



1 The Reog Ponorogo procession, East Java, is said to commemorate the expedition by King Kelana Sewadana to Daha to ask for the hand of the Princess of Daha.

2 People shaking the tabuik structure during the procession which takes place on the anniversary of Husein bin Ali Thalib's death. The procession is a tradition among the people of Bengkulu and Padang-Pariaman, West Sumatra.

3 The galombang performance of West Sumatra is presented by two rows of self-defence experts.

4 The focal points of the garebeg sekaten in Central Java are huge decorated rice mounds and special gamelan orchestras called gamelan sekaten.

5 Many villages throughout Bali have a group devoted to the rejang dance.

6 The hudoq mask is carved in various images representing crop pests and dangerous animals and is used in a ritual dance to ensure good harvests. The dance is performed by the Bahau and Modang Dayak of East Kalimantan.



RITUAL AND PROCESSIONAL PERFORMANCES

In Indonesia, performances are often linked to ritual enactment. In some, the spirits of ancestors, deities or guardian animals take possession of human bodies and in this form, dance. In other cases, the presentation is meant to entertain spirits which have descended to Earth to join their people on some special occasion.

In the first instance, the presence of the spirits is invoked by a ritual specialist to help expel pestilence. Many of the dances performed for this purpose are native to Indonesia. Trance can be an important component: it is seen as a sign of spiritual presence. The *sanghyang* of Bali and *seblang* of East Java come under this category. *Sanghyang* performers are possessed by celestial nymphs and animal spirits whose conduct they imitate, while the *seblang* of East Java is performed as a traditional village-cleansing ritual.

Spirits of deities coming down to join a Balinese temple's anniversary celebration (*odalan*), on the other hand, enter into the bodies of wooden effigies (*pratima*); and performances of the *rejang* and *baris gede* are conducted for their entertainment, so that they will be pleased to stay a while. After the dances, the effigy is paraded in a colourful and lively procession to a bathing place some distance away for annual ritual bathing, before it is returned to the temple's innermost courtyard.

All processions have the quality of a performance. In the Javanese courts of Surakarta, Yogyakarta and Cirebon, the Prophet Muhammad's birthday is celebrated with a grand procession conveying several gigantic mounds of rice or *gunungan* to the Grand Mosque where, after prayers, they are distributed to the waiting crowd. The raucous colourful *reog ponorogo* procession in East Java is purely entertaining. The dominating feature is the heavy *dhadhakmerak* headdress, a tiger's head crowned with a huge fan of peacock feathers. The *galombang* procession greets important guests in West Sumatra. Six to twelve martial arts experts advance towards the guests in two long rows, rising and falling in wave-like movements, then part to allow the passage of a woman carrying a betel container, and two umbrella-porters. After the guest has accepted a quid of betel, the trio usher the guests into the ceremonial area.



Galombang

Almost every Minangkabau nagari (a political as well as territorial unit) and urban community in West Sumatra has some sort of cultural performance dedicated to honouring important guests. Some take place as the guests are about to enter the location of the event to which they have been invited, others when they have taken their places inside. The principal element in the display is the 'art of movement' carried out to the accompaniment of music bun(ny)i-bun(ny)ian.



»A modern-day West Sumatran wedding, showing that the galombang continues to have a role in ceremonial life. Behind the welcoming dancers is the bridal pavilion, resplendent in gold-embroidered and sequined velvet hangings.

»A West Sumatran sarih set which is often used in the galombang dance.

The penghulu, who is marked by a special heirloom scarf around his neck, accepts a quid of betel as a sign of not only his good intentions but also his appreciation for the honour being shown him.

Galombang Performance in Minangkabau

While the art form itself is called *galombang* or *tari galombang* (*tari*=dance), its actual performance is known as *bagalombang* or *main galombang* (*ba*=the act of doing; *main*=play, perform). Conventionally speaking, the *galombang* is a symbolic demonstration of welcome for visiting personages commensurate with their status. The word *galombang* also refers to a series of movements made by *randai* actor-dancers in a circle resembling the rise and fall of ocean waves (*galombang*). (*Randai* is a local form of folk theatre in which the story is enacted through dance and narration).

The *galombang* takes place just before the guests enter the site. After they are seated, further honour may be shown with the performance of the *tari pasambahan*. The *pasambahan* (offering or salute) is an urban phenomenon introduced fairly recently into the Minangkabau dance repertoire. Created by a choreographer in the modern Western sense, it comes under the category of 'recreational dance'.

The *galombang* performance was a part of Minangkabau culture long before the birth of the independent Republic of Indonesia (17 August 1945). Closely related to the governmental structure established by Minangkabau's first ruler, Adityavarman (AD1347-1375), it evolved into a deeply embedded constituent of Minangkabau

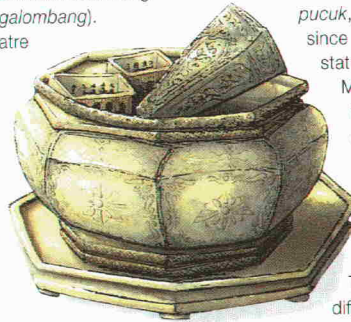


tradition, performed to greet such personages as visiting *nagari* chiefs (*penghulu*).

The government of early days comprised the ruler and his *penghulus*, and an administrative apparatus. They constituted the community's most important people. Conceptually speaking, the king was head of the Minangkabau world, while each *penghulu* headed either a *nagari* (*penghulu pucuk*) or an individual matrilineage within a *nagari* (*penghulu suku*).

Within the confines of his own *nagari*, the *penghulu pucuk*, was perceived as ruler or 'king' since the *nagari* had autonomous status within the greater kingdom of Minangkabau. This is reflected in the saying: *adat salingka nagari, cupak sapanjang batuang* (tradition encloses the *nagari*, a *cupak* spans an internode of bamboo): the validity of a regulation extends as far as the boundaries of the *nagari*.

The law of one *nagari* can be very different from that of another. The institutionalisation of the welcoming dance tradition for honouring guests indicates a close relationship between the tradition and the administrative system.



Form and Implementation of Performance

The *galombang* performance requires considerable skill to carry out the movements according to local aesthetic standards.



Six to 12 dancers align themselves in two long rows along the path leading to the site at which the event will take place, facing the direction from which the guests will arrive. One person is assigned to offer *sirih-pinang* (betel quid) in a ceremonial *sirih* container to the principal guest-of-honour, and one or two others to usher the guest to his seat. The musical accompaniment consists of a *gendang* (double-headed drum), *talempong* (set of kettle gongs), and *puput* (either *sarunai* [flute], *pupuk gadang* [large double reed], or *pupuk tingkolong* [ricestalk reed with *tingkolong*-leaf cone at the end]).

