Keroncong / Krontjong: Whose heritage is it anyway? An exploration of the concept of ‘shared intangible cultural heritage’ through keroncong music

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An exploration of the concept of 'shared intangible cultural heritage' through *keroncong* music

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Table of Contents

A note on spelling

The spelling of Indonesian words and names, notably of persons and geographical locations, has historically varied between Dutch and Indonesian spellings. The reason for this is that, after Indonesia declared its independence, the newly formed Indonesian government issued the use of *Bahasa Indonesia* (‘Indonesian language’ or ‘language of Indonesia’), which changed the way words used to be spelled during the Dutch occupation. For example, the word *keroncong* itself has been previously spelled as *krontjong* and is often still spelled that way in Dutch literature. Meanwhile, the Indonesian spelling has changed the word into *keroncong*, while international literature occasionally erroneously refer to the music style as ‘kroncong’. Throughout the duration of this thesis, for the sake of consistency, I will be using the modern Indonesian spelling for Malay words and names, unless phrases or the names of historical figures are more well-known in their Dutch spellings.

Abstract

Keroncong is a style of music that combines cultural influences of both Southeast Asian and European origin. Through the course of its history, *keroncong* has become a style of music that arguably, both the Indo-Dutch community in the Netherlands and the Indonesian community consider part of their intangible cultural heritage (ICH). Despite a recent surge in archival heritization activity, *keroncong* music has as of yet not been acknowledged by international heritage organizations such as UNESCO as ICH, likely due to problems that arise when the cultural heritage of *keroncong* needs to be 'shared' among cultural groups that engage with the genre in different ways. By analyzing the history and main characteristics of *keroncong*, this thesis aims to establish a more in-depth understanding of the 'shared intangible cultural heritage' (SICH) phenomenon and the problems that arise therein. The thesis will argue that, even though *keroncong* has not yet been recognized by UNESCO, it can rightfully claim to be ICH in its different cultural manifestations. The thesis concludes that, if *keroncong* music is to be acknowledged as SICH, it would likely be best to do so by inscribing both its Indonesian and Indo-Dutch manifestations (i.e. *keroncong* and *krontjong*) into the Representative List as the genre came to carry and convey different meanings in the two cultural contexts, thereby suggesting a change in the way in which the 'sharing' of heritage takes place.

Introduction

The topic of this thesis is a genre of music that was born on the Malay peninsula that goes by the name of *keroncong* (pronounced “kronchong”). Seeing the bulk of its development in the late 1800s/early 1900s, *keroncong* is a style of music that notably grew to be popular across social and ethnic classes in colonial Indonesia[1]. The development of *keroncong* has seen stages in which it was pushed forward by various social and cultural groups: from Portuguese-Indian mestizo groups to Indo-Europeans, to Chinese-Indonesians and - as Indonesia started to develop its national identity - Indonesians. In recent years, the genre has seen a new influx of interest as old *keroncong* records become digitally archived, available for the world to listen to. Examples of such archives are the Dutch initiative led by the KITLV, called ‘South East Asian Pop Music’[2], and the digital platform by Indonesian label Lokananta Records[3].

Today, two groups in particular seem to be able to consider *keroncong* music part of their cultural heritage landscape: the Indo-Europeans, who were repatriated to the Netherlands after the Indonesian independence, and the Indonesians, who have seen their Indonesian identity take shape in part through *keroncong* music[4]. In the Netherlands, performances of *keroncong* music are a staple of Indo-Dutch *pasar malam* (Indo-themed events, lit. ‘night market’) events to this day, with ensuing discussions about how *keroncong* is supposed to sound, namely - as many in the Indo-Dutch community opine - *asli* (Indonesian for ‘real’)[5]. Meanwhile in Indonesia, *keroncong* music has played a part in the advent of Indonesian nationalism[6], while Indonesian artists today continue to push the boundaries of *keroncong* by mixing it with transnational and local influences.

Both of these cultural groups have seen parts of their culture become officially acknowledged as cultural heritage. For example, Indonesians have seen the Malay poetic form of *pantun* become acknowledged as intangible heritage by UNESCO[7], while the Indo-Europeans (also known as ‘Indos’) have had the tradition of the *rijsttafel* (‘rice table’) acknowledged by the Dutch Centre for Intangible Heritage[8]. *Keroncong* music, however, has not

[1] Keppy 2008:143
[2] KITLV “Southeast Asian Pop Music”
[3] Maullana 2017: “Lagu Lawas Produksi Lokananta Records Didistribusikan Ke Seluruh Dunia”
[4] Alfian 2013
[5] Mutsaers 2013:10
[6] Alfian 2013:171
[7] UNESCO 2020:“Pantun”
[8] Kenniscentrum Immaterieel Erfgoed Nederland 2016:“Indische rijsttafeltraditie”

yet been acknowledged as either Indo-European or Indonesian heritage by any transnational cultural heritage institution.

The absence of *keroncong* music in the cultural heritage catalog begets several questions. Firstly, there is the question to which extent *keroncong* music fits within the definition of intangible heritage as handled by UNESCO or similar organizations. Secondly, assuming that heritage preservation organizations were to acknowledge *keroncong* music as intangible cultural heritage (ICH), would it then become Indonesian, Dutch, or 'shared' among the two of them? Lastly, if *keroncong* as intangible cultural heritage is attributed to both the Indonesian and the Indo-Dutch communities, then that leads us to question what the implications are of acknowledging *keroncong* as 'shared intangible cultural heritage'.

Of all ICH items previously inscribed into UNESCO's Representative List, nearly two thirds have contained a significant musical component[9]. Although UNESCO has an elaborate definition of what it considers to be ICH, it does not state very clearly at which point music genres specifically begin to fit the description. *Keroncong* music is in the unique position in which it, while carrying considerable significance to two cultural groups, developed in remarkably different ways in Indonesia and the Netherlands. What follows is that, if *keroncong* is to be inscribed into the Representative List, it is still unclear whose heritage it would become. The problem here is two-fold. Firstly, both the Indonesians and the Indo-Dutch have made unique contributions to the development of *keroncong*, causing both groups to display strong identification with the genre and subsequently making it challenging to attribute it to one or the other. Secondly, as shall be explored later, the way in which UNESCO processes its inscriptions requires it to attribute the heritage inscripted on the Representative List to countries. This means that, as the Indo-Dutch have the Dutch nationality, their inscription of *keroncong* would be attributed to the Netherlands, leading to a possible 'shared heritage' between Indonesia and the Netherlands. As shall be explored in chapter 1, this relation has high potential to be problematic, as starting in 2009, the Dutch government has been engaging in what they called 'mutual' overseas heritage preservation projects, in which countries with a "history of prolonged contact with the Netherlands" were asked to co-fund restoration of Dutch heritage abroad[10]. These projects have been criticized as being "undergirded by immediate and pragmatic geopolitical self-interest", with the definitions of the used terminology being so vague that they

[9] Broclain et al. 2019:1
[10] Yapp 2016:69

become virtually unworkable[11]. Thus, in order to conclude that *keroncong* is 'shared heritage', a more refined understanding of the way in which the 'sharing' of heritage takes place is required.

The aim of this thesis is to establish a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of 'shared intangible cultural heritage' (SICH) and the problems that arise therein by taking the story of *keroncong* as a case study. Chapter 1 will provide a theoretical context through which the story of *keroncong* can be interpreted by introducing and defining the theoretical concepts with which this thesis will engage. Chapter 2 will present the story of *keroncong* by recounting the story of the style as it is found in multiple analytical sources, approached from multiple angles (particularly from Indonesian and Dutch perspectives), thereby starting the case-study of *keroncong*. In chapter 3, the theoretical concepts introduced in chapter 1 will engage with the story of *keroncong* in order to determine to what extent the genre fits our definition of SICH and what the implications are of the consequent 'sharing'. Finally, chapter 4 will conclude the thesis by summarizing how *keroncong* interacts with the concept of 'shared intangible cultural heritage' and which path might lead to the genre's inclusion in the international ICH catalog.

[11] Ibid. 73

Chapter 1: Theoretical framework

In order to determine whether - and in what capacity - *keroncong* music can be acknowledged as shared intangible cultural heritage, it is essential to define the theoretical concepts used by UNESCO (i.e. the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and the cultural heritage sector in the discourse concerning cultural heritage and the process in which new ICH inscriptions are nominated. To this end, this chapter will aim to define and reproduce the current understanding of what 'intangible cultural heritage' and 'mutual heritage' are according to these institutions and scholarly consensus.

UNESCO and music as intangible cultural heritage

When discussing intangible heritage, UNESCO's role in our understanding of it needs to be addressed, as it is internationally acknowledged as the main organizational body for protection of cultural heritage. For participating states, having their cultural heritage safeguarded by this United Nations-founded organization holds considerable benefits, such as support in education and the founding of museums.

