

RHYTHMIC TRANSNATIONALISM: A COMPARATIVE STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF *KERONCONG* ACCOMPANIMENT PATTERNS IN INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA

Abdul Rachman,^{1*} Udi Utomo,² Suharto,³ Wadiyo,⁴ Marzelan Salleh,⁵ Loo Fung
Ying⁶

*First & Corresponding author

^{1,2,3,4}Art Education, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia

^{5,6}Faculty of Creative Arts, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

(dulkemplinx@mail.unnes.ac.id, udiutomo@mail.unnes.ac.id,
suharto@mail.unnes.ac.id, wadiyo@mail.unnes.ac.id, marzelanum.edu.my,
loofy@um.edu.my)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22452/jati.vol31no1.7>

Abstract

Keroncong in Indonesia and Malaysia reflect the longstanding cultural kinship that has developed across Southeast Asia. Despite its historical and cultural significance, an ethnomusicological study of *keroncong* as a shared musical tradition between the two countries is lacking. This study is necessitated by the transnational adaptability of *keroncong*, which has evolved through interactions with local musical traditions such as *langgam Jawa*, *dangdut*, and *joget*. A qualitative approach employing a comparative case study design was used to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation of performances and musical notation in Semarang, Kuala Lumpur, Johor, and Selangor. The findings reveal that the core instrumental ensemble remains consistent across both countries, comprising *cak*, *cuk*, cello, contrabass, and guitar. However, significant variations occur in rhythmic structures and performance styles, particularly in the *Cello* and bass patterns. In Malaysia, *keroncong* performances often incorporate *joget* rhythms characterised by distinctive rhythmic shifts and adaptations of the 'tak' sound, whereas in Indonesia, *keroncong* is enriched through the influence of *langgam Jawa* and *dangdut*. These musical differences demonstrate how local aesthetic preferences shape the sonic expression of *keroncong* while maintaining its fundamental identity. Beyond these technical characteristics, the study also shows that *keroncong* functions as a social expression, a medium of cultural diplomacy, and a marker of collective identity. The findings position *keroncong* as

a dynamic cultural practice through which local traditions and transnational influences are continually negotiated, fostering cultural connectivity and inter-ethnic exchange across Southeast Asia. More broadly, this study contributes to Southeast Asian studies by providing an ethnomusicological framework for understanding *serumpun* relations and demonstrating how shared musical heritage can facilitate intercultural dialogue and sustain cultural affinities that transcend contemporary national boundaries. To address these broader concerns, the study investigates three interrelated questions. First, what structural and technical differences characterise the instrumentation patterns of Indonesian and Malaysian *keroncong*? Second, how do local musical genres, particularly *Langgam Jawa* in Indonesia and *joget* in Malaysia, reshape and reinterpret these patterns within their respective cultural contexts? Third, what do these sonic adaptations reveal about the construction and negotiation of localised identities within Maritime Southeast Asia?

Keywords: *keroncong, ethnomusicology, Indonesia, Malaysia, Langgam, cultural kinship, musical patterns*

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Musical traditions in Southeast Asia often transcend linguistic and regional boundaries, reflecting a shared history and environment. This is particularly evident in the cultural kinship between Indonesia and Malaysia, often referred to as *saudara serumpun* (Ahmad et al., 2025; Sulaiman et al., 2025; Mohd Bakri et al., 2025). A primary example of this shared heritage is *keroncong*, a musical style that has evolved through centuries of adaptation in Indonesia and gained significant popularity in Malaysia since the 1920s. The *keroncong* in Indonesia has developed since the 15th century through various adaptations (Rachman & Utomo, 2018, 2019; Alfian, 2013; Budiman, 1979; Ganap, 2006, 2011, 2019; Harmunah, 2011; Soeharto, 1996; Yampolsky, 2010). Meanwhile, in Malaysia, *keroncong* began to develop in the 1920s and has gained popularity in several areas in Malaysia, such as Penang, Malacca, and the Malaysian peninsula, including Selangor and Johor (Matusky & Tan, 2004; Hamzah & Johan, 2020). There are both similarities and differences between Indonesian and Malaysian *keroncong*, each reflecting distinctive expressions of their shared cultural heritage.

In Indonesia, *keroncong* ensembles typically consist of seven instruments: contrabass, *cello*, *cuk*, *cak*, guitar, violin, and flute (Rachman & Utomo, 2018, 2019; Budiman, 1979; Ganap, 2019, 2020; Harmunah, 1987; Harmunah, 1996; Matusky & Tan, 2004; Soeharto, 1996). Meanwhile, Malaysian *keroncong* is generally performed with six instruments: *cuk*, *cak*, guitar, violin, flute, and bass. The foremost concern is not merely the similarities or differences between the two *keroncong* traditions (Sunarti, 2013), but rather the distinctive ethnomusicological features that underscore the singular cultural identity of *keroncong* in each tradition. The blending of *keroncong* with local cultural elements not only enriches its character but also strengthens its identity within each country (Yampolsky, 2010; Kartomi, 2012; Matusky & Tan, 2004; Sunarti & Fadeli, 2021). Music as a medium of cultural expression has the potential to convey the values, norms, and social rules of a community (Delfia et al., 2023). Primarily in ethnomusicology, which examines music as a cultural phenomenon within its social, historical, and ecological context in which it was produced (Merriam, 1964).

The number of previous studies on *keroncong* has remained limited, focusing either on a single stylistic form or on specific regional traditions (Alfian, 2013; Asriyani & Rachman, 2019; Saputra & Haryono, 2021; Satria et al., 2024; Setiadi et al., 2024; Setiawan et al., 2024; Sunarti & Triwinarti, 2013; Supiarza, 2021; Suryati et al., 2025). While previous scholarship has extensively documented regional *keroncong* traditions within isolated national contexts, there remains a critical gap in comparative research on how these 'kindred cultures' have diverged or converged through local adaptations such as *Langgam Jawa* and *joget*. Accordingly, this paper will outline the musical texts of Indonesian and Malaysian *keroncong*, the elements of local wisdom embedded in both traditions, and, as the central discussion, the ethnomusicological perspectives of *keroncong* in Indonesia and Malaysia as expressions of cultural kinship, representing the novelty of this study.

Beyond its contribution to ethnomusicology, this study is situated within the broader field of Southeast Asian studies. By examining *keroncong* as a shared musical heritage that has evolved along distinct national trajectories in Indonesia and Malaysia, the study offers a cultural perspective on how to understand *serumpun relations*. The comparative analysis demonstrates that musical

traditions function not merely as forms of artistic expression but also as sites where cultural affinities, cross-border interactions, and regional identities are articulated and negotiated. In this respect, *keroncong* provides a valuable framework for exploring how shared heritage continues to shape cultural connectivity and mutual engagement in contemporary Southeast Asia.

LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

The transnational flow of artistic expressions across maritime Southeast Asia highlights a shared historical environment where national borders frequently blur. In analysing this cultural matrix, Sunarti and Fadeli (2021) investigate the migration patterns of Javanese populations to Malaysia and document the transfer and ongoing preservation of Javanese musical, theatrical, and dance traditions. They point to the Javanese-Malay ethnic group as the primary stewards responsible for keeping this Javanese heritage alive outside its country of origin, establishing localised cultural identities within a foreign national framework. This community-driven preservation can be effectively framed through the lens of transnationalism, which illuminates how ethnic groups maintain complex social, emotional, and cultural networks across state borders. Viewed this way, cultural identity ceases to be a static concept bound to a single geopolitical territory and instead becomes an evolving network of cross-border connections. Applied to the study of *keroncong*, transnationalism shows that the genre should not be treated as the exclusive cultural property of either Indonesia or Malaysia. Rather, it is a fluid product of historical mobility and profound cultural interconnectedness that binds the *serumpun* (kindred) societies of maritime Southeast Asia (Kartomi, 2012; Matusky & Tan, 2004; Sunarti & Fadeli, 2021).

Further insight into regional musical relationships is provided by Sumrongthong and Sorrell (2000) in their comparative study of melodic mechanics in the Thai *Pi-phat* and the Javanese *Gamelan*. They observe that while these two ensembles diverge substantially in surface terminology and sonic textures, they operate on a shared concept: both rely on integrated structural improvisations over a singular, central melody. However, their structural hierarchies differ significantly. In Javanese *Gamelan*, the core framework melody is performed and transcribed overtly, yet it takes a secondary role compared to the fluid vocal melodies layered above it. In contrast, the *Pi-phat* ensemble treats its framework melody as an implicit, unheard foundation; the vocal performance

appears to grow directly out of this hidden root, reversing the hierarchy into a secondary-primary relationship.

These insights are vital for modelling a comparative analysis between Indonesian and Malaysian *keroncong*, helping scholars grasp the shared systemic roots that underlie surface variations. This balance of structural commonalities and aesthetic divergences can be understood through the concept of cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 1994; Burke, 2009). Drawing from Homi Bhabha's theory of the "Third Space", Malaysian *keroncong* should not be dismissed as an incomplete or secondary imitation of the Indonesian tradition. Instead, the historical intersection of *keroncong*'s core instrumental framework with local Malaysian *joget* aesthetics created a fresh, hybrid space where musical meaning and regional identities were autonomously renegotiated. This hybrid space allows Malaysian performers to claim *keroncong* as an authentic piece of local heritage while honouring its shared historical and structural roots across the region. This demonstrates that musical cultures born of prolonged interaction often retain their foundational blueprints while developing distinct, localised variations.

