

"Why Not Experiment with Odd Counts? Interpreting and Developing of the Balinese Musical form of 'Gilak'"

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the transformation of *gilak* from a conventional eight-beat cycle into a site of rhythmic experimentation in contemporary Balinese composition. While *gilak* has long served as a recurring rhythmic and colotomic framework in genres including *Gong Kebyar*, *Bebonangan*, *Gong Gede*, and *Baleganjur*, recent compositions demonstrate that its underlying principles can be reorganized through alternative pulse structures. The study examines two cases: I Ketut Gede Asnawa's *Topeng Keras Papatihan* (2019), which organizes the rhythmic cycle combining eight and five pulses, and I Wayan Tiodore's *Baleganjur Dharma Sidhi* (2014), which explores five-, six-, and seven-pulse cycles, particularly through its seven-pulse colotomic and *ceng-ceng* organization. The analysis considers the distribution of pulses, recurring accents, gong-cycle articulation, repetition, and the relationship between these structures and the conventional eight-beat *gilak*. Musical analysis is supported by semi-structured interviews with seven composers, performers, and scholars of Balinese gamelan conducted in Denpasar, Badung, Gianyar, and Buleleng between April and November 2024. The study finds that odd-numbered cycles do not constitute a rejection of *gilak* but a reorganization of its principles of cyclicity, repetition, and temporal articulation. By shifting the numerical structure of the cycle while retaining its function as a recurring rhythmic framework, these compositions create different relationships among pulse, accent, and colotomic punctuation. The article therefore proposes that the contemporary development of *gilak* can be understood as a process of structural reinterpretation, in which established rhythmic concepts are retained, modified, and recombined to accommodate new compositional possibilities within Balinese gamelan practice.

Keywords: *Gilak*; Balinese gamelan; rhythmic organization; musical transformation and contemporary composition.

INTRODUCTION

Balinese traditional music is deeply rooted in local cultural values and has been openly developed by musicians and scholars in Bali. David Harnish, an American ethnomusicologist, indicates that throughout the twentieth century, Balinese composers have created thousands of pieces that push the boundaries of traditional music and address the aesthetic demands of a society that is both modernizing and becoming more global. These composers exist in a period of significant change in Balinese history, and their compositions embody this sense of modernity. He states:

The village musicians, freed from the sensibilities of courts and royal patrons, began to experiment with the gamelan *gong gede*, a large orchestra that performed ceremonial and dance repertoire. Musicians developed a faster playing technique and more complex musical passages, both of which contributed to the emergence of a new style of music in north Bali around 1915 (Harnish, 2000, p. 3).

Balinese artists often view innovation not as a break from tradition but as an extension or refinement of it. Rather than replacing older practices, innovation is seen as a way to enrich Balinese culture by exploring new expressions within the familiar structure of their artistic traditions. They also often incorporate new elements in

ways that respect traditional forms and aesthetics. This blending allows for the preservation of cultural identity while embracing change. Scholars also note that the Balinese community tends to collectively negotiate the boundaries of artistic innovation, seeking a balance between honoring heritage and engaging contemporary interests. Davies argues that Balinese artists possess a refined sensitivity for absorbing and selectively integrating cultural influences, adapting them into their own artistic expressions.

The Balinese are innovative in the readiness with which they adopt and adapt new media and technologies in art production.....Yet they also illustrate pervasive aspects of the Balinese aesthetic, such as the supposition that art should be practically useful. Innovation, appropriation, adaptation, and fusion have not been adopted from the postmodern West but are, instead, thoroughly Balinese ways of approaching the arts (Davies, 2007, p. 27).

The study of Balinese music is integral to understanding the rich cultural tapestry of Bali, where traditional practices continue to evolve within contemporary contexts. Among the rhythmic structures central to this musical landscape is the *gilak*, a foundational motif that not only serves as a cornerstone in traditional compositions but is also reinterpreted in contemporary musical works. Several scholars have discussed about *gilak* within the construction of Balinese music composition (see Mc Phee 1964; Bakan, 1998; Tenzer, 1998 & 2000; Dunbar-Hall, 2006; Rai S, 2022). *Gilak* is a fundamental rhythmic cycle and pattern in Balinese gamelan music, particularly associated with the fast, energetic pieces in the *gong kebyar*, *bebonangan*, and *gong gede* ensembles. It typically consists of an eight-beat pattern that provides a driving pulse, often used to accompany dynamic dances or processions. Tenzer notes that “By far the most common colotomic pattern for ostinatos is the *gilak*, an 8, 16, or 32-beat structure that features two kempur strokes aligned towards the end of the cycle in a peculiarly asymmetrical way” (Tenzer, 1998, p. 52). Although frequently referenced in scholarly works, discussions on *gilak* has largely been confined to surface-level examinations, lacking comprehensive analysis and exploration of its development in contemporary Bali.

Historically, the *gilak* has been perceived as a rigid framework; however, its interpretation by contemporary artists reveals a dynamic and evolving nature. Musicians have increasingly embraced the concept of asymmetry, allowing for the emergence of new motifs that challenge conventional expectations and enhance the richness of Balinese music. This transformation not only reflects individual creativity but also highlights the cultural adaptability of Balinese music in a globalized world. The crossover of musical cultures has been inevitable due to Bali's long history of interaction with the outside world. For over a century, non-Western music has significantly influenced the classical tradition. Carl Orff (1976), a German composer and music educator, observed this trend, which began with Claude Debussy's exposure to gamelan music at the 1889 World Exhibition in Paris. Since then, numerous prominent composers, including Colin McPhee (1937), John Cage (1948), Lou Harrison (1973), Jack Body (1974), and Michael Tenzer (1982), have incorporated elements of gamelan into their compositions. This integration has not only introduced a fresh dimension to their music by utilizing gamelan but also inspired a new generation of Balinese composers, such as I Wayan Gde Yudana, Dewa Alit, and Wayan Sudirana. These intercultural exchanges have profoundly influenced and shaped the evolution of Balinese gamelan music (Kartawan, 2022, p. 12).

