DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.18860/eh.v26i1.26327

ISLAMIC MUSIC AND LOCAL IDENTITY OF SUNDANESE ETHNICITY

Amin Tohari
Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia
Email: amintohariuinoke@gmail.com

Received: March 3, 2024
Revised: May 4, 2024
Accepted: May 7, 2024

Abstract

Derived from the dimension of locality, terebang merges Sundanese ethnic and Islamic elements into a distinctive music genre. This article explores the forms of the Sundanese Islamic musical genre and how this genre is utilized at Islamic ritual events and on the urban stage. With the involvement of cultural activists supporting the Candralijaya band, this research also examines the challenges and criticisms from various groups concerning the integration of ethnicity and Islam. Based on an ethnographic expedition in Tasikmalaya, West Java, the findings reveal a unique significance in this genre that is not evident in other parts of Indonesia or the Muslim world, such as in the Middle East and Pakistan. This study highlights the importance of expressing 'Sundanese-Islamic feelings' through musical performance art. It argues that this music genre embodies a vernacular meaning born from two distinct origins, yet it has created a distinctive genre. This confirms that both sources maintain specific

boundaries, each with its own unique 'flavors.' Future studies could explore how these musical performances can foster intercultural dialogue and understanding in diverse societies, potentially serving as a bridge between different religious and ethnic communities.

Berawal dari dimensi lokalitas, terebang menggabungkan elemen-etnik Sunda dan Islam menjadi genre musik yang khas. Artikel ini mengeksplorasi bentuk-bentuk genre musik Islam Sunda dan bagaimana genre ini digunakan dalam acara ritual Islam dan di panggung urban. Dengan keterlibatan aktivis budaya yang mendukung band Candralijaya, penelitian ini juga mengkaji tantangan dan kritik dari berbagai kelompok mengenai integrasi etnisitas dan Islam. Berdasarkan ekspedisi etnografi di Tasikmalaya, Jawa Barat, temuan ini mengungkapkan sebuah keunikan dalam genre ini yang tidak terlihat di bagian lain Indonesia atau dunia Muslim, seperti di Timur Tengah dan Pakistan. Studi ini menyoroti pentingnya mengekspresikan 'perasaan Islam-Sunda' melalui seni pertunjukan musikal. Argumennya adalah bahwa genre musik ini mengandung makna vernakular yang berasal dari dua sumber berbeda, namun telah menciptakan genre yang berbeda. Ini membenarkan bahwa kedua sumber tersebut mempertahankan batas-batas tertentu, masing-masing dengan 'rasa' uniknya sendiri. Studi mendatang dapat mengeksplorasi bagaimana pertunjukan musik ini dapat mendorong dialog dan pemahaman lintas budaya dalam masyarakat yang beragam, berpotensi menjadi jembatan antara komunitas agama dan etnik yang berbeda.

Keywords: *cultural criticism, local identity, music genre, urban stage*

Introduction

Indonesia, a prominent Southeast Asian country with thousands of islands, is home to diverse tribes and cultures. It has 17,508 islands inhabited by more than 1,340 tribes (Wijaya, 2019, pp. 3–4), with 1,728 cultures recorded as intangible cultural heritage in 2022 (Kementerian Pendidikan

dan Kebudayaan RI, 2022). Such diversity sometimes triggers friction (Vangen & Winchester, 2014, p. 693). This study focuses on West Java, a location where cultural conflicts often occur, viewing religion as a factor that exacerbates this friction. One such conflict took place in 2016 when the Islamic Defenders Front or *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI), a hardline Islamic group, conducted a midnight sweep and destroyed a statue of the puppet character "Arjuna" in a tourist park in Purwakarta Regency. The FPI, deeming the statue an "idol," destroyed it to restore Purwakarta's religious identity. This unauthorized action led to confrontation, with local leaders condemning it. Subsequently, Dedi Mulyadi, the Mayor at the time, challenged the FPI to destroy the tiger statue, an icon for the Siliwangi Regional Military Command III and the West Java Regional Police, questioning their selective targeting of non-Islamic symbols.

Similar incidents have occurred elsewhere; for instance, in Yogyakarta, the statue of the Virgin Mary was covered with a blue tarpaulin due to developmental disagreements, leading to external Islamic organizations intervening, which prompted police involvement. Ultimately, this case concluded as a 'misunderstanding.' Further tensions in East Java involved the tearing down of statues at a temple in Tuban, highlighting ongoing cultural and religious conflicts.

In West Java, the interplay between religion and culture is particularly intense, with the majority (97%) of the population being Muslim, intertwining Sundanese identity with Islam. This is encapsulated in the slogan: 'Sundanese are Islam, Islam is Sundanese' (Woodward, 2019). Despite these tensions, areas such as Kampong Toleransi exemplify peaceful coexistence between Chinese and Sundanese communities (Yuliawati et al., 2023), challenging the notion that Islam is detached from local ethnic cultures. Puppetry, criticized by both conservative Islamist and modernist groups, exemplifies the cultural artifacts most often targeted.

This paper specialises in Islamic performances in West Java that contradict the abovementioned phenomena. The historian Pacholczyk (1986), for example, observed that musical performances played during the

Wali Songo (Islamic) era were a transition to the Javanese Hindu (pre-Islamic) tradition (Pacholczyk, 1986). Outside Java, in Lombok, for example, Sasak (Islamic) music and Balinese (Hindu) music are often positioned in a binary position as harmonisation of two different religious values (Harnish & Rasmussen, 2011).

This research was conducted in Tasikmalaya City, West Java, in mid-2023 by a research team from the Center for the Study of Muslim Society (CSMS) and used a separate corpus. This study approached the topic from a cultural perspective, while the CSMS examined it from a musical anthropology angle. Preliminary observations and interviews positioned Sundanese music as a bridge between Islamic culture and Sundanese ethnicity, suggesting a syncretic blending rather than a dichotomy. Islam, as perceived here, is distinct from 'Arab' culture, aligning more closely with peripheral Javanese traditions. During the study, the high esteem for Islam among the Sundanese of West Java was evident, reinforcing the slogan 'Sundanese is Islam; Islam is Sundanese,' particularly in the context of Islamic performing arts influenced by strong tribal values.

