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## MUSICAL ELEMENTS IN HIKAYAT HANG TUAH

### Introduction

The *Hikayat Hang Tuah* is preferably meant to be recited, so as to be heard as revealed by the copiest who produced the Leiden manuscript when he states: "that *sukacitalah segala yang mendengar* (my emphasis) *dia cerita ini*," (all who hear this story will be happy). The emphasis is on the hearing, namely the recitation, not on the reading. It is therefore the aural aspect which is important. This paper delineates the sounds, musical or otherwise, in the *Hikayat* and traces the use of musical instruments in conjunction with the numerous rituals as can be seen in that of bathing, as described in the *hikayat*. The many roles played by musical sounds and instruments in the social functions of that time are delineated.

### Functions of Musical Sounds in Merry Making

The use of sounds and music can be seen from the numerous functions such as for merry making and during formal occasions or for the gathering of people where musical sounds play an important role. Besides these functions, the sounds and music of *Melaka* are also contrasted with that from other places, not only as friendly competitions to reveal one's upmanship but also to enhance the country's social and national standing. Music is also seen in its affective impact on the kings/*rajas*.

Music and musical instruments are always used especially for general merry-making where food is in abundance, drink flows freely and the people engage in singing and dancing. The first occasion for merry-making is after the incident when

Hang Tuah and his friends saved the Bendahara from being killed. This happened after his soldiers left him in the lurch and alone he had to defend himself. His eventual safety calls for much rejoicing with singing galore and eating a-plenty. On occasions like these, the pattern is: there will be lots of food to eat and plenty to drink, and the people assembled will engage in rejoicing and merry-making, as they all eat, drink, sing and dance. The following description is given time and again throughout the *hikayat*:

And everybody drank, and there were so many sounds, in the *Malay style*. And the *rebana* was played and singers with good voices sang and their voices sounded so sweet. And all the officers and noblemen stood up and danced and invited others to dance, and there was such a huge crowd.

*(Maka sekalian minumlah terlalu ramai dengan bunyi-bunyian cara Melayu. Maka rebana pun dipalu oranglah. Maka biduanda yang baik suara pun bernyanyilah terlalu merdu suaranya. Maka segala pegawai dan petuanan pun berbangkit dan menari beranggapan terlalu ramai).*

The emphasis in the above is on the many, different sounds. It is also on the drinking, the dancing, the sweet singing for the singers all must have good voices. The emphasis is also on the sheer number of crowd: the more the merrier. Moreover the crowd seems to strengthen and empower the nation's social gathering. More importantly, during these events the musical sounds made are of the *Malay style* (emphasis added).

The Betara of Majapahit, in his many attempts to kill Hang Tuah, always makes sure that he feeds the admiral besides incessantly offering him drinks in the hope he would get drunk. Hang Tuah is also initiated into the different sounds of music, singing and dancing before the Betara makes any attempt to kill him. The following description is commonly found in the *hikayat*:

And people brought in the food, hundreds of different types of food ... After eating the food the drinks were brought in ... And everybody drank, and in the process inviting others to do likewise. And the instruments were played, all the different varieties, and the people were excited, some even danced ...)

*(Maka hidangan pun diangkat oranglah beratus hidangan ... Setelah sudah makan maka diangkat orang pula hidangan minuman ... Maka minumlah terlalu ramai beranggap-anggapan. Maka bunyi-bunyian pun dipalu oranglah terlalu ramai; masing-masing pun berahilah; ada yang menari ... (p. 105).*

As always the emphasis is on the sheer number of people, the huge crowd which testifies to the success and enormity of the event. Great emphasis is also placed on the different types of food and drinks which are served to the people who must enjoy and appreciate the occasion. The above passages show a society that is musically talented, know how to play many instruments, sing melodiously and at the same time enjoy themselves amidst great rejoicing and festivities. Time and again they know how to have fun, eat and drink well as they sing and play musical instruments, even though their intention, unfortunately, is to brutally commit murder.

### **Music and Formal Functions**

Music, sounds and rhythms play important roles not only in informal gatherings where much emphasis is placed on merry-making but also during important and formal occasions to welcome foreign dignitaries to Melaka. This is the standard practise which is also used in other countries like in Majapahit or in Inderapura (Pahang) when they, in turn, welcome the *raja* or delegation from Melaka. Music plays an important function during such occasions as they are used to welcome the guests from foreign lands. Music is needed to show respect, bestow honour on the guests and welcome them to the host country. Music is the barometer to show the importance of the guests and how appreciated and welcome his visit/s.