This research examines the development of the *gilak*, focusing on how musicians and composers interpret its essence to create innovative motifs that transcend traditional boundaries. Understanding the interpretation and development of the *gilak* is crucial for several reasons. First, it offers insights into the creative processes of musicians, demonstrating how traditional musical forms can be reimaged to engage contemporary audiences. Second, this research contributes to the broader academic discourse on cultural preservation and innovation, highlighting the dynamic interplay between maintaining heritage and fostering transformation. By exploring the nuances of the *gilak* and its role in the evolution of Balinese music, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of its significance within the cultural context of Bali and beyond.

This study holds particular significance within the fields of ethnomusicology and cultural preservation, as it underscores the intricate relationship between tradition and innovation in Balinese music. By analyzing how composers and musicians reinterpret the *gilak*—a foundational element in Balinese compositions—this research deepens our understanding of the ways traditional musical forms evolve to meet contemporary artistic needs. The findings illuminate the creative processes and cultural principles that guide Balinese composers,

revealing their efforts to honor heritage while embracing innovation. Furthermore, this study contributes to wider academic discussions on cultural resilience and transformation by demonstrating how traditional musical structures can sustain their relevance through adaptive reinterpretation. By documenting these processes, the research not only safeguards critical knowledge of Balinese music but also serves as a framework for investigating similar developments in other musical traditions, ultimately enhancing our comprehension of music's integral role in shaping cultural identity and continuity.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilises ethnographic fieldwork, including interviews with musicians, composers, and Balinese music scholars; offering insights into the evolving role of *gilak* within contemporary Balinese music and examining of *gilak* in Bali's musical landscape. These experts provide unique perspectives on how traditional musical frameworks are being reinterpreted to suit new artistic expressions. Through interviews, composers shared their approaches to adapting the *gilak* structure to achieve a balance between maintaining cultural authenticity and exploring innovative rhythmic arrangements. Additionally, an analysis of two recent compositions reveals the ways in which these pieces utilise *gilak* as a fundamental, yet flexible, framework, introducing asymmetrical rhythms that deviate from conventional patterns. These compositions highlight how *gilak* serves not only as a rhythmic base but also as a launching point for creative expansion, allowing composers to engage with Balinese tradition while contributing novel elements to the repertoire. By examining these pieces in conjunction with insights from interviews with seven composers, performers and Balinese music scholars, this study underscores the significance of *gilak* in the continued development of Balinese music. A core methodological approach in this study is the transcription of oral music traditions into written notation, essential for detailed analysis. Arom emphasises that "music would seem extremely difficult to analyze in depth unless first reduced to the form of a written score" (Arom, 1991, p, 94). Roeder further notes that music analysis can illuminate compositional depth and structural frameworks (Roeder & Tenzer, 2012, pp. 6-7). By employing transcription, this study aims to uncover how *gilak* has influenced neo-traditional compositions, shedding light on its evolving significance within contemporary Balinese music.

The transcription process utilises the Balinese notation system called *ding-dong*, rooted in traditional Balinese *aksaras* (letters). This system is essential for capturing Balinese gamelan music, as it represents notes by their relative positions within the scale, accommodating the non-standardized tuning of gamelan instruments.

Table 1. Balinese Notation

Bali Aksaras	Chyper Notations	Read
ꦒ	1	<i>nding</i>
ꦝ	2	<i>ndong</i>
ꦢ	3	<i>ndeng</i>
ꦕ	5	<i>ndung</i>
ꦥ	6	<i>ndang</i>

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Musical Form of Gilak

In Balinese music composition theory, several types of motifs exist, each distinguished by specific characteristics such as the number of beats in a cycle, type of colotomic structure, and melodic nuances. Sugiarta explains that Balinese traditional music adheres to an even-numbered (binary) rhythmic system, with cycles of 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64 beats, and so on, each cycle marked by a gong (Arya Sugiarta, 2015:51). He refers to these as rhythmic patterns, which are then combined with melody, dynamics, and tempo to create various types of musical motifs and compositions. However, Sugiarta does not clearly explain how these rhythmic patterns integrate with melody, dynamics, and tempo to produce distinct musical forms.

Other scholars, such as I Nyoman Rembang (1985) and I Wayan Rai S (2022), have extensively analysed

Balinese musical motifs—including *batel*, *bapang*, *tabuh telu*, *lelonggoran*, *bebaturan*, *gegaboran*—and their colotomic structures within various repertoires. Each motif's colotomic structure is marked by instruments such as the *gong*, *kempur*, *kemong/klemong*, and *kempli*. The *gong* serves as the primary instrument marking the cyclical structure, while other instruments (*kempur*, *kempli*, and *kemong*) indicate mid-cycle points. The choice of instruments depends on the ensemble or genre. For example, *gong* and *kemong* are used in the *Palegongan* and *Bebarongan* ensembles or genres. The *Lelambatan* and *Bebonangan* genres employ *gong*, *kempur*, and *kempli*. In contrast, the *kekebyaran* genre can involve all four instruments, where *kemong* and *kempli* are functionally interchangeable, with only one being used as needed. The figure below details the types of motifs and their respective colotomic structures.