This article examines the Islamic Sundanese frame-drum music genre, exploring how the people of Tasikmalaya articulate this musical performance as part of local music that is distinctly Islamic yet strongly nuanced by ethnicity. Using Bennett and Peterson's ethnography approach, this research reveals how music genres embody local and trans-local agendas, articulating recurring lifestyle meanings and showing how individuals or groups negotiate these into various activities (Bennett & Peterson, 2004). This study addresses a gap not covered by Simon Black, who discusses how urban movements born from critical efforts of street culture in poor, migrant working-class urban communities shape local musical identities (Black, 2014). In contrast, the Sundanese Islamic music genre emerges not from social movements but from a tradition where frame drums are taught from one generation to the next.

Furthermore, this research fills a void left by Appert by examining how music genres are influenced by the geographical presence of a society

and the significance of specific moments (Appert, 2017). However, it uniquely focuses on how local music shapes the identity of certain ethnic groups with specific ethnic, cultural, and religious traditions. It also challenges Aharon's findings, where the local identity of a community is said to be shaped by appropriating other ethnic music genres (in this case, Israeli appropriation of the Andalusian music genre) (Aharon, 2013).

This research aims to delve into the Sundanese ethnic Islamic music genre by examining its background, type of music, and its activists. Understanding the local context is crucial for comprehending how the Sundanese ethnic community intertwines religion (Islam) with ethnic culture through musical performances, while addressing the challenges and criticisms associated with merging these two aspects. It argues that the Sundanese Islamic music genre possesses a local agenda that integrates Sundanese and Islamic values, making this performing art a distinct identity of the Sundanese society. The study uncovers that the local authenticity of society is shaped by performing arts that amalgamate local ethnic culture with religious traditions.

Method

This study was based on an ethnographic expedition in Tasikmalaya, West Java precisely in a remote village called Cikeusal, Tanjungjaya subdistrict. It focuses the analysis on the Islamic musical genre using the frame-drum type with a musical instrument called *terebang*. The data concerning the Sundanese ethnic Islamic music genre includes its background, type of music, and its activists. Therefore, the data collection includes interviews with key informants such as local musicians, religious leaders, and community elders who are directly involved in the performance and preservation of the *terebang* music genre. Field observations were also integral to the study, allowing for in-depth analysis of live performances and rituals in which the *terebang* is utilized. Additionally, video and audio recordings of the performances were collected to facilitate a detailed examination of musical patterns and interaction among performers.

Documentation review was another crucial aspect, involving analysis of local archives, musical manuscripts, and previous research studies related to the musical traditions of the Sundanese people. This combination of qualitative methods aimed to capture the nuanced interplay between music, culture, and religious expression in this specific ethnographic context.

Findings and Discussion

Terebang in Tasikmalaya

Terebang is played at religious events such as the reading of the Prophet's history, known as al-Barzanji-an, accompanied by a typical Sundanese instrument, the salendro (Suhaya et al., 2020). In Tasikmalaya, this musical instrument is played by a local group named Candralijaya, which was established in 1966 with a unique Cikeusal genre style called '*beluk*,' meaning music without instrumental accompaniment. Although frame drums are played in various villages of Tasikmalaya, this music is particularly popular and renowned in the village of Cikeusal. The primary audience for this music tends to be the elderly, who are also the main performers, thus preserving this musical tradition in Sunda. Not many young people attend these performances; typically, they only participate briefly at the beginning and then soon leave. This situation indicates a lack of opportunity for generational regeneration, placing the tradition at risk of extinction. However, contrary to what might be expected, we found that the knowledge is not being passed down to the young but rather to the older generation.

Brakel observed that local performing arts in Java are usually part of syncretistic ritual ceremonies and involve the veneration of specific sites or figures (Brakel, 2004). While Brakel's argument is valid, it does not entirely apply in Cikeusal where *terebang* is played to commemorate Islamic events such as the *Maulid* (birthday) of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH and circumcision, with quite a few people using it for celebrations. This practice challenges Brakel's assumptions and leans more toward efforts at desacralization. Although some scholars, such as Acciaioli and Newland, argue that ritual desacralization aims to promote tourism with material and

worldly motives, and attempts to showcase the syncretism within Islam in West Java (Acciaioli, 1985, p. 152; Newland, 2000, p. 199).

Sundanese Muslims in Tasikmalaya

As the second-largest ethnic group in Indonesia after the Javanese, the Sundanese people are 97.29% Muslim (Suryadinata et al., 2003, p. 103), giving rise to the label 'Sundanese are Islam, Islam is Sundanese'. Tasikmalaya is part of Sunda, and history has recorded that Tasikmalaya became a small cultural center in Sumedang (which had its capital in Central Dayeuh) under the Islamic Mataram Sultanate. The influx of Muslims into Sunda became even more significant after the forced migration in 1965, during the transition to the tumultuous New Order government. This period was marked by a coup and physical conflict between the Soekarno government and the TNI (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia* or Indonesian Army) (Hoadley, 2005, pp. 8, 10–12, 16). This situation forced Muslims to migrate to Tasikmalaya, Garut, and Bandung, areas that were protected by the army (Hugo, 2006, p. 73). Currently, there are around 1.8 million Muslims in Tasikmalaya, and there were 266 Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in 2019 (Pemerintah Kota Tasikmalaya, 2019). This popularity later earned Tasikmalaya the reputation of being one of the 'santri cities'.

