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I Wayan Rai S.
Rector ISI Denpasar.
1. **Indonesian Performing Arts Market: Challenges and Opportunities**
   I Made Bandem (Indonesia Institute of the Arts, Jogyakarta) ...................... 1

2. **Gamelan Gong Beri: a Case Study of Acculturation in Balinese Music**
   I Wayan Rai S (Indonesia Institute of the Arts, Denpasar) .......................... 6

3. **Strategic Building 2005 – 2009 Research And Public Servise Institution (LP2M) Indonesian Institute of The Arts (ISI) Denpasar**
   A.A. Rai Kalam (Indonesia Institute of the Arts, Denpasar) ...................... 20

4. **Pluralism and Conflict Management in Cultural Religion Perspective of Hindu Learning Through the Wisdom Of Predecessors**
   Ida Bagus Gde Yudha Triguna (Indonesia Hindu University, Denpasar) ........ 28

5. **Preserving and Developing the Balinese Language**
   Ni Luh Sutjiati Beratha (Udayana University Denpasar) ............................ 45

6. **Coexistence of Balinese People in Yogyakarta**
   I Wayan Dana (Indonesia Institute of the Arts, Jogyakarta) .................... 54

7. **Reification of Paradigms Neo-Expanionism of Art Practitioners in Indonesia**
   Soegeng Toekio M (The College of the Arts Indonesia, Surakarta) ............ 62

8. **Revealing Musical Meanings with Titles of Gendhing a Javanese Gamelan Examples**
   Santosa ((The College of the Arts Indonesia, Surakarta) ...................... 81

9. **The Existence Bali’s Shadow Show as Dynamics Cultural in Era Modernization**
   I Gusti Ngurah Seramasara (Indonesia Institute of the Arts, Denpasar) ....... 90

10. **Studies on Women Hegemony of Custom and Tradition Structure**
    I Nyoman Dana (Indonesia Institute of the Arts, Denpasar) ..................... 99

11. **Marginal Artists from Bali Marginal Arts: a Short History**
    Jean Couteau (EHESS Sorbone University France) ............................. 112
12. Calonarang Dance Drama Performance of Women Tragedy
   Ni Made Wiratini (Indonesia Institute of the Arts, Denpasar).................. 133

13. Indonesian Institute of the Arts and the Tradition of the Penasar
   Ron Jenkins (Wesleyan University, USA)............................................. 141

14. Natural Love, Base Expression in Architectural and Fine Art in Bali
   I Made Merta (Udayana University Denpasar)...................................... 145
GAMELAN GONG BERI: A CASE STUDY OF ACCULTURATION IN BALINESE MUSIC

I Wayan Rai S

Abstract

One of the most unique ensemble found in Balinese music is Gamelan Gong Beri. It is unique in its historical background, instrumentation, musical function, and value within its society. This particular Balinese ensemble found in two villages, i.e., Renon and Semawang in south Bali. Gamelan Gong Beri shows that the cultural contact between Bali and other cultures has been occurred since long time ago.

Based on ethnomusicological study, in this paper I will focus on one particular tradition, i.e., Gamelan Gong Beri Renon, and discuss briefly its historical background, musical function, the ensemble, the gending (musical piece), as well as its cultural value.

Key Words: Gamelan, gong beri and acculturation

I. Historical Background

According to a Balinese-Indonesian dictionary (Kamus Bali-Indonesia) “gong beri” means a gong that is used in the battle. The word “bheri” is mentioned in the prasasti Blanjong (Blanjong inscription) found near Renon and Semawang village. Writing inscribed on the stone is dated 835 caka (913 A.D.).

According to Jaap Kunst, “In old Javanese and Balinese literature on occasionaly finds the gong mentioned either under the name that of bheri, bhaírí or bahirí (Sanskrit: bheri, Balinese: berí). The word “bheri” is also mentioned in: Wirata Parwa (996 A.D.), Adi Parwa (c.1010). Arjuna Wiwa-

