Music from the Outskirts of Jakarta

GAMBANG KROMONG

Mama Ong, heard in tracks 6-9.
Masnah, heard in tracks 2-5.

On the cover: Three musicians from Gambang Kromong Irama Bersatu, holding (from left) the kongahyan, tehyan, and sukong. The player on the right is Oen Oen Hok, director of the ensemble.
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Music from the Outskirts of Jakarta:
Gambang Kromong

Lagu lama (old repertoire)
1. Pobin Kong Ji Lok 5:51
2. Pobin Pe Pan Tau - Gula Ganting - Lopan Ce Cu Teng 6:56
3. Pobin Pe Pan Tau - Mas Nona - Lopan Tukang Sado 8:21
4. Pobin Poa Si Li Tan - Poa Si Li Tan - Pobin Poa Si Li Tan 5:22
5. Pobin Pe Pan Tau - Burung Nori - Lopan Seng Kyok 7:31
   Gambang Kromong Irama Bersatu, directed by Oen Oen Hok

Lagu sayur (modern repertoire)
6. Balo-balo 5:31
7. Stambul Bila 9:12
8. Onde-onde 4:55
9. Stambul Lama 8:38
   Gambang Kromong Slendang Betawi, directed by Ustari
10. Cinta Manis 6:13
   Grup Tanjidor Kembang Ros, directed by Sarna

Recorded, edited, and annotated by Philip Yampolsky

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Series edited by Philip Yampolsky.
Descriptive notes enclosed

A wonderfully mixed-up music, gambang kromong combines
Indonesian, Chinese, and
sometimes Western instruments.
These 1990 recordings focus on two
repertoires: a body of old pieces,
now rarely heard, that blend
Chinese and Indonesian musical
elements; and the most popular
modern repertoire, which sounds
like gamelan music crossed with
small-group jazz of the 1920s and
1930s.

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Music from the Outskirts of Jakarta: Gambang Kromong

The Smithsonian/Folkways Music of Indonesia Series

If Indonesia were superimposed on Europe, it would stretch from the western shore of Ireland almost to the Caspian Sea. Only four countries in the world (China, India, the USA, and the USSR) have larger populations, and few encompass a more bewildering diversity of societies and ways of life. Indonesia’s people belong to more than 300 ethnic groups, speak almost as many languages, and inhabit some 3000 islands (out of nearly 13,700 in the archipelago). Most (about 90%) are Muslim, but there are substantial numbers of Christians, the Buddhist/Taoists, Hindus, and animists as well. Three-quarters of the population lives in rural areas, yet the information and entertainment media are saturated with urban images, mostly from the capital, Jakarta, a megalopolis with more inhabitants than any city in the U.S. and more territory than Tokyo. The Jakarta rice-fishers, the Buginese, the Balinese petanda (Hindu priest), the Acehnese alama (Islamic teacher), the Jakarta bureaucrat, the Jakarta noodle-vendor, the Minangkabau trader, the Chinese obese-mouth she-shopkeeper, the inhabitants of Yogjakarta, the forest nomad of Kaliantan, soldiers, fishermen, batik-makers, bankers, shadow-puppeteers, shamans, peddlers, marketwomen, dentists — these are all Indonesians, and our picture of the country must somehow include them all.

Indonesia’s music is as diverse as its people. Best known abroad are the Javanese and Balinese orchestras generally called gamelan, which consist largely of gongs and other metallophones, but gamelan is only one aspect (albeit an important one) of the whole. Solo and group singing and solo instrumental music (played typically on flute, shawm, plucked lute, bowed lute, plucked zither, or xylophone) are found everywhere, and a great many of these instruments and ensembles are distributed nationally in a single type (mostly common flutes, drums, xylophones, zithers, or gongs).

Much of this music may be termed traditional, in the sense that its scales, idioms, and repertoires do not in any obvious way derive from European/American or Middle Eastern (or other foreign) music. On the other hand, some of the most prominent and commercially successful genres of popular music definitely do derive from foreign sources, but since these are sung in Indonesian, disseminated nationwide through cassettes and the mass media, and avidly consumed by millions of Indonesians, they must certainly be considered Indonesian, regardless of their foreign roots.

Finally, along with the indigenous and the clearly imported, there are many hybrid forms that mix traditional and foreign elements in delightful and unpredictable ways.

Music from the Outskirts of Jakarta: Gambang Kromong offers a sampling of this tremendous variety. In selecting the recordings, we are concentrating on genres of special musical interest and, wherever possible, will present them in some depth, with several examples to illustrate the range of styles and repertoires. We are also concentrating on music that is little known outside Indonesia (and even, in some cases, within the country), and therefore much of our work is introductory and exploratory. Accurate histories of the genres we have recorded do not yet exist and perhaps never will; studies of their distribution and their varieties from place to place have not yet been done. So our presentations and commentaries cannot presume to be definitive; instead they should be taken as initial forays into uncharted territory.

—Philip Yampolsky, series editor

Music from the Outskirts of Jakarta: Gambang Kromong

by Philip Yampolsky

Gambang kromong, the genre featured in the present recording, comes from Jakarta and its environs — barely uncharted territory, one would think. But this is a Jakarta that is virtually invisible, one that most people have not even known existed.