Unfortunately, finding a definition of 'intangible cultural heritage' (ICH) in relation to music appears to be a more arduous effort than finding the definition used by UNESCO alone, because there seems to be a disconnect in the way that UNESCO, researchers, heritage professionals, musicians and other actors in the scene of music define ICH[12]. This disconnect exists because of differing philosophies regarding the preservation of music as heritage among different actors: conservation institutions are more likely to 'heritagize' music by conserving its artefacts, like recordings, instruments and musical notations; UNESCO, on the other hand, 'heritagizes' (or, using UNESCO terminology, 'safeguards') music by supporting the creation process and the transfer of knowledge and skills[13]. This discrepancy is noticeable within the context of *keroncong* with institutions like the KITLV creating its jukebox of Southeast Asian pop music, while Indonesian artists engage with the music style by mixing it with foreign elements. However, UNESCO, as arguably the largest ICH organization working in the field, is yet to focus any of its attention on *keroncong*. For this reason, the following part of the chapter will focus on UNESCO's definition of 'intangible cultural heritage' and the qualities ICH needs to possess in order to be inscribed into UNESCO's Representative List.

[12] Broclain et al. 2019:4
[13] Ibid.

During the General Conference of UNESCO held in Paris in 2003, intangible cultural heritage was for the first time defined and conceptualized, meaning it was now equally worthy of conservation resources as its tangible counterpart. 'Intangible cultural heritage' was defined as follows:

> *"The 'intangible cultural heritage' means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity."*[14]

The intangible cultural heritage that was to be conserved, was to be manifested in one or more of the following ways:

> *"(a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;*
> *(b) performing arts;*
> *(c) social practices, rituals and festive events;*
> *(d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;*
> *(e) traditional craftsmanship."*[15]

From this point onwards, 'State Parties' (i.e. "countries which have adhered to the *World Heritage Convention"*[16]) were able to nominate elements of cultures within their national borders for inscription on either the 'Urgent Safeguarding List' or the 'Representative List' of intangible cultural heritage. Nearly two thirds of cultural elements that have since been inscribed into the lists include a significant musical component[17]. Even the first wave of inscriptions in 2008

[14] UNESCO 2020:5
[15] Ibid.
[16] UNESCO 2020:"States Parties Ratification Status"
[17] Broclain et al. 2019:1

contain a significant amount of musical traditions and traditions containing a musical element such as dance, chanting and theatre[18].

Although 'intangible cultural heritage' and the requirements to be acknowledged as such have been defined and identified by UNESCO, the organization does not specifically state the requirements musical genres need to adhere to in order to be inscribed into the list. Extrapolation of these requirements by analyzing examples of music-related inscriptions becomes our next best option.

Religious/ceremonial elements and representation of local and traditional values seem to be key characteristics of musical inscriptions. For example, Indonesia's *angklung*, an instrument consisting of bamboo tubes, has been inscribed in the Representative List in 2010[19]. The inscription states *angklung*'s role in traditional customs, arts and ceremonies as motivation for its inscription. Similarly, Portugal's *fado* music has been inscribed into the Representative List in 2011, stating the genre's local traditionality and multicultural synthesis[20]. More recently, in 2018, Jamaican reggae music was inscribed into the Representative List, stating the genre's roots of being a voice for the marginalized, contributions to international discourses of injustice and its spiritual elements[21]. An interesting omission on either list at the time of writing is Indonesia's *gamelan* music, found on Java and Bali, which also has a role in ceremonies and rituals, besides employing unique instruments. The genre is only briefly mentioned as an accompaniment to *wayang* puppet plays[22]. This is counterintuitive, as our previous findings (along with longstanding scholarly interest in the genre) indicate that *gamelan* would be a prime candidate for inscription. I would argue that the omission of *gamelan* on the Representative List indicates the necessity of official guidelines regarding the inclusion of music on the List.

(Inter-)nationalism: the Representative List nomination process

One eye-catching element of UNESCO's Representative List of ICH is that inscriptions are usually attributed to one country. This makes sense when considering the process for nominating elements of ICH for inscription on the list. In order for a cultural heritage element to be inscribed into the Representative List, it must first be included in a State Party's inventory of ICH with consent of the community, groups or individuals concerned. Along with proposed

[18] UNESCO 2020:"Browse the Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices"
[19] UNESCO 2010:"Indonesian Angklung"
[20] UNESCO 2011:"Fado, urban popular song of Portugal"
[21] UNESCO 2018:"Reggae music of Jamaica"
[22] UNESCO 2008:"Wayang puppet theatre"

safeguarding measures, the nomination of the element is sent to UNESCO's secretariat. Then, after the State Party supplements any potentially missing files, UNESCO's evaluation body evaluates the nomination before presenting it to the committee for examination. Finally, after the committee has examined the nomination, it will either approve or deny the element's inscription into the List[23].

However, inscriptions into the Representative List are not always attributed to a single country. Some inscriptions are attributed to two or more countries, such as the tradition of falconry, which is attributed to a grand total of 18 countries[24]. This complicates the nomination process considerably, as now multiple countries have to add the ICH element to their inventories together, while coordinating the nomination from both (or all) sides. Communication with relevant communities must now also be done across national boundaries, particularly when a particular community is spread across multiple nations.

We thus see several complicating factors in the process of inscribing intangible cultural heritage when multiple countries, or State Parties, are involved. Firstly, logistically speaking, a combined inscription of ICH requires State Parties to communicate with one another fervently about the necessities for the inscription. Secondly, State Parties must be willing to share their ICH as being part of another country's cultural heritage. Thirdly, the communities involved must be able to imagine themselves as belonging to the same cultural entity[25], or at least view each other as similar enough that they would be willing to share their ICH. This might prove to be extra challenging when communities are divided by national borders or the unfolding of historical events.

'Shared heritage': a reflection on 'mutuality' in heritage

As previously noted, examples exist of inscriptions into the Lists of intangible cultural heritage that are attributed to two or more countries. What follows is that these countries 'share' this element of ICH with one another, but what does it mean exactly for two countries to 'share' an element of ICH? And how does this affect the element itself, as well as the communities involved? What happens when these communities do not share the values attributed to the element of ICH?

Starting in the 1990s and continuing over the course of the 2000s, 'shared heritage' - often used interchangeably with the terms 'mutual heritage' or 'international heritage' - became

[23] UNESCO 2020:"Procedure of inscription of elements on the Lists and of Selection of Good Safeguarding Practices"
[24] UNESCO 2016:"Falconry, a Living Human Heritage"
[25] Anderson 1983:15

part of scholarly discourse in the field of heritage studies. The concept was commonly used in the context of architectural heritage, often exploring the relationship between former colonies and colonizing countries through traces of architectural evidence of colonial presence. Discourse analysis shows a difference in conception of the term 'shared heritage': in former colonies, the term designated "buildings that were originally designed by metropolitan architects but are now appropriated by postcolonial users", while in the context of European postcolonial museum collections, 'shared heritage' designated what was created by natives and collected by Europeans[26]. In other words, there is no universally accepted definition of what 'shared heritage' is or how heritage professionals should work with heritage that is potentially 'shared' .

Although the concept remains under-defined, it has been problematized by several thinkers within the framework of post-colonial relations. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall has voiced his concerns on shared heritage in the context of post-colonial Great Britain. If the point of 'shared heritage' is to build up a collective social history, then the narratives of marginalized communities should be brought to the center. However, if the narratives from the periphery come to the center to represent the whole, can the whole still imagine itself as a single national community? How can 'shared heritage' be inclusive while still acknowledging difference[27]? Following in the footsteps of Hall, Clara Arokiasamy questions whether, as Europe's demography shifts into being increasingly of mixed parentage, 'indigenous White Europeans' should regard the diaspora's contribution to heritage as the majority's heritage. If so, how can 'shared heritage' lead to an integration of the diaspora's cultural rights into the nomination, inscription and management of world heritage[28]?

In order to analyze the history of *keroncong* through the lens of 'shared heritage', it is essential to consider what relation the Netherlands and Indonesia have with the concept, so that we might determine how willing the countries are to 'share' their cultural heritage. Looking at UNESCO's Representative List, one might notice the presence of the poetic form of *pantun*, as was mentioned in the Introduction, inscribed in 2020 and attributed to both Indonesia and Malaysia[29]. Considering the cultural similarities and shared Austronesian ancestry between the two countries, one might expect there to be more shared inscriptions between Indonesia and Malaysia on the List. This is, however, not the case, as the tradition of *pantun* is the only inscription on the list that Indonesia shares with Malaysia or any other country. Indeed,

[26] Vanhee 2016:6
[27] Hall 2004
[28] Arokiasamy 2012:344
[29] UNESCO 2020:"Pantun"

Indonesia's relation with Malaysia with regards to heritage has been highly turbulent. In 2009, a promotional tourism video for Malaysia sparked controversy in Indonesia, as it presented Balinese *pendet* dance as part of Malaysian culture[30]. Although the Malaysian Minister of Culture and Tourism issued an apology for the video, the highly charged emotions in Indonesia led to attacks on the Malaysian embassy in Jakarta, with protestors throwing rocks and rotten eggs, and in one instance burning a Malaysian flag[31]. Throughout the course of modern history, both countries have aimed to claim ownership of cultural elements that were viewed as their own, such as the textile art of *batik*, the shadow puppet theater called *wayang kulit*, and the ceremonial dagger called the *keris*[32]. Hostility between the two nations goes as far back as 1962, when Sukarno's *Konfrontasi* ("confrontation") policy aimed to protest against Malaysia's plan to create a new federation that included Singapore and Borneo[33]. For the purposes of this thesis, it suffices to observe that Indonesia does not seem particularly keen on sharing their intangible cultural heritage.