As the guests approach the site, they are greeted by the *galombang* dancers who move slowly and dramatically towards them, performing a series of movements that produce the effect of rising and falling waves. They stop at a distance of two to three metres from the guests. *Sirih-pinang* is offered (it is obligatory that guests take some) and the double file of dancers separates to allow the guests to pass through their ranks to the site of the main event.

The general concept of the *galombang* performance is more or less the same in all Minangkabau social units. However, variations can be discerned from *nagari* to *nagari* in both form and sequence of movement.

Galombang Performance in Pariaman

There is a host and a guest *galombang* in Pariaman. Both go into action when the guests approach the site. The host *galombang* begins; the guest *galombang* follows shortly afterwards. The two generally have an equal number of men, arranged in two pairs of rows facing each other. In front of each group is the *tukang aliah* who leads the *silek* movements.

The two groups progress towards each other in the synchronised wave-like movement of the *galombang*. When they come face-to-face, each puts on a special display of its prowess in the martial arts. As things can sometimes get out-of-hand, an arbiter, *janang*, stands ready with a *sirih* container. The moment a real fight seems imminent, he thrusts the *sirih* container between the two parties. Brought to their senses, the two *tukang aliah* salute each other under the *sirih* container held aloft by the *janang*. Each then places a red, yellow and black banner, *merawa*, across the top of the *sirih* container. In Pariaman, this signifies forgiveness and continued friendship between the two groups. Should the fight not be stopped, it continues to the beating of the *gandang tambua* (single-headed hand drum) until winner and loser emerge.

After the two parties separate or are separated, they reassemble into two long lines facing each other. Down this aisle, the host advances to fetch the guests and escort them to their places. In Pariaman, performances usually take place as a part of traditional festivities, particularly those related to the installation of a 'ruler' or *penghulu*.

Galombang Dua Baleh

One style of *galombang* is the *galombang dua baleh* which was created by a martial arts expert by the

MOVEMENTS IN THE GALOMBANG



Movements are generally extracted from the local art of self-defence (*silek*), on aesthetic considerations alone. There are, in fact, three conceptual sources of movement: *silek*, nature, and symbolism. Synchronisation is

controlled by a principal performer, *tukang aliah*, who calls the changes. Performers are traditionally men, who are dressed in all black loose low-croched pants (*galombang*), loose shirt and headcloth.

name of Pandeka Tangguak in 1926. The dance was initially performed by 12 male dancers but in recent times, it can be performed by both male and female dancers.

Urban Galombang Performances

Variations have become more evident with urban development in West Sumatra, especially with the involvement of arts institutions as well as creative individuals. Today, modification, re-arrangement and re-creation tend to be in the hands of a single individual, as opposed to the consensus of local traditions through which the *galombang* originally developed. New sources of movement have been found in the martial arts, such as the *tari piring* (plate dance). Female performers have been introduced. A group of three women often adds elegance to the performance: one carries the *sirih* container, flanked by the other two. Behind are three men, the one in the middle carrying a yellow parasol-of-honour to shelter the *sirih* bearer. This group is positioned in the middle of the two rows of *galombang* dancers as they move towards the guests. All the performers are clothed in specific regional costume that may have been modified by the choreographer.

The music may also have been reworked to conform to new concepts of harmony. This performance is called the *tari galombang* (*galombang* dance), to distinguish it from the traditional *galombang*. The *tari galombang* escorts the guests to their places, at which point it ends.



The movements of West Sumatran dance are sharp, forceful and definitive like those of self-defence, *silek*.

Frame-Drum Ensembles

In Indonesia, the frame-drum is closely associated with Islam. All over the country one encounters ensembles of several or many frame-drums which are played for Muslim weddings and circumcisions, both in parades and processions preceding the ceremony and as entertainment afterwards, and for devotional meetings.

»»Many of the folk performances throughout Indonesia are held by torchlight at night, such as this indang performance in West Sumatra.



(Above) Drumming without drums. The Gayo people of Central Aceh use their bodies for beating out rhythmical accompaniment to their singing.

»»This man demonstrates the technique of playing the rebana biang.

Defining Frame-Drums

In a frame-drum, by definition, the diameter of the head is greater than the depth of the body. Frame-drums may or may not have jingles attached (tambourine), and they may have one or two heads (membranes), although in Indonesia the single-headed variety is more common. The single-headed drum is often called *rebana*; some other names are *terbang*, *rapa'i*, *rapano* and *gendang*.

Frame-drum music is believed originally to have

been used in the dissemination of Islam. It is, even today, a combination of art and religious teaching, however the Arabic verses have become largely unintelligible through the centuries and the assimilation of local languages.

The Rebana Ensemble

The number of single-headed frame-drums in an ensemble ranges from two or three to 20 or 30, and even more for a spectacular occasion. Typically, some of the frame-drums are larger

than others, and thus lower in pitch, and different musical functions are assigned to various drums. The lowest-pitched drums may function, for example, as gongs, marking strong beats of repeating patterns. It is very common in these ensembles for the drummers to divide into several groups playing interlocking patterns of considerable complexity and variation.

The drummers, who are usually male, generally sing as they drum, more or less in unison, songs with Muslim content: praises of Allah and Muhammad, or statements of Islamic rules and principles. One common text is the Arabic poem known as *Barzanji*, after its author; many texts are in Indonesian or in regional languages. While the singing is going on, the *rebana* will typically play a repeating pattern quietly. In pauses, the drums will state their pattern vigorously or burst into impressive



passages of interlocking patterns. In some traditions, there is no dance; in others, the musicians dance as they sing and drum, moving their whole body if standing, or just their upper body if seated or kneeling; and in still others, there is a separate group of dancers. *Dabus* in Aceh, West Java and Maluku, *indang* in West Sumatra, *rebana biang* in Jakarta, and *selawatan* throughout Java are typical genres featuring ensembles of *rebana*.

Variations

Many variations and expansions of this nuclear combination of frame-drums and Islamic content or context have developed. Melody instruments — guitars and electronic keyboards, for example — are added, and a female chorus substituted, to make a popular form known as *qasidah*, or *nasyid*. The *gambus* ensemble uses a plucked lute, the *gambus*, which can be an Arab-style *ud* or an indigenous Indonesian lute, and three to five small two-headed frame-drums, *marwas* or *marwis*, to accompany singing by the lute-player. The drums play in the style described above for *rebana*.