The visible Jakarta is the capital city, the center of the Indonesian government and the national television and radio networks, and also the center of the film, recording, and magazine publishing industries. Practically all the centers of music by Javanese that is distributed nationally are based in Jakarta, and justly so: it is also about Jakarta — about government officials in Jakarta, about the glamorous singers and actors in Jakarta, their clothes and their automobiles and their easy commerce with the big city and the modern world. The reality of Jakarta is increasingly the only imagery common to all Indonesians: the nation’s idea of itself is an idea of Jakarta. For the entertainment industry in particular, the rest of the country is made up of "regions," and what happens in the regions is of no interest, aside from touristic curiosity, to anyone who does not live there or come from there. (For example, the only consciousness of music by Indonesians that are distributed nationally are certain studio-polished genres of urban popular music, recorded almost without exception in Jakarta, cassettes of "regional" music are marketed only in their home regions and to emigrants who have maintained their regional ties.) Jakarta is thus the opposite of the regions: they are the disparate parts of the nation, Jakarta the unified whole.

Paradoxically, gambang kromong is the regional music of Jakarta. Its performers and audience are ordinary people, and the Jakarta they live in is no more sophisticated or cosmopolitan than other cities and towns elsewhere in Indonesia. Unlike the audience for national popular music genres, gambang kromong audiences can be defined quite specifically in ethnic, economic, and geographic terms. And, as it happens, the music itself reflects with unusual clarity the development of this audience. While the popular music produced in Jakarta’s studios embodies the ideal of a uniform culture throughout the country, gambang kromong expresses one region’s cultural history in all its particularity.

Plan of the recording

These recordings focus on the two richest repertoires of gambang kromong music. The first is the lagu lama (tracks 1-5), a body of old pieces that are now rarely heard, despite their beauty. In their mixture of Chinese and Indonesian elements, they bear witness to the fruitful intermingling of these cultures in the colonial era. The second repertoire (tracks 6-9) is the lagu anyar, these pieces, which dominate gambang kromong today, present a startling combination of Indonesian music with American and European popular music and jazz from before World War II. Track 10 is another demonstration of the impact of jazz: it is a piece from the modern gambang kromong repertoire but is played by a different ensemble, tanjidor, that sounds like a New Orleans jazz band. How somehow acquired Indonesian gongs and drums and a Chinese fiddle.

In the commentary, the modern repertoire and situation of gambang kromong as heard in tracks 6-9) are discussed first, then the older repertoire (tracks 1-5) and its historical background.

Gambang Kromong Today

The performers and audience for gambang kromong today live at the edges of Jakarta in slums and semi-rural areas beyond (Bekasi, northern Bogor, and Tangerang). They belong to two groups: the so-called Peranakan Chinese, whose ancestry is mixed Chinese and Pribumi ("native"—that is, without Chinese or other immigrant admixture), and the Betawi, Pribumi Indonesians who during the colonial period came or were brought as slaves to Jakarta (then known as Batavia or Betawi) from many regions of Indonesia and who over time lost ties to their homelands, becoming essentially Betawi (the same with the Betawi of Java). While the two groups differ in at least one crucial respect—the Peranakan are Christian or Buddhist/Taoist, and the Betawi are Muslim—there are shared very much among them. They live in the same or adjacent neighborhoods; they both speak as their primary language the Betawi dialect of Indonesian; and for the most part they live at the same relatively low economic level, working as small farmers, fishermen, peddlers, factory hands, laborers, jitney drivers, and so on.

Most of the musicians heard in the present recordings live in Tangerang, about an hour and a half west of Jakarta, and the descriptions here of social and musical practices are based on observations made in the Sewan/Kampung Melayu/Dadap/Mauk region of Tangerang. (For an ethnographic study of this area, see Go Glenn Tywan 1966.) Perhaps especially in Tangerang, the cultural conditions under which the Betawi and Peranakan have led to a degree of mutual acceptance and integration that is unusual in the rest of Indonesia, where there is often friction between "Chinese" and Pribumi. For instance, in Tangerang, the hosts of Peranakan wedding celebrations expect Pribumi (i.e., Muslim) guests and are careful to include among the matter of pork dishes: sometimes they provide two separate food tables, one with pork and one without; often they hold the celebration over two days and nights and refrain from serving pork on the first.

Ensemble and style

The gambang kromong ensemble is a mixture of Chinese, Indonesian, and, often, European instruments. It takes its name from two Indonesian instruments:

- a xylophone (gambang) with 18 keys tuned pentatonically over 3-1/2 octaves, and
- a set of 10 small kettle-gongs (kromong), tuned pentatonically over 2 octaves and played melodically.

The other instruments that together with the gambang and kromong form the nucleus of the modern ensemble are:

- a two-stringed fiddle of Chinese origin, with an attached bow whose hair passes between the playing-strings; the instrument is usually called tehyan, though some musicians say its name is properly congohyan,
- a side-blown flute (suling), also Chinese; and
- a battery of Indonesian non-melodic percussion: two hanging gongs (kempul and goong); drums (gendang); and kekrek (clashing metal plates mounted on a wooden block).

Then there are male and female singers, and a number of optional but commonly-found Western instruments:

- one or more electric or amplified guitars playing bass and rhythm; and
- one or more Western melody instruments: trumpet, clarinet, saxophone; electric keytar or organ (usually a two-octave Casié organ), Hawaiian guitar.

In the present recordings, all of the Chinese and Indonesian instruments listed above, plus a trumpet, are heard in tracks 6-9, and a Hawaiian guitar is added in tracks 7-9. The ensemble for the old repertoire (tracks 1-5) is somewhat different and will be described later.

