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Musical Instruments and Musicians of the Malay Shadow Puppet Theater

PATRICIA MATUSKY

MANY types of shadow puppet play or *wayang kulit* are found throughout Southeast Asia, and in Peninsular Malaysia four different kinds of shadow play are performed. The four types are known as: *Wayang Kulit Jawa*, *Wayang Gedek*, *Wayang Jawa*, and *Wayang Siam*.¹

The *Wayang Kulit Jawa* is the Javanese *wayang purwa* and is performed by peoples of Javanese ancestry in the southern Malaysian states of Johore and Selangor. *Wayang Kulit Jawa* essentially retains the characteristics of the Indonesian *wayang purwa* with the musical accompaniment of the *gamelan*.²

Wayang Gedek is the Malay term for the shadow puppet theater of southern Thailand known among the Thais as *Nang Talung*. The *Wayang Gedek* can be found in the northern Malaysian states of Kedah and Kelantan, performed by Thai peoples in the Thai language. The style of the puppets, musical ensemble, and general presentation take form in a distinctly southern Thai idiom.

The *Wayang Jawa* and *Wayang Siam* are Malay types of shadow play performed by Malay peoples in the Malay language. The *Wayang Jawa* (also known as *Wayang Kulit Melayu*), strongly influenced by the Javanese *wayang purwa*, once flourished under royal patronage as entertainment for aristocrats. Today, however, patronage by the courts of the Malay sultanates has ceased, and the form is nearly extinct.

The *Wayang Siam*, on the other hand, is a product of the *kampung* or villages and has its roots in the rural areas of Kelantan, Malaysia's northeastern state. It is also found in other northern states of Malaysia and in Pattani, the southern Thai state. When the seasonal monsoon rains have stopped, usually in February or March, the *wayang* season

1. Amin Sweeney, *The Ramayana and the Malay Shadow Play* (Kuala Lumpur: National University of Malaysia Press, 1972), p. 3.

2. Some changes in the physical construction of some *gamelan* instruments have occurred in Malaysia. These changes are described, with illustration, in the article "Musik Ethnik Malaysia" by Mohd. Ghouse Nasaruddin, in *Bahasa, Kesusasteraan dan Kebudayaan Melayu* (Kuala Lumpur: Kementerian Kebudayaan, Belia dan Sukan Malaysia, 1976), pp. 162-303.

begins. Until September or October one can expect to find performances of shadow play in the villages dotting this coastal, paddy-growing area. The Wayang Siam is the most widely performed type of shadow puppet play in Malaysia, and it is the type on which the present study will focus.

The stories of the Wayang Siam, told in the local dialect of the Malay language, have their roots in the Malay version of the Indian epic, the *Ramayana*.³ In the oral Malay tradition this epic is known as the *Cerita Maharaja Rawana* (*The Tale of King Ravana*), and although it is a tale not often performed, it is usually the main story a student puppeteer learns. The stories most frequently told are considered "branch" stories which focus on Malay folklore and on topics of current and local interest. Tales taken from the Panji cycle also constitute a small part of the Wayang Siam dramatic repertoire.⁴ In all tales related in the Wayang Siam the basic theme of positive, good forces overpowering negative, evil forces prevails.

The flat cowhide puppets of the Wayang Siam are essentially those of the Ramayana characters. The puppets are designed in very ornate patterns and highlighted with bright colors.⁵ The stage or *panggung* for the Wayang Siam is a raised, three-walled, hutlike structure (about 10 by 12 ft. of floor space) with a white curtain or screen forming the fourth wall of the hut. A lamp (kerosene pressure lamp or electric light) hangs at the middle of the screen at eye-level height with the *dalang* (puppet master), who sits on the floor of the *panggung*. Between the lamp and screen the *dalang* manipulates the puppets, casting shadows on the screen as he relates a tale. The audience usually sits on the ground outside the *panggung* and watches the shadow side of the screen. It is common, however, for curious spectators occasionally to spend a few minutes watching the performance inside the hut.⁶ In Malaysia an evening's performance is about four hours, beginning at 8:00 P.M. and concluding at midnight. A given story usually takes four or five nights to complete.

3. Sweeney, *Ramayana*. Sweeney has given a detailed account of the dramatic repertoire of the Wayang Siam.

4. A concise outline of the main elements of the Panji theme may be found in S. Robson, *Wayang Wideya* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1971), pp. 12-13.

5. For an account of puppet construction see Amin Sweeney, *Malay Shadow Puppets* (London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1972).

6. The *dalang*, musicians, and all accessories for the shadow play are contained in the *panggung* during performance. Therefore, the generally confined and congested area within the hut limits the number of spectators the *panggung* will accommodate.

The musical repertoire for the Wayang Siam numbers thirty-five pieces, each with its own specific instrumentation. The musical pieces, or *lagu*, may be grouped according to their dramatic function, including pieces for specific kinds of puppet movement, pieces for specific characters, and pieces to give information or to convey mood or intention. Music is always required for puppet movement on the screen, and during the course of a performance the dalang draws on the repertoire of musical pieces according to given dramatic situations in the story.

Musical Instruments

The orchestra for the Wayang Siam is a percussion-dominated ensemble comprising ten instruments which require a maximum of ten players. The ensemble can, however, function with fewer players if necessary. During performance the players are seated on the floor of the panggung behind and in specific relation to the dalang's location. Various seating arrangements are possible and are determined by the dalang.⁷ The principal melodic instrument of the ensemble is an aerophone known as the *serunai*. The membranophones called *gedumbak*, *geduk*, and *gendang* provide rhythmic patterns in various timbres of sound. Finally, the metallophones of the ensemble, known as the *tetawak*, *canang*, and *kesi*, function as markers of time and indicators of formal structure in the musical system.