Music and the attendant musical sounds are also used when letters are paraded through the streets before being taken to the recipients. This can be seen in the delegation headed by Tun Utama and Tun Bija Sura who are in Inderapura to ask for Tun Teja's hand. The letter brought by the delegation was received with all sorts of musical sounds (*dengan segala bunyi-bunyian*). It was put on an elephant and carried in a procession to be paraded before it was taken to the king. As the *hikayat* describes it all sorts of musical instruments were played: processional drums, the state *nobat* and *nafiri* instruments. And the letter and gifts were received by the people (*bunyi-bunyian pun berbunyiilah: gendang arak-arakan dan nobat, nafiri negara. Maka surat dan bingkisan itu pun disambut oranglah,*" (p. 91).

The same process is repeated with the letters from the Indian and Chinese emperors, likewise from the Betara Majapahit amongst others. The giving and receiving of letters or official missives must be accorded its own special rites and "protocol" as delineated in the *hikayat*. It is to honour both the sender and the recipient. As always, during such occasions, music plays an important role in accompanying the delivery of the letter and acknowledging its acceptance. This becomes understandable for letters of *watikahs* then, as they were known, were the main means by which leaders communicated. Letters from other nations must be accorded the proper respect and protocol. It is therefore necessary for music to accompany and enhance these deliveries and acceptance.

The importance of music, both for formal and informal occasions, become more relevant for music serves not only as an empowering tool, but also for its psychological affective impact. It is important to stress here that music has a soothing effect on the *rajas*: it makes them dreamy / *khayal*. It is also used to encourage them to forget their royal protocol so that they can indulge in merry-making and dancing. It is to enable them to let their hair down, be part of the crowd and indulge in merry-making. When Raden Wira Nantaja visited Melaka, the Pateh

Kerma Wijaya and the whole court of the Raja of Melaka were so happy with all the musical instruments and all the sounds that they were hearing. They knew that in being accorded such a welcome, they were indeed special and highly esteemed guests who were greatly respected. Musical sounds, singing and dancing signify not only the importance of the event and the people but also serve as an indicator of appreciation, diplomatic reciprocity and empowerment.

### **Music: The Social Leveller**

The society of the *hikayat* is a society very much dependent on musical instruments and talented singing. More importantly, the playing of musical instruments and the singing are engaged by everybody irrespective of class and status. Music embraces all, from king to subject. Everyone knows how to play a musical instrument, everyone can sing and dance. These important events are often accompanied by a display of revelry involving weapons. Thus it is not surprising that when Pateh Kerma Wijaya played the *tombak* (spear), Most people soon thereafter, likewise, followed suit as they took turns to show their skills in also handling the *tombak*. The effect of all these sounds, and all the playing was that the king began to feel dreamy, likewise Raden Inu too felt dreamy; (*raja pun berasa khayallah dan Raden Inu pun berasa khayallah,*" (p. 51).

Music induces a trance like effect on kings, dignitaries and the ordinary subject. The hypnotic effect of music is important to induce forgetfulness and encourage merry-making. Both these aspects: the ability to forget and the ability to enjoy themselves are pre-requisites to some other deep, dark ulterior motives, which sometimes accompany these events. For often, beneath the merry surface of gaiety, celebration and enjoyment, lurks the sinister aim of killing the guests who, ironically, have been so greatly and ceremoniously welcomed.

Music and sounds will make the warriors and the kings dance as can be seen from the many scenes in the *hikayat*. Sounds, as in good, sweet, melodious voices are also used to lull the king to sleep. This is seen in the scene where Hang Tuah had been banished, his *keris* taken from him and given to Hang Jebat. The King of Melaka is invariably and inconsolably sad. Thus to entertain him, Hang Jebat is asked to read the *Hikayat*: “and the king asks Hang Jebat to read the *Hikayat*, for he knows that Hang Jebat knows how to change and modulate his voice, and Hang Jebat indeed has a very good voice”; (*maka disuruhnya oleh raja membaca hikayat, kerana ia tahu membawa suara berbagai-bagai, tambahan suaranya terlalu baik. Maka Hang Jebat pun membaca Hikayat, terlalu nyaring suaranya lagi merdu, (p. 291).*”

