Islamic Musical Forms and Local Identity in Post-Reform Indonesia

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Abstract

Through an analysis of local Sundanese music in distinct settings in village and urban contexts, this article observes and analyses different constructions of meaning around Sundanese Islamic music, as well as the role played by cultural activists and village audiences in those constructions. Based on fieldwork in Tasikmalaya, West Java, I explore the novel meanings given to village genres in urban contexts, and contrast that with the affective responses of village audiences. I find that musical meanings offer different processes of identity formation within particular social boundaries. Emergent Indonesian political developments shape these processes.

Keywords

Islamic music – Sundanese culture – the construction of meaning – village – urban settings – local identity

1 Introduction

West Java has long been a site of tension over Islam and cultural expression. The most recent incidents involved the destruction of statues. On 11 February 2016, members of the hard-line Muslim group Front Pembela Islam (FPI, Islamic Defenders' Front) ventured out at midnight to destroy statues depicting the *wayang* character Arjuna in a tourist park in Purwakarta Regency. The regency is well-known for its *wayang* statues erected in the park and in other prominent locations. In a later attack, a number of other statues in the city

were vandalized. The reason behind the attacks was the attackers' conviction that the statues were idols, which could lead Muslims to associate the images with Divinity, something impermissible in Islam. The incidents captured wide attention in the media, with the public being generally outraged at this display of extremism. The attacks were condemned by Islamic leaders and—more vocally—by the mayor of Purwakarta, Dedi Mulyadi, who had earlier played a key role in erecting the statues. He pointed out that the statues were not related to religion, but were expressions of regional culture that made the city unique and gave it an artistic flavour.¹

Incidents such as these have not only happened in Purwakarta, West Java. In the last ten years, there have been nine incidents of statues being destroyed in Indonesia in locations other than West Java, including in Yogyakarta and cities in East Java and North Sumatra.² The incidents have resurrected a familiar Indonesian polemic around the supposed tension between Islam and indigenous arts and performance genres. To the disapproval of many, a vocal minority advocates the opinion that the latter contain un-Islamic elements, preferring Arabic genres as permissible Islamic expressions.

The polemic is a complex one in West Java, where a large Islamic majority (around 97% of the West Javanese are Muslim) holds Islam as the defining element of the province's cultural heritage. Members of the Sundanese ethnic group, the ancient occupants of the region, frequently use the idiom *Sunda itu Islam, Islam itu Sunda* (Sunda is Islam, and Islam is Sunda) to characterize their ethnic culture. According to this formula, West Java is the home of authentic Islamic culture. Following this logic, the argument that Sundanese culture should be purified of indigenous elements is accepted by many (Lahpan 2015b; Rosidi 2005; Bisri, Heryati & Ruvaidah 2005).

These incidents, and the responses to them, convey a heavily dichotomized relationship between Islam and culture, but they do not adequately represent Muslim dispositions towards regional culture. Those dispositions are the subject of this article. In what follows, I refer to recent developments in Islamic performing arts in West Java, hoping to contribute to the broader discussion about regional performing arts and Islam in Indonesia. Authors such as Sumarsam (2011) and Harnish (2011) have pointed out the tension between Islam and the regional arts. Focusing on *wayang* performance, Sumarsam (2011) has noted that dynamic interaction between Islam and Javanese culture has occurred

1 See <https://www.merdeka.com/peristiwa/dituding-syirik-ini-jawaban-bupati-purwakarta-dedi-mulyadi.html> (accessed 18-1-2018).

2 <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/masyarakat-lintas-etnis-dan-agama-di-jawa-timur-tolak-rencana-perobohan-patung-di-tuban/3978319.html> (accessed 18-1-2018).

continuously since the arrival of Islam in Java, especially through the *wayang* narratives. Conflicts and debate around this interaction broke out during the Islamic reformation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Harnish (2011) has shown Lombok to be a site of tension between Islam and local arts, especially amongst the Sasak community, where *adat* (custom) and religion are frequently understood in binary terms.

In this article, based on fieldwork conducted in 2013 in the villages and capital city of Tasikmalaya, I seek to move this conversation beyond this binary opposition. In my efforts to understand the dynamic relations between Islam and the regional arts, I did not find it useful to acknowledge the existence of any tension between an abstracted Islamic ideal of purity and regional traditions. The Sundanese clearly prefer performance genres that are marked as Islamic, but their highest preference is generally for Islamic styles and genres that also project Sundanese authenticity. It is not a choice between Sundanese and Arabic; rather, the dominant value underpinning this preference is the quality of *buhun*, which is a Sundanese word meaning original, venerable, and authentic. In other words, in many Sundanese villages, it is not simply that 'Sunda is Islam', but that Sundanese authenticity is Islamic authenticity. Recent political developments are critical to my argument, for the valorization of Sundanese authenticity has been stimulated anew by the autonomy process implemented in Indonesia over the last decade and a half.

Through an examination of two genres of the musical form known as frame-drumming in Tasikmalaya, West Java Province, I examine how different audiences—in rural and urban contexts—identify with Islamic music. I describe the musical performances, but also pay attention to listening, which I approach as a social activity that varies greatly in diverse settings. Listening is not considered here as an individual activity, but as a social practice reflecting wider processes of social and political changes. Listening as a social and cultural practice has been conceptualized by Van Zanten (1997), Qureshi (2000), and Becker (2004). By understanding how the sociability of listening varies across rural and urban settings, I argue, we can understand how cultural genres move across borders. I also pay attention to the cultural activists whose politically based cultural projects pave the way for new understandings of these genres.

