

## Philosophy and Aesthetics of Kendang in The Sundanese Concept of Life

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**How to cite:** Rizali, R., Budiman, A., & Sukmayadi, Y. (2023). Philosophy and Aesthetics of Kendang in the Sundanese Concept of Life . *Gondang: Jurnal Seni dan Budaya*, 7(2): 461-473.

**Article History :** Received: Apr 30, 2023. Revised: Sept 15, 2023. Accepted: Dec 17, 2023

### ABSTRACT

*The characteristics of Sundanese kendang in a review of multiple cultural perspectives are sufficient to provide space for exploration in the process of acculturation of traditional arts at national and international levels. Sundanese kendang has shown its existence as a collaborative local cultural product. However, the acculturation of Sundanese kendang which is currently growing has certain problems on the other hand. Through the various charms it offers, Sundanese kendang are now not only owned by the Sundanese people, but are already owned by other non-Sundanese people. Therefore, of the many changes in the process of development and distribution, identification of how the Sundanese kendang looks today is quite important to complement the Sundanese kendang literacy itself as a complete identity. Sundanese kendang as a cultural product are certainly inseparable from the Sundanese people as their owners. Periodically, Sundanese kendang have not found common ground about when, where, and who can be used as an accurate reference source for the interests of Sundanese kendang literacy itself, therefore this paper offers an approach through the pattern of rationality of Sundanese culture which allows it to be used as an option. in the study of Sundanese kendang as one of the cultural products of the Sundanese people. The philosophy of the Sundanese people will be reflected in the meaning contained in the Sundanese kendang as one of the cultural products it produces. By discovering the cultural values contained in Sundanese kendang, it will provide a new view of what, why and what is wrong with Sundanese kendang.*

### KEYWORDS

*Sundanese  
Kendang  
Tritangtu  
Aesthetics  
Philosophy*

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### INTRODUCTION

Sundanese Kendang is a traditional musical instrument which is currently a traditional musical instrument used in various traditional arts, especially on the island of Java. Apart from Sundanese art, now Sundanese drums have also been widely adopted by Javanese art in certain types of arts (Fajarianty et al., 2022; King, 2021; Pryatna et al., 2020; Saputra, 2019; Setiawan & Setyoko, 2022; Sudirana, 2009). Since the birth of "world music" on the world music scene, Sundanese drum musical instruments are often found used in ethnic music works that are a collaboration between traditional music and modern music (Saepudin, 2017a; Simanjuntak & Arief, 2020).

In terms of appearance, both organologically and in terms of the form of the drum pattern, Sundanese drums have certainly developed along with technological developments, developments in communication and information media (Anton Febrindo Luwiga, 2022;

Maulana & Kusno, 2015; Saepudin, 2017b; Sari & Rahmawati, 2022 ). The development of technology, communication and information media has influenced the interest in Sundanese drums among the young generation in West Java today with the large number of drumming communities whose members are mostly young drummers. One of the factors causing the rapid development of Sundanese drums in terms of organology and percussion patterns is caused by the obsession and enthusiasm for the work of young drum players themselves, where at a young age their appearance and work are considered more attractive, more attractive, lively and innovative for the audience so that indirectly adds unique value to the Sundanese drum itself.

Talking about the aesthetics of Sundanese drums, it will be closely related to the issue of the Sundanese way of life and belief system (Belladonna & Nurmanah, 2021; Diva et al., 2018; Herdini, 2012). Sumardjo (2008) explains the aesthetic way of thinking of Sundanese people in a triple pattern (tritangtu) as a reflection of the world above (sky), middle (world of human life), and below (earth, land) which is also interpreted as *Rishi* (determination), *Ratu* (saying), and *Rama* (lampah). This study of Sundanese drums needs to be studied in depth from the perspective of the text and context of Sundanese drums for the communities that support these cultural products (Patriansah, 2020; Patriansah et al., 2022; Razak et al., 2022). This is in line with what Soedarsono (2000) explains: works of art produced by a society are not solely to fulfill the need to actualize an artist's inner experience, but more than that, they are driven by spiritual needs in an effort to find balance in their lives.

