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## Notating Traditional Drumming in 'Makyung'

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### Abstract

Makyung is a Malay dance theatre that developed in the state of Kelantan in Malaysia. An oral tradition handed down from teacher to student ('disciple'), the music of Makyung is traditionally not notated and usually learned 'by ear'. This teaching-learning approach can be time-consuming and less effective for the modern classroom, where students are expected to learn and perform many different styles and genres of music in a relatively short period. Currently, there is also an absence of a technique book on the teaching and learning Pergendangan Kelantan (Kelantanese Drumming) in Makyung. This study explores how to notate Pergendangan Kelantan in Makyung based on the drumming technique of two instruments: Gendang Ibu and Gendang Anak with Tetawak. This study aims to notate Pergendangan Kelantan using western notation. This notation will likewise fill in as a significant aspect of the endeavour to document Pergendangan Kelantan in Makyung. Without documentation, the knowledge will perish when the teacher passes away. One standard piece from the repertoire is selected in this study. The piece is determined based on its simple form and rhythmic pattern. The Western notation will be the method to notate each sound produced by the Gendang Ibu, Gendang Anak, and Tetawak. There will also be a few compositions of short exercises that can be used as a warm-up or practice guide.

Keywords: Makyung, Music notation, traditional Drumming

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### 1.0 Introduction

Makyung is a form of dance theatre developed in the state of Kelantan in Malaysia. It combines music, singing, dance, and acting elements in its performance. Makyung is said to have originated from Patani, an old *Melayu Lama* state in southern Thailand (Ghouse, 2003). On 25 November 2005, UNESCO proclaimed that Makyung in Malaysia was a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. This study aims to explore ways to notate Kelantanese Drumming using western notation. The notation will be a significant aspect of the endeavour to document Kelantanese Drumming in Makyung.

#### 1.1 Challenges

Makyung is an oral tradition handed down from teacher to student. Students will usually follow the teacher to learn the Makyung tradition. If mistakes are made, the teacher will be responsible for correcting the students. The music of Makyung is traditionally not notated and usually learned 'by ear'. Where the student will need to memorize what they have learned, learning processes would be almost impossible without a teacher's presence. This teaching and learning approach can be time-consuming and less effective for the modern classroom, where students are expected to learn and perform many different styles of music in a relatively short period.

Knowledge is at our fingertips in the age of technology and embracing Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0) in education. Knowledge can be found easily online in the form of videos, digital books, audiobooks, and many more. This has opened up opportunities and access to knowledge for everyone using the internet of things (IoT). However, the scenario of traditional music in our country is different. Finding

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even a physical method book to learn our traditional music is challenging. For example, a student or music practitioner would like to learn how to play Rebab. This particular individual will need to find a Rebab expert or a skilful teacher to learn. This process can be tedious and time-consuming as the particular expert might be located far away and also time-consuming. This is due to the lack of references or method books to enable the learning process without the presence of a teacher.

### 2.1 Western Music Notation

This oral tradition in Makyung also indirectly jeopardizes this world heritage culture. The older generation, art practitioners and art inheritors who learn and inherit this art heritage from childhood using the oral tradition have also decreased. Without documentation, the knowledge will perish when the teacher or art practitioner passes away. This will end up with them bringing with them all the valuable knowledge passed down to them.

It is essential to take steps and initiative to document all the knowledge possessed by the older generation of art enthusiasts before it becomes extinct. All these documents will ensure that this knowledge is passed on to the younger generation. It will also enable future reference and also research to be conducted. Currently, there is also an absence of a technique book on the teaching and learning *Pergendangan Kelantan* (Kelantanese Drumming) in Makyung. With the presence of this technique book, it will enable the teaching and learning process to take place not only locally but globally. Although this might not be able to replace the teacher's role in the teaching and learning process, the documentation will also aim to reduce the teaching and learning time.

## 2.0 Literature Review

In the current digital world and embracing Industrial Revolution 4.0, access to knowledge has never been more accessible and fast. We have access to expertise at our fingertips through the internet. We can access many types of music genres and knowledge through the internet. However, things are a bit different here in our country for our traditional music. There is still a lack of documentation and method books.

Western music notation is the most common form of notation used worldwide. This notation is used to compose, write or play music. This notation is chosen to be used as part of the documentation of Makyung music, which later will be used in the method and technique book on teaching and learning *Pergendangan Kelantan* (Kelantanese Drumming) in Makyung.