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1) Material for this paper has also been published under title Balinese Gamelan Gong Beri (Prasasti Denpasar, 1998).
2) The First cassette recording was made in August 1986. at Pura Baris Renon. Later, in various temple ceremonies in Renon (Pura Desa, Pura Dalem, and Pura Baris), I was also able to make other cassettes recordings, video tapes, photographs, and slides. On February 1, 1995, I collected an additional eight hours of video tape recording during the odalan (temple ceremony) held at Pura Baris Renon.
ha (c. 1040). Bharatayuddha (1157 A.D.), Rangga Lawe (1334), Sutasoma (1375), Kidung Sunda (14th c.), and Kidung Sundayana or Kidung Sunda version C. In addition, the word “bheri” appears in Bisma Parwa, Caturyuga, Kakain Haricraya, Kidung Harsawijaya, Nawaruei, Kakain Ramawijaya, Sorandaka, Sudamala, Udyogaparwa, Usana Bali, Uttara Kanda and Wangbang Wideha. Further, in Niticastra, the word “bhaihiri” is mentioned; in Ramayana, the word “bheri” and “bhaihiri” are also found. In other literature, Sri Tanjung and Tantri Kamandaka, it is called “beri”.5

In the two-volume study Music in Java, Jaap Kunst also provides several illustrations (e.g. II421, 422, 452); but these Javanese instruments are small compared to the Balinese Gong Beri.6

Mantle Hood also has made literary reference to the Javanese gong baihiri, a beri with a kind of frame around the edge, translated from Javanese script in the seven-volume manuscript housed in the palace of the Sultan of Yogyakarta.7 There is no indication of size.

In Lontar Prakempa, a 19th century Balinese gamelan manuscript, gong Beri is not mentioned explicitly. But, in his recent study about Lontar Prakempa, I Made Bandem has also added six more gamelan in his chart, and Gong Beri is one of them.8

II. Gamelan Gong Beri In Renon

According to people in Renon,9 the term “Gong Beri” can refer either to the “instrument” or the “ensemble” in which it is found. The instrument is actually a pair of flat gongs found in Renon and the neighbouring village Semawang.10 The names are onomatopoetically derived “Ber” and “Bor”.

There are three accounts of the origin of Gong Beri in Renon: 1) the account relating to I Renggan and I Renggin; 2) the story of the purchase of Gong Beri from sailors; and 3) information related by Ida Pedanda Istri Mas.

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5 Ibid. p.07-117.
9 Renon is village located near a harbour in Kotamadya Denpasar, South Bali.
10 In November 1998, I Found that there is a Gong Beri in Puri Tegal Suci Tampaksiring, Gianyar. The function of this instrument is usually to celebrate the harvest season and is used by the farmers.
I. I Renggan and I Renggin

It is said that in Java there was a king who had two children, I Renggan and I Renggin. The two children had opposite characters. I Renggan had a good character; his sister I Renggin had a bad character. She practised "penestian" (black magic). Because of this she was sent out of the kingdom. She went to Bali and settled in Nusa Penida. Meanwhile, I Renggan, because of his good character, became the king's most trusted associate.

During this era, the king of Bali, Sri Kesari Warmadewa, was still a Buddhist, while the king of Java was a Hindu. The king of Java wished for the Balinese king and his people also to become Hindu. He told I Renggan to go to Bali and meet with Sri Kesari Warmadewa and to convince him to convert to Hinduism. I Renggan went to Bali by ship with 74 soldiers. On this ship he brought the Gong Beri. Enroute, I Renggan stopped in Nusa Penida and by coincidence met his sister. I Renggan told I Renggin his purpose in coming to Bali, and if the king and people of Bali refused to convert, Javanese soldiers would invade. I Renggin told her brother not to carry out this mission, because she knew it would be impossible for the Javanese to conquer Bali, since Sri Kesari Warmadewa had supernatural power bestowed upon him by Bhatara Mahadewa, the god of the holy mountain Gunung Agung. I Renggan was insulted by his sister's words. He retorted that it was unnecessary to worry about his own power. And with that he left his sister and continued on to Bali, landing in Bualu village, where he consolidated, his troops and prepare to attack Bali.

However, on Gunung Agung, Bhatara Mahadewa was already aware of I Renggan's intention. When I Renggan and his soldiers left Bualu and sailed up the coast, the boat suddenly split in half. Many of the soldiers drowned; only 14 of the original 74 were saved. They got to shore by using one half of the boat as a sailboat, and they were able to save the gong beri. They landed at Blanjong in the Sanur area. They stayed there in built themselves temporary shelter. Believing that the wreckage of the boat had saved their lives, they worshiped the wood.

