



## ***Klotheakan Music in the Brendung Ritual: An Ethnomusicological Analysis of Rain-Invoking Traditions in Pekalongan***

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<b>Abstract</b>		
<p><i>The Brendung ritual represents a rain-invocation tradition that continues to be practiced by the community of Langensari Village, Kesesi District, Pekalongan Regency, Indonesia. This ritual incorporates klotheakan music, performed using various household objects as musical instruments. This study aims to analyze the musical structure of klotheakan within the Brendung ritual, to examine the relationship between musical structure and ritual processes, and to interpret its cultural significance within the community's social life. A qualitative research design was employed using an ethnomusicological approach. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with ritual specialists, musicians, and community leaders, as well as audiovisual documentation during ritual performances. The analysis focused on musical structure, including rhythmic patterns, inter-instrumental relationships, and emergent musical dynamics within klotheakan performance.</i></p> <p><i>The findings indicate that klotheakan music is constructed through simple yet interdependent rhythmic patterns performed collectively using an interlocking system among instruments such as boyong, bamboo slit drums (kentongan), buckets, cans, and metal trays. Repetitive rhythmic structures function to generate a ritual atmosphere that facilitates trance states and intensifies participants' emotional engagement. Furthermore, klotheakan music holds significant cultural meanings, functioning as a medium for ritual legitimization, social integration, spiritual communication, and the reinforcement of cultural identity. These findings demonstrate that klotheakan music operates not merely as an accompaniment to ritual activities, but as a symbolic medium that sustains and amplifies collective ritual experience within the Brendung tradition.</i></p>		
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### **Introduction**

In agrarian societies, ritual practices play a crucial role as part of a cultural system that mediates relationships between humans, the natural environment, and spiritual forces believed to influence the balance of life. Rituals should not be understood solely as religious or belief-based practices; rather, they function as social mechanisms that represent values, norms, and collective perceptions of natural phenomena affecting community survival (Merriam, 1964; Nettl, 2005). In this context, ritual becomes a symbolic arena in which communities negotiate relationships between humans, nature, and spiritual dimensions shaping collective life structures.

In many traditional societies, ritual practices are almost invariably accompanied by musical activities that serve social, symbolic, and spiritual functions. Music in ritual contexts is not merely an aesthetic complement to ceremonial processes; instead, it operates as a medium of collective expression that reinforces the symbolic meaning of ritual actions (Blacking, 1973; Titon, 2015). Through sound and rhythm performed collectively, communities articulate hopes, prayers, and beliefs directed toward forces perceived to influence cosmic balance.

From an ethnomusicological perspective, music is understood as a cultural phenomenon inseparable from the social context in which it is produced. It is not an autonomous aesthetic object, but rather a social practice reflecting value systems, social relations, and collective experiences of a community (Stone, 2010; Rice, 2003; Suryadmaja, 2025). Therefore, the study of ritual music is essential for understanding how musical practices interact with belief systems, social structures, and cultural dynamics.

Within Javanese society, musical practices in ritual contexts frequently utilize simple instruments derived from everyday objects. Bamboo slit drums, kitchen utensils, and various household tools are commonly repurposed as musical instruments that generate specific rhythmic patterns during ritual activities. This phenomenon reflects the community's musical creativity in utilizing available environmental resources to construct meaningful sonic expressions (Johnson, 1995; Kartomi, 1990; Trehub, 2015). Thus, musicality in traditional societies does not necessarily depend on formal instruments, but can emerge through cultural practices rooted in everyday life.

One such example is found in the *Brendung* ritual performed by the community of Langensari Village, Kesesi District, Pekalongan Regency. This ritual constitutes a rain-invocation practice conducted during prolonged dry seasons. In its implementation, the *Brendung* ritual incorporates *klothekan* music—rhythmic performances utilizing household objects such as buckets, cans, trays, and bamboo slit drums. These sounds are performed collectively as an integral component of the ritual, positioning music not only as an accompaniment but also as a symbolic manifestation of communal participation in invoking rainfall.

The use of everyday objects as musical instruments is not unique to the *Brendung* ritual but is also evident in various ritual music traditions across Indonesia. Research on Bettong music in customary rituals demonstrates that simple instruments can serve as essential media in constructing musical structures closely linked to ritual practices (Fikri et al., 2021). Similarly, studies on Dol music in Bengkulu reveal that repetitive rhythmic patterns function to reinforce ritual atmosphere while symbolizing cultural identity (Parmadie, 2018). In addition, musical practices in the Nyabakng ritual illustrate how simple instruments can form complex musical systems imbued with symbolic meanings within community life (Nanda, 2024).