The theory of "antagonistic dualism" departs from the religious thought of the mythical-spiritual culture of Sundanese and other tribes in Indonesia (Herdini, 2012; Julia, 2018). Based on mythical-spiritual cultural thinking that all "existence" always consists of two conflicting elements. Existence itself is related to "spiritual existence" and "material existence". Both have different and contradictory characteristics (Sumardjo, 2008). Furthermore, Sumardjo, (2008) stated that the primordial farming community (Indrawardana, 2014; Rustandi & Angradinata, 2019; Salayanti, 2017), like the general public in Indonesia, believes that all existence is dualistic. But all dualistic things are binary pairs, namely pairs of two opposite things. This kind of condition must not be left in the tension of conflict, which will only end in destruction. This requires harmony between the couple. This harmony is an integration between dualistic addresses, giving rise to the "third address". In this way, dualistic thinking is transformed into triune thinking. Therefore, the concept of Sundanese Tritangtu and the theory of "antagonistic dualism" will be used as a theoretical basis in studying the 'aesthetics' of Sundanese drums.

Many previous researchers have conducted research on Sundanese drums. Oktriyadi, (2019) researched the use of Sundanese drums in dance performances. In this research, it is discussed that the function of Sundanese drums is not only to fulfill musical aesthetics but more than that, it can also function as an accompaniment to dance performances. Saepudin & Yulaeliah, (2021) researched changes in *motivesslap* (beating technique) drums in campursari art performances. Anton Febrindo Luwiga, (2022) researched the relationship between rhythm perception and drum playing patterns with aspects of rhythmic performance and Sundanese drum playing. However, there are no research results that specifically carry

out in-depth studies on the phenomenon of Sundanese drum cultural products with aesthetic and philosophical values in Sundanese society.

The uniqueness of drums in general is not only found in the sound they produce but also in the playing of the drum players themselves. As said by I Wayan Suweca and Hendra Santosa, the uniqueness of kendang players is that the agility of their hands in playing is accompanied by beats that require their own experience and skill. Therefore, the number of people who can play an instrument is relatively small compared to musicians on other instruments. So it often happens that a gamelan group hires a drummer from another group for performance purposes (Suweca, 2009). This reality is clearly a paradoxical situation, from one side it indicates a shortage in the number of drum players due to the fact that being a drum player is considered something that is not easy, while from the other side it indicates the opposite. Another interesting phenomenon, the text and context of Sundanese drums are closely related to the philosophy of life of the Sundanese people who have a background as a primordial farming society. The belief system inherent in society is one of the factors that causes Sundanese drum artifacts to be full of values believed by holders and users of Sundanese drum cultural products in West Java. This phenomenon has become material for philosophical study related to the rationality pattern of Sundanese culture so that it can be concluded that the paradoxical phenomenon in Sundanese drums is one of the aesthetics of Sundanese drums itself.

This research aims to examine in depth the aesthetics of Sundanese drums in correlation with the patterns of cultural rationality that prevail in Sundanese society. Sundanese drums, as part of local wisdom, are cultural products of the Sundanese people, which have aesthetic and philosophical values that are closely related to the Sundanese way of socializing and other social systems which are the life beliefs of the Sundanese people. This study was carried out based on empirical and field observation results regarding various phenomena of Sundanese drum performance activities in society as well as thoughts about cultural religious systems which influence aesthetic assessments through philosophical views in a cultural product produced by and from Sundanese society.

## **METHOD**

This research was conducted using ethnographic research methods in a qualitative research approach (Darmiyati Zuchdi & Afifah, 2021; Kuswarsantyo, 2008; Nurwati & Rosilawati, 2017). The cultural phenomenon of Sundanese drums will be linked to the cultural phenomenon of Sundanese society in West Java. In this study, multidisciplinary sciences will be used, such as; sociology, anthropology, semiotics, esthetics and organology in music studies. Research data was obtained from observations, interviews and literature studies in finding answers to research problems regarding the Sundanese drum phenomenon from the perspective of aesthetic and philosophical studies. Observations were made in several phenomena of traditional Sundanese art performances which present drum instruments in their performances. Greetings, one of the case study phenomena observed in wayang golek performances, because the central role of the drums is an important part in realizing the story play and becomes a reinforcement for each scene of the wayang golek characters played by the puppeteers in the performance. Interviews were conducted with several prominent Sundanese musical artists in West Java and academics who have