The Netherlands, on the other hand, have had a much more positive attitude towards the idea of 'shared' or 'mutual' heritage. In fact, 'mutual heritage' has been part of Dutch policy for over a decade, particularly concerning relics left in the former colonies. Discourse concerning these relics flourished in the 2000s, with center-right politicians specifically voicing concern over the "decaying state of VOC cemeteries along India's coastline"[34]. These concerns, as well as the following impetus of 'shared heritage' - which came to replace the term 'mutual heritage' - in Dutch political discourse, culminated into official policy in 2009, when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science launched the Shared Cultural Heritage (SCH) program[35].

The SCH program has, both in its historical and current conceptions, focused on the maintenance of physical heritage relics and sites. Nations involved with the project currently include Australia, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, Surinam, Sri Lanka, the United States and South Africa[36]. In the fact sheet released by the SCH initiative, the program aims to operate on three basic premises: a) cooperation based on equality, reciprocity and respect for ownership; b) international cooperation; and c) participation of the public[37]. The implication of

[30] Chong 2012:2
[31] Ibid. 3
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.13
[34] Yapp 2016:68
[35] Ibid. 69
[36] DutchCulture 2020:"Gedeeld Cultureel Erfgoed en de Rol van DutchCulture 2017 – 2020":1
[37] DutchCulture 2020:"Shared Cultural Heritage Fact Sheet 2017 - 2020":1

the equality of the working relation as suggested in the fact sheet is that both the Netherlands and the partner country should supply financial and organizational aid.

It is precisely this notion of equality that has been challenged by anthropologist and heritage scholar Lauren Yapp. In a critical essay about heritage diplomacy in the Netherlands, the author evaluates the usage of the terms 'shared' and 'mutual' by the Dutch government and the SCH project. Seeing more 'diplomacy' than 'heritage conservation' in the program, she writes that the terms 'shared' and 'mutual' are used as a replacement for the far riskier word 'colonial'[38]. Yapp notes that, pointing out that the Dutch government cut its own budget for the funding of the SCH project while motivating partner countries to contribute, the SCH project seems to contain an element of self-interest for the Dutch government[39], aiding in the construction of a self-image in which the Dutch colonial era was a happenstance[40].

Indeed, the word 'colonial' is nowhere to be found in the documents released by the SCH program. Instead of traces left by the Dutch colonialism, the documents rather speak of a 'mutual past' (*gemeenschappelijk verleden*), thus avoiding usage of the term 'colonial'. In fact, the documents steer away from colonialism altogether, framing the past as an opportunity for 'cultural cooperation'[41]. Similarly, in 2016, the Dutch Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage added the *Indische rijsttafel* ("Indies rice table"), or the colonial Dutch custom to put a collection of Indonesian dishes on the table for diners to choose from, to its inventory[42]. Although the inscription briefly acknowledges the colonial origin of the custom, it puts only little emphasis on the Indonesian nature of the dishes themselves. Instead, the social elements surrounding the phenomenon are emphasized, such as the togetherness (*gezellig samenzijn*) or learning the recipes from grandmother or aunty[43].

In conclusion, Indonesia and the Netherlands seem to have distinctly differing attitudes concerning the 'shared heritage' phenomenon. Indonesia, with its history of harshly criticizing Malaysian attempts to heritagize elements of intangible cultural heritage that Indonesia views as its own, seems averse to the concept. This is further evidenced by the fact that the only Indonesian shared ICH inscribed in UNESCO's Representative List was added as late as 2020. Meanwhile, the Netherlands seems to embrace the concept of 'shared' heritage to the point that it can be said to border the neo-colonial. Indeed, inscriptions such as the *Indische rijsttafel* seem

[38] Yapp 2016:73
[39] Ibid. 72
[40] Ibid. 74
[41] DutchCulture 2020:"Gedeeld Cultureel Erfgoed en de Rol van DutchCulture 2017 – 2020":1
[42] Kenniscentrum Immaterieel Erfgoed Nederland 2016:"Indische rijsttafeltraditie"
[43] Ibid.

to hold appropriating elements, while the Dutch government's SCH programme can be questioned about the extent to which it is fueled by self-interest rather than inclusion of the marginalized.

Defining 'shared intangible cultural heritage'

In order to determine whether *keroncong* music is able to be acknowledged as 'shared intangible cultural heritage' (SICH), we first need a working definition of the phenomenon. Fortunately, the definition of 'intangible cultural heritage' has been relatively clearly defined, although 'shared heritage' currently still lacks a coherent definition. A definition of these two phenomena combined, in the form of SICH, also remains to be made. Although creating a well-advised definition of SICH that is workable for the entire field of heritage studies is likely beyond the scope of this thesis, we draft a definition of it here that is befitting of this thesis' purpose.

This thesis will draft its definition of SICH by combining UNESCO's working definition of ICH and an original definition of 'shared heritage', bearing in mind the criticisms of the latter mentioned above. UNESCO's working definition of ICH focuses on the inclusion of any expression of intangible cultural elements that can belong to any community, group or individual. Meanwhile, our definition of 'shared heritage' aims to keep in mind Arokiasamy's concept of the diaspora's cultural rights and Yapp's criticism of the Dutch government's heritage diplomacy in its SCH policies. Our working definition of 'shared intangible cultural heritage' will be as follows:

> "Shared intangible cultural heritage is the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – recognized as part of the cultural heritage of two or more groups, communities or individuals that identify as being part of different cultural groups due to historical developments or nationality"

Formulated in this way, this definition borrows its first half from UNESCO's definition of intangible cultural heritage. The critiques by Arokiasamy and Yapp have been accounted for in two ways. Firstly, the adoption of 'historical developments' as a reason for cultural groups to not identify as belonging to the same cohesive overarching group takes diasporic migration into account. It allows migrants and their offspring to also influence what is and what is not heritage. Secondly, for this same reason, the adoption of 'nationality' in the definition aims to even out the

playing field of heritage diplomacy by acknowledging both postcolonial nations and former colonizing nations as equals.

Chapter 2: The story of *keroncong* and *krontjong*

This chapter will aim to give a concise narrative of *keroncong*, from its early roots to modern day Indonesian genre-fusions and Indo-Dutch essentialism. In order to represent the story as it is understood on both sides, writings have been consulted from both Indonesian and Dutch sources, from historians as well as musicologists. Additionally, in order to better understand the circumstances in which the developments of *keroncong* take place, historical context is given where deemed necessary. In the following section, the chapter will introduce what is generally understood to be *keroncong*. Following this introductory section, it will aim to narrate and contextualize each major development in the story of *keroncong*, so that a fruitful discussion can take place afterwards.

Identifying keroncong

Keroncong is a style of music hailing from the Indonesian peninsula that is characterized by its mixture of elements from various local and overseas cultural influences, both in its instrumentation and musical characteristics. In order to talk about *keroncong* in a meaningful way, we will first shortly define what is meant when we use the term. The word *keroncong* has historically had different referents. In the 19th century, *keroncong* referred to a guitar- or lute-like instrument related to the Portuguese *cavaquinho*, being played in either three-, four-, or five-stringed variants[44]. The word '*keroncong*' was likely onomatopoeic for the sounds these instruments produced. Throughout the 20th century, the *keroncong* instrument was gradually redesigned into two different instruments and dubbed *cak* (pronounced "chak") or *cuk* (pronounced "chook"), after the intertwining rhythmic patterns these instruments played. During this time, the meaning and usage of the word *keroncong* started to shift towards the repertoire these instruments played (i.e. *lagu keroncong*, which translates to '*keroncong* songs'), as well as an activity among Dutch Indo-Europeans (i.e. *krontjongen*; 'to *keroncong*')[45].