In Banyuwangi, at the eastern end of



Java, the *kuntulan* ensemble augments a group of some ten *rebana* with European military drums, some instruments typical of a local dance tradition (*gandrung Banyuwangi*) and, apparently, anything else that comes to hand — Balinese *reyong*, singers, dancer and Casio keyboards are among the possibilities. The frame-drums, together with the military drums, tend to play in alternation with the other instruments, rather than simultaneously; this musical opposition reflects *kuntulan*'s history as a genre that originated in religious performance, *hadrah*, and then over time, acquired secular elements.

In Muslim areas of Lombok, there is a *rebana* ensemble that is also a 'drum chime', that is a set of precisely tuned drums which use, in this case, a five-tone scale. At least one of these ensembles plays music borrowed from the Balinese processional gamelan, *bebonangan*: each drummer drops in his pitch whenever it comes around in the melody. Here, there appears to be no Islamic content to the performance, but other Lombok *rebana* ensembles are reported to perform more typically Muslim music.

Frame-drum music is very popular amongst the Betawi of Jakarta. The *rebana burdah*, which is believed to be the oldest form, consists of four frame-drums, conforming to a Muslim's 'four' obligations: to God, to nature, to the community, and to the self. The songs are rendered traditionally in Arabic, which has become garbled with time and is now largely unintelligible, but today quite often in the vernacular.

The Islamic nature of frame-drum music is reinforced by the costumes worn by the musicians and vocalists. These are invariably long trousers, shirt and a Muslim cap or turban for men, and perhaps a scarf around the neck; and trousers, a long tunic, and a veil worn over a head-hugging cap for women.

Drumming without Drums

In Aceh, there are two instances of what could be considered frame-drum ensembles without the frame-drums. The *seudati* genre of the Acehnese is derived from Sufi ecstatic rites; it involves male singers who dance and make percussive sounds, but their instruments are their own bodies, as they clap their hands, slap their chests and sides, and snap their fingers. Among the Gayo, who live in southern Aceh, *didong* is performed at Muslim celebrations, although its songs do not necessarily have Muslim content. Some of the singers, traditionally always male and always seated, clap while others produce surprisingly loud sounds by slapping small square fabric pillows.

- 1 The entire entourage of the rebana burdah.
- 2 A zapin performance using frame-drums.
- 3 A frame-drum ensemble in Sumbawa.
- 4 A rebana performance near

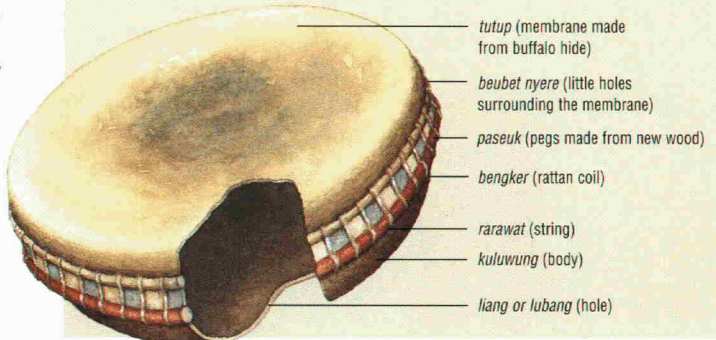
- 5 Sumbawa Besar: A combined frame-drum performance, Sulawesi.
- 6 An indang dance, West Sumatra.
- 7 A Minangkabau frame-drum player from West Sumatra.



TERBANG GUDRUG OF CIRANGKONG, TASIKMALAYA

The *terbang gudrug* of the Cirangkong area of South Tasikmalaya, West Java, is a set of frame-drums which are played by three to five drummers. The players are taken from the male community. Usually, two players take turns to play a drum because the performance continues until late at night.

The form of the *terbang* is unique and distinctly different from the usual frame-drums found in other areas. The structure of the drum is superior, strong and antique. Each drum measures about 70 centimetres in diameter. The membrane is made from two-year-old buffalo hide and small holes surround the edges of the membrane for interlacing strings. The body is surrounded by 66 symmetrically placed wooden pegs.



Zapin

The zapin dance is common to almost all of coastal Indonesia, and especially areas where Islam is the dominant influence. Deli on the eastern littoral of North Sumatra, the Riau islands, Jambi, South Sumatra, Bengkulu, and Lampung; Jakarta, Pekalongan, Garut, Tuban, Gresik, Bondowoso and Yogyakarta in the Javanese coastlands; Madura, Nusa Tenggara, all of the Kalimantan and Sulawesi coastal districts, Ternate, Seram and several other Malukan islands, each has its own version of the zapin dance. Aceh and West Sumatra are the exception, despite the predominance of Islam and the presence of the right traditional musical instruments and rhythms for accompaniment.

(Top right) This zapin 'Mak Inang' was performed by Sanggar Tari Dahlia in Medan, Sumatra. (Bottom) A performance of the zapin 'Kasih dan Budi'.



Meaning of Zapin

Zapin, the word, has a variety of interpretations, all derived from Arabic. In the Arab-descended community of Bondowoso (East Java), it is variously attributed to the word *zafin* (step or to take a step), *zaf* (which is a plucked 12-stringed musical instrument for dance accompaniment) and *al-zafin* (to take a step or to raise one foot). Zapin dance movement emphasises footwork. Hand and arm gestures act as a balance and have a form of their own, like paddling a canoe, swinging freely, taking hold of the shirt front with one hand, the other behind the body, palms loosely open or clenched with a protruding index finger elegantly curved.

Amongst the Malay peoples of Indonesia, the word *zapin* has various equivalents. In Deli and Riau, *zapin* prevails, in Jambi it becomes *dana sarah*, and in Lampung *bedana*. On Java and Madura, the dance is known as *zafin*, on Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Maluku *jepin* or *jepen*, and in Nusa Tenggara *dani-dana*.

Areas Where Zapin is Found

The practising community is generally the Malay ethnic group, however on Java, Madura and in Nusa Tenggara the *zapin* dance genre is known only in Arab-descended communities.

Differentiation can therefore be made between the Arabic

zapin and the Malay *zapin*. The Arabic *zapin* is so institutionalised with respect to style and accompanying music that it can be performed by any dancers anywhere. The Malay *zapin* is greatly varied. On Sumatra, for example, we have the *zapin Deli*, *zapin Siak*, *zapin Pulau Penyengat*, *zapin Tembilahan*, and *zapin Palembang*. All may be linked by dance pattern and musical accompaniment, but they differ extensively with respect to style.