Hang Jebat then reads the *Hikayat* and his *suara[s]* (voice) is high and sweet. It is not only the king who is besotted with Hang Jebat’s recitation but also the masses, who then peep behind doors and pillars to see and hear Hang Jebat’s recitation. Even the king’s mistresses’ succumb to the lure and seduction of Hang Jebat’s singing. They all fall in love with Hang Jebat merely by listening to him sing and recite the *Hikayat*. The king himself is very pleased to hear Hang Jebat reading the *hikayat* for his voice is so sweet and melodious like the flute. Hang Jebat was indeed very adept at changing his voice, so that people would be affected as they became happy or sad, and whoever hears him would certainly love him so; (*terlalu sukacita mendengar Hang Jebat membaca Hikayat itu, suaranya terlalu manis seperti buluh perindu, kerana Hang Jebat pandai mengadakan suara-suara memberi sekalian mendengar dia pilu dan rawan, barang siapa mendengar dia menjadi kasih hatinya, (p. 291).*” Again and again, it is shown in the *hikayat* that the whole society appreciates music and singing. It is also shown that the ability to play musical instruments and the talent to avenge the king’s *maruah* / (dignity). *Jebat* was still in the palace and was continuously placated and entertained by the playing of the *rebana*/drums:

sing is shared by all from the leaders to the led. Music and singing unify the whole social strata. Music is indeed, the great social leveler.

### Music: “Hypnosis” and Betrayal

Through his *suara[s]/voice [s]* Hang Jebat could make people happy or sad and disturbed, and the king, hearing the many faceted voices, of Hang Jebat was himself lulled to sleep even as he tried, perhaps, to forget his own troubles. He fell asleep on Hang Jebat’s lap, eager to forget that he had dismissed his devoted, courageous Laksamana and he wanted also to, perhaps, lull and vanquish his inner turmoils and consequent regrets. This episode also reveals for the first time how Hang Jebat used his *suara* to commit treason in order to avenge his dishonoured friend, who had been blatantly betrayed by their very own patron: the king himself.

Hang Jebat stopped reading the *hikayat* and began to sing the *raja* to sleep; and his voice was extremely sweet; (*Hang Jebat pun berhenti daripada membaca itu, lalu bangun menyanyi pula, mengulit raja beradu, terlalu sekali merdu suaranya,*” (p. 292); Earlier in the *Hikayat*, Hang Jebat only used his sweet voice to read letters before they were sent to foreign dignitaries. Now in his angst-ridden, angry state he will exploit his voice so that he would commit treason in order to avenge his wronged friend.

If music is used to lull the king to sleep, and to soothe his regrets for having dismissed Hang Tuah, music too will now be used to lull Hang Jebat who, at the height of his treason, must be made to succumb and fall asleep. In the *hikayat*, music is the social leveller which knows no barriers and treat everybody equally. Thus it is that even as Hang Jebat used music and singing to lull and soothe the king, the same method is applied to lull and soothe the enraged warrior. Hang Jebat has committed treason against his king, so Hang Tuah is asked to avenge the king’s

*maruah* (integrity). Jebat was still in the palace and was continuously placated and entertained by the playing of the *rebana*/drums:

The *Laksamana* stops at the hall and hears the sounds of many drums. *Jebat* is eating and drinking with the whole palace. When he notices that it is early noon, the *Laksamana* hears the *rebana* and the *rebab* ceased to be played; only the small *rebana* is heard lulling *Jebat* to sleep.

*(Maka Laksamana berhenti di balai gendang mendengar bunyi rebana itu terlalu ramai, Si Jebat makan minum dengan segala isi istana. Setelah dilihatnya dari hampir tengah hari, maka didengar oleh Laksamana bunyi rebana dan rebab itu berhenti, hingga bunyi rebana kecil juga lagi bunyinya, mengulit si Jebat tidur (p. 314).*

In an earlier episode, Hang Jebat reads the *hikayat* and sang the king to sleep. When the king awakened, he found Hang Jebat at the height of his treason: acting in such an arrogant manner and behaving as if he was the master of the king's own palace. To soothe the enraged *Jebat*, music must be played. He was eventually soothed and lulled to sleep by the small *rebana*. When he awakened, he would have to account for his conduct to Hang Tuah. The juxtaposition of these two closely related and interlinked events is interesting. What happened to the king parallels on another scale the fate that would also befall Jebat. Unfortunately, Jebat, in his self-assured tyranny was oblivious of the epiphany.