After they had settled there for quite a long time, they encountered more problems, also originating in the sea. At low tide, huge quantities of fish jumped on to the sand and died in the sun. Armies of ants carried the rotting fish write into the village; the stench and the ants made it impossible to continue living there. The king of Bali heard about the settler's predicament and came to the village hopping to solve the problem. But he soon realized that the settlers were in fact his enemies. The king of Bali did two things. First, he moved their settlement northwest to a swampy area and instructed

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11 Related to me orally by Pemangku Desa at the meeting held at the Pura baris Renon, on June 18, 1992.
them to make it liveable. Second, he built a pracasti, a type of temple inscribed with ancient writing in Blanjong.\(^\text{12}\)

The Javanese settlers brought gong beri to their new home. After they succeeded in transforming the swamp land into the village, they called it Renon.\(^\text{13}\) By now they were impoverished and force to sell everything they owned, including Gong Beri, in order to survive. It was sold to Sesetan, a village southwest of Renon. Not all the settlers remained in Renon. Some moved to Camenggaon, where they built a temple called Pura Lantangidung. Others, moved to Cerancam, others to Yang Batu.

The inhabitants of Sesetan considered Gong Beri a sacred instrument and used it, with other instrument, to accompany dance. However, whenever Gong Beri was used in a performance, one of the performers died soon after. This happened consistently for along time. Therefore, people came to the conclusion that Gong Beri did not belong in Sesetan. It was than taken to Abian Kapas, it was used by the youth during wedding ceremonies to accompany newlyweds as they paid their ceremony visit to the home of the groom’s extended family. And also to create a festive atmosphere, when the couple’s friends visited them at home. But everytime Gong Beri was used in this way, one or both of the young couple died soon after. So the people of Abian Kapas stopped using it.

Meanwhile, in Renon, the village elders hear messages from the gods (bawos sakeing embang) saying that Gong Beri must be return to Renon. They had a meeting, and then went to Abian Kapas to explain what they had heard. The people of Abian Kapas readily agreed. Since that time, Gong Beri is found in Renon, and it is used to accompany dance, probably what is now known as Baris Cina. It is also believed that Gong Beri and Baris Cina represent their “pengayom jagat,” a sacred object that safeguards the village or is the protector of the universe.

2. The story of purchase of gong Beri from sailors\(^\text{14}\)

Pan Tama was told the following by I Letung, and old man from Lantang Bejuh, Sesetan who heard the story from his grandfather. I Letung’s ancestor bought Gong Beri from “wong juragan”, i.e sailors. After the gong was bought, villagers created a dance to be used with Gong Beri. The new dance and instruments supported village activities, such as temple festival. The results were bad; everytime Gong Beri was used in performance, someone among the musicians or dancers either died or became seriously ill. Accordingly, the people of sessetan stopped using Gong Beri and put it away.

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\(^{12}\) Prasasti Blanjong is found in Blanjong village. Although some of the writing has deteriorated, the word ‘beri’ is legible. See further, R. Goris, *op.cit.*

\(^{13}\) The word “Renon” derives from the root word “rena” means happy.

\(^{14}\) Related to me orally by Pemangku Baris at the meeting on June 18, 1992.
For a long time, it rusted in storage. Finally, the Gong Beri moved to Abian Kapas, where it was used in wedding ceremonies (as above). The same horrible result occurred; the couple died, so Gong Beri was moved back to Renon.

3. Information from Ida Pedanda Istri Mas.\textsuperscript{15}

This story was told by Ida Pedanda Istri Mas to Pemangku Baris, Renon. According to her, Bhatara Ratu Tuan (god of Gong Beri and Baris Cina) had three siblings. Their names were Ratu Tuan Mas Medaeng, Ratu Ayu Gede, and Ratu Ayu Sengkerin Jagat. Ratu Tuan Mas Medaeng owned Gong Beri, in Griya Delod Pasar. Ratu Ayu Sengkerin Jagat owned the “Cengceng Kebes,” now located in Suwung village. This is all information given by Ida Pedanda Istri Mas.

Based on the data mentioned above, it is likely that the origin of Gamelan Gong Beri, particularly in Renon, started at least in the 8\textsuperscript{th} century, as inscribed in the Blanjong inscription, or possibly even earlier. Then, over period of time, the tradition surrounding it has developed through cultural contact between Bali and other cultures.