background and experience in conducting research on Sundanese drums. Apart from that, the author's empirical experience as a Sundanese drum player is one of the motivations for conducting an in-depth study of the Sundanese drum phenomenon. The data obtained is presented based on the rules for conducting qualitative research (Hashimov, 2015; Huberman & Miles, 2002). To maintain the accuracy of the data obtained, a triangulation technique was carried out so that the data obtained was valid.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Organology of Sundanese Drums

*"It's like a tree that looks like a tree, it's not different, but there's a difference and a difference."  
"Like the Teureup tree and the Kluwih tree, there really is no difference, but there is something different and different."*

These Sundanese poem describes Sundanese drums which, when viewed in terms of shape and method of sounding, have many similarities with membranophone musical instruments in general. However, behind that, in Sundanese drums there are also certain differences, where these differences show a compatibility with the philosophy of Sundanese culture. As for the suitability of Sundanese philosophy for drums or other musical instruments, this does not mean that the musical instrument originates from Sundanese culture and this is not a problem because Soemardjo stated that "Sundanese philosophy certainly comes from Sundanese society, but as a philosophy it certainly also applies to society - other communities. "The values are the same as the philosophy of Plato, Kant, Heidegger, which, even though it is a European product, turns out to be popular in Indonesia" (Soemardjo, 2010: 28).

In general, a Sundanese drum player certainly knows about the organology of Sundanese drums, where Sundanese drums consist of two main elements, namely the wood element and the leather element. At first glance, these two elements are not contradictory, however, if these two elements are coherent in Sundanese cosmology regarding the philosophy of life, then the wood element and the leather element are dualistic which will give rise to a third address.

In Sundanese cosmology regarding the philosophy of life, there are three types of life, namely "*Live Quietly, Live Loudly, and Living Consciously*". *Live Shut Up* = Silent Life, in the sense of showing living creatures whose lives do not move and move from one place to another over long distances. Which belongs to the classification *Live Shut Up* one of them is trees (wood). *Live Loudly* = Waking Life, refers to living creatures whose lives are known to move long distances. One of those classified as loud breathing is animals.

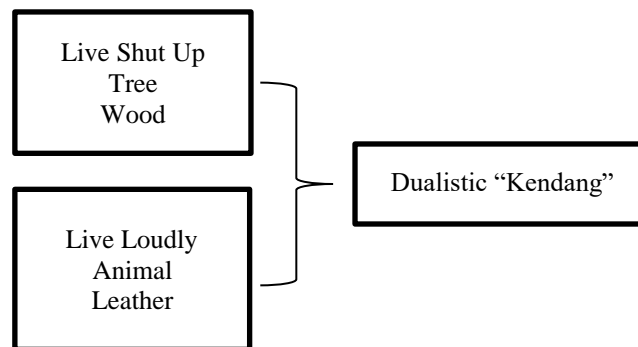
*Live Shut Up* = Tree = Wood

*Live Loudly* = Animal = Skin

In the antagonistic dualistic view, this harmony gives birth to what we call *Kendang*. Then, after the dualistic integration occurred, the third address was born, namely *Living Consciously* which shows living creatures whose lives are known to move, change places,

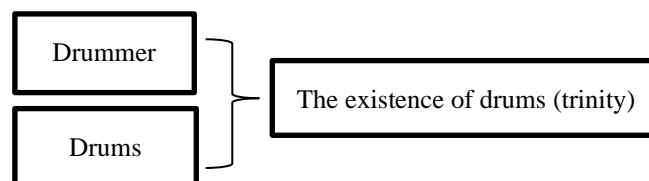
have intelligence and have awareness of their relationship with the Almighty Creator. Those who fall into the category of intelligent life are humans.

*Living Consciously* = Human = “Drummer” (Harmony)



**Figure 1.** Dualistic of Kendang Organology

When the Kendang and Pengendang were integrated, it was transformed into a triune idea, namely its existence itself, which still survives to this day.