Gambang Kromong is dominated by melody instruments. In some songs of the modern (lagu anyar) repertoire, such as Balo-bele and Onde-onde here, several of the instruments (tehyan, gambang, kromong) carry a basic melody, but each one uses its own distinctive idiom and adds its own variations to the line. Meanwhile, other instruments (trumpet, flute, and, in Onde-onde, the Hawaiian guitar) seem to bustle around the melody, underlining phrases, popping up with swirls and fills and then subsiding. The singer also drops in and out, adding another melodic line and idiom, meeting the others at the ends of phrases. Other lagu anyar, such as Stambul Bila and Stambul Lame here, are based on the chords of Western harmony; in these pieces it seems to be the harmonic progression rather than the melody that drives the music, and thus there is even less to tie the various lines together. Underneath all this runs what is essentially a Sundanese (West Javanese) percussion group, with intricate and tonally-varying drumming straining against and then resolving into an undying cycle of gong-punctuation.

In short, gambang kromong has a loosely integrated, highly polyphonic texture, with at least five melodic lines in contrasting timbres and idioms all riding above a largely autonomous rhythm section.

Overall, the texture simultaneously resembles the various forms of Javanese and Sundanese gamelan music and small-band American and European jazz of the 1920s and ’30s. And in fact most of the modern
 gambang kromong repertoire originates in the period before World War II, when there were jazz bands active in Batavia and jazz was also popular on radio and records. That there was a strong cross-cultural exchange between jazz and gambang kromong seems indisputable when one listens to the laga sayur recordings here, for what they sound like is precisely a jazz band playing Indonesian music, or a gamelan playing jazz.

But notice in all of this that while the music is full of Indonesian and Western figures, the people about the music—aside from the fiddler and the flautist, whose music could easily be played by Indonesian or Western counterparts. The audience is largely Chinese (i.e., Peranakan), and so many of the players are men and a few of the instruments, but the music is not. This is another paradox of gambang kromong, which we will return to below when we discuss the old repertoire.

Performance contexts: the modern repertoire

There are two main contexts for gambang kromong music: at Peranakan weddings and other family celebrations, and as the music of choice for performances of the theater-form lemong. These contexts occur mainly in the outlying areas of Jakarta, not in the city proper, where both gambang kromong and lemong are considered unsophisticated and lower-class.

At weddings the central entertainment is dancing, and the music of gambang kromong is essential. The face of a particular sort (found in varying forms in many parts of Java and Sumatra) that is here called nging Obst is a particular face of gambang kromong. Some nging Obst will ask for a gambang kromong for the wedding, and in this case the music of gambang kromong will be played between the songs that are sung in the wedding.

Lagu sayur are by far the most frequently performed music at weddings, but certainly other kinds of music can also be heard. The time of the evening when the ensemble will play two or three songs from dangdut, a nationally-known urban music that arose in the 1970s and is most popular in the major cities.

The gambang kromong ensemble can only approximate the sound of dangdut, and several of the instruments just sit or play minimal parts, while others (tambourine and a special dangdut drum) are added. (An example of dangdut played on gambang kromong is heard in Volume 2 of the Music of Indonesia series, Indonesian Popular Music, SF 4005-4.)

Another repertoire that is sometimes heard at weddings is called gambang moderen or gambang kromong pop. The style was pioneered in the late 1960s by BBG and Jasma and continued in the 1970s by the group known as the Pacific Jazz. These styles are more or less dominant at a wedding, but the music is still played for the dance.

Yet another repertoire that is sometimes heard at weddings is called gambang banyen or gambang banyen pop. The style was pioneered in the late 1960s by BBG and Jasma and continued in the 1970s by the group known as the Pacific Jazz. These styles are more or less dominant at a wedding, but the music is still played for the dance.

celebrations, but its musicians include both Peranakan and Pribumi. Gambang kromong plays before the show begins, to attract an audience, and it plays incidental music to accompany the show. The music is very similar to the gambang kromong, and in the same key for performances of the wedding, but often there is a higher proportion of dangdut songs in lemong. (For more on lemong, see Greg 1976.)

Lyrics

The lyrics of lagu sayur (and also of lemong, discussed below) are sung in Indonesian with many elements of Betawi dialect and are for the most part set in the verse-form known as pantun, common throughout the Malay world. Classical pantun are typically (but not exclusively) quatrains in which the first couplet uses “specific, concrete images to describe a human situation,” and the second uses “abstract words to state an observation or maxim.” The second couplet is referred to as the “intent” or meaning of the quatrains, while the first couplet is the “shadow of the intent”; there is argument, however, over whether the couplets are always meaningfully related. In any case, they are usually related in sound, matching each other in rhyme and (often) internal rhymes. (This description is adapted from Thomas 1979.)

The pantun sung at Peranakan weddings follow the classical pattern in their rhyme schemes, but the second couplet is rarely abstract, and the relation in meaning between the couplets is often invisible (to me, at least). Pantun are sung in Betawi (though not one enunciated by any of the singers) that in the rather unclassical context of Tangerang weddings many pantun are composed on the poetic principle that the couplets consist of two phrases that except by rhyme—that, as Cockney rhyming slang, the fun of the pantun is the creation through rhyme of incoherent juxtapositions.

