public sound is used in Indonesia and then address how this relates to gamelan associations, their creation of public sound, and what they seek to do and gain through this.

The most pervasive use of sound signalling is in the door-to-door selling of food in residential areas, and the specific examples I give here are all drawn from my own experience living in the *kampung* of Ngasinan⁹⁰ in 1999-2001 and 2012-2013. Houses in Solo are not normally open to the outside world: socialising among neighbours happens in the early evening when those wishing to be involved will sit in front of their houses rather than inviting others into their space. Any major celebrations in residential areas will also take place in the spaces between houses, with chairs set up in the road. Most houses do not have a doorbell and there are quite strict protocols to be used when attracting attention on approaching someone's house. As a result it is extremely rare for anyone other than close neighbours to knock on the door without urgent need.⁹¹

⁹⁰ The residential area located next to the campus of ISI and Solo's largest university UNS.

⁹¹ The only times I have seen this happen were when some particularly brave beggars were running a scam asking for donations for charity; this was clearly deeply uncomfortable for them and surprising for the local residents. When members of one of the groups I was playing with were

Because of this, the many people who make a living by selling food from door to door have to adopt techniques which alert their potential customers, ensconced inside their houses, to their presence without being able to directly approach them. As a result each category of food has its own distinctive sound which the vendor makes in some way while moving through the streets and which allows one to choose whether to go out to buy or not. To give a few examples: *putu*, a steamed sticky rice snack is heard as a loud whistle powered by the steam from a portable stove; milk carts have electronic speakers which play an advertising song about the health benefits of milk; bread carts play a tinny electronic version of the *lambada* which the vendors often use creatively, restarting the loop to stutter the opening and remix the tune as they walk; *saté* vendors have a clump of bells attached to their wheel which produces a slow, drawn-out jingle; fruit salad sellers rhythmically hit a fork against a plate; and the rag and bone man broadcasts a constant litany of what he is prepared to buy or take away through a megaphone. The progression of these sounds changes throughout the day and provides a sense of time as well as an inducement to eat.

Another sound which moves around residential areas is that produced by *kenthongan*, or small hand-held slit drums, which are carried by the *ronda*, a rotating group of young men from the *kampung* who patrol the area at night keeping watch for thieves or other troublemakers. The soft, hollow knocking of this instrument serves as an auditory symbol of security and calm for those inside, signalling the vigilance of others which allows one to relax. If anything untoward does happen whilst the *ronda* are on watch the *kenthongan* turns into an alarm signal, and the rapid, violent use of the same sound transforms it from

trying to find me as a result of some problems within the association they would not knock on the door but waited to find a neighbour in the street who would do so for them.

a token of reassurance into a summons to action. Even when *kenthongan* are no longer actually used in a particular *kampung* the local ‘*pos*’, a small open-sided hut for the use of the *ronda*, is often supplied with a large, decorative example, which acts as a visual icon of vigilance and protection, even if it no longer sounds.

The ability of sound to reach out far beyond the range of the visual and attract attention means that it is a prime site for asserting many types of power and authority and it is this potential in sound that leads to its control in Java rather than its potential to disrupt as noise. Projecting power through sound in this way means that there is a strong focus on volume as an indicator of potency, as can be seen in a number of sound phenomena from before the time of electronic amplification and also in the way such amplification has been adopted and used in Java.

The prime user of loud sound has historically been the palace. The resources and wealth of the royal family allowed it to produce instruments which were louder than anything else. Sumarsam (1995, 78) describes the use of events predicated on levels of volume rather than other aesthetic principles in the Kraton during the Dutch colonial era, where the sound of European force in the guise of brass bands and waltz accompaniment were symbolically absorbed into the sound world of the palace gamelan ensemble. Two examples of this which are still used to this day, albeit to somewhat different effect, are the gamelan ensembles called *monggang* and *sekati*. The gamelan *monggang* consists of primarily horizontally mounted gong chimes similar to *kenong* in the modern ensemble, only has three pitches, and is used only for playing one specific piece which shares its name. *Monggang*, both as an ensemble and a piece of music, is an heirloom of the palace, and palace musicians talk of it as being a boon granted to the Sultan by the Queen of the South Sea (Nyai Rara Kidul). This makes the playing of *monggang* an assertion of the link between the palace and the formidable power of this goddess, this link being one of

the main strands in the palace's validation of its authority, and a way for the palace to attract her continued attention. The instruments are still played every week, on Saturday afternoons at four o'clock in the Sithinggil, a large partially roofed courtyard which abuts the northern palace public square (*alun-alun*) which is the only part of the palace complex open to the general public, and which functions as a reception room for large events. The instruments only actually sound for five minutes and are played in exactly the same way regardless of whether or not there is anyone paying any attention.