At this point, I need to define one of the important concepts in my argument: authenticity. I do not treat authenticity as an attribute or feature of the practices under discussion here. Rather, I understand it here as a value drawn upon in everyday processes of evaluation. In my research, I constantly witnessed cultural brokers, audience members, and performers making distinctions between various practices, using the term 'authenticity' (Indonesian: *asli*; Sundanese: *buhun*) as a measure of evaluation. These distinctions are

extremely important to the regional cultures of Indonesia. In these cultures, regional subjects recognize authenticity as a quality lacking in Indonesian culture, which is constantly changing and dynamic. For example, in my research amongst Sundanese villagers, authenticity was the most important quality associated with the frame drum genres. It was not only villagers who made this appraisal; urban Sundanese audiences also gave these genres the same appreciation, although their reasons for doing so, as I show below, differ. This is relevant to Lee's (1997:2) statement that 'authenticity elevates the importance of particular circumstances of time, place, and culture in explaining identity'.

My primary field site was the village of Cikeusal in Tasikmalaya. Two forms of the Islamic frame-drumming genre known as *terebang* are practised in this village by a group named Candralijaya.³ Founded in 1966, the group plays frame-drumming styles as well as other distinctly village-based musical forms. These include *beluk*, an ancient Sundanese vocal art (usually without any musical accompaniment); *rengkong*, which is a form generated by a bundle of rice hanging from a bamboo cane, carried by a man who moves in a rhythmical way, similar to dancing; the acrobatic, martial arts performance known as *debus*, in which participants summon their powers of invulnerability; *lais*, an acrobatic performance using a six-metre-long rope stretched and linked between two pieces of bamboo with a height of 12 to 13 metres; and *tutunggulan*, which is rhythmical music made by pounding rice, performed usually by a group of women using a rice pestle and a mortar.

Frame-drumming is generally considered to be a disappearing art form and is usually associated with rural contexts, particularly isolated ones. Outside of my expectations, I noticed during my fieldwork that one of the *terebang* forms I found in the village, namely *terebang gebes*, was finding new audiences in the cities of Tasikmalaya and Bandung. The other form appeared to be immobile in comparison, and had not found new audiences outside of the village, although it had retained a distinctive place in everyday life for its village audience, which consisted mainly of older people.

As I show below, the renewed popularity of one of these genres is an important reversal of trends established during the New Order era (1966–1998). The New Order government's mission was to define ethnic cultures as national culture, following a cultural policy reflecting its 'unity in diversity' ethos (*bhineka tunggal ika*).⁴ In that era, the central government formulated a national cultural

3 In Sundanese, *terebang* means frame drum. The genre is sometimes labelled as *terbang*; for instance, Kunst (1973:368) uses this label. In this article I use *terebang*, following the usage in my field site.

4 See Sutton 1995, 2006; Lindsay 1995; Newland 2001; Harnish 2007.

policy, which functioned as a guideline for provincial governments to 'establish' and 'develop' their local performances (Harnish 2007:61). Performance genres were held to be significant for their role in building nationalism and forming a national culture for Indonesia. Yet, this period was also the time of a significant separation between Islam and cultural expression. In this period of rapid modernization, indigenous Islamic genres suffered under the label of syncretism. Syncretism was associated with negative values such as antiquatedness, backwardness, tradition, and non-Islamic qualities. Modernity had become such a core element of Indonesian Islamic self-reflection that localized Islamic genres were to be re-assigned the function of spectacle in place of their previous function as ritual. This process is called 'desacralization' or 'detraditionalization' (Harnish 2007:81) or 'dedoxification' (Acciaioli 1985:152). Government policy has tended to promote ritual genres as cultural activities or tourist attractions rather than religious observances (Acciaioli 1985; Newland 2000). This project has seen Islamic genres defined, nationalized, and modernized, and thus has seen the government play a role in controlling the production of musical meanings (see Harnish and Rasmussen 2011).

Nevertheless, things have changed since the dawn of the Reformasi era in 1999. Diverse social groups and actors have emerged to join the government in shaping the meanings of performances. Social and religious institutions have played renewed roles in shaping musical practice, as shown in the case of *dangdut* (Weintraub 2008).⁵ The emergence of new actors in these roles has added complexity to the construction of local performance genres. As I outline below, the developments of the Reform period have stimulated positive evaluations of frame-drumming and its authenticity as both Islamic and Sundanese practice. Key actors in these developments have been young cultural activists in Tasikmalaya, who consider Candralijaya as a tool and resource for their project of strengthening local identity, and have brought the group to urban stages. At the same time, the *terebang* also still functions within ritual cycles among villagers in Tasikmalaya, enabling a comparison between the appreciations given by audiences in these two domains.

It is relevant to note that the musical genres of rural Islam, with the exception of the nationally popular *dangdut*, have attracted little attention in the academic literature. They do not appear to offer the refined cultural values and technical virtuosity such as are encountered in *tembang Sunda*, and scholars have not always accepted their Islamic values as authentically Indonesian (see

5 *Dangdut* is a genre of Indonesian popular music that has its roots in a combination of Malay, Arabic, and Hindustani musical elements.

Lahpan 2015a). Moreover, they are not found amongst the genres of mass media consumption. Nevertheless, as I argue here, they deserve attention because of their salience in the Reformasi era, when Islam and regional culture have surged anew in public life.

2 Background: Sundanese Music in Cikeusal Village, Tasikmalaya

The Sundanese form the second-largest ethnic group in Indonesia after their neighbours, the Javanese, and occupy Indonesia's West Java province, which is the most populous and densely populated province of Indonesia; 97.29 % of the province's population are Muslim (Suryadinata, Ananta and Arifin 2003:103). Of them, about 27 million people speak Sundanese (Sobarna 2007:13).

Tasikmalaya is situated in the southern part of West Java, and is constituted by two administrative areas, the capital city (*kota*) and the surrounding rural area (*kabupaten* or regency). Tasikmalaya was a major centre of Sundanese culture and politics in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when it was the capital of the Priangan regions. At that time it was known as Sukapura (Yayasan Wakaf Sukapura 2002). Tasikmalaya has a Muslim population of 1,680,870; in other words, more than 98% of the population are Muslim. The city is home to many Islamic boarding schools. In 2009, it had 708 Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), attended by 69,357 Islamic students (*santri*).⁶ For this reason, the city has been known as the 'Islamic city' and 'the city of Islamic students' (*kota santri*).