In both the above occasions, music is used to soothe jagged nerves or to lull people into a state of unconsciousness or even to make them sleep so that they can then be disposed of. It is to enable a respite to happen, anger to be soothed and also to "buy" time to evaluate the circumstances. It is to encourage a cooling off period, failing which the respite can be used to regroup and rethink strategies to overcome oppositions. Concomitant with the above functions, music and sounds are also used for purposes of destruction or to avenge insults. For instance whilst in Majapahit, the many attempts made on Hang Tuah's life, not only failed to kill him but succeeded in making



him angry. Hang Tuah, the invincible warrior, successfully thwarted all attempts made on his life. Although he was happy to be so successful, he was still angry and frustrated that so many attempts were made to kill him. It was only proper that he retaliated. For revenge, Hang Tuah vowed to infuriate the *Betara*. Together with his friends, they would destroy the Betara Majapahit's forbidden garden.

Thus it was that they ate the fruits and gathered the flowers of the garden, even as they joked, sang, and recited the different types of poems like the *pantun*, *seloka* and *syair*, with all their attendant variations (*sambil bersenda, bernyanyi, dan berpantun dan berseloka, berbagai-bagai ragamnya*) (p. 159). The above shows that these are warriors who not only know how to fight, but they also know how to dance, sing, play all sorts of musical instruments, handle all sorts of weapons and sing in such lovely, melodious voices. Time and again, the *hikayat* shows how music and singing unites the society. It is almost as if during these social gatherings, the playing of musical instruments and the singing, successfully amalgamates not only the different stratas of society but also the different abodes. People, irrespective of class and creed, become united through music. The *hikayat* also shows, time and again, that members of society during that time is indeed multi-talented and multi-facetted artists who also possess melodious voices.

### **Music: The Social Barometer**

Sounds and music which are used for entertainment are also a means to showing off talent, power and wealth especially when entertaining foreign guests. This happens when the music and sounds of the host country and the visiting countries are compared and contrasted. The Raja of Melaka who was in Majapahit for his wedding to Raden Mas Ayu was being entertained with festivities and general merry-making, which as usual, was accompanied with lots of sounds. In the midst of these activities, the Seri Betara wanted to hear the singers from Melaka

sing. As he said, "my son, do you have with you a singer with a good voice, for I have a great desire to see a Malay singer sing and dance; (*adakah anakku membawa biduan yang baik suaranya, kerana ayahanda terlalu ingin hendak melihat biduan Melayu menyanyi dan menari,*" (p. 125). The Raja of Melaka who had come well-prepared responded: Yes, Your Highness, I brought with me four Malay singers who know how to dance and sing; (*Ya tuanku, patik bawa empat orang biduan Melayu tahu menari dan menyanyi*)" (p. 125).

Dancing and singing are important aspects of a court's life, and the Raja of Melaka had brought them along not only for his own entertainment, but also to entertain his host and future father-in-law. More importantly, it is to show that he has come well-prepared to perform anything that is asked of him so that he will not lose face. It is also to show the talent of his singers/dancers and to further empower not only his own social standing but that of his own king and country. Had he come unprepared, he would not only have disappointed his father-in-law, but belittled his own delegation and insulted his own social standing and humiliated his own self. Worst, in the process he would also have belittled and humiliated his country.

When he was banished for the first time, Hang Tuah went to Inderapura since he wanted to abduct Tun Teja and present her to the Raja of Melaka. Hang Tuah hoped that such an action would enable him to regain his lost favour and perhaps, should he succeed in this endeavour, he would be duly rewarded. Perhaps too he would be reinstated to his former position or better still be elevated and empowered to an even better position. To accomplish his objective of taking Tun Teja, he had to work his way through and bluff the royal maids. Hang Tuah then expressed his desire to see and hear the people of Inderapura sing and dance for him. As he asked: "do you know how to sing. I would very much like to hear the people of Inderapura sing" (*tahukah dayang bernyanyi? Inginnya sahaya hendak mendengar orang Inderapura bernyanyi*), (p. 172). Hang Tuah must pretend that he wanted so very much to be entertained by

the talent of the people of Inderapura as symbolized by Tun Teja maids. This is to enable Hang Tuah to appear in Tun Teja's presence so that he could then launch his actual plan: to abduct Tun Teja for his own king.