Today, Gamelan Gong Beri is an essential tradition in Renon village. It is regarded as a sacred ensemble, because it is believed that Gamelan Gong Beri represents their “pengayom jagat” or the protector of the universe. This ensemble is used to accompany a ceremonial dance called Baris Cina, a type of Balinese sacred dance suggestive of Chinese influence. It is claimed that sometimes the dancers in trance are speaking Chinese, although this not yet been confirmed.

The idea, dance structure, dance movement, costumes, and musical accompaniment of Baris Cina depict soldiers in battle. Eighteen male dancers are devided into two groups: Baris Gede or Baris Selem or Baris Ireng and Baris Cenik or Baris Putih or Baris Petak. Each group, therefore, consists of nine dancers, one whom acts as a “pengater” or leader of the group.

The costumes look like military uniform consisting of a soft round-brimmed hat (like Navy hats); a loose, long-sleeved, hip-length jacket; a sash worn diagonally across the chest; and baggy trousers. The dancers are barefoot and carry swords. For Baris Putih, the customs are white; for Baris Selem they are lack. The leaders can be distinguished by their costumes: both wear a grey-green hard hat similar to Dutch hats. Each wears a beard, white for Baris Putih and Black for Baris Selem. Their sashes are “poleng” (black and white plaid); and the Baris Selem wear red pants.

\textsuperscript{15} This priest was from Geria Delod Pasar, Sanur. Her story was related to me orally by Pemangku Baris at the meeting on June 18, 1992.
The movements of Baris Cina are derived from the martial arts but have been stylized. The pengater of the Baris Selem begins the dance with a solo demonstration. When he is finished, he stands still and the rest of the Baris Selem enter in two lines of four dancers. With the pengater leading in front, the group executes a dance in unison. When they are finished, they sit in front of the Gong Beri. Then, the entire sequence is repeated by the Baris Putih. The battle section follows in which the two groups fight, one on one, with swords. The climax occurs when some or all the dancers and the musicians go into trance. Although is suggested by the explanations given by three pemangku (priests): Pemangku desa, Pemangku Dalem, and Pemangku Baris.

Pemangku Desa explained it as follows: “China ane merupa ciri-ciri anak lakar tedun, yen ring tityang dumun niki, merasa ja sampun tityang rereha teken petenge, bentuk ipune care model gulem kenten artine, peteng ampun teka kenten dumun, aaaaaaa.....Yen sampun tityang merasa tangkeba teken petenge nika, engsap ampun tityang, niki ciri amu nika, ciri merekak ten kenten ya, Cuma tityang sendiri yang merasakan wenten keto kene malu, hubungane kepada yang terlibat saja ten kenten dumun, amunika wenten cilna-cilna ane kera sa antuk tityang, ane sida antuk tityang ngaturang.”

In translation: “The symptom of someone about to go into trance, especially my own, is a feeling of darkness coming over me like a cloud, darkness is coming, aaaaaa....and if I feel the cloud has already covered me, I’m unconscious, it sounds like I’m bragging, because only I myself can feel it, it only happens to the person in trance.....those are the symptoms that I can feel, that I can tell you.”

Pemangku Dalem explained: “Yen tiang jeg ja biasa tiang kene, cara anak sing keraanah keto asane, kewala tiang lek. Yen yeh matan tiange, yeh cunguh tiange sing dadi baan ngerim kin awak tiange ngejer, monto nden malu cirine, sampun kenten disampun encegina, ical sampun leke.”

In translation: “As for me, I feel the same as usual, just like someone who’s not going into trance, but I feel embarrassed. Tears and snot, I can’t stop them, my body’s shaking, those are the symptoms, after that when it (the deity) comes to me, I’m not embarrassed anymore.”

Pemangku Baris explained as follows: “Jeg ja kadi nak tangkeb gulem ja sampun kenten. Jeg ten ampun pangghih napi, jeg ja gulem sampun.”

In translation: “Just like someone covered by a cloud, I can’t see anything other than darkness.”