Monggang instruments on the Sithinggil 27/04/13

The players, who include official palace musicians and some of the women from the tourism office staff, take the correct and timely performance of this duty very seriously but are in no way reverential or awestruck when carrying it out. Musically the ensemble is not particularly interesting, the one piece consisting of a constantly repeated phrase of

three alternating pitches. This phrase slows down to allow the addition of a clashing bowl cymbal and then speeds back up again to the thunderous speed and volume of the opening before slowing to finish. The fundamentally important thing is for the sound of the ensemble to spread out from the palace, demonstrating its ability and authority to create such powerful noise, and its commitment to the continued interaction and negotiation with the unseen world which allows the cosmic order to continue.⁹²

The gamelan *Sekati* are two sets of extremely large instruments only used once a year for the celebrations of the Prophet Muhammad's Birthday (*Maulud Nabi* or *Sekatèn* in Javanese). In the week leading up to this festival the gamelan are carried from the palace, across the *alun-alun*, to the central mosque and then play alternately throughout the day from the morning until at least eleven o'clock at night in dedicated pavilions. Their presence in the mosque is said to be a result of the use of gamelan by the Nine Sages (*Wali Sângâ*) to attract the Javanese to Islam (Sumarsam 1995, 29), but I believe it represents a far more complex display of the negotiation of power through sound. The volume produced by the *Sekati* gamelan is immense; indeed there is a commonly held belief that any player who manages to break a key in the process of playing will be rewarded richly by the palace for exerting themselves so hard in this enterprise. Despite this the ensembles are amplified within the mosque courtyard, a phenomenon I will discuss further later. The only times at which the gamelan stop playing are during the call to prayer. This is clearly a mark of respect for the authority of the sound of the *adhan*, but, even though the palace cedes these five moments of aural space, the rest of the day is filled seamlessly with an assertion of its sonic power, with the gamelan continuing to play across the Qur'anic recitation and devotional songs which take place in the main prayer

⁹² This concept that sound which originates with the divine and is then reproduced regularly by humans contains the power to sustain existence has been transposed by many Muslim Javanese to an often expressed conviction that if the call to prayer is no longer heard then the world will end.

hall of the mosque. The use of instruments within the precincts of a mosque and the associated offerings made to spirits resident in the gongs throughout the performance are contentious, but the fact that the central mosque is built on palace land and the links to the original era of Islamic mission in Java mean that this yearly insertion of palace sound into the mosque is still tolerated.



Gamelan *Sekati*, South Pavilion 18/01/13

The idea of allowing the *adhan* to sound without any overlapping noise is remarkably prevalent in Solo and this is explicitly the case when gamelan associations' rehearsals coincide with prayer times. The Pasar Gedhé group's rehearsals were frequently still taking place at the sunset call to prayer, and if the group was not already playing a piece when the *adhan* started they would not start until all audible calls had ceased. The Sunday group at the Kraton met at a time which coincided with both the sunset and the evening

prayer time and here this was used as a means of structuring the *latihan*. When the sunset *adhan* started the group would take a break from playing and some of the men would go to pray; the evening *adhan* was used as a sign that it was time to bring the rehearsal to a close and go home. All of the other associations had *latihan* which fell in the large gaps between the evening prayer and the dawn prayer or, in the case of the Post Office group, between the congregational prayer on Friday and the sunset prayer. This tendency to schedule events in a way that avoids collisions with the call to prayer, or at least takes it into account when organising the flow of a rehearsal, is actually very prevalent but I only became aware of it explicitly because I was present at many more planning discussions during fieldwork than I had been on previous times in Indonesia.

The *adhan* is the only sound which is treated in this way. At any other time multiple layers of overlapping sound are tolerated, ignored, or positively enjoyed. What is more important for the current discussion, however, is that the auditory signal of the *adhan* is shown this respect even by people who have no intention of responding to it by engaging in prayer, and who will frequently launch straight back into whatever activity they were engaged in the moment it is over. Not playing during the *adhan* also in no way implies that there is silence, simply that large-scale organised sound is briefly considered inappropriate. Simply hearing the call to prayer, and not generating any competing, powerful sound in opposition to it, is for many people as valid a response as praying: respecting authoritative sound is the important issue.

The intimate relationship between sound, religion, and power is also amply demonstrated by the implicit regulation of religious sound in Solo. Despite the constitutionally guaranteed religious pluralism of the Indonesian state the overwhelming dominance of Islam in terms of authority is also an audible phenomenon. As well as the call to prayer many mosques regularly broadcast hours of Qur'anic recitation or devotional songs

through their sound system at enormous volume. This is in stark contrast to the complete lack of sound generated by any other religious building. Even during major festivals churches only amplify services at a level which reaches those parts of the congregation seated outside the main building, never to a level which makes it capable of reaching out beyond those already present. At the municipal celebrations of Chinese New Year, which are sponsored by and take place next to the central combined Daoist and Buddhist temple, ‘Chinese’ sound is very apparent, but only that which is within the realm of the ‘cultural’; all religious sound is kept within the temple.

The potency of sound is also a primary concern in *wayang* performance. Here, although a full gamelan is essential to the performance, it is the voice of the puppeteer which is the crucial factor. The quality, flexibility, strength, and authority of a *dhalang*’s voice are among the most frequently discussed elements when assessing competence, equal in weight to issues of dexterity with puppets, storytelling ability, and choice of appropriate accompaniment. The power of a *dhalang*’s voice, in all the permutations it goes through in order to represent the story’s cast of characters, holds the audience’s attention and controls and coordinates the many elements that make up a *wayang* performance.

Sound signalling using means other than the voice is also crucial in both *wayang* and *karawitan* more generally. During performance a puppeteer sits cross-legged, facing away from the musicians with his hands engaged in dealing with the puppets. This means that cues for the players are made through a combination of vocal techniques and other sounds which can be made using the feet. Vocal cues are never direct other than in cases of serious breakdowns in performance, usually consisting of hints (*sasmita*) whereby the *dhalang* uses poetic terminology to cryptically allude to the title of the next piece he requires. This is supplemented by a codified series of knocks made on the large wooden puppet box with a hand- or foot-held beater, sometimes also involving a number of metal

plates to provide additional sound possibilities. This same system of control signals is also used in other theatrical forms such as *kethoprak* but played on a *kenthong* slit drum instead of the puppet box. In instrumental *karawitan* all changes of speed, moving to alternative sections of a piece, or continuing to the next part of a suite, are signalled aurally by either the drum or *rebab*. Thus all instructions are given aurally rather than visually and are given within the usual processes of unfolding the piece, rendering them as unobtrusive as possible.