When Tun Teja found out that her maids were going to entertain Hang Tuah with their songs, she advised them "to be careful when you sing in front of that man from Melaka, for he is used to seeing and hearing those who really know how to sing and dance" (*baik-baik diri bernyanyi di hadapan orang Melaka itu, kerana orang itu biasa melihat orang tahu bernyanyi dan menari,*" (p. 175).

It is important to emphasize at this juncture that Hang Tuah is used to seeing people dance and to hearing people sing. More importantly, Hang Tuah himself is an accomplished artist. He thus knows and would be more sensitive and appreciative of what he is seeing and listening. He would also be more critical. It is therefore not surprising that Tun Teja wanted her maids to be at their best: do their best, sing their best, dance their best for certainly she did not want to be embarrassed by their poor performances, if any. She did not want her maids' excellence or lack of excellence, to reflect upon her own bearing and stance. She was also very much aware of Hang Tuah's social standing, likewise his musical and singing abilities. Above all she was concerned and did not want him to criticise her maid's performances.

When Raja Wira Nantaja visited Melaka, the King of Melaka asked his people to play music, the *Javanese* way [emphasis added] so that his visitors could feel at home. It was his way of showing his appreciation and respect for his guests who came from Java. It was to show them that he cared for their well-being and to prove that he wanted to make them feel at home. But he also wanted to indirectly tell them that he had a talented and abled set of entertainers, who could also effortlessly play Javanese music. This is so for each country or state has its own kind of music which they are proud to show off to the visiting

guests. Being able to play music from a different country is an added bonus, testifying to one's ability, preparedness and hardwork. As the Pateh Kerma Wijaya confessed: "Sir, I don't know how to dance the Malay way, but if it is the Javanese way, I can at least try"; (*Tuanku, patik tidak tahu menari cara Melayu; jika cara Jawa bolehlah barang rupanya*). When Raden Wira Nantaja heard *Pateh Kerma Wijaya's* admission, he respectfully addressed Wira Nantaja thus, "*Sungguhlah Tuanku, seperti sembah patik itu, sedang paman Pateh lama di tanah Melayu, orang patik pula tahu menari cara Melayu.*" *Setelah baginda mendengar sembah Wira Nantaja itu, maka titah baginda, "Suruhlah palu bunyi-bunyian cara Jawa; kita melihat orang saudara kita bermain,"* (p. 50-51). Raden Wira Nantaja says to the king, "it is true Your Highness what he just said, he had been here for quite some time and his people can certainly dance the Malay way." On hearing that the king ordered the people to "play the instruments the Javanese way for we want to see how our friends dance.

Even when it is entertaining guests or just socializing, the subtexts of these social gatherings are still competition, rivalry and one upmanship. Singers must sing and dance well, for their ability is a reflection of their country's talents and abilities. They are state dancers and singers and they must always exemplify their country's code of distinction and empowerment.

### **Music and Communications**

Besides entertainment, musical sounds and singing are used as a public address system to call people to an assembly. They are exploited to attract the people's attention so that orders can be clearly given. When the King of Melaka became a pious man and wanted to distribute his wealth amongst his poor subjects, he asked the Temenggung to order a messenger to go round the country beating sounds (*momongan*) requesting the poor and the neglected to assemble at the palace so that aid

could be equally distributed. In an age devoid of telecommunications and technological infrastructure, musical sounds and instruments, were essential elements crucial to disseminate information. In another instance when Kisna Rayan did not want to sell firewood to Nala Sang Guna only because he wanted to embarrass the latter, a messenger was ordered to go around the country beating a gong and giving the instructions forbidding the sale of firewood. As he said: "Temenggung, quick, ask someone to go and beat the *gong* around the country, ordering the people not to sell firewood to Nala Sang Guna" (*Hai Temenggung, segeralah palu gong berkeliling negeri ini, jangan diberi orang berjual kayu api akan Nala Sang Guna,*" (p. 355). Firewood is crucial for without it, Nala Sang Guna would not be able to feed his invited guests since his people would not be able to cook without having the necessary fire. In an age without telecommunication, sending a gong-beating messenger around the country was surely the most convenient way of making certain that important information or royal edicts were transmitted.