In order to clearly distinguish historical conceptions of *keroncong* from what the term signifies today, Philip Yampolsky handily utilizes the distinction 'standard *keroncong*' to indicate what the word signifies today, the terminology of which shall be borrowed in this thesis[46]. In 'standard *keroncong*', the instrumentation includes voice, violin, flute, guitar, cello, and the lute-like *cak* and *cuk*. Besides these two last instruments, the ukulele, mandolin or banjo may

[44] Yampolsky 2010:8
[45] Mutsaers 2013
[46] Yampolsky 2010:9

also fulfill the role of the intertwining rhythmic playing. The cello plays a 'pizzicato' (i.e. plucked) rhythmic pattern, resembling the rhythmic patterns of the drums found in *gamelan* music, called *kendangan*[47]. The voice, flute and violin play the melody of the piece being played, with the flute and violin filling up rhythmic space left by the vocals.

Keroncong Tugu *and the Mardijkers*

In its earliest form, the style of *keroncong* is generally thought to be brought to the Malay world by freed slaves of Indian ancestry, brought to the Dutch-Indies from the Portuguese colonial settlements in Asia[48]. This group came to be known as the Mardijkers, a label bestowed upon them by the VOC[49] that conceals their ethnic diversity. The word is based on the Malay word *merdeka*, which translates to 'free'[50], referring to their status as freed slaves. The Mardijkers were granted land titles by the VOC in 1661[51], particularly in the area of Tugu, located to the north-east of Batavia[52]. It is here that the Tugunese Mardijkers are generally credited with developing *keroncong* music in its early stages.

The Mardijker people, before settling in the Tugunese enclave, had lived in Portuguese Malacca in the south of what is now Malaysia. Their ancestors before them had lived in the coastal areas of Malabar and Coromandel, located in the south-west and south-east of India respectively[53]. After the Dutch had taken over control of Malacca from the Portuguese in 1641, doing so with the help of local troops of the Sultan of Johore, the freed slaves were transported to Java and offered the land titles mentioned above[54].

By the time the Mardijkers had settled in Tugu, the community had incorporated a variety of Portuguese cultural elements into their own identity. It is through these cultural elements that the Tugunese differentiated themselves from native Indonesian peoples, over whom they held a privileged position in colonial society[55]. Notably, the Tugunese spoke creolized Portuguese[56] and had adopted the christian faith, with the Dutch demanding that the Tugunese convert from

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[47] Keppy 2008:142
[48] Ibid.
[49] Choudhury 2014:902
[50] *merdeka*, in turn, is based on the Sanskrit *maharddika*, describing a person of pronounced divine authority (Choudhury 2014:901)
[51] Which is not to say that the VOC are to be seen as slave liberators, as it also engaged in slave-trading from the early seventeenth to mid-nineteenth century (Ibid. 903)
[52] Keppy 2008:142
[53] Mutsaers 2013:56
[54] Parthesius 2010:48
[55] Mutsaers 2013:56
[56] Yampolsky 2010:16

catholicism to protestantism as a condition for their liberation[57]. Other notable Portuguese cultural influences incorporated by the Mardijker people were those of music, musical instruments and stylistic elements in particular. It is from these influences that the style of *keroncong* emerged that would later become known as *Keroncong Tugu*.

Musically, the Portuguese ancestry found in *Keroncong Tugu* are generally believed to lie in *fado* music. '*Fado*', which translates to 'fate' from Portuguese, was allegedly adopted from West African slaves in the 15th century[58]. This style of music has been described as prominently featuring stringed instruments and lyrical improvisation, with topics relating to life experience, humor, love and eroticism[59]. The music also evokes a sense of melancholia through its melodies and lyrical topics, which is captured in the Portuguese word *saudade*, which translates to 'longing'[60].

The notion that *fado* music is the originator of *keroncong* music has, however, been contested. Philip Yampolsky writes that, although Portuguese musical elements have indeed survived in *keroncong* music, stating that *keroncong* music is a continuation of *fado* is unfounded, since *fado* music itself rose to popularity from approximately the 1850s onwards[61]. Considering that the Portuguese rule of Malacca ended in the 17th century, Yampolsky writes that it is unlikely that the Tugunese were influenced by *fado* directly.

Regardless of whether *Keroncong Tugu* was directly influenced by *fado* or not, other elements of Portuguese musical culture can be found in the style, including melodies, chord progressions and - notably - the *cavaquinho*, a small guitar-like four-stringed instrument[62]. In the hands of the Mardijkers, the *cavaquinho* transformed into the *cak* and *cuk*. These instruments would later become a staple of *keroncong* music, playing the intertwining, driving rhythmic patterns that are characteristic of the style.

Buaya keroncong

While the cultural roots of *keroncong* music can be found in the Mardijker communities, it is in Batavia of the 20th century where the music was popularized and would be further developed[63]. In the early 1900s, *keroncong* came to be associated with Indo-European males, known as *buaya* (Indonesian for 'crocodile'), roaming the streets of Batavia's poorer

[57] Choudhury 2014:904
[58] Ganap 2006:1
[59] Mutsaers 2013:115
[60] Ibid. 27
[61] Yampolsky 2010:17
[62] Ibid.
[63] Keppy 2008:142

neighborhoods while playing *keroncong* music. This activity, which came to be known as *krontjongen* (Dutch for 'to *keroncong*'), had the reputation for being a process in which the Indo-European males would seduce females, whose reputations would be tainted in the process[64]. However, the increasingly traditionalist Dutch cabinet passed the 'morality law' (*zedelijkheidswetgeving*) in 1911, prohibiting souteneurship, along with prostitution and access to anticonception[65]. It thus became increasingly difficult for Indo-European males in the Dutch-Indies to play *keroncong* music in the streets, which caused the *buaya keroncong* phenomenon to decrease in popularity. The stories of street-dwelling *buaya keroncong* did not disappear, however, causing their history to become embedded into the story of *keroncong*[66].

Keroncong stambul

The next step in the story of *keroncong* is located within the narrative of *stambul* theater. *Stambul* plays, also called *komedi stambul*, started to gain popularity in the early 1900s with versions of classical Arabian stories like One Thousand and One Nights, Aladdin, Ali Baba, Sinbad and stories of Scheherazade[67]. As the popularity of *komedi stambul* increased, Western fairy tales like Sleeping Beauty and Snow White started to be performed, as well as opera's like Shakespeare and Bellini and folk tales of Chinese, Malay, Hindu and Javanese origin[68]. With a repertoire spanning a large variety of cultural backgrounds, audience members of all ethnic and social groups would attend the plays, to the extent that *stambul* groups started to advertise the broad accessibility of their plays[69]. *Stambul* theater can thus be seen as one of the first instances of cross-ethnic unification in Indonesia, a role that would be, as we shall discuss later in the chapter, fulfilled by *keroncong* music in the late- and post-colonial periods. Interestingly, cast members from these *stambul* ensembles were largely of Indo-Dutch origin[70]. A prominent artistic director of *stambul* plays was Auguste "Guus" Mahieu, whose Indo-European family was part of the colonial upper social classes[71]. Mahieu, who acted in the plays and orchestrated the music therein besides being in the director's seat, made efforts to increase the accessibility of the plays to lower-educated Indo-Europeans from poorer neighborhoods, thus starting a cultural activity which could be attended by visitors across social layers[72].

[64] Mutsaers 2013:20
[65] Heine 2019:163
[66] Mutsaers 2013:20
[67] Ibid. 83
[68] Yampolsky 2010:11
[69] Jedamski 2008:483
[70] Mutsaers 2013:82
[71] Ibid. 84
[72] Bosma et al. 2008:305

A prominent feature of *stambul* theater is its use of *keroncong* music during the shows and its intermissions. Performers would either sing the songs in character during the play, or perform them out of character as entr'actes[73]. The *keroncong* songs played during the *stambul* plays would later become known as *Lagu Stambul*, or 'Stambul songs', with songs methodically titled *Stambul I*, *Stambul II* etcetera. *Stambul I* and *II* specifically had become songs that were standardized in the repertoire of *keroncong* orchestras, as well as the Tugunese classic *Moresco*[74]. As Indo-Europeans across social classes in the Dutch Indies became able to attend the *komedi Stambul* plays and hear the playing of *keroncong* orchestras, *keroncong* music itself started to reach the ears of an audience that was increasing in size and increasingly accepting of the genre since its *buaya keroncong* infamy. *Komedi stambul* ensembles tended to tour back and forth across colonial Indonesia and Malaysia. The popularity of *keroncong* music was thus carried outside of Batavia, across the peninsula and across ethnic groups, as exemplified by Chinese-Malaysian artists of Penang picking up the genre[75].

Concours *and* pantun

As *keroncong* music started to become popular outside of the confines of Batavia and Indo-European communities, so too did the population of colonial Indonesia start to engage with the genre with increasing vigour. By the late 1910s, Batavian *keroncong* enthusiasts started to organize competitions, called *concours*, starring *keroncong* orchestras and singers. *Keroncong concours* drew spectators from not just the Indo-European population, but from across all age groups, social classes and ethnic groups[76]. Although the *keroncong* performances at the *concours* mostly contained elements that the genre was known for at this point (such as its instrumentation and well-known melodies), the *concours* provided a unique form of entertainment which set *keroncong concours* aside from other music competitions occuring at the time (like jazz or Hawaiian) and even other *keroncong* performances, namely the verbal 'battles' through the Malay textual tradition of *pantun*[77].