There is one form of asserting authority and influence through sound which is not universally accepted in Java and which is remarkable because of this. Any amount of sound will usually be tolerated without complaint but the phenomenon of *konvoi* actually provokes spontaneous voluble complaints. When elections are approaching political parties attempt to make themselves as visible as possible by putting up enormous numbers of huge banners and posters on every available space, and by giving out free t-shirts with their symbols on to anyone who will wear them. This desire to be visible is also accompanied by a desire to be audible, and the parties give reasonably large amounts of money to young men in a particular area in exchange for them organising a *konvoi*. At the requisite time around fifty boys will gather, wearing party t-shirts and carrying enormous banners, remove the muffling tubes from their motorbike exhausts and proceed to drive around the area while rhythmically revving their engines as loudly as possible. The sound of a *konvoi* is unmistakable and impossible to avoid if one is nearby. It does not directly tell listeners who is sponsoring the sound but it is usually disturbing enough that people go to see and thus see the banners. The idea of *konvoi* originates with football supporters who use it to express their joy at a victory or frustration at a loss, but has now also become synonymous with attempts to secure votes.

The deep-seated connections that sound has to the expression of authority and the giving of commands mean that being able to produce sound in a way that is heard as widely as possible is crucial. As a result, amplification and access to sound systems is an extremely important part of Javanese life, particularly for those involved in any form of music.

Events are amplified at levels which massively outstrip the need to make them easily heard by those present, and this acts as a sound beacon for the event, summoning people from afar. This helps make the event more of a success by being attended and attended to, whether deliberately and voluntarily or not. *Wayang* can often be heard from a mile away, the predominant feature here being the voice of the puppeteer. The importance of this particular sound is sometimes attributed to the power of the *dhalang* to entertain, attract, or repel any spiritual entities that might be in the vicinity, thereby encouraging the beneficial presence and blessings of helpful forces and driving away any unhelpful influences. It is also clearly tied to the way such events are organised in Java.

Large-scale performances are not usually ticketed in Java, but are paid for by a sponsoring individual or institution whose interest in the event is largely a matter of being publicly visible and audible to as many people as possible. Maximal amplification serves to increase the number of those who are exposed to the performance and who will hopefully be made aware of the sponsor through banners or mentions during the event or in speeches. Success, or in the language of Indonesian political campaigns, '*sukses*', is measured by the level of activity at such an event, and by the amount of liveliness and noise, *ramé*, that is generated by it. This is also true of personal events which fall into the category of 'having business' (*nduwé gawé*) such as weddings, funerary events, circumcisions etc. The number of people invited to any of these events in Java is always enormous and well beyond the ability of a single family to accommodate. Those with larger financial resources hire public reception halls, but for the vast majority of people

putting on such an event means that they have the right to the use of the street outside their house and several houses in all directions, to the assistance of all their neighbours in whichever category of help they can be involved, and to create noise at levels which, even in Solo, are not normally considered appropriate in residential areas. This special dispensation on noise extends to the nights before and after the event itself: it is considered necessary to entertain those involved in the preparations and not sleeping in advance of major events is regarded as a form of spiritual preparation, even if it involves playing cards and listening to *dangdut*. The right to broadcast noise in this way is completely taken for granted by all concerned but only when someone ‘has business’.

Gamelan associations and amplification

The pervasive sense that amplified sound is sound that has power and authority can be seen in the use of microphones in a range of other circumstances. Even when there is no need for voices to be amplified to be audible, anyone wishing to speak formally, officially, or with authority will use a microphone if one is present. Many gamelan associations actually ensure that they have a number of microphones, some form of sound board and an amplifier even for rehearsals. The group at Pasar Gedhé always used at least three vocal microphones for the singers, plugged straight into a large amplifier. These were used to make the singers audible over the very loud iron gamelan which was always played with a great deal of vigour, but they were also used when the official group manager spoke, or when the head of the market addressed the group. They were, interestingly, never used by any of the men who would occasionally teach the group new pieces or comment on a particular rendition, only in the context of non-musical interventions by those with formal status. The only occasion on which non-singing members of the group would use the microphone was when they had a formal message to

convey to the whole room, and this was commonly done even when they could have easily been heard when simply speaking. Official and important speech is both signified by and created by amplification.

This approach to amplified and non-amplified voices was also evident in the groups at the Post Office, Kosti, and Jetis. In Jetis the sound system was very sophisticated with a large mixing desk and several speakers and amplifiers. A young man who lived nearby was in charge of setting this up, organising and testing microphones, and balancing the overall mix produced by the monitors throughout the rehearsal. This was the only group with a dedicated sound engineer for rehearsals; the role is normally filled by the player with the most knowledge of how to avoid feedback, but the same protocols surrounding the use of the microphone were apparent. Only official and formal announcements were made through the microphone, such as a welcome from the host and the formal introduction of an invited *sindhèn*.