Arab Zapin

The Arabic *zapin* (*zafin hajjir marawis*) is derived from the double-headed *marwas* or *hajjir* drums which provide the accompanying rhythm. Both ends of the *marwas* drums, which are 15-20 centimetres in diameter, and the larger *hajjir* drums, 30-40 centimetres, are covered with tightly stretched calf- or goat-skin membranes. The melody is carried by a five-holed bamboo flute, *madruf*. The *zafin hajjir marawis* begins with the *julus*, in which a pair of male dancers faces the musicians. As the music begins, the dancers assume a standing position, *qiyam*, and salute the musicians with raised hands, palms pressed close together. They move back and forth several steps in time to the music as they adjust themselves to its rhythm and tempo. When the dancers feel synchronised with the music, they perform a figure-eight movement. This basic step is performed at the completion of each dance step or movement. This is then followed by the *tahtoh* which is to move forward, shift one foot to the back, then turn in place and sit on

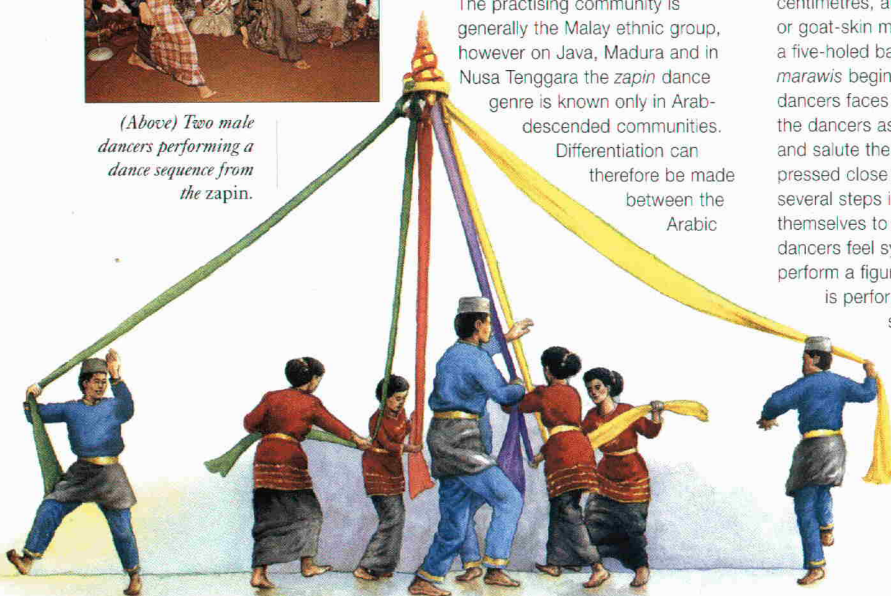
The modern *zapin* are presented in theatres, open fields and schools in diverse styles and forms. By devising new modes of expression, the genre is expanded into a creative 'work', while on the village level the *zapin* continues to fulfil its traditional role.

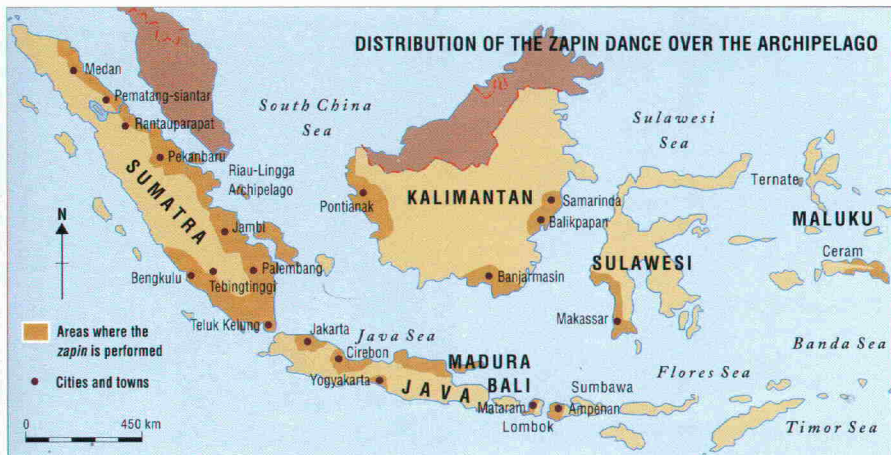


(Above) A stage backdrop for a zapin performance at TIM Art Centre in 1984.



(Above) Two male dancers performing a dance sequence from the zapin.





one folded leg. The figure-eight is followed by a voluntary step, then repeated. The *tahtim*, which is identical to the *tahtoh*, is executed after each dance step. The dance concludes with the closing *tahtoh*.

The Malay Form

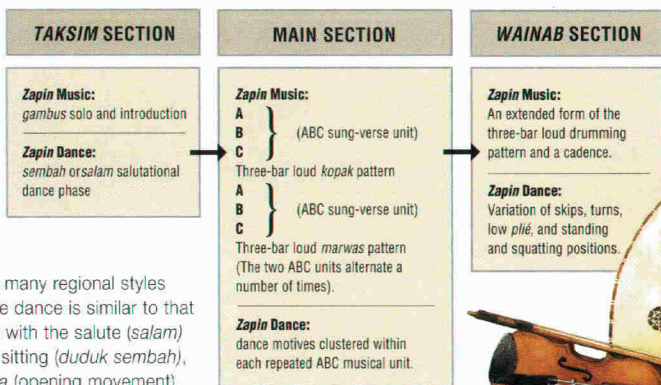
The Malay *zapin* has a great many regional styles and steps. The pattern of the dance is similar to that of the Arabic *zapin*. It opens with the salute (*salam*) executed while standing, or sitting (*duduk sembah*), followed by the *langkah buka* (opening movement), *langkah tari* (dance step), *tahtim*, *langkah tari*, and closing *tahtoh* or *sembah penutup* (closing salute). The actual number of dance steps used in each *zapin* depends on the dancers.

The Malay *zapin* differs with the Arabic *zapin* in that the dancers face the audience and not the musicians. The opening step is simple, merely stepping forward, rising on the toes with feet together on every fourth count, pressing or brushing heels on ground, or raising one foot, turning 180° to return to the original position with the same step, and making another 180° turn so as to end up facing the audience. Musical accompaniment is provided by the same instruments as the *zafin gambus*.

Some Malay *zapin* make use of dance accessories, in which case the dance adopts the name of the accessory. This technique is particularly popular in West Kalimantan where we find the *jepin tembung* (pole), *jepin kerangkang* (fishing net), *jepin payung* (umbrella), and *jepin selendang* (stole/shawl).