Beyond its ritual function, music also plays a significant social role within communities. Ritual music often contributes to strengthening social solidarity and constructing cultural identity. Through collective musical practices, communities reinforce social cohesion while affirming cultural values transmitted across generations (Budiman, 2025; Anggrianingsih, 2023). Consequently, ritual music encompasses not only aesthetic dimensions but also functions as a social mechanism sustaining community cohesion and cultural continuity.

Despite the significant development of ethnomusicological studies in recent decades, research on local ritual music employing non-conventional instruments remains relatively limited. Much of the existing scholarship focuses on musical traditions involving formal instruments or well-documented

musical systems (Irawati, 2020; Cottrell, 2010). As a result, many localized musical practices embedded in ritual contexts have not received adequate scholarly attention.

Previous studies have indeed examined the role of music in various Indonesian ritual practices. Research on music in traditional healing rituals indicates that music plays a crucial role in shaping spiritual atmospheres and strengthening collective ritual experiences (Anindita, 2023). Other studies highlight that music in customary rituals functions as a medium of symbolic communication between humans and perceived spiritual forces (Fitri, 2020). However, these studies predominantly emphasize social function or symbolic meaning, while detailed analyses of musical structure—particularly in practices involving everyday objects—remain scarce.

This gap underscores the need for further investigation. Analyzing musical structure—including rhythmic patterns, inter-instrumental relationships, and musical dynamics—provides deeper insight into how communities organize sound into meaningful musical systems within their cultural context. Such analysis not only contributes to understanding the aesthetic dimension of ritual music but also reveals how musical practices shape ritual experience.

In response to this gap, the present study offers a novel contribution through an ethnomusicological analysis of *klotheakan* music structure in the *Brendung* ritual, focusing on rhythmic patterns, inter-instrumental relationships, and the role of music in constructing ritual atmosphere. Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasize social functions, this research integrates structural musical analysis with cultural interpretation to elucidate how the *klotheakan* musical system contributes to shaping collective ritual experience. This integrative approach enables a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between musical structure, ritual practice, and cultural meaning within the *Brendung* tradition.

Based on this background, the study addresses three primary research questions: (1) What constitutes the musical structure of *klotheakan* in the *Brendung* ritual? (2) How does this musical structure relate to the ritual process? and (3) What cultural meanings are embedded in *klotheakan* music for the community of Langensari Village?

This study aims to describe the musical structure of *klotheakan* within the *Brendung* ritual, to analyze the relationship between musical practice and ritual processes (Titon, 2015), and to interpret its cultural meanings within the context of Langensari society (Blacking, 1973).

Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the advancement of ethnomusicological scholarship, particularly in understanding the interplay between musical structure, ritual practice, and cultural systems. It also seeks to enrich the literature on traditional music and ritual-based musical practices (Stone, 2010; Nettl, 2005). Practically, this study contributes to the documentation and preservation of local ritual music traditions as part of intangible cultural heritage. Such documentation is essential for ensuring the sustainability of cultural traditions amidst ongoing social transformation (Hou et al., 2022).

## Methods

This study adopts a qualitative research design within an ethnomusicological framework to examine *klotheakan* music practices in the *Brendung* ritual in a contextualized and interpretative manner. A qualitative approach is appropriate as the study does not solely address musical structure as a sonic phenomenon, but also investigates its cultural meanings, social experiences, and ritual functions. From an ethnomusicological perspective, music is understood as a cultural practice embedded in

value systems, social relations, and collective experiences (Titon, 2015; Nettl, 2005). This approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of the interrelationships between musical structure, ritual processes, and cultural meanings.

The research was conducted in Langensari Village, Kesesi District, Pekalongan Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. This site was purposively selected due to the continued practice of the *Brendung* ritual as a rain-invocation tradition actively maintained by the local community. As an agrarian society highly dependent on environmental conditions, the community perceives the ritual as an essential cultural mechanism for negotiating relationships between humans, nature, and spiritual forces. This socio-cultural context provides a relevant setting for examining *klothekan* music within its ritual framework.