There are many groups, however, which do not use amplification during rehearsals and there are two dominant reasons for this. The first is meeting in a space which has been specifically designed with acoustic properties ideal for gamelan playing and listening, or is accidentally so, and the second is a sense that amplification, perhaps precisely because of its sonic and authoritative power, detracts from intimacy and authenticity. The groups that meet at Cakra Homestay never use microphones as the gamelan room is carpeted, which reduces the amount of instrumental resonance slightly, and is also high-ceilinged enough that voices easily carry well throughout the room. The acoustic here is sympathetic enough that even the *rebab* is readily heard. The leaders of both groups lay a great deal of emphasis on listening well to all parts of the ensemble, in order to pick up

on cues, and to create the right level of volume for contrasting pieces. Not using amplification forces the players here to focus on refining their listening skills and to adjust their perception of appropriate volume levels. The lack of electrical support for the sound also fits well with the atmosphere of traditional intimacy that is essential to the group's role at the hotel.

The groups that rehearse at the Kraton also do not use any amplification as they play on a *pendhâpâ*, the form of open-sided pavilion which is the standard traditional performance space for gamelan, dance, and *wayang*, and which provides an ideal acoustic environment for blending unassisted voices with the sound of the instruments. The gamelan here is also a historical set which is smaller in size and volume than most modern sets and which therefore does not have the potential to unintentionally overpower voices. Although it was not explicitly discussed, there is an assumption that in the setting of the palace the perfect circumstances for authentic gamelan performance are automatically in place and any addition to this would be both unnecessary and disruptive. The Benawa group also meet in a *pendhâpâ* and do not use microphones, although this is made possible because of the somewhat small numbers of players attending regularly and the focus on covering as many of the soft instruments as possible rather than having a full *balungan* section.

The one occasion on which I was aware of microphones being used for instruments as well as singers in a rehearsal setting was when I visited a group in Wonogiri, an hour's journey to the south of Solo. The players and organisers here were keen to stress their connection to prestige practice, describing their connection to well-known musicians, and engaging me in conversation about specific aspects of interpretation of pieces. Another way in which they chose to emphasise their knowledge was to provide a microphone for

the *gendèr*, displaying their awareness of which instruments are considered important for the interpretation and embellishment of the melody in ‘educated’ circles, rather than letting themselves be perceived as amplifying simply for added volume and excitement.

Public performance

The use of amplification for singers is universal in performance and, in most cases, every instrument is also supplied with a microphone, which allows for every element within the ensemble to be heard as desired. This does, however, put the responsibility for balance in the hands of the sound engineer. The knowledge required to set up the microphones, sound desk, and speakers is entirely reserved to sound engineers. None of the musicians in the groups I played with made any attempt to engage with the process at all. The only musicians who ever comment on microphones or volume levels are semi-professional *sindhèn* who are heavily invested in how they personally sound and have far more experience of interacting with sound engineers. Players appear to feel that they can rely on the skills of the sound men to present their performance in the most appropriate way, rather as they trust traditional architecture to do so when playing on a *pendhåpå*.

Not all of the groups I studied performed in public, but the vast majority did. Taking the material from *latihan* to performance was always a cause of great excitement, with the balance between focussing on what was being performed or the simple fact of performing varying dramatically between groups. The gamelan associations that I played with only performed publicly when an opportunity was provided for them to do so by an institution or organisation. The possibility of organising such an event themselves was beyond their logistical and financial means. The group at Pasar Gedhé would occasionally arrange night-time events for important dates in the Javanese calendar where, despite being inside

the market and theoretically private, one of the amplifiers would be placed in a window so that the sound was audible from the main road outside. There was no expectation that anyone would come as a result of this, but the urge to assert their presence in this way was strong. The large number of official public performances that the group engaged in only occurred when there was an event organised by the market itself or the Town Hall. This meant that there was formal backing for moving the gamelan to a position which would potentially obstruct traffic, or people shopping at the market, and there was also funding for full-scale amplification.

A major site for performance was the regularly held *Klenèngan Selasa Legi*. This was a series of events hosted by a small arts centre, which is based in a set of rooms at the base of a large book shop. The events were established as a forum for gamelan associations to perform publicly in a reasonably formal setting, with an audience of interested, knowledgeable, and appreciative people. Every thirty-five days a different group performs a two-hour set in either *sléndro* or *pélog*.⁹³ The venue provides amplification and food for all the musicians as well as light snacks and water for those watching and listening, and also has a vocal lecturer from ISI who is renowned for his skill at providing witty commentary to act as master of ceremonies, introducing the pieces and entertaining the audience. Playing here is very popular: groups come to perform from all over Solo and the surrounding area. During the ten months I was in Solo for fieldwork there was a *klenèngan* with a different group every thirty-five days, apart from the fasting month, and there has never been a gap since the series began. The organisers told me that only very rarely do they need to actively seek out groups to play and when there is a potential gap groups that have played before are always willing to perform again.

⁹³ This limit was imposed by the need to borrow instruments from the local arts centre and the cost involved in moving them to the venue.

Summary

Playing in a gamelan association grants people, who would not otherwise have this possibility, access to being publicly audible, whether this is mediated by traditional spaces such as *pendhâpâ* or through amplification. Being heard in this way is symbolically powerful because of the extremely well-established links between the authority of the palace, the state, and religious bodies and its audible assertion. The institutional sponsorships that allow gamelan associations to exist also allow them to make public sound at public events. This locates the institutions concerned within traditional models of displaying authority but also grants the individuals and groups making public sound on their behalf, who would otherwise not have access to this level of public sounding, a chance to participate in the aural public sphere.