Pantun is a form of Malay verse that has been in use for at least 500 years, with the earliest records of Malay *pantun* dating back to the 15th century[78]. The most common form of the *pantun* is the four-line, ABAB variety. In its four lines, the *pantun* typically delivers some kind

[73] Yampolsky 2010:11
[74] Ibid.; Mutsaers 2013:182
[75] Keppy 2008:143
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Hirsch 2014:440

of advice or message, with the first two lines setting up the message, which is delivered in the final two lines[79].

During these verbal 'battles' at the *keroncong concours*, also called *sindiran*, vocalists from participating groups would engage one another through improvised *pantun* verses, full of hidden - often sexual - meaning[80]. The *pantun* verse that was the most creative would win the 'battle', earning the singer the title of *jago* (Malay for 'rooster') or *kampioen* (Dutch for 'champion'). Female singers also increasingly took part in the *sindiran*, sometimes opposing male singers, often creating the sexual meanings the 'battles' came to be known for and further increasing the accessibility and popularity of *keroncong* music across the borders of gender. With *keroncong* no longer being considered an exclusively male activity, the improvised *pantun* with which the contestants teased each other - sometimes to the point of insult - during the *sindiran* greatly contributed to the popularity of *keroncong* and the *keroncong concours*. It is during the heyday of the *keroncong concours* that the age of *buaya keroncong* transitioned into that of *bintang keroncong*, or '*keroncong* stars', in which the genre started to attain its own celebrities.

Keroncong *records*

The next development in the history of *keroncong* is its introduction into the recording age. While previous records of *keroncong* were exclusively in written form, advancements in recording technology allowed *keroncong* music to be recorded and distributed. This caused well-to-do Indo-Europeans, Chinese and Indonesians to be increasingly able to listen to performances of *keroncong* at home. The resulting increase in popularity of the genre caused a shift in the way *keroncong* music was performed and produced. Instrumental in *keroncong*'s shift towards the recording age was Chinese department store owner Tio Tek Hong.

Tio Tek Hong, who established his shop of the same name in Batavia's Pasar Baru in 1902, had a particular interest in music[81]. Besides catering a variety of products to European demand, Tio started publishing and selling sheet music of *keroncong* songs, as well as musical instruments (particularly, the *cak* and *cuk keroncong* lutes) and 78 rpm records[82]. Tio also offered music courses, for example in violin and mandolin. In doing so, Tio Tek Hong played a

[79] Ismail et al. 2015:138
[80] Keppy 2008:143
[81] Ibid. 148
[82] Mutsaers 2013:135; Keppy 2008:148

pivotal role in increasing the accessibility and popularity of *keroncong* music throughout Java and beyond, with records distributed by Tio reaching as far as British Malaya[83].

The sales and production of *keroncong* records by Tio Tek Hong have played an important role in the history of the genre. The first record players were brought to the Dutch Indies in 1892, where they would be gradually integrated into affluent households after approximately a decade[84]. It is around this time that advertisements for records started to appear in the newspapers. The stores of Tio Tek Hong in Batavia and Toko A.B.C. in Bandung became particularly well-known for distributing records from local artists besides jazz and other non-Asian music[85]. Local recordings would be transported to British-India, where they would be pressed and imported back into the Malay world, as record production centres were mostly absent in Southeast Asia[86]. Here, labels would distribute the records to traders and sales agents, who would then sell the records to their customers. Additionally, sales agents would also scout for local talents and recommend them as potential recording artists to the label. It is in this role that Tio Tek Hong played yet another part in the popularization of *keroncong*, working for the influential German label Odeon[87].

Although the production and import of *keroncong* records was disrupted during the First World War, activity resumed after 1925[88], around which time Tio Tek Hong (the company) managed to become a subsidiary of Odeon. Through the label, *keroncong* and the Indo-European repertoire reached a new level of popularity[89]. Tio would attend *keroncong concours* and *stambul* performances to recruit local artists and promote *keroncong, komedi stambul* and his 78 rpm records, as well as the sheet music and aforementioned instruments his company had for sale[90]. The availability of 78 rpm *keroncong* records greatly contributed to the accessibility of *keroncong* outside of Batavia. Less affluent inhabitants of the Dutch-Indies also had access to the *keroncong* records, as they were allowed to play the records in the store without having to buy them[91]. New *keroncong* repertoire could thus be more easily learned and covered by *keroncong* musicians, as the popularity of *keroncong* spread further outward.

[83] Keppy 2008:148
[84] Ibid.
[85] Mutsaers 2013:143
[86] Keppy 2008:149
[87] Ibid.
[88] Yampolsky 2010:13
[89] Mutsaers 2013:143
[90] Keppy 2008:149
[91] Mutsaers 2013:144

Radio airplay, female keroncong *stars and genre crossing*

By the 1930's and 1940's, listening to recorded versions of *keroncong* performances had become a common activity. Besides recording and playback technology, one other major contributing factor to this development was radio airplay. Radio stations such as the *Nederlandsch-Indische Radio Omroep Maatschappij* (NIROM, Netherlands-Indies Broadcasting Company) started broadcasting *keroncong* records, catering to its native Indonesian and *peranakan* Chinese audience despite being Dutch controlled[92].

As the way *keroncong* music was consumed started to shift towards the recorded medium, so did the way in which the music was produced. As heralded by the popularity of female vocalists in the *keroncong concours*, the *keroncong* landscape started to attain its female stars, also known as *bintang keroncong*, who were usually backed by male instrumentalists. Indicating their worldly orientation, these artists usually carried the English word 'Miss' in their names, as exemplified by artists such as Miss Riboet and Miss Annie Landouw[93].

Besides the cosmopolitan awareness the names of the artists carry out, the sound of the music also started to change in accordance to this trend. By the mid-1920's, *keroncong* as it was played during the days of *komedi stambul* was considered old-fashioned[94]. Most strikingly, the records of this time display a slowing down of the tempo in which the music is played. A 1909 recording of the *keroncong* classic 'Moresco' clocks in at 92-97 beats per minute (*keroncong* orchestras typically sped up as the song progressed), while a 1926 Miss Riboet recording of the same song is played at 52-54 beats per minute[95]. Recordings of this time also experimented with the instrumentation of the *keroncong* sounds. Prone to omission were the cello drum, guitar and even half of the *cak-cuk* formation, only leaving the on-beat strum. Specifically Miss Riboet even favored the inclusion of piano into her music[96], indicating an influence of jazz music, which was also increasing in popularity at the time. During her live performances, the popular Miss Riboet would even employ a jazz band on stage[97]. Similarly, observers have noted incorporations of other popular western music genres into *keroncong*, resulting in hybrid styles such as *keroncong cha cha, keroncong tango* and *keroncong foxtrot*[98]. *Keroncong* from this time thus started to fuse its characteristics with other genres of music, a

[92] Keppy 2008:152
[93] Ibid.
[94] Yampolsky 2010:35
[95] Ibid. 37
[96] Ibid. 42
[97] Keppy 2019:138
[98] Kornhauser 1978:133

tendency which we shall observe in Indonesia's modern-day context shortly. In order for listeners to differentiate between the newer *keroncong* styles and the more traditional *keroncong* styles discussed so far, contemporary sources start to use the term *keroncong asli* (Malay for 'real' or 'genuine' *keroncong*) to separate the old from the new[99]. This term is still in use to this day to differentiate traditional *keroncong* styles from newer genre fusions.

Nationalist keroncong

The next development of the history of *keroncong* is the appearance of *keroncong* with a nationalist tone. This development occurs in the context of Indonesia's budding national identity and anti-colonial sentiment. The search for a style of music to represent indigenous Indonesian art was not new, as Indonesian as well as Dutch intellectuals have voiced their preference of *gamelan* over *keroncong* ever since the "degenerating" use of the *pantun* verse by *keroncong* artists during the days of the *concours*[100]. However, developments in the emerging Indonesian nationalism brought about changes in the narrative surrounding *keroncong* and what was to be 'Indonesian' art, favoring the genre.

In 1922, the term 'Indonesia' was coined when the association of Indonesian students in the Netherlands changed its name from the *Indische Vereeniging* (Indies Association) to *Indonesische Vereeniging* (Indonesian Association). A name change would occur again in 1925, when the name was translated into Malay: *Perhimpoenan Indonesia*[101]. As the Indonesian students in the Netherlands - among whom were the famous Mohammad Hatta and Nazir Pamontjak - started to define and refine the meaning of 'Indonesia' and Indonesian independence from outside of the colony, future first president of Indonesia Sukarno started to form his nationalist ideas and debating current events from within the Dutch-Indies[102]. Having attended the Dutch HBS (*Hogere Burgerschool*, or Higher Civic School) in Surabaya, Sukarno had access to the Dutch, German, English and French languages besides his native Javanese and Malay[103]. Fluency in these languages gave him access to the ideas of such European thinkers as Voltaire, Marx, Engels and Lenin, as well as the works of Thomas Jefferson[104]. All of these thinkers would eventually influence Sukarno's leadership of the post-independence Indonesian Republic.