Here are examples of pantun from the few of the pantun from these recordings:

Gumang Sinuar pasir apung / Tonek bungkuk / Hadi tidur kepalas pasying / HabibSegadjang sehari semalam

Mount Sindur has yellow sand / A man sleeps in a sandstorm / Wake up with a headache / After staying up all night

Saya heran kota api / Beli tolan bunga dalam / Saya heran si jantung har / Kalau mandang tidak sudahnya

A funny thing about trains / They’re so long but there’s no horse / A funny thing about my sweetheart / He can’t stop looking at me

Anak ikan bera manis / Ikan di laut / Panjang durang / Sanak bakak beragai / Kenapa baik manis bading

The children of fish have more little fish / Ocean fish have long bones / We’re not like that in any way / Why are you so nice to me?

Some songs (such as Onde-onde and Betawi) are more modern, and some lagu lama (such as Burang Nori) have single lines or couplets, in addition to and independent of the pantun quatrains, that include the words of the pantun but mean less than actually fixed: the singers simply choose from the stock of pantun that they have memorized.

In performance, in order to make the lines fit comfortably with the music, or just for the sake of embellishment and variation, the singers frequently repeat words and insert stock words and phrases (or the names of friends or musicologists) into the lines. For example, the first pantun given above, from Stambel Bila (track 7), is sung in the recording this way:

Gumang lah Sindur nuna Gumang lah Sindur sayang pasir pasirnya kuning / Kalau tangkap lah udang tangkaplah / Kuning dalam / Langun lah tidur nuna bangun lah tidur sayang kepala pasying / Adah habis begadang habis begadang jiwa manis sehari semalam

Lah is a particle without definite meaning here; sayang and jawa manis both mean "sweetheart," and nuna means "young lady." But the execution of these words in this context is rhythmic not semantic; another singer would insert different words or put them in different places in the line.

Although every performing group has one or more female singers whose job it is to sing pantun, they are not the only ones who sing in performance: virtually everyone knows at least a few verses, and the melodies are totally familiar, so in the relaxed atmosphere of a wedding the microphones often passes around among the male guests and male associates of the ensemble. The older women who now sing are typically of the generation who are themselves usually former wayang will also turn takes singing. There is apparently no expectation that a woman who takes the microphone will sing more than a few lines and be able to sing well—indeed it seems to be a structural premise of gambang kromong that women are professionals while men (aside from the instrumentalists) are guests and amateurs.

Tanjidor

Tanjidor (track 10) is a European brass band with Sundanese percussion, to which a teyhan and singers may be added. Like gambang kromong, it is found in the outlying regions of Jakarta but not in the city. Although it is a separate ensemble, historically independent of gambang kromong, it now shares some of the gamelaneh repertoire, and it is thought to derive from slave orchestras that played for Dutch and Eurasian landowners before the emancipation of 1860, and European mercenaries in the court of the last sultan. Tanjidor players are usually Betawi, not Peranakan. Their repertoire includes the European marches and waltzes, the lagu sayur of gambang kromong, dangdut songs, and the complete set of Sundanese music that is needed for Peranakan weddings. We will give tanjidor a fuller presentation in a later volume in the Music of Indonesia series, but here is an excerpt of the lagu sayur played by tanjidor. (An example of dangdut played on gambang kromong is included in Volume 2 of the Music of Indonesia series, Indonesian Popular Music, SF 4005-4.)

The old repertoire

The first half of this recording (tracks 1-5) is devoted to a repertoire very different from the lagu sayur of the second half (tracks 6-10). The lagu lama 'old
melodies) are still recalled by some musicians, but nowadays they are virtually never performed. Yet in the early part of this century these pieces were apparently more important to the audience (including most of the ones heard here) and says that she could not find any musicians who could play them; but several were issued on a commercial cassette in the mid-1970s, and the performance that they recorded in 1990 were still performed by musicians who remembered them (without, incidentally, the aid of any form of notation).

People in Tangerang say that the reason why lagu lama became obsolete is that they are no fun at weddings, because they can't be danced to. There is another likely reason, however, that is not mentioned. Up until the mid-1960s, the Chinese of Indonesia (Peranakan and Totok) maintained openly a number of cultural forms that were explicitly Chinese in origin and atmosphere: boisterous New Year celebrations with lion dances, boat races for the Peranakan holiday with gambang kromong (the gamelan music), and cokel performing in the boats, Chinese-language theater, Indonesian-language theater using Chinese stories, and so forth. But in 1965 and 1966 political events turned against the Chinese, and in 1966 the Sukarno government was overthrown by the Indonesian Communist Party, and, in retaliation, hundreds of thousands of real and alleged Communists were massacred. The Chinese of Indonesia were believed to be Communist sympathizers, and who were unpopular in any case for what is seen as their unfairly gained economic superiority over Peranakan (Sundaese) and Chinese (Sino-Javanese) communities, usually contain only one bowed lute if any. These Chinese-serving features are blended in gambang kromong with the distinctively ethnic Indonesian larger and more resonant tone and the gong-wong, Indonesian-language lyrics, and the pan-Malay pantun verse-form—and perhaps, to go out on a limb, with an Indonesian tendency toward looseness in the rhythm to produce a thoroughly mixed and beautiful style.