The serunai is a reed pipe which appears in two sizes, large and small, referred to as *ibu* (mother) and *anak* (child), respectively. The two sizes make up one pair of serunai. The small size is approximately 40 cm. in length, and the large is at least 50 cm. long. Pairs of serunai, however, are not standard in size, and the lengths may vary from one pair to another.

The serunai is made of a conical tube of hardwood (and with a conical bore), expanding slightly at the bottom end to form a bell (see fig. 1). The body (called *batang*) is made from one piece of wood, and the bell-shaped lower end (called *'copong* or *pangkal*) is a separate piece attached to the body. The instrument is usually ornamented with carvings at the upper and lower ends of the body and occasionally has raised

7. Shahrum bin Yub, "The Technical Aspects of the Kelantan Malay Shadow Play Theatre," *Federation Museums Journal*, New Series 15 (1970): 43-75. Shahrum's article deals with construction of the panggung and seating arrangements for both the Wayang Siam and Wayang Jawa types of shadow play as performed in Kelantan.



FIGURE 1. *Serunai: ibu* (left) and *anak* (right).

bands between the six or seven fingerholes in front and the one at the back.⁸

The reed (*pipit*) is made from the dried leaf of the *pokok lontar* (palmyra palm). From the leaf four pieces of the reed are cut, each in the shape of a small fan. The narrow base ends of the fan-shaped pieces of reed are moulded to the shape of the tubular metal (brass or bronze) reed carrier (called *mali*). With the four pieces of reed placed parallel to each other and with two pieces of reed on each side of the reed carrier, heavy string is wound around the narrow base end of the reeds, thus attaching them to the reed carrier. A small brass lip disk with a hole in the center (called *caping*) is mounted on the reed carrier and sits just below the reed. Additional reeds are tied and stored on a string about 20 to 25 cm. long which is attached to the edge of the lip disk. (See figs. 2 and 3.) The beating reeds are not controlled by the player's lips, but rather are fully inserted into the mouth cavity with the player's lips resting against the small disk (see fig. 4).

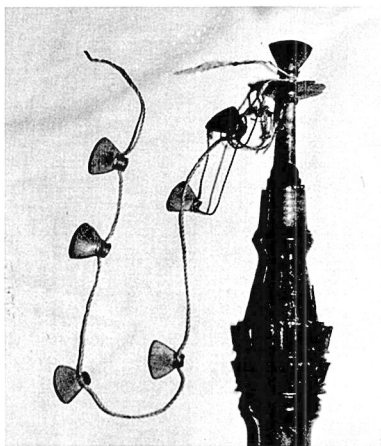


FIGURE 2. View of upper end of *serunai*, showing lip disk and reeds.

8. Jeanne Cuisinier, *Le théâtre d'ombres à Kelantan* (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), p. 59; and Henry Balfour, "Report on a Collection of Musical Instruments from the Siamese Malay States and Perak," *Fasciculi Malayenses*, Anthropology Part 2a (1904): 10–11. Cuisinier describes the *serunai* as having seven front stops, Balfour reports on two *serunai* in the collection of musical instruments in the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford, England, one with six front stops, and the other with seven. All *serunai* examined by the author in Kelantan during the period 1976–78 exhibited seven front stops and one at the back.

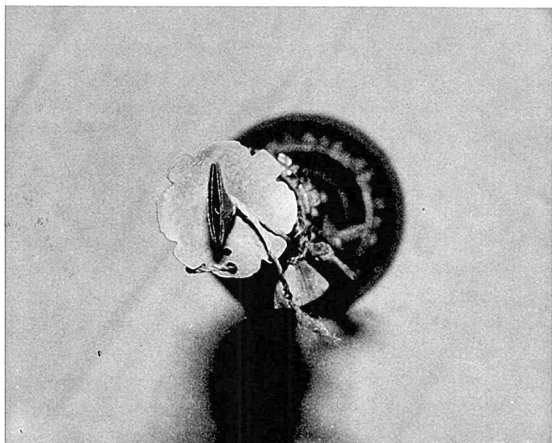


FIGURE 3. End view of *serunai* reed.

A melody is produced by means of a circular breathing technique in which the flow of air through the reeds is never stopped. Air flows from the lungs and mouth through the reeds and into the tube of the instrument. Periodically the control of airflow changes from the dia-



FIGURE 4. Playing position of *serunai*.



FIGURE 5. *Serunai* player with puffed cheeks typical of circular breathing technique.

phragm muscle and the lungs to the facial cheek muscles and the mouth cavity. While the air continues to flow from the mouth cavity (which serves as a kind of bellows—see fig. 5), the epiglottis opens the wind passage to the lungs and breath is taken through the nose (to refill the lungs). Thus an unbroken melodic line, once begun, rarely stops until a piece comes to an end.⁹

Double-reed pipes, similar in construction to the serunai, can be found in the Near East, across Northern India, and into Thailand, Indonesia, and other parts of Southeast Asia. The oboe of the Near East is known as *surnaya* or *surnay* in Persia, the *zurna* or *zorna* in Turkey, and the *zakra*, *zamr*, or *gaita* in the Maghrib.¹⁰ In Northern India the name *zurna* is applicable to the oboe, preserving to some extent the

9. David Morton, "The Traditional Instrumental Music of Thailand" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1964), p. 151. Morton describes an identical breathing technique in performance on the Thai *pi nai*.

10. Curt Sachs, *History of Musical Instruments* (W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1940), p. 248; and William P. Malm, *Music Cultures of the Pacific, the Near East, and Asia*, 2d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1977), p. 62.

classical Persian name. In Thailand the *pi phat* ensembles¹¹ include a quadruple-reed pipe known as *pi nai*, whose body construction differs from that of the Malay serunai.¹² However, for processions, funeral ceremonies, and for matches of Thai boxing and fencing, accompanying small music ensembles include a reed pipe called *pi ch aw a*, whose reed and body construction are very similar to the Malay serunai.¹³

The Wayang Siam ensemble includes three kinds of membranophones, called gedumbak, geduk, and gendang. Each drum appears in large and small sizes and, as in the case of the serunai, the two sizes are usually referred to as ibu and anak. In the instance of the drums, however, the two sizes may be alternately referred to as *bapak* (father) and *adik* (younger brother, sister, friend).