A third foundational model is found in the comparative work of Rachman et al. (2021), which examines the playing patterns of the *Gambang* in *Gambang Semarang* music alongside the *Ranat Ek* xylophone in the Thai *Pi-phat* ensemble. Their analysis shows that the Indonesian *Gambang* employs two primary rhythmic and melodic patterns: *sekarang Nglagu* and *cengkok ajeg*. Conversely, the Thai *Ranat Ek* utilizes a different set of idiomatic patterns, including *kan ti kro*, *kan ti kep*, *kan ti siao mue*, *kan ti sado*, and *kan ti sabat*. These structural variances, despite a shared instrumental lineage, stem from the unique functional demands and ensemble roles each instrument plays within its respective collective tradition.

Taken together, these three studies prove that musical styles linked by geography and history regularly demonstrate a complex pattern of convergence and divergence in execution and structure. Yet, while past scholarship has mapped these musical relationships between Indonesia and neighbouring countries, a distinct gap remains. No existing research has explicitly focused on *keroncong* as a shared, transnational musical tradition that bridges Indonesia and Malaysia. Instead, prior literature remains heavily isolated, exploring *keroncong* through narrow regional boundaries or single-country histories (Alfian, 2013; Asriyani & Rachman, 2019; Saputra & Haryono, 2021; Satria et al., 2024; Setiadi et al., 2024; Setiawan et al., 2024; Sunarti & Triwinarti, 2013; Supiarza, 2021; Lestari et al., 2024; Lanjari et al., 2025; Suryati et al., 2025). This study addresses that gap by analysing the shared history and unique variations of contemporary *keroncong*.

Theoretical Framework

To evaluate *keroncong* as both a technical musical style and a living cultural practice, this study utilises Alan P. Merriam's (1964) tripartite ethnomusicological model. Merriam asserts that music cannot be fully understood in isolation; instead, it must be studied through three fundamentally intertwined dimensions: Sound, Behaviour, and Conception.

The Dimension of Sound

The first branch of Merriam's model centres on the tangible, audible elements of performance: its structural blueprints and acoustic textures. In this study, the sound dimension is used to break down the exact accompaniment formulas used by the contrabass, cello, *cak*, *cuk*, and guitar across both territories. This involves dissecting the rhythmic shifts between the 1/16-note structures characteristic of *engkel* (single) accompaniment systems and the denser 1/32-note subdivisions found in double accompaniment setups.

Furthermore, this dimension tracks the acoustic blending of local tonal structures into Western instrumental layouts. This includes tracing how Indonesian *langgam Jawa* incorporates indigenous *Pelog* and *Slendro* scales, as well as the rhythmic accents adopted in Malaysian *joget* interpretations. Through this formal auditory lens, the research highlights the shared structural anchor points of *keroncong* while isolating its distinct regional offshoots.

The Dimension of Behaviour

Merriam's second dimension shifts focus from the music itself to the human actions, interactions, and social practices surrounding its creation. Rather than treating sound as an isolated artefact, behaviour looks at how musicians self-organise, teach, adapt, and perform within different societal frameworks (Yampolsky, 2010). This study pays close attention to the ensemble's collaborative habits. For example, it tracks how musicians dynamically re-map their accompaniment parts to cover the tonic note if a contrabass is missing from the lineup.

It also examines the informal, oral transmission methods through which these intricate patterns are kept alive, memorised, and passed down through generations without reliance on sheet music. Finally, the behavioural lens accounts for the creative choices musicians make to satisfy audience expectations, such as integrating *dangdut* rhythms in Indonesian urban centres or *joget* components in Malaysian performances to keep the crowd engaged.

The Dimension of Conception

The final dimension of the framework targets the underlying theories, values, and identity narratives that a society projects onto its music. This layer investigates how practitioners, audiences, and cultural institutions interpret *keroncong* as a symbol of identity and history.

In Indonesia, *keroncong* is conceptually bound to postcolonial cultural nationalism, the classical Javanese aesthetic concept of *rasa* (soul/deep feeling), and the historic localisation of Western stringed instruments.

In Malaysia: The genre—particularly when infused with *joget* components—is conceptualised as a celebration of Malay values, festive social interaction, and community solidarity (Matusky & Tan, 2004).

By assessing these conceptual frameworks, the study highlights how nearly identical instrumental structures can carry vastly different cultural meanings depending on the unique social histories of the communities that play them. Together, Merriam's three dimensions offer a holistic path for exploring how a shared history can yield both beautiful musical harmony and highly distinct local expressions.

METHODOLOGY

The research approach of this study used a qualitative case study design with an ethnomusicological focus (Creswell, 2017; Nettl, 1964; Stake, 2009). This approach was chosen because the study examines traditional music from both a musical and cultural perspective. In research on music anthropology and music sociology, a musicology/ethnomusicology approach is required to examine music itself from a musical perspective. Additionally, a sociological and anthropological approach is also employed to examine music from a sociological and anthropological perspective (Merriam, 1964; Nettl, 1964; Sedyawati, 2012).

This research was conducted in Semarang, Indonesia, as well as in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, and Johor Bahru, Malaysia. Additionally, this research focuses on *keroncong* music, emphasising the playing patterns of each instrument. Semarang (Indonesia) was chosen as a historic hotbed for *keroncong* development in Central Java, where the genre heavily collided with *Langgam Jawa* (Javanese musical scales). Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, & Johor (Malaysia) were selected as urban and royal cultural epicentres where *keroncong* was integrated into British Malayan radio history, court culture, and indigenous folk arts like *joget*.

Furthermore, this study employed three techniques, namely observation, interviews, and documentation (Creswell, 2017; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016; Rohidi,

2011). First, the observation technique. The observation technique applied is open observation. The subjects observed in this study were *keroncong* music performances in Semarang and Kuala Lumpur, including live *performances*, *rehearsals*, and *video recordings*. Here, the researcher observed performances, rehearsals, and *keroncong* music activities in Semarang, as well as similar activities in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, and Johor Bahru, Malaysia.

Secondly, the interview techniques employed. Researchers prepared a systematic list of questions for the informants. This was useful for focusing the questions and answers from the informants. Therefore, the interview results remained aligned with the research objectives. The participants interviewed in this study were musicians, practitioners, teachers, observers, figures, composers, and *keroncong* music arrangers.

Table 1. Information on Informants

Country	Professional Role	Description
Indonesia	Composer and arranger	Two senior <i>keroncong</i> composers and arrangers provided data related to the musical and sound dimensions of the study.
Malaysia	Composer and arranger	One <i>keroncong</i> maestro and one prominent <i>keroncong</i> figure who contributed insights into the musical and sound dimensions of Malaysian <i>keroncong</i> .
Indonesia	Academic	One academic who provided perspectives on the behavioural, cultural, and educational dimensions of <i>keroncong</i> .
Malaysia	Academic	Three academics who contributed data concerning behavioural, cultural, and socio-musical aspects of <i>keroncong</i> in Malaysia.
Indonesia	<i>Keroncong</i> practitioner	Three practitioners who shared experiences and perspectives regarding <i>keroncong</i> performance practices and community engagement.
Malaysia	<i>Keroncong</i> practitioner	Three practitioners who shared experiences and perspectives regarding <i>keroncong</i> performance practices and community engagement.

Third, documentation techniques are techniques for collecting data in the form of notes, transcripts, books, newspapers, magazines, inscriptions, minutes, ledgers, agendas, sheet music, and other written or recorded sources. The

documentation obtained from this research included sheet music, photographs, song scores, musical arrangement scores, and performance videos, which were used to supplement the primary data from interviews and observations.

Participants performed the musical instruments that were the focus of this study, and their performances were documented with video recording equipment. The resulting recordings were then reviewed carefully and repeatedly to gain a detailed understanding of the musical elements present in the performances. Based on these recordings, the researcher transcribed the audiovisual data into musical notation using Sibelius software. The transcribed notation was subsequently played back and compared with the original recordings to assess its accuracy. Whenever discrepancies were identified, revisions were made until the notation closely reflected the actual performance. Once the transcription had been thoroughly verified and deemed accurate, the final notation was exported as images and included in the research data and analysis.

Data analysis followed Merriam's (1964) tripartite model consisting of sound, behaviour, and conception as the primary analytical framework. First, the sound dimension was used to analyse musical structures and sonic characteristics of Indonesian and Malaysian *keroncong*, including rhythmic patterns, accompaniment structures, instrumental roles, tuning systems, and adaptations of local musical elements such as *Langgam Jawa*, *dangdut*, and *joget*. Musical notation, performance recordings, and observational data constituted the primary sources for this analysis.

Second, the behaviour dimension was applied to examine musical practices and social actions surrounding *keroncong* performance. This stage focused on musicians' interactions, rehearsal processes, performance contexts, adaptation strategies, transmission of musical knowledge, and audience-oriented innovations. Data were primarily derived from observations and interviews with performers, educators, arrangers, and cultural practitioners.

