

# Indonesia

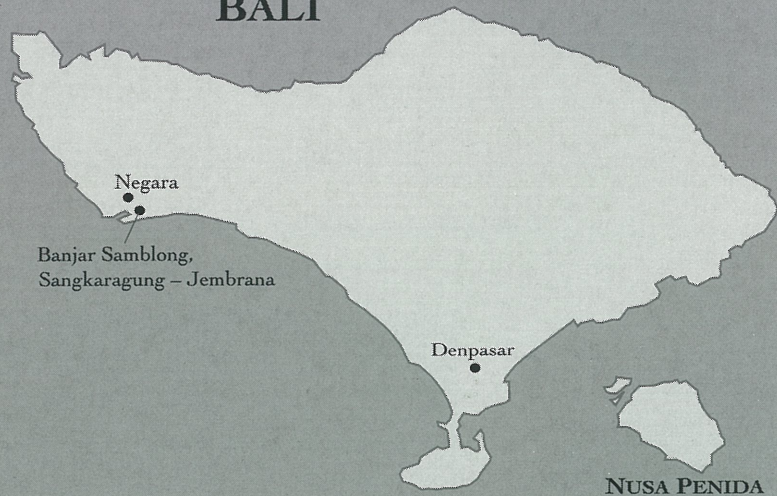
## Jegog: The Rhythmic Power of Bamboo

*I Nyoman Jayus' Bamboo Ensemble  
from the Northwest of Bali*

MUSIC OF THE EARTH



# BALI



# Indonesia

## THE RHYTHMIC POWER OF BAMBOO

*I Nyoman Jayus' Bamboo Ensemble from the Northwest of Bali*

## Track Listing

**Bamboo Ensemble: Jegog Jayus from Banjar Samblong,  
Sangkaragung-Jembrana/Bali**

1. TRUNGTUNGAN  
(Music to gather the villagers for community work) . . . . . 10:16
2. JALAK PUTIH  
(Music to entertain an assembly during periods of waiting) . . . . 20:56
3. BARONGAN  
(Music to entertain an assembly during periods of waiting) . . . . 24:49
4. GOPALA  
(Original composition by  
I Nyoman Jayus) . . . . . 10:59
- Total time* . . . . . 67:00

*Non-English musical types and styles are indicated by italics. Titles are in capital letters  
Because these are field recordings, there may be some extraneous noise despite the high fidelity utilized.*



## Field Notes

by *Martin Ramstedt*

# Bali

Separated from the eastern tip of its larger neighbour Java by only two kilometers, the island of Bali is one of the 27 provinces of the Republic of Indonesia. The huge mountain range which divides the island's total area of 5633 square kilometers into distinct geographical zones is part of the so-called "ring of fire" that embraces the Pacific Ocean from both sides. This volcanic mountain range runs 145 km from the western tip of Bali to the eastern tip of the island, leaving only a narrow strip of coast in the north, north-east and northwest. The district of Jembrana, the home of Jegog, encompasses the western part of the mountain range as well as the narrow strip of the northwestern coast.

In contrast to the eastern part of the mountain range with the still-active volcanoes Gunung Agung (3143m) and Gunung Batur (1717m) and several lakes of volcanic origin,

the mountain area of Jembrana consists of old volcanoes that are extinct and only 1,500m high. They are covered with thick primeval forest and cut through by deep ravines. The rivers running through this part of the mountain range do not carry much water during the dry season, so the jungle has been totally unspoiled by agricultural activity. Although the vast jungle area of Jembrana was proclaimed "Bali Barat National Park", very few scientists or ecotourists have visited this region due to the density of the jungle. It is here where a special kind of bamboo grows which is not found elsewhere in Bali and from which the Jegog orchestras are made. The thickest trunks of this bamboo can reach a circumference of 70 cm. As bamboo resonators they produce the deep chthonic sound for which the Jegog is famous.

The strip of the northwestern coast

is a narrow plain which receives water from rivers rising in the mountains. In former times this water was sufficient for wet-rice cultivation only during the rainy season, but a new dam built to the north of Negara, the capital of Jembrana, has made

irrigation possible the whole year round. In spite of dangerous under-currents offshore, fishing is still a necessary complementary nutritional source for the comparatively few inhabitants of this district. The hard life and modest circumstances of the



farmers still ploughing their fields with water buffaloes has not prevented them from developing a kind of music which, on the one hand, requires no great material expenses and, on the other hand, deserves to be counted among Bali's most dazzling art forms.