The gedumbak is a drum with a goblet-shaped body constructed from one piece of jackfruit wood (*kayu nangka*). The gedumbak ibu is at least 45 cm. long, 22 cm. in diameter at the head, and 12 cm. in diameter at the neck. The gedumbak anak is approximately 2 cm. smaller in all dimensions. The usual shape of the body is shown in figure 6; a variant shape is shown in figure 7. The variant shape is characterized by a shallower head frame which is slightly larger in diameter than that of the standard gedumbak. Over the opening of the head a membrane of goatskin is stretched by rattan lacing, which is attached to the skin with small loops of twisted string sewn into the skin. The rattan lacing is, in turn, attached to a metal ring located near the neck of the body. Small wood wedges are inserted between the body and metal ring to tighten the laces and skin.

Similar constructed drums are found elsewhere in mainland Southeast Asia and the Near East. For example, a drum similar to the Malay gedumbak is known as *thon* in Thailand, and *tombak*, *darbuka*, or *darbukka* in the Near East.¹⁴

The gedumbak is held in a horizontal position in the player's lap,

11. Malm, *Music Cultures*, p. 123. The *pi phat* bands of Thailand are percussion-dominated ensembles of gongs, xylophones, and the *pi nai* oboe. The ensembles are heard mainly as accompaniment to official state ceremonies and during dramatic presentations.

12. Dhanit Yupho, *Thai Musical Instruments* (Bangkok, Thailand: Department of Fine Arts, 1960), pp. 70-71. The *pi nai* is constructed of a thick, convex teakwood body which tapers and then slightly expands at both ends.

13. Morton, "Traditional Instrumental Music," pp. 149-60. *Ch aw a* is Thai for Java, and from this terminology Morton suggests that the Thais probably adopted the instrument from Java, possibly during the Ayuthaya Period (14th-15th centuries), the same time that the *kl ng kh ek* (*kendang*) was adopted by the Thais.

14. Yupho, *Thai Musical Instruments*, pp. 37-42; and Malm, *Music Cultures*, pp. 63-64.



FIGURE 6. *Gedumbak*: *ibu* (top) and *anak* (bottom).

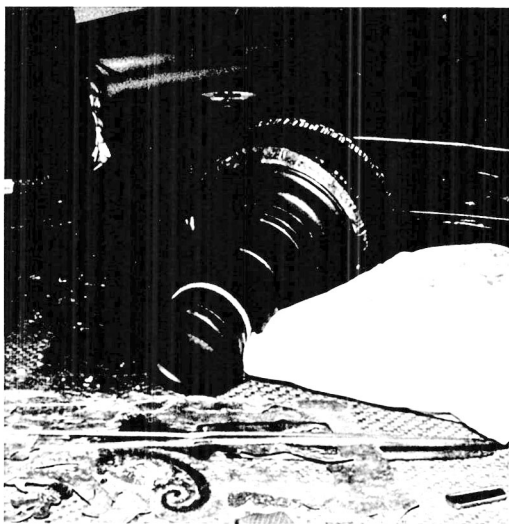


FIGURE 7.
Gedumbak, variant
shape.

and the single membrane is struck by one hand while the other hand is used to cover the open base (see fig. 8). In this manner various timbres of sound are produced. The sounds are onomatopoeic and are called "dong," "duh," "chap," and "ting." The mnemonic sound "dong" is produced by leaving open the base end of the drum while hitting the head in the center with one hand (see fig. 9). A similarly produced sound, "duh," is achieved in an identical manner, but the hand is left on the drum head after impact, creating a muffled or damped sound. The mnemonic "chap" is produced by closing the base end with one hand and hitting the head in the center with a quick, snaplike (or springy) motion of the other hand (see figs. 10 and 11). The sound "ting" is likewise produced by closing the base end of the drum, while hitting the head near its rim with the fingers (see fig. 12). The gedumbak acts as the "pillar" drum of the ensemble, for it supplies specific rhythmic patterns for over two-thirds of all the pieces in the Wayang Siam musical repertoire. The given rhythmic patterns of the gedumbak are those on which other drums in the ensemble provide rhythmic ornamentation and embellishment.



FIGURE 8. Playing position of *gedumbak*.



FIGURE 9. Hand positions for production of mnemonic “dong” on *gedumbak*.



FIGURE 10. Hand positions for production of mnemonic “chap” on *gedumbak*.



FIGURE 11. Hand position closing base end to produce mnemonic “chap” and “ting” on *gedumbak*.



FIGURE 12. Hand positions for production of mnemonic “ting” on *gedumbak*.

The geduk is a barrel drum which also appears in two sizes (see fig. 13). The larger drum, *geduk ibu*, is approximately 40 cm. in height with a circumference of 95 cm. at mid-body. The diameter of the heads is about 30 cm. The *geduk anak* is about 3 cm. smaller in all dimensions.

The body of the geduk is carved from wood of the jackfruit tree. The two heads of cowhide are glued and pegged to the body. In the process of construction, only one head is stretched to extreme tautness before it is permanently attached to the body. The other head is also attached with glue and wooden pegs, but since this head is not used, no effort is made to stretch the skin. Two long rattan sticks, which are attached to one side of the body and extend beyond the body, serve as feet. The feet allow the drum to be propped upright.

As the drum sits upright, slightly tilted and facing the player, it is hit with a pair of wood sticks (see fig. 14). Drumming techniques involve, first, a supple movement in the player's wrists and, second, a highly raised movement of the upper arm. No mnemonic system is used for rhythmic patterns played on the geduk.