### 2.2 Kelantanese Drumming (*Pergendangan Kelantan*)

Kelantanese Drumming refers to a pair of two-faced gendang in the Makyung ensemble. This two faced gendang in Makyung ensemble is Gendang Ibu and Gendang Anak. Both Gendang Ibu and Gendang Anak have one face that produces a higher pitch and another face that produces a lower pitch. Generally, Gendang Ibu is more prominent in size and produces a lower pitch. The Gendang Anak is smaller and produces a higher pitch than gendang Ibu.

Both Gendang Ibu and Gendang Anak are classified as membranophone instruments. The faces of both Gendang are made from the skin (usually goat skin for thinner skin and cow skin for thicker skin). The Gendang Anak usually play a basic rhythm and repetitive form. At the same time, Gendang Ibu plays a separate set of rhythms which usually Interlock with the rhythms played by Gendang Anak. Sometimes Gendang Anak also functions as a timekeeper.

### 2.3 Makyung Music Ensemble

Makyung music ensemble consists of voice, Rebab, Gendang Anak, Gendang Ibu, and Tetawak (also known as gong). Voice consists of singing the melody and chorus. Rebab is the melody and chordal instrument. Gendang Anak and Gendang Ibu play the rhythm, and Tetawak will determine the phrase in the song.

Gendang Ibu and Gendang Anak is a two face drums. Both Gendang Ibu and Gendang Anak are usually played together with tetawak.



Figure 1 : Gendang Ibu



Figure 2 : Gendang Anak

Gendang Ibu is shown in Figure 1 and Gendang Anak in Figure 2. Physically, the Gendang Ibu is bigger. The more prominent face of the Gendang Ibu is made from cow skin, and the smaller face is made from goat skin. Both faces of Gendang Anak are made from goat skin. Two types of skin are used to enable different production of tone. Cow skin is thicker to allow it to produce a lower tone and more bassy sound. In contrast, the goat skin is thinner to enable it to produce a higher tone sound.



Figure 3: Tetawak

Figure 3 shows the tetawak used in Makyung's music ensemble. Tetawak is a pair of knob gongs played with a single beater. These knob gongs come in two sizes. The bigger size is called Tetawak Ibu, and the smaller one is called Tetawak Anak. Tetawak Ibu produces a lower tone sound, and Tetawak Anak has a higher tone sound.

In Gendang and Tetawak, we find similar sound concepts related to daily life. In the Malaysian language, 'Ibu' means mother, and 'Anak' means child. In Makyung, the instrument name 'Ibu' will be more significant or more prominent in size and lower in tone versus the instrument name 'Anak', which will be smaller in size and higher in tone.

### 3.0 Methodology

This research employs a qualitative approach. A few methods adapted include an interview, video recording, audio recording and observation. These methods will enable the researcher to obtain information directly from the target individual. According to Berg (2004), "interviewing may be defined simply as a conversation with a purpose. Specifically, the purpose is to gather information" (p.75). Norman Denzin (2001) believes that "interviews today should be more than mere information-gathering devices". Semi-structured interviews are chosen to obtain information from respondents. This will provide some space to ask additional questions to get the needed information. According to Denzin (2001, p.24), "I want to re-read the interview, not as a method of gathering information, but as a vehicle for producing performance texts and performance ethnographies about self and society".



Figure 4: Project framework (Yap, 2014)

In the process of notating traditional Drumming in Makyung, four steps need to be carried out to achieve the required output. Data collection will be conducted first. Once data collection is completed, the data will be separated into categories. Once each type is identified, then the construction of data using western music notation will be carried out. Lastly will be producing the date needed.

### 4.0 Findings

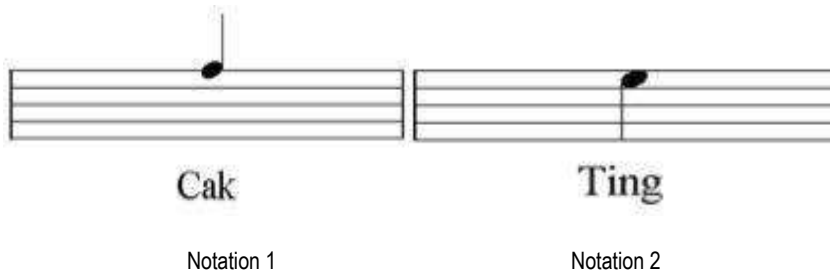
In the process of collecting and processing data, there are a few ways suggested to notating the traditional Drumming in Makyung. In this notation, three instruments will be included: Gendang Ibu, Gendang Anak and the pair of tetawak. After taking into consideration, there are three ways identified. The first method is to notate all the instruments into one part, similar to the drum set notation. The second method is to notate Gendang Ibu and Gendang Anak into one notation and tetawak separately on another notation. The third method would be to notate each instrument individually.