**Figure 2.** Dualistic of Kendang Sunda

Sundanese people have repeated expressions which are a unity of three. *Determination, say, act. Teach each other, love each other, take care of each other. Rishi, queen, father. Buhun, country, sarak. Teachers, queens, people and others. Buana nungcung, buana panca middle, buana barang.* If collected, the list of these very popular expressions is still a very long list (J Soemardjo - Patterns of Sundanese Cultural Rationality: 28).

The expression which is a unity of three is also found in Sundanese drums, namely: *Nangkana - Campaka - Kananga.* The one that is ripe, the one that touches the drumstick, the one that smells like Kanangana or more easily understood as the jackfruit must be ripe, it must have the chrysanthemum, it must smell like memories. The expression of the unity of the three patterns above can be interpreted as a flow or stage in becoming a drummer. Sing asak nangkana shows that the best wood material for making kuluwung drums is jackfruit wood that is ripe, meaning it is completely dry.

The one who touched *Campakana*, campakana is divided into two words, namely *campa* and *kana*. *Campa* means hand touch and *kana* means on. So this word can be interpreted as a message to a drummer that playing the drums is not just about skill in sounding the drums, but the result of touching the hand on the drums must be able to touch the heart of the person who listens so that when a drummer plays the drums it touches the heart. then it will be as great as Kananga.



Kananga (ylang ylang) is a tree that emits a fragrance, like the sandalwood tree. Sing seungit Kanangana can be interpreted as an achievement when a dancer becomes a successful dancer, admired by the community of fans so that his good name spreads everywhere. Nangkana (Kendang) – Campaka (Drummer) – Kananga (Existence). If we refer to the unity of the three patterns (tritangtu), the organology of Sundanese drums consists of two elements, namely wood and leather.

## Wood

Regarding the wooden element, the drum is divided into 3 parts, namely: *Kuluwung*, *wengku* and supporting tools (*Hammer*, *however*, *panakol*).

### 1. Kuluwung

Say *Kuluwung* is an acronym for the phrase "The wood is brown" means wood that is curved on the inside. In general, the shape of the external appearance *mourn* There are two types of Sundanese drums, A Saepudin explained that "Sundanese drums consist of two forms, namely the drum form *cucumber seeds* and the drum shape of the face" (A Saepudin: 2015).

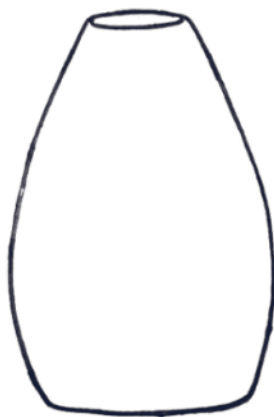


Figure 3. Siki Bonteng



Figure 4. Beungeut Nyere



Figure 5. Endog Sapotong

Drums with shape *cucumber seeds* is a drum with a shape *mourn* similar to cucumber seeds, seeds = seeds and cucumber = cucumber. While the drum with shape *face hurt* is a drum with a shape *mourn* which resembles a skewer, *face* = face/surface, *sore* = people. Shape the cucumber and stick on the shape *mourn* is an antagonistic dualism which can be seen from the character of its form. The shape of the cucumber is more of an oval, round shape, giving the impression of being blunt, while the cucumber is more of a straight shape, giving the impression of being pointed. This dualism has now been integrated which can be seen from the development of the current form of *kuluwung*, namely in form *Kuluwung "Egg Piece"* or "*Barrel*".

The appearance of the "A Piece of Egg" or "barrel" In Sundanese kuluwung kendang it is the result of an antagonistic dualistic harmony which ultimately gives birth to the third address, namely a new existence, so that it becomes a coherence with what is called Sundanese aesthetics. Retty Isnendes stated that "Sundanese aesthetics offers values and activities that radiate from the character of the wearer" (Retty Isnendes - Journal of Education and Teaching Sciences, Vol. 1 No. 2, July 2014: 195).