Balinese music scholars, such as McPhee (1942), Aryasa (1977), Bandem (1983), Tenzer (1998 & 2000), Bakan (1998), Bandem (2013), Rai S. (2022), and McGrew (2008) consider that the *gilak* has a standard structure, featuring eight beats in one cycle, typically following the pattern: — — — (—) — — — (—). However, this study has observed regional variations in colotomic structure: in Southern Bali (Bebadungan), the *gilak* pattern is: — — — G P — P G, while in Northern Bali (Buleleng), it is — — P — P — P G. Both variations remain in use today.

The strongest accent in Balinese music, including *gilak*, occurs on the second gong, as compositions traditionally build toward the gong rather than starting with it. In *gilak*'s eight-beat cycle, the heaviest emphasis falls on the eighth beat, aligning with the gong (Rai S, 2022:38). Rai also notes that *gilak* has the shortest *gending* structure, with eight beats per cycle. Suweca concurs, describing *gilak* as the shortest classic *lelambatan pegongan* form, although there are shorter motifs, such as *bapang* and *batel*, which are generally found in *palegongan*, *bebarongan*, and *kekebyaran* genres.

Gilak in the Performance Practices

In line with Sugiarta's (2015) assertion that specific rhythmic patterns can produce unique motifs and compositions, *gilak* exemplifies this by functioning both as an independent composition (*gending*) and as a motif within a larger piece. Examples of standalone *gilak* compositions include *Pengundang Taksu* as an opening piece, *Penglebar* as a closing piece, and *Wirekasari* and *Wirengprabu* as accompaniment for the Topeng Keras dance (Bandem and Rembang, 1975). These compositions feature melodic and punctuation patterns that vary in length, spanning eight or sixteen beats, and may extend across multiple cycles. Tenzer (2000, p. 274) states that melodies can span multiple cycles. In *tabuh telu*, *gilak*, or other short meters without a fixed duration, drumming patterns are tailored to fit specific melodies by modifying certain established patterns associated with particular meter types (Tenzer, 2000). The following figures are three examples of *gilak* models with different lengths melodic.

(0) [0 1 2 0 2 1 0 0]
— — — G P — P G

Figure 1. Gilak Wira Kesari

(0) [0 0 0 0 0 1 0 2 2 0 2 2 0 0 1 0]
— — — G P — P G — — — G P — P G

Figure 2. Gilak Wireng Prebawa

(?) [0 2 0 2 0 2 2 0 0 2 1 0 2 0 2 2]
2 2 0 2 1 2 0 1 0 0 1 0 2 2 0 2]
— — — G P — P G — — — G P — P G
— — — G P — P G — — — G P — P G

Figure 3. Gilak Penyineb/Penglebar

The *gilak* motif is frequently utilized in compositions as a section or sub-section, as seen in *Gending Baris*, a piece accompanying the Baris dance. *Gending Baris* consists of three parts: (1) *Pepeson*, (2) *Pengawak*, and (3) *Pengecet*. The first and third sections employ the *gilak* motif with distinct melodies, while the second section includes two other motifs—*Lelonggoran* and *Gegaboran*. The *gilak* motif is also found in Pegongan repertoire, as in *Gending Tabuh Pat Jagul*, *Tabuh Pat Parianom*, *Tabuh Nem Semara Metu* arranged into a Lelambatan Kreasi by I Ketut Gede Asnawa, and *Tabuh Kutus Pelayon* by I Wayan Beratha. In these compositions, the *gilak* motif is featured as a sub-section in the *Pengecet*, or final part of the piece.

As a musical form, *gilak* is widely recognized and popular among Balinese musicians. The *gilak*, an 8-, 16-, or 32-beat colotomic pattern, is the most common for ostinatos, characterised by two *kempur* strokes placed asymmetrically near the cycle's conclusion. Asnawa highlights that the colotomic structure's organisation around the gong and *kempur* creates a cohesive punctuation, forming a final and semi-final gong structure. Asnawa describes the fundamental concept of this punctuation pattern as syncopated, aligning with Balinese music's characteristic emphasis on interwoven patterns (Interview with Asnawa, July 23, 2024).

Gilak as Gegulak

In the context of "*gilak as gegulak*," this section explores the interpretation of *gilak* in musical terms as a standard measure and in performance terms as a model. The term "*gegulak*" in Balinese society carries a variety of meanings and is used in multiple contexts. Literally, "*gegulak*" can signify *sikut/sukat* (measurement or pattern) or *wimba* (example, custom, or model). Both meanings—whether as a measure or a model—appear across contexts such as architecture, traditional construction, mass production, regulatory design, adherence to cultural customs, and the creation of art forms, including visual arts and performance arts like music.

In Balinese music, temporal and structural organisation is frequently defined by cycles. The *gilak*'s eight-beat cycle serves as a standard measure for time and phrasing, forming a rhythmic foundation across Balinese musical repertoire and genres, including *Pegongan*, *Pegambuhan*, *Kekebyaran*, and *Bebonangan*. As noted, several pieces in the *Pegongan* repertoire utilise the *gilak* motif either as standalone compositions or within a larger *gending*. An example is *Tabuh Pat Jagul*, where the *pengecet* (closing section) incorporates the *gilak* motif. In *Kekebyaran*, the *gilak* motif appears in numerous pieces, including *Baris*, *Topeng*, and newly composed works. Meanwhile, in *Bebonangan*, *gilak* functions as the foundational structure of the genre.

