

SOUTH SUMATRA

In 1972 and 1973 we went from Palembang across to Kabupaten Lahat.

From Lahat to Pagar Alam took about two hours.

Then in Kecamatan Tanjung Sakti we recorded *serdang* (flute), *redap* (drum), also we found an old *rebab* here.

Guritan, which are long story songs of literary quality based on very old stories are performed here. *Serdang* (flute) is used on sad occasions, usually played on the occasion of a funeral.

Harmonika music is used to cheer people up, very happy music.

Rejong is sung by boys and girls when they are in love or courting. Out of the presence of the parents certainly not in the house.

There is *lagu tangis*, very sad singing.

In this area the orchestra is called *tabuhan*, which consists of one *tabuhan* (a set of small bossed gongs) and a *redap*.

In this area there are two kinds of *pencak adat* (self defence). One is on the occasion of a wedding where there is the ceremony to bring the groom to the bride. The second occasion is ordinary *pencak* fighting (the art of self defence). The *redap* in this area has cow or goat skin and the wood part of it is a trunk of a coconut tree. It is tautened from the inside and outside with *raton* cord.

On the occasion of traditional dancing, *tariyan adat*, which is accompanied by *tabuhan* and *redap*, a boy and a girl who already know each other a little get to know each other better through social dancing. Boys and girls from each village are allowed to take part but not to dance with or marry a girl from the same village. The leader of the girls is called *tua tua tadis* and the leader of the boys is called *tua tua bujang*, which means bachelor. Anyone who wants to take part in the dancing first reports to either the *tua tua tadis*, or the *tua tua bujang*, who arranges for the dancing, who should dance with whom and in what order. Usually up to 20 girls might dance, dressed in traditional costume, but only 1 or 2 men take part. Sometimes a boy dancer would look at a girl dancer and say, " Oh, you're from my family, you're not allowed to dance with me, go away!" Sometimes he is naughty and tells all the girls to go away except the one he wants to dance with. They are not allowed to laugh while they are dancing or else they are told to leave. The purpose of all this is to provide an opportunity for boys and girls to mix, especially at weddings.

On the tape that we recorded at Kampung Masambulau in the Margapumi area in Tanjung Sakti in Bahasa Besemah (the language of Besamah):

First of all we recorded *harmonika* played by Pak Lesai, who played six songs without stopping. He started with *mantau kundang*, meaning to call a friend; followed by *aseu aseu*, meaning he is not sure; thirdly *bidadari bekindon*, which means an angel sways a baby girl in heaven; fourthly *tangis membarak*, meaning a child cries because his father is dead; fifthly, *terjung tunggalig*, meaning waterfall into the stream; finally, he played *tangis anak belaijauh*, which is a sad song about a girl whose husband is in another region.

Always when the *harmonika* plays these songs there is some slight variation.

There are ten white buttons available and two chord gadgets ... e.g.... ??? Only those three tones are used, particularly in the first song. This *harmonika* is an old German *harmonika* which was brought when the Christians first entered this area at the beginning of this century and founded the Catholic church in Tanjung Sakti.

Second on the tape is the long story telling called *guritan*. The singer was Cik Timih, a middle aged lady from Kampung Nagri Kaya from the Margapumi area. The story sung was *Bujang Indaran*. There is a lot of melisma in it, and repeated tones. Each verse begins very low and then raises in pitch. The singer has a rather hoarse voice. There is thin vibrato and nice ornaments; pentatonic singing with the main tones being a fifth apart. Verse after verse sings about the relationship between men and women. Normally only women sing this song but others are sung by men only, especially those about religion.

The third song recorded on the tape is *rejong*. *Rejong* is only sung by boys and girls, usually after each other, in pantun verse. It is sung outside of the village in very loud voices. The parents are not allowed to listen, but the *rejong* poetry is known by everyone. Often it expresses disappointment or shame so the parents might hear what is being sung. Every few years there is a change of tune, in the 1940 period a different tune for this performance from 1936 etc.. One verse sings about unfulfilled ambition, another expresses sadness to oneself as one is alone in the jungle. It is in free metre....An elderly man and an elderly woman answer each other in pantun form. Pak Lesai begins singing, "I'm very thin because I never eat, because I'm sad at heart ". Ibu Ci tima, the lady, sings in return , " I'd like to give you some advice in return as a friend. Express your feelings etc.". The poems are in pantun form, that is a,b,a,b rhyme, with an allusion in the first two lines and the pith of the meaning in the second couplet. Traditionally when this form of singing is performed (boys and girls answering each other in pantun form), an elderly lady has to be present to look after the young people to make sure that they don't do or say the wrong thing.

The next item on the tape is called *rejong panjang*. This is a long *rejong* which is only spoken in very refined language not sung. Pak Lesai speaks this *rejong*. In the verse he humbles himself in front of a girl. If there were a girl to answer she would have said, " No, I'm even lower than you." Eventually they would realise that they both like each other. In the end they would find suitable words to accept each other. Right at the end there is a line, "The Chinese never make a mistake when they calculate, they are so clever ", which means in the allusion that the couple are really suited to each other.

The fifth item on the tape is a *serdang* (flute), recording by Pak Mohar. The flute is about 20" long and made from hollow black bamboo. I brought one which is in the department. It has three holes in the front. The two upper ones are close together, the third one is further down. If you make a *serdang* you first measure a cord around the circumference of the bamboo and then multiply that distance by ?? for the distance between the two upper holes and then multiply the distance of the circumference by two to measure the distance between the two lower holes. *Sukat* is distance. It is a ring stopped flute and has a *ratan* ring around the last piece. If you want to move from a lower octave to a higher octave while you are playing like a cat's voice, that's the expression, you move the piece of *ratan* up and down the hole with the lips.