**Repertoire, ensemble, style**

The lagu lama that survive today are all known in the 1910s and 1920s (though, if Phoa is correct, their melodies date from much earlier and are in fact Chinese in origin). These are instrumental pieces, called pokin, and pieces with vocal. Pokin may be played on the violin, like the pokin Kong Ji Lok (track 1) that always opens a gambang kromong performance. Pokin may be played before and after vocal pieces. The titles of most pokin are personal names, but what the connection is between the person and the pokin is not clear. Most of the vocal lagu lama have Indonesian-language titles. Some important lagu lama, aside from the ones recorded here, are: Semoer Ganepp, Tanjung Barungh, Pecah Piring, and Cenat Manis Berdiri. The lagu lama ensemble differs from the one for lagu sayur. It contains, in addition to a female singer:

- three Chinese fiddles (see cover photograph): konghay (smallest), tehan, and sukong (largest); the first two play mainly in the same octave, while the sukong mutters and hums two octaves below.
- gambang, kromong, and suling.
- gongal, goong, gendung, and kekrek, plus some additional percussion instruments: pan, a woodblock, and nginging, two small shallow gongs in a frame.

No Western instruments are used in lagu lama. Chinese shawms, called trompet in Indonesia, are added in some pieces (as in track 1).

**Notes**

1. Until the twentieth century, virtually all the “Chinese” born in Indonesia descended from unions between China-born men (mainly Hokkien, with a local Chinese mother in southern Java) and Indonesian women. As now, Peranakan culture combined Chinese and Indonesian elements and used local languages rather than Chinese. For instance, the Peranakan spoken (and still speak) the local dialect of Malay (the colonial-era name for the language now known as Indonesian). The mestizo Chinese-Indonesians are now called Peranakan (meaning, in effect, “miscategorized”) and distinguished from the Totok, who descend on both sides from China-born immigrants more recently arrived in Indonesia (often from Hakka- or Cantonese-speaking regions). Totok in general use Chinese cultural elements and are felt to be culturally oriented more toward China than Indonesia.

2. Another feature, which I am uncertain how to attribute, is the gongal lagu lama vocal lines, and in the style of melodic lines such as the fiddles and the flute, of pitches not available to the pentatonic gambang and kromong. If we assign to gambang and kromong, as Tangerang musicians do, the pitches B D F E - Sharp A B, then the additional pitches from the singer and the “vocal” instruments are G and C-natural. Is this partial hepatization a Chinese or an Indonesian trait? In either case, it is another indication of duality in the music.

**Bibliography**


**Commentary on the selections**

The lyrics of many of the pantun in these recordings are quite obscure—especially the initial couplet, the “shadow of the intent.” The translations given below are both tentative and selective, sometimes using only a few of the pantun sung in the recording. Listeners who would like copies of the song texts in the original Indonesian should send a check for $2.00 (postage and handling) made out to the Smithsonian Institution along with their name and address to: Indonesian Texts 1-2-3, Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings, Office of Folk Life Programs, Smithsonian Institution, 955 L’Enfant Plaza, Suite 2600, Washington, D.C. 20560, U.S.A.

The old repertoire: lagu lama

Performed by Gambang Kromong Irama Bertutur.

1. Pokin Kong Ji Lok

This instrumental piece (pokin) is played as the opening piece on the gambang kromong ensemble. In the version recorded here, Chinese shawms (trompet) are added to the ensemble.
In the list of Indonesian melodies, a notable exception is the song

"Onde-ondie," which is performed by the well-known vocalist

Mama Ong. This song is a beautiful example of the traditional Javanese

melodies and has gained widespread popularity among Indonesian

listeners. The melody is

stirring and has a strong emotional

component, making it a favorite among many.

The lyrics of "Onde-ondie" are:

\[ \text{Vocal: Mama Ong.} \]

\[
\text{1. Onde-ondie.}
\]

When the waves crash on the shore,

And the wind sings a mournful tune,

I hear the distant sound of drums,

And my heart is filled with sorrow.

[Refrain: Onde-ondie.]

I hear the drums in the night,

And my thoughts are filled with pain.

[Verse 2: Onde-ondie.]

The moon shines brightly in the sky,

And the stars twinkle in the dark.

I see my love far away,

And my heart is filled with tears.

[Refrain: Onde-ondie.]

I hear the drums in the night,

And my thoughts are filled with pain.

[Verse 3: Onde-ondie.]

The wind howls through the trees,

And the leaves rustle in the breeze.

I see my love's sad face,

And my heart is filled with sorrow.

[Refrain: Onde-ondie.]

I hear the drums in the night,

And my thoughts are filled with pain.

An acknowledged master of the traditional Javanese melodies,

Mama Ong is known for her emotional performances and

her ability to convey the pain and beauty of the

Indonesian heritage through her music. Her

"Onde-ondie" is a beautiful example of her

artistic expression and her dedication to preserving

the cultural heritage of Indonesia.
Gambang Kromong comes from a virtually invisible part of the capital of Indonesia, one that most people have forgotten. Today, both performers and audience for this music live at the edges of Jakarta and in the towns and semi-rural areas beyond. The music is wonderfully disorienting. It combines Indonesian, Chinese, and sometimes European-derived instruments in music that at times is reminiscent of gamelan music and at other times recalls small-group jazz of the 1920s and 1930s.