The widespread use of *gilak* has led many musicians to consider any musical pattern in an eight-beat count interpretable as *gilak*. For instance, in *Pegongan*, *Tabuh Telu* is identified by Rai (2022, p. 30) as an extended form of the *gilak* pattern. When comparing the *gilak* with *Tabuh Telu* (see Figure 4), a consistent beat extension and similar colotomic structure emerge, as seen in *Tabuh Telu*. Many versions exist regarding the colotomic structure variations of *Tabuh Telu*, particularly in the pattern and type of instrument used in the middle cycle, as illustrated in the following figure.

Gilak	{	Bebadungan (Bali Selatan) Buleleng (Bali Utara)	(G)	--- G P - P G
				-- P - P - P G
Tabuh Telu	{	Version 1 Version 2 Version 3	(G)	--- 1 - - - 1 - P - 1 - P - G
				--- 1 - P - 1 - P - 1 - P - G
				--- 1 - - - G - P - 1 - P - G

Figure 4. The Gilak dan Tabuh Telu Pattern

The figure above also illustrates variations in the colotomic pattern of *Tabuh Telu*, highlighting this diversity as a reference for understanding the relationship between the *gilak* motif and other motifs. This analysis does not attempt to judge which version is correct; rather, it acknowledges that these colotomic types are preserved and still actively used by gamelan communities (*sekaa gamelan*) in Bali.

This study found that two main colotomic types of *Tabuh Telu* exist in Southern Bali, including areas such as Badung, Gianyar, and Denpasar (Versions 1 and 3). In contrast, Northern Bali (Buleleng) features a distinct structure, represented as Version 2. An analysis of the table shows that the colotomic structure of the *gilak* has been extended into *Tabuh Telu*, with *Gilak Bebadungan* corresponding to *Tabuh Telu* Version 3 in the South and Version 2 in Buleleng. Northern Balinese artists, such as Pande Mustika, I Made Terip, and I Made Pasca Wirasuta, confirm that the colotomic structure of *Tabuh Telu* in their region is indeed an extension of the *gilak* pattern (Personal interview with Mustika and Wirasuta, September 30, 2024 and Terip, (October 1, 2024). Asnawa, a composer and musician from Denpasar, shares this view, noting that Southern Bali's *Tabuh Telu* also developed from the *gilak* pattern, aligning with Rai S, who similarly traces *Tabuh Telu* back to the *gilak* motif (Rai, 2022, p. 43).

These perspectives collectively suggest that the *gilak* colotomic pattern serves as a foundational unit (*gegulak*), adaptable into new motifs and forms. American ethnomusicologist Michael Bakan, in his article "Walking Warriors: Battles of Culture and Ideology in the Balinese Gamelan," discusses the *gilak* motif as an essential part of Balinese gamelan, analyzing its significance in musical, ritual, and social contexts. He concludes Beleganjur music, whether performed in ritual settings or modern *kreasi* competitions, typically follows a standardized formal structure known as *gilak*. This structure is characterized by an eight-beat gong cycle that is continuously repeated throughout the performance (1998, p.44).

The *gilak* pattern forms the fundamental structure of the *Baleganjur* genre, defining much of its musical framework. *Baleganjur*, also known as *Kalaganjur*, is a processional music style typically performed during the *pecaruan* ceremony, an offering made to the *Butha* spirits to harmonize the environment, and *Ngaben*, the Balinese ritual of spirit purification. *Baleganjur* music is marked by a loud, thunderous, and dynamic character, shaped by its ensemble—comprised of percussion instruments with powerful sounds—and by its musical structure, where the *gilak* pattern is played as a fast-paced ostinato, creating a highly dynamic effect.

The *gilak* pattern is frequently used as a teaching tool in gamelan instruction, especially for beginners. Artists such as Asnawa, Suweca, Tiodore, Mustika, Terip, and Wirasuta consider this pattern highly effective for quickly learning Balinese gamelan, reflecting their own early experiences with the genre. The short, repetitive nature of the *gilak* pattern allows students to understand, memorize, and perform the music more rapidly. These artists confirm the *gilak* pattern's effectiveness in teaching, incorporating it into their instructional methods in a practice passed down continually. In this way, the *gilak* pattern functions as a "*wimba*" or model for the transmission of Balinese gamelan music across generations.

Developing *Gilak* within New Compositions

Historically, *gilak* evolved as a core musical form used in various Balinese ensembles. Over time, composers and musicians have adapted and expanded on the *gilak* pattern, integrating new variations and dynamics while preserving its traditional framework. The *gilak* cycle can be adapted and varied depending on the context, whether it's accompanying dancers, rituals, or serving as a musical foundation for improvisation and variation in melodic instruments. This is a common phenomenon where composers interpret it in diverse ways. Sudirana suggests that young Balinese composers, inspired by earlier innovations, began boldly exploring new techniques, timbres, and melodic structures beyond traditional constraints. They sought originality, developing unique identities and intellectual concepts in their compositions (2024, p.2).

In examining compositions created up to the late 1990s, composers generally adhered to maintaining the *gilak* pattern in an even and symmetrical count. However, in recent compositions, there is an emergence of pieces featuring asymmetrical melodic contours and odd-count *gilak* patterns. Composers offer myriad reasons for this shift away from symmetrical forms, reflecting a move toward more diverse structural approaches. It is likely that composers adjust and manipulate these patterns through two main approaches: (a) adapting colotomic structures to fit a newly created melody, or (b) crafting a melody to align with a colotomic pattern. To illustrate how composers develop the *gilak* form in line with these two considerations, this paper analyses *Topeng Keras Egar Abhinawa*, a piece by Asnawa (2019), composed for *Topeng Keras* dance accompaniment, and *Dharma Sidhi* by Tiodore (2014), an instrumental work in the *Baleganjur* genre.