The *gendang* is a double-headed drum with a slightly convex wooden

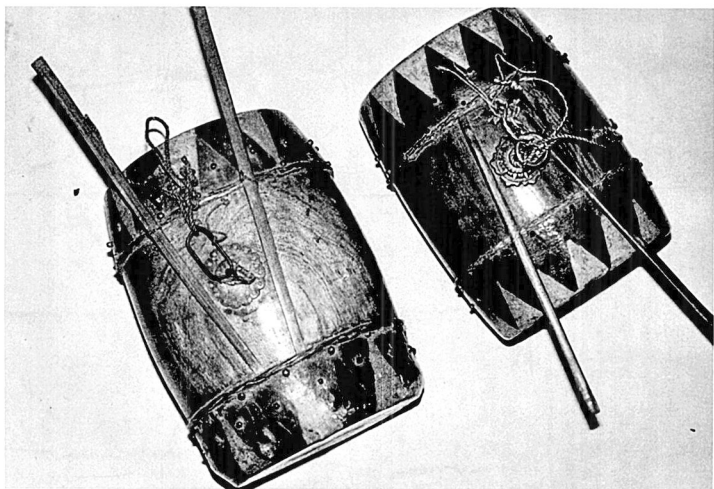


FIGURE 13. *Geduk: ibu* (left) and *anak* (right).

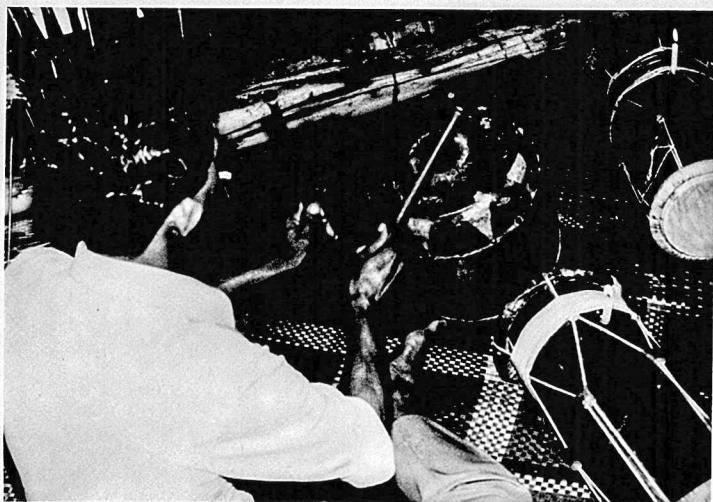


FIGURE 14. Playing position of *geduk ibu*.

body usually made of jackfruit wood. The gendang ibu is about 55 cm. in length, 30 cm. in diameter at the large head, and 26 cm. in diameter at the small head. The body, at its central point, is about 80 cm. in circumference. The gendang anak is approximately 2 cm. smaller in all dimensions. (See fig. 15.)

Each drum, then, has two head sizes, one slightly larger than the other. Both heads of the gendang anak are of goatskin, while the large head of the gendang ibu is of cowhide and the smaller of goatskin. The membranes are braced to the body of the drum by circular pieces of split bamboo on which laces of rattan are looped. The Y-shaped laces can be tightened to raise the pitch and change the timbre. Once the laces have been pulled taut, encircling cowhide loops secure the rattan laces in pairs. The gendang anak is tuned so that the large head will produce a pitch to match that of the hanging gong of high pitch (*tawak anak*). The gendang ibu is tuned to produce a low damped timbre on the large head.

Both heads of the gendang are struck with the hands as the player sits on the floor holding the drum in a horizontal position in his lap

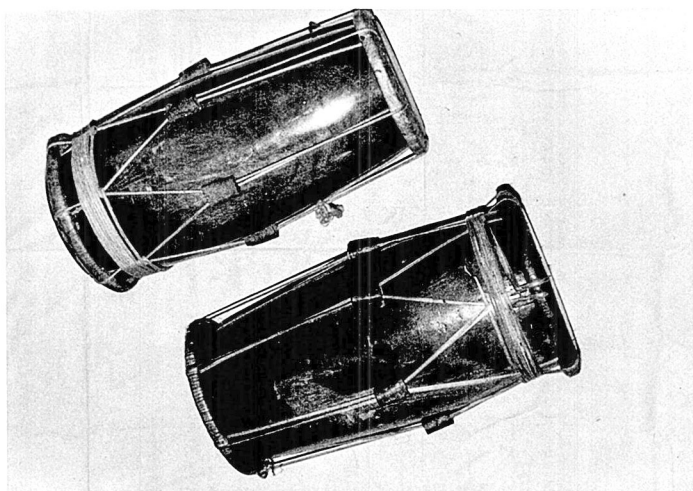


FIGURE 15. *Gendang*: anak (left) and ibu (right).

(see fig. 16). When struck, the gendang anak produces two sounds, which are represented by the mnemonic sounds “chap” (small head) and “ting” (large head—it is the pitch of “ting” which is tuned compatibly with the high-pitched hanging gong).¹⁵ The mnemonic “chap” is produced by damping the large head with one hand, while the small head is hit in the center with the upper palm and fingers of the other hand (see figs. 17 and 18). The sound “ting” is produced by hitting the large head of the gendang anak, near its rim, with the upper part of the hand (see fig. 19). The gendang ibu produces the sounds “chap” (sometimes vocalized as “pak”) and “duh” with a playing technique similar to that of the gendang anak (see figs. 20, 21, and 22). Because of the difference in size of the two drums, however, the timbres of the “chap” mnemonic are slightly different.¹⁶

Various forms of this Malay drum are found throughout Southeast

15. The same mnemonic “ting” is also used to vocalize a specific timbre played on the gedumbak, even though the “ting” timbres are different on the two drums.