Another indicator of the Islamic influence is that after the New Order, Tasikmalaya began to incorporate Islamic values and principles into regional law. The issuance of the Tasikmalaya Sharia-based Regional Regulation (*Perda Syariah*) provided a protective umbrella for Sundanese Muslims amid the political and social chaos following Soeharto's resignation. However, this *Perda Syariah* did not have a significant impact on Tasikmalaya because of the widespread chaos and the emergence of corruption practices that plagued both central and regional governments after the overthrow of the New Order (McLeod, 2000). The existence of this Sharia Regional Regulation at that time demonstrated that Islam had deeply penetrated aspects of the Sundanese people's lives and had been adopted into the regional government system.

Types of Sundanese Islamic Music Genres

Terebang Sejak

This Sundanese Islamic music genre features two types of drums. The first, *terebang sejak*, includes four to five drums of different sizes, typically played by one person per drum in unison. The rhythm varies depending on the event. In Cikeusal, the terebang sejak is traditionally played during the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, with rhythms derived from the *Kitab Mulud al-Barzanji*, more popularly known in West Java as the *Kitab Mulud*. However, the tradition fell into disrepair when this music was played at weddings. The *Kitab Mulud al-Barzanji*, authored by the village founder Haji Aki Hambali in 1961, combines Sundanese and Arabic and is inspired by Zainal Abidin Ja' far bin Hasan al-Barzanji's 17th-century work. The *Kitab Mulud* serves as an instruction manual for all *terebang sejak* performers, consisting of five main personnel—two vocalists and three backups to cover for any fatigue. Performances typically last all night until dawn.

Terebang sejak performances, enriched with Islamic motifs, accompany Islamic ceremonies, with songs and music following the intonations noted in the *Kitab Mulud*. Historically, *terebang sejak* has been part of the region since pre-Islamic times, passed down through generations. The spread of Islam in Java during the mid-14th century, particularly through trade routes like those in Banten, Cirebon, and Sunda, integrated Islamic culture into Javanese traditions (Gultom, 2018; Sulistiyono, 2021). The Sultanate of Banten and Cirebon represented the zenith of Islamic glory in Sunda, linking to the Demak Islamic empire. In other words, Islamic culture and art aspects were introduced and infiltrated Javanese culture and traditions. It is not impossible that the art of Islamic music, as musicologist Kunst found in Sunda, showed that the *Rangkasbetung* musical instrument was popular among West Javanese Muslims (Kunst, 2013, pp. 449–450).

The rhythmic text of *terebang sejak* originates from the *Kitab Mulud al-Barzanji*, and some lyrics are drawn from *Syi'rul Hisan* (Qur'anic verses about goodness). In places like Sumedang in West Java, this genre has been preserved as 'ritual music' since the 1930s, often intertwined with stories of

Muslim figures such as Shaykh 'Abdul Qadir Jailani, popularly involved in *manakiban* rituals. Given the Javanese affinity for ritual, integrating Islamic elements into this music has been a way to propagate Islam (Tickell, 2009). In contrast to the Candralijaya music group, they play more *beluk* than *sejak*. During the *Maulidan* event, the people of Cikeusal think that the 'spirit' of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH will be present when the drum bedug is beaten. There is a constant awareness that the Prophet will be present at assemblies (Muslim gatherings) to remember with prayer (*dhikr*, prayer) and song.

During *Maulidan* events, the residents of Cikeusal believe that the 'spirit' of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH is invoked when the bedug drum is played, fostering a communal atmosphere of remembrance through dhikr (prayer) and song. The use of *terebang sejak* in these rituals reflects a Sufi approach, reminiscent of the *Samā'* ceremonies that involve singing, dancing, and poetry to evoke divine remembrance. Integrating music into religious practices is central to contemplative traditions in Islamic Sufism (Lewisohn, 1997), creating an immersive experience where participants feel 'intoxicated by divine love'. According to the Sundanese people, especially Cikeusal, there is no means of getting closer to God in a plural manner other than congregational prayer and playing *terebang*.

Terebang Beluk

To distinguish it from *sejak*, *beluk* is older and is played without a musical rhythm; the instrument used is called *gebes*. In other words, *gebes* is the musical instrument, and *beluk* is the vocal art. Previously, both were played in a single performance, but nowadays, they are more often played separately. Occasionally, the *gebes* drum is played at *terebang sejak* performances. Another distinction from *sejak* is the larger size of the drum. Players of this Sundanese frame-drum genre must be physically and mentally robust, as the instrument is quite large, with a diameter of around 75 cm and made from jackfruit tree wood, each drum weighing 20-35 kilograms. Although it is played while sitting down, players must remain mentally

composed as performances last all night; thus, players lying down—whether inside or outside the performance—must not be distracted by other activities. For the Sundanese, wood from the jackfruit tree is considered robust, suitable for foundations or antiques. As such, the Candralijaya band possesses terebang musical instruments over 100 years old. Another difference from *sejak* is that the vocal text in *beluk* is unstructured and lacks a controlled sound system.

When interviewed, several *gebes* players mentioned that this music exudes a 'Sundanese-Islamic' aura, although it was initially confusing how music played without songs could convey a sense of sacredness. However, during observation, I noticed that the audience for *gebes* enjoyed the unsung rhythm of the pieces. Mr. Ujang Syahrul expressed his enjoyment of the authentic Sundanese rhythm, which invigorates those present. Another informant, Mr. Aceng, shared that his ancestors have played *terebang gebes-beluk* across generations, a practice in Sundanese called *sered*. He recalled that there were many bands like Candralijaya in the past, ranging from 10 to 17 groups. They would gather and play in open fields for competitions, an activity known as *grubug*, meaning 'gathering simultaneously'. According to him, the more bands that attended, the more enthusiastic the players became, as they showcased their skills in these competitions. In the context of the Islamic Mataram palace, another term for *grubug* is *garebeg*, used during ceremonies such as *sekaten* (commemoration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH), *syawalan* (Eid al-Fitr holiday), and *besaran* (Eid al-Adha holiday) (Karim & Raya, 2022; Woodward, 2011).