The high piety of Tasikmalaya residents in the post-Suharto period is indicated by their enthusiasm for the enactment of shariah-based regulations (*perda syariah*). These laws, passed by the local governments of Tasikmalaya, appeared to offer a sense of stability and security that was felt to be absent after the fall of the New Order. Although the laws are quite popular, critics have pointed to the negative effects they have on vulnerable groups, and to the corruption accompanying them (Suisanto 2007; Jati 2013; Bush 2008). Nevertheless, they indicate the respect local residents have for Islamic norms.

My research was conducted in a village in Tasikmalaya Regency, named Cikeusal. Like many villages in Tasikmalaya, it is generally undeveloped in economic terms, being reliant on agriculture. Cikeusal is a cultural setting that reveals a characteristic interaction between Islam and Sundanese culture, which emerges in the daily life of the villagers I observed, and especially in their

6 <http://pendis.kemenag.go.id/file/dokumen/pontren-32a.pdf> (accessed 3-8-2015).

Islamic practices and performing arts. Village performers have appropriated both Islamic and Sundanese conventions, which are performed and enjoyed in rituals and cultural practices. Amongst these, frame-drumming (*terebang*) is popular. In Cikeusal, there are two genres of frame-drumming, referred to as *terebang sejak* and *terebang gebes-beluk*.

3 *Terebang Sejak*

A performance of *terebang sejak* consists of five frame drums of different sizes, each played by a single individual. The drums are played simultaneously, although the playing of individual drums signals a movement between the different parts of the performance. The names of the five *terebang*, from large to small, are: *goong* (1), *bangsing/gedemung* (2), *kempring* (3), *tojo* (4), and *kitimprik* (5). In Cikeusal, the drums are accompanied by the singing of a vocal text written in a book known as the *Kitab Mulud* (Book of the Prophet's biography). This book, written in Arabic and Sundanese, was compiled by Aki Hambali, the founder of the Cikeusal *terebang sejak* group, in 1961. He adapted the content of this book from a popular Islamic work that glorifies the Prophet Muhammad and his family, called *Kitab Barzanji*.⁷

Terebang sejak is performed by ten people, all of whom are men: five musicians, two vocalists, and three reserve performers. They sit in a circular formation. While the musicians play the *terebang*, the vocalists, following the text of the *Kitab Mulud*, sing one of the 32 songs from the book. They sing the four-line stanzas using melodies that have become customary in the village. In current times, time limitations do not allow all 32 songs to be sung in one sitting. Rather, the vocalists decide which parts of the text they will read. The music is played in a slow tempo initially, but quickens and becomes more dynamic after four to five songs.

Cikeusal's *terebang sejak* is widely performed, demonstrating a successful synthesis between local cultural practices and modern religious practices. I need to be clear about what I mean by modern. The performance of *terebang* shows a clear connection to the pre-Islamic period, and some villagers still

7 The *Kitab Barzanji* is the prose-poem recited and sung in Arabic on ritual occasions in West Java. It conveys the Prophet Muhammad's life story and seeks Allah's blessing upon him. The performance is frequently called *marhabanan*. The name *Kitab Barzanji* is derived from the book's author, Syekh Ja'far al Barzanji, who was born in Medina in 1690 and died in 1766. The *Barzanji* is one of the most popular Islamic texts performed among Muslims in Indonesia and other Islamic countries.

FIGURE 1 Terebang Sejak performance at the harvest celebration event in Cikeusal village
AUTHOR'S COLLECTION, 2014

remember when the *terebang* was not an Islamic practice. When the singing of Islamic texts was added to the performance of the *terebang*, this brought the genre into line with contemporary understandings of Indonesian modernity. In other words, 'modern' in this context signifies that an art form has evolved from the Sundanese ritual forms that were formerly popular in the area.

The texts popularly performed in Cikeusal include not only the *Barzanji*, but also blessings and praise for the Prophet (*solawat*), a reading of the Prophet's biography called *Syirul hisan* (The verses of goodness), and the recitation of the marvellous deeds of 'Abd Al-Qadir (*manakiban*). In the ritual practices currently followed in the village, people prefer these Islamic readings above the older vocal performance styles, such as the group style known as *beluk*. Yet the old drumming style has been retained as a musical form for accompanying these newer ritual practices. This is partly because, for Muslims in West Java and other parts of Indonesia, the sound of the frame drum indexes the Prophet Muhammad. It is a constant presence in the musical traditions performed to commemorate him and to seek Allah's favour upon him.⁸ In a place

⁸ According to popular history, the people of Medina in Saudi Arabia (called the Anshor group)

where Islam is given such a high priority in public life, a distinct 'public culture of sounds' (Qureshi 2000:814) is created as a result of this connection.

But the *terebang sejak* fulfils villagers' spiritual needs in other ways also, and these have assisted the genre to survive in the village while other traditional genres have fallen away. Performers and audiences consider that playing and listening to the music will earn them blessings from the Prophet, but at the same time, these also create a sense of 'feelingfulness' at the time of playing and listening to the music. I explain this feelingfulness below.

4 *Terebang gebes-beluk*

Terebang gebes and *beluk* were originally two different performances; however, due to the need to make current performances more attractive to the audience, they are now offered in one performance form. Both types of music complement each other, as *beluk* is a vocal art without accompaniment, and *gebes* uses percussion instruments but no vocals. Thus, in this research I consider *gebes-beluk* as one performance type.