The composition *Egar Abhinawa* was created by Asnawa in 2019 as accompaniment music for *Topeng Keras* dance, dedicated to Denpasar's team for the 41st Bali Arts Festival Topeng Kreasi Parade. *Topeng Keras*, often referred to as *topeng penganter* (opening dance), is traditionally performed at the beginning of a *Patopengan* dance drama in both ritual and entertainment contexts. According to Asnawa, *Egar Abhinawa* is derived from *Egar*, meaning "actions," and *Abhinawa*, meaning "authority. This dance portrays a royal knight (*abdi/pepatih*) character with a firm, dignified persona, strengthened musically through a fast, dynamic *gilak* motif.

The following figure presents the *Topeng Keras Egar Abhinawa* notation, showing melody, colotomic punctuation, and drum patterns, with beats extended in $\frac{1}{4}$ -count to facilitate complex rhythmic notation like the *kekendangan* (gegulet) pattern.

Mel = Melody, Col=Colotomic, KW=Kendang (drum) Wadon, D= Syllable for the bigger head side of Wadon, T= Dumping sound, KL=Kendang Lanang, d= Syllable for the bigger head side of Lanang, and t= dumping sound.

The colotomic structure of *Topeng Keras Egar Abhinawa* reveals multiple melodic cycles consisting of five phrases (block colors), each comprising four beats. Regular punctuation, following the *gilak* 8-beat pattern, occurs in the first melodic line, with additional instances in phrases four and five. A significant pause in phrase three is marked by a single gong stroke, seemingly manipulating the regularity of the *gilak* pattern in the subsequent cycle. Asnawa indicates that the placement of the gong and kempur strokes should be adjusted due to the melodic expansion in the second line. This adjustment does not affect the *kekendangan* pattern, which retains its four-beat length; however, accent manipulation occurs due to the asymmetric melodic contour.

Analysing the melody, *Topeng Keras Egar Abhinawa* represents a development from *Wireng Prabawa* (see Figure 3). Phrases one, three, four, and five of *Egar Abhinawa* are identical to those in *Wireng Prabawa*. In this sense, *Topeng Keras Pepatihian* adapts the melody of *Wireng Prabawa* with the addition of one melodic phrase in the first line. Asnawa explains that such melodic expansion is feasible as long as the flow remains coherent, using the term “pangus” to describe this. This term often denotes a level of value achieved in a work of art, reflecting harmony and appropriateness within specific aesthetic aspects.

According to Asnawa, a composer's approach to developing existing melodic forms is natural in the context of creative music composition. Sudirana supports this view, noting that Balinese composers often engage in hybridity by "borrowing," "stealing," or "transforming" materials from older genres and diverse sources, be

they local, national, or international (Sudirana 2013:166). This suggests that Asnawa's interpretation of *gilak* has evolved: on one hand, *Gilak* is seen as having a standard form, while on the other, it can be transformed into new patterns. Such transformations should ideally adopt distinct terminology to avoid overlap or confusion, a practice that remains uncommon among composers. The following section presents another example of the *gilak* pattern's adaptation and development in contemporary Baleganjur composition.

Baleganjur Dharma Sidhi

Dharma Sidhi is a modern Baleganjur composition by Putu Tiodore Adi Bawa, showcased in the Youth Baleganjur Competition during the 2014 Badung Cultural Festival. The piece represents a significant innovation within the Baleganjur genre, particularly through its use of a *gilak*-like motif featuring asymmetrical pulse counts that deviate from the traditional 8-pulse structure. In "Dharma Sidhi," Tiodore deconstructs one of the fundamental elements of the *baleganjur* genre, where the 8-pulse *gilak* pattern typically serves as its defining identity. Instead, he incorporates *gilak*-inspired motifs based on counts of 7, 6, and 5 within a single cyclical gong cycle. This shift profoundly impacts other musical elements, such as the colotomic patterns in the *gong* and *kempur*, the *gegulu* patterns in *kendang*, the *ceng-ceng* patterns, and the approach to melody construction.

Tiodore refers to these *gilak*-derived motifs with non-8-pulse structures as *gegilakan*. He defines *gegilakan* as the adaptation of the *gilak* form into motifs that resemble *gilak* but diverge in pulse count. According to Tiodore, the term "resemblance" is based on key *gilak* characteristics, such as its cyclical structure, colotomic layering of sounds and instrumentation, interlocking rhythmic patterns, and an energetic, dynamic performance style. Tiodore's rationale for developing *gegilakan* motifs is rooted in the concept of "creativity," a crucial element in every Baleganjur competition. He argues, "In the context of creativity, if music can exist in even-numbered pulse forms, then it should also be acceptable to compose it in odd-numbered counts." In this sense, he reinterprets *gilak* as a musical form with potential for development in an "opposite way" (Personal interview with Tiodore, July 28, 2024). Willgoss states that creativity is used in two main ways. Firstly, it serves as a broad, often colloquial term that implies a positive value judgment on any personal achievement. Secondly, it is a rigorously researched scientific concept, referring to the discovery of methods that demonstrate independence, originality, and effectiveness. In either case, asserting creativity requires a belief similar to recognizing atoms as identifiable (Willgoss, 2014).