Terebang Beluk is a Sundanese Islamic musical genre characterized by an agricultural theme. Because it does not require precise arrangement or ensemble rules, this genre sometimes sounds rough and loud, contrasting sharply with its role's typically gentle and smooth character. According to Mr. Aceng, in the past, *terebang beluk* and outs were used by farmers to express their grievances through music. Typically, members of the group take turns performing as a means of regeneration. The message of this musical instrument is conveyed when it is sung, and the members of the Candralijaya

group project their voices loudly, akin to people screaming. This method mimics how farmers communicate across their distant and hilly fields. Most fields in Cikeusal are dry rice fields (*huma* fields).

In his monumental work 'Music in Java,' Kunst classified *terebang beluk* as ancient Sundanese music called *tembang nuhun*. It is referred to as '*tembang*' because it is sung with a specific arrangement to narrate stories so that lessons or values can be imparted (Kunst, 2013, p. 392). The people of Cikeusal call terebang *'tembang lumbung'* to honor the romance of the farmers' struggles, from planting to harvest. They endure various challenges, from acquiring seeds, planting, nurturing, combating pests, weathering hostile climates, and achieving bumper harvests, to selling their crops at fluctuating prices. This *tembang lumbung* also commemorates the farmers' success in the food self-sufficiency program initiated by President Soeharto during the New Order regime (Ariefiansyah & Herman, 2023; Hamilton-Hart, 2019). In the New Order era, the practice of plowing fields transitioned from using animal power (buffaloes) to machines (Dijkman & Leeuwen, 2019, pp. 143–144). In essence, *terebang beluk* represents the traditional method by which the Muslim community in Cikeusal cultivates crops, celebrated through this ancient Sundanese song.

Several farmers in Cikeusal have admitted that the romanticized version of the farmers' journeys during the Suharto era's food self-sufficiency program is no longer felt today. The switch to engine power has made their work more accessible, and they no longer express their grievances through song. Mahmudi, the son of Mr. Aceng, recalled how his father once owned buffalo. According to him, *terebang beluk* has transitioned to the urban stage. The Candralijaya band has taken the initiative to bring *terebang beluk* to urban audiences, performing at venues like the Tasikmalaya Arts and Culture Exhibition at Plaza Asia, Tasikmalaya City. This event was held on the Ground Floor of the mall and even featured a collaboration with vocalist Iwan Fals in 2010.

Candralijaya is one of the main actors in Terebang performances. The older generation in Cikeusal remains enthusiastic about preserving these frame drums. Meanwhile, the youth are interested in preserving the performing arts of Sundanese music but find playing traditional musical instruments somewhat 'boring.' However, several youth communities are keen to help the Candralijaya band preserve this music genre. After Suharto announced his resignation as President in 1988, these youth groups became concerned about the development of *terebang* and founded several 'Sundanese Music Lovers' communities.

Mr. Asep Zam Noer and Mr. Acong are two young individuals who frequently transition between traditional and modern stages. They formed the *Azan* Community and the *Cermin* Community, which have revitalized the authenticity of centuries-old *terebang* in the urban performing arts scene. To date, Mr. Asep Noer has engaged educational institutions such as the Cipasung Islamic Boarding School to study and help regenerate interest. This initiative is driven by the rhythm and arrangement developments that originated from the Mulud Book, a key reference in Sundanese Islamic boarding schools. Similarly, Mr. Acong has undertaken comparable efforts with the *Cermin* Community, mirroring those of the *Azan* Community. According to him, the urban stage is an ideal venue for the millennial generation to acquaint themselves with the legendary Sundanese performing arts.

Mr Asep Zam Noer and the *Azan* Community

The founder of the *Azan* Community is Mr. Asep Zam Noer, whose full name is Acep Zam-zam Noer. In 2001, through a Sharia Regional Regulation (*Perda Syariah*), Tasikmalaya was designated a 'Muslim City' by the regional government. This inspired Mr. Asep Zam Noer to establish the Azan Community as a means to preserve Sundanese Islamic culture, at a time when there was opposition trying to erase traces of Islamic art and culture in Sundanese society. In essence, the creation of the *Azan*

Community was Mr. Asep Zam Noer's method of safeguarding *terebang* through political channels.

From the *Azan* Community, Mr. Asep Zam Noer then founded the PNS Party (Nurul Sembako Party), which stands for '*Nurul*' (light in Arabic) and '*Sembako*' (Nine Basic Needs). Through the PNS Party, Mr. Asep Zam Noer criticized the Reform-era government for its lack of support for rural communities in agriculture, arts, and culture. Another layer of parody in 'PNS' refers to civil servants—who receive substantial salaries from the government yet are perceived as not siding with the people. With this party and the Azan Community, Mr. Asep Zam Noer encouraged all Sundanese to abstain from '*golput*' (*golongan putih* or white group), a term for those who refuse to vote in general elections, particularly the Presidential elections, as a strong protest against the government.

Furthermore, Mr. Asep Zam Noer invited the Cipasung Islamic Boarding School to teach *terebang* to the students (santri) so that they could become familiar with the art of Sundanese Islamic music, based on the Kitab Mulud. He also took the initiative to broadcast *terebang* performances on local radio and television channels. Even when airing on television, Mr. Asep Zam Noer labeled *terebang* as 'Sundanese Islamic Music' to introduce this Islamic performing art to the general public. Since Mr. Asep Zam Noer showcased *terebang sejak* and *beluk* on television and radio, many people outside the Sundanese community have begun to recognize *terebang*. He views this exposure as his contribution to preserving Sundanese Islamic culture. He also has a strong desire to counter the criticism from opponents of the *Perda Syariah*, who, according to him, are corrupt groups with worldly interests.