This circular breathing.... The singer shuts his eyes and relaxes ...e.g..

The same style ornaments as with the *harmonika* but they are more complex. The player can go for two hours, the chest moves up and down as he breathes in quickly. He plays very quietly and every 3 or 4 seconds his neck and chest breath in There is no node in the flute and there are a lot of microtones. Octaves and fifths are the intervals. Some long-held tones are interspersed with fast ornamental passages. There a lot of variations in dynamics. There is a very favourite cadence .. eg... This kind of flute playing is only indulged in on the occasion of a death to express grief. All the village has to come to the funeral at the deceased house to listen to the very sad flute playing, especially on the first, third and seventh and fortieth day after a death. The songs recorded on the flute were *cintok rawa*, which is also a name of a rice stamping piece; followed by *ayam setalang*,

meaning a chicken under one roof; followed by *raunggah*, which means a collection of songs; followed by *tangis anak belaijauh*, which is about a wife who is married a long way from home and longs for her childhood village.

The *serdang* increases the sadness of a funeral. Its aim is to make everyone cry even more to get rid of their emotions of grief. They sit there listening to the flute from morning to evening; even while they are sleeping the flute plays.

The sixth item on the tape is *ginggong*, an iron jews harp played by Pak Lesai ...e.g., the songs are *mantau kundang*, which was recorded awhile ago on the *harmonika*. This was followed by *terjung tunjung*. In this it is normally a boy that plays a *ginggong* to a girl. He beckons to her to come to see him. At the end of a line of melody, he raises his right hand and beckons to the girl that he likes. Girls may also play a jews harp and beckon in the same way but the father has to be absent, or if the father just goes away as the boy enters, then this means that the father has agreed to the match.

The seventh item is music for a wedding ceremony played by Pak Alik who saw this kind of ceremony when he was still a child. There are no longer weddings of this kind, but this is the kind of wedding that was celebrated before Islam came into the area. A boy and a girl sits below him. Their mother stands to the girl, the girl's mother stands next to her and the mother carries hen-hatching eggs. On the shoulder of the bride and groom she puts some rice in a bowl used to feed the chicken, a symbol of fertility.

A *Jurai Tua*, who is the village elder or anyone who knows how to marry someone, presides over the ceremony. He sings lots of repeated words and lines about chickens and other symbols of fertility. For example, "The chicken is jumping out! Catch the chicken with a fishnet! A marriage is lasting if it is like a fish in a net. The more children the better. Before the teeth of a baby appear you should have another child".

For the eighth item on the tape, the traditional *tari adat*, *tabuhan* and *tari adat*, there is a *tabuhan*, which is a set of four small bossed gongs about 8" in diameter. Two pieces of rough wood are used as beaters. The three kettle gongs on the right are played by the right hand of the player and the fourth gong on the left is played with the left hand. They have domes of about 2". The *redap*, or *redab*, is about 6" long. It is open at one end and has skin covering the other end.

The next thing recorded, number nine, is *lasung* music. This is rice stamping music recorded in Tanjung Sakti until this time. *Palit* means to touch a little, to move from here to there. In other words you move the *alu*, the long stick used for stamping rice here and there. There are three main rhythms: *irama siamang jauh* (which means from the jungle it can be heard far away); *irama madang* (medium); *irama palit*. It is not as loud a sound as *lesung* playing in Java. The uncooked rice grains are put in one hole in a piece of plaited bamboo. Sometimes the guitar can be played with the *lesung*. The wood of the trough is made of *gelam* wood. Usually the maximum number of players is four. It is the women who play and they practice often or else they forget the rhythms. *Irama siamang jauh* is ..e.g... *Madang* which gets faster, stops for a moment for a rest and a drink if you wish, that's the meaning of the text ...e.g... Then *irama siamang jauh* is the fastest of the rhythms; it is the loudest and the most difficult ...e.g... The players were Ibu Baria, Ibu Halima and Ibu Sakinah. There are only two or three pitches you beat in the hole which makes a dull sound on top of the box. Flour flies in the air as you play.

Next we moved to Pagar Alam, a town two hours away. In the house of the *camak* we heard the very brilliant sound of the *tabuhan* beaten loudly with two beaters ...e.g... types of patterns. The

performers were Hadji Teman playing *tabuhan* and on the *terbang* (*redap*, drum) was Hadji Abdul Halim. Pieces recorded were *cacing pembuka*; *cacing perentup* and *lagu tai Musi*, (the song of the river Musi) – very fast repetitive music with good part playing. The *cacing pembuka* is the opening section and *cacing perentup* is the closing section.

The *serdang* player was called Pak Mesulut from Dusun Gunggung Kempang, Tanjung Sakti. Then there was the *rejong* which is also called *andri2* performed by Guruanang from the old market Pasarlama from Tanjung Sakti. The *harmonika* was played by Pak Menalis from Tg. Sakti. Ringgit by Mr. Manarap.

Tangis Ayam, which has Arabic influence, by Yowunda Rui Pah, helped by four people from Tg. Sakti. In Pagar Alam the *ginggong* (jew's harp) player was very shy and didn't face the audience. It was a very small iron harp with a knob at the end of each tongue for vibrating. He played *terjung tundang*; followed by *tangis anak belai jauh*; followed by *kokok ayam setalang* (the voice of a cock), and finally *mantau kundang* (to call a friend). It was beautiful playing with a very nice sound. They exclaimed "*Riau tangis!*" (It makes you cry). If it is very bad then you say "*Rinu Menjerip!*".