Jegog has always been considered a somewhat "boorish" kind of music by Balinese outside Jembrana, especially by the vast majority living on the fertile southern slopes of central Bali, where in former times many major and minor courts competed for aesthetic excellence and prestige. After the Dutch conquest of Bali, this aesthetic competition has been continued by the

villages which have created new art forms that are still heavily influenced by the classical aesthetic standards.

This aesthetic tradition, along with the spectacular rice terraces and the rich temple architecture of central Bali has been fascinating Western visitors since the 1920s. Because Jembrana lacks most of the aspects that South Bali is so famous for, there are still almost no tourist facilities in this area. Jegog has until recently developed almost unnoticed by Western visitors to Bali, most of whom stay in the southern, eastern and northern part of the island.



*Jegog instrument construction*

## The History of Jegog

### The Instruments

The first definitive information about the existence of Jegog dates from the year 1912. At that time the Dutch colonial government ruling the north and northwest of Bali (since 1855) had already introduced some technical and social innovations that considerably improved rural life and the circumstances of the farmers in Jembrana. It is likely that by around the turn of the century, I Genjor, a musician from the village Dangan Tukadaya at the northwest of Negara, built the forerunner of the modern Jegog ensemble. The instruments of the ensemble created by I Genjor had keys of soft woods, wooden sound boards and resonators of bamboo. Between 1912 and 1945, Jegog developed into an orchestra that consisted of nine instruments: three *barangan*, three *kancilan* or *kantilan*, two *undir* or *pemade* and one *jegogan*. These instruments, which still exist in modern Jegog ensembles, were made of eight bamboo tubes hanging in a wooden frame, employing a four-tone scale. The Jegog scale is unique in

Bali. Every Jegog ensemble has its own slightly different variation since there has been no standardized tone system in Bali. Whereas the *barangan* and the *kancilan/kantilan* cover a range of two octaves, the *undir/pemade* and the *jegogan* cover a range of one octave, with the left hand playing the four tones of the left register and the right hand playing the same four tones in the right register. Within the whole ensemble the *jegogan*, which lent its name to the whole orchestra, is the deepest and most impressive instrument: each tube has a circumference of 60 to 65 cm, the deepest ones with a length of up to three meters. Such huge bamboo trees only grow in the jungle of the mountain region of Jembrana. The player of the *jegogan* sits on a wooden board fixed to the wooden frame of the instrument, playing the tubes from above. The *undir/pemade* is one octave higher than the *jegogan* and played from above as well. The lowest register of the *barangan* is again one octave higher than the *undir/pemade*, and the highest register of the *kancilan/*



*kantilan* one octave higher than the highest of the *barangan*.

Around 1945, five instruments were added to the ensemble; three *suir* and two *celuluk*, also called *kuntung*. Whereas the highest register of the *suir* is one octave higher than the highest of the *kancilan/kantilan*, the *celuluk/kuntung* is one octave higher than the *undir/pemade* and like the *undir/pemade*, covers a range of one octave on both the left and right registers. The function of these 14 instruments arranged in four rows represent the structure of Jegog music. The first row facing the audience consists of three *barangan*. The player of the middle one (*barangan patas*) plays the fundamental melodic part, while the players of the other two (*barangan nyandet*) play a complementary melodic part. The *kancilan/kantilan* are placed in the second row. The player of the middle one (*kancilan begbeg*) plays rhythmic patterns which embellish the melodic line played on the *barangan*. The players of the two other *kancilan* (*kancilan nyandet*) complement these patterns, with the result being a structure of interlocking rhythmic

ornamentations (*kotekan*). If the players are virtuosic, then they repeat the part of the *kancilan begbeg* with their right hand and play the interlocking rhythmic structures with their left hand (*slanketan*). The three *suir* of the third line of the instrumental arrangement have a function analogous to that of the *kancilan*. The player of the *suir begbeg* plays the same patterns as the player of the *kancilan begbeg*, and the players of the two *suir nyandet* play the same rhythmic structures as the players of the *kancilan nyandet*. The players of the *celuluk/kuntung*, *undir/pemade* and *jegogan* play certain basic notes of the fundamental melodic part of the *barangan*, which form a kind of bass melody themselves. With their left and right hand the players strike the right and left register of their instruments alternately in the typical "rolling" manner.