Mr Acong and the *Cermin* Community

Because the Candralijaya band was predominantly managed by the 'old people,' Mr. Acong, representing the 'young people,' took alternative steps to help preserve this Sundanese Islamic music genre. In 1998, similar to the Azan Community, Mr. Acong founded the *Cermin* Community to

encourage school children to learn about the musical traditions. If the schools did not accept this performing art, Mr. Acong invited children after school, including those who had dropped out, to Cikeusal for regular meetings—weekly and once a month—to practice playing *terebang*. Although *terebang* is typically played by 'old people' during traditional performances, Mr. Acong believes that young people should also be given the knowledge and practice of playing this musical instrument, along with the teachings of the *Kitab Mulud*.

Unlike the politically oriented Azan Community, the Cermin Community focuses more on preserving culture through educational and cultural initiatives that involve the private sector. In 2010, Mr. Acong contacted Candralijaya to facilitate a collaboration with national artists. During the New Year celebrations in Bandung and Tasikmalaya, Candralijaya successfully collaborated with the renowned vocalist and guitarist, Iwan Fals. This strategy proved quite successful as the Sundanese Islamic frame-drum genre, with Candralijaya as the performers, received special attention from the millennial generation and attracted thousands of viewers. Among the attendees were many students. Iwan Fals sang with guitar accompaniment, while Candralijaya complemented the performance with *terebang*. This epic combination of modern guitar and traditional drums created a unique blend, where Iwan Fals brought a pop-flamboyant style, and Candralijaya contributed a traditional sound that evoked an Old Sundanese feel.

Terebang and Rural-Urban Vibes

Every beat is silent when this frame drum is played in the village. However, when these frame drums are played in the city, they convey an authentic impression of 'Sundanese Islam.' Here, the researcher demonstrates how *terebang* can explore both contexts and position itself as a local identity, potentially beneficial for other ethnic performing arts with similar cultural character and spirit.

While part of the CSMS research team, the researcher attended an Islamic frame-drum genre performance in Cikeusal village, and felt different vibes compared to those in *Sasak* (Lombok) or at the *Keraton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat* (Central Java). The *Sasak* style is more prominent in ensemble, flow and melody rather than Islamic story elements. In the song *Lalo Ngaro*, performed on Musik Wonderland Indonesia 2 on August 17 2022, the female vocalist is seen wearing traditional *Sasak* clothing, complete with a *hijab* (a head covering like Muslim women). However, *Lalo Ngaro* only tells the story of a young man who went to the rice fields and met a woman on the way. This is similar to the Islamic musical at the *Keraton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat,* where the Islamic Mataram element subtly influences every aspect of the palace's cultural heritage and values. Even though it remains one of the Islamic sultanates in Java, Islamic elements add only a subtle touch to the palace's musical genre. Meanwhile, according to the researcher's analysis, the performance in Cikeusal village transcends the ethnic Islamic values inherent in the genre. Through Qureshi's analysis, it becomes evident that the nexus between sound and societal response is crucial, where the sonic sensation not only ignites enthusiasm but also awakens people (Qureshi, 2000, p. 801). In other words, the frame drum can instantly connect the audience, allowing them to immerse in the same emotive experience.

The term 'vibes' is used here because it focuses attention on the local rural atmosphere. Borrowing Canosa and Bennett's term, 'urban vibes in a rural setting,' *terebang* emerges as an art performance that represents ecological awareness with a rural aura. Canosa highlighted that 'urban vibes' develop because today's young generation has a more rural than urban local form. Rural spaces allow the younger generation to play rural music amidst urban vibes (Canosa & Bennett, 2021). The music's impact on the audience leads to varied responses depending on the situation. Mencke assesses that the combination of different modes of musical experience—from classical (traditional) music aesthetics to contemporary (modern) trends—among listeners and players in different contexts, places, and situations creates

unique vibes. By utilizing evidence from psychology and neuroscience research, the emotional response of inner calm provides a feeling of joy and new enthusiasm (Mencke et al., 2023). This is why Candralijaya portrays *terebang* as a venue to voice his grievances about being a village farmer. Furthermore, *terebang* aims to introduce the personal life of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH and his gentle and caring character to 'little people.' At these moments, the audience is also lost in this imaginative journey.

In the village vibes, as the music begins, the drummers' solemnity is evident as they close their eyes and sway from side to side. This mirrors the intensity of those lost in the ritual of dhikr (remembering God in Islam) during *istighosah* or *sholawatan*, where praise to the Prophet accompanies the rhythm of the songs. This tranquil atmosphere is also influenced by rural elements, such as the absence of vehicle noise or the hustle and bustle of urban areas. Conversely, in urban settings, the audience's response to this music performance differs significantly. For example, in the village, everyone recognizes *terebang* as a Cikeusal music genre that embodies Sundanese Islamic authenticity. However, in cities and urban communities, even those residing in West Java may still need to learn what *terebang* is. The researcher confirmed with a colleague from Bandung that they were not familiar with this Sundanese music genre. The activity organized by the *Cermin* Community, which showcases *terebang* and its players, the band Candralijaya at Mall Plaza Asia, serves to affirm the identity of *terebang* as a Sundanese ethnic Islamic musical genre on a modern stage.

Unlike in the village where *terebang* performances are live and involve only local performers and audiences, in urban areas, the involvement of cultural activists and stakeholders is necessary to create cultural events in public places such as malls. Moreover, these events must be planned for specific occasions, unlike in Cikeusal, where they can happen spontaneously. What Candralijaya achieved in collaboration with the capital's musician, Iwan Fals, exemplifies the engagement of cultural activists in this endeavor. Stakeholders such as malls, entrepreneurs, or local governments facilitate these performance events. The music performances by Candralijaya allow

urban audiences, particularly young people and millennials, to experience their Sundanese identity in ways they have never seen before. Meanwhile, for the people of Cikeusal, this performance is a routine tradition that connects them to the struggles of farming, intertwined with the story of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH's life journey, providing solace to their hearts that the Prophet too endured pain.