A few presentations and discussion is conducted to choose which method of notation to use. Finally, the third method is selected to notate each instrument individually. This method is preferred because the notation is clearer when it is notated separately according to the instrument. Individual instrument scores would be clearer and easier for students to read. This method also ensures that future development and enhancement of the notation are possible as other additional tones are used in traditional Drumming in Makyung.

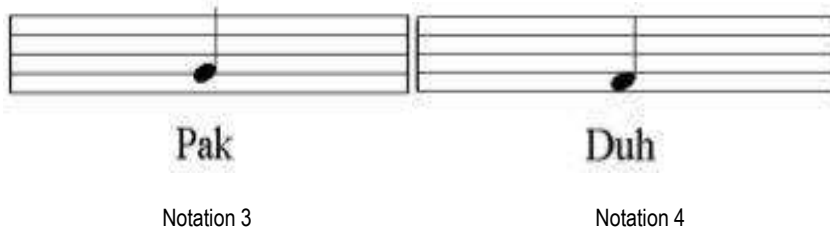
#### 4.1 Western Notation

Notation is an essential medium for teaching and learning music. Apart from being the source of information for teaching and learning, notation also serves as documentation.

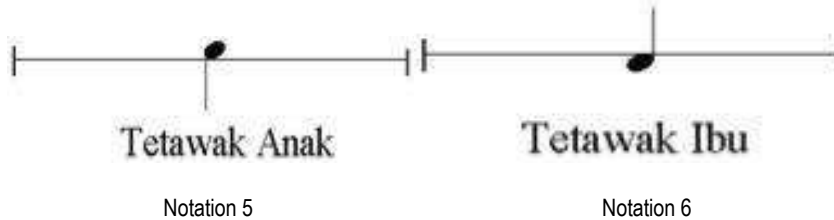
Western notation is chosen as the method to notate and document the song in Makyung because this is the music notation system widely used worldwide.



Gendang Anak is the smaller gendang. There is two essential sound play on the Gendang Anak. On the smaller face, 'cak' is the sound produced and notated, as shown in notation 1. On the bigger face, 'ting' is played and notated, as demonstrated in notation 2. Cak is the higher pitch, and ting is the lower pitch play on Gendang Anak.



Gendang Ibu is the bigger gendang and produces a lower pitch sound than Gendang Anak. Essential sound play on the smaller face of Gendang Ibu is 'pak', notated as shown in notation 3. On the more prominent face, made from cow skin, 'duh' is notated, as seen in notation 4. Pak is the higher pitch, and duh is the lower or bass pitch similar to the bass drum on the drum kit.



Tetawak Anak and Tetawak Ibu are notated as shown in notation five and notation 6. Tetawak Anak produces a higher pitch than Tetawak Ibu, which makes a lower pitch.



Notation 7

Notation 7 is a primary song notated using the western notation system. "Sa" is a song commonly played in Makyung's performances. This song can be divided into three parts which are the intro, repetition, and end. The first five bars are the intro of the piece. Then there will be repetition twice before going to the piece's ending. The repetition part is repeated twice before going to the end. For teaching and

learning purposes, repetition can be set accordingly. Compared to the performance, the repetition part will be repeated until the actor gives a cue to end the piece.

## 5.0 Discussion

In the process of notating Traditional Drumming in Makyung, there are some strengths and weaknesses that can be improved in future. Some of the strengths is this will serve as part of the documentation and notation for Traditional Drumming in Makyung. By using western notation, this notation and documentation can be used widely around the world. This will indirectly enable the learning of traditional Drumming in Makyung to be carried out anytime and anywhere in the world.

Despite all the strengths, there are also weaknesses which can be improved in the future. Although with the notation provided, at the later stage of the learning process, a teacher is still needed to validate what has been learned through the notation prior. However, this might cut short the learning time compared to the traditional oral tradition. This notation of traditional Drumming in Makyung is also a bit less interactive as there is minus one track provided together as a partial exercise.

## 6.0 Conclusion

Notating traditional Drumming in Makyung is one of the early steps to notating and documenting our traditional music in Malaysia. With this initiative being carried out, hopefully, there will be more initiatives carried out. This will ensure that this traditional art learned by oral tradition will not perish when the art enthusiast passes away. With more similar documentation like this, we will be supporting the fourth goal of the SDG (Sustainable Development Goals), which is to provide quality education to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

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