Data were collected through three primary techniques: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and audiovisual documentation. Participant observation was conducted during multiple ritual performances to capture the sequential structure of the ritual and the role of *klothekan* music within it. This method enabled the identification of rhythmic patterns, performer interactions, and the relationship between musical practices and ritual stages (Rice, 2003). Field notes were systematically recorded to document both musical and social dynamics emerging during collective performance. In-depth interviews were conducted using a purposive sampling strategy involving key informants directly engaged in the *Brendung* ritual, including ritual specialists, musicians, and community leaders. The selection criteria were based on participants' experiential knowledge, active involvement in the ritual, and cultural authority within the community. Semi-structured interview guidelines were employed to ensure consistency while allowing flexibility in exploring participants' perspectives. Ritual specialists provided insights into symbolic meanings and ritual functions, musicians contributed detailed explanations of rhythmic structures and performance techniques, and community leaders offered perspectives on the social significance of the ritual in maintaining cultural identity and cohesion.

Audiovisual documentation was utilized to record musical practices during the ritual, including audio recordings, photographs, and video footage. These recordings functioned as primary data for musical analysis, enabling repeated examination of rhythmic patterns and inter-instrumental relationships. In ethnomusicological research, such documentation serves as a cultural archive that supports analytical accuracy and contributes to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage (Hou et al., 2022).

Data analysis was conducted through a multi-stage qualitative procedure. First, all field data—including interview transcripts, field notes, and audiovisual materials—were organized and subjected to thematic coding to identify key categories related to musical structure, ritual processes, and cultural meanings. Second, musical analysis was performed through transcription of selected audio recordings into simplified rhythmic notation to examine recurring motifs, interlocking patterns, and temporal organization. This structural analysis focused on rhythmic patterns, inter-instrumental relationships, and musical dynamics shaping the sonic texture of *klothekan* music (Johnson, 1995).

Subsequently, the findings were interpreted using an ethnomusicological framework to contextualize musical structures within the community's belief systems and collective experiences (Stone, 2010). The integration of structural musical analysis and cultural interpretation enabled a holistic understanding of *klothekan* music as both a sonic system and a cultural practice.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study employed methodological triangulation by comparing findings from observation, interviews, and audiovisual recordings. In addition, member checking was conducted with selected informants to validate the accuracy of interpretations. These procedures enhance the credibility and reliability of the research findings. Through this rigorous methodological framework, the study not only explicates the formal characteristics of *klothekan* music but also reveals its role as a cultural practice that constructs and sustains ritual meaning within the social life of the Langensari community.

## Results and Discussion

### Overview of the *Brendung* Ritual

The *Brendung* ritual represents a rain-invocation tradition that continues to be practiced by the community of Langensari Village, Kesesi District, Pekalongan Regency, Indonesia. This tradition is typically performed during prolonged dry seasons, when water scarcity significantly affects both daily domestic needs and agricultural activities. Within an agrarian society, particularly one reliant on rain-fed agricultural systems, water availability constitutes a critical determinant of social and economic sustainability. Accordingly, the *Brendung* ritual can be understood as a cultural response to ecological challenges encountered by the community (Budiman, 2025).

From a historical and cultural perspective, the *Brendung* ritual is closely associated with Javanese belief systems that have long incorporated elements of animism and dynamism. Within this cosmological framework, natural forces and ancestral spirits are perceived as possessing spiritual agency capable of influencing human life. Such beliefs are expressed through ritual practices that function as symbolic mechanisms of communication between the human and spiritual realms (Merriam, 1964; Blacking, 1973). In the context of Langensari Village, the *Brendung* ritual serves as a medium through which the community invokes rainfall by appealing to spiritual forces believed to regulate natural balance.

The *Brendung* ritual is characterized by the performance of incantatory chants accompanied by *klothekan* music, as well as the use of a symbolic effigy known as *Mbak Ayu Brendung*. This effigy functions as a spiritual intermediary believed to possess the power to summon rain. Symbolically, the *Brendung* effigy is represented as a female or celestial figure—a guardian of the sky—who is believed to bring rain to the earth. The effigy is constructed using simple materials such as a coconut-shell dipper, bamboo, and women's clothing, and is subsequently adorned with decorative elements including white lime powder (*apu*), lipstick, charcoal, and floral arrangements.