16. The slight difference in “chap” timbres on the two gendang drums may account for the use of the mnemonic “pak” by some musicians. However, the distinction and use of the mnemonic sounds “chap” and “pak” is not consistent among musicians.



FIGURE 16. Playing position of *gendang anak* (left) and *ibu* (right).



FIGURE 17. Large head damped for production of mnemonic “chap” on *gendang anak*.



FIGURE 18. Hand position on impact in production of mnemonic “chap” on *gendang anak*.



FIGURE 19. Hand position for production of mnemonic “ting” on *gendang anak*.



FIGURE 20. Hand position on impact in production of mnemonic "duh" on *gendang ibu*.

Asia. Jaap Kunst, in his work on Hindu-Javanese musical instruments, describes conical and barrel-shaped drums with two heads and tuning straps which are known as *kendang* in Java and Bali. Elsewhere in the Malay Archipelago they are called *gendang*, *gondrang*, or *ganrang*.¹⁷

In thirteen of the pieces in the Wayang Siam repertoire the *gendang anak* functions as an ornamenting drum, filling in empty beats of standard rhythmic patterns played on the *gedumbak*. In eleven pieces, however, the two *gendang* are the only drums which provide rhythmic patterns in the pieces. Most of these pieces have been borrowed from the *Mak Yong* (Malay dance-drama) and require singing by the *dalang* (puppet master).

The metallophones of the Wayang Siam ensemble function as markers of time within the musical system. The largest metallophone in size is called *tetawak* or *tawak* and consists of two large gongs usually made of bronze (see figs. 23 and 24).¹⁸ The diameter of the gongs from one

17. Jaap Kunst, *Hindu-Javanese Musical Instruments* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), p. 40.

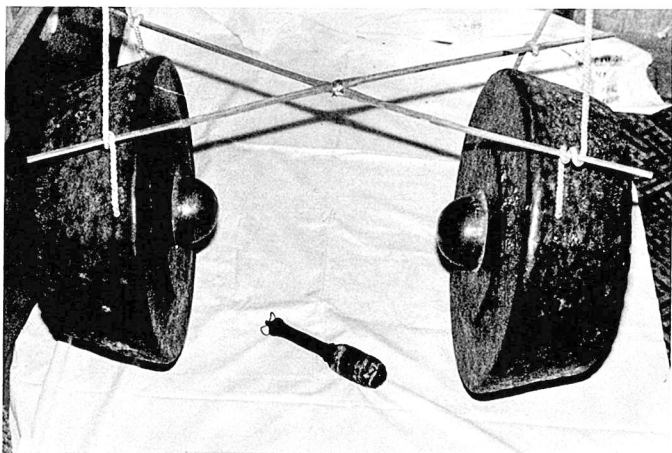
18. The term *tawag* (*tawak*) refers to the large hanging, bossed gongs used by peoples in Sabah and Sarawak on the north shore of Kalimantan (Borneo). In Lombok and Bali



FIGURE 21. Large head damped for production of mnemonic “chap” on *gendang ibu*.



FIGURE 22. Hand position on impact in production of mnemonic “chap” on *gendang ibu*.

FIGURE 23. *Tetawak*.

ensemble to another can range from 40 cm. to as large as 60 cm. or more. The gongs are deep-rimmed with thick walls, and with a boss in the center of the face of the gong. The pair of two gongs is usually suspended by rope from the roof beams of the panggung or from a wooden stand. The gongs are held secure by two cross-sticks about 50 cm. long on which the rope supporting the gong is wound. (See fig. 23.) Traditionally hung inside each gong are small strips of cloth and raw thread, while a small amount of water is placed in the inside base of each gong. These items carry ritual importance according to Kelantanese belief.

When hit on the boss with a padded beater (see fig. 24), the two gongs produce a high pitch (*anak*) and a low pitch (*ibu*). The tuning of the gongs is not standard from one ensemble to another.¹⁹ The im-

the large bossed gongs are referred to as *tawa 'tawa'*; cf. "An Anthology of South-East Asian Music (Panji in Bali I)" (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Musicaphon BM 30 SL 2565), notes accompanying the recording by Tilman Seebass.

19. The large hanging gongs of the Wayang Siam orchestra known as *tetawak* (or *tawak*) are identical in construction to other large hanging, bossed gongs found in folk ensembles throughout "island" Southeast Asia, notably in Sumatra, Bali, Kalimantan, East Malaysia, and the southern Philippine Islands. Throughout this geographical area the tuning of gongs in given ensembles is generally not standard. Even in the two basic scale

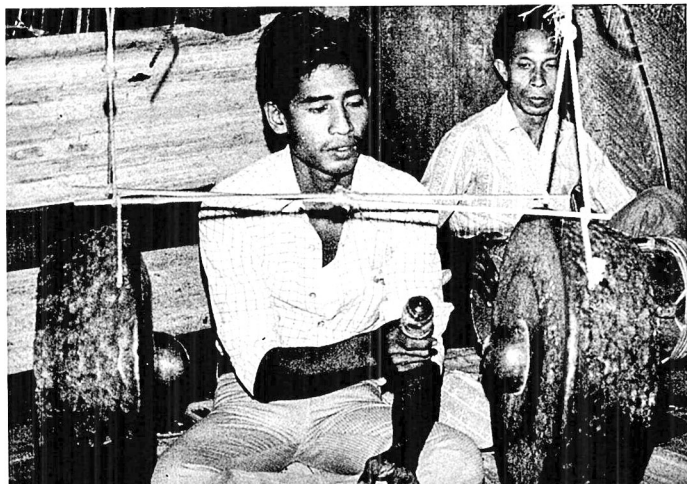


FIGURE 24. *Tetawak* with player.

portant factor, however, is the highness and lowness of pitch. The interval of the two pitches generally ranges from a third to a fourth.