[99] Mutsaers 2013:360
[100] Keppy 2008:151
[101] Stutje 2016:45
[102] Rush 2014:178
[103] Ibid. 174
[104] Ibid. 175

In 1927, Sukarno founded the *Partai Nasional Indonesia* (PNI, Indonesian National Party) with friends from his study club. This party adhered to no single political ideology and instead pledged to achieve total independence for Indonesia, swearing non-cooperation with the Dutch authorities[105]. With his skill in public speaking and charisma, Sukarno soon became the face of the nationalist movement, despite the difference of opinion with some other nationalist thinkers, notably Mohammad Hatta, whose approach of independence through education took a path which would require more time[106].

Sukarno was exiled to Flores by the Dutch government in 1938, away from the other leaders of the nationalist movement[107]. He would have limited freedom of movement until 1942, when the Japanese Imperial Army invaded the archipelago and drove the Dutch away from the Indies. Under the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, the Empire of Japan wished to create an Asian bloc free of western influences, with itself at the top. The Japanese Imperial Army recruited Sukarno to help organize the Indonesian people, who in turn wanted to use the Japanese presence to quicken Indonesian independence.

Under the influence of the Japanese, who propagated their Greater East Asia ideology, *keroncong* music started to evolve, with the Japanese banning any Western characteristic of the style. Instead, the Japanese implemented a policy that was intended to protect, support and lead the creation of healthy, traditional art[108]. In other words, *keroncong* music was now expected to display a certain kind of morality that adhered to imperial Japanese cultural standards. This resulted in the definite end of the phenomenon known as *buaya keroncong*, as playing music in the streets was now prohibited. *Keroncong* performances were now mandatorily conducted in formal dress, with the women being dressed in *kebaya*, a long-sleeved blouse worn on formal occasions and usually combined with a *sarong*[109]. *Keroncong* ensembles were no longer allowed to carry European names and had to be translated into Malay[110]. Additionally, new *keroncong* compositions were to resemble Japanese cultural forms like dance, music and language. *Keroncong* music was thus slowed down even further, while *cak-cuk* instruments were either replaced by guitars or removed altogether[111].

[105] Ibid. 180
[106] Ibid. 183
[107] Ibid.
[108] Mutsaers 2013:372
[109] Alfian 2013:177
[110] Mutsaers 2013:372
[111] Darini 2012:26

On August 17th, 1945, Sukarno and Hatta proclaimed the independence of the Indonesian Republic[112]. What follows is the phase in Dutch-Indonesian history which came to be known as the *Bersiap* (Indonesian for 'getting ready' or 'preparing') phase, in which clashes between the Dutch and newly proclaimed-independent Indonesians led to an outburst of violence in the former colony. Euphoric over the beginning of the Indonesian Revolution, many Indonesian youths joined armed struggle groups, also known as *badan perjuangan*[113]. These youths came to be known by the Indonesian word *pemuda*. Some of these *badan perjuangan* were undisciplined, which resulted in acts of violence towards Dutch and Indo-European civilians. The Dutch government, aiming to reclaim its position as colonial ruler, undertook understatedly named *politionele acties* (Dutch for 'policing operation'). In Indonesian historiography, these military actions are more commonly known as the *Agresi Militer Belanda*, or the 'Dutch Military Aggressions'. The two military actions occurred in 1947 and 1948, resulting in the UN and United States demanding the Dutch retreat in January 1949 and a full transfer of sovereignty on July 1st 1950[114]. As a result of the Indonesian independence and the accompanying period of violence, the majority of the Indo-Dutch population was repatriated to the Netherlands or other countries like the United States or Australia.

The effects of the Indonesian struggle for independence on *keroncong* were considerable. Firstly, the rising sentiment of nationalism resulted in a wave of *keroncong* which accentuated its appreciation of the Indonesian nation. One famous example of such a composition is the *keroncong* classic *Bengawan Solo*. Composed by Gesang Martohartono in 1940, the song's lyrics recount the tidings of the Solo river during the dry and rainy seasons, during which, respectively, its water turns dry and flows abundantly[115]. During the Indonesian struggle for independence, the song became so well-known that it arguably attained the status of an alternative national anthem[116]. Ironically, the song also became popular among the Indo-Dutch community, with the song becoming a popular performance piece at *pasar malam* events post-repatriation. Secondly, as *keroncong* became a vehicle for maintaining morale among fighters, the genre increased its popularity throughout the archipelago, with radio stations broadcasting the new *keroncong* repertoire across the islands. Compositions by composers such as the aforementioned Gesang, along with those by Ismail Marzuki, R. Maladi

[112] Mutsaers 2013:374
[113] Ricklefs 2001:264
[114] Ibid. 283
[115] Alfian 2013:177
[116] Mutsaers 2013:375

and Kusbini would be broadcasted by nation-wide radio stations as well as local stations. The songs were also played in public spaces like markets or stations[117]. This meant that *keroncong* was now accessible for anyone willing to listen, wherever they might find themselves, regardless of social class or ethnicity.

Keroncong *today: two philosophies*

The repatriation of the Indo-Dutch community resulted in a fork in the road of the *keroncong* narrative, each path leading to a different kind of *keroncong* in Indonesia and the Netherlands, respectively. In Indonesia, the story of *keroncong* took it through state-supported nationalism towards a focus on genre hybridity, whereas in the Netherlands, *keroncong* followed a path of nostalgic essentialism.

The decades following the independence of Indonesia, particularly during Soeharto's New Order era, the aforementioned Indonesian patriotism found in *keroncong* during the Sukarno era was developed further into music that can be divided into three categories: campaign songs (*lagu resmi*, lit. 'official songs'), struggle songs (*lagu perjuangan*) and compulsory songs (*lagu wajib*)[118]. These songs were designed to, respectively, inform Indonesians of the values the administration wished to promote among the citizens; remind the Indonesians of the heroism of the fighters during the struggle for independence; and be learned and sung by primary school children, who could then perform the songs at national ceremonies[119]. Because of its popularity throughout the nation and its accessibility as opposed to Java-centrist *gamelan* music, the genre of *keroncong* was often chosen to record and perform these nationalist songs in. Of particular importance to this development was General Pirngadie, dubbed the '*keroncong* general', who strongly pleaded for *keroncong* to become the style of the nation. To this end, the general formed his own *keroncong* band to '*keroncong*-ize' popular music, thus popularizing the term *keroncong*-beat, which came to indicate any *keroncong* music which had a western rhythm section with drums and bass[120]. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, cassettes, CDs and VCDs containing *lagu wajib* were released in Indonesia, which even attained a good degree of popularity until the negative image of the Indonesian army detracted from this good reception during the post-Soeharto *Reformasi* era[121].

[117] Nugraha et al. 2016:229
[118] Dijk 2003:54
[119] Ibid. 41
[120] Dijk 2007:113
[121] Dijk 2003:32

As *keroncong* music entered its modern era in Indonesia, the style started to increasingly become mixed with contemporary and local musical styles. The 1960s saw the rise of the Javanese *keroncong* style known as *langgam Jawa*. This style mixed the 'standard *keroncong*' aesthetics with the sounds and harmonic system found in Javanese *gamelan* music[122]. Similarly, in the 1970s, the group Koes Plus rose to popularity with their brand of *keroncong* mixed with western rock music[123]. This, in turn, would be famously mixed with the popular *dangdut* style in the 1990s, particularly by popular Javanese singer Didi Kempot in a new genre called *campursari*, or a 'mix of essences'[124]. In recent years, even though the genre of *keroncong* is not as popular as it once was, it is still kept alive by artists combining the style with even more genres, like the hip-hop group Fade2Black that combined *keroncong* with rap on their song *Kroncong Protol*[125]. Later development in *keroncong* saw the incorporation of electrical instruments such as the electric guitar, bass, and most notably, the keyboard. At one point, one keyboard could replace the playing of an entire *keroncong* orchestra[126].