Unlike *terebang sejak*, *terebang gebes-beluk* has found new audiences in the city context. The *terebang gebes* is a frame drum, but the *gebes* is larger and heavier than the *terebang* of the *terebang sejak*. The *gebes* requires physical strength from the player, unlike the *terebang sejak*. It is believed to be the oldest musical genre in the village. The ensemble will typically consist of three to four instruments. The size of the instruments is uniform, measuring about 60 to 75 cm in diameter. Each instrument weighs about 20 to 30 kilograms, and the performers play them while sitting on the floor. The instruments are made from locally sourced jackfruit wood (*kayu nangka*), a very strong and durable wood, which makes the instrument very heavy, but also gives the individual drums great longevity. Amongst the drums owned by the Candralijaya group, for example, the oldest instrument is 100 years old, while the other drums are 75 years old.

welcomed the Prophet with frame drums and singings after his arrival from Mecca (*hijra*). The most popular song is a song called *Talaal badru alaina* (The moon has risen over us). The story is very popular among Indonesian Muslims as part of oral traditions; however, in classical Islamic scholarship, there is some debate about when and where this song was sung and the level of validation of the narration, for example, as narrated in the classical books *Fath al Bary* and *Bidaya wa al Nihaya*.

Hijra is one of the most important events in the early years of Muhammad's Islamic proselytization, signifying the movement of the centre of Islamic *dakwah* from Mecca to Medina City.

Apart from the nature of the drum, another major point of distinction between *gebes-beluk* and *sejak* is the nature of the vocal text (*beluk*). The vocal text consists of unrestrained, almost wild, vocal sounds without linguistic form, unlike the *sejak* form that has become a vehicle for the singing of the Prophet's biography.

People tell stories about the *terebang gebes* that give it a unique aura. These are important to the processes by which it is constructed as an authentic Sundanese performance genre. My main sources for such stories were Pak Ipin, the leader of the group, and an elderly villager, a former *terebang* player named Abah Odor. They tell stories about the *terebang gebes* that go back to the nineteenth century. They recalled a time when 10 to 15 groups from different villages played *terebang* together in one performance. Assuming a group consisted of three to four people, this would amount to thirty to sixty *terebang* players playing *terebang* at once. The more players, the more energetic the performance was. Performers would play in any place that could accommodate them, such as a field or an open area. These events were called *terebang gubrug*, from the Sundanese word *gebrug*, which, according to Pak Ipin, means 'to put something heavy anywhere in a hard manner, such as by throwing it'.

Another piece of information about the *terebang gebes* that circulates from person to person concerns the *terebang sered*, which is played by sitting back to back. Abah Odor (80 years old), a skilled *terebang* player, told me that players would sit like this when they wished to demonstrate magic powers and to compete in magical prowess. Two performers would sit on the floor, back to back. Between their backs, they put a slab of local wood called *jambe* wood. Each performer recited spells to make their hands very strong. They played the *terebang* as long and as loud as they could until the wood between their backs shattered. The strongest player was the one who could play for the longest, and this man received acclaim as the 'winner'. People told me exotic stories about these competitions. Sometimes, the players' hands were bloody; sometimes a *terebang* would make no sound at all because of the magic directed at it by the player's rival. People described these performances as attractive and lively events. These stories partly explain Cikeusal's past reputation, according to elder villagers, as *kampung baragajul*, meaning a 'village of tough guys'.

The *terebang gebes-beluk* is a fusion of the *gebes* with *beluk*. *Beluk* is an ancient Sundanese vocal art originating in agricultural activities. As noted, it consists of extended vocal phrases, not having any linguistic shape, delivered in a very loud and coarse manner. It lacks all the refinement commonly associated with Sundanese verbal arts. Stories of its origins have spread from mouth to mouth in ways that have given it the same aura as the *gebes*. In the past, it functioned as a communication tool among farmers engaged in dry-rice farming

(*huma*), which was common in mountainous areas. *Huma* fields were sometimes located far apart from each other, and were often separated by hills. The farmers developed high-pitched calls to communicate with each other. In fact, I noticed in Cikeusal that farmers in this highland area can still speak in unusually high voices, and sometimes reveal this in their daily conversations.

The *beluk* of Cikeusal differs somewhat from the descriptions commonly given about *beluk* in the literature on Islamic music in West Java. In that literature, *beluk* is tied to the performance of the Islamic verse narratives called *wawacan*. For example, Kunst's seminal book *Music in Java* categorized *beluk* as *tembang buhun* (ancient singing) that was used for the singing of *wawacan* (Kunst 1973:392; see also Rosidi 2000; Kurnia and Nalan 2003).

Following changes in agricultural systems, *beluk* moved from the context of dry-rice farming (*huma*) to wet-rice farming (*sawah*) practices. In wet-rice farming, *beluk* was used to accompany buffaloes working in the field during the pre-planting stage. According to villagers in Cikeusal, when the Suharto regime altered the type of grain to a new, high-yield variety in the 1970s, *beluk* was practised less and less in the fields. As farming became more mechanized, there were fewer opportunities to sing *beluk*.

Beluk singing is no longer a necessary part of farming, as buffaloes have mostly been replaced by cows and/or machines for ploughing the fields. Performances are rarely encountered in Cikeusal village. It is surprising, then, that Candralijaya's combination of *terebang gebes* and *beluk* has found a new stage in the city as a result of the new meanings being established through local identity. The shift of this original/old (*buhun*) performance form, *terebang gebes-beluk*, on to city stages has been the result of the efforts of young people involved in cultural activist groups in Tasikmalaya.

5 Cultural Mobility: The Role of Young Cultural Activists

The young cultural activist groups in Tasikmalaya have been concerned with finding contemporary relevance in the artistic genres of the past, asserting old traditions in new contexts, and then internalizing old values and re-externalizing them as new ones. Komunitas Azan (Azan Community, led by Acep Zamzam Noor), and Komunitas Cermin (Cermin Community, led by Ashmansyah Timutiah or 'Acong'), have taken an active role in promoting genres like *terebang-beluk* as authentic signs of Islamic and Sundanese culture in the post-Suharto era.