Gongs of good quality are made of bronze, and some Malay musicians say that these most likely came to Malaysia from Java and Sumatra at some past time. Neither bronze making nor gong forging is found in Malaysia today. However, gong casting using iron or brass is known, and it is common to find gongs of all sizes made of iron or shaped from large metal barrels.

Another pair of metallophones, called *canang*, consists of two small bossed gongs set on cross-strings on a wooden rack.²⁰ The diameters of the gongs may range from 15 to 20 cm. Very old *canang* (more than 100 years old) are pot-shaped bronze gongs with a boss on the center face of the gong. Newer *canang* made in the present century are fash-

systems (*slendro* and *pelog*) of the Javanese gamelan, a great variance in actual pitches and intervals of the scales can be found from one gamelan to another. Rather than specific pitch and interval, it is melodic contour which is important.

20. Other sets of small bossed gongs placed in a rack and referred to as "*canang*" may number more than two gongs. In Peninsular Malaysia, for example, the only other "*canang*" is a set of six small bossed gongs placed in a rack. This instrument is found in the Wayang Jawa orchestra.

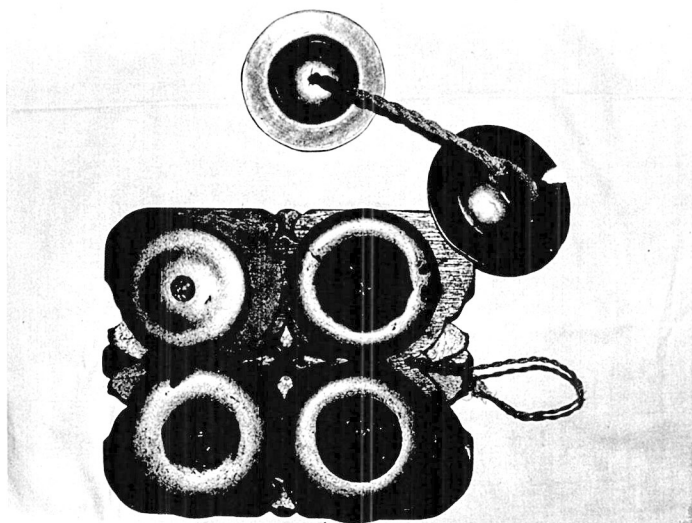
ioned from iron or brass with a very shallow rim and boss. The shallow-rimmed gongs are usually strung onto rattan strips which are attached to a wooden rack (see fig. 25). Because of the scarcity of bronze gongs of the proper size and pitch, the iron variety is commonly found in ensembles throughout Kelantan today.

The two canang produce a high pitch and a low pitch when hit on their bosses with a padded beater. The tuning of the canang is not standard. The interval between the high- and low-pitched canang may range anywhere from a whole step to a sixth. Ideally, an attempt is made to match the pitch of the canang ibu with that of the high-pitched hanging gong (tetawak anak), but with one-octave displacement.

The final metallophone of the ensemble, known as kesi, usually consists of two pairs of small cymbals, but occasionally three pairs of cymbals may be used (see fig. 26). Kesi are made of bronze or iron and are about 10 cm. in diameter. The shape is that of a small disk with a raised cuplike protrusion in the center. A small hole in this center enables a cord to be passed through each piece of metal to connect the pairs together. One (or two) pair of kesi is attached to a flat piece of wood. Another pair, connected by a piece of cord, is held in the player's hands and is struck onto the first pair (or pairs).



FIGURE 25. *Canang*.

FIGURE 26. *Kesi*.

The playing technique on the cymbals produces two kinds of sound, damped and undamped. To achieve an undamped sound the pair of cymbals which is held in the hands is struck onto the second pair and immediately raised after impact (see fig. 27). If the pair of kesi held in the hands is struck onto the second pair and held in place at the position of impact, a muffled, damped sound is produced (see fig. 28). In many pieces of music these two characteristic sounds of the kesi occur simultaneously with the two pitches of the canang, undamped kesi with the canang anak and damped kesi with the canang ibu.

Hand cymbals similar to the Malay kesi are found in various sizes throughout mainland Asia—for example, in Buddhist rituals of Tibet and China and in theatrical ensembles. Smaller hand cymbals similar in construction to the kesi are used by southern Thai theatrical ensembles and are called *ching*.²¹

It has been reported that other types of instruments have been used

21. Morton, "Traditional Instrumental Music," p. 123.



FIGURE 27. Impact of cymbals in production of undamped sound on *kesi*.



FIGURE 28. Impact of cymbals in production of damped sound on *kesi*.

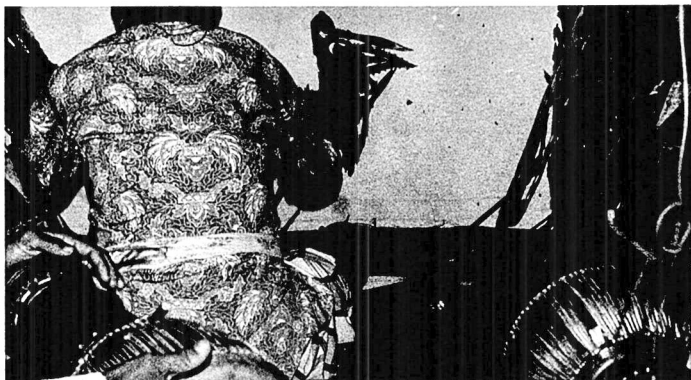


FIGURE 29. *Pemetik*, at the *dalang*'s knee.

in place of the small hand cymbals. One of these is given the name *kelime*' and is described as a slab of iron attached, near the center of the slab, to a wood frame. The slab is then hit on each end with a metal beater.²² A variation of this instrument is a slab of bamboo supported on a wood frame and hit on either end with a beater.