In practice, the ritual is conducted on *Kliwon* days according to the Javanese calendar, which are considered to possess heightened spiritual potency. The ritual sequence begins with the construction of the *Brendung* effigy, initiated by the acquisition of a coconut-shell dipper as the primary material for forming the effigy's head. Traditionally, this object is obtained by covertly taking it from the house of a widow known for her temperamental character, as part of the ritual requirement. This act is symbolically interpreted as a means of generating emotional energy believed to intensify the community's supplication for rain. Once the effigy is assembled and decorated, it is temporarily placed in a cemetery or other sacred site prior to the commencement of the ritual procession.

The ritual is typically performed at night in an open space such as a field or a spacious courtyard. As the *Brendung* effigy is carried from the sacred site to the ritual location, musicians begin performing *klothekan* music, signaling the initiation of the ritual process. This music is produced

using various household objects, including *boyong* (a clay water container), buckets, trays, cans, and bamboo slit drums (*kentongan*). Among these instruments, the *boyong* holds a central role as a mandatory instrument in the ritual. Symbolically, the *boyong* represents the community's aspiration for water, embodying their dependence on natural resources. It is played by striking the upper opening with a bamboo fan, producing a low-frequency sound resembling a bass tone.

In addition to musical performance, the *Brendung* ritual involves the recitation of chants performed repetitively in synchronization with the rhythmic patterns of *klothekan* music. This repetition continues until the *Brendung* effigy enters a trance state (*dadi*). During this phase, the effigy – placed on a container filled with water – begins to move intensively, appearing to jump or oscillate. The local community interprets this phenomenon as an indication of the presence of spiritual forces responding to their invocation. At the culmination of the ritual, the ritual specialist terminates the trance state by reciting closing incantations, marking the conclusion of the ceremony.

Community participation in the *Brendung* ritual underscores its function beyond a purely spiritual practice, positioning it as a social space that reinforces communal solidarity. The involvement of community members as both participants and observers fosters social interaction and strengthens collective resilience in facing environmental challenges. In this regard, the *Brendung* ritual can be conceptualized as a cultural practice that integrates ecological, spiritual, and social dimensions within agrarian life.

Thus, the *Brendung* ritual operates not only as a rain-invocation tradition but also as a cultural expression reflecting the community's belief system, social structure, and musical creativity. The presence of *klothekan* music within this ritual highlights the significant role of musical practice in constructing ritual atmosphere and reinforcing collective experience within the cultural life of Langensari Village.

### Structure of the *Brendung* Ritual

The structure of the *Brendung* ritual consists of a sequence of interrelated stages, encompassing ritual preparation, ritual enactment, and ritual closure. Each stage is governed by specific rules, requirements, and symbolic meanings that are collectively understood by the community as integral components of a cultural practice transmitted across generations. From a cultural anthropological perspective, such ritual structures can be conceptualized as symbolic systems that organize social action while reinforcing relationships among humans, nature, and spiritual forces believed to regulate communal life (Merriam, 1964; Blacking, 1973).

The initial stage of the *Brendung* ritual involves the preparation of essential ritual elements. One of the most significant components is the construction of the *Mbak Ayu Brendung* effigy, which functions both as a symbolic representation and as a spiritual intermediary within the ritual process. The effigy is constructed using simple materials such as a coconut-shell dipper, bamboo, and women's clothing, and is subsequently decorated with white lime powder (*apu*), charcoal, lipstick, and floral arrangements.

The effigy-making process takes place in the kitchen (*pawon*) during the daytime and involves three ritual practitioners with distinct roles. A male participant is responsible for assembling the structural framework of the effigy, using bamboo for the body and wooden pieces for the arms, while two female participants are tasked with decorating the facial features and adorning the effigy with flowers and clothing. The use of a coconut shell for the effigy's head reflects both practical and

symbolic considerations, as its shape resembles a human head and its availability is closely tied to everyday life within the community.

A distinctive aspect of the preparation stage lies in the acquisition of the coconut-shell dipper used for the effigy's head. Traditionally, this object must be obtained by covertly taking it from the house of a widow known for her temperamental disposition. This act is performed by an unmarried young woman during the daytime, ensuring that the owner remains unaware of the act. Within local belief systems, this practice carries symbolic meaning associated with the generation of emotional intensity, which is believed to enhance the efficacy of the rain invocation. If the act is discovered, the ritual is considered invalid and must be repeated.

Following its construction, the effigy is taken to a cemetery or another site regarded as sacred by the community, where it is temporarily placed until the ritual commences in the evening. The effigy is carried by two young men and covered with a cloth during transportation. Its placement in the cemetery is interpreted as a symbolic act of seeking permission or blessing from ancestral spirits (*dhanyang*), who are believed to serve as guardians of the village territory.