Occasions for Performances

The *zapin* dance is generally presented on specific occasions such as ritual gatherings, circumcisions, ritual bathing ceremonies and commemorations of Islamic holy days. Initially the performers were all men who danced in pairs and dressed in *sarung* (cylindrical skirt-cloth), shirts and black *kopiah* hats,



or the *teluk belanga* (pajama suit) with *sesamping songket* (gold-brocaded sarong over-skirt) and *lacak* or *destar* headcloth. The Arabic *zapin* is still performed by an all-male company, but the Malay *zapin* is now performed as well by an all-female or mixed troupe. Female dancers wear the *songket* sarong, *baju kurung* (pullover blouse) or *kebaya panjang* (cardigan blouse), and a *selendang* (stole). The stole may be worn to cover the hair, draped diagonally across the chest, or wound around the waist. When the hair is not covered, it is wound in a *sanggul* knot and ornamented with *sunting* (decorative hairpins) or flowers.

The Zapin in Present Day

The origin of the *zapin* dance is contemporaneous with the arrival of Arab, Persian and Indian traders in the 13th century. It has become a cultural heritage, a root from which have sprouted new forms of Indonesian dance, a process greatly facilitated by the wealth of existing *zapin* forms and its demand for both spontaneous and pre-conceived improvisation.

The *zafin gambus* is accompanied by the *gambus* (6-stringed lute), violin, double-headed *marwas* drum, *madruf flute* and singing. Vocal accompaniment appears in the form of quatrain-versed pantun and *syair*. This is delivered in the Arabic language for the Arabic *zapin* and Malay and Arabic for the Malay *zapin*. Both contain advice, a story, romance and humour which are closely linked to Islamic poetry.



(Below) The *zapin* dancers perform a figure-eight movement taking a diagonal step forward to the left, a jump to the right, a 180° turn, a diagonal step to the right, a jump to the left, and another 180° turn, arriving back at the starting point.



Dances of West and South Sumatra

The dances from West and South Sumatra range from combination of martial arts and dance such as the *alau ambek* to graceful female dance like the *gending sriwijaya*. Unique forms of dances such as the *alau ambek*, *alang suntieng* and *gending Sriwijaya* are particular to the area but West and South Sumatra also possess dances which are shared with other parts of Sumatra and Indonesia such as the *pencaik silat* and *tari piring*.

The *tari piring* (plate dance) is one of the dances of the Minangkabau. West Sumatra.

Alau Ambek

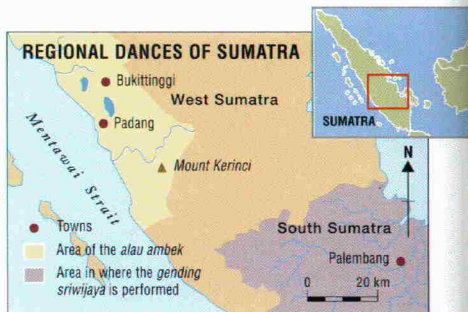
Alau ambek is a traditional dance from the Minangkabau culture of West Sumatra which is based on martial arts movements. It is said to have originated in the period when the kings of ancient kingdoms conducted battles to expand their hegemony: the kingdom sponsoring the losing fighter would be obliged to surrender its territory to the winner. Today, the dance is merely an exhibition of skill in the martial arts, but it retains a spiritual nuance and thus cannot be performed without the permission of the highest traditional authorities, the *ninik mamak* (male elders of the matrilineal clan), since improper performance could have disastrous consequences for the community. The *ninik mamak* are identified at the performance with the display of valuable paraphernalia owned by them such as ceremonial hangings and banners (*tirai*, *candai*, *tabie*), announcement gongs (*canang*), and three ceremonial betel quid containers (*carana bapaga*).

Presentation

An *alau ambek* performance resembles a martial arts duel supervised by two arbiters, *janang*. Movements

(Left) The thrust-and-parry movement that gives the dance its name, *alau ambek*, which literally means *repulse and receive*.

(Right) Two authorities from Padang Lawas performing the traditional *alang suntieng*. In parts of Padang Lawas, the *alang suntieng* is still a serious dance and greatly esteemed. It has become teaching material in dance academies.



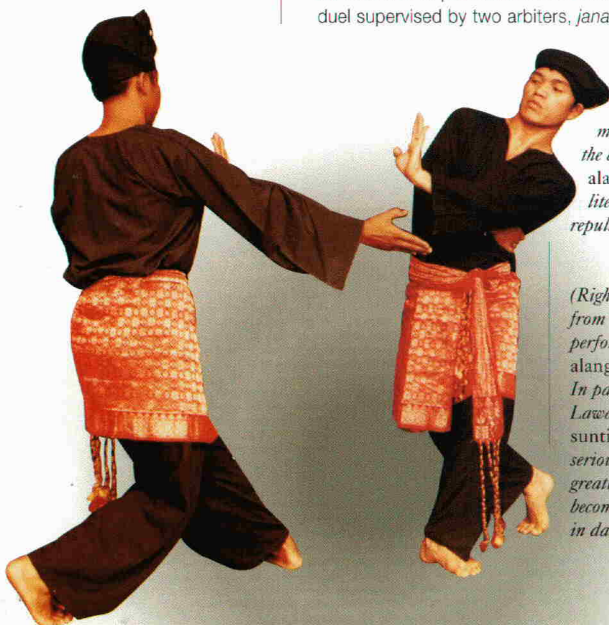
consist of such motions as shaking hands, attack and defence, four steps, and stealing a step, all delivered in slow motion. Arm movements include crossing the arms like 'scissor points', various symbolic gestures (*imbur*), and baiting (*batuah*). The musical accompaniment, *dampeang*, has male and female tones. The male *dampeang* is high-pitched, signalling an imminent attack, while the lower-pitched female *dampeang* directs the steps to attack or defend. Costumes consist of wide *galembong* pants, black shirt, belt and headcloth (*destar*).

Alang Suntieng

The *alang suntieng*, also called *alang suntieng panghulu*, which means 'eagle dance, the adornment of the panghulu', is a traditional dance form from Padang Lawas in the Agam regency of West Sumatra. Replicating the skilful and rapid movements of the eagle, the dance is said to have once been famous all over the three original Minangkabau regions of settlement (*luhak nan tigo*) as the pride of the *panghulu* (traditional leaders). Having fallen into disuse long ago, the *alang suntieng* was revived in 1964 as a part of traditional ceremonial life and is today performed at weddings, an infant's bathing ritual (*turun mandi*), and to welcome important visitors. It has also become the learning material for dance students. It continues to appear only with the permission of the *ninik mamak*, basically to accompany the bearers of the *sirih* (betel quid) container (*carano*) required at all traditional ceremonies. Formerly staged inside the *rumah gadang* (the traditional 'great house') within the area framed by the *tonggak nan ampek* (four posts), the *alang suntieng* may now be presented inside a building or outside, according to the wishes of the *ninik mamak*.