Third, the conception dimension was used to interpret the meanings, values, and cultural understandings associated with *keroncong* in both countries. Interview data were analysed to identify how musicians and communities perceive *keroncong* as cultural heritage, collective identity, cultural diplomacy, nostalgia, and a medium for expressing local values. The findings from these three dimensions were subsequently compared across Indonesian and Malaysian contexts to reveal both shared cultural foundations and locally distinctive expressions of *keroncong*.

Data reduction involves the stages of selection, focusing, simplification, abstraction, and transformation of raw data obtained from field notes. Data

reduction is closely related to the data analysis process. The researchers categorised coded data, discarded data, and developed narratives, all of which represent analytical choices. Through these steps, the data were refined, classified, and directed, and also unnecessary information was eliminated; therefore, the conclusions can be drawn and verified. The data selected during the reduction phase are then organised to draw conclusions and take action. The presentation used in this research is a narrative text that condenses a large amount of information into a concise form, accompanied by images and tables.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Single *Engkel* Accompaniment Pattern

Contrabass

The single *engkel* accompaniment pattern on the contrabass instrument in one bar often plays a two-beat rhythmic pattern, typically articulated on the first and third beats and generally sustained within the same chord position. The next accompaniment pattern is a two-beat and one-beat rhythmic pattern: the first and second beats are grouped as two beats, followed by the third and fourth beats, each of which is one beat. This two-beat-one-beat accompaniment pattern is typically used for chord changes. Essentially, the two-beat single-bass accompaniment pattern is a variation of the rhythmic pattern, but it remains tied to the chord being played.

The notes played by the contrabass typically emphasise tonic and dominant notes, but in the one-beat variation pattern, the median notes can also be varied. For example, when playing the root note D, the first chord position employed the notes D and A. In the one-beat variation pattern, for instance, in the fifth chord, you can play the notes A and E (as the dominant of the A chord) or play the notes A and C sharp (as the mediant of the A chord). The notation below is an example of contrabass notation illustrating the rhythmic pattern along with its notes.



Figure 1. Single-Beat Contrabass Accompaniment Pattern
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Figure 1 shows that the first and third bars of the contrabass play $\frac{1}{2}$ notes, while the second bar combines $\frac{1}{2}$ notes on the first beat and quarter notes

high range, starting from F#2 and extending upward. The following notation is an example of the basic single-note accompaniment pattern notation for the *Cak* instrument.

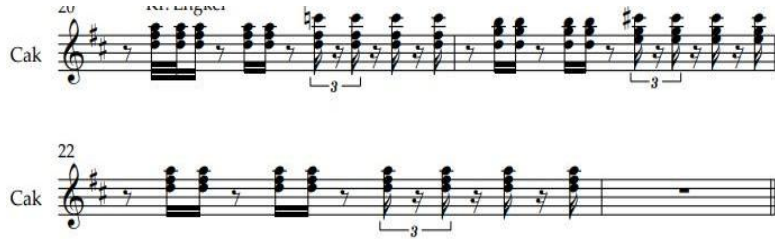


Figure 4. Single-Beat *Cak* Accompaniment Pattern
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Guitar

The single accompaniment pattern for the guitar is characterised by a 1/16 rhythmic pattern with an arpeggio tone pattern. The execution employs a picking technique (guitar string picking tool) by picking each note (one note per pick). The following is an image of the notation for the basic single accompaniment pattern on the guitar.



Figure 5. Single-Beat Guitar Accompaniment Pattern
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Double Accompaniment Patterns

Contrabas

In principle, the double bass accompaniment pattern is the same as the single accompaniment pattern, which is one bar playing a two-beat rhythmic pattern on the first and third beats, and an accompaniment pattern with a two-beat, one-beat rhythm, which is two beats on the first to second beats, then one beat each on the third and fourth beats.

The notation below is an example of contrabass notation illustrating the rhythmic pattern and the notes of the double contrabass accompaniment.



Figure 6. Double Accompaniment Pattern for Contrabas.
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Cello

The basic principle of double *Cello* accompaniment patterns is the repetition of a single-beat accompaniment pattern, articulated twice with rhythmic variation and dynamic accents. Similar to single accompaniment patterns, *Cello* accompaniment patterns generally begin on the median note. For example, when playing a D chord, the *Cello* will take F sharp as its first note. The notation below is an example of double-cello accompaniment to illustrate the rhythmic pattern and its notes.



pattern, which is 1/32, played in alternation with the *cuk* or often referred to as the canon. The canon concept begins with the *cuk* initiating the pattern, which is subsequently answered by the *cak*, and so forth. Below is an example of the basic double-accompaniment pattern notation for the *cak* instrument.

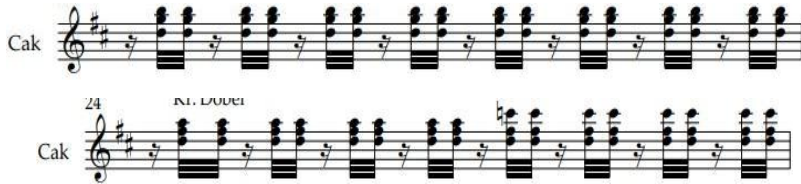


Figure 9. Double Accompaniment Pattern for Cak
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Gitar

The double-guitar accompaniment pattern is the same as the single-guitar accompaniment pattern. It employs a 1/16 rhythmic pattern with an arpeggio tone pattern. Here is an example of a basic double accompaniment pattern on the guitar.



Figure 10 Pola Iringan Double Gitar
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

The single-engkel accompaniment pattern is typically played with a sixteenth-note value (1/16), especially in patterns played by the *Cuk*, *Cak*, and guitar. Meanwhile, the contrabass tends to play half note values (1/2). Sometimes it also plays quarter notes if the player applies a passing chord. The double accompaniment pattern, on the other hand, tends to be played with thirty-second notes (1/32), particularly patterns played by the *Cuk*, *Cak*, and Guitar. Meanwhile, the Contrabass is similar to single accompaniment patterns, which tend to play half (1/2) note values. Occasionally, it also plays quarter notes if the player applies a chord progression.

Table 2. Differences between the Single and Double Accompaniment Patterns

Instrument	The Single <i>Engkel</i> Accompaniment Pattern	The Double Accompaniment Pattern
Contrabass	- Two beats: beats 1 & 3 (½ notes) - Variation: combination of ½ and ¼ notes with chord	- Four beats: first two beats + last two beats - Chord change generally on beat 3

	change on beat 3 - Notes: tonic & dominant, sometimes mediant	- Same notes: tonic, dominant, mediant (variation)
<i>Cello</i>	- Rhythmic variation; same basic pattern as contrabass - With contrabass: starts on mediant - Without contrabass: starts on tonic	- Denser rhythm (double the single-beat pattern) - Note rules are the same: depend on the presence of contrabass - Pitch pattern is more dynamic
<i>Cuk</i>	- Techniques: strumming and <i>tremolo</i> - <i>Tremolo</i> often played on the highest string (string 3) - Notes follow the chord	- <i>Tremolo</i> only (single down-up stroke) - Very fast rhythm: two 1/32 notes - Notes remain within a single chord
<i>Cak</i>	- Starts on the upbeat (not the downbeat) - Triplets and 1/16 rhythmic variations - Short notes (staccato) in the high register	- Strumming technique (rapid plucking) - 1/32 rhythm, played in canon alternation with the <i>Cuk</i>
Guitar	- Arpeggio with a 1/16 rhythm - Picking technique: one note per stroke - Pattern remains within a single chord	- Same as the single-beat pattern - Rhythm remains 1/16 with arpeggio technique

Local Elements in Indonesian-Malaysian Keroncong Music

Single-Beat Accompaniment Pattern of the Javanese Pelog Mode in Contrabass

In Javanese *Pelog*-tuned music, the contrabass accompaniment generally follows a two-beat pattern in each bar, played on the first and third beats, usually in a single chord position. Variations in the pattern include a combination of two consecutive beats (beats 1–2) and two single beats (beats 3–4), often accompanied by a chord change on the third beat.

The notes played are predominantly on the tonic (I) and dominant (V), however, in a one-beat variation, the median note (III) can be added to enrich the harmony. For example, in the D scale, the I chord uses the notes D and A, while the V chord (A) can be varied with A–E or A–C#. This pattern shows that

although the contrabass accompaniment is simple in rhythm, it retains important harmonic flexibility that shapes the character of Javanese music.



Figure 11. Single-Beat Contrabass Accompaniment Pattern in Javanese *Pelog Langgam*.

(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Javanese Pelog Langgam Cello Accompaniment Pattern

The *Cello* accompaniment pattern in Javanese *Pelog* music is divided into two types: single-beat (*engkel*) and double. Both have distinctive characteristics that distinguish them from other instrument patterns, particularly through the technique of striking the body of the *Cello* to produce a “tak” sound. This sound is notated in the score, performed with four fingers, and struck below the first string. Functionally, the *tak* strike serves as the primary rhythmic marker, akin to the *Kendang*'s role in traditional Javanese music.

The melody on the *Cello* remains rooted in the chord structure, with a dynamic rhythmic character. The note values used include $\frac{1}{8}$, $\frac{1}{16}$, $\frac{1}{32}$, and triplets in 4/4 time, with a combination of plucking, striking, and pauses. All these elements form a complex yet harmonious accompaniment pattern within the aesthetic of the Javanese *Pelog* scale.



Figure 12. Single-Beat *Cello* Accompaniment Pattern in Javanese *Pelog Langgam*.