A Baleganjur ensemble comprises various instruments that collectively create a dynamic and rhythmic musical structure. The *Gong Ageng*, the largest gong, produces a deep, resonant sound that marks the beginning and end of musical cycles, while the *Kempur*, a medium-sized gong, reinforces structural beats. The *Bebende*, a large flat gong with a bright, piercing sound, accentuates significant moments in the music. The *Kajar*, a small handheld gong, functions as a timekeeper, maintaining a steady beat amid the ensemble's intricate textures, while the *Kempli*, another single gong, provides a rhythmic anchor to support timing. The *Reong*, a set of small gongs played by four musicians, contributes both melodic and rhythmic complexity through interlocking patterns, while the larger *Ponggang* punctuates these patterns with additional melodic accents. The *Kendang*, performed in pairs (*Kendang Wadon* and *Kendang Lanang*), serves as the ensemble's leader, directing tempo, dynamics, and transitions through various strokes played with a mallet. The *Cengceng*, a set of handheld cymbals, enhances rhythmic intensity with rapid interlocking patterns, producing a bright, crashing sound. Together, these instruments form the bold, driving sound characteristic of Baleganjur, a vital element in Balinese processions and ritual music.

It should be noted that this study analyses the *gending Dharma Sidhi*, specifically focusing on its use of various *gilak* and *gegilakan* motifs within the colotomic and rhythmic instrument groups, excluding the melodic elements. The analysis examines the traditional 8-pulse *gilak* alongside *gegilakan* motifs featuring 7, 6, and 5 pulses as used in *Dharma Sidhi*. This exploration investigates how the colotomic structure, *kendang* (drum) patterns, and *ceng-ceng* (cymbal) patterns interact to create a rhythmically complex and cohesive ensemble. The 8-pulse *gilak*, a foundational structure in *baleganjur* music, serves as a comparative base for examining other motifs.

[illegible]

Figure 6. Gilak with 8-pulse Cycle

Figure 6 represents a traditional 8-pulse *gilak*, a rhythmic cycle foundational to *baleganjur* gamelan. Characterized by its steady and cyclic structure, this rhythm anchors the ensemble's interlocking textures. The colotomic instruments—*gong* (“G”), *kempur* (“K”), and *kempli* (“l”)—structure this cycle, with the *gong* striking on the first and last pulse, creating a sense of completion. The *kempur*, often placed on the fourth pulse, divides the cycle and enhances synchronization. The *kempli* provides a continuous pulse, supporting ensemble cohesion.

In Balinese gamelan, the *kendang* drums direct tempo and dynamics. The notations include *kendang wadon* (KW) and *kendang lanang* (KL). The *wadon* drum, marked by “D” for strong hits and “d” for muted ones, provides rhythmic and dynamic accents, shaping the musical energy. The *lanang* drum, through patterns like “D,” “T,” and “d,” complements the *wadon* with syncopated strokes, adding complexity and tonal contrast. The *ceng-ceng*, small hand-held cymbals, add rhythmic intensity and texture. In this notation, the players are divided into three groups: C1, C2, and C3. The first group (C1) interlocks frequently within the 8-pulse cycle, creating a consistent rhythmic layer. C2 mirrors C1 with a slightly altered pattern, producing a syncopated texture typical of *kotekan* patterns in Balinese music. The third group (C3), with two players, reinforces specific beats to add emphasis, completing the complex rhythmic texture. The interlocking *ceng-ceng* layers enhance the rhythmic density and produce the high-energy sound that characterizes *gilak* in Baleganjur, filling the soundscape with engaging rhythmic interplay that supports the ensemble. This 8-pulse *gilak* rhythm exemplifies the collaborative intricacy inherent in Balinese Baleganjur music. Each instrumental group—from colotomic markers to complex *ceng-ceng* (cymbal) patterns—plays an essential role in sustaining rhythmic intensity and ensemble unity. This notation captures the depth of rhythmic complexity and the communal essence of Balinese gamelan through interlocking structures, layered textures, and dynamic pacing.

The following notation depicts a *gilak* rhythm in a nontraditional 7-pulse cycle, innovatively developed by Tiodore as a departure from the conventional 8-beat cycle (see Figure 7). This 7-pulse configuration produces rhythmic tension and asymmetry, challenging the typical balance and circularity of the standard *gilak* form. The ensuing analysis explores each component of this notation, focusing on the colotomic structure, drum patterns, and *ceng-ceng* interlocking patterns, examining how these elements interact to forge a cohesive rhythmic experience.

[illegible]

Figure 7. Gegilakan 7-pulse Cycle

The colotomic markers establish critical points within the 7-pulse structure. The gong serves as the primary anchor, initiating and concluding each cycle, thus setting a clear boundary around the unusual 7-beat rhythm. This placement provides closure while emphasizing the cycle's asymmetry, challenging the listener's expectation of even-numbered cycles. Typically, the *kempur* divides the cycle, marking a pulse that contrasts with the symmetrical 8-pulse cycle; this often placed on the fourth beat, further enhances the cycle's unpredictable feel. The *kempli*, marking distinct moments within the cycle, provides a steady beat, guiding musicians through the uneven 7-pulse *gilak* and establishing a foundational rhythm.

In this 7-pulse *gilak*, the *kendang* (drums) are essential for balancing the asymmetry. The *wadon* drum (lead) alternates between open and muted strokes, providing rhythmic accents that punctuate the cycle. This pattern strategically emphasizes certain beats, aiding players and listeners through the unconventional cycle. The *lanang* drum complements the *wadon*, incorporating syncopation and adding rhythmic complexity. Their interplay is integral in maintaining cohesion and structure within the unusual 7-pulse cycle.