The two groups were formed not long after the fall of the Suharto regime. They intended to make a difference in public spaces and thereby stimulate

FIGURE 2 *Terebang gebes-beluk* city performance; the stage was located in one of the biggest shopping centres in Tasikmalaya

KOMUNITAS CERMIN COLLECTION, 2012

public awareness of new possibilities for civic identity in the new era of democracy in Tasikmalaya. This involved bringing youth into the space of their activities. In their efforts to make local culture the core of their public activities, they have played an active role in bringing local performance genres into new contexts. The religious meanings were particularly important for Acep Zamzam Noor, who organized activities in the Islamic school at Cipasung, where he resides. The Cermin Community brought those traditional performances onto city stages, where young audiences were able to enjoy a striking re-contextualization of authentic art forms which they may previously have known little about.

5.1 *Acep Zamzam Noor (Azan Community)*

Acep Zamzam Noor is a well-known figure in Tasikmalaya. He has frequently positioned himself in opposition to Tasikmalaya's government policy, most notably when the government introduced the above-mentioned *perda syariah* (sharia regional regulation) in 2001 and simultaneously branded the city as an 'Islamic city'. This opposition has taken shape in a number of projects of cultural activism. To forcefully express his critique of unethical behaviour amongst politicians in the new democratic era, he established a group called Partai Nurul Sembako (PNS, The Party of the Light of the Nine Basics) in 1999.

Nurul Sembako is a play on Arabic and bureaucratic language. *Nur ul-* (the light of) is a common compound structure in Islamic Tasikmalaya. *Sembako* is an acronym for *sembilan bahan pokok* (the nine basic needs, a category of basic goods). The government considers these nine goods to be the basis of human sustenance. This parodied a political party that held cultural carnivals to promote *golput* (*golongan putih*, or 'the white group'), which is the Indonesian designation for those who refuse to vote in the election as a sign of protest—either by casting a blank or spoiled ballot or by boycotting the polls. In other words, Acep's 'political party' encouraged voters to boycott the polls in elections at local and national levels. This project is a critique of the political process, but was also intended as a public education project designed to raise accountability amongst politicians (Lahpan 2015a).

In 2002, as part of his cultural strategy, Acep took the initiative to bring together some of Tasikmalaya's traditional performers to perform in the Cipasung boarding school (*pesantren Cipasung*) in Tasikmalaya. Cipasung is a particularly important site for Islamic learning in West Java. It is one of the biggest Islamic schools (*pesantren*) in West Java, with 3,650 Islamic students in 2009.⁹

Acep Zamzam Noor is the oldest son of the charismatic Islamic figure and leader of the Cipasung *pesantren*, Kyai Ilyas Ruhiyat. Acep's position is unique: he is a poet and a cultural activist, who brings different local groups to perform in the *pesantren* area. On the other hand, *pesantren* are commonly acknowledged as places that restrict access to performances of any kind.

In those performances, he included old performance genres (Sund.: *seni buhun*) not widely known in contemporary society in Tasikmalaya, including frame-drumming, but also *pantun beton* (a variant on a Sundanese *pan-tun* genre), *calung tarawangsa* (a ritual performance involving bamboo instruments and a zither), *genjring ronyok* (a kind of frame-drumming performance by a large group of 40 performers or more), and *ronggeng gunung* (a dance performance accompanied by gamelan and vocals). The Candralijaya group was invited to this event, where it performed *beluk*, *terebang gebes*, and *terebang sejak*. The consistency of the group's repertoire and its unwavering devotion to these genres attracted Acep's attention, and the group has subsequently become increasingly involved in various performance activities arranged by Acep's network in Tasikmalaya, including radio shows and television programmes. At most of these activities they only play the *terebang gebes-beluk*, not the *terebang sejak*. Acep put the label of 'Islamic' on these

9 <http://pendis.kemenag.go.id/file/dokumen/pontren-32a.pdf> (accessed 3-8-2015).

performances, based on the characteristics and values as well as the cultural background of the performances. In his writings about the performance, he argued that Islam and Sundanese culture have influenced each other in these performances. In 2003, he also held cultural meetings (*halaqoh budaya*) in the Cipasung *pesantren* in collaboration with the Desantara Foundation, a non-profit organization based in Jakarta, in which one of the programmes is the cultural reconciliation between *pesantren* community and local culture. He brought local performance groups to the seminar to promote the discourse that 'Islam is friendly to local cultures and their arts'.¹⁰ Ipin Saripin, a leader of the Candralijaya group, was invited to the seminars.

In fact, this cultural programme is full of political meaning. Acep's conception of cultural value is a critique of contemporary realities in Tasikmalaya. Acep perceives that Candralijaya is free from commercialized networks of consumption, and also has an authenticity derived from its links with the past, or its '*buhun*-ness'. Acep is a vocal critic of religious actions that are motivated by economic or political aims, and Candralijaya fits his conception of an economically disinterested, authentic Tasikmalaya Islamic-Sundanese expression group. He organized his performances to give voice to expressions of Islam and Sundanese culture that reflected their compatibility, to affirm the positive relationship between traditional culture and Islam, and, in doing so, to resist the Tasikmalaya government's homogenizing idea of an Islamic city. These efforts appealed to a younger audience. In the activities, performances, and discussions just mentioned young people from Tasikmalaya and the provincial capital, Bandung, were prominent in the audience.

5.2 *Komunitas Cermin (Cermin Community)*

After Acep Zamzam's initial patronage, support for Candralijaya shifted to Komunitas Cermin. This group plays an important role in fostering appreciation of Candralijaya's musical tradition among city audiences. The community has its home base in the city of Tasikmalaya and has a wide network of stakeholders in the city. Founded in Tasikmalaya in 1998, it consists of young cultural activists interested in Sundanese traditions and performances in their broader contexts. It empowers young people by giving them skills in Sundanese tradition, focusing on school students as well as school-age children who for whatever reason are not attending any educational institution. They

10 Interview with Acep Zamzam Noor, 28-1-2013. *Halaqoh budaya* is another term used to bring 'culture' closer to the Islamic community. The *pesantren* have long been set in opposition to local performances, as if the two cannot exist in the same place.

have weekly meetings at which they practise, and hold monthly performances as well as calendric celebrations.