Costumes and Musical Accompaniments

Traditionally, the performers are an even number of men. Musical accompaniment is provided by





(Above) The *gending Sriwijaya* is reminiscent of old court dances. In its present form, it is composed in the 1940s.

the *adok* (frame-drum), *talempong jao* (set of kettlegongs), *saluang* (bamboo flute), *pupuk beranak* (reed) and frequently also the vocalisation of songs like *pasalaman*, *tanduak buang*, *dok dinandong*, *si kumbang cari*, *awan bentan*, *si junda*. Costume consists of long pants in the wide and loose *sarawa lambuak* or *gunting enam* style, a shirt and a *destar palangi* (headcloth) interwoven with gold thread, a dagger slipped into the waistband and, once upon a time, a sword as well.

Gending Sriwijaya

Inspired by the glory of the ancient kingdom of Sriwijaya in South Sumatra, the *gending Sriwijaya* is today considered to be a traditional court dance of the Palembang region. The *gending Sriwijaya*'s music and lyrics, however, were only introduced in the early 1940s, during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia. They were subsequently united with the dance and reworked by Suhainah Rozak and Masnun Toha into dance suitable for performance to honour and welcome important guests.

Performance

The *gending Sriwijaya* is a stately dance performed by an even number of women dressed in lavish costumes of gold-threaded brocades and masses of gold jewellery. The movements are gracefully languid and simple, stressing the beauty of the fingers which are extended by long golden finger-covers. Little flicks of the fingers cause chains of little gold discs on the underside of the finger-covers to tremble exquisitely. The chorus of dancers is led by a group of three young women carrying the equipment for betel-chewing, an age-old welcoming tradition throughout Southeast Asia; but the dance is performed as pure entertainment.

ALANG SUNTIANG PERFORMANCE

Dance patterns consist of the ① *tapuak pasalaman*, which is a request for forgiveness directed at the audience, closing with the *rantak pasalaman* (greeting by footwork); ② *tanduak buang*, describing the buffalo's horns; ③ *awan bentan*, 'waves of clouds blanketing the sky', which once involved sword-play in which the wielder of the sword cleanly sliced a banana leaf bound to the other's forehead without touching the person; ④ *dok dinandong*, which describes the movements of an eagle eyeing its prey; ⑤ *tari gandang*, or dance of happiness, with the audience participating with rhythmic handclapping; ⑥ *adau adau*, depicting a rice-straw mat weaver as a symbol of community prosperity and the skill of the youth in working the ricefields; ⑦ *barabah pulang mandi*, the 'ducks return home to bathe', flapping their wings in all directions; and finally the conclusion, in which the performers again beg the forgiveness of the audience.



Bangsawan, Mendu and Wayang Gong

Bangsawan, mendu and wayang gong are three genres of traditional theatre which share the same Malay cultural background. Bangsawan originated in the Malay culture, and is derived from oral Malay literature which is written in *pantun* (quatrain poetry) style. The wayang gong has been influenced by the bangsawan, especially in presentation techniques, as well as some visual aspects of performance.

Bangsawan and Other Forms of Theatre

Bangsawan is generally found in northern Sumatra, but its strong influence has spread throughout the whole island. In other areas, similar theatre forms developed under various names such as *dumuluk* (Abdul Muluk), and *indera bangsawan* of South

Sumatra, and *dardanella*, *opera/komidi stambul* and *komidi bangsawan* on Java. The Sundanese drama form, *sandiwara sunda*, also reflects *bangsawan* influence. The *ketoprak* of Central Java, especially that on the north coast, has evolved in the *bangsawan* style. *Bangsawan* elements are also visible in the *mamanda* or *tantayangan* of Kalimantan.

Mendu is found in the Riau area, the source of the old Malay language. For this reason, the cultural background of this theatrical form is old Malay.

Wayang gong originated in Java and has become a part of South Kalimantan cultural tradition and it manifests strong ethnic overtones from this region. It is the local version of the *wayang* theatre.

Bangsawan

Bangsawan is a traditional theatre form generally found on the island of Sumatra, with the Malay



The *sandiwara sunda* was very popular with the West Javanese earlier this century. As in all the folk theatres of Indonesia, only the plot outline was determined before the show; everything else was left up to the actors.



culture as its dominant cultural background. It has been known by various names: *komidi bangsawan*, *dardanella*, *opera/komidi stambul*, all of which adopted many Western theatre techniques. This is reflected by its performance style which always uses a stage, even when presented outdoors.

It has been noted that *bangsawan* was first introduced in Malaya around the year 1870, by an all-male theatre group from India. It was called *wayang parsi*, because the stories performed were derived mostly from the Middle East and India. It spread southwards and across the Straits of Melaka into Indonesia. It was given the name *bangsawan*, which means aristocrat, because the stories were originally about a royal family.

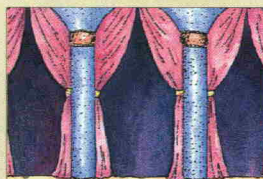
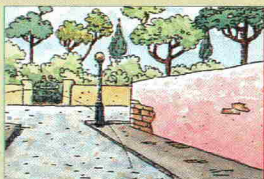
The main distinguishing characteristic of the *bangsawan* theatre is the manner of presentation. Dialogue is in four-lined *pantun* verse, because this is the style of oral Malay literature which is the source of the stories. Words are sung by the actors, both dialogue and narrative. Themes are also extracted from Middle Eastern tales, legends and folk stories. They may be presented according to the original, but are often adapted to the local ethnic culture or fused with local folk stories.

The Malayan influence is evident in both the style of dances and the music. Instruments used include the violins, *kendhang* (double-headed drums), *tambur* (single-headed drum), *seruling* (flute), guitars, the clarinet-like *serunai*, and accordion.

BACKDROPS AND STAGE PROPS

Stage props and backdrops play essential roles in creating a realistic setting for the story portrayed. The modern street scene (*strit*) is used for a story based in the present. An *istana* (*istana tebuk*) is a place for court audience, *kampung* (*kampung*) represents village scene, landscape (*padang pasir*) is used for depicting desert settings, the forest (*butan*) is used for hunting scenes, and the garden (*taman*) is used for love scenes.

