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## Interlocking Rhythm Between *Gendang Ibu* and *Gendang Anak* in *Gendang Silat Kedah*

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### Abstract

Interlocking rhythms were defined as rhythms that are superimposed on each other. Usually, interlocking rhythm can be found in Balinese music. However, some music students do not realize the existence of interlocking rhythms in the music they play, especially in traditional music. For example, interlocking rhythm can happen when *Gendang Ibu* and *Gendang Anak* play together with different rhythmic patterns. Therefore, this research paper provides some information and reference to the students regarding interlocking rhythms between *Gendang Ibu* and *Gendang Anak*, which are rarely founded nowadays. At the same time, it will help musicians to master playing different kinds of rhythmic patterns and apply those skills in modern music.

Keywords: traditional music; *Gendang Silat*; Qualitative; Phenomenology

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### 1.0 Introduction

*Gendang Silat Kedah* is traditional music that accompanies martial arts dance. Usually, *Gendang Silat Kedah* often played for a particular ceremony. Four musical instruments are used in *Gendang Silat Kedah* are *Gendang Ibu*, *Gendang Anak*, *Serunai*, and *Gong*. *Gendang Ibu* is a leader who leads the pattern of the rhythm in *Gendang Silat*, and *Gendang Anak* functions as a second instrument that plays one rhythmic bar pattern in the ensemble (Bating, 2014). These musical instruments are always a priority when playing *gendang silat*, especially in rhythmic patterns and melody. Music is made up of a variety of complicated components that harmoniously coincide together (Schwanz, 2015). Rhythm is one of the essential components that make up music, which has become an influential force in music lives (Anku, 1997). Rhythmic patterns have been divided into many categories, and one of them is interlocking rhythms. Interlocking rhythms were defined as rhythms that are superimposed on each other. In *Gendang Silat Kedah*, interlocking rhythms happen when 'gendang ibu' and 'gendang anak' play together with different rhythmic patterns. *Gendang Ibu* has seven and a half rhythmic patterns; these are polyrhythmic and different from a *Gendang Anak* rhythmic pattern. The interlocking rhythm in this traditional music ensemble starts from the intro to the song and continues until the song's end. Besides that, *gendang anak* is the basic pattern in this ensemble, meaning *gendang anak* will play the same pattern in each section. Moreover, this ensemble is divided into two basic patterns; the first pattern is the intro of the song *gendang silat Kedah* and the second section is a pattern for the body of the song. In the body, the area has a seven-and-a-half rhythmic pattern of *gendang ibu*.

Based on the researchers' experience, it is hard for music students who have a passion for learning music traditional of '*Gendang Silat Kedah*' when there is no specific reference for them to refer to. To help the student by providing information on *gendang silat Kedah* and

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explaining interlocking rhythms between gendang ibu and gendang anak will help students who have a passion for learning traditional music to use the resource as their reference for study and practice. This study is to make a new method for student music to study conventional music ensembles by providing the transcription of the piece. It will help students easy to play with traditional costumes with the transcription.

Besides that, this ensemble has a unique rhythmic pattern, and it is hard to catch the rhythm. Gendang Silat Kedah has an interlocking rhythm that should master for playing the Gendang Silat Kedah song. Based on this study, students have no skills in playing interlocking rhythms in this music ensemble. So, by transcript the piece of playing the interlocking rhythms between Gendang Ibu and Gendang Anak, it can help students play independently with the transcription that has been provided, and it is also easy for students music to master the interlocking rhythm.

## 2.0 Rhythmic Pattern of Gendang Silat Kedah

Gendang Silat Kedah is traditional music that accompanies martial arts dance. In ancient times, it is often played for a particular ceremony. There are various types of Gendang Silat in Malaysia which is Gendang Silat Kelantan, Gendang Silat Perlis, and Gendang Silat Kedah. All types of gendang silat have their playing styles and different rhythmic patterns (Bandem, 2005). This study focus on Gendang Silat Kedah. The things that differentiate all of Gendang Silat in Malaysia are skills in playing, rhythmic patterns, and the type of instruments used (Matusky & Tan, 1997).