The Cermin Community is a private initiative. It is currently empowering local traditions in new spaces that generate new meanings for local identity. In the past, the government dominated this function, in fulfilment of its role as a broker of regional culture for the national project. Candralijaya is a regular performer in their activities. As a cultural activist and a keen supporter of local performing arts, the leader of the group, Ashmansyah Timutiah (nicknamed Acong), told me:

In every performance event, we always give priority to Candralijaya. We also recommend to other cultural events in Bandung and Tasikmalaya within our networks that they should involve Candralijaya in their cultural and performance activities.¹¹

The community considers Candralijaya to be an 'authentic' Sundanese group faithfully playing old arts (*seni buhun*). It places priority on supporting the group by providing spaces in city performances and other activities. Acong considers that the mentoring of local performances is one of Cermin's missions, along with supporting the emergence of new art forms. He and his friends also regularly visit Cikeusal village to support the continuation of performances in the village. Cermin has become a new patron for Candralijaya.

Under Cermin's patronage, Candralijaya has performed in festivals and events in Bandung and Tasikmalaya, such as New Year celebrations. A big event that attracted a massive, youthful audience was a concert by Iwan Fals held in 2010. Iwan Fals is a nationally popular artist with a huge number of fans. Candralijaya collaborated in this performance, and received special attention from the youthful audience, mounting the stage and performing *beluk* and *terebang* in harmony with the modern guitars of Iwan's group. They accompanied Iwan as he performed a number of his tunes. This is an effective way of bringing an (old) performance tradition to a new audience, by performing alongside pop musicians who are widely known among a younger audience.

I argue here that the reception of this performance in an urban context requires us to think afresh about the meanings and effects of the genres. But before I explore those, I will compare the meanings and responses people give to the genres in the setting of Cikeusal village. Listening in the village, I argue, is not the same as listening in the city.

11 Interview with Ashmansyah Timutiah, 21-7-2014.

6 'Village Feelingfulness'

During my attendance at *terebang* performances in the village, I was struck by the distinctive, shared experiences of feeling that the performances brought on. These shared experiences call for an analysis that goes beyond the Islamic values attached to the frame drum performances. Villagers fall into a characteristic mode of reception based on their shared experience. Qureshi's (2000:801) identification of links between sonic genres and shared reception are highly relevant here:

the physical sensation of sound not only activates feeling, it also activates links with others who feel. In an instant, the sound of music can create bonds and shared responses that are as deep and intimate as they are broad and universal.

The term 'feelingfulness' is useful here, for it directs our attention to the capacity of music to engender different modes of musical experience among listeners as well as performers in different contexts and situations. Following Swanwick (1993) and Maxwell (2006), I use the term 'feelingfulness' to express different modes of experiencing music among listeners as well as performers in their different contexts, places, and situations. This enables me to acknowledge that understanding modes of experiencing music requires us to go beyond a reductive analysis focusing on hearing/listening, and to take into account the social settings where the music is played (Van Zanten 1997). Becker's conception of the 'habitus of listening', derived from Bourdieu's seminal work, produces a similar awareness: listening is often a social activity learnt through unconscious imitation of one's surroundings (Becker 2004:71). Below I approach Cikeusal as a habitus of listening, seeking to bring out the 'interrelatedness of the perception of musical emotion and learned interactions with our surroundings' (Van Zanten 1997:46).

In the village context, *terebang sejak* is a privileged form. As noted, oral traditions among Indonesian Muslims acknowledge the frame drum both as an icon and an index of Islam, so the performances are a kind of sonic bridge for Islamic culture in Indonesia, and in that sense are an image of the spread of Islam. The frame drum is an icon because its visual form represents the prophetic tradition. A performance is indexical because it is contextually associated with the Prophet Muhammad and his biography. Furthermore, frame drums are musical instruments that are generally regarded as permissible in debates about music and Islamic law (*fiqh*) (Jahja 1964).

These meanings bring a level of solemnity and respect to people's participation in *terebang sejak* performances. The reading and singing, which are

dedicated to the Prophet and/or to saints in order to obtain blessings, call for solemnity, self-awareness, and humility. During this singing, people show typical gestures, such as closing their eyes and swaying their body to the left and to the right, similar to the movements of *dzikr* (remembering God).

But solemnity is not an appropriate term for all aspects of the performance. Following Turino (2008), *terebang sejak* can be categorized as a participatory performance, meaning a performance in which the audience and performers can interact closely and sing together. There is no physical distance between audience and performers. Most audiences know the songs already from repeated listening, and are free to contribute to the singing. The music also has simple rhythms that enable people to join in. This participatory ethic is one of the features that enables 'village feelingfulness', a mode of participation specific to the village *terebang* performance. The specificity lies in the coming together of various elements of village life in the performance, including work, kin relations, ritual, and everyday sociability. This is not like the genres of post-industrial societies, where many contemporary performance genres take place in spaces detached from other daily undertakings. A concert, for example, takes place in a space set apart from other undertakings as a concert space. But a *terebang sejak* performance is at the same time a musical performance, a ritual practice, and an opportunity to express feelings of spirituality, happiness, jokes, and other emotions. It is not detached from these elements, but is determined by them. In addition, its performers do not consider themselves to belong to a creative class that is distinct from the village populace: no one performer stands out for their creativity; rather, many people are involved. A *terebang sejak* performance is an example of 'voices and places as connected social experience' (Stokes 1997:673).

Striking examples of 'village feelingfulness' occur in performance features designed to deal with boredom and sleepiness. *Terebang sejak* is performed mostly at rituals, such as circumcision. People accept that the performance will be lengthy, and inevitably become tired. This is especially the case with listeners and performers who have already spent the day labouring in the fields. Performers overcome this situation by playing brief musical variations called *sisindiran* or *papantunan*. *Sisindiran* is a poem in which an allusion (*sindir*) is made through a combination of words which spell out the intended meaning using sound associations. This element is called *diraeh* in Sundanese, meaning 'to create variation'. These are intended to create fun, both for performers and audiences, and are commonly found in various forms of performing arts in West Java, including *wayang* (puppet shows), *tembang Sunda* (classical Sundanese singing), and other performance genres (Van Zanten 1989). The *sisindiran* are very different to the songs transcribed in the Islamic book, being

irreverent or jokey. Sometimes, the lyrics are quips about the host family, pointing out things such as the late arrival of the food.