The *ceng-ceng* section, divided into three groups (C1, C2, and C3), features interlocking patterns that are crucial for rhythmic momentum and textural richness. The unique 7-pulse structure introduces challenges for the interlocking *kotekan* technique, requiring precise timing and synchronization. Each group provides distinct rhythmic beats within the cycle, filling specific moments. This layered texture drives the ensemble's continuity, with each group's pattern adapted to reinforce the 7-pulse framework's balance and intensity. This 7-pulse *gilak* rhythm exemplifies an innovative adaptation within traditional *balenganjur*, introducing a unique rhythmic structure that challenges performers to rely on collective precision. Through the colotomic instruments, interlocking drums, and layered *ceng-ceng* patterns, the rhythm conveys both continuity and complexity. The 7-pulse cycle reflects the adaptability and creativity inherent in Balinese music, encouraging ensemble unity through the Balinese principle of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation).

The notation of a *gegilakan* rhythm organized within a 6-pulse structure further explores Balinese gamelan's capacity for rhythmic flexibility (see Figure 8). Typically, Balinese gamelan adheres to an 8-pulse cycle; thus, the compact 6-pulse rhythm introduces a faster, dynamic form. Each component—the colotomic structure, *kendang* patterns, and interlocking *ceng-ceng* sections—is adapted to create an intensified rhythmic texture within the condensed cycle.

Col	(G)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	G	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	P	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	G
KW		.	D	.	.	D	.	D	.	D	.	.	D	.	D	.	T	.	D	.	T	.	.	.	L
KL		d	.	d	.	.	d	.	d	.	.	d	.	d	.	t	.	d	.	t	.	d	.	.	L
C1	1	.	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛	.	☛	.	.	☛	.
	2	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛	.	☛	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛	.	☛	.	☛	.	.	☛	.
	3	.	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛
C2	4	☛	.	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛
	5	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛	.	.	☛	.
	6	.	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛
C3	7	.	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛
	8	.	.	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛	.	.	☛	.	☛	.	☛	.	☛	.	☛	.	.	☛	.

Figure 8. Gegilakan 6-pulse Cycle

The colotomic markers here include the gong, *kempur*, and *kempli*, which establish orientation within the shorter, faster cycle. The gong marks the start and end of the 6-pulse cycle, offering a clear, reliable boundary that defines the rhythm. The *kempur* marks the midpoint, creating an internal balance, while the *kempli* provides a regular pulse, ensuring rhythmic continuity. The *kendang* drum patterns, both *wadon* and *lanang*, adapt to the 6-pulse structure by condensing accents and adding syncopation, providing contrast and depth. These adjustments highlight key beats and sustain rhythm intensity within the abbreviated cycle. The *ceng-ceng* patterns in a 6-pulse cycle require precise interlocking to maintain rhythmic momentum and texture. With each group striking at specific beats, the interlocking pattern creates a seamless, driving rhythm. The condensed structure demands close coordination, amplifying rhythmic drive and energy. This 6-pulse rhythm highlights gamelan's adaptability and is especially effective in high-energy settings such as processions and rituals, enhancing the communal performance experience.

The 5-pulse *gegilakan* form (see Figure 9) introduces a rare rhythmic structure in Balinese gamelan, further challenging traditional expectations. Each element—from the colotomic markers to drum and *ceng-ceng* interlocks—coheres to form an intense yet cohesive rhythmic expression within this asymmetric structure.

Col	(G)	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	P	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	P	-	-	-	G
KW		.	D	.	.	D	.	D	.	D	.	D	.	T	.	T	.	.	T	.	D
KL		d	.	d	.	.	d	.	d	.	d	.	.	.	t	.	.	t	.	t	.

C1	1	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	•	.	•	.	•	.	•	.	•	.	•	.	•
	2	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.
	3	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.
C2	4	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.
	5	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.
	6	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.
C3	7	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.
	8	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.	.	•	.

Figure 9. Gegilakan 5-pulse Cycle

The colotomic structure in the 5-pulse cycle, featuring gong and *kempur* markers, provides rhythmic orientation within the asymmetry. The gong, marking the fifth beat, reinforces the cycle's cyclicity. The *kempur*, marking beats within the cycle, creates an internal division that provides a balance despite the cycle's inherent irregularity. The *kendang* drum patterns underscore dynamic emphasis within the 5-pulse rhythm, with the *wadon* and *lanang* drums interlocking to create a layered rhythm that balances the cycle's asymmetry. Each drum's accent patterns enhance the flow and drive within the short, irregular structure. In this 5-pulse form, *ceng-ceng* interlocking rhythms contribute a dense texture that supports the cycle's cohesion. Each group's rhythm fills the cycle, producing a continuous, intense flow that counteracts the potential instability of the 5-pulse form. This interlocking requires meticulous timing, reinforcing the rhythm's integrity. The 5-pulse *gilak* underscores the adaptability of Balinese gamelan, allowing musicians to explore rhythmic innovation while preserving ensemble cohesion and continuity. This unusual rhythmic framework, adapted from dynamic ritual or processional contexts, exemplifies the versatility of gamelan music and its enduring cultural significance.

The change in structure, syncopated *kendang* and *ceng-ceng* patterns, and rhythmic orientation on *gegilakan* offered by Tiodore is a step forward for the development of Balinese music. The development of the *gilak* motif into the *gegilakan* motif characterized by 7, 6, and 5 pulses, as created by Tiodore, marks a significant evolution in Balinese musical composition. This transition reflects a deliberate exploration of rhythmic complexity, demonstrating how traditional structures can be adapted to create new musical expressions. The *gegilakan* motif retains elements of the original *gilak*, yet it introduces asymmetrical phrasing and diverse pulse patterns that challenge conventional rhythmic frameworks.