In addition to the effigy, ritual preparation also includes the provision of *ubarampé*—ritual paraphernalia consisting of offerings and symbolic objects. These include white incense, a comb, a mirror, face powder, lipstick, perfume, roses, jasmine, kenanga, frangipani flowers, a broom made of palm sticks, and candles. Within Javanese ritual practice, such offerings function as mediating objects through which respect is expressed toward ancestral spirits and spiritual entities believed to be present during the ritual.

Upon completion of all preparatory stages, the *Brendung* ritual is conducted at night in an open space, such as a field or a spacious courtyard. The timing of the ritual is determined according to the Javanese calendar, specifically on *Kliwon* days, which are believed to possess heightened spiritual potency within local cosmology.

The ritual enactment begins with the procession of carrying the *Brendung* effigy from the cemetery to the ritual site. As the effigy approaches the location, musicians initiate the performance of *klothekan* music, marking the commencement of the ritual sequence. This music is produced using various household objects, including *boyong*, buckets, trays, cans, and bamboo slit drums (*kentongan*). The resulting rhythmic soundscape establishes the ritual atmosphere while accompanying the recitation of chants performed by the ritual specialist and musicians.

Subsequently, the *Brendung* effigy is placed on a container filled with water and secured with two *angking* ropes held by four male participants. These individuals are responsible for stabilizing the effigy during the trance phase. Throughout the ritual, chants are performed repetitively in synchronization with the rhythmic patterns of *klothekan* music. These chants are understood as forms of spiritual communication directed toward *dhanyang* and natural forces, with the intention of invoking rainfall.

The climax of the ritual occurs when the effigy begins to exhibit signs of trance, locally referred to as *dadi*. In this state, the effigy moves vigorously, appearing to jump or oscillate with considerable force, requiring the handlers to exert significant effort to restrain it. The community interprets this phenomenon as evidence of the presence of spiritual forces responding to their invocation for rain. The final stage of the *Brendung* ritual involves the closing process conducted by the ritual specialist. At the peak of the trance state, the ritual specialist halts the effigy's movement by inserting a hand into the effigy, symbolically withdrawing the spiritual force believed to inhabit it. This act signifies the conclusion of the ritual and the return of the invoked spiritual entities to their respective realms.

In summary, the *Brendung* ritual exhibits a structured sequence organized into three principal stages: preparation, enactment, and closure. Each stage serves not only practical functions within the ritual process but also embodies symbolic meanings rooted in the community's belief system. This structured pattern illustrates how the community constructs ritual practices as a medium of communication between humans, nature, and spiritual forces, while simultaneously reinforcing social cohesion within the community.

### Structure of *Klotheakan* Music

*Klotheakan* music constitutes a central element in the *Brendung* ritual, functioning as a musical medium that both accompanies and intensifies the sacred atmosphere of the ritual process. Within an ethnomusicological framework, musical structure is not merely understood as an arrangement of sounds, but as a system embedded in social practice and cultural meaning (Nettl, 2005; Titon, 2015). Accordingly, the analysis of *klotheakan* music in the *Brendung* ritual extends beyond sonic features to encompass the interrelation between sound, ritual practice, and collective experience.

In general, the structure of *klotheakan* music in the *Brendung* ritual is constructed through the interaction of several simple instruments that generate specific rhythmic patterns. Performed collectively by community members, the music produces a repetitive yet dynamic sonic texture throughout the ritual process. This musical structure is composed of several key elements, including the types of instruments employed, the rhythmic patterns produced, and the overall compositional form within the ritual sequence.

The instruments used in *klotheakan* music are predominantly derived from everyday objects available within the community's environment. The principal instruments include the *boyong* (a clay water container), bamboo slit drums (*kentongan*), buckets, trays, and metal cans. Each instrument produces distinct sonic characteristics, enabling the formation of complementary rhythmic layers within the collective performance.

The *boyong* typically functions as the primary instrument, providing the foundational rhythmic pattern of the *klotheakan* ensemble. Its sound is more dominant and often serves as a temporal reference point, effectively establishing the tempo of the performance. In contrast, the *kentongan* reinforces rhythmic accents and contributes to the articulation of temporal structure within the ensemble.