(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

The image displays musical notation for Cello and Cello Tak in Javanese Pelog Langgam style. It is divided into three sections. The top section shows a Cello staff with a simple melodic line and a Cello Tak staff with a rhythmic accompaniment. The middle section, starting at measure 33, is labeled 'Dobel' and shows a Cello staff with a complex, fast tremolo pattern and a Cello Tak staff with a rhythmic accompaniment. The bottom section, starting at measure 35, shows a Cello staff with a complex, fast tremolo pattern and a Cello Tak staff with a rhythmic accompaniment.

Figure 13. Double Accompaniment Cello Pattern in Javanese Pelog Langgam.
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Javanese Pelog Langgam Cuk Accompaniment Pattern

The *Cuk* accompaniment in the Javanese *Pelog* style consists of two main patterns: single-beat (*engkel*) and double, both of which begin with an upbeat in the form of a $\frac{3}{4}$ rest. The *engkel* pattern uses a fast plucking technique combined with *tremolo*, performed in a single chord using a pick on a single string. This *tremolo* technique is performed with a rapid sequence of movements: downstroke – upstroke – downstroke.

Musically, the single pattern (*engkel*) begins with the tonic note, picked with a $\frac{1}{16}$ value, followed by three other notes (usually thirds or fifths) with a $\frac{1}{32}$ value. The character of this playing remains rooted in the chord structure. Meanwhile, the double pattern begins with a half-beat rest, followed by three $\frac{1}{32}$ notes (from the third or fifth), then a $\frac{1}{32}$ rest, and then back to three $\frac{1}{32}$ notes. This pattern repeats in subsequent measures and also employs a fast picking technique, categorised as *tremolo*, which is still based on the notes of the chord being played.

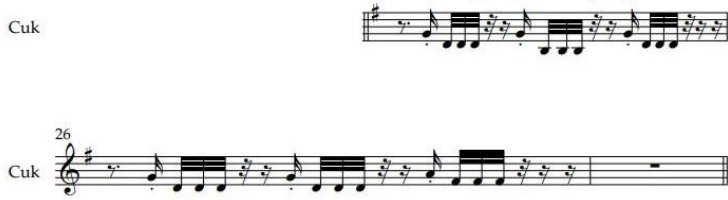


Figure 14. Single-Beat Cuk Accompaniment Pattern in Javanese *Pelog Langgam*.
 Source: (Abdul Rachman, fieldwork.)



Figure 15. Double Accompaniment Cuk Pattern in Javanese *Pelog Langgam*.
 (Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Javanese Pelog Langgam Cak Accompaniment Pattern

The accompaniment in the Javanese *Pelog* scale is divided into two main patterns: single-beat (*engkel*) and double, both of which use a single plucking technique with a pick on one of the strings. The notes played follow the *Pelog* scale (do, mi, fa, sol, si, do) and are adjusted to the song's chord progression.

For example, in the G scale (one sharp), the song begins on the B note, which is part of the G chord, and proceeds according to the *Pelog* scale structure. The *engkel* (single) pattern uses a 1/16 rhythm, while the double pattern uses a 1/32 rhythm. The main difference between the two patterns lies in the rhythmic division, not in the notes themselves.



Figure 16. Single-Beat Cak Accompaniment Pattern in Javanese *Pelog Langgam*.
 (Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)



Figure 17. Double Accompaniment *Cak* Pattern in Javanese *Pelog Llanggam*.
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Javanese Slendro Llanggam Contrabass Accompaniment Pattern

The contrabass accompaniment in Javanese *Slendro* generally follows a two-beat pattern within a bar, played on the first and third beats, usually in a single chord position. Another variation is a combination of two beats and one beat, where the first and second beats are played as two beats, while the third and fourth are each played as one beat, often accompanied by a chord change on the third beat.

In general, the one-beat pattern is considered a development of the basic two-beat pattern, but it still follows the chord structure. The notes played centre on the tonic and dominant, although in the one-beat variation, the median note can be added. For example, in the key of D, the I chord is played with D and A, while the V chord (A) can be varied with A–E (its dominant) or A–C sharp (its median).



Figure 18. Contrabass Accompaniment Pattern in Javanese *Slendro Llanggam*.
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Javanese Slendro Llanggam Cello Accompaniment Pattern

The *Cello* accompaniment pattern in the Javanese *Slendro* scale is divided into two main patterns: single (*engkel*) and double, with a striking difference in the form of a strike on the body of the *Cello* that produces a “*tak*” sound. This sound is written in notation and produced with four fingers, struck below the first string. In Javanese music, *tak* serves as a rhythmic marker, similar to the *Kendang*'s role in other ensembles.

The notes played always refer to the chord structure, and the rhythm is dynamic. The note values include $\frac{1}{8}$, $\frac{1}{16}$, $\frac{1}{32}$, and triplets in 4/4 time. *Cello* playing combines plucking, striking, and pauses, creating a rich yet structured

accompaniment. Both single and double patterns are built on the same chord foundation, with the main difference being the rhythmic patterns played.

Figure 19 shows musical notation for a single-beat cello accompaniment pattern. It consists of two systems. The first system (measures 37-38) shows a Cello part with a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, and a Cello Tak part with a simpler pattern of quarter notes. The second system (measures 39-40) continues the Cello part with a similar pattern and the Cello Tak part with quarter notes.

Figure 19. Single-Beat Cello Accompaniment Pattern in Javanese Slendro Langgam.
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Figure 20 shows musical notation for a double-beat cello accompaniment pattern. It consists of three systems. The first system (measures 41-42) shows a Cello part with a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, and a Cello Tak part with a simpler pattern of quarter notes. The second system (measures 43-44) continues the Cello part with a similar pattern and the Cello Tak part with quarter notes. The third system (measures 45-46) continues the Cello part with a similar pattern and the Cello Tak part with quarter notes.

Figure 20. Double Cello Accompaniment Pattern in Javanese Slendro Langgam.
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Javanese Slendro Langgam Cuk Accompaniment Pattern

The accompaniment pattern for the *Cuk* instrument in the Javanese *Slendro* scale is divided into two types: *engkel* and *double*. Both begin with an upbeat consisting of a $\frac{3}{4}$ rest. The *engkel* pattern combines fast plucking and *tremolo*, a technique of quickly and consecutively plucking a single string (down-up-down strokes) within a single chord.

The single pattern begins on the second beat with three tertses or fifths worth $\frac{1}{32}$, interspersed with a short rest and ending with a tonic note worth $\frac{1}{8}$. This pattern repeats in the next bar, with a fast picking technique closely related to the chord structure.

The double pattern begins with a $\frac{1}{8}$ rest on the first beat (upbeat), followed by three thirds or fifths three times with a value of $\frac{1}{32}$, interspersed with a $\frac{1}{32}$ rest, and continued with three notes of the same value. This pattern repeats continuously in the next bar, using the *tremolo* technique as a variation of fast picking that follows the chord notes.



Figure 21. Single-Beat *Cuk* Accompaniment Pattern in Javanese Slendro *Langgam*. (Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork Rachman [2024].)



Figure 22. Double *Cuk* Accompaniment Pattern in Javanese Slendro *Langgam*. (Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Javanese Slendro Langgam Cak Accompaniment Pattern

The accompaniment patterns in the Javanese Slendro scale are divided into two main patterns: single-beat (*engkel*) and double, both of which use single-string picking with a pick. The notes played follow the Slendro scale (do, re, mi, sol, la, do) and are adjusted to the chord progression.

For example, in the G scale (1 sharp), the A minor chord starts on the A note, an element of the chord, and follows the *Slendro* scale. The single pattern uses a $\frac{1}{16}$ rhythm, while the double pattern uses a $\frac{1}{32}$ rhythm. The main difference lies in the rhythmic pattern, while the note elements and picking technique remain the same.



Figure 23 Pola Iringan *Langgam* Jawa Slendro Engkel *Cak* (Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

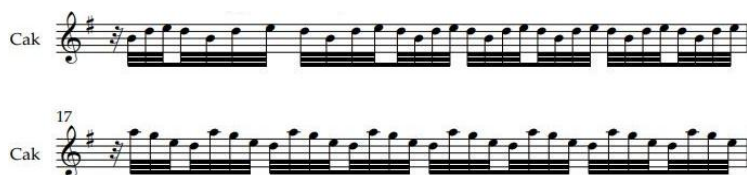


Figure 24 Pola Iringan Langgam Jawa Slendro Double Cak
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Dangdut Accompaniment Pattern in Keroncong

In Semarang, the high public demand for *keroncong* orchestras to perform *dangdut* songs has triggered innovation in *keroncong* accompaniment patterns. *Keroncong* musicians have adapted *dangdut* accompaniment patterns to keep the orchestras relevant and thriving. This adaptation is particularly evident in the *cello*, which is treated similarly to a *dangdut* drum, as well as the *cak* and *cuk*, which adopt the accompaniment patterns of *dangdut* guitar and piano.

First, in the contrabass *congdut* (*dangdut* contrabass) accompaniment pattern, on the contrabass, the *dangdut* accompaniment pattern follows the single and double patterns, starting from the tonic note, then shifting to the fifth note on the third beat, and returning to the tonic on the fourth beat. An example in the key of D shows the I chord (D) with D on the first beat, A on the third, and back to D on the fourth. This pattern reinforces the distinctive *dangdut* rhythm in modern *keroncong* performances. This adaptation reflects the flexibility of *keroncong* orchestras in responding to developments in popular music while preserving tradition with a modern twist.