Other main backdrops include the sea (*laut*), heaven, a cave (*gua batu*), clouds (*awan*), black cloth (*kain hitam*). All these props and backdrops are used in Malaysian *bangsawan*. (After Tan Sool Beng, 1993)



Music is an inseparable component of the *bangsawan*. Introductory music at the commencement sets the atmosphere for the show as it attracts spectators. Music played during the performance creates the mood of the story, accompanies singing and opens and closes scenes.

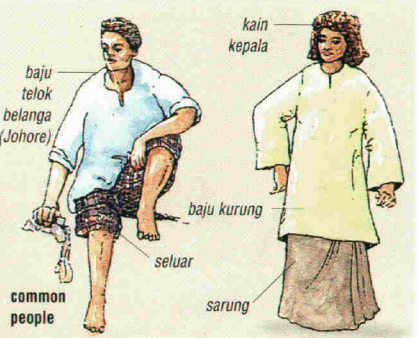
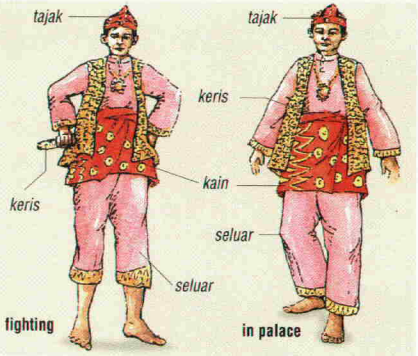
A performance always begins with a prelude in the form of song(s) or dance(s). The feature story follows, consisting of many scenes and several acts. An intermezzo of jokes and comedy divides the feature into two parts. For a finale, all the actors return to the stage to sing and perform the audience's favourite songs. *Bangsawan* is sometimes referred to as a Stambul comedy (*komidi stambul* (Istanbul)), because of the emphasis on humour. Most traditional Asian theatres do not separate 'comedy' from 'tragedy'. Regardless of whether the story is serious or funny, the humour comes out strongest; the actors cry and laugh at the same time. Joking clowns are an important part and they are given roles as servants or retainers.

Costumes are always shiny and sparkling, like those of the *1001 Nights*. The idea is to give the impression of a Middle Eastern kingdom, no matter

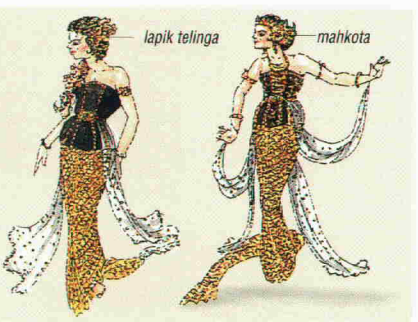
how simple the equipment and props may be. *Bangsawan* is an example of traditional theatre that has been influenced by Western techniques in its performance. It uses a stage, complete with backdrop painted to suggest the setting.

Bangsawan elements are also very evident in the mamanda theatre of South Kalimantan. Stories are entertaining and simple. Each performance begins with a dance and song. Costumes are based on local traditional fashion adorned with accessories such as epaulettes that vibrate as the male main characters move.

MALAY COSTUMES IN MALAY BANGSAWAN



JAVANESE COSTUMES IN MALAY BANGSAWAN



Bangsawan is influenced by the Western theatre and film as it seeks to enact fictional reality. This is achieved through measures which include lavishly made costumes representing the rich and wealthy in the ancient Malay world which are contrasted with the simple costumes worn by ordinary folk such as people living in kampungs. Sources for stories are also found in other historical periods and areas such as old Javanese stories from the wayang repertoire including Panji Semirang (right).



The wayang gong of South Kalimantan takes its themes from the Ramayana wayang theatre and emphasises the use of the gong in the gamelan.



Mak Yong and Randai

Mak Yong and randai are two prominent forms of traditional theatre in mainland Sumatra and the Riau Islands. Mak Yong is a traditional Malayan theatre style which began in the Malay Peninsula around the 17th century. It arrived in the Riau islands about the 19th century. Randai is a traditional West Sumatran narrative dance-drama from the Minangkabau region.



Mak Yong

The *mak yong* theatre is believed by some to have been influenced by the Hindu-Buddhist Thai and the Hindu-Javanese culture.

The name, *mak yong*, is perhaps a derivation of *Mak Hyang*, another name for *Dewi Sri*, the rice goddess.

Theme

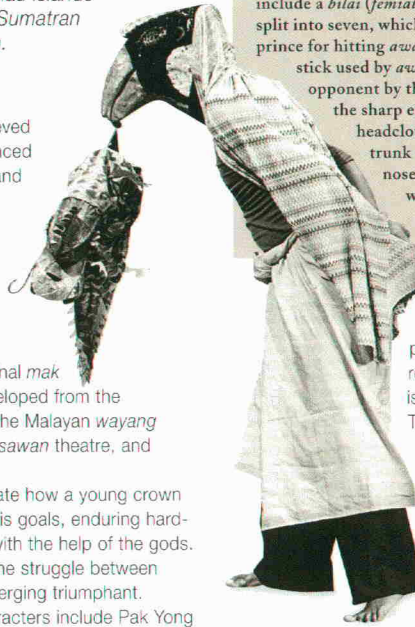
There are a dozen or so original *mak yong* stories. Others are developed from the *menora* theatre of Thailand, the Malayan *wayang kulit* (shadow-play) and *bangsawan* theatre, and the Javanese *Panji* tales.

The *mak yong* stories relate how a young crown prince struggles to achieve his goals, enduring hardship, disaster and suffering with the help of the gods. The essence of the story is the struggle between good and evil, with good emerging triumphant.

The many *mak yong* characters include Pak Yong (king), Pak Yong Muda (young prince), Mak Yong (queen), Puteri Mak Yong (young princess), Ci Awang (elderly male attendant/counsellor), young attendants (servants), Mak Inang (counterpart of Ci Awang), Inang Bongsu (youngest *inang*), Tok Wak, the gods, giants and genies, people from 'the west' or villagers, elements of nature (stars, birds, elephants, snakes), ladies-in-waiting, and *pembatak* (villains). The elderly

MASKS AND PROPS OF THE MAK YONG

There is a repertoire of 35 songs and a collection of character masks comprising the villain, tiger, elephant, deer, horse, monkey, *garuda*-bird, astrologist, king's old counsellor (red), young man, Mak Inang, Betara Guru (the supreme god) (white), Wak Perambun (green), and a genie. Props include a *bilai* (*femiat*; whip) of rattan or bamboo split into seven, which is carried by the king or prince for hitting *awang pengasub*; a bent wooden stick used by *awang pengasub* for grabbing an opponent by the neck; a magic kite tied to the sharp end of a lance; *gajang* or headcloth twisted into an elephant's trunk and hung from an actor's nose; *jala* or long cloth (*kain*) for wrapping around the body as a skirt; and a bottle or water container.



male character is a wise person, the king's guard, advisor and attendant. He is portrayed by a man wearing a red mask and in many stories, is also Mak Inang's husband. Tok Wak is the astrologist, or the king's orderly. Generally all roles are played by women, except those requiring masks, which are played by men. In Malaysia, there are no masks and hence, no male performers.