Playing musical instruments and singing, besides fulfilling many important national and social obligations were also crucial for mundane activities like ascertaining that the people remained awake throughout the night so that they could work until late at night or early dawn to prepare for the next day's activities and festivities. Since the King of Melaka was in Majapahit for his wedding, the people of Majapahit must get ready for such an important and grand, royal wedding. Thus the entire subject must work hard to make it a success. More so because this was an "international" wedding, celebrating a union between two nations, and one which involved the king of a different country.

*Pateh Gajah Mada* intoned on the importance of this wedding as he bowed and went to order all the princes, *Adipati*, all the officers and the young men to gather in the hall. He also ordered all the princes and the subjects to beat the sounds of drums, flutes, the *madali*, trumpets, the royal musical instruments

in the form of the *sekati* and the bamboo castanets with all their different musical modulations and arations. Why, there were so many people awake in the country of the Betara who then “*menyembah lalu keluar mengerahkan segala raja-raja dan Adipati dan segala pegawai periai berhimpun masuk ke paseban dan mengerahkan segala raja-raja dan segala rakyat memalu bunyi-bunyian daripada gendang, serunai, madali, nafiri, samping, sekati, ceracap, terlalu ramai orang berjaga-jaga di dalam negeri Betara*), (p. 128).” Here the sounds and music were used to make sure the people got ready and prepare in detail for the royal wedding. It was also to provide them with some kind of entertainment so that they would not be bored; and neither would they neglect doing their work of meticulously preparing for the wedding feast.

The mode of ensuring that everybody, from noblemen to warriors to the ordinary masses, work was not only limited to royal weddings but encompassed other social events too, especially those requiring lengthy preparations. This was then crucial necessary for the time taken would spread through many days and nights. It was not surprising that the cooking and other preparations were interspersed with the playing of musical instruments, singing and dancing.

Musical instruments and sounds were not only social levelers but performed important social, governmental functions and also signaled the onslaught of battle. For such a purpose the use of musical instruments and general sound making were not melodious, instead they were loud, ferocious, harsh and jarring. This was rightly so for how else could war be signaled if not in terms of loud discordant notes and the display of weaponry. In the confrontation between Hang Tuah and Tun Teja's former fiancé, the Megat Panji Alam at Inderapura, war was signaled by the beating of war drums. Thus *Megat Panji Alam* asked his men to beat the sounds and the war drums were then sounded ... the Laksamana too asked the war drums to be beaten; they should be beaten in the tradition of the warriors;

(Maka Megat Panji Alam pun menyuruh orangnya memalu bunyi-bunyian. Maka gendang perang pun dipalu oranglah ... Laksamana pun menyuruh memalu gendang perang dan dipalu paluan seperti adat panglima, (p. 216 – 217). War is an important signifier of might and power. War must be loudly and properly declared before a battle can take place. In the case of Hang Tuah and Megat Panji Alam, both sides have declared war and will now fight, in the case of Megat Panji Alam to avenge an insult, and in the case of Hang Tuah, to maintain the integrity and supremacy of his patron: the king of *Melaka*. Tradition plays an important role in the *hikayat's* society where it is seen that things must be done according to tradition, be they the sending and receiving of official letters or missives between nations, the festivities engaged in welcoming foreign guests, social gatherings and preparations for weddings or wars.

It is obvious that sounds and music are an integral part of court life. The King of Melaka lives surrounded with sounds, noises and music. His every move was accompanied by the sounds of music, for needlessly, he worried if his life were to become suddenly silent and still, with absolutely no sounds within earshot. This could be seen when the merchant from the Indian continent after having visited Melaka insisted on taking Sang Jaya Nantaka to be king in his country. During the visit, Melaka was full of gaiety, sounds, noises and music which were all further intensified and empowered with general merry-making. When it was time for the merchant to leave to his country, the worried King of Melaka lamented to his Bendahara that: "when the merchant leaves, our country will be very quiet ..." (*ayo mamak Bendahara, jika mamak saudagar ini kembali sunyilah negeri kita ...*," (p. 82).