Track List

1. Pobin Kong Ji Lok
2. Pobin Pe Pan Tau - Gula Ganting - Lopan Ce Cu Teng
3. Pobin Pe Pan Tau - Mas Nona - Lopan Tukang Sado
4. Pobin Poa Si Li Tan - Poa Si Li Tan- Pobin Poa Si Li Tan
5. Pobin Pe Pan Tau - Burung Nori - Lopan Seng Kyok
6. Balo-balo
7. Stambul Bila
8. Onde-onde
9. Stambul Lama

Updates by Philip Yampolsky
Dr. Han Kuo-Huang of Northern Illinois University, in a review of this recording published in the electronic journal Ethnomusicology Research Digest (#58, 6 September 1991),* provides some important information about the Chinese roots of the lagu lama, particularly the instrumental preludes and postludes. Dr. Han writes:

The instrumental pieces [in Tangerang] are derived from the Chinese qupai (tunetype) tradition. There are hundreds of qupai in Chinese music some of which have texts and some instrumental. They are used [in Tangerang] as preludes (pobin) and postludes (lopan; literally, "dropping beat") to a vocal work in Gambang Kromong. This is also a practice in southern Fujian music. Therefore, the names such as Pe Pan Tau, Ce Cu Teng, Seng Kyok, etc., are qupai names, not personal names. In fact, different versions of Pe Pan Tau (literally, "eight-beat head," consequently, in 8 or 16 beats; Mandarin: Baban Tou) are still used as preludes and postludes (most often as preludes) to folk dances and other important works in western Fujian.

This relation of pobin and lopan to the instrumental repertoire of Fujian is apparently unknown to the Tangerang musicians, who, as I wrote in the commentary, say that the pieces are named for individuals.

Dr. Han also notes that the title Kong Ji Lok (track 1) is, in Mandarin, Kongzi Le and means "Confucius's Happiness."
For an eventual revision of the commentary, I am eager to learn more about the relations between gambang kromong and Chinese music. Any information on the topic will be gratefully received (and acknowledged in the final publication). Please contact me through the Smithsonian Folkways website. -- Philip Yampolsky (1991)

In March 2000 we visited Tangerang for the first time in several years. We were saddened to learn that in the interval several of the musicians heard in this album have died: Oen Oen Hok (died August 1994), Suhaery Mufti, Mama Ong Yasin, Ustari, Inan, and Misna. We are grateful for the music they left with us.

During our March 2000 visit, we heard another term for the lagu lama: lagu dalem, "inside melodies."

Additional References (added March 2000)

Batavia: kisah Jakarta tempo doeloe. [Jakarta]: Intisari, [1988].


Transcriptions and Translations

The following transcriptions and translations were made by Philip Yampolsky in consultation with the singers. In a few instances the translations in this supplement include improvements over the versions in the insert published with SF 40057.

In these translations, the standard "filler" words and phrases used to extend the line (e.g., sayang disayang, ayun diayun, ada, lah, saya, etc.) are ignored. (An entire line of such fillers is marked in the translations by a dash.) Also, sometimes the individual words are clear, but how they fit into a sentence is not; in such cases (and when not even the words are clear) no translation is attempted. (Unclear lines are indicated by a question mark.)

After the transcriptions, some notes and bibliographical references not found in the published commentary have been added.

2. Gula Ganting

Sayang di sayang
Hati si nona
Sirih lama di laksamana
Ai ketok karang ada kolong jembatan
Sayang hati si nona
Ya sudah lama nona pergi di mana
Ya sudah lama memang pergi di mana
Hati si jiwa
Ya baru sekarang sayang saya lah
kelihatan
Sayang-sayang, ayun diayun
Gula Ganting ini lagunya

Gula Ganting

--
--
?
?
--
Where have you been for so long
Where have you been for so long
--
Why do turn up only now
--
Gula Ganting is the name of this song

Ai gludug ada saya udan lah pagi
Sayang hati si nona
Kampung Norbek [=Noordwijk] ada ya
kebanjiran
Ya saya hibuk si nona sama yang tinggi
Sayang hati si gunung
Ya kalau yang pendek saya ada buat
pikiran
Ya saya hibuk sama yang tinggi
Ayun diayun
Mas Nona ada pulang kondangan

Gula Ganting

Thunder and rain in the morning
--
The Norbek [=Noordwijk] neighborhood is flooded
I’m interested in the tall one
--
But I’ll keep the short one in mind
I’m interested in the tall one

Mas Nona returning home after a gathering
3. Mas Nona

Mas Nona

Tanjung Burung Kampung Melayu
Ai selampek pelekat ada jahit Parenggi
Sayang disayang
Selampek pelekat ada jahit Parenggi
Sayang disayang
Selampek pelekat ada jahit Parenggi
Sayang si nona
Ayun Mas Nona disayang
Sayang disayang
Laksana burung di cabang kayu
Saya mau pikat terlalu tinggi

Ayun-ayun Mas Nona
Nona diayun pulang kondangan

Sayang disayang
Mas Nona ada sayang ini lagunya
Mas Nona ada di turi rembang

Kapal belayar pergi di Juda
Sampai di Juda ada kecap dan lada
Sayang disayang
Sampai di Juda saya kecap dan lada
Sayang disayang
Ya kalau saya ingat saya yang sudah-sudah
Sayang disayang
Ya capek hati saya mengurut dada

Ayun-ayun Mas Nona
Sayang disayang
Ya Mas Nona ada di turi rembang
Sayang disayang

Mas Nona

From Tanjung Burung to Kampung Melayu
A checkered crocheted handkerchief
--
A checkered crocheted handkerchief
--
A checkered crocheted handkerchief
--
Like a bird on a branch
I want to catch it but it’s too high up

--
Nona [--] returning home after a gathering

--
Mas Nona is the name of this song
Mas Nona in Turi Rembang [?]