The colors, black and white, represent the dualism, evil and good (one informant said Buddhism and Hinduism), and the battle represents the fight between them. It is interesting that in this dance the Baris Selem representing evil enter first. The idea is that evil should be effaced by good. It is also interesting that the dance does not end with any ultimate outcome of the fight. Baris Cina is performed either in the context of “sauh sabda” or as part
of calendrical temple festival.\textsuperscript{16} Sauh sabda is a vow made to Ratu Tuan (the God of Gong Beri and Baris Cina), usually at the time of family illness, to perform Gong Beri and Baris Cina are performed both in Pura Baris and temple around Renon and other villages.

The group who performs Gong Beri and Baris Cina is called Pemaksan Alit.\textsuperscript{17} Pemaksan Alit is member of the temple, Pura Baris, compromised of those people who are directly responsible for the performance of Gong Beri and Baris Cina, i.e. the musicians and dancers. They are usually taken from the young generation. As members they have daily obligations, taking care of the costumes and instruments, cleaning the temple, etc., as well as performing. Today there are 45 members.

III. Ensemble

The Gamelan Gong Beri ensemble consists of gongs, cengceang (cymbal), bedug (drum), and sungu (conch shell); all together there are 11 instruments. These instruments are:

1. Ber, a flat gong.
2. Bor, a flat gong.
3. Tawa-tawa Ageng or Pung, a bossed gong.
4. Tawa-tawa Alit or Pir, a bossed gong.
5. Kempli or Pu, a bossed gong.
6. Bebende or Teng, a flat gong.
7. Kajar or Kluk, a bossed gong.
8. Klenang or Nang, a bossed gong.
9. Cengeang Kopyak, a pair of cymbals.
10. Bedug or Bebedug, a barrel shaped drum.
11. Sungu, a conch shell.

The pitch measurements of this ensemble are as follows:

1. Ber : 0 D\# + 30 cents.
2. Bor : 0 d\# + 40 cents.
3. Tawa-tawa Ageng or Pung: o F - 10 cents.
4. Tawa-tawa Alit or Pir: 1 C\# - 20 cents.
5. Kempli or Pu: 1 G\# + 20 cents.


\textsuperscript{17} There are two kinds of Pemaksan: Pemaksan Gede and Pemaksan Alit. Pemaksan Gede includes all the people involved in Gong Beri and Baris Cina, even the members of Pemaksan Alit. There are currently 113 members. Anyone can be a members of Pemaksan Gede; the only obligation is attending the temple festival of Pura Baris, a temple which exist solely for the consecration and performance of Gong Beri and Baris Cina. Pura Baris is located in the banjar Kelod, Renon, Kecamatan Denpasar Selatan, Kodya Denpasar, Bali.
6. Bebende or Teng: 0 B + 20 cents.
7. Kajar or Kluk: 0 A-20 cents.
9. Sungu: 1 A + 0 cents.

The measurements show that the relative pitch of each instrument used in Gamelan Gong Beri is “unique”. It is different from the relative pitch commonly used in other Balinese Gamelan traditions, more specifically in regard to the “Angkep-angkepan”, i.e. the totality of the sound. This is because aside from typical Balinese instruments that make up this gamelan, there are also foreign instruments. The pair of flat gongs called Ber and Bor in fact seem to have originated in China. These types of gongs are still found today in Yunan, south-west China. Further, one of the knobbed gong in this ensemble, called Tawa-tawa Ageng, is very similar to gongs found in Kalimantan, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The bedug, a barrel shaped drum, used in this ensembles, suggest two possibilities. First, it could be just a name of drum; and secondly, it show the influence of Islam. In Indonesia, the Bedug is found and used in the mosque. In the case of Gamelan Gong Beri it seems to suggest the second possibility. This also supported by the fact that the offerings for Gamelan Gong Beri and Baris Cina may not include pork, the meat that is usually favored in Bali. Instead, it must be beef. Finally, the gong stand consists of four metal poles supporting cross bars are marked “Germany”. They were used as gun stands in World War II.

There first six gongs in the list above are suspended from a stand in the shape of three sides a square. During a performance, the musicians playing the kajar, klenang, bedug, cengceck kopyak and sungu usually sitting in a row in front of the gongs with the bedug player in the center.

Eleven musicians are usually required in performance, one to an instrument. The bedug is played on both ends, the player holding a panggul (mallet) in each each hand. It is played with Balinese drumming technique. The bedug player has a leading role of providing polirhythmic accents. The sungu is the only aerophone of the ensemble. It is played as loudly and as countinously, as possible. Its sound remaining instruments, all gongs, play interlocking rhythms, forming a countinuous ostinsto.