The beautiful wood carvings which embellish the frame of every instrument of the Jegog orchestra represent mythical beings; allegories for the power of nature, gods and goddesses from the Balinized Hindu pantheon, as well as stylized buffaloes, the

animals most important to the farmers of Jembrana (see below). The carving, as well as the whole building of the Jegog instruments, is done by farmers who have developed these special skills and who usually are members of the specific group for which they produce the instruments.

## The Repertoire

The inhabitants of Jembrana are predominantly adherents of the same Balinized version of Hinduism as most Balinese on other parts of the island. In spite of the advent of modernity, they do not really discriminate between a sacred and a



Water buffalo race

profane sphere of life. In contrast to the bronze and iron orchestras from the more known parts of Bali, which are mostly employed for ritual purposes and thus have a definite sacred status, Jegog has never had a ritual function. It emerged as a forceful expression of the vitality of rural life in Jembrana which is still felt even in the most modern Jegog



to be a strong connection between Jegog and the water buffalo, which is peculiar to Jembrana and not found elsewhere in Bali. Not only do the four posts of the frame of each instrument of the Jegog orchestra evoke the image of the legs of buffaloes, but the fast and powerful

*Jegog performance*

compositions.

In the period between 1912 and 1945, Jegog ensembles performed mostly instrumental pieces as accompaniment for certain activities, such as water buffalo races (*mekepong*). These races were held for sporting purposes during periods when agricultural activity was low, such as after the harvest. There seems

rhythms of the music itself recall the stamping of the hooves during a race.

Instrumental pieces were also played in order to alert the villagers to community work (*gotong royong*) or as entertainment during periods of rest after phases of hard work, like ploughing, sowing or harvesting. During nights of such resting periods (*malam suntuk*) there were occasional contests between two, three or more different Jegog orchestras (*mebarung*). On other occasions, Jegog ensembles accompanied simple dances (*janger Jembrana*) performed by male and female youth groups.

In the period between 1945 and 1965 the female dancer, Ni Subrik, from the village Delod Brawah enriched the Jegog repertoire by performing Jegog as accompaniment for *pencak silat*, an Indonesian version of Asian *budo* art forms like *karate* or *kung-fu*. *Pencak silat* is still a popular pastime for young men and women in Jembrana.

In 1974 an earthquake killed about 500 people in Jembrana and destroyed all Jegog orchestras in the region. At that time, I Nyoman Jayus, who originates from the village

Sangkaragung at the southwest of Negara, was studying at the Academy for Indonesian Dance and Music in Denpasar, the Balinese capital not far from the southern coast of the island. In order to introduce the Jegog repertoire, which was hitherto unknown in the south of Bali, to the Academy for Indonesian Dance and Music, Jayus had transferred the Jegog orchestra of his family to Denpasar, which became the only one that survived the catastrophe in Jembrana.

I Nyoman Jayus' father, I Nengah Ruba, was a well-known musician in Jembrana and a leader of several ensembles (Jegog, *kebyar*, *bebarongan*, *janger*). His mother, Ni Ketut Rimek, was a dancer. Before he began to study at the Academy in Denpasar, Jayus had already received a traditional education in all the art-forms his parents had mastered. When I Nyoman Jayus adapted the classical and still popular *pelegongan* dance-style and also the modern and fashionable *kebyar* dance-style to the Jegog, adding drums (*kendang*) the cymbal-set (*ceng-ceng*) and a small gong (*kempli*) from the *pelegongan* and



*kebyar* orchestra to the original instruments of the Jegog orchestra, Jegog finally met the minimum aesthetic standards of the southern Balinese and Jayus became its most recognized exponent.

As a result of support from the Indonesian government which emphasized the promotion of local art-forms, I Nyoman Jayus was invited to perform with his Jegog group on the occasion of Imelda Marcos' visit to Bali. When six years later, Ibu Tien Soeharto, the late wife of the Indonesian President, visited Bali, his Jegog ensemble was again asked to entertain the selected circles of state representatives. Ibu Tien Soeharto was so impressed by the performance that she was given a Jegog as a present which is now played by Jayus' group in Jakarta every August 17th, Indonesian Independence Day. In 1994, I Nyoman Jayus was appointed to be the art representative of Jembrana.

Jayus' new creations (*kreasi baru*) have not only become popular with Balinese cultural officials, but also with Japanese and Western musicians, ethnomusicologists and tourists,

some of whom have become Jegog students of I Nyoman Jayus. Since the early '90s, the group has performed regularly in several hotels on the south coast of Bali and also been invited to perform overseas in Japan and Europe. His success has motivated many other musicians in Jembrana to follow his example. There is now at least one Jegog group in almost every village in Jembrana.