Other instruments, such as buckets, trays, and cans, serve to enrich the sonic texture by introducing rhythmic variation. Each instrument is played using distinct striking techniques, producing diverse timbral qualities that collectively define the unique sonic identity of the ritual. The use of everyday objects as musical instruments reflects the community's creative capacity to transform available resources into meaningful sonic expressions (Kartomi, 1990).

This reliance on non-conventional instruments further illustrates that musical systems in traditional societies do not necessarily depend on formalized instruments. Instead, communities are capable of constructing coherent musical systems through the adaptive use of ordinary objects embedded in daily life. Such practices demonstrate cultural flexibility in the production of musical expression within ritual contexts.

A defining characteristic of *klotheakan* music is its layered rhythmic structure, achieved through inter-instrumental interaction. These rhythmic patterns form an interlocking system, wherein each instrument contributes complementary rhythmic motifs that collectively generate a relatively complex musical texture despite the simplicity of the instruments. In ethnomusicological studies,

interlocking patterns are widely recognized as a common strategy for achieving coordination and complexity in ensemble performance (Johnson, 1995). Visually, the rhythmic structure of *klothekan* music is illustrated in Figure 1.

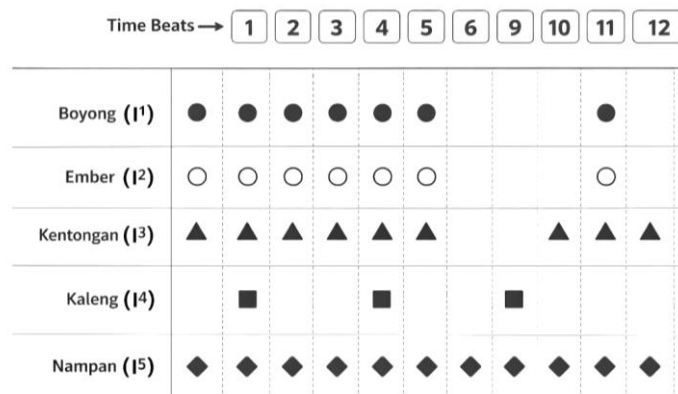


Figure 1. Rhythmic Structure of the *Klothekan* Ensemble in the *Brendung* Ritual

As illustrated in Figure 1 (*Rhythmic Structure of the Klothekan Ensemble in the Brendung Ritual*), the structure of *klothekan* music is constructed through interdependent rhythmic relationships among instruments. Each instrument performs a distinct rhythmic motif, yet together they produce a cohesive and organized sonic texture. Within this structure, the tray (*nampan*) functions as a continuous rhythmic layer that maintains temporal stability, while the *boyong* and buckets establish the foundational rhythmic framework. Meanwhile, the *kentongan* and metal cans provide rhythmic accents that enhance the overall musical dynamics.

From an ethnomusicological perspective, this structural configuration demonstrates that musical complexity does not necessarily arise from sophisticated instruments, but rather from the interaction of simple rhythmic patterns performed collectively (Johnson, 1995). When these patterns are executed simultaneously, inter-instrumental interplay produces layered sonic textures that are both dynamic and cohesive. This rhythmic structure is inherently cyclical and repetitive, allowing performers to sustain the musical pattern over extended durations throughout the ritual process.

Rhythmic repetition plays a crucial role in constructing the ritual atmosphere. Continuous repetition generates musical intensity capable of influencing the emotional and psychological states of participants, thereby enhancing collective engagement in the ritual. In the context of the *Brendung* ritual, such repetition contributes to the creation of a sacred sonic environment that supports the ritual process and reinforces communal focus on the ritual objective (Nettl, 2005).

The compositional structure of *klothekan* music in the *Brendung* ritual can be understood through three primary elements: rhythmic motifs, pattern repetition, and musical dynamics. Rhythmic motifs represent the fundamental patterns performed repeatedly by each instrument. Although these motifs are relatively simple, they possess sufficient rhythmic strength to sustain musical continuity throughout the ritual.

Pattern repetition constitutes a central feature of *klothekan* composition. Identical rhythmic patterns are performed continuously by ensemble members, producing a stable musical structure. This repetition not only maintains tempo consistency but also gradually intensifies the musical atmosphere as the ritual progresses.

In addition to repetition, musical dynamics play a significant role in shaping the overall structure. Variations in intensity – such as changes in tempo and volume – occur in response to the progression

of ritual stages. At certain moments, the music becomes faster and louder to amplify the ritual atmosphere, while at other points, intensity decreases to accommodate shifts in ritual activity. This dynamic modulation reflects the close interdependence between musical performance and ritual progression.