Form *Kuluwung "Egg Piece" or "barrel"* it is a combination of forms *cucumber seeds* and *sore face* so that the shape is round at the bottom and straight at the top, round and straight at the same time – it seems blunt and at the same time seems pointed. Even in the Bogor area there are forms *mourn* who show this pattern in an extreme way, regardless of whether they are conscious or not, on purpose or just for fun, but the proof is there and they call it *Kuluwung Bottle*.

## 2. Wengku



Figure 6. Wengku

We can also find a dualistic combination in parts *my bed*. According to the Dictionary of Sundanese Karawitan Terms, *Wengku* is a kind of bracelet made from Rattan or Bamboo which is placed on the lip of the drum body to act as a roller for the skin to make it tense (Soepandi, 1988: 211). In general, wood is straight and stiff, although there are several types of wood that are elastic, such as rattan wood and bamboo wood. However, basically any type of wood is straight and stiff before the wood goes through processing to be made into something.

To show the location of the dualistic combination in *my bed* these, can be reviewed during manufacture *my bed* The wengku itself is made in a curved shape so that it is shaped like a bracelet/ring (circle). The result of creating a shape *my bed* This makes the wengku both straight and round and elastic and stiff. This dualistic combination refers to the nature and character of wood as the material used to make it *my bed*. In the supporting equipment section, three patterns can be found in form and function "however" Sundanese drums. According to the Dictionary of Sundanese Karawitan Terms, *However* is a standard, place or container for placing penclon or tone bars from one of the instruments/waditra. *Ancak Gong* is called *Kakanco*, *ancak kendang* is called *Rehal*, *ancak and/or resonator harp or Gong Buyung* is called *rurumah*. Likewise, *ancak Gender*, *Selentem*, *Selento* are called *rurumah* (Soepandi, 1988: 13).



**Figure 7.** Ancak/Kakanco

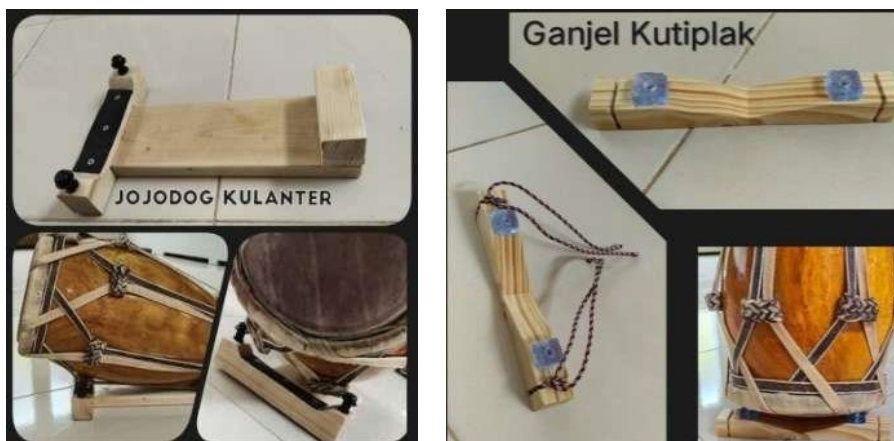
Technically, *however* Kendang is a development of previous techniques. According to evidence found in several old school portraits, it turns out that in ancient times, drum players did not use drum drums but used their feet as supports for the drum itself. This reality is a result of the trinity/tritangtu pattern which has an impact on the creation of ancak kendang. The *tritangtu* pattern in the ancak kendang is not only found in the number of wooden parts, which are three, but in the shape of the ancak itself which is positioned at an angle. The oblique position is an antagonistic duality that combines vertical and horizontal to give birth to the third address, namely diagonal (oblique). Therefore, the position of the drummother Sundanese drums are always placed at an angle. In principle, *slight* The function of the drum is to make the main drum tilt in a slanted position so as to create a certain comfort for the drummer.



**Figure 8.** Diagonal Kendang

*Ancak* Kedang has now developed into two types, namely *A slight one* and *awkward*. *A slight one* used for drummother (big/main drum) and odd used in kulanter (small drum). *goodslight* or ganjel, the function remains the same, namely to place the drum in an inclined position.