The emphasis is not only on sounds as sounds per se, but also on the sweetness, loudness or the different varieties of the sounds and the multi-layered melodies and rhythms. The Raja of Melaka visited Majapahit to marry *Raden Mas Ayu*. On arrival he was escorted and courted in full processional regalia

befitting a great *raja* and a future son-in-law. Besides the numerous musical instruments which were played, the emphasis was also on the rhythms/*ragam* of the many instruments. As it is written: "and the processional drums were beaten, likewise the *nobat, nafiri, madali, merengu* with forty different types were all sounded; (*Maka berbunyiilah gendang arak-arakan, dan nobat dan nafiri dan madali, merengu empat puluh bagai pun berbunyiilah,*" (p.121). The sounds emitted from such varied musical instrument are melodious and richly textured testifying to and empowering the stately and cultural wealth of a country and the might and power of its ruler.

### **Music and *Suara* (Voice)**

Hang Tuah, after his successful mission to China returned to India, where he was loudly received in full procession. Here the emphasis is primarily to show not only Hang Tuah's status and importance but also, to highlight his services and contributions to his king and country. Hence the manner of his reception where he was welcomed home with a full procession, accompanied by the whole spectrum and variety of the country's musical instruments and paraphernalia. This in turn signifies the social, political and cultural wealth and might of the country.

The magnitude of the procession, the variety of musical instruments all bespeak of a country ready not only to welcome home a hero, but also to highlight and show its own power and might to friends and foes alike. The procession was loud, rich in sounds and textured by a variety of mellifluous rhythms : As described in the *hikayat* "the elephants and the horses were gathered with all sorts of sounds, and forty different rhythms were sounded, and they were very melodious. If there were thunder it would not be heard, and several thousand princes and warriors accompanied the letter bearer"; (*Maka gajah kuda pun berhimpunlah dengan segala bunyi-bunyian yang empat-puluhbagai ragamnya (my emphasis) itu pun berbunyiilah terlalu azamat. Jika guruh berbunyi pun tiada kedengaran, dan*



*berapa puluh ribu raja dan hulubalang mengiring surat itu, (p. 370).*

Hang Tuah was a warrior well-versed in knowledge */ilmu*. He was also a very talented artist. When the king of Majapahit sent over the swift Arabian horse as a gift for his grandson, Hang Tuah was the only one who could ride it. More importantly, he could make the horse dance according to twelve different types of music: “the Laksamana asked that the twelve different rhythms of the musical instruments which were brought from Majapahit be sounded. The Laksamana then made the horse dance the different types of dances; (*Maka bunyi-bunyian yang dibawa dari Majapahit pun disuruh Laksamana palu dua belas ragam (my emphasis). Maka kuda itu pun disuruh Laksamana menari pelbagai ragam tarinya, (p. 230).* It must indeed be a very clever horse to not only dance, but be able to recognize the sounds of the musical instruments from Majapahit and differentiate them from the musical sounds of Melaka.

It was not only sounds and music which play important roles in the society of that time. A person’s voice (*suara[s]*) was also important. Letters, before being sent to foreign countries, must first be read to the King of Melaka so that he could hear and listened to how it would sound like when the recipient read it. Usually it was Hang Jebat, who had a very good voice, who would be asked to read the letters. Hang Tuah too was blessed with a very good voice. When he was in Inderapura, the king asked him to tell the story of the Malay kings of yesteryears. Thus it was that Hang Tuah told the story in front of all the officers. And the king was very pleased to hear Hang Tuah telling the story, for his voice was very melodious, his face sweet and his tongue proficient; (*Tun Tuah pun berwayatlah di hadapan segala pegawai. Maka raja pun terlalu sukacita melihat kelakuan Hang Tuah berwayat itu dengan merdu suaranya dan manis mukanya dan fasih lidahnya,*” (p. 197).

This was repeated in the meeting with the Raja of Siam, and also when Hang Tuah visited Turkey, China and Majapahit,

whose kings were all so very impressed with Hang Tuah's talent, ability and his very sweet, melodious *suara[s]*. Hang Tuah had a mellifluous, versatile *suara* which could rapidly change: be hard and harsh when confronting his enemies or in his speeches beginning with the exclamation "*cis*" which reverberated with feelings of anger, hatred or dislike. Under such circumstances, Hang Tuah, the warrior, par excellence would use his voice to show his military might and prowess. But as a diplomat and wooer, or as Hang Tuah the emissary of the king, bringing peace, goodwill and friendship to the country, Hang Tuah's *suara[s]* will be *manis* [sweet] and *merdu* [melodious]. Hang Tuah could even recite poems and make them sound like the soothing, calming verses of the Koran.