Tiodore's innovative approach not only enriches the repertoire of Balinese music but also exemplifies the dynamic nature of cultural practices in response to contemporary influences. By expanding the *gilak* motif into these varied pulse configurations, Tiodore contributes to a broader understanding of rhythm in Balinese music, illustrating the interplay between tradition and innovation. This development signifies a growing openness within the musical community to experiment with and reinterpret established forms, thereby fostering a vibrant and evolving artistic landscape. Ultimately, Tiodore's work encapsulates the ongoing dialogue between historical motifs and modern creativity, highlighting the vitality of Balinese music as it continues to evolve while honoring its roots.

Reinterpreting the *Gilak* Motif; The Composer's Perspectives on Composing Cross Boundaries

The concept of developing the *gilak* motif has sparked diverse, even contradictory, perspectives among Balinese artists. Some accept it as an inevitability, considering the evolution of global music today. Others, however, accept it with certain limitations, arguing in favor of aesthetics and the preservation of tradition.

A composer and musician from Gianyar, I Wayan Suweca, suggests that *gilak* can take various forms or variations, but its structure and expression should align with the intended musical character or artistic representation. He provides an example, stating that the *gilak* motif for accompanying *topeng keras* dance or similar performances should follow an even count with a structured musical arrangement. This ensures cohesion and synchronization between music and dance during a performance. *Topeng* dance, in particular, is often performed with improvisation, making accentuation unpredictable. In this context, musicians must be quick to anticipate accents, while dancers need precision in considering musical counts when executing accents. According to Suweca, if *gilak* were structured in an odd count, it would create difficulties for both musicians and dancers.

Asnawa's work, *Egar Abhinawa*, directly contradicts Suweca's suggestion. As previously explained, Asnawa constructs *gilak* with an asymmetrical melodic structure to introduce a fresh nuance to *topeng keras* dance. His approach aims to challenge dancers while also fostering artistic development. Asnawa expresses this idea with the phrase "*pang sing amontoan gen*," meaning "not just the same as before." He critiques the stagnation of creativity in *gilak* arrangements for *topeng keras* accompaniment, arguing that innovation is necessary. Through this composition, Asnawa hopes to encourage dancers to be more creative and step out of their comfort zone—where many have become reluctant to practice due to their familiarity with symmetrical, even-count *gilak*. Unlike traditional *gilak* for *topeng keras*, *Egar Abhinawa* requires dancers to understand the melody deeply, making dedicated rehearsal essential.

Tiodore's work, *Baleganjur Dharma Sidi*, serves as a notable example of *gilak* motif development, sparking both praise and criticism. Although not a pioneer in this approach—since several composers had explored similar ideas before—Tiodore introduced unconventional *gilak* motifs, incorporating counts of 5, 6, and 7 within a single cyclical gong pattern. This innovation drew sharp criticism from some artists, including his peers, who questioned, "*Ngudiang ketoang gilak e?*"—which translates to, "*Why is the gilak arranged like that?*" This reaction reflects their disapproval, viewing it as a bold and unacceptable deviation from traditional Balinese music structures. However, Tiodore defended his approach as a legitimate exploration of *gilak*, driven by the question: "*Why not experiment with odd counts?*" He emphasized the importance of creative freedom in uncovering new possibilities, suggesting that if symmetrical patterns exist, asymmetrical ones should also be considered. For Tiodore, innovation is valid insofar as it preserves the core concept of *gilak*. To distinguish his developed motifs from traditional *gilak*, he adopted the term *gegilakan*—a concept that embodies both continuity and transformation, maintaining a link to *gilak* while introducing new creative dimensions. This terminology aims to uphold the integrity of *gilak* while allowing space for experimental ideas. Tiodore views *gegilakan* as a conceptual bridge, fostering dialogue among Balinese composers exploring contemporary innovations and promoting broader acceptance within the artistic community.

Based on the discussion above, it can be interpreted that the creation of *gilak* motifs through innovative and creative approaches has encouraged composers such as Asnawa and Tiodore to push the boundaries of traditional forms. This development is grounded in individual interpretation, fostering artistic freedom unbound by cultural constraints. Deliege et al. (2006) state that "creativity is the process or activity of realising insights freely. This creative process typically involves multiple dimensions, with only one being emergent and essential among the ideas and products that can be characterized as 'creative' (p. 19)". Furthermore, the development of the *gilak* motif reflects a conscious effort by artists to navigate two critical issues: preserving tradition and fostering innovation. Scholars such as Raheb et al. (2022) view this as an evolving thought process, asserting by engaging with the intricacies of diverse musical traditions, composers can develop compositions that are both technically sophisticated and emotionally compelling, providing audiences with fresh musical experiences (p. 15).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In conclusion, the exploration of the *gilak* motif and its evolution into the *gegilakan* motif by composers like Asnawa and Tiodore underscores the dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation in Balinese music. This transition not only reflects the adaptability of established musical forms but also highlights the potential for creative reinterpretation within a cultural context. The introduction of asymmetrical phrasing and varied

pulse patterns enriches the rhythmic complexity of the music, allowing for new expressions and interpretations that resonate with contemporary audiences.

Moreover, the integration of the *gegilakan* motif into the broader repertoire signifies a commitment to preserving cultural heritage while embracing change. We argue that this balance between honoring traditional structures and encouraging experimentation is vital for the continued vitality of Balinese music. As musicians and composers engage with these evolving motifs, they contribute to an ongoing dialogue that fosters a deeper understanding of the rich musical landscape of Bali, ensuring its relevance and resonance for future generations. Thus, the development of motifs such as *gilak* and *gegilakan* exemplifies not only the resilience of cultural traditions but also the potential for innovation within the framework of Balinese music.

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