These repetitive and dynamic musical characteristics are consistent with broader patterns observed in ritual music across diverse cultural contexts. Ritual music is often characterized by relatively simple structures performed repetitively to generate strong collective experiences among participants (Nettl, 2005). In the case of the *Brendung* ritual, the structure of *klothekean* music functions not only as an accompanying element but also as a sonic medium that constructs sacred atmosphere and reinforces the emotional engagement of the community within their cultural practice.

### **Music-Trance Interrelationship in the *Brendung* Ritual**

Within the *Brendung* ritual, *klothekean* music functions not merely as an accompaniment but as a central sonic mechanism that actively structures emotional, spiritual, and collective experience. Its repetitive rhythmic organization, relatively stable tempo, and interlocking instrumental patterns generate an acoustic environment that facilitates the emergence of a sacred atmosphere. Such sonic conditions contribute to participants' transition into altered states of consciousness, commonly conceptualized as trance or ritual ecstasy. In this regard, music operates as a temporal and sensory regulator, shaping the experiential intensity of the ritual through sustained rhythmic stimulation (Rice, 2003).

From a structural perspective, the repetitive rhythmic patterns of *klothekean* establish a continuous temporal framework that organizes both musical and bodily activity. Rather than functioning solely as a sonic backdrop, this repetition acts as a cognitive and perceptual mechanism that modulates participants' sense of time and awareness. The layered interaction of instruments—such as *kentongan*, *boyong*, buckets, cans, and trays—produces interlocking rhythmic cycles that accumulate into a dense and dynamic sonic field. This cumulative sonic intensity plays a critical role in gradually transforming participants' affective states, enabling deeper emotional and spiritual engagement.

This process can be further understood through the concept of entrainment, in which synchronized rhythmic activity aligns bodily movement, auditory perception, and collective attention. As participants engage in repetitive striking patterns and coordinated bodily responses, a form of embodied synchronization emerges, reinforcing both individual immersion and collective cohesion. Within this framework, the musical structure of *klothekean* does not merely accompany ritual action but actively generates a participatory field in which sound, movement, and perception become integrated. Such integration enables the transformation of individual experience into a shared ritual consciousness, linking participants to broader spiritual and cosmological dimensions (Rice, 2003).

Moreover, the progression toward trance is closely associated with dynamic variations in musical intensity. At particular moments within the ritual sequence, increases in tempo and amplitude amplify the overall sonic energy, marking a shift in ritual phase. These sonic escalations are consistently accompanied by heightened emotional and physical responses, including vocalization, intensified bodily movement, and expanded participation. In this sense, *klothekean* music functions as a form of ritual dramaturgy, structuring the temporal unfolding of the ritual while directing its emotional trajectory.

These findings align with previous studies on ritual music, which demonstrate that repetitive and participatory sonic structures can facilitate collective spiritual experiences (Anindita, 2023). However, in the *Brendung* ritual, this function is not limited to reinforcement; rather, the interlocking and cumulative nature of *klotheakan* rhythms suggests a more active role in producing trance conditions. Through collectively generated sound, participants not only express communal aspirations for rainfall but also enact symbolic relationships between humans, nature, and spiritual forces believed to regulate environmental balance.

Thus, the relationship between music and trance in the *Brendung* ritual should be understood as a dynamic cultural process involving the interaction of sonic structures, embodied practice, and belief systems. *Klotheakan* music operates as a generative medium that transforms ritual participation into an intensified experiential state. Within an ethnomusicological perspective, this phenomenon demonstrates that ritual music functions not only as an expressive form but also as an operative mechanism in constructing religious experience and reinforcing collective solidarity (Rice, 2003; Anindita, 2023).