Figure 25. Dangdut Contrabass Accompaniment Pattern in Keroncong.
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Second, the *cello* accompaniment pattern in *congdut* (*dangdut*-style) uses a technique of striking the body with four fingers under the first string, producing a sound called 'tak'. This technique is similar to the *Kendang*'s role in *dangdut* music as the main rhythm keeper.

The performance begins with the first sound as 'dang', followed by 'tak', then 'tung' on the first beat. The second beat begins with two brief 1/16 rests and

ends with a 'dang' followed by 'tak' on the upbeat, creating the characteristic rhythmic pattern of *congdut*. This pattern emphasises the *cello*'s role as a rhythmic reinforcement in the *keroncong* orchestra, which adopts the *dangdut* style.



Figure 26. *Dangdut Cello Accompaniment Pattern in Keroncong.*
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Thirdly, the accompaniment pattern for the *Cak* instrument in *congdut* (in *dangdut*-style *keroncong*) uses a strumming technique, which involves plucking the strings using a pick from string 3 to string 1, producing a sound that is almost simultaneous across all strings.

The rhythmic pattern of *cak congdut* (*dangdut*-style *keroncong*) generally uses a 1/16 note value with a 1/8 rest at the beginning. This pattern continues with two 1/16 notes in the first beat, followed by four consecutive 1/16 strums in the second beat. This pattern forms a consistent two-beat rhythm.



Figure 27. *Dangdut Cak Accompaniment Pattern in Keroncong.*
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Fourth, in *dangdut*-style *keroncong*, the *Cuk* combines several playing techniques within a single chord. The strumming technique, also known as *digenjreng*, involves plucking the strings with a pick, moving downward from string 3 to string 1, producing nearly simultaneous sounds. Additionally, there is a plucking technique that involves plucking a single string with a pick, as well as the *tremolo* technique, which involves rapid plucking of a single string with a repeated down-up-down stroke pattern. Generally, *tremolo* is played on the highest string, the third string, so it does not always emphasise the tonic note but rather the note of that string. All these techniques are always adapted to the chord's tonal elements to maintain the harmony and dynamics of the *Congdut* accompaniment on the *Cuk* instrument.



Figure 28. *Dangdut Cuk* Accompaniment Pattern in *Keroncong*.
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Malaysian Joget Contrabass Accompaniment Pattern

The Malaysian *joget* accompaniment pattern is similar to the *Dangdut* accompaniment pattern found in Indonesia. However, the *joget* accompaniment pattern has a different rhythmic pattern from the single and double patterns. The contrabass movement has a rhythmic pattern of two beats, divided into one and a half beats and half a beat, repeated continuously, corresponding to the fifth note (E). The combination of notes played typically changes after completing the pattern, specifically on the third beat. For example, in a piece in A minor, the I chord (A minor) plays the tonic (A) for the first two beats while the third and fourth beats execute a distinct rhythmic pattern. The following image shows a notation excerpt of the contrabass accompaniment pattern for the *Joget* rhythm to clarify.



Figure 29. Contrabass Accompaniment Pattern in Malaysian *Joget*.
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Malaysian Joget Cello Accompaniment Pattern

The Malaysian *joget* accompaniment pattern on the *cello* uses a technique similar to the *cakapur* pattern in Indonesia, namely, using the sound 'tak' as a rhythmic marker. The *Cello* body is struck using four fingers (index, middle, ring, and little finger) under string number 1 (the lowest string). In the context of *joget* rhythm, the 'tak' functions as a rhythmic regulator, similar to the role of drums in music, a role later adopted in *keroncong* music. The pattern begins with the first two sounds associated with the 'deng' sound, resembling a bass drum, followed by the second beat on the downbeat, accompanied by the 'tak' sound, and ends with the second beat on the upbeat, which again produces the 'deng' sound. This two-beat pattern is then repeated continuously. The following notation illustrates the *Cello* accompaniment pattern for *joget*.



Figure 30. *Cello Accompaniment Pattern in Malaysian Joget*
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Malaysian Joget Cak Accompaniment Pattern

The accompaniment pattern for the *cak* uses a playing technique for each chord, called the strumming technique. The strumming technique, known as *digenjreng* in *keroncong*, involves plucking the strings using a pick, starting from the 3rd string to the 1st string (downstroke), producing a sound from all the strings almost simultaneously. The rhythmic pattern of the *cak* plays a single pattern over a duration of two beats using a large triplet rhythm, beginning with a rest on the first triplet note, followed by the next two triplet notes performing the strumming of the desired chord. Below is the notation for the rhythmic pattern of the *Cak* instrument's accompaniment.

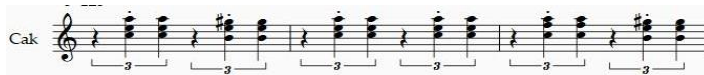


Figure 31. *Cak Accompaniment Pattern in Malaysian Joget*
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork [2024].)

Malaysian Joget Cuk Accompaniment Pattern

The Malaysian *joget* accompaniment on the *cuk* instrument uses several techniques, performed within a chord. The Strumming technique, known among *keroncong* players as *digenjreng*, involves plucking the strings with a pick, starting from the 3rd string to the 1st string (downstroke), producing a sound from all the strings almost simultaneously. The plucking technique involves using a pick to pluck a single string on the *cuk* instrument. The *tremolo* technique refers to plucking a single string of the instrument from top to bottom in the sequence (downstroke-upstroke-downstroke) performed very quickly. Playing these techniques is inseparable from the chord's tonal elements. Typically, the *tremolo* technique is played by sounding the top string. Therefore, it does not necessarily emphasise the tonic but follows the note of that string (the top string of the *cuk*). Below is an example of the basic accompaniment pattern for *joget* on the *cuk* instrument.









Figure 32. *Cuk* Accompaniment Pattern in Malaysian *Joget*.
(Source: Abdul Rachman, fieldwork[2024].)

Table 3. Characteristics of *Keroncong* Accompaniment Patterns with Local Wisdom (Javanese *Langgam*, *Dangdut*, and *Joget*).

Instrument	Scale	Type of Accompaniment	Characteristics of Accompaniment Pattern
Contrabass	<i>Pelog</i>	<i>Engkel</i> (single)	Two beats: beats 1 and 3, the chord position remains constant.
		Double	Beats 1–2 remain the same, beats 3–4 vary with chord changes.
	<i>Slendro</i>	<i>Engkel</i> /Double	Similar to the <i>Pelog</i> pattern, a two-beat rhythm per measure.
	<i>Dangdut</i>	-	Three beats: D – A – D (tonic–fifth–tonic), in <i>Dangdut</i> rhythm.
	<i>Joget</i>	-	Two-beat rhythm: 1½ + ½ beats. Tonic note followed by the fifth.
Cello	<i>Pelog</i>	<i>Engkel</i>	A combination of plucked notes from the chord being played; typically, when in a formation with contrabass, the <i>Cello</i> plays the third or mediant note.
		Double	Fast rhythmic variations using note values of 1/8, 1/16, 1/32, and triplets.
	<i>Slendro</i>	<i>Engkel</i> /Double	Same as in <i>Pelog</i> , using “tak,” with variable note values.
	<i>Dangdut</i>	-	“Dang–Tak–Tung” and “Dang–Tak” with a 1/16 rest.
	<i>Joget</i>	-	“Deng–Tak–Deng”, Two-beat rhythm resembling a drum pattern.
<i>Cuk</i>	<i>Pelog</i>	<i>Engkel</i>	Upbeat, rapid plucking with <i>tremolo</i> , tonic note followed by third/fifth intervals.
		Double	Rapid plucking of three notes – rest – three more notes, with 1/32 rhythm.
	<i>Slendro</i>	<i>Engkel</i>	Beat 2: three notes (third/fifth) – rest – tonic note.

		Double	Upbeat: rest – three notes – rest – three notes.
	<i>Dangdut</i>	-	Strumming plus <i>tremolo</i> . The top or third string is often played.
	<i>Joget</i>	-	Strumming, plucking, and <i>tremolo</i> ; the top string is dominant.
<i>Cak</i>	<i>Pelog</i>	<i>Engkel</i>	Pluck one string (1/16), based on the <i>Pelog</i> scale elements.
		Double	1/32 rhythm using the same technique.
	Slendro	<i>Engkel</i>	1/16 rhythm, based on the slendro scale elements.
		Double	1/32 rhythm.
	<i>Dangdut</i>	-	Strumming: downstroke from string 3 to 1, two-beat pattern, initial rest.
	<i>Joget</i>	-	Triplet strumming: two notes per beat, starting with a rest.