One final piece of sound-producing equipment, though not recognized and referred to as a musical instrument by Malay musicians, is the *pemetik*, the cueing device (see fig. 29). The *pemetik* is a wooden clapper placed during performance at the *dalang*'s knee. It is constructed of two pieces of narrow board about 50 cm. long. These two pieces are attached at one end and held slightly apart by a spring device which is secured between the two boards. To cue the orchestra to begin and end a piece, to change tempo, and to create sound effects (especially during battle scenes), the *dalang* produces a loud clap by hitting the *pemetik* with his knee.

Musicians

The group of musicians who constitute the orchestra is known as the *panjak*. As noted above, the maximum number of members, excluding

22. Mohd. Ghouse Nasaruddin, "Musik Ethnik Malaysia," pp. 167–207. I have not seen either this instrument or its bamboo variant.

the dalang, is ten (one player to an instrument). However, the troupe can and usually does function with fewer members. The players of the geduk and gendang often double on those instruments with one person playing one geduk and one gendang. Occasionally, the tetawak (gong) player also plays the kesi. If doubling of this kind occurs, the total number of members is seven. One of the musicians, too, is usually obligated to serve as an aid to the dalang during performance, supplying those puppets stored out of reach of the dalang. Thus, it is very difficult to function with only seven members, and the usual number is from eight to ten persons.

The panjak is an exclusively male group. Traditionally, women do not play musical instruments of the wayang orchestra or those of other musical-theatrical genres.²³ Women take other roles in the performing arts. In the Mak Yong (Malay dance-drama), for example, the primary performers are women, who are the principal singers, dancers, and actors on stage. In the *Joget Gamelan* (court dance) tradition of Trengganu and Pahang, women are the dancers, while men play the instruments of the gamelan (orchestra). Women frequently are *bomoh* (spirit mediums), and it was said that a woman dalang was once quite popular in the Tumpat District of Kelantan.

The wayang troupe is a fairly mobile group. Most musicians play regularly for a single dalang and are attached to that dalang by association with the dalang's troupe and the dalang's preference for musical style, drumming style, and so on. It is very common, however, for a musician to take an occasional job playing for other dalang when time permits. If one dalang does not have a full complement of musicians, which today is often the case, he may borrow a drummer or gong player from the troupe of another dalang who is a friend. The "borrowed" musician has the option to play or not depending upon whether he has the time, if he knows the preference for musical style of the other dalang, and if he has the consent of the dalang for whom he regularly plays. If two dalang are long-standing friends and their style of performing is similar, then frequent borrowing of musicians occurs.²⁴

In addition, wayang musicians rarely play only music for Wayang Siam. Usually a musician is able to play the music for several different

23. My teachers often commented that women certainly had the ability to learn to play musical instruments, but they usually had little time or no inclination to do so.

24. This is the case with Dalang Hamzah of Kampung Gerong and Dalang Yusuf Hassan of nearby Kampung Mesira, Kelantan.

musical-theatrical genres of the area, including *Main Peteri*, *Gendang Silat*, *Mak Yong*, and the *Manora*.²⁵ For example, both the serunai and gendang players of the troupe of Dalang Hamzah bin Awang Amat of Kampung Gerong, Kelantan, are highly skilled players of the music which accompanies *bersilat* (art of self-defense), and both musicians are frequently invited to perform for bersilat competitions in their local villages.

The performance of music is always a secondary occupation. Most musicians (in Tumpat District, Kelantan) are *padi* (rice) farmers, or they sustain themselves by vegetable farming. Their income as musicians is very small and is supplemental to their primary income. The amount earned from performance in any one show may be only a few dollars, and this income alone cannot adequately support a family.²⁶ In addition, the wayang is seasonal and is performed only from March until September or October in a given year. Consequently, a man's supplemental income as a musician is viable only during part of the year.

In the wayang kulit troupe of Dalang Hamzah, only the dalang is a full-time performer.²⁷ The serunai player of this troupe is a *beca* (pedicab) driver during the day, while the main gendang and geduk player is a farmer. Another drummer and student dalang in the troupe is also a padi farmer who does additional handicraft work to further supplement his income. Other musicians work in the *batik* industry or do jobs in the villages or towns. Economic and social pressures often force many musicians to leave the wayang.²⁸

25. *Main Peteri* is an exorcism ritual performed by a *bomoh* (shaman) with the accompaniment of music. *Gendang Silat* is music performed to accompany the Malay art of self-defense (*bersilat*). *Mak Yong* is the Malay dance-drama, and *Manora* is the Thai dance-drama.

26. Shahrum bin Yub, "The Technical Aspects of the Kelantan Malay Shadow Play Theatre," p. 65. Shahrum reports that in 1927 a typical payment to a dalang for one complete performance would be M\$3.50. The serunai, geduk, and gedumbak players would receive M\$2.50, and all others M\$1.50. In 1972 Sweeney reported somewhat higher figures, and in 1976-78 musicians and dalang were still earning approximately the same as they earned in 1972.

27. Dalang Hamzah's situation is even rare among dalang, for most puppeteers support themselves by working at other occupations. For Dalang Hamzah, however, the occupation as a dalang is his primary and only source of income. To supplement his income from performances, he makes puppets and musical instruments which are sold to other, less-skilled dalang in the area and also to town shops selling handicraft objects to tourists. During the past two years Dalang Hamzah has also supplemented his income by teaching at the Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang.

28. A young drummer in Dalang Hamzah's troupe, for example, left Kelantan near the beginning of the wayang season in 1976 for work in the south of Malaysia. His reason was that he could not obtain enough income to support his family and, also, that his wife



FIGURE 30. The old teaching the young in traditional rote practice.