Playing in a gamelan association makes individuals visible and audible as the representatives of a sponsoring organisation in a way which is different from professional musicians. The fact that they are known to have chosen to play, rather than being paid to do so, means that they can be framed as participants in an event rather than functionaries. This makes their participation something which holds the potential to generate political change. Gamelan associations can be regarded, therefore, as a re-contextualisation, in Ochoa's terms, of *karawitan's* use in displaying power: the entities being represented by gamelan association performances are local, small-scale, or even individual, and the musicians producing public sound for them are amateurs participating voluntarily. This is in stark contrast to the traditional model of professional lineage musicians playing in the employ of a palace or the state at a national level.

I argue, therefore, that gamelan associations represent a broadening of participation in producing public gamelan sound, both in terms of the type of organisations sponsoring it and also in terms of the people providing the music. As such they are part of a democratisation of the aural public sphere in Solo. This shift is in line with the wider phenomenon of increasing devolution of power within the Indonesian state and, although I did not witness any direct outcomes of this increase in involvement during my fieldwork, it opens up the potential for participation in public gamelan playing to become more politically significant in the Solonese aural public sphere.

Conclusion

What are gamelan associations?

Gamelan associations are an important component of the musical landscape in Solo, even though they have not previously been afforded much attention. Large numbers of people are playing gamelan on a weekly basis in these groups, which fall outside the parameters of gamelan musicianship that have been presented in the literature, experienced by most foreign students of *karawitan*, or considered normative by lineage and professional musicians.

Most of the members of gamelan associations are in their fifties or older and these groups offer a chance for them to take part in music making for the first time or to reconnect with the performing arts after a long hiatus. The pressures of work and raising children make it extremely difficult to commit to regular attendance at *latihan*, which are long and usually take place at night, if playing gamelan is not your primary source of income. Being able to be part of a gamelan ensemble is, therefore, something that is possible for most non-professional players either when they are still young and at school, or once they are near retirement or can afford to reduce their workload. It is rare for women, other than members of puppeteers' families, to play instruments in professional gamelan ensembles and this is also the case in gamelan associations. The only exceptions are groups based in workplaces where women are in the majority such as Pasar Gedhé and the civil service group at Bengawan. This appears to be a return to a more traditional model after the *Orde Baru* phenomenon of the all-female group as I did not encounter any all-female groups apart from the long-standing one at ISI.

Although gamelan associations do sometimes explicitly position themselves as representatives of ways of playing *karawitan* which are markedly different from prestige styles, in the main the differences in playing technique found here are the result of attempts to produce a sound which is as rich, filled-in, and exciting as that of a full gamelan ensemble with all soft instruments and singers. This sometimes results in musical practices which initially appear unconventional and would be regarded as crass or objectionable by professional players. I argue, however, that these are in fact attempts to approximate as closely as possible the atmosphere and sound world produced by professional ensembles, and that the way players hear gamelan performed on the radio, on recordings, and at weddings exerts a very large influence on how they expect and wish their own music making to sound.

The number and variety of people participating in gamelan associations and the many ways in which their participation is rewarded mean that it is not possible to describe them straightforwardly as amateur ensembles. Their membership is, however, almost entirely comprised of individuals who would describe their involvement in music as being something which they do as a hobby, for fun, or as an adjunct to their primary occupation. There is no single term in Javanese or Indonesian which is used to classify this type of musician but rather a complex web of phrases, circumlocutions, and references which are heavily freighted with implications of qualitative difference from professional players. Despite the lack of a unified terminology, the type of musicianship and model of participation predominant in gamelan associations is recognised and well understood by outsiders. Members of associations also clearly recognise and refer to their difference from lineage- and institution-based players, and have extensive contact with them as teachers, visiting musicians, and additional players for public performances. The extent to which gamelan associations are connected to other similar groups, commercial

performance troupes, and even international networks of gamelan playing through members, teachers and visitors who move between these spheres is also an important feature of the overall association ‘scene’ in Solo. These connections provide many opportunities to compare styles and adopt or reject alternative possibilities, to assert authority through reference to outside experience, and to engage networks of support.

Gamelan associations require large amounts of investment from a broad range of stakeholders in order to be set up, maintain viability, and manage inevitable changes in circumstance. This accounts for the fact that so many of these groups are based in or supported by official bodies, whether a workplace or a local community association, or by individuals with the space and resources to own and house a gamelan. The interactions between the interests and investments of all of these stakeholders are extremely productive, in the main allowing for the stable existence of gamelan associations, but also on occasion generating complex and unintended consequences⁹⁴ which can temporarily or permanently destabilise them. This phenomenon represents a contemporary form of patronage which draws conceptually and practically on several historical models including palace sponsorship of ensembles, commercial village troupes, and state engagement with the performing arts under the Suharto era New Order. Interacting with institutions in this way is a practical necessity in order to secure a space to rehearse in, instruments to play, and funds to employ teachers and *sindhèn*. The perceived stability, respectability, and political safety provided by such links are, however, also important both in making associations attractive to players, and in enabling them to facilitate and contain the variety of negotiations that take place within them.

⁹⁴ Similar, on a very local scale, to the phenomenon Tsing (2005) observes on a global scale and calls ‘friction’.

What do people gain from participation?

The commitments of time, energy, and other resources that are required to establish and maintain a gamelan association mean that investing in ‘being a musician’ must provide the possibility of significant returns of some kind. I have explored five of the ways in which this investment proves productive for participants.

Gamelan associations are places where individuals seek out and find community. This might take the form of spending time with people they already know and forging closer bonds or surrounding themselves with like-minded acquaintances with whom they do not interact outside of this specific context. The communities generated in this way are often presented as representing a broader community from which they are drawn when they perform publicly. This brings with it a sense of responsibility but also means that gamelan association members are in a position where they are involved directly with the definition and presentation of these communities and become personally visible in this role. The deeply embedded assumptions about the role of playing gamelan in inculcating and supporting patterns of desirable social behaviour in Central Java also mean that gamelan associations’ involvement with the definition and presentation of community in this way places them in a powerful position in relation to achieving and rationalising other goals.