Table 4. Comparison between the Dangdut and Joget Accompaniment Patterns

Instrument	Dangdut Accompaniment Pattern	Joget Accompaniment Pattern
Contrabass	 <p>- Tends to use two note values - Half note on beat one and two, quarter note on beat 3 and 4 - Notes: tonic & dominant</p>	 <p>- Tends to use two note values - Combination of quarter note and half note on beat one and three - Notes: tonic, dominant,</p>
Cello	 <p>- Note 1/2 and 1/4 variations - <i>Tak</i> sound placed on the upbeat</p>	 <p>- Note 1/2 and 1/4 variations - <i>Tak</i> sound placed on the downbeat</p>
<i>Cak</i>		

- | | |
|--|--|
| - Basically, use a 1/6 note | - Basically, use a triplet note |
| - Begins rest 1/6 and is followed by a group of 1/16 notes | - Begins rest and is followed by the following two triplet notes |

Cuk



- | | |
|--|--|
| - Basically, use a 1/6 note | - Variations of 1/8 and 1/16 notes |
| - Techniques: strumming and <i>tremolo</i> | - Techniques: strumming and <i>tremolo</i> |

DISCUSSION

The aspect of sound in Merriam (1964) The ethnomusicological approach focuses on the audible reality present in musical practice. In the context of Indonesian and Malaysian *keroncong* music, this element of sound manifests as the interaction among rhythmic structure, instrumental timbre, playing technique, and the scale system used. *Keroncong* music is not composed solely of vocal melodies but is built from interlocking patterns among instruments such as the contrabass, *cello*, *cak*, *cuk*, and guitar, each of which has its own distinctive accompaniment pattern in the single and double systems. Sonically, the single pattern relies more on 1/16 rhythmic values, whereas the double pattern uses 1/32 values, creating a denser and more dynamic musical texture.

Additionally, the *cak* and *cuk*, which are two small stringed instruments played with fast plucking and *tremolo* techniques, produce sharp rhythmic accents. Rhythmic accents serve as the main driver of rhythm. The *tremolo* and strumming techniques (*digenjreng*), played at a fast tempo, give the impression of rapid, dynamic repetition (characteristic of *keroncong*). *Cak* typically emphasises high notes in the F#² register and above, played in an upbeat pattern with a staccato character, while *Cuk* plays mid-range notes using a combination of *tremolo* and rapid down-up plucking. The *cello* contributes mid-range tones with a dynamic character, combining plucking techniques and body strikes (the 'ak' sound) that acoustically resemble the *Kendang* in *Gamelan*. Meanwhile, the contrabass serves as the harmonic foundation with a two-beat pattern on the first and third beats, and plays the tonic and dominant notes as the foundation of the chord structure.

One of the unique features of *keroncong* music lies in the adoption of the *Pelog* and *slendro* scales into Western instruments. This results in a distinctive

change in tone colour, for example, in Javanese *langgam*, *Cak* and *Cuk* follow the *Pelog* structure by playing the notes *mi*, *sol*, and *si* in the context of modern chords. Conceptually and practically, the fusion of Western systems (harmony, chord progressions, guitar arpeggios) and local systems (*Gamelan* tuning systems) create a distinctive musical idiom that is difficult to find in other genres of music. The use of sounds such as ‘tak’ on the *cello* and canon techniques between *Cuk* and *Cak* in double patterns further strengthens the musical texture through cross-system sound integration.

The adaptation of other musical genres, such as *dangdut* and *joget*, has also brought transformative changes to *keroncong*. In *congdut* accompaniment, the *cello* imitates the *dangdut* drum with a ‘dang-tak-tung’ pattern, while the *cuk* and *cak* imitate the *dangdut* piano or guitar with progressive strumming. This adaptation enriches the sonic palette of *keroncong* and demonstrates the flexibility of its aesthetic sound. The overall sound of *keroncong* music can thus be understood as an acoustic space that represents the negotiation among modernity and tradition, Western and local values, and musical expression and cultural values. This was also supported by the opinion of Mas Indro (a *keroncong* practitioner from Citra Ungaran, Indonesia, in an interview on May 17, 2024), who states that the rapid development of *keroncong* has led to various types of *keroncong* performances, such as *keroncong jus*, *keroncong dangdut*, and others. In line with this, Indonesian *keroncong* academic and enthusiast Ateng (interviewed on May 3, 2024) stated that globalisation has opened up new, flexible possibilities for *keroncong*, allowing it to incorporate diverse musical genres without rigidity.

Beyond demonstrating *keroncong*'s adaptability, the findings also contribute new ethnomusicological knowledge on the development of *keroncong* outside Indonesia. An important contribution of this study lies in documenting and analysing Malaysian *joget*-based *keroncong* accompaniment patterns, particularly those performed on the contrabass, *cello*, *cak*, and *cuk*. While previous *keroncong* studies have largely focused on Indonesian traditions and regional stylistic developments (Alfian, 2013; Ganap, 2019; Harmunah, 2011), detailed ethnomusicological descriptions of Malaysian *keroncong* rhythmic structures remain scarce. The identification of distinctive *joget* rhythmic patterns, including the adaptation of the ‘deng–tak–deng’ cello pattern and the triplet-based accompaniment structure of the *cak*, provides new empirical evidence of how *keroncong* has been localised within the Malaysian musical environment. This finding extends existing scholarship by demonstrating that Malaysian *keroncong* is not merely a reproduction of Indonesian *keroncong* traditions but has developed its own rhythmic identity through interaction with Malay *joget* aesthetics. Consequently, the present study contributes original documentation

to the limited body of literature on Malaysian *keroncong* and offers a new perspective on transnational musical adaptation in Southeast Asia.



**Figure 33. A *Keroncong* Performance in Indonesia (Left) and a *Keroncong* Performance in Malaysia (Right)
(Source: Rachman [2024].)**

The second aspect in Merriam's (1964) analytical framework is behaviour, which refers to all forms of human actions, habits, and interactions in musical practice. In the context of *keroncong*, musical behaviour not only reflects the technical process of playing music but also explains how music is used, learned, passed down, and performed within the community's social life. One of the most striking forms of musical behaviour in *keroncong* practice is the collective use of instruments to form interlocking accompaniment patterns. Each instrument, from the *cak*, *cuk*, contrabass, *cello*, to the guitar, does not function independently but plays a role as part of a complete rhythmic structure. *Keroncong* consciously regulates the dynamics of playing; therefore, they do not overlap but complement each other in the division of beats and rhythm. This reflects a musical ethos aligned with the distinctive social values of Indonesian and Malaysian societies: togetherness, harmony, and cooperation.

In addition, musical behaviour is also evident in the patterns of adaptation and improvisation that musicians employ to suit the needs of the performance context. For example, in ensemble formats that do not include a contrabass, *Cello* players automatically change the initial note from the median to the tonic to represent the basic function of the chord. This flexibility is a manifestation of an unwritten collective understanding, passed down through experience and direct interaction within the group. Similarly, in the development of the *congdut* (*keroncong-dangdut*) and *joget* (Malaysia) genres, musical behaviour adapts to the tastes of listeners who want popular or fast-paced songs. Here, *keroncong* musicians do not hesitate to adapt techniques from other genres, such as striking the cello body to emulate the rhythmic function of a Dangdut drum or

employing strumming patterns derived from Malay guitar traditions, as forms of innovation that remain rooted in *keroncong*'s character. A particularly illustrative example is the 'tak' sound produced by striking the body of the cello. At the sonic level, this sound functions as a percussive rhythmic marker within the *keroncong* ensemble. At the behavioural level, musicians intentionally create the 'tak' sound by striking the cello body beneath the first string with four fingers simultaneously- the index, middle, ring, and little fingers to reproduce a rhythmic role traditionally associated with the 'Kendang' in local musical practices. At the conceptual level, this technique reflects a shared understanding among musicians that local musical aesthetics should be preserved even when expressed through instruments of Western origin. Consequently, the cello is not regarded merely as a European bowed instrument but as a medium through which indigenous rhythmic identities can be maintained, adapted, and reinterpreted. This example demonstrates how musical behaviour functions as a cultural strategy for embedding local values within an ensemble whose instrumentation was originally derived from Western musical traditions. This is in line with the opinions of several *keroncong* sources listed below. Opinion from a Malaysian source, Mahzan Manan (a Malaysian *keroncong* enthusiast), stated that the musical response to audience preferences involves adapting popular songs familiar to local listeners into the *keroncong* style: "...but at this initial stage, it cannot be too heavily based on the *asli* style, because people would not understand it. Therefore, I include more popular songs... arranged in the *keroncong* style, including my own compositions" (Interview, 24 June 2024).

This approach is a form of *joget* musical behaviour that is both flexible and communicative. *Keroncong* is created with a fast rhythm and cheerful nuances as a bridge between *keroncong* and Malay *joget*. Another opinion that reinforces this argument comes from Bang Mail (*keroncong* musician), who stated: "Most of the venues where we perform are at celebratory events in Johor. In every rehearsal session, we practice playing both traditional and contemporary *keroncong* and popular songs, occasionally using the prepared lead sheets" (Interview, June 26, 2024).

This statement shows that the Malay *keroncong* repertoire often overlaps with popular entertainment songs, including fast-paced songs similar to *joget*. This reinforces the thesis that the musical behaviour of *keroncong* musicians in Malaysia creates space for integrating Malay musical forms and nuances, such as *joget*, through the selection of songs and accompaniment patterns appropriate to the Malay cultural context. This is also confirmed by Kuntoro Edi (a music educator in Malaysia who is originally from Indonesia).