Musicians begin to learn their art at a very early age. As young boys they frequently sit inside the panggung as they watch a performance. If interest and inclination are present they may eventually join a particular troupe, sitting in to imitate and play along with an experienced member of the troupe (see fig. 30). Instances also arise in which adult men are recruited by a dalang to learn to play the musical instruments and become members of the troupe. The dalang and his experienced musicians are the teachers, and, in this situation, several newcomers learn in a group.²⁹

did not like his late night hours spent in performing for the wayang. Another young musician who was playing regularly with Dalang Hamzah's troupe as a student finally left the troupe and his home state of Kelantan, where training for other types of better-paying occupations was not available to him at the time. Near-poverty conditions forced a student dalang in the troupe to apply at one point for training in the police force, in which he could earn a stable, adequate income. Conditions somewhat later took him to a temporary job in the state of Kedah, and now his financial position has allowed him to return to his kampung in Kelantan and to rejoin Hamzah's troupe.

29. Teaching newcomers the music is a continuous process for the dalang of Wayang Siam in Kelantan, Malaysia. Dalang Hamzah has indicated that every two or three years he must teach at least one or two new players, to replace those who have moved away or who have taken other full-time jobs.

The first instruments learned are the *canang*, *tetawak*, and *kesi*. The parts played on these instruments are basic and essential to the understanding of the framework of the particular pieces of the *wayang* repertoire. These same parts also teach the student about rudimentary principles of time organization and rhythm which prepare him to progress to the drum parts. The student may spend a period ranging from several months to a few years in learning all *canang*, *kesi*, and *tetawak* parts for all pieces of the *wayang* repertoire, always learning in the context of ensemble performance. When the *dalang* feels the student is competent enough to play the gong parts, he is allowed to begin learning one of the drum parts, which may be either *gedumbak* or *geduk*. Again, he is taught by rote, imitating an experienced player. The *geduk* parts of pieces of the *wayang* are not many, and if a student shows a particular flair for the style of drumming on *geduk*, he will be allowed to pursue his study on this drum prior to learning the *gedumbak*.

Mastering the *gedumbak* is essential, and once a student has learned to play this drum it is felt he indeed knows and understands the pieces of the *wayang* repertoire. By the time a musician is considered *pandai* (skilled) in playing *gedumbak*, one can assume he knows all patterns played on all gongs and all rhythmic patterns on *gedumbak* for all pieces.

The last drum a student learns is the *gendang*, which is played in interlocking style with the *gedumbak* or with another *gendang*. The *gendang* supplies patterns of rhythmic complement as well as rhythmic ornament to the central *gedumbak* part. It is essential to know not only basic *gendang* patterns, but also the *gedumbak* rhythmic patterns in order to execute appropriately the various kinds of ornaments possible on *gendang* for each piece of the *wayang* repertoire.

The final instrument studied by a student is the *serunai*, acknowledged by Malay musicians to be the most technically difficult instrument to play. Although the *serunai* player is able to play most other instruments of the ensemble with some degree of accuracy, not all musicians (or *dalang*) are able to play the *serunai* with a high degree of competence.

Ideally, all trained *wayang* musicians know how to play all parts for all pieces on all instruments. In practice, however, very few know how to play the *serunai*, and there is a tendency to specialize on given instruments such as the *gendang* or *gedumbak*. In *Dalang Hamzah's*

troupe a once regular gendang player³⁰ was given the tetawak (gong) part for a short period of time one night during a performance. He soon relinquished the gong beater to the regular gong player because, as he said, he was making too many mistakes. He had not played tetawak for a long time and did not remember the parts any longer. He had become a specialized drummer and could take on any of the drum parts at any time. He was considered an "expert" drummer by his peers.

All dalang, too, should be able to play all instruments of the Wayang ensemble with some degree of skill. It is the responsibility of the dalang to serve as teacher as well as leader of his troupe. Today, however, most dalang know how to play only one or two instruments. They cannot dictate specific musical style to their musicians, and they cannot teach. Limited musical knowledge on the part of the dalang is often the major reason why he may not have a constant, full complement of musicians, for he is unable to train new performers to replace those who die or who leave his troupe.

Wayang musicians are considered professional in their art. They are able to make and repair their own musical instruments and are paid for their services. Within their ranks, musicians today are recognized as *ahli-ahli muzik* (players of music) or *ahli gendang* (drummers). We can see a particular hierarchy prevailing with regard to the status of a musician within the community of musicians and dalang. The serunai player is the closest in rank to the dalang, for he has most likely studied for almost as long a period of time as the dalang. In many troupes the serunai player is able to perform the prologue to the wayang, and he may even aspire to become a dalang himself.³¹ The gedumbak and geduk players are next in rank, with the gendang players following. The tetawak, canang, and kesi players are the lowest paid and carry the lowest status in the wayang ensemble.

The ensemble, then, comprises a group of men who have most likely

30. The elderly drummer Samad died in November, 1976, after a prolonged illness. His son, Ismail bin Samad, continues to serve as an *ahli gendang* (drummer) in Dalang Hamzah's troupe.

31. In Dalang Hamzah's troupe the main serunai player is the highest-paid musician, who occasionally performs the prologue to the shadow play. However, he has not expressed interest in studying further and performing on his own as a dalang. He is content to remain a member of Hamzah's troupe and is probably the most generally skilled musician in the troupe. He is highly competent on all other instruments of the ensemble.

played musical instruments since childhood. The process of learning the music for wayang kulit (or for other musical-theatrical genres) takes place in the traditional rote practice, and it is many years before a student is highly skilled in his art. Today social or economic conditions often force musicians to abandon their musical activity or to move from one location to another. The lengthy learning process and the general mobility of musicians, on the one hand, is often cause for concern on the part of the dalang, for it is ultimately the responsibility of the dalang to keep his troupe together. The mobility and versatility of the musicians, on the other hand, is a factor which ensures an adequate supply of musicians not only for the wayang kulit, but for other theatrical genres as well.

*Universiti Sains Malaysia
Minden, Penang, Malaysia*