Participating in making gamelan music allows individuals to stake their individual and collective claim to ownership of the tradition, thereby assuming not only the right to perform it but also the responsibility for preserving and continuing it. The discourse of attrition and preservation surrounding Javanese cultural practices means that taking on this responsibility is conceived of by both players and outsiders as something virtuous. Thus, whilst adopting this position may derive from a genuinely felt conviction, it is also

something that can be invoked to justify and validate participation when one's other reasons for involvement are more personal and less obviously civic in nature.

I contend that the prestige associated with gamelan music, and its status as a very concrete way of expressing commitment to Javanese culture, allow gamelan associations to safely contain other behaviour which is usually heavily deprecated in Javanese society but which participants clearly enjoy engaging in. Explicit and direct assertions of knowledge and authority are routinely made in ways which are not employed even within the same social group in non-musical settings. Negotiations of musical authority are contested at a level of ferocity which would be profoundly destabilising in other social settings but, as long as they remain in this domain, do not cause any serious or ongoing ruptures in relationships.

The setting up and running of a gamelan association bring members of the group into contact with individuals of significant authority within sponsoring institutions. Whilst this is an inevitable result of obtaining the use of instruments and space, opportunities to forge these links are also clearly sought out in excess of what is strictly necessary. Gamelan associations allow their members access to people and places which hold various forms of power, in ways which would otherwise not be available. Those in positions of power or with significant resources benefit from their involvement by being visible as patrons of the traditional arts, players have opportunities to talk to senior figures in an informal yet highly structured social setting and have their concerns heard, and those who act as intermediaries between these two groups acquire considerable leverage for advancing their own interests. This model of patronage is not simply one where those with power advertise this through their sponsorship of gamelan music but one where they are brought into potentially productive contact with those performing on their behalf.

Participating in a gamelan association also gives people the opportunity to be involved in public performance. This is significant because of the symbolic importance of the aural public sphere in Central Java. Sound signalling in general is extremely prevalent, and the production of sound, particularly loud or amplified sound, and how one responds to it, reveal deeply embedded assumptions about authority and its expression. Voluntary participation, however, rather than paid employment, in the public presentation of a music which is still redolent of the performance of state power, allows members of gamelan associations to associate themselves with this connection to power, without the connotations of service and duty attached to professional performance in the same contexts.

Further questions

There are many groups operating in Solo that I never had the opportunity to visit. Whilst the majority that I am aware of seem to be largely similar in profile to those which I studied, I did specifically avoid groups with a large number of foreign students as members. I initially made this decision in order to focus on local perspectives on gamelan playing which had not been influenced by extensive exposure to the motivations and rationalisations of foreign players; subsequently the large number of associations that I encountered also made it unnecessary to rely on involvement with such groups to carry out my research. It would be interesting, however, to investigate what the implications of significant exposure to the discourses on music making and community that foreign players use to justify their involvement are on Javanese players.

This study was based predominantly on observation of and conversation with the members of gamelan associations and individuals at the lower levels of institutions who were directly and visibly involved in supporting their existence. To unpack more fully the

intersections between the grassroots desire to establish a gamelan association and the official support provided it will be necessary to carry out more interviews with people from the senior levels of institutions that support gamelan associations, determine how engaged they are with these decisions, and how they perceive their role in relation to the performing arts. It would be particularly useful to investigate in more detail the extent to which the decentralisation in taxation and resource management has affected their ability and willingness to do so.

The idea of exposing the results of ethnographic research to critical reflection by the original informants is well established if not regularly engaged in. This project is one where such a process would potentially be productive. Discussing my analysis of the role of gamelan associations with those who provided the material for this thesis would allow for both a checking of my assumptions and conclusions, and a further engagement with how those involved with gamelan associations seek to manage the meaning of their participation.

This study focussed on the city of Solo precisely because I knew it to have a large number of such groups in operation and because of its status as a significant and dominant cultural centre. It will be important to ascertain whether or not Solo is unique in having this number of groups and whether or not the particular links between gamelan and authority are specific to this city. This will require comparative study in Yogyakarta and other large cities in Central Java. It will be interesting to see whether there is more of a focus on specific local styles of playing within gamelan associations in places outside the sphere of Solonese dominance or whether such styles are more commonly emphasised in professional performance. In the case of Yogyakarta it will be necessary to observe how the very different political status of the palace here affects its engagement with *karawitan*: does the palace support gamelan associations in the same way? In what ways

do the relationships between the musical authorities of the palace, the arts academy, and village musicianship here differ from the situation in Solo and the surrounding area?

This study is entirely based on contemporary data and has not attempted to make comparisons with the historical situation, largely because of a lack of information on the previous prevalence of gamelan associations. Although there may not be any way of comparing the current situation with the past it will be important to track what happens to gamelan associations and what the existence of such a body of people opting to play gamelan may mean for the future of the tradition. Pak. W., a lecturer at ISI, on hearing about the number of groups I was finding, remarked that this sounded remarkably similar to the situation when he was young when he claims there was an upsurge in popular interest in *karawitan* ultimately leading to what he called the ‘commercialisation’ of the tradition, with the establishment of the recording company Lokananta in 1956, and the production of thousands of high-profile recordings. What might the presence of so many people opting to play gamelan music mean for future patterns of production and consumption?