In Malaysia, *keroncong* feels more 'elite' yet remains closely connected to the nuances of Malay *joget*. Songs such as *Rangkaian Melati* or *Bandar Jakarta* are arranged with the addition of keyboards and sometimes performed in a lighter, more rhythmic style to suit local tastes. I observe that *joget* elements emerge naturally in the way they shape tempo and rhythmic colour. There is no longer merely an imitation of Indonesia, but it has begun to develop as something that belongs to them as well. (Interview, September 16, 2024).

Keroncong musical behaviour also involves community participation, whether in stage performances, festivals, or social events such as weddings or cultural celebrations. Performers do not merely act as music presenters but also as mood setters, creators of cultural dialogue, and even symbols of local identity. The learning process is intergenerational and oral; techniques such as *tremolo Cak* or guitar arpeggios are passed down through direct observation rather than from formal sheet music. This behaviour reinforces the position of *keroncong* music as an integral part of community life practices, not merely an aesthetic object.

Overall, musical behaviour in *keroncong* music reflects how music is performed as a dynamic social process. *Keroncong* musicians are cultural actors who constantly negotiate between tradition and innovation, between musical norms and audience responses. In this regard, Merriam's (1964) approach helps to clarify that *keroncong* cannot be evaluated solely based on its sound, but also on how people actively and creatively engage with it to keep it alive and relevant amid changing times (Ganap, 2019).

The differences between Javanese *Langgam* in Indonesia and *joget*-influenced *keroncong* in Malaysia reflect not only musical variation but also distinct social needs and cultural orientations within *keroncong* practice. In Indonesia, the incorporation of Javanese *Langgam* has produced a musical character that is generally calmer, more reflective, and often melancholic. This characteristic is closely related to the Javanese concept of *rasa*, which emphasises emotional depth, inner contemplation, harmony, and refinement. Consequently, *keroncong* is frequently positioned as a medium for nostalgia, cultural reflection, and aesthetic appreciation that resonates with the values of classical Javanese musical traditions. In contrast, the integration of *joget* elements in Malaysia has led to a faster, more vibrant, and more socially engaging musical style. This character reflects *joget*'s traditional role as a form of social dance music associated with communal celebrations, public entertainment, and collective participation. Within this context, *keroncong* functions not only as an object of musical appreciation but also as a medium for social interaction and festive expression.

Therefore, the transformation of *keroncong* into Javanese *Langgam* and Malaysian *joget* demonstrates how a shared musical tradition can adapt to different social contexts: in Indonesia, it tends to reinforce aesthetic refinement and Javanese cultural reflection, whereas in Malaysia, it develops as a vehicle for social engagement, communal celebration, and collective enjoyment.

The aspect of conception or concept represents the third part within Merriam's (1964) framework of ethnomusicology, encompassing the views, values, and meanings attached to music in a particular culture. In *keroncong*, in both Indonesia and Malaysia, music is seen not only as entertainment or a performing art but also as a symbol of collective identity and cultural heritage, and as a vehicle for expressing local values. This is in line with Geertz (1976), who states that the meaning of a culture cannot be understood apart from its local context. In Indonesia, *keroncong* music is often associated with the spirit of nationalism and localised colonial cultural heritage. The existence of Javanese *langgam* songs such as *Yen Ing Tawang Ono Lintang* or *Caping Gunung* reflects the Javanese people's aesthetic conception of *rasa* (musical taste) and harmony. On the other hand, Malaysian *keroncong*, especially in the form of *keroncong joget*, represents the social values of Malay society, emphasising politeness, the beauty of movement, and collective joy within the framework of traditional music.

The concept of *keroncong* was also integrated into the interpretation of the instrument's function and tone system. *Keroncong* players do not view the *Cak* and *Cuk* merely as stringed instruments, but rather as "translators" of the functions of *Gamelan* instruments such as the *siter*, *kempul*, or *Kendang*. Such musical concepts reflect epistemological adaptation, the process of adjusting Western sound systems (instrumentation and harmony) to local musical values (tuning systems and emotional expression). Even the terms "*Cak*" and "*tak*" in *Cello* not only describe playing techniques but also reveal local sound perceptions that cannot be represented by Western terminology.

Furthermore, society's conception of *keroncong* music also contains symbolic values. Accompaniment patterns such as *engkel* and *double* are not merely technical variations but are understood as forms of rhythmic expression that flow with the feel of the song and the singer's emotions. This reinforces the idea that humans create and use symbols in their interactions (Geertz, 1976). In many cases, the choice of accompaniment patterns by *keroncong* musicians is not based on fixed rules but rather on the feelings and unwritten agreements among players to create a certain mood. This shows that the conception of *keroncong* music is greatly influenced by the community's collective intuition and musical culture.

In society, *keroncong* music is also interpreted as a space for social interaction and values, a medium of nostalgia, a space for aesthetic expression, and a form of cultural diplomacy between different community groups. In Malaysia, *keroncong* serves to preserve Malay culture and promote multiethnic integration, while in Indonesia, it expresses musical pluralism, blending influences from Portuguese, Javanese, Betawi, and Malay traditions. All of this demonstrates that *keroncong* music is built upon a complex conceptual framework: uniting tradition and modernity, locality and structure, and emotion. The conceptual approach in theory, as provided by Merriam (1964), provides an understanding that *keroncong* is not only what is heard, but also what is believed, interpreted, and passed down as part of the cultural life of the community. SE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study demonstrates that *keroncong* in Indonesia and Malaysia represents a shared cultural tradition that has evolved through different local musical environments while maintaining its fundamental musical identity. The comparative analysis reveals that both traditions retain the core *keroncong* ensemble structure consisting of the *Cak*, *Cuk*, *Cello*, contrabass, and guitar. However, significant variations emerge in accompaniment patterns, rhythmic organisation, and performance practices.

In Indonesia, *keroncong* has undergone extensive localisation through the incorporation of Javanese *Langgam* and *Dangdut* elements. The adaptation of *Pelog* and *Slendro* tonal systems, together with the development of *Congdut* accompaniment patterns, reflects a strong orientation towards local cultural expression and musical innovation. In contrast, Malaysian *keroncong* has developed distinctive characteristics through the integration of *joget* rhythms, resulting in more dance-oriented, socially interactive, and festive musical forms. These differences illustrate not a fragmentation of *keroncong* tradition but rather the capacity of a shared musical heritage to accommodate diverse local identities.

A particularly significant finding of this study is the documentation of Malaysian *joget*-based *keroncong* accompaniment patterns, including the distinctive rhythmic structures performed on the contrabass, *cello*, *cak*, and *cuk*. This contribution expands the currently limited ethnomusicological literature on Malaysian *keroncong* and provides new evidence of how shared musical traditions are transformed through local cultural adaptation.

From an ethnomusicological perspective, the findings confirm the analytical relevance of Merriam's (1964) tripartite model of sound, behaviour, and conception. At the level of sound, Indonesian and Malaysian *keroncong* exhibit both shared structural foundations and distinctive rhythmic adaptations,

particularly in the accompaniment patterns of *Langgam Jawa*, *dangdut*, and *joget*. At the level of behaviour, musicians in both countries actively negotiate tradition and innovation through performance practices, improvisation, audience engagement, and the adaptation of local musical elements. At the level of conception, *keroncong* is understood not merely as a musical genre but as a symbol of collective identity, cultural memory, and cultural diplomacy.

More importantly, this study demonstrates that the three dimensions proposed by Merriam are deeply interconnected. Musical sounds emerge from culturally embedded performance behaviours, which are guided by broader cultural conceptions of heritage, identity, and social values. The 'tak' sound produced by the *Cello*, the interlocking canon between the *cak* and *cuk*, and the adaptation of *joget* and *Langgam Jawa* exemplify how musical structures, performance practices, and cultural meanings operate as an integrated system. Consequently, this study contributes to Southeast Asian ethnomusicology by illustrating how a shared transnational musical tradition can simultaneously preserve common historical roots and generate distinctive local expressions.

The findings highlight the importance of *keroncong* as a cultural bridge connecting Indonesia and Malaysia within the broader Southeast Asian cultural sphere. As a shared cultural heritage, *keroncong* possesses considerable potential to support cultural diplomacy, intercultural dialogue, and regional identity-building within ASEAN.

Future research should move beyond comparative musical analysis and explore several specialised directions. First, organological studies are needed to investigate the physical modification, construction, and acoustic adaptation of *keroncong* instruments across different regional contexts. Second, digital humanities approaches could be employed to develop digital archives, computational analyses of accompaniment patterns, and interactive databases documenting *keroncong* repertoires throughout Southeast Asia. Third, sociological and audience-centred studies should examine how younger generations perceive *keroncong* and how digital media platforms influence its transmission, sustainability, and contemporary relevance. Finally, comparative studies involving additional Malay-world regions, such as Singapore and Brunei Darussalam, would provide a broader understanding of *keroncong* as a transnational cultural phenomenon.