**Figure 9.** Ancak Kulanter

## Leather

There are several types of leather used for Sundanese drums, including cow, buffalo, bull and deer skin. Currently, buffalo and deer skins are no longer used for Sundanese drum skin due to the existence of bulls and deer which are difficult to find along with development developments which are increasingly eroding forest areas as habitat for bulls and deer. So Sundanese drum craftsmen currently mostly use buffalo and cow skin to be used as Sundanese drum skin. In general, buffalo leather is used more often in Sundanese drums than cow leather. This is not only due to the fact that many leather industries use cow skin, but according to Sundanese drum craftsmen, buffalo leather is considered more suitable for use in Sundanese drums as a good quality Sundanese drum.

There are certain specifications in selecting the type of buffalo leather to produce quality Sundanese drums. The selection is based on the skin element in Sundanese drums which is divided into three core parts, namely: *Face*, *raw* and *ali-ali*. Before discussing the specifications in selecting skin, a brief explanation of the three main elements of skin in Sundanese drums is as follows:

### 1. Drum face

The surface of the drum is divided into two parts, the upper part and the lower part. Asep Saepudin explained that "Kendangmother has two faces (faces) namely the *facebrave* (the bottom of the big drum face) and the *facecompany* (upper face of the large drum).



**Figure 10.** Rarawat



**Figure 11.** Ali-ali

## 2. Rarawat

*Rawat* is leather formed into a long rope that serves to hook *the face of the building* and *my face* which have been positioned respectively on the drum body (*mourn*) so that the drum body is covered with skin.

## 3. Ali-ali

*Ali-ali* is a skin shaped like a ring that serves to tighten or weaken the rarawat so that it can be used to determine the high and low sound of the drum. Apart from that, there is something called cayenne rope which is part of *the face of the drum* as a *stepraw* which is positioned attached to the wengku which has been wrapped by *face drums* so *face drums* are not quickly damaged in the process of adjusting (stem) drums. *Raw rope* It is not a core part of Sundanese drums in the sense that Sundanese drums can still be used even if they are not used *cayenne rope*.

From this explanation, the skin element is an important part to pay attention to in Sundanese drums. Not just because it produces sound, but the durability and strength of leather is more susceptible to damage than wood. Therefore, in using leather elements for Sundanese drums, there are certain specifications which are used in the process of selecting parts for buffalo leather.

Good leather to use as *leathercamp* is the skin on the armpits or shoulders of buffalo and is used as *leatherbrave* is the skin on the stomach of a buffalo. Whereas for *raw* and *ali-ali* You can use other parts of the skin. Apart from that, in selecting the type of buffalo skin itself, female buffalo skin is more suitable for use as Sundanese drum skin than male buffalo skin. Based on the experience of Sundanese drum players, these specifications are considered to have been proven to produce good sounds on Sundanese drums.

More specifically, it is better to use the skin of a female buffalo that has given birth than the skin of an adult female buffalo that has not given birth. From a logical point of view, the *beungeut gedug* in the *dung drum* is positioned as producing the sound "dut" which is done using the *tengkepan* technique. To sound it means that the *gedug* skin must use skin that is not stretchy so that the *tengkepan* technique can be done well and comfortably. Therefore, the skin of a female buffalo that has given birth is more suitable to be used as *gedug* skin because going through the process of pregnancy and giving birth will reduce the elasticity of the skin so that the skin becomes no longer elastic.

However, in another view, there is one thing in these specifications that is a point of connection with the *Tritangtu* philosophy, namely that the selection of the type of skin of a female buffalo that has given birth is considered more suitable than the type of skin of a female buffalo that has not given birth. This is a three-unit reality that exists in the natural process of women/females, namely when women have not yet become women, when women are becoming women and when women are no longer women - when women have not experienced menstruation (childhood), when women are menstrual period and when a woman is no longer menstruating (menopausal).

As another reference, the reality of *tritangtu* is also found in *Sintren* art. *Sintren* has its own special feature in its performance, namely that it is based on the fact that the *Sintren* dancer is required to be a girl in a pure state so that the spirit of an angel can enter the dancer's

body so that the dancer can dance without her awareness. This kind of belief is very strong among coastal communities (Jody & Mayangsari, 2019: 5223).