--
A sailing ship goes to Juda
In Juda eat sauce and pepper
--
In Juda eat sauce and pepper
--
If you remember days one by
--
Your heart gets tired and you wring your hands [lit. rub your chest]

--
Mas Nona in Turi Rembang [?]

4. Poa Si Li Tan

Poa Si Li Tan

Ikan kelenger beruntun-runtun
Ya ada teruntun sama gurita
Saya mendengar
Mengatur pantun di dalam pantun
Di dalam pantun ada cerita
Di dalam pantun ada cerita
Sayang si nona

Teruntun lagi sama gurita
Gurita masuk di sero rotan

Kelenger fish swimming in a line
In a line along with an octopus
--
Arranging pantun within pantun
In the pantun there’s a story
In the pantun there’s a story
--
In a line along with an octopus
The octopus is caught in a trap
Di dalam pantun ada cerita
Cerita yang ada
Cerita yang ada Poa Si Li Tan
Cerita ada Poa Si Li Tan
Sayang si nona

Gurita masuk di sero rotan
Kerbau hutan seret pedati
Cerita yang ada Poa Si Li Tan
Bu Cek Tian ada Bu Cek Tian si Ong Ho mati
Bu Cek Tian ada si Ong Ho mati
Sayang si nona

Kerbau hutan seret pedati
Muat yang rotan ku dengan yang tali
Ada cerita
Si Ong Ho mati
[...] Li Tan
Lantas Li Tan menuju rari
Lantas Li Tan menuju rari
Sayang si nona

5. Burung Nori

Ke sana ubi ke mari ubi
Ya tidak sama ubi keramat
Sayang disayang
Ke sono ubi ke mari ubi
Ya tidak sama memang ada ubi keramat
Ke sana nabi ke mari nabi
Tiada sama Nabi Muhammad

Dendang Plembang lah burung nori
Siang dipandang ada malam dicari
Gludug ada hujannya pagi
Hujan siang ada lah kebanjiran
Pikiran hibuk sama yang tinggi
Yang pendek ada buat pikiran
Sayang disayang
Kalau tidak karena bulan

In the pantun there's a story
The story is about Li Tan
--
The octopus is caught in a trap
The water buffalo draws a cart
The story is about Li Tan
Bu Cek Tian and Ong Ho who died
--

A water buffalo draws a cart
With bundles of rattan in it
There's a story
About Ong Ho who died
[...] Li Tan
Then Li Tan ran away
Then Li Tan ran away
--

Burung Nori

Sweet potatoes here sweet potatoes there
They're not the same as sacred sweet potatoes
--
Sweet potatoes here sweet potatoes there
They're not the same as sacred sweet potatoes
Prophets here prophets there
They're not the same as the Prophet Muhammad

Song of Palembang, the nori bird
If you see her in the daytime, you'll look for her at night
Thunder and rain in the morning
Rain in the afternoon.flooding
I'm interested in the tall one
But I'll keep the short one in mind
--

If it weren't for the moon
Ya tidak tahu nona sari melati
[baris yang dilompati?]
Ya tidak tahu saya memang si jantung hati
?

Sayang disayang
Kereta api kabarnya murah
Ya jalan-jalan ada di Tanjung Pura
Sayang disayang
Kereta api kabarnya murah
Ya kita jalan-jalan ada di Tanjung Pura
Ya kita jantung hati lagi gumbira
Ya kalau cari kita sampai sana sudara

Jalan-jalan ke Pintu Besi
Sayur ketupat sayurnya basi
Anak sapa putih bersih
Mau dipinta tiada dikasi

Sayang disayang
Kebo bule beranak bule
Ya mau dicancang ada di kolong balik
[baris yang dilompati?]
Mpknya boleh adiknya boleh

Dendang Plembang memang si burung nori
Yang dipandang sayang malam dicari

6. Balo-balo

Ei anak ikan beranak ikan
Ikan di laut panjang durinya
Ikan di laut panjang durinya
Sayang adiknya
Sanak bukan Om Philip saudara bukan saya
Ei kenapa baik hati budinya

Akang mas balo-balo
Ei sayur kacang di mana taruh

Kangmas pagar kedondong
Pergi ngaji pulangnya ngendong

Balo-balo

The children of fish have more little fish
Fish in the sea have long bones
Fish in the sea have long bones
--
We’re not related in any way

Why are you so nice to me?
?

Where should I put the vegetables and peanuts?
?

You go off to read the Qur’an but you end up sleeping away from home [ngendong (Sund.) = sleep overnight]
Ei di atas pisang di bawah jantung
Tuang cuka di kelapain
Di atas pisang di bawah jantung
Tuang cuka di kelapain
Sayang adiknya
Biar dicincang dihukum gantung
Ei kalau suka mau diapi
Akang mas balo-balo...

Anak balang bertiti balang
Balang bertiti gandarianya
Anak balang bertiti balang
Balang bertiti gandarianya
Sayang adiknya
Saya cari seputer alam
Baru ketemu Om Philip ini dianya
Akang mas balo-balo...