Village vibes, as Allen termed, the revival of local music is about "maintaining authenticity." The discourse of a strong local identity in Cikeusal through the steadfast efforts of the Candralijaya band and the two youth communities (Azan Community and Cermin Community) represents a renaissance of awareness that vernacular music genres are part of a series of historical processes shaping the authenticity of rural music. Allen also emphasized that the involvement of a single band underpins this identity formation, driven by a robust cultural impulse (Allen, 2010).

Challenges and Criticism of the Fushion of Sundanese Ethnicity with Islamic Culture

Here, the term 'Islamic culture' is used because this Islamic musical genre shares patterns with other regions in Indonesia, such as parts of Java and several Southeast Asian regions. In Thailand, the extinction and revitalization of Cambodian performing arts have occurred significantly. Khmer music, a traditional Thai music genre, has had to face this reality. However, a group of accomplished musicians, mentors, and players have made efforts to revive these Thai music traditions. A strong motivation for this revitalization is the role of tradition in educating (regenerating) and preserving religious rituals, Cambodian national identity, and the livelihood background of the musicians (Kartomi, 1995). Kartomi also confirmed that in Cikeusal, the challenge of preserving music is similarly rooted in three aspects found in Thai Khmer music: regeneration and preservation of traditions, Sundanese identity, and farmers as the main livelihood of the Cikeusal community. Here, the real challenge is the issue of regeneration, which still adheres to traditional principles. *Terebang* players are always

chosen from older age groups, preventing young people from being directly involved. Although Mr. Asep Zam Noer and Mr. Aceng have initiated efforts through the *Azan* Community and the *Cermin* Community, the method of regenerating this music genre has remained unchanged.

This sparked criticism from opponents of the Tasikmalaya Sharia Regional Regulation (*Perda Syariah*), who, according to Mr. Asep Zam Noer, are corrupt government officials opposed to establishing Islam as the foundation of regional law. Using his political methods, Mr. Asep Zam Noer responded to this criticism by establishing the Azan Community and the PNS Party. The Cipasung Islamic Boarding School supports this effort, teaching its students to play *terebang* as part of preserving Sundanese musical arts. Titon views efforts like this from an ecological perspective. While preserving local music as cultural heritage with the aid of applied ethnomusicologists and folklorists, the public still adopts a defensive stance in protecting cultural assets. This occurs due to sustainability interventions from interested parties who wish to segregate one culture (Titon, 2009). For instance, critics of *terebang* seek to separate Islam from Sundanese culture due to other, misaligned interests. Observing this phenomenon, these officials are hesitant to designate Tasikmalaya as an 'Islamic City.' Pourmohammadi argues that the definition of an 'Islamic City' transcends its physical form and structure. The 'Islamic City' theory, as introduced by the Qur'an, consists of three supporting elements: society, law, and city government. According to him, if these three elements are absent, then the definition of an 'Islamic City' cannot be established (Pourmohammadi et al., 2022). Although the Cikeusal community, which is predominantly Muslim, meets these criteria, the Sharia Regional Regulation, opposed by some Tasikmalaya government officials who advocate for its repeal, still does not suffice to make Tasikmalaya an 'Islamic City.'

The officials acknowledge Sundanese as the 'native' ethnic culture of Tasikmalaya but do not accept Islam as the law and governance. Although there are other motivational factors for this rejection, the necessary mechanisms to establish Tasikmalaya as an 'Islamic City' are not yet in place.

Moreover, the argument for an 'Islamic City' that emerged from an Islamic musical genre does not yet possess sufficient resources to meet these criteria

In fact, from a cultural perspective, this music genre meets the criteria for being considered an Islamic musical, as previously explained. In the village vibe, *terebang* is an iconic 'Sundanese Islamic' identity not found in Islamic culture in other parts of Java. Essentially, it bridges Sundanese culture with the spread of Islam. For example, the frame drum is iconic, symbolizing a prophetic tradition. This is supported by the biographical storyline of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH and the legal consensus on musical instruments permitted in Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) (Omar, 1964). *Terebang* instruments are also regulated in the Kitab Mulud al-Barzanji. These factors earn the genre widespread respect. Besides embodying Sundanese ethnic values, *terebang* also exalts Islamic values by musically narrating the history of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. The responses of players and spectators are central to this discussion. If this genre did not carry the 'Sundanese spirit' or 'Islamic spirit', it would be impossible for members of the Candralijaya group and the audience to enjoy the music accompanied by physical movements as if they were lost in the pleasure of dhikr. This resembles a Sufi movement, where dancers move their bodies repeatedly to celebrate the 'liberation of the soul' from all dependence, relying solely on 'God's Love'. For Sufis, dancing is a moment when they are 'drunk in love' with God, as if walking amidst the grass and green village vistas with flowers to present themselves to God's beloved servant (Maier, 1990).

Meanwhile, in Pakistan, the repetitive sound of drums from the Islamic musical genre can hypnotize the audience with a ritual dance called *dhamāl.* The imaginative expectation of creating *dhamāls* that are then displayed at various holy sites in Pakistan characterizes the actual devotional practices of rural communities and the urban poor in Sindhi and Punjab, expressing their spiritual feelings (Frembgen, 2012). Like *dhamāl, terebang* is an experience of complete and active mystical devotion to fulfill the 'social habitus' of village farmers, a typical village ritual act deeply embedded in Sundanese culture. Similarly, this experience of mystical devotion is fully

integrated into the local dimensions of Sindhi and Punjab, shared by Muslims with audiences from other religions, such as Hindus. Here, the contextual meaning of Cikeusal, predominantly farming, becomes the repertoire for *terebang* farmers to engage with nature (rice fields or fields) through the lens of Islamic spiritual romance.