In this expression it is explained that a girl who is still in a pure state is a requirement to become a Sintren dancer. A married girl is no longer considered chaste, but the measure of a girl's purity is not in that matter, but rather in a girl's menstruation which is a measure that the girl is worthy of marriage. Therefore, a girl's purity lies in her menstruation itself. When a girl has menstruated, she is considered no longer pure because this indirectly shows her suitability for marriage.

Media that contains purity is considered to be a medium of transcendence to unite the upper world and the lower world. Therefore, sintren uses dancers played by a girl who is still pure. This concept is similar to the Sundanese kendang in selecting female buffalo that have given birth or not yet given birth. Therefore, Sundanese drums mostly use the skin of female buffalo or buffalo *calvesone*. The skin of a female buffalo that has given birth is used for gedug and the skin of a buffalo is used for kempyang. The choice of buffalo skin for Sundanese drums rather than cow skin is also because buffalo are one of the mammals that experience menstruation, while cows are not one of the mammals that experience menstruation.

In primordial farming societies such as the Sundanese, buffalo are often used by farmers to plow fields. The existence of buffalo is closely related to the daily life of farming communities so that in farming communities in Sunda there is the term "mider, kia" and perhaps there are other terms used by a farmer to communicate with a buffalo to direct the buffalo in the process of plowing the fields. Apart from that, buffalo are often found in Sundanese names and expressions, including in *Uga Wangsit Siliwangi* has the words *Kebo bule* (white buffalo) which evokes "white people", in Sundanese legends there is a character named *Mundinglaya*, in Sundanese proverbs it is mentioned Buffalo returned to the scene (the buffalo returns to the pen by itself).

Based on this, the skin element in Sundanese drums is a marriage of duality which gives birth to the third address (tritungtu). Just like the story of Prophet Isa As who was born to a virgin, namely his mother, Maria. A virgin and mother, the third address was finally born, namely the Prophet IsaAs as a symbol of purity (holy spirit). Likewise, the same concept in Sundanese drums, that the sound "bang" is a soundcamp as well as soundbrave which is produced from a type of buffalo skinone at the same time from the skin of a buffalo that has given birth.

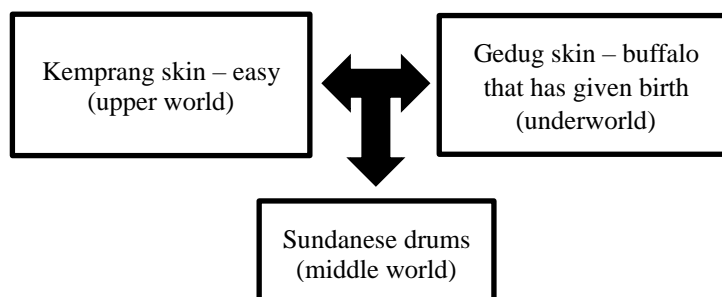


Figure 12. Tritungtu Kendang

## CONCLUSION

The truth of the meaning or true significance of Sundanese drums belongs only to extraordinary humans who long ago created the Sundanese drums themselves. Starting from using two natural elements (wood and leather) as materials, from an organological perspective it feels very simple, but if studied further as a whole it turns out that it contains high knowledge values which can be seen from how the Sundanese drums are placed. how Sundanese drums have influenced the social character of the Sundanese people themselves from generation to generation, and the most basic thing is about the existence of Sundanese drums which have continued to survive until the 21st century even though they have experienced changes from time to time. The philosophical value of Sundanese drums is not a simple thing, it is enough to provide an opportunity for careful thinking to produce knowledge about the philosophical values of Sundanese drums in essence. The perspective of Sundanese philosophy has provided an understanding that makes it possible to give birth to several answers to several questions about the what and why of Sundanese drums that are not sufficiently satisfied by answers from a technical perspective. Therefore, understanding the existence of traditional art is the human right of all humans. By using various explorations, humans will have knowledge of philosophical values that are beneficial for both individuals and the general public. The results of this research are very important so that future generations can fully understand the cultural phenomenon that Sundanese drums have high value related to the philosophical way of life and belief system of the Sundanese people as a support for their culture.

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