Presentation

The *mak yong* theatre uses songs and dances to convey specific meanings. There are songs for walking, war, love, dialogue preludes, etc. Instruments include a two-stringed *lute* (*rebab*) in Malaysia and a clarinet-like *sarunai* in Riau, a pair of long double-headed drums, a pair of *tetawang* gongs, a pair of *gedombak* drums, two *talempong* (sets of kettlegongs), one *breng-breng* (flat gong) or a *canang* (hanging gong), and several pairs of bamboo clappers (*ceracap*).

A ritual expert, the leader of the actors opens the performance with the *buka panggung* (open the stage) or *buka tanah* (open the earth) ritual. This ritual is for driving away ghosts or earth goblins who might disturb the show. This is followed by *betabik* (opening songs and dances), the *menghadap rebab* (face the lute) ceremony, and a round dance called *sedayung mak yong*. After a song in walking tempo, the feature begins. The show was previously used to pass on social and religious values and concepts of government administration; today the *mak yong* is played purely for entertainment.

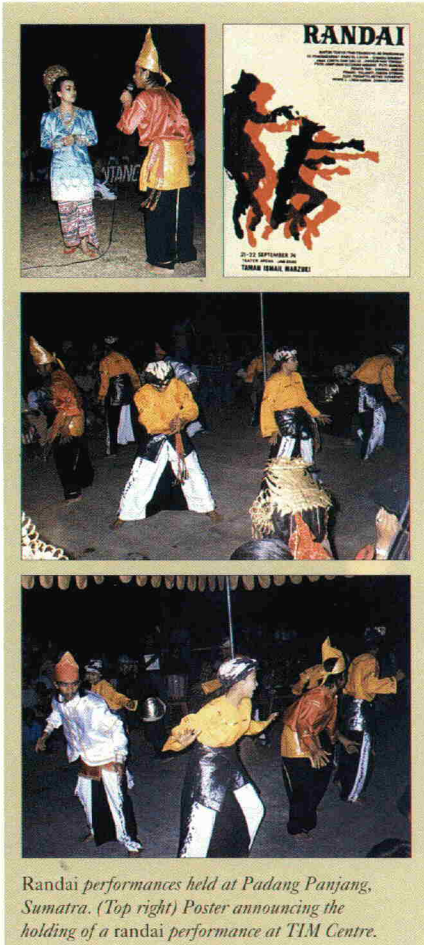
Randai

The *randai* was influenced by early popular forms of theatre such as the local *basijobang*, Dutch *tonil* plays, and especially the *komidi bangsawan*. It is said that in 1932 in the Payakumbuh area of West Sumatra a *komidi bangsawan* group decided to

»»»The *garuda*-bird holding a papier maché chicken in its beak.

(From top left, clockwise) The late Mak Timah (Fatimah) as *Makyong* executes the *buka tanah* ritual that precedes the *makyong* performance. She is assisted by an apprentice. *Makyong* performances are still being held although they are not as popular as before.





Randai performances held at Padang Panjang, Sumatra. (Top right) Poster announcing the holding of a randai performance at TIM Centre.

improve the *basijobang* with elements from the Dutch *tonil* play and local *pencak silat* martial arts. The stories were expanded with other *kaba* stories and several new scripts were written. The *randai*, as it was named, quickly became a favourite with the Minangkabau people. Various troupes appeared, taking their names from the stories or the *kaba* characters. *Randai* is freely explained to mean 'having fun while forming a circle'.

Theme

Randai presents historical events, Minangkabau tradition, and lessons passed down from parents to children to prepare them for life. The most interesting part is the eternal wisdom of the traditional advice transmitted to the audience in the dialogue.

Presentation

A *randai* group may have between 14 and 25 players, depending on the story. Once performed outdoors, it is now often presented in a theatre. Basic movements are taken from the *pencak silat*, and executed at the beginning of the play, when making the transition between scenes, and at the

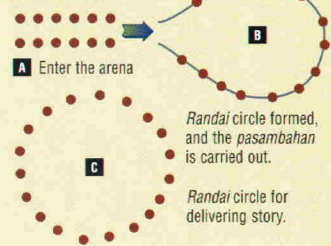
conclusion, as well as during fighting scenes.

The performers stand in a large circle five to eight metres across. Before each scene, they dance in a ring, singing and keeping the rhythm with hand-clapping and leg-slapping. The song serves as a narration, a scene opener, an opening salute and/or a closing item. Dialogues are presented by actors who sit or stand in the middle of the circle; the rest of the players squat on their haunches in a circle around the outer perimeter to define the boundaries of the performance area. When the players dance in a circle, the sound 'hep ta' is heard, which is the signal to begin the next movement of song. The 'hep' sound is uttered simultaneously with hand-clapping and the 'ta' sound with leg-slapping. As these movements are taking place, the words 'hep' and 'ta' are vocalised by the performers.

Randai is a form of folk entertainment performed after harvest, during wedding and other parties. Show-time is in the evening; it can take several days or a week to complete a story.

Costumes consist of black or white low-crotch trousers, black long-sleeved mandarin-collared shirt, fringed and beaded head-cloth, and a large handkerchief wrapped around the waist. The leading man and the *dubalangs* (district chiefs) carry a knife or a *keris* (dagger).

STYLE OF THE RANDAI SHOW



Special Characteristics of the Randai

Randai has evolved into a conventional stage performance, but it retains certain special folk-play characteristics. These are the circle formation, the martial arts, and the use of the *kaba* stories. Even with the development of new stories outside the *kaba* repertoire, they stay within the framework of dramatised *basijobang* (*sijobang* recital) or *bakaba* (*kaba* recital).



(Above left) Local Minangkabau *pencak silat* forms the basic movements in the *randai*. (Above top) Martial arts movements. (Above) The *randai* musical ensemble consists of a lute, flute, small gongs and various drums.

(Below) As the story is being played out, the *randai* dancers sit cross-legged in a ring around the performance arena.