In Gendang Silat Kedah, the player often uses interlocking rhythms to accompany martial arts dance. Interlocking rhythms have been used in many musical traditions, such as Balinese gamelan, Afro-Cuban, and African music. As we can see, it also can be applied to our traditional music to create interesting rhythmic patterns (Snow & Brissett 1986; McGraw, 2008). Two musical instruments play rhythmic patterns in gendang silat Kedah: gendang ibu and gendang anak. Each tool will play different rhythmic patterns to create interlocking rhythms (Toussaint, 2006). Usually, gendang anak will play one bar pattern as the basic pattern in Gendang Silat Kedah, while Gendang Ibu will play interlocking rhythmic patterns. These two instruments will produce a unique rhythmic pattern, and only the gendang ibu will play the interlocking rhythm. The interlocking rhythm that plays by the gendang ibu is the original pattern, and to get the correct pulse, the gendang ibu player should master all the rhythmic patterns, including Gendang Anak rhythmic pattern (Gomez et al., 2008).

Gendang Ibu functions as a leader to lead the pattern of the rhythm in Gendang Silat. Gendang Ibu is a traditional instrument with a larger size than Gendang Anak. It has two faces on the side, the more prominent face called 'doh' and the small face called 'pah'. The type of skin for a more prominent face is usually made in female cow skin that had to give birth because it has a thick skin. This female cow skin is suitable for making hand instruments because the skin is hard to tear. The small face is made from a goatskin. Besides that, the type of wood usually used to make gendang is a hardwood known as 'kayuangka'. Gendang Ibu is played with two hands palm without using any rattan or other things to hit the two-face Gendang Ibu (Matusky & Tan, 1997).



Figure 2. Gendang Ibu

Gendang Anak is a second instrument that plays one bar rhythm pattern in the gendang silat Kedah ensemble. It also has two faces on the side, but the size of the gendang anak is smaller than gendang ibu, as shown in Figure 2. Next, the small face of the gendang anak is called 'cak'. The type of skin used is usually made from female goatskin because it has a thin kind of skin and will produce a tense sound (McGraw, 2008). The more prominent face is called "ting", and the skin is made from cow skin. This instrument also can use for other traditional music ensembles such as 'wayang kulit gedek and other music traditions that use instrument gendang (Matusky & Tan, 1997).



Figure 2. Gendang Anak

'Serunai' uses a double reed instrument and is categorised worldwide and is defined as a 'shawms' tool, as shown in Figure 3. It refers to the specific types of inflatable equipment that have a shape like 'Kun' in the melodic pipes of 'chanter' and using a two-layered spin as a sounding device in India known as 'Shahnay', in China known as 'Sona', in Sri Lanka known as 'Harone' and in Thailand known as 'Phi-Nai'. In Malaysia known as 'Serunai'. The word 'Serunai' comes from the word 'Nay', in the Persian language, meaning blowing. The character of 'serunai' in the Gendang Silat Kedah ensemble plays the melody and also works for giving a signal to get in the song and signal for the end of the song. This instrument play by using circular breathing. Circular breathing is the technique that has to master to play this instrument (Matusky & Tan, 1997).



Figure 3. Serunai

'Gong' is produced in a special form it is one that has *Busut* or *Tombol* and is generally defined as 'gong' as shown in Figure 4. There is another gong is without a knob or knob and has been defined as a 'flat gong type'. The word gongs are generally used extensively throughout the world nowadays and come from the Malay / Indonesian word. It is based on the 'onomatopoeia' system, a system of nomenclature inspired by the impersonation produced by the device. In this ensemble, gong as the keep time, to play this instrument in this ensemble, just hit the knob with the crochet beat until the end of a song (Matusky & Tan, 1997).



Figure 4. Gong

### 3.0 Methodology

This research employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenology research design. The research process involved three experts in *Gendang Ibu* and *Gendang Anak* in the *Gendang Silat Kedah*. A semi-structured interview was adopted taking a length of the period of about 1 hour for each participant. During the process, it took one week to get responses from participants. This is because reply times all depend on the participant's free time. The data was analyzed using the two steps in data analysis consisting of transcription of data and exploring the data.