This can be seen in the episode where Hang Tuah wooed Tun Teja with the aim of abducting her. Tun Teja was very pleased to hear Hang Tuah reciting the *pantun* and *syair*, for she knew the meaning of the *pantun* and the *syair*, requesting her to be patient. Hang Tuah recited the *pantun* and the *syair* in such a sweet melodious voice just, like someone reading the Koran; (*Maka Tun Teja pun terlalu sukacita hatinya mendengar pantun dan syair itu memberi erti jalan hati sabar dan berpantun itu terlalu merdu manis suaranya; syahadan lakunya seperti laku orang membaca quran*, (p.194). Such was Hang Tuah's talent that Tun Teja was not even aware that she was the intended target of all his sweet charms. On foreign missions Hang Tuah changes his *suara[s]* so as to captivate and entice all who must hear him.

The *suara[s]* must always be *manis* [sweet], *merdu* or (melodious) *amat merdu* [very melodious]. If it could not be any of these then it must simply be *baik* [good]. It was not only the *biduanda* [artists] or the *dayang* [maid] who must have sweet *suara[s]*, but warriors too must possess good voices, cheerful demeanors and proficient tongues. Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat personify all these traits and they have certainly managed to capture their audiences through their *suara[s]* even as they

successfully impressed others with their military might and talent.

The *hikayat* reveals how different personalities used their *suara[s]* to amplify their roles. The Raja of Melaka used an ordinary *suara[s]* in his everyday life, but when he was *murka* (angry), for instance, his *suara[s]* too changed. This can be seen in the episodes when he ordered the banishment of his own brother and later of admiral Hang Tuah, his trusted confidant and devoted, loyal warrior.

Likewise, Hang Jebat, too, exploited his *suara[s]*. He could lull the Raja to sleep on his lap for Hang Jebat was indeed noted for the beauty of his *suara[s]* and the modulations and changes that he could do with it. But he too could make his *suara[s]* hard and harsh. When Hang Tuah came to kill him, Hang Jebat used a hard, harsh *suara[s]*. As Hang Jebat said: "Cis! Jebat and Tuah, the Raja of Melaka's two warriors, dying a useless death; (*Maka Hang Jebat pun memekik katanya: "Cheh! Si Jebat dan si Tuah hulubalang Raja Melaka mati tiada guna"*). (p.319)

Hang Jebat sadly lamented the futility of it all and revealed how absolute, devoted loyalty can jeopardize friendships. Likewise treachery would eventually succeed in destroying friendships and national, political, alliances. If only it could have been otherwise. For surely the combination of such talent and ability, of such devotion and commitment could have taken both king and nation to greater grandeur and power. It could only have led to the empowerment of ruler and state.

## Conclusions

From the above pages, we see a court whose people are talented, versatile artists and fearless warriors where music and melodious sounds play an important role in the society. Their personalities and daily demeanors were evaluated by the types of *suara[s]*

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they exhibited both to the king, to the general public and to other nations. Musical instruments were important not only for their sounds but also for their social-cultural-political continuum whereby the ability to play must be matched by the availability and variety of the talent at the disposal of the king. Music testifies to a nation's might, just as it highlights the cultural versatility of the country. Above all music is a great social leveler and political barometer. Sounds, to be heard, enjoyed appreciated or sung are important in the *hikayat*, not words to be read. This, coming from the copyist, must surely be the final testimony of the oral receptivity of the *hikayat* which signals also to the grandeur and importance of music and all its attendant elements.

## Appendix I

### List of Musical Instruments As They Appear

1. Rebana
2. Gendang
3. Serunai
4. Nobat
5. Nafiri
6. Gong
7. Madali
8. Merenggu
9. Samoing
10. Kopak
11. Cheracap
12. Serdam
13. Bangsi
14. Muri
15. Dandi
16. Kecapi
17. Kopok
18. Sekati
19. Redap
20. Tabal
21. Negara
22. Remana

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