Another way of dealing with the length of the performance is simply to fall asleep. This is a distinct mode of engagement that points to ritual meanings and the distinct mode of reception engendered in this environment. At a circumcision event, the *terebang* is performed to accompany the host family to stay awake overnight. According to Mustapa's classic account of Sundanese Islamic culture, villagers believe that the parents of a boy who is going to be circumcised should not sleep overnight. Instead they must keep watch over the boy to protect him from any harm (Mustapa 1985).

Circumcision rituals in West Java are prominent. Mustapa (1985) explains that the circumcision ritual was accompanied by a number of other ritual practices taking place before, during, and after the actual circumcision. People believed that evil spirits could come to disturb the boy who was going to be circumcised. So, the *terebang sejak* was played to accompany the parents, as they tried to stay awake at night. It is believed that this will also make the boy feel less pain when he is circumcised in the morning. Not surprisingly, the audience members often fall asleep during the performance. It sometimes happens that the performers are the only ones still awake, their listeners having all fallen asleep around them.

A sleeping audience is not unique to *terebang sejak* alone. According to Van Zanten (1997), discussing a performance of *tembang Sunda*, 'sleepy time' is the best time to begin to play the music. When listeners 'feel asleep' while listening, this is valued positively, for it is evidence that the music is bringing about feelings of harmony, signifying a good situation of social and cosmic order. This is also related to the Sundanese philosophy that underpins the evaluation of performances. The quality of performance is not only measured by the technical skills of musicians, but also by the way it affects audience members' feelings and emotions.

This 'village feelingfulness' also emerged when I asked participants to verbally express their appreciation of the *beluk-gebes*. Many villagers said this could not be expressed in words. One said it was *bakat ku resep* (a feeling of attraction). Others expressed it as *muringkak bulu punduk* (the excitement felt in the hairs on the back of one's neck).¹² But others gave accounts that explicitly

12 Nostalgic feelings, such as *waas* and *muringkak bulu punduk*, are modes of feelingfulness that commonly occurred among Sundanese listeners in response to traditional or classical music. According to Van Zanten (1997), in Sundanese musical traditions such as *tembang Sunda*, the quality of the music according to its listeners is not measured by the right performance technique, but rather by how it fits with the audience's sensibility, and this is

connected their affective enjoyment of *beluk* with their experience in the rice field. In other words, they recognized everyday sociability as an element of the performance genre. Their ritual sensibility also found its way in some of these explanations. Senior *beluk* singer Aki Toha connected the form to light-hearted sociability:

When *beluk* was sung in the field, people who worked in different fields heard it and they would respond to it, so they shouted at each other. Sometimes, when there was someone who did not sing properly, his friend would throw mud at him to mock him. I recall this fondly [Sundanese: *waas*].¹³

In Aki Toha's account, the music expresses the intimacy and solidarity formed between farmers as they labour together in the fields. In the present, the music triggers beautiful memories of this intimacy and solidarity. Another Cikeusal performer, Pak Ipin, articulated how his happiness was linked to the solemnity of his understanding of the ritual music:

When I hear modern music like *dangdut* I feel that my happiness is only temporary, experienced in that particular moment, but when I hear *beluk*, my feeling of happiness is lasting, even after I reach home. This beautiful voice reminds me of the God who creates all these things.¹⁴

Because the older listeners feel such an intimate recognition towards the performance, the form is protected from processes of change that affect other genres. This is not the norm for popular music in West Java. In recent history, the Sundanese have been creative in combining different music genres to produce new forms, such as *jaipong dangdut* and *calung dangdut*, both of which are combinations of the Indonesian pop form known as *dangdut* and village instrumental performances.¹⁵ These adaptations of other genres increase interest in the performances. The *terebang sejak* and *beluk-gebes* that I observed

signified by *muringkak bulu punduk*. Thus, this can be considered as the most powerful measure of the quality of the music, that is, by experiencing how music makes audiences have goose bumps (*muringkak bulu punduk*).

13 Interview with Aki Toha, 8-1-2013.

14 Interview with Pak Ipin, 11-1-2013.

15 *Jaipong dangdut* and *calung dangdut* are combinations of the Sundanese traditional genres of *jaipong* and *calung* with the *dangdut* genre, a more popular genre in the villages. By combining the genres in this way, the traditional genre of the art form is melded with pop music to make it more attractive to contemporary audiences, especially in villages.

in Cikeusal are different, however. Their resistance to change is considered their virtue by those who participate in the performance. In other words, these art forms are authorized by an ethic of pre-replication rather than innovation and adaptation (Urban 2001). On a number of occasions performers acknowledged this static state. As eighty-year-old Abah Muhri, for example, phrased it: '*Ah mung sakitu-kituna da, teu aya langkungna* (that's all it is, there is nothing more)'.¹⁶ Abah Muhri's statement draws attention to the simplicity of this music as a participatory performance: it does not require specialized skills.

I now contrast this with the reception encountered by the frame-drumming genre *terebang gebes-beluk* in novel contexts in the city.

7 City Performances: *Buhun*-ness, Authenticity, and Identity

The major point of comparison between the village and urban performances of *terebang* lies in the values that city audiences have imbued the art form with. These include its *buhun*-ness (antiquity), its vernacular appeal as specifically Sundanese, and the authenticity it creates as an icon of Sundanese-ness. Because of these meanings, the genre signifies the resurgence of Sundanese Islamic identity in West Java. This resurgence of identity has been stronger in urban political contexts than in village ones.