Among the Indo-community in the Netherlands, the story of *keroncong* proceeded along a vastly different path. Whereas the post-independence development of *keroncong* in Indonesia is largely characterized by genre fusions, its development in the Netherlands is more so characterized by nostalgia. The Dutch acquaintance with *keroncong* music started in the 1920s. During this time, Indo-European clubs and associations would also organize musical activities, while Dutch persons formerly active in the Dutch-Indies would play *keroncong* music at private parties[127]. In the 1930s, as the 78 rpm records attained popularity in the colony, so too did the *keroncong* records attain a wider audience in the Netherlands. One example of an orchestra from this era that combined *keroncong* and Hawaiian was Eurasia, who even recorded and released several 78 rpm records of their own[128]. *Keroncong* music was also broadcasted on Dutch radio from the late 1920s onwards, broadening the popularity of classics such as *Nona Manis* and *Nina Bobo*, while also introducing Dutch language song lyrics to new compositions[129].

As mentioned earlier, large portions of the Indo-European population in Indonesia were repatriated to the Netherlands (and other countries, such as Australia and the United States) after the Indonesian declaration of independence and the Dutch recognition thereof. Many

[122] Alfian 2013:178
[123] Darini 2012:27
[124] Achsani 2019:154
[125] Darini 2012:29
[126] Saputra 2020:68
[127] Tangkau 1996:241
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid. 243

keroncong musicians from the Dutch-Indies were thus transported to the Netherlands, where they found an increasing interest in the genre, together with the increasingly popular genre of Hawaiian. It is during this time that musicians such as George De Fretes found success with a combination of the rhythmic patterns of *keroncong* with the sound of slide guitar[130].

Interest in *keroncong* would eventually wane, however, with the younger second generation of Indo-Dutch being more interested in Western style pop music and indo-rock. By the late 1970s, *keroncong* music was considered *passé*, only enjoyed in private by a limited number of people[131]. This changed, however, as Indos gained a renewed interest in their Indo-European heritage in the 1980s, signaling the coming of *tempo doeloe* ('times of the past'), a sentiment characterized by nostalgia for the Dutch-Indies. The second generation of Indo-European immigrants started to experience a sense of pride in their Indo heritage, which led to the emergence of the term *Indo-pride*[132], as well as the appearance of nostalgia acts and events[133]. *Pasar malam* events surged in popularity, together with 'all time greatest hits' compilation records. The character of 'Tante Lien' - well-remembered to this day - made her first appearance, played by first-generation Indo-European immigrant Wieteke van Dort portraying a '*gezellige Indische tante*', or amicable Indo aunty[134].

The nostalgic interest in *tempo doeloe* led to a reappreciation of *keroncong* music, albeit mostly in its *keroncong asli* mold. This style of *keroncong* was considered the most 'real', thus the most worthy of revival[135]. George Dankmeyer, a well-known musician among the Indo musician community, reiterates in 2006 the sentiment that "*keroncong* is folk music. [It is] the soul, the rhythm, the tone, the sounds, the soul of the people *there*"[136], implying that the sound of *keroncong* should not be changed. The best-received new *keroncong* music in the Netherlands is also played in the *keroncong asli* style, as exemplified by the 2011 release of the album *Kroncong Baru* ('new *keroncong*') by Erwin van Ligten and Julya Lo'ko.

It is at this point that our narration of the story of *keroncong* ends. That is not to say, however, that this is where the story of *keroncong* finds its end. In Indonesia, the genre continues to find new ways of expression among newer generations of artists. Similarly, although on a smaller scale, *keroncong* is still enjoyed by enthusiasts attending Indo-themed

[130] Mutsaers 2013:355-6
[131] Tangkau 1996:243
[132] Ibid.
[133] Mutsaers 2013:465
[134] Ibid. 466
[135] Ibid. 477
[136] Ibid. 483

events every year. Be it in Indonesia or the Netherlands, in any shape or form, *keroncong* music is likely to continue to be played for years to come, as the genre has been developed and kept alive by artists and enthusiasts for over a century.

Chapter 3: Discussion

In the previous chapter, we have made an effort to come to a comprehensive understanding of *keroncong* music, its cultural roots and the historical contexts that gave shape to its developments. In this chapter, we shall assess whether *keroncong* can be considered intangible cultural heritage and whether it can be 'shared', thereby answering the questions asked in the Introduction of this thesis. Borrowing from UNESCO's definition of ICH, we have defined 'shared intangible cultural heritage' as:

> "Shared intangible cultural heritage is the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – recognized as part of the cultural heritage of two or more groups, communities or individuals that identify as being part of different cultural groups due to historical developments or nationality"

Can keroncong *become 'intangible cultural heritage'?*

In order to assess whether *keroncong* music can adhere to our definition of 'shared intangible cultural heritage', our first step will be to determine whether it can be considered 'intangible cultural heritage' in the first place. UNESCO specifically states in its definition of ICH that, in order to be acknowledged as such, a cultural expression has to contain practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills that are associated with a cultural group. Skills can, counterintuitively, include objects associated therewith, as well as instruments and artefacts. Closer inspection of actual inscriptions in UNESCO's Representative List pertaining to music reveal usage in religious ceremonies and/or rituals as a contributing factor, along with locality, traditionality, representations of the marginalized and, in the case of the inscription of *fado*, multiculturalism[137]. I will argue here that *keroncong* contains many, but not all, of the qualities described above.

The most notable hindering factor is that *keroncong* does not serve as any religious or ceremonial accompaniment. Throughout its history, from its beginnings in the village of Tugu to the modern-day era, *keroncong* has been a style of music intended for entertainment. The only exception to this might be during the *buaya keroncong*-era, but its intended use then was also not quite religious.

[137] UNESCO 2011:"Fado, urban popular song of Portugal"

Keroncong does, however, come with much knowledge and skills that deserve attention from the heritage sector. Firstly, the design and usage of the *cak* and *cuk* instruments is unique to *keroncong*. Likely owing many of its design choices to the Portuguese *cavaquinho*, these lute-like instruments have some distinctive modifications made to their design. The *cak* is a four-stringed instrument that is tuned D5 D5 G4 B4, meaning that it is stringed from high to low. This is uncommon, as stringed instruments are usually tuned low to high. Furthermore, instead of one larger sound hole, the *cak* has multiple smaller holes in its body, often shaped in one or multiple squares, circles or triangles. The *cuk* is a three-stringed instrument, also tuned high to low, with a G4 B3 E3 tuning. Unlike the *cak*, the *cuk* has a more traditional single sound hole[138]. The knowledge needed to produce these instruments, along with the knowledge and ability needed to play them, are elements likely to fulfill the requirements for safeguarding according to UNESCO standards.

Secondly, in the context of revolutionary Indonesia, the unifying role played by *keroncong* can be counted towards its acknowledgement as ICH. During this time, *keroncong* was the only genre of music developed inside of and popular throughout the new nation of Indonesia. What follows is that *keroncong* music allowed people of many different cultural groups to imagine themselves as belonging to the same community, effectively functioning as an incarnation of Indonesia's pan-Indonesian motto 'unity in diversity', or *bhinneka tunggal ika*[139].

Thirdly, in the context of the Indo-European community, *keroncong* can be seen as a cultural element of the marginalized. Historically, the Indo-Dutch have played major roles in the development of *keroncong*. Indo-Dutch *buaya keroncong* brought the genre to Batavia from Tugu, while Indo-dominated *komedi stambul* ensembles were filled with Indo-Dutch players. This is not to say, however, that all Indos in the Dutch-Indies enjoyed or associated themselves with *keroncong*, as some Indos who aimed to arrange their lifestyles as European as possible, saw little value in the music style and actively distanced themselves from it[140]. It was only later, after the vast repatriation of Indo-Dutch to the Netherlands, that the Indo-community started to collectively embrace *keroncong* and started to see it as 'their' music[141].

In summary, *keroncong* fulfills many, but not all, requirements of UNESCO's definition of ICH. The style, which has a history that spans multiple centuries and carries significant meaning

[138] ATLAS of plucked instruments 2006:"Keroncong Guitar / Cak / Cuk"
[139] Which, ironically, is itself not completely free of Java-centrism, as the phrase is composed in Old Javanese
[140] Dijk 2007:113
[141] Tangkau 1996:246

to two cultural groups, brought forth unique instruments and knowledge while carrying unifying qualities. However, the lack of a religious function might be problematic for *keroncong*'s road to inclusion in the ICH catalog. Additionally, the widespread popularity of *keroncong* in Indonesia, together with the embrace of the marginalized Indo-Dutch group in the Netherlands, seem to lead to opposing conclusions about the genre. This might become problematic when the inscription is to be shared among the two countries. Nevertheless, *keroncong* music seems to be eligible for inclusion into the catalog of ICH or UNESCO's Representative List and, as shall be elaborated later in the discussion, its inclusion need not lead to conflict when we guide our thinking outside of the either/or-paradigm of the 'shared or not shared' discussion. This brings us to our second question:

Whose heritage: Indonesian, Dutch, or 'shared'?