### Cultural Meaning of Ritual Music

*Klotheakan* music within the *Brendung* ritual should not be reduced to an aesthetic practice; rather, it operates as a symbolic system that mediates multiple layers of social and cultural life within the Langensari community. Within an ethnomusicological framework, ritual music functions as an integrative medium through which social, spiritual, and cultural dimensions are articulated and reproduced. Accordingly, the cultural meaning of *klotheakan* music can be analytically approached through several interrelated functions: ritual legitimation, social integration, spiritual communication, reinforcement of social norms, and communal engagement. These functions resonate with, yet also extend, Merriam's (1964) conceptualization of the social functions of music. First, *klotheakan* music operates as a mechanism of ritual legitimation by marking the transition from everyday space into ritual space. The initiation of rhythmic sound signals the formal beginning of the ritual sequence and establishes a distinct symbolic boundary between ordinary and sacred domains. The use of everyday objects—such as kentongan, boyong, buckets, cans, and trays—transformed into musical instruments further reinforces this transition, as familiar materials are recontextualized into ritual media (Suryadmaja & Ningsih, 2024; Suryadmaja & Saearani, 2025). In this sense, music does not merely accompany ritual action but actively authorizes and sustains the ritual as a culturally recognized practice.

Second, *klotheakan* music functions as a medium of social integration through its inherently participatory structure. The collective performance requires coordination, attentiveness, and shared temporal engagement, which foster intensified social interaction among participants. This participatory dynamic produces not only musical coherence but also social cohesion, as individuals become embedded within a shared sonic and performative field. Consequently, music serves as a mechanism through which communal identity is enacted and reinforced, rather than simply expressed.

Third, *klotheakan* music operates as a medium of spiritual communication by structuring the ritual's symbolic engagement with non-human forces. Within the agrarian belief system of the community, the *Brendung* ritual constitutes a form of supplication directed toward spiritual entities responsible for environmental balance. The repetitive and cyclical nature of the music generates a sustained sonic environment that facilitates this communicative process. Rather than functioning as a passive

background, the rhythmic structure acts as a symbolic conduit through which collective intentions are articulated toward the spiritual realm (Merriam, 1964).

Fourth, *klothekan* music contributes to the reproduction and reinforcement of social norms by embedding cultural values within performative practice. Participation in the ritual involves adherence to shared expectations, including cooperation (*gotong royong*), mutual coordination, and respect for tradition. These values are not transmitted through explicit instruction but are enacted through repeated participation in collective musical activity. In this way, music functions as a medium of embodied cultural transmission, sustaining continuity across generations.

Fifth, *klothekan* music also generates a dimension of communal engagement that may be understood as affective or experiential rather than purely functional. Although the *Brendung* ritual is oriented toward spiritual objectives, the dynamic and energetic character of the musical performance produces moments of collective enjoyment and emotional release. This affective dimension enhances participation and reinforces communal attachment to the ritual. Rather than contradicting its ritual function, this experiential aspect strengthens the overall efficacy of the ritual by deepening collective involvement.

Taken together, these dimensions demonstrate that *klothekan* music performs a multidimensional role that extends beyond the functional categories traditionally associated with ritual music. It simultaneously structures ritual action, organizes social interaction, mediates spiritual relationships, and sustains cultural continuity. Within this perspective, ritual music emerges not only as an expressive form but as an operative system in which sound, embodiment, and social practice converge to produce collective meaning (Merriam, 1964).

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *klothekan* music constitutes a fundamental element within the structure of the *Brendung* ritual practiced by the community of Langensari Village, Kesesi District, Pekalongan Regency. Through an ethnomusicological approach, the study reveals that musical practices within the ritual do not merely function as accompaniment but also perform structural, social, and symbolic roles within the cultural life of the community.

From a structural perspective, *klothekan* music is constructed through simple rhythmic patterns performed collectively using instruments derived from everyday objects, such as *boyong*, *kentongan*, buckets, cans, and trays. The interlocking relationships among these instruments produce a stable and repetitive musical texture, forming a temporal framework that regulates the dynamics of the ritual process.

The findings further indicate a strong interrelationship between musical structure and ritual processes. Rhythmic repetition and dynamic sound intensity contribute to the construction of a sacred atmosphere, thereby enhancing the emotional and spiritual engagement of participants. In this context, music operates as a medium that facilitates the formation of collective ritual experience within the practice of rain invocation.

Moreover, *klothekan* music embodies multidimensional cultural meanings for the Langensari community. It functions as a mechanism of ritual legitimation, strengthens social integration, serves as a medium for symbolic communication with spiritual forces, reinforces local cultural values, and provides a dimension of communal entertainment within the ritual process.

Overall, this study affirms that *klothekan* music in the *Brendung* ritual represents a cultural practice that reflects the close interrelationship between music, ritual, and social life in agrarian communities. Despite its relatively simple musical structure, *klothekan* music performs complex symbolic and social functions in shaping ritual experience and reinforcing cultural identity.

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