Ultimately, this study affirms that *keroncong* is more than a musical genre; it is a living expression of shared cultural resonance that continues to connect communities across national boundaries. Through its capacity to preserve historical memory while embracing local innovation, *keroncong* remains

an important medium for strengthening cultural understanding and fostering cultural diplomacy in Southeast Asia.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to express our gratitude to all participants and contributors from Indonesia and Malaysia who were involved in this research. Special thanks also go to the Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang, and the Faculty of Creative Arts, Universiti Malaysia, for enabling this collaborative research to be carried out successfully.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, B. E., Abdullah, M. F., Suratman, M. N., Latif, Z. A., Gandaseca, S., Permana, C. E., Sunarti, L., Setyani, T. I., Abdullah, M. A., & Ismail, M. R. (2025). Traditional ecological knowledge for sustainable livelihood among the indigenous communities in Malaysia and Indonesia. *JATI–Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 30(1), 159–185. <https://doi.org/10.22452/jati.vol30no1.6>
- Alfian, M. (2013). Keroncong music reflects the identity of Indonesia. *Tawarikh: International Journal for Historical Studies*, 5(1), 67–78.
- Asriyani, N., & Rachman, A. (2019). Enculturation of keroncong music by O.K Gema Kencana through annual concerts in Banyumas. *Musik: Jurnal Pertunjukan dan Pendidikan Musik*, 1(2), 74–86.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.
- Budiman, B. J. (1979). *Mengenal kroncong dari dekat* Get to know kroncong up close [Please provide an English translation of the title]. Perpustakaan Akademik Musik LPKJ.
- Burke, P. (2009). *Cultural hybridity*. Polity Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2017). *Research design: Pendekatan kualitatif, kuantitatif, dan mixed* Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed approaches [Please provide an English translation of the title] (A. Fawaid, Trans.). Pustaka Pelajar.
- Delfia, E., Wijana, I., & Kesuma, T. (2023). Local language as representation of local wisdom in the West Sumatra regional regulation. *Curricula*, 8(2), 99–116. <https://doi.org/10.22216/curricula.v8i2.2411>
- Ganap, V. (2006). Pengaruh Portugis pada musik kroncong Portuguese influence on keroncong music [Please provide an English translation of the title]. *Harmonia: Jurnal Pengetahuan Dan Pemikiran Seni*, 7(2), 56–68. <https://doi.org/10.15294/harmonia.v7i2.753>

- Ganap, V. (2011). *Krontjong Toegoe*. Badan Penerbit Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta.
- Ganap, V. (2019). Keroncong orchestration of millennial generation. *Harmonia: Journal of Arts Research and Education*, 19(2), 17–25.
- Ganap, V. (2020). *Krontjong Toegoe: Asal-usul musik keroncong The origins of keroncong music* [Please provide an English translation of the title]. Kompas Media Nusantara.
- Geertz, C. (1976). *The religion of Java*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Hamzah, S. A., & Johan, A. (2020). Malaysian music and social cohesion: Contemporary responses to popular patriotic songs from the 1950s–1990s. *JATI–Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 25(1), 191–209. <https://doi.org/10.22452/jati.vol25no1.10>
- Harmunah. (1987). *Musik keroncong: Sejarah, gaya, dan perkembangan Keroncong music: History, style, and development* [Please provide an English translation of the title]. Pusat Musik Liturgi.
- Harmunah. (1996). *Musik keroncong Keroncong Music*[Please provide an English translation of the title]. Pusat Musik Liturgi.
- Harmunah. (2011). *Musik keroncong Keroncong Music*[Please provide an English translation of the title]. Penerbit Pusat Musik Liturgi.
- Kartomi, M. (2012). *Musical journeys in Sumatra*. University of Illinois Press.
- Lanjari, R., Kusumastuti, E., Hartono, & Agustina, H. (2025). Factors and actors for strengthening and sustaining performing arts education in Central Java, Indonesia. *JATI–Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 30(2), 146–169. <https://doi.org/10.22452/jati.vol30no2.7>
- Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2016). *Practical research: Planning and design* (11th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Lestari, W., Andira, A. A., & Hartono. (2024). Effectiveness of multicultural Seguyub Lasem dance in cultivating education in secondary schools in Central Java Indonesia. *JATI–Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 29(2), 169–191. <https://doi.org/10.22452/jati.vol29no2.7>
- Matusky, P., & Tan, S. B. (2004). *The music of Malaysia: The classical, folk and syncretic traditions*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203493403>
- Merriam, A. P. (1964). *The anthropology of music*. Northwestern University Press.
- Mohd Bakri, M. A., Mohammad Kamal Sabran, M. K., Ab Razak, A., Che Me, R., Ramli, S. H., Mohamed Kamil, M. J., & Surip, S. S. (2025). The impact of angklung art-based intervention on the health of senior citizens in Malaysia. *JATI–Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 30(2), 146–169. <https://doi.org/10.22452/jati.vol30no2.7>
- Nettl, B. (1964). *Theory and method in ethnomusicology*. The Free Press.

- Rachman, A., & Utomo, U. (2018). Sing penting keroncong: Sebuah inovasi pertunjukan musik keroncong di Semarang The important thing about keroncong: An innovation in keroncong music performances in Semarang [Please provide an English translation of the title]. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kajian Seni*, 3(1), 47–64.
- Rachman, A., & Utomo, U. (2019). The rhythm pattern adaptation of langgam Jawa in kroncong. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 271, 99–101. <https://doi.org/10.2991/iconarc-18.2019.23>
- Rachman, A., Teangtrong, P., Jirajarupat, P., & Cahyono, I. N. (2021). A comparative study of playing patterns on gambang and ranat ek instruments. *Harmonia: Journal of Arts Research and Education*, 21(2), 356–368. <https://doi.org/10.15294/harmonia.v21i2.31037>
- Rohidi, T. R. (2011). *Metodologi penelitian seni* Art research methodology [Please provide an English translation of the title]. Cipta Prima Nusantara.
- Saputra, B. A., & Haryono, S. (2021). Preserving keroncong orchestra group: A study of OK. Waseso in Bumijawa Tegal. *Jurnal Seni Musik*, 10(1), 40–46.
- Satria, D., Setiawan, A., & Darlenis, T. (2024). Keroncong arrangement as an expression of freedom Congrock 17. *Resital: Jurnal Seni Pertunjukan*, 25(1), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.24821/resital.v25i1.9462>
- Sedyawati, E. (2012). *Budaya Indonesia: Kajian arkeologi, seni, dan Sejarah* Indonesian Culture: A Study of Archaeology, Art, and History [Please provide an English translation of the title]. PT RajaGrafindo Persada.
- Setiadi, I. K., Armanu, Rohman, F., & Indrawati, N. K. (2024). Dynamics of cultural loyalty among keroncong music fans: Roles of cultural values, heritage image, and community involvement. *Journal of Logistics, Informatics and Service Science*, 11(10), 215–236. <https://doi.org/10.33168/ILISS.2024.1012>
- Setiawan, Y. E., Aribowo, W., Mibtadin, M., & May, A. (2024). Metafora konseptual dalam praktik musik keroncong vernacular Conceptual metaphors in vernacular keroncong music practices [Please provide an English translation of the title]. *Resital: Jurnal Seni Pertunjukan*, 25(1), 48–67. <https://doi.org/10.24821/resital.v25i1.12479>
- Soeharto, D. (1996). Serba-serbi musik keroncong All about keroncong music [Please provide an English translation of the title]. Musika.
- Stake, R. E. (2009). Studi kasus Case study [Please provide an English translation of the title]. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (T. R. Rohidi, Trans.) (pp. 445–466). Pustaka Pelajar.
- Sulaiman, A., Rofaie, N. S. A., Lestari, L. A., Rohman, A., Zakaria, Z., & Ramli, S. Q. (2025). Understanding youth consumers of halal cosmetics: A cross-country study of Malaysia and Indonesia. *JATI–Journal of Southeast Asian*

- Studies*, 30(1), 67–107. <https://doi.org/10.22452/jati.vol30no1.3>
- Sumrongthong, B., & Sorrell, N. (2000). Melodic paradoxes in the music of the Thai pi-phat and Javanese gamelan. *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 32, 67–80. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3185243>
- Sunarti, L. (2013). Menelusuri akar konflik warisan budaya antara Indonesia dengan Malaysia Tracing the roots of the cultural heritage conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia [Please provide an English translation of the title]. *TAWARIKH: International Journal for Historical Studies*, 6(1), 77–88.
- Sunarti, L., & Fadeli, T. R. (2021). Preserving Javanese identity and cultural heritage in Malaysia. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 8(1), Article 1956068. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2021.1956068>
- Sunarti, L., & Triwinarti, W. (2013). The dynamics of keroncong music in Indonesia, 1940s-2000s: Innovations in traditional music. *TAWARIKH: International Journal for Historical Studies*, 5(1), 89–102.
- Supiarza, H. (2021). Preservation of keroncong music through music learning at SMP Santa Angela Bandung. *Jurnal Seni Musik*, 10(2), 115–126.
- Suryati, S., Jamnongsarn, S., Sanjaya, R. M. S., Widodo, T. W., & Rokhani, U. (2025). Cultural adaptation: The resilience of musicians based on artistic creativity in preserving traditional keroncong music. *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, 13(1), 275–292.
- Yampolsky, P. (2010). Keroncong revisited: New evidence from old sources. *Archipel*, 79(1), 7–56. <https://doi.org/10.3406/arch.2010.4159>

How to cite this article (APA):

Rachman, A., Utomo, U., Suharto, Wadiyo, Salleh, M., Loo, F.Y. (2026). Rhythmic Transnationalism: A comparative structural analysis of *keroncong* accompaniment patterns in Indonesia and Malaysia. *JATI-Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 31(1), 161-199.

Date received: 2025-08-24

Date of acceptance: 20 June 2026