As we have learned in the chapter about the story of *keroncong*, the Indo-Dutch and the Indonesians have each played unique roles in the development of the genre. Thus, to answer this question, we should enumerate which of *keroncong*'s qualities might lead to its inscription as Indonesian, and which would lead to its inscription as Dutch. It is here where we run into a problem mentioned briefly in the Introduction, namely that the Indo-Dutch have no country of their own, which makes their nationality Dutch, which in turn makes any of their inscriptions into the UNESCO's Representative List attributed to the Netherlands.

When we think along the lines of State Party nominations into the Representative List, one option would be to attribute it to the Netherlands. The Dutch could argue that it was the Indo-Dutch who made essential contributions to the development of *keroncong* in its early stages. It were the Indo-European *buaya keroncong* who brought the music from Tugu to Batavia, and it was them who played the *lagu stambul* in the *komedi stambul* orchestras. After their repatriation, the Indo-Dutch came to embrace *keroncong* as music that represents people, where it was differentiated from indigenous Dutch music as well as other contemporary popular music genres such as jazz and rock styles. One might argue that the Indo-Dutch already had indo-rock (e.g. the Tielman Brothers) as a 'soundtrack of the people', but I would argue that, firstly, indo-rock is based on American blues and rock-'n-roll traditions; and secondly, the genre was mostly enjoyed by the younger generation of Indos, who wanted something more exciting than what was popular in the Netherlands at that time[142].

The second option would be to attribute *keroncong* to Indonesia. They could argue that *keroncong* music contains elements that are indigenously Indonesian, as it has historically

[142] Mutsaers 1990:307

made use of *pantun*, which has already been acknowledged as being of partly Indonesian origin, and most of *keroncong*'s developments geographically take place in Indonesia. Furthermore, the genre has played a role in the formation of an Indonesian identity through the *lagu perjuangan* played during and after the Indonesian struggle for independence. Finally, it is the Indonesian artists that are currently rejuvenating the genre by creating new genre fusions with local and transnational music styles.

The third option would be to acknowledge *keroncong* as both Indonesian and Dutch heritage, in other words, for it to become 'shared'. As previously stated, members of the Indo-Dutch community have the Dutch nationality, which makes any of their contributions to the Representative List part of the ICH catalog of the Netherlands, as the way in which UNESCO operates requires the involvement of State Parties and the attribution of its inscriptions to one or more countries. It is for this reason that, if the Indonesian community is to 'share' their heritage, it would become shared with not just the Indo-community, but with the Netherlands as a whole, which could become problematic. It is this issue that we shall elaborate when we answer the question:

What are the implications of 'shared intangible cultural heritage'?

As we have established throughout this thesis, both the Indonesian and the Indo-Dutch cultural groups can rightfully claim that *keroncong* music is part of their identity. These cultural groups possess different nationalities and have been driven apart due to developments in the entangled histories of both countries. According to the definition of SICH that we drafted earlier, we can already claim that *keroncong* is 'shared' heritage. This 'sharing', however, can be problematized in a myriad of ways. Firstly, it does not take into account the role that the Tugunese and their Mardijker ancestors have played, in particular because their cultural identification lies in a gray area between Dutch and Indonesian. Should their efforts then be acknowledged under the Dutch or Indonesian umbrella, or should a third, non-State Party be added to the list for the first time? If this is the case, should Portugal then also be added as a stakeholder, as they in turn likely influenced the culture of the Mardijker people? Secondly, the Dutch have a problematic history with the Dutch government's policies surrounding 'shared heritage', in which the heritage to be preserved seemed to serve the Dutch interest more than the partner countries'. When we look at UNESCO's Representative List now, we see that the Netherlands have a single inscription, whereas Indonesia currently has eleven[143]. If the

[143] UNESCO 2020:"Browse the Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices"

Netherlands were to apply for an inscription with Indonesia, it could be interpreted as a self-serving attempt from the Dutch government to become a bigger player in the field of ICH at the expense of Indonesia, which could be interpreted as a neo-colonial endeavor. Lastly, Indonesia itself also does not appear particularly keen on sharing their heritage. Of its eleven inscriptions into the Representative List, only one is shared, namely the inscription of *pantun*, which is shared with Malaysia[144]. Before this inscription, Indonesians have historically had an antagonistic stance towards the sharing of heritage, feeling rather that the heritage was 'stolen' from them[145]. Taking this into consideration, it is likely that, if Indonesia were to be presented with the choice to share *keroncong* music as an inscription with its former colonizer, it would not be enthusiastic about it.

An alternative to 'shared intangible cultural heritage'

Although technically possible, it would seem that a shared inscription between the Netherlands and Indonesia would still be problematic. It is at this point that this thesis suggests an alternative to a shared inscription.

Throughout the development of *keroncong* after the independence of Indonesia and the repatriation of the Indo-Dutch, we have seen that the style of music has come to signify different meanings and value to both groups. To Indonesia, the genre has come to represent progression and unity, resulting in an aesthetic philosophy that is ever-evolving. To the Indos in the Netherlands, rooted in nostalgia, it has come to represent the past, resulting in an aesthetic philosophy that favours stability and that which is *asli*.

The suggestion, then, is to inscribe *keroncong* music not once, but twice into the Representative List, once for each cultural group. The inscriptions can be differentiated through their spellings, namely *keroncong* for the Indonesian inscription and *krontjong*, the Dutch spelling that is used throughout Dutch-language literature on the subject, for the Dutch inscription. When done in this way, the story of *keroncong* can be told from both perspectives while still respecting what the music means to each group. An additional benefit is that there will be no need for argument about how the budget meant for safeguarding is to be used, as each country can use the budget as it sees fit[146]. The Tugunese and the Mardijkers can be credited in both inscriptions, without the need to include them with either the Indonesians or the Dutch. The Netherlands can argue that it is giving the marginalized group of Indo-Dutch an opportunity for

[144] Ibid.
[145] Chong 2019:2
[146] And at this point, UNESCO's committee will already have approved any plans the countries might have during the nomination

representation in the cultural canon of the Netherlands, countering potential accusations of cultural appropriation. Finally, separate inscriptions will release *keroncong* from any need for uniformity, as both communities can engage with the music in the way that they want, without one seeming more 'real' than the other.

Furthermore, inscribing *keroncong* music in this way does not mean that the notion of 'shared heritage' in itself is rejected. Rather, what is changed is the way in which the 'sharing' takes place. Instead of sharing the phenomenon of *keroncong* as a whole, what is now shared is its mutual history, while both versions have the freedom to evolve into whatever form it may take. Although this idea might take some lobbying, it is likely that, when *keroncong* music is inscribed in this way, it will keep the largest number of stakeholders satisfied and - more importantly - have their cultural identity acknowledged.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to establish a more in-depth understanding of the concept of ‘shared intangible cultural heritage’, which has up to now been underexplored. It addresses the problems embedded therein by analyzing the history and main characteristics of *keroncong* music and the problems that arise when it is viewed through the lens of SICH.

When taken at face value, *keroncong* music seems to be a poster child for heritage that is ‘shared’ among multiple cultural groups, namely the Indonesians and the Indo-Dutch, and that they could possibly nominate *keroncong* for inscription into UNESCO’s Representative List together. However, closer inspection reveals that such unification is unlikely. Firstly, *keroncong* has evolved into two distinctly different manifestations throughout the course of its history, significantly changing the way in which the two groups engage with the music. Secondly, the way in which UNESCO’s inscription process works would require *keroncong* to be shared with not just the Indo-Dutch, but with the Netherlands as a country. This is problematic as, for the Dutch, sharing the inscription with Indonesia could be criticized as being neo-colonial and culturally appropriating. Lastly, Indonesia has had a turbulent past with the ‘shared heritage’ phenomenon, particularly in relation to Malaysia. It is thus unlikely that the two cultural groups can be successfully unified under a single shared inscription of intangible cultural heritage.

Instead, this thesis proposes a dual nomination under the music style’s two names, *keroncong* and *krontjong*, separately attributed to Indonesia and the Netherlands respectively, in order to keep the largest number of stakeholders satisfied while still safeguarding the tradition of *keroncong*. Our analysis of the story of *keroncong* reveals that the phenomenon of ‘shared intangible cultural heritage’ is problematic as the way in which heritage is ‘shared’ continues to be under-defined. It is likely that there are more instances of intangible cultural heritage that, like *keroncong*, could be attributed to multiple cultural groups and face similar issues, indicating there is a need for the heritage sector to properly define ‘shared cultural heritage’.

This thesis suggests that, in order to account for differences and positively change the way in which this ‘sharing’ takes place, *keroncong* and other instances of ICH like it should be able to be inscribed in two or more separate inscriptions, shifting the way in which the heritage is ‘shared’ towards a shared history, rather than the phenomenon altogether. As a closing statement, I would like to offer the analogy of the language family tree. The field of linguistics has no issue with acknowledging the ‘shared heritage’ of languages like Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and French as Romance languages, while still remaining separate languages. Why,

then, would the field of heritage studies not acknowledge a shared past between two separate Representative List inscriptions?

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