



(LAS 7310)

STREET MUSIC OF CENTRAL JAVA

Recorded in Jogjakarta, Indonesia

Although, in recent years, many Westerners have been exposed to the beautiful and timeless sounds of the court gamelans of Central Java, very few have heard the remarkable folk version of this music tradition called siteran barangan (or cokekan or simply siteran). Siteran music is performed by wandering musicians in the streets and marketplaces of densely populated cities like Jogja-karta and Surakarta rather than by specially trained musicians in the palaces of these same Central Javanese cities. A successful siteran ensemble can achieve, with a minimum of personnel and instruments, a full texture comparable to that of a twenty-piece Central Javanese gamelan orchestra.

Siteran music can be performed by a single musician or by groups of up to five members, ensembles of two or three being most common. The instrumentation of these groups varies, with the siter (a plucked zither) and the kendhang (a double-headed hand drum) being the two most common instruments. Whatever instruments are used must be durable and portable because the musicians carry them by hand as they walk the streets. The melodic instrument, usually the siter, must have a wide range and be full in sound since it functionally and texturally replaces an entire gamelan (except for tempo and dynamic control, which is a function of the kendhang). The siters used in these ensembles are usually homemade and are altered in design from their gamelan counterpart, the clempung. Alterations include modification of shape so the instrument can be more easily carried, heavier construction for durability, and additional strings for a wider range.

In general the instrumentalists in a siteran ensemble sing while they play though there are frequently additional vocalists, usually female, whose sole function is singing. The group recorded here consists of two male and two female musicians. The group's leader, Sunarto, who comes from Klaten (a city halfway along the forty-mile road connecting Jogjakarta and Surakarta) plays kendhang and gong bambu. By buzzing his lips into a narrow bamboo tube which rests inside a larger bamboo resonator, the gong bambu player can simulate the deep and resonant sound of the gamelan's large gong ageng. The other instrumentalist, Suradi, plays a home-made siter with seventeen courses of strings - the nine lower-pitched strings are single course and the remaining eight, double. The body of the instrument is made of wood while the bridge, tuning pegs and strings are metal. Although normally played with the thumbnails, the siter player uses metal plectra in order to increase the instrument's volume. He comes from a city just outside of Jogjakarta called Prambanan The younger of the female singers, Sri Suparmi, originally from Surakarta, is the wife of the siter player. Marni, the elder singer, is from Klaten. Besides singing, the women sometimes provide rhythmic handclapping and occasionally whistle.

The relation of siteran music to gamelan music Demonstrates the socio-musical phenomenon of a culture's folk music and art music traditions sharing many common characteristics, including repertoire. Although found in other Asian cultures and to a lesser degree in the West, this phenomenon is very clearly illustrated by the similarity of the siteran and gamelan music of Central Java.

TRACKS AND TIMES:

1. Ketowoug Puspawarna, slendro patbet Mamyara (12:09)
2. Gendhing Dolanan, slendro pathet sanga (5:06)
3. Gendhing Gambir Sawit, slendro pathet sanga (5:25)
4. Pathetan; Bawa Sekar-Ageng Tepi Kawuri;
Gendhing Montro, slendro pathet manyura (22:20)

THE TRACKS WITH NOTES:

1. Ketowoug Puspawarna, slendro patbet Mamyara (12:09)

All of the pieces heard on this recording are played in slendro, a five-tone tuning system with nearly-equi-distant-intervals. Slendro has three patbets (modes), this first piece being in pathet manyura. The structure of Puspawarna is called ketawang, in which there are sixteen melodic pulses in each phrase ending with a sounding of gong. Note how full the texture of this ensemble can be, remembering there are only four performers.

2. Gendhing Dolanan, slendro pathet sanga (5:08)
Campur Sari; Kae Lho Kae; Witing Klapa

In this medley of three gendhing dolanan, non-serious pieces enjoyed by both children and adults, a male vocal introduction precedes each piece. The chorus singing and flashy drumming are prominent characteristics in this performance.

3. Gendhing Gambir Sawit, slendro pathet sanga: (5:25)
excerpt (timing) Gambir Sawit has two sections, each with sixty-four melodic pulses per sounding of gong. The excerpt recorded here is taken from the second section of a complete performance. In this excerpt there are two places where the flow of the full texture is interrupted (keudelan, lit., to stop) and a female vocal solo follows, a common practice in Central Javanese music.

4. Pathetan; Bawa Sekar-Ageng Tepi Kawuri; Gendhing Montro, slendro pathet manyura (22:20)

This performance begins with pathetan (a rhythmically free interlude) played on the siter and is followed by a bawa (a male vocal solo) which leads directly into Gendhing Montro. Montro, like Gambir Sawit, has two sections, each with sixty-four melodic pulses per sounding a gong. There is one kendelan in this performance of Montro as well as several tempo changes, another common practice in Central Javanese music.

Mark Nelson and Roger Vetter
University of Hawaii, 1976

These selections were recorded in 1975 in Jogjakarta during the University of Hawaii Music Department Study Abroad Program, direction Professor Jarda Susilo.

Photos: James Giles and Robert Herr
Cover Artwork: Jeannette Bennington.

ORIGINALLY RECORDED IN 1975, THIS RELEASE IS NOW PART OF THE
LYRICHORD ARCHIVE SERIES.



THE LYRICHORD ARCHIVE SERIES

PO Box 1977 Old Chelsea Station
New York, NY 10011 Ph: 212 404 8290 Fax: 212 404 8291
email: nick@lyrichord.com Web: www.lyrichord.com

© and (P) Lyrichord Discs Inc. These texts (including images) are published under copyright by Lyrichord Discs Inc. All rights are reserved.
The texts, and the music associated, with them, may only be republished, duplicated or sold, with written permission from Lyrichord Discs Inc.