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18 Information from Prof. Dr. I Made Bandem. Interviewed on January 1995, at STSI Denpasar, Bali.
19 The bedug is also a name of a small framed drum used in Gamelan Gong Luang, a seven-tone pelog, found in Tangkas, Klungkung. The Term ‘bedug’, is mentioned in Malat. For further, Jaap Kunst, Hindu-Javanese Musical Instruments, 1968, p. 109.
20 The priest, Pemangku Baris, also believes in the second possibilities. Interviewed on June 18, 1992.
IV. Gending (Musical Pieces)

Gamelan gong beri is used only to accompany a particular sacred dance known as Baris Cina. As mentioned above, the ideas, costume, dance structure, and dance movements of this Balinese ritual dance depict soldiers in battle.

There are two type of Gending or Musical Pieces used in Gamelan Gong Beri: 1) Gending Baris Gede to accompany the first group, i.e. Baris Selem; and 2) gending Baris Cenik to accompany the second group, i.e. Baris Putih. In Gending Baris Gede, the tawa-tawa ageng or pung always plays a leading role. But, in Gending Baris Cenik, the tawa-tawa alit or pir takes the leading role.

The musical structure of Gending Baris Gede and Gending Baris Cenik are the same, and both consists of three sections: Kawitan (introduction), Pengadeng (slow section), and Pesiat (fighting section). Both gending have variation in tempo (fast, slow, fast) and density.

The following is an example of a typical gending of Gending Gong Beri Renon, recorded at Pura Baris Renon on August 1986. (transcribed) by Tom Whitman.

Example is shows the entire kawitan through the beginning of the pengadeng. The kawitan begins with unmetered introduction played by the Bedug (drum). This usher in the four-beat colotomic pattern. Bor and Pir are struck simultaneously, functioning akin to Gong in other genres in Balinese music; though transcribed as a down beat, this is considered beat 4 in Balinese practice. In each cycle, Bende is struck twice (on beats 1 and 3) and Bir is struck once (on beat 2). The most active Gong, Pung, plays three strokes during the second half of the cycle. The tempo increases gradually until the Klenang enters: this marks the beginning of Pangadeng section, which is in a moderately slow tempo. For the remainder of Pangadeng (not shown), the Cengeeng Kopyak and Bedug play variations on the rhythms shown in this transcription; the other instruments continue unchanged.

Example I.b and I.c show two excerpts from the pesiat section. The first is in a rather fast tempo; the second is extremely quick. The colotomic pattern is unchanged, but with additional strokes on pung that lend these passages a sense of heightened urgency. Example I.d shows the conclusion of Baris Selem, with an abrupt ralentando evidently led by a loud cue in the Bedug.

In baris Putih (Example II, page 19) the colotomic pattern as played by Bor, Ber, and Bende is essentially the same as in the Baris selem. Pir and Pung, however, have traded role: now the function of Gong is taken by Bor and Pung, while Pir Plays during the second half of the cycle. Example IIa shows a typical cycle from the Pengadeng, in a moderate tempo. Example IIb shows an interesting variant which occurs several times in the Pesiat: here the colotomic cycle has been shortened to three beats, with Bor, Pung,
Bende, ber each playing once per cycle. The music is otherwise similar to Baris Selem.

Gong Beri Examples

Example 1:
Baris Selem
Kawina

Pung
Kajar
Tiwa-2 Ageng
Bende
Bor
Pir
Suatu
Ceng-2 Kopyak
Bedug

4 1 2 3 4 (nc)

J = c. 60 [Gradual accel...

ref.
V. Summary and Conclusion

Gamelan Gong Beri is an unique ensemble in Bali, which can be seen from its historical background, musical tradition, and its cultural value. Its origin goes back at least to the 8th century, as inscribed in Blanjong inscription. Over period of time, it has accumulated the influence of contact with other traditions in Java and those originating outside Indonesia.

In Renon Village, Gamelan gong Beri is regarded as a sacred ensemble and is used to accompany a type of Balinese ritual dance known as Baris Cina. People in Renon believe that gamelan gong Beri and Baris Cina represent their "Pengayom Jagat" or protector of the universe.

Further research will yield additional examples, I am sure, acculturation and syncretism in Bali.

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