In the city performance, stakeholders, musicians, audiences, and cultural activists play a crucial role behind the scenes in constructing the context of performances. Festival organizers, for example, read, interpret, compare, and make decisions based on the meanings generated by a wide range of genres. The Azan and Cermin communities do this. Their decision-making processes also involve newer performance forms, such as pop music and contemporary art forms. Thus, on the stage of a festival held in the city, the music moves between modernity and tradition in the blink of an eye. All kinds of performances might appear on the one afternoon, and all of them are 'staged', as opposed to the preference for performance in a domestic space that can be observed in Cikeusal. A succession of performance genres appears on the stage, and it is as a result of this comparative process that Candralijaya's *terebang gebes-beluk* seems to appear to young Sundanese people as a symbol of Sundanese identity. It is distinguished by its apparent antiquity and authenticity, in contrast to the many forms of pop music with which it shares the stage. Candralijaya's music enables city audiences, especially youth, to witness their Sundanese identity in

¹⁶ Interview with Abah Muhri, 15-1-2013.

performance, and to affirm boundaries that separate them from other identities in Indonesia. In this process of boundary-making, as Stokes (1994) argues, authenticity emerges as a key value. In the new context of Indonesia these boundaries are important to differentiate uniqueness, 'authenticity', and local identity among distinct localities in the politics of regional autonomy. This is something that was avoided during the New Order era, when too strong a local identity was considered a threat to national stability due to the hundreds of ethnicities in Indonesia.

I am not arguing that city audiences do not respond affectively to *terebang gebes-beluk*. It is not merely an intellectual process. I spoke to youthful urban audiences about the appeal of the performances and they responded by using an affective lexicon similar to that used by the villagers, using Sundanese expressions to indicate the affect of nostalgia and goose bumps.¹⁷ But in contrast to the village performances, the city performances are not constructed out of everyday experience. It is their novelty and authenticity that appeal. Younger audiences observe the uniqueness of *terebang* instrument and its sounds, as well as the 'screaming' voices coming from *beluk* singers. These sounds are not found in their daily lives or in the musical repertoires of contemporary contexts (except, of course, on the festival stage referred to here). This appeal extends also to the presentation of the performance. Unlike other local performances, which have adapted clothing styles to make them eye-catching for new audiences, *gebes* and *beluk* performers are dressed in traditional Sundanese apparel, namely simple, loose-fitting garments in black cotton, with characteristic headbands (called *totopong* or *iket* in Sundanese). For Sundanese, these clothes signify plainness, simplicity, humility, and the agricultural way of life.

We can see now how the city and village contexts display different modes of tradition. For young audiences in the city, *beluk-gebes* indexes village life and ancestral ways. As one volunteer from Cermin told me, a Candralijaya performance provides a chance for young people to experience the culture of their ancestors. Young urban audiences understand villages as, in Gupta and Ferguson's terms, 'imagined places' that are 'remembered places [...] as symbolic anchors of community for dispersed people' (1992:11). In this case, the audience members find these anchors in traditional music, which enables them to imagine something they have not experienced in person: rice fields, nature, and so on. In contrast, for villagers, the sounds of the *terebang* index the routine realities of village life. The feelingfulness they enjoy in performances is produced by

17 Interview with audience members of Komunitas Cermin Tasikmalaya, 15-1-2013.

the proximity between the drum performance and village activities. In the city, however, the drums, the uniforms, and the screaming are an icon of something imagined: Sundanese tradition. They refer to an abstraction rather than quotidian reality.

A final question needs to be resolved. Why has it not been the *terebang sejak*—a performance that recites the life and goodness of the Prophet—that has made a successful transition to city stages, especially since the villagers consider the singing about the Prophet to be more modern? There are a number of reasons. First, a *terebang sejak* performance in the village consists of a formal sequence of acts and utterances, including a statement of the event being celebrated, the singing of an intercessory prayer, and finally the singing of the *Kitab Mulud*. It is difficult to transport this sequence to stages outside the village as it would take a long period of time as well as posing difficulties in terms of shortening the sequence. In contrast, the *terebang gebes-beluk* is very mobile. A performance can be started directly and concluded at almost any point. Finally, the screaming of the *beluk* and the more dynamic drumming of the *gebes* makes it more arresting and exciting for the listener in comparison to the recitation of the Prophet's life. City audiences are already familiar with diverse genres that involve blessings for the Prophet and reflections upon his life. The verbal chaos of the *beluk* is something different for them.

8 Conclusion

Although Candralijaya does not model itself on contemporary notions of creative performance, it has nevertheless accomplished something quite difficult with its *terebang-beluk*. As mentioned earlier, Candralijaya's engagement with city performances, especially after the Reform era, was initiated by a cultural activist, Acep Zamzam Noor. Through Acep's connections, later continued by Komunitas Cermin, Candralijaya has gained popularity with Tasikmalaya audiences, especially among the youth. It has performed *terebang-beluk* and been recorded for radio and TV, and these events have all taken place in cities. Yet, in its own village, Candralijaya performs a 'modern' and Islamized version of the *terebang* (*terebang sejak*). Even this is not highly popular, as young people in the village prefer *dangdut* or pop music to celebrations and lifecycle events. Candralijaya, therefore, has achieved a complex bridging of contexts.

This achievement has important implications for scholarly understandings of Indonesians' negotiation of Islam and culture. By introducing the notion of *buhun*-ness (antiquity), I complicate the notion that the Islam-culture dialectic

in contemporary Indonesia is as black and white as the Purwakarta incidents, mentioned at the start of this article, might suggest. The examples discussed here originate from Tasikmalaya, a regency more known for its Islamic piety and Islamic institutions than Purwakarta; even so, they indicate that Islamic genres succeed when they offer the quality of Sundanese authenticity. But this quality does not have an affect *per se*. Rather, it is the political conditions of post-Reform Indonesia that have enabled the border-crossing success of the genre examined here. Political activists rally behind the frame-drumming genres and enable their performers to have access to the festival stages of the city of Tasikmalaya. For audiences there, the striking sound and appearance of the performance, as well as the exotic narrative of its Sundanese origins, have reinvigorated the genre and increased its appeal.

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