In 1974 the Jegog tradition seemed to be on the verge of extinction, not only because of the earthquake, but also due to the changing life styles in Jembrana and the growing influence of the predominant musical style in modern Bali, the *kebyar*. Compulsory school attendance, nine-to-five jobs, and changing priorities led to the complete disappearance of the former nights of leisure when the youth groups gathered for dancing and contests between different Jegog groups. Buffalo races, traditionally accompanied by Jegog, were only sponsored by wealthier villagers for weddings or other important occasions. Since the revitalization of Jegog, there are now new indigenous contexts for Jegog

performances; state rituals (independence day, birthday of a government institution, birthday of a national hero, visit of a state representative) and private occasions such as business openings or the consecration of a new house. Additionally, each year on the occasion of the annual visit of the governor of Bali to Jembrana, a buffalo race accompanied by a Jegog performance is sponsored by the regional government.

## The Musicians

Like the *kebyar* or other Balinese music and dance genres, Jegog was created by musicians who earned their daily rice as farmers, not as professional artists. Since the notion of professional artists is only a recent development in Bali, it is not surprising that the vast majority of Jegog musicians are still not professionals in the Western sense. Most of them work as farmers, clerks or civil servants. Performances for an indigenous audience provide them with a free meal and occasionally

modest remuneration. The best players can earn significant additional income when they are regularly invited to perform at one of the tourist centers of the island. This is one of the few opportunities for the inhabitants of Jembrana to receive a share of the revenues the tourist industry has brought to Southern Bali.

## The Group Jegog Jayus from Banjar Samblong

For several years, seven Jegog groups in Sangkaragung and its environs performed regularly under the tutelage of I Nyoman Jayus, both for indigenous as well as tourist audiences, like any other of the well-known groups of Jembrana. One of the seven is the group "Jegog Jayus" from Banjar Samblong. The majority of its members are farmers, while a few of them are employed as clerks in nearby Negara. There is a nucleus of members who are regular players and others who only participate in a performance occasionally.

## The Selections

Although he continuously composes new material, I Nyoman Jayus has recently turned back to the more traditional form of Jegog which was still uninfluenced by the style and repertoire of the Southern bronze orchestras. Most modern Jegog ensembles reject the pure bamboo sound of the original Jegog in favor of the fuller, but also more aggressive sound created by the additional drums, bronze cymbals and bronze gong. The group Jegog Jayus from Banjar Samblong does without these instruments. The group has also picked up many of the older pieces created between 1912 and 1965. Three of the four pieces found on this recording originate from this earlier period. The fourth piece is the instrumental version of the dance Gopala created by I Nyoman Jayus in 1985. In all four pieces only the fourteen bamboo instruments of the earlier Jegog orchestra are played. The sound they produce evokes the bravery and natural elegance of the rural life of a region on the periphery of paradise.

1. TRUNGTUNGAN: This instrumental piece was created by an anonymous composer between 1912 and 1945; it was originally played to gather the villagers for community work.
2. JALAK PUTIH: Another instrumental piece composed by an anonymous artist between 1945 and 1965; it was played when a large assembly needed to be entertained during periods of waiting.
3. BARONGAN: A piece created between 1945 and 1965 which is sometimes also called NDUNG GERIA; it was originally performed in order to entertain an assembly during periods of waiting.
4. GOPALA: This piece was created by I Nyoman Jayus as musical accompaniment for a dance which he named after the Hindu god Krishna in his form as Gopala, entertaining the beautiful gopis or

female cowherds with his bamboo flute. The dance version is performed with additional drums, cymbal set and gong, whereas the instrumental version is only played by the 14 instruments of the earlier form of Jegog, as it was done in this recording.

Performers: Group "Jegog Jayus" from Banjar Samblong, Sangkaragung-Jembrana/Bali

Recorded at Banjar Samblong, Sangkaragung-Jembrana/Bali, 15 March, 1995

### Credits:

Producer: Stephen McArthur  
Co-Producers: Andrew Sloan & Chris Mills  
Booklet Design: Tim Newcomb

Research, Recording, Photography,  
Notes: Martin Ramstedt (Dr. phil., anthropologist, ethnomusicologist, specialist in Balinese culture and music)

Special Cooperation: I Nyoman Jayus (SST, composer, musician, dancer, leader of the group "Jegog Jayus," teacher of various Balinese music and dance genres at several private and official educational institutions both in Bali and Java)

### Acknowledgements

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