Conclusion

The study of local music has garnered attention from world musicologists, some of whom focus on the structure of the instruments, while others adopt an anthropological approach to draw out the cultural aspects that shape musical genres. However, as explained in this paper, it has been challenging to find studies that illustrate a solid vernacular culture generated from religious elements. The Candralijaya band is a local Muslim element that upholds Islam as a principle of life. Furthermore, local rural music genres rarely make appearances on the urban stage. Through the efforts of the youth movements of the *Azan* Community and the *Cermin* Community, these genres have successfully reached an urban audience previously unaware of this music. By presenting a robust blend of Sundanese ethnic culture and Islamic performance rituals, this study explores the Sundanese Islamic music genre, which originated from two distinct sources: the Sundanese ethnic and the Islamic traditions. History records that *Rangkasbetung* has been popular among Muslims in West Java and is another name for *terebang*. Additionally, the arrangement and ensemble of *terebang*, as prescribed in the *Kitab Mulud al-Barzanji*, which contains the life story of Prophet Muhammad PBUH, is noteworthy. These two sources have merged to form a new genre that differs from others, such as the Muslim Sasak music in Lombok or the music at the *Keraton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat* in Central Java.

This type of sensation—silence, authenticity, and unity with nature—is not found in those genres. This study showcases these expressions on two different platforms: 'village vibes' and 'city vibes,' highlighting the strong identity of the vernacular ethnic music genre. With its ability to display these

aspects, this Sundanese Islamic music genre offers a broad comparative analysis with Islamic musical genres from other parts of the world, such as the Middle East with the concept of 'Sufi dance' that can 'free the soul' from dependence on anything other than God, and in Pakistan, where its Islamic music genre can create *dhamāl*, used in various Muslim and Hindu holy places as a form of genuine devotional practice for rural communities and the urban poor. Although *terebang* has successfully combined two different elements, it has faced negative criticism. Some Tasikmalaya government officials oppose the implementation of the Sharia Regional Regulation (*Perda Syariah*), which legalizes Islamic performing arts in public spaces as part of defining an 'Islamic City.' On the other hand, activists from the Sundanese Islamic music genre, such as the Azan Community and the Cermin Community, have struggled to meet the criteria for defining Tasikmalaya as an 'Islamic City' as proposed by Pourmohammadi, which includes requirements introduced by the Qur'an. Although the Cikeusal community represents an 'Islamic society,' the law (Perda Syariah) and the city government apparatus reject Pourmohammadi's criteria, leading to the failure of this definition in the area.

The findings of this study underscore the importance of integrating local music genres with broader cultural narratives, particularly in how they engage with urban audiences and address issues of identity and tradition. Given the unique confluence of Sundanese ethnic and Islamic cultural elements in the *terebang* music genre, further research could benefit from a more in-depth comparative analysis with other regional musical genres that incorporate religious elements. Future studies could explore the socio-cultural impacts of such music genres in urban settings, particularly how they influence youth culture and urban public life. Another productive area of study could be the exploration of how these musical performances can foster intercultural dialogue and understanding in diverse societies, potentially serving as a bridge between different religious and ethnic communities.

References

Acciaioli, G. (1985). Culture as art: From practice to spectacle in indonesia. *Canberra Anthropology*. https://doi.org/10.1080/03149098509508575

Aharon, M. (2013). Riding the Culture Train: An Ethnography of a Plan for Social Mobility through Music. *Cultural Sociology*, *7*(4), 447–462. https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975512457137

Allen, R. (2010). In Pursuit of Authenticity: The New Lost City Ramblers and the Postwar Folk Music Revival. *Journal of the Society for American Music*, *4*(3), 277–305. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196310000155

Appert, C. M. (2017). Engendering Musical Ethnography. *Ethnomusicology*, *61*(3), 446–467. https://doi.org/10.5406/ethnomusicology.61.3.0446

Ariefiansyah, R., & Herman, R. (2023). The Fantasy of National Rice Barn and Reality of Farmers in Indramayu. *Antropologi Indonesia*, *44*(2), 3. https://doi.org/10.7454/jai.v44i2.1026

Astuti, D., & Rismawati, R. (2018). *Adat Istiadat Masyarakat Jawa Barat*. PT. Sarana Pancakarya Nusa.

Bennett, A., & Peterson, R. A. (2004). *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual*. Vanderbilt University Press.

Black, S. (2014). 'Street Music', Urban Ethnography and Ghettoized Communities. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *38*(2), 700–705. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12098

Bornstein, L. N. (2020). The Romantic Fragment as a Key to a New Reading of Song of Songs. *Hebrew Studies*, *61*, 235–258.

Brakel, L. F. (2004). Islam and local traditions: Syncretic ideas and practices. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, *32*(92), 5–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/1363981042000263435

Canosa, A., & Bennett, A. (2021). Urban vibes in a rural setting: A study of the bush doof scene in Byron Shire. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *24*(3), 388–403. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2020.1730772

Dijkman, J., & Leeuwen, B. van. (2019). *An Economic History of Famine Resilience*. Routledge.

Frembgen, J. W. (2012). Dhamāl and the Performing Body: Trance Dance in the Devotional Sufi Practice of Pakistan. *Journal of Sufi Studies*, *1*(1), 77–113. https://doi.org/10.1163/221059512X626126

Gultom, A. M. (2018). Kalapa – Jacatra –Batavia - Jakarta: an old city that never gets old. *SPAFA Journal*, *2*. https://doi.org/10.26721/spafajournal.v2i0.173

Hamilton-Hart, N. (2019). Indonesia's Quest for Food Self-sufficiency: A New Agricultural Political Economy? *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *49*(5), 734–758. https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2019.1617890

Harnish, D. D., & Rasmussen, A. K. (2011). *Divine Inspirations: Music and Islam in Indonesia*. Oxford University Press.

Hoadley, A.-G. N. (2005). *Indonesian Literature Vs New Order Orthodoxy: The Aftermath of 1965-1966*. NIAS Press.