As mentioned above, gamelan associations are an environment dominated by people in their fifties and above. The other age at which individuals who do not come from musical backgrounds have easy access to playing gamelan is when they are at school. In the school context, who chooses to become involved with *karawitan*? Is participation optional or compulsory? How is gamelan framed within the broader school curriculum and what are the ideological bases used to justify traditional music-making at this level? How many people who play at school go on to participate further in gamelan playing as adults and in what settings?

The implications and significance of this study

Karawitan in Solo is shown here not to be a monolithic tradition with straightforward and uncomplicated lines of transmission and authority. It is conceived of in a range of ways by the members of gamelan associations, with different groups ascribing authority to different sources, blending the sources on which they draw, and both making explicit political and social justifications for these decisions and using the same decisions to make political statements and build networks of support. Lines of transmission and musical authority are important for players in gamelan associations just as they are for professional Solonese musicians, providing the means to assert one's own status and negotiate this with other individuals, but there is far less consensus as to where a final authority might be found with decisions being taken contextually, provisionally, and pragmatically.

Gamelan associations provide a structured, institutionally supported way to participate in traditional music for individuals who would otherwise not have access to the necessary resources or training. They provide a space where people can enjoy playing a form of music that is both personally significant for them and culturally valued, and where they can engage in congenial social interaction at a range of levels: deepening existing bonds of friendship, creating new relationships, or increasing their circle of meaningful but not necessarily emotionally significant acquaintances.

Membership of gamelan associations allows people to build and finesse communities that meet their needs and publicly display these communities to others, to assert their connection to and right to engage with this form of music, allows the enjoyment of transgressive social behaviour in a safe space, grants them access to figures and places of authority otherwise out of their reach, and allows them to be heard through making public

sound in a culturally validated manner. The ways in which this happens are, however, not automatic, mechanistic, or taken for granted, but are worked on and negotiated on an ongoing basis. The individuals who play in gamelan associations take up the possibilities afforded by historical and contemporary assumptions about the links between *karawitan*, community, and power, and use them in ways which are innovative precisely because they are not the type of people, either in terms of social standing or artistic training, who are expected to have access to the use of music in this way. The negotiations, jostling for benefit, and challenges to social norms that occur in the establishment and running of gamelan associations are significant and sometimes dramatic, but they are not seriously disruptive, remaining framed within the extremely strong Javanese cultural emphasis on the maintenance of surface-level harmony. They constitute, rather, a flexing within, and testing of, existing structures in new ways.

Gamelan associations make transparent some of the ways in which new models of patronage for the performing arts in Solo are being assembled, drawing on a range of historical models. These new models are extremely flexible and collaborative with important contributions being made by multiple stakeholders, rather than straightforward top-down sponsorship by one institution or individual. They are not always stable, as the occasional breakdown of groups during my research demonstrates, but are dynamic and allow for a significant level of input and negotiation on the part of those being ‘supported’.

Gamelan associations also represent an opening up of the sponsorship of *karawitan*. The existence of gamelan associations allows more individuals and organisations to act as sponsors of gamelan music: their amateur status makes them far cheaper to support than a professional group, and the fact that they are often embedded in particular institutions means that, as groups, they already have established allegiances and loyalties to their

supporters. This also results in more institutions and individuals, whether sponsors or members of groups, participating in the production of public gamelan sound. I argue that this is creating an increase in, and widening of, *karawitan*'s presence in the aural public sphere in Solo. As yet, this participation has more symbolic than concrete significance but the fundamental importance of sound in Solonese life means that it is replete with potential.

Examining 'amateur' ensembles thus allows us to see how links between gamelan music and various forms of social and political power are dynamically built, negotiated, and exploited in an ongoing and changing manner outside of the formally established structures of musical training and performance. It also provides an insight into the ways in which the uses and meaning of playing *karawitan* are different for those who are engaging in it as an addition to their existing social and economic activity rather than as the basis of their livelihood. The forms of benefit amateur musicians in Solo derive from playing gamelan are available precisely because they are not professional musicians. Many of these benefits are, however, founded on, and gain strength from, associations between gamelan and authority which grow out of the context of professional performance. Whilst gamelan association musicians in Solo may often be classified by using terms that define their difference from professional players in negative terms, it is precisely this position of difference that enables them to engage with the discourses surrounding *karawitan*'s links to community, authority, and power in ways which are less regulated and more amenable to negotiation.

Glossary

abdi dalem: A palace servant, generally in receipt of a token salary.

balungan: The core melodic idea in a gamelan piece and the instruments that play this: *saron*, *demung*, and *slenthem*.

bedhåyå: Austere palace dance for nine female dancers.

blangkön: A small ready-formed stitched turban; part of traditional Javanese formal wear.

bonang barung: The larger and lower-pitched of the pair of pot-chimes, having 12 notes in *laras sléndro* and 14 in *laras pélog*.

bonang panerus: The smaller and higher-pitched of the pair of pot-chimes, having 12 notes in *laras sléndro* and 14 in *laras pélog*.

campursari: A popular genre mixing gamelan instruments with drum kit, guitars and electric keyboards.

ciblon: A medium-sized two-headed, hand-struck drum used to accompany movement such as dance or shadow puppetry.

dangdut: An upbeat popular genre originating in the Malay world; generally considered to be risqué and low-status.

déså: Javanese for village; used to describe anything considered less than sophisticated or modern.

demung: A seven-bar metallophone, the loudest of the *balungan* instruments.