### 4.0 Findings

Overall, each individual has their own story about interlocking *Gendang Silat Kedah*. Based on my interview question, each of them has their own experience with this traditional music ensemble. The interlocking rhythm is important in this ensemble because if we cannot play the right pulse of this rhythmic pattern, we cannot get a tight interlocking rhythm, between *Gendang Ibu* and *gendang anak*.

Participant 1 is a trainer of 'Gendang Silat Kedah' at Felda Bukit Mendi, Triang Pahang. He is a professional player in *gendang silat*. To sum up, he said, he should master this traditional music ensemble first, before learning other music traditional ensembles. Before studying how to play this *gendang silat Kedah*, then the musician must know all the instruments of *gendang silat Kedah*. All of the instrument characters in this ensemble are important to produce a good quality of sound. Besides that, spend time with 7 and a half pattern *gendang ibu* and master it first before starting practice with *gendang anak*. Study the interlocking rhythm between *Gendang Ibu* and *Gendang Anak* with the unison rhythm and the alternate voicing *gendang*. Do not miss a look at the pulse, because the pulse is the one

step in making an interlocking rhythm between both gendang. Participant 1 also said, to do a transcription of the rhythmic pattern gendang silat Kedah, helps student music to practice without a principal lecturer for a short term. A student also can play the rhythmic pattern correctly. Besides that, he said batter students meet up with the trainer of *Gendang Silat Kedah* to learn with him. A student will get all information about this ensemble and easy for the student to ask directly about the interlocking rhythm. A sample of participants' responses is as follows.

*'Gendang Silat Kedah is our music traditional and I should master this music ensemble first before I learn other music ensembles. Gendang Silat Kedah has a good combination of rhythmic patterns played by Gendang Ibu and Gendang Anak. All musicians gendang silat Kedah should understand each instrument before playing this ensemble. Gendang Silat Kedah has 4 instruments, which is 'Gendang Ibu', 'Gendang Anak', 'Gong' and 'Serunai'. Each instrument has its own character in this ensemble. Gendang Ibu and gendang anak will play all rhythmic patterns from the beginning of the song until the end, gendang ibu will play all interlocking rhythms and gendang anak play all the basic patterns from the beginning of the song until the end. Besides that, the rhythm will change the pattern depending on the translation that invites by a signal from Gendang Ibu. 'Serunai' will play the melody part and the 'serunai' player also will give the signal for any translation in an ensemble. 'Gong' just played all crochet beats which beat 1,2,3 and 4. After musician understands all instrument character, they will easy to play gendang silat'.*

Participant 2 also said the same opinion as participant 1, he said that gendang silat Kedah is an interesting music traditional ensemble because of the unique interlocking rhythmic pattern. To study the interlocking rhythm for this ensemble, we must know the correct pulse of the rhythmic pattern. Spend time with the 7 and-a-half pattern gendang ibu to master the interlocking rhythm between gendang ibu and gendang anak. Besides that, he also gives the opinion to practice with a slow tempo for making sure the correct pulse to play the gendang silat Kedah rhythmic pattern. Transcription is helpful for student music practice personally without a principal lecturer but will have a problem with interlocking rhythm. The solution to this problem, a student should check the alternate voicing of gendang between gendang ibu and gendang anak. A sample of participants' responses is as follows.