Hugo, G. (2006). Forced Migration in Indonesia: Historical perspectives. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, *15*(1), 53–92. https://doi.org/10.1177/011719680601500104

Karim, A., & Raya, M. K. F. (2022). The Acculturation Dynamics of the Sekaten Tradition in Modern Indonesia. *Dialog*, *45*(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.47655/dialog.v45i1.510

Kartomi, M. J. (1995). "Traditional Music Weeps" and Other Themes in the Discourse on Music, Dance and Theatre of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, *26*(2), 366–400. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463400007141

Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI. (2022). *Penetapan Warisan Budaya Takbenda*. Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI. https://warisanbudaya.kemdikbud.go.id/?penetapan&&list&limitto=1

Kunst, J. (2013). *Music in Java: Its history, its theory and its technique*. The Hague Martinus Nijhotf.

Lanti, I. G. (2002). Indonesia: the year of continuing turbulence. *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 111–129.

Lewisohn, L. (1997). The sacred music of Islam: Samā' in the Persian Sufi tradition. *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, *6*(1), 1–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/09681229708567259

Long, N. J. (2019). 'Straightening What's Crooked'? Recognition as Moral Disruption in Indonesia's Confucianist Revival. *Anthropological Forum*, *29*(4), 335–355. https://doi.org/10.1080/00664677.2019.1664984

Maier, J. (1990). Silence and Ecstasy: Watching the Sufis Dance. *Journal of Ritual Studies*, *4*(1), 41–64.

McLeod, R. H. (2000). Soeharto's Indonesia: a better class of corruption. *Agenda: A Journal of Policy Analysis and Reform*, *7*(2), 99–112.

Mencke, I., Seibert, C., Brattico, E., & Wald-Fuhrmann, M. (2023). Comparing the aesthetic experience of classic–romantic and contemporary classical music: An interview study. *Psychology of Music*, *51*(1), 274–294. https://doi.org/10.1177/03057356221091312

Mustapa, H. H. (2022). *Adat Istiadat Sunda*. Penerbit Alumni.

Newland, L. (2000). Under the Banner of Islam: Mobilising Religious Identities in West Java. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, *11*(3), 199–222. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1835-9310.2000.tb00056.x

Omar, H. M. T. J. (1964). *Hukum seni musik seni suara dan seni tari dalam Islam*. IDC. https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1130000797092429952

Pacholczyk, J. M. (1986). Music and Islam in Indonesia. *The World of Music*, *28*(3), 3–12.

Pemerintah Kota Tasikmalaya. (2019). *Grafik Jumlah Pondok Pesantren, Santri Dan Ustadz Tahun 2019*. https://data.tasikmalayakota.go.id/home/visualisasi/grafik-jumlah-pondok-pesantren-santri-dan-ustadz-tahun-2019/

Pourmohammadi, M., Habibi, S. M., Bahrainy, S.-H., & Davoudpour, Z. (2022). Rejecting the Theory of Islamic City as a Form. *The Monthly Scientific Journal of Bagh-e Nazar*, *19*(107), 99–110. https://doi.org/10.22034/bagh.2021.256752.4710

Purnomo, M., Yuliati, Y., Shinta, A., & Riana, F. D. (2021). Developing coffee culture among indonesia's middle-class: A case study in a coffee-producing country. *Cogent Social Sciences*, *7*(1), 1949808. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2021.1949808

Qureshi, R. (2000). How Does Music mean? Embodied Memories and the Politics of Affect in the Indian Sarangi. *American Ethnologist*, *27*(4), 805–838. https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.2000.27.4.805

Qureshi, R. B. (1993). Sufi Music and the Historicity of Oral Tradition. In *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History* (pp. 103–120). University of Illinois Press.

Suhaya, S., Rachman, A., Sinaga, S. S., & Alfayad, D. M. (2020). Percussion Pattern of Terebang Gede in Panggung Jati Studio, Panggung Jati Village, Serang. *Harmonia: Journal of Arts Research and Education*, *20*(2), Article 2. https://doi.org/10.15294/harmonia.v20i2.18067

Sulistiyono, T. (2021). Capitalism Expansion and Local Adaptation: Maritime trade network on the North Coast of Java during the early modern period. *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategic Studies*, *48*(1), 71–95.

Suryadinata, L., Arifin, E. N., & Ananta, A. (2003). *Indonesia's Population: Ethnicity and Religion in a Changing Political Landscape*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Tickell, P. (2009). Javanese Performances on an Indonesian Stage: Contesting culture, embracing change. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, *10*(1), 62–64. https://doi.org/10.1080/14442210802644783

Titon, J. T. (2009). Music and Sustainability: an ecological viewpoint. *The World of Music*, *51*(1), 119–137.

Van Zanten, W. (2014). Musical aspects of popular music and pop Sunda in West Java. In *Sonic Modernities in the Malay World* (pp. 321–352). Brill. https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/32254/1/613356.pdf#page=335

Vangen, S. & Winchester, N. (2014). Managing Cultural Diversity in Collaborations: A focus on management tensions. *Public Management Review*, *16*(5), 686–707. https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2012.743579

Weintraub, A. N. (2010). *Dangdut Stories: A Social and Musical History of Indonesia's Most Popular Music*. Oxford University Press.

Wijaya, S. (2019). Indonesian food culture mapping: A starter contribution to promote Indonesian culinary tourism. *Journal of Ethnic Foods*, *6*(1), 9-19. https://doi.org/10.1186/s42779-019-0009-3

Woodward, M. (2011). The Garebeg Malud: Veneration of the Prophet as Imperial Ritual. In M. Woodward (Ed.), *Java, Indonesia and Islam* (pp.

169–198). Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0056-7_5

Woodward, M. (2019). Islamicate Civilization and National Islams: Islam Nusantara, West Java and Sundanese Culture. *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage*, *8*(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.31291/hn.v8i1.542

Yuliawati, S., Dienaputra, R. D., & Yunaidi, A. (2023). Coexistence of the ethnic Chinese and Sundanese in the city of Bandung, West Java: A case study on Kampung Toleransi. *Asian Ethnicity*, *24*(3), 390–405. https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2022.2158784