gadhön: A sub-ensemble within a gamelan consisting of the soft instruments with *gong* and *kenong*; also describes the repertoire likely to be played by this ensemble.

gambang: A multi-octave xylophone that usually plays fast melodic patterns in octaves.

gambyong: A form of flirtatious female dance. Originally performed in the street with a small group of musicians, now formalised and performed with full gamelan.

garap: The process of realising parts for gamelan instruments based on the *rebab* melody or the *balungan*; also used to describe a particular interpretation of a piece.

gâtrâ: A unit of four *balungan* pitches ending with a *sèlèh* note.

gendèr: A two-and-a-half-octave metallophone with individual resonators for each key; most important of the soft instruments. Fundamentally important in shadow puppet :theatre accompaniment, where it accompanies the puppeteer at all times.

gendhing: A piece of Javanese classical music; also more specifically a large piece consisting of a *mérong* and an *inggah*.

gérong: The male chorus.

gong ageng: The largest gong in the ensemble.

inggah: The second section of a two-part *gendhing*.

irâmâ: The system of stretching relative rhythmic density which allows for the development of melody in gamelan music.

karawitan: Generic term for classical Javanese music.

kasar: Rough or vulgar.

kempul: A set of small hanging gongs which mark important structural points in a piece.

kendhang: Javanese drums.

kenong: Horizontally mounted pot-gongs which mark important structural points in a piece.

ketawang: A form of *gendhing* with 16 *balungan* notes in each gong cycle; usually emphasising vocal material.

krobongan: A recess in a traditional Javanese house used to store dowry items and rice; also acts as a shrine to ancestors and the goddess of rice, Dewi Sri.

kulintang: An ensemble of four xylophones from Sulawesi.

Kraton: Javanese for 'palace'. In Solo this refers to the palace of the Pakubuwânâ rather than the Mangkunegaran, which is referred to as an *Istana*.

kroncong: A nationally popular song genre accompanied by interlocking ukuleles, three-stringed cello, guitar, flute, and violin. The lyrics are in Indonesian and the overall atmosphere is one of nostalgia and romance.

ladrang: A form of gamelan piece with 32 *balungan* notes in each gong cycle.

lancaran: A form of gamelan piece with 8 *balungan* notes in each gong cycle. Usually fast-moving.

laras: The two scales, or tuning systems, used in Javanese gamelan: *laras sléndro* and *laras pélog*.

lèdhèk: A loaded, and now avoided, term for female dancers which carries implications of sex-work.

lugu: Simple, plain, unadorned.

mérong: The first section of a large *gendhing*; sets out a melodic idea in a leisurely manner.

monggang: A palace ensemble of large pot-gongs designed to play only one piece, linked to the ruler's relationship with the spirit world.

ngamèn: To play music whilst moving along streets asking for money at each shop or person encountered.

orjen tunggal: A form of *campursari* that only uses one electric keyboard and a drummer to accompany singers.

palaran: Sung poetry accompanied by *gong*, *kenong*, and soft instruments; usually inserted into a *srepegan*.

pangrawit: Javanese term for someone who plays gamelan; originally a court title used to honour senior musicians.

pathet: Ways of organising pitches within a scale somewhat analogous to mode.

peking: Seven-bar metallophone, the highest-pitched of the *balungan* instruments; plays at a higher rhythmic density than the other *balungan*.

pesindhèn: The female singer in a gamelan ensemble.

rebab: Two-stringed spike fiddle which is considered to be the melodic leader for the majority of pieces in the classical repertoire.

samir: Slim, bi-coloured scarf used to denote allegiance to a particular court.

saron: Seven-bar metallophone; mid-range *balungan* instrument.

sekatèn: The event where the heirloom gamelan *sekati* are taken from the palace and played in the courtyard of the main mosque during the celebrations of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday.

sèlèh (note): The last note in a four-note unit. These are the fundamental pitches in the flow of a gamelan melody where most instruments coincide.

sindhèn: Female singer; abbreviated and more commonly used form of *pesindhèn*.

siter: A 14-pitch, double-course, thumbnail-plucked box-zither.

siteran: An ensemble consisting of a singer, usually two *siter* of different octaves, *ciblon*, *suling*, and a blown bamboo tube used to provide a gong tone.

slenthem: Seven-pitch metallophone with resonator tubes; lowest-pitched of the *balungan*.

soft instruments: A sub-division of the gamelan ensemble consisting of the *rebab*, *gendèr*, *gendèr panerus*, *gambang*, *siter*, and *suling*.

soran (loud instruments): A sub-division of the gamelan ensemble consisting of all the *balungan*, the gong, *kempul*, *kenong*, and *bonang*. Also a repertoire of pieces played on these instruments.

srepegan: A form of piece used in shadow puppet accompaniment for mid-intensity scenes; often used in non-theatrical musical settings to provide drama and allow for the singing of *palaran*.

srimpi: A refined palace dance for four dancers.

Sriwedari: The official entertainment park in Solo with funfair rides and staging for events. A permanent building here houses nightly performances of *wayang wong*, where dancers portray the stories usually told with leather shadow puppets (*wayang kulit*).

suling: An end-blown bamboo flute.

wayang (kulit): Shadow puppet theatre performed with full gamelan accompaniment.

Usually uses flat leather (*kulit*) puppets but may also occasionally refer to three-dimensional wooden puppets (*wayang golèk*) or to a painted scroll which is unwound (*wayang bèbèr*).

wayang wong: A performance genre where the stories from the shadow puppet theatre are performed by dancers.

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