*'Gendang Silat Kedah is an interesting traditional ensemble because gendang silat Kedah has its own complex interlocking rhythm and uses polyrhythm. Based on my experience studying Gendang Silat Kedah, I spend much time understanding the interlocking rhythm, because if you do not focus on the pulse, you will not get the correct interlocking rhythm. To master the interlocking rhythm, study step by step to get the correct feel also need to transcript the rhythmic pattern to show how interlocking rhythm works'.*

The conclusion of Participant 3 said, gendang silat Kedah is a unique music traditional ensemble, because of the interlocking rhythm. Both gendang players should practice together to make sure the gendang ibu pattern does not clash with a gendang anak rhythmic pattern. This practice is to get the chemistry between both of the gendang players. Besides that, score transcription for this ensemble rhythmic pattern are help students to practice personally without a principal lecture. The student will take a short time to understand the interlocking rhythm because a student does not have to waste time waiting for the principal lecturer for the next class. The student can do their own analysis by the transcription of the unison rhythm and alternate voicing of gendang between gendang ibu and gendang anak. A sample of participants' responses is as follows.

*'gendang silat Kedah has a unique interlocking rhythm between gendang ibu and gendang anak. The interlocking rhythm is hard to understand if the gendang ibu player does not master the 7 and-a-half pattern. To master the interlocking rhythm in this ensemble, study the rhythmic pattern first and understand the rhythm chemistry between gendang ibu and gendang anak. Study relationship pattern both of gendang. My suggestion, firstly understand the character of gendang ibu and gendang anak, after that, find the unison rhythm both of patterns. From that step, you will get the step on how to play the interlocking rhythm'.*

## 5.0 Discussion

Each person studying gendang silat Kedah will master playing the interlocking rhythm between gendang ibu and gendang anak. To master the interlocking rhythm between both gendang is important to know the right pulse it is the alternate voicing of gendang, which is voicing 'pah' and 'doh'. Both gendang cannot play the same voicing at the first beat, this is because the interlocking rhythm starts from the first beat and continue to the next rhythmic pattern. To master the interlocking rhythm in this ensemble, it must start from practice with a slow tempo. Player gendang ibu should practice and master all 7 and a half patterns and also master the basic Gendang Anak rhythmic pattern. After our memory muscles master all of the rhythmic patterns, start practice with gendang anak to make sure the correct interlocking rhythm and of course to build up the chemistry between player gendang ibu and gendang anak.

Besides that, we also understand the character of gendang ibu and gendang anak. Before start playing gendang silat Kedah, we should know the history each of instrument in this ensemble. To understand the interlocking rhythm between gendang ibu and gendang anak, gendang ibu is work as an interlocking rhythm and the rhythm will fill the space from the rhythmic pattern gendang anak. Gendang anak timekeeper for support rhythmic pattern of *Gendang Ibu*. *Gendang Anak* will play the basic rhythmic pattern and wait until gendang ibu give a signal to end the song.

Conclusion of transcription rhythmic pattern of gendang silat Kedah it a new method for learning this music traditional ensemble. All participants agreed that this transcription can help a student to learn gendang silat Kedah. The student can practice anytime to master the interlocking rhythm and it helps the student to understand the pulse. By reading the score, the interlocking between gendang ibu and gendang anak directly will be correct because, nowadays, students are easy to read music scores and master rhythmic patterns (Ismail et al., 2022). Moreover, students also must study and practice the alternate voicing between gendang ibu and gendang anak, because this

exercise can help to understand the pulse of the interlocking rhythm.

The circle in Figure 5 is the unison rhythm and the alternate voicing between Gendang Ibu and Gendang Anak. The above staff line is for instrument Gendang Ibu and the below staff line is for Gendang Anak.



Figure 5. Unison rhythm and alternate voicing of Gendang

## 6.0 Conclusion

*Gendang Silat Kedah* is the one of traditional music ensemble that should we care about the instrumentation, the function, and the special interlocking rhythm. From that point, it can help us to compose new ideas in a rhythmic pattern. Next, after studying this topic, more knowledge is gained which does more research about rhythmic patterns in Gendang Silat Kedah, because Gendang Silat Kedah has a lot of elements that can be the focus and pick up one element forget the new knowledge. Such as rhythmic pattern, relationship rhythmic pattern Gendang Anak with Gendang Ibu. Besides that, also can study another pulse in the rhythmic pattern gendang silat Kedah to get the interlocking rhythmic pattern, besides studying the alternate voicing between *Gendang Ibu* and *Gendang Anak*.

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