7. Stambul Bila

Anjing lah hitam anjing lah hitam aduh nama Si Dayung
Ai mati ditembak mati ditembak Mas Joko kena kakinya
Ya malam Mas Joko rasa diayun
Seperti ombak aduh banting dirinya

Gunung lah Sindur nona Gunung lah Sindur sayang pasir-pasirnya kuning
Kalau tangguk lah udang tangguk lah udang jiwa manis airnya dalam
Bangun lah tidur nona bangun lah tidur sayang kepala-pala pusing
Aduh habis begadang habis begadang jiwa manis sehari semalam

Saya heran sayang-sayang saya heran Mas Joko kereta api
Aduh begitu panjang Mas Joko begitu panjang tidak kudanya

The bananas are up above, the banana flower is down below
Pour vinegar into a coconut
The bananas are up above, the banana flower is down below
Pour vinegar into a coconut
--
They can chop me up or sentence me to hang
If I like you they can’t make me stop

Grasshoppers in a swarm
Grasshoppers swarm around a gandaria fruit
Grasshoppers in a swarm
Grasshoppers swarm around a gandaria fruit
--
I’ve looked all around the world
I’ve finally found him

A black dog called Si Dayung [=The Rower?]
Was shot in the leg and died
At night you feel that you’re rocking
As though tossed on the waves

Mount Sindur [in Kali Prumpung, Bogor] has yellow sand
A shrimp trap deep in the water
You wake up with a headache
From staying up all day and all night

A funny thing about trains
They’re so long but there’s no horse
Ya Lip saya heran saya heran si jantung hati
Aduh begitu liwat sayang begitu liwat ya Lip tidak sudahnya

Anak lah balang nona anak lah balang sayang bertiti-titi balang
Aduh balang bertiti balang bertiti jiwa manis sedari gandariannya
Saya lah cari nona saya lah cari sayang ke puter-puter alam
Aduh belum ketemu belum ketemu jiwa manis sama dianya

8. Onde-onde

Paling enak lah kue onde
Ada yang kecil ada yang gede
Yang bikinnya paling pande

Kue onde matengnya timbul
Sayang hati si nona
Kalau sayang onde paling enak lah kue onde
Alah onde onde onde kue onde matengnya timbul
Onde-onde ada lagunya nona (Tarik, Ap)

Kue bolu kue rengginang
Roti-roti dalam tetampah
Dari dulu sudah dibilang

Setengah hati sih buat apa

Onde kue onde-onde matengnya timbul
Onde-onde matengnya timbul

Saya heran kereta api
Begitu panjang tidak kudanya
Saya heran si jantung hati
Kalau pandang tidak sudahnya sayang

Paling enak kue onde
Kue onde ada lagunya
Onde lah ya onde alah onde onde
Ada yang kecil ada yang gede

Onde-onde

Onde cakes taste the best
There are small ones and big ones
The people who make them are the cleverest
Onde cakes, when they're done they pop up
Onde cakes taste the best
Onde, onde, onde, onde cakes, when they're done they pop up
Onde-onde is the name of this song (Take it, Ap)

Spongecake and rengginang snacks
All kinds of cakes on a tray
It's been said since long ago

Half-hearted isn't worth much

Onde cakes, onde-onde, when they're done they pop up
Onde-onde, when they're done they pop up

A funny thing about trains
They're so long but there's no horse
A funny thing about my sweetheart
He can't take his eyes off me

Onde cakes taste the best
Onde cakes is the name of this song
Onde onde
There are small ones and big ones
Onde-onde matengnya timbul sayang
Satu dua si kuda lari
Tidak sama si kuda belang
Satu dua gampang dicari
Tidak sama biasa orang
Satu dua gampang dicari
Tidak sama biasa orang
Onde onde onde mateng-matengnya timbul
Onde-onde, when they’re done they pop up
There are a few horses running around
They’re not the same as a spotted horse
There are one or two who are easy to find
They’re not the same as ordinary people
There are one or two who are easy to find
They’re not the same as ordinary people
Onde onde onde, when they’re done they pop up
Onde onde, when they’re done they pop up
Onde onde, when they’re done they pop up

9. Stambul Lama

Stambul Lama (Old Stambul)

Ai buang lah batu buang lah batu timbul kelapa
Tangguk udang tangguk udang di pasir Mayang
Buang satu Om Joko tidak kenapa
Kalau saya bujang banyak yang sayang

--

Saya kira aduh ya Lip kain-kainan
Ya Lip kain lah putih kain putih di atas peti
Saya kira aduh main-mainan
Tidak lah ya tahu tidak lah tahu Om Joko senang di hati (Tarik, Wi Sun)

Saya kira aduh ya Lip kain-kainan
Ya Lip kain lah putih kain putih di atas peti
Saya kira aduh main-mainan
Tidak lah ya tahu tidak lah tahu Om Joko senang di hati (Tarik, Wi Sun)

Kapal belayar menuju Lampung nona
Lampung dituju tarik bendera
Bukannya saya meninggal kampung
Saya lah cari sanak sudara

Biruan gajah biruan nona
Kalau gajah mati di tanduk kambing
Dibuang ada biar lah dibuang
Biar lah jadi jiwa lah manis darah dagang
(Tarik, Bu Wani)

Pukul lah yang gambang aduh sayang
pukul gambang si lima-lima

Biruan gajah biruan nona
Kalau gajah mati di tanduk kambing
Dibuang ada biar lah dibuang
Biar lah jadi jiwa lah manis darah dagang
(Tarik, Bu Wani)

Pukul lah yang gambang aduh sayang
pukul gambang si lima-lima

Pukul lah yang gambang aduh sayang
pukul gambang si lima-lima

Play the gambang with five keys

9
If you pull up the grass you'll feel the ground

Your heart's anxious about that guy

You want to know what his name is

An officer's daughter named Rohayah

A kitten jumping about

You have set yourself free from me

We will each go our own way