Southeast Asian arts

Southeast Asian arts, the literary, performing, and visual arts of Southeast Asia. Although the cultural development of the area was once dominated by Indian influence, a number of cohesive traits predate the Indian influence. Wet-rice (or *padi*) agriculture, metallurgy, navigation, ancestor cults, and worship associated with mountains were both indigenous and widespread, and certain art forms not derived from India—for example, batik textiles, gamelan orchestras, and the *wayang* puppet theatre—remain popular.

The term Southeast Asia refers to the huge peninsula of Indochina and the extensive archipelago of what is sometimes called the East Indies. The region can be subdivided into mainland Southeast Asia and insular Southeast Asia. The political units contained in this region are Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The Philippines originally was not included, because Philippine history has not followed the general historical pattern of Southeast Asia, but, because of its geographic position and the close affinities of its cultures with the cultures of Southeast Asia, it is now usually regarded as the eastern fringe of Southeast Asia.

A common geographic and climatic pattern prevails over all of Southeast Asia and has resulted in a particular pattern of settlement and cultural development. Mountain people generally have a different culture than that of the valley dwellers.

THE CULTURAL SETTING OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN ARTS

Southeast Asia has been the crossroads of many peoples who have been contending against each other for centuries. The first to come were the Austronesians (Malayo-Polynesians), sometimes described as Proto-Malays and Deutero-Malays. At one time they occupied the eastern half of mainland Southeast Asia, but later they were pushed toward the south and the islands by the Austroasiatics. At present, peoples of Austronesian origin occupy Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. There were three main Austroasiatic groups, the Mon, the Khmer, and the Viet-Muong. The Mon were at one time dominant, but they lost their ethnic identity in the 18th century and became absorbed by the Burmese and the Tai; only a few thousand Mon are now found living near the Myanmar-Thailand border.

The Khmer from the 9th century to the 15th built a great empire, but much of its territory was lost to its neighbours so that only the small kingdom of Cambodia remains today. The Viet-Muong now occupy Vietnam. A Tibeto-Burmese tribe, the Pyu, founded an empire of city-kingdoms in the Irrawaddy Valley in the early centuries of the Common Era, but the Pyu disappeared, and the Burmese, taking the leadership, founded their kingdom of Pagan and have occupied Burma (now Myanmar) up to the present day. In the 13th century the Tai-Shan lost their kingdom of Nanchao in Yunnan, China, and entered the Mae Nam Chao Phraya Valley to found kingdoms that gradually evolved into the kingdoms of Siam (Thailand) and Laos.

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

In Southeast Asia, winds of change often came as storms. Indian commerce expanded into Southeast Asia in the early centuries of the Common Era and, in spite of its peaceful nature, caused revolutionary changes in the life and culture of the peoples of the region. The Indians would sojourn in the region in small numbers for two or three monsoons only. The success of their commercial venture and the safety of their persons depended entirely on the goodwill of the inhabitants. The Indians brought new ideas and new art traditions. Since these ideas had some affinity with indigenous ideas and art forms, the natives accepted them but were not overwhelmed by an influx of new traditions. The Hindu and Buddhist cultures of the Indians made a tremendous impact and came to form the second layer of culture in Southeast Asia, but the first layer of native ideas and traditions has remained strong to the present day.

Changes often came to Southeast Asia, usually because it possessed a commodity that was in great demand by the rest of the world. The Indians came because they were looking for fresh sources of gold after the Roman imperial source had run dry. In the 15th, 16th, and the 17th centuries, insular Southeast Asia attracted Islamic merchants from India and farther west and later the Portuguese and the Dutch as a rich source of spices. As with the Hindu and Buddhist merchants of the past, the Islamic traders came not as missionaries, though they did spread their religion in the region. The Portuguese came as conquerors and as militant missionaries of their Roman Catholic form of Christianity, and, for those reasons, their cultural traditions were unacceptable to the natives. In the 17th century the Dutch came as conquerors and colonists for whom the attraction was first spices and then coffee, rubber, and petroleum. Since mainland Southeast Asia produced no spices for export, it was less vulnerable to the navies of Portugal and The Netherlands, so the region was not greatly

affected by the Muslims, Portuguese, and Dutch. In the 19th century, Britain and France became interested in mainland Southeast Asia as the back door to China and sought to possess it as a colony. By the end of the 19th century, Burma had fallen to Britain, Siam was allowed to retain its independence only with the tacit permission of the two powers, and the rest had fallen to France. When in the mid-20th century the whole of Southeast Asia became free again, European culture and European art forms clearly had made little impact.

INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS

The peoples of Southeast Asia were once thought to have shared a lack of inventiveness since prehistoric times and to have been “receptive” rather than “creative” in their contacts with foreign civilizations. Later excavations and discoveries in Myanmar and Thailand, however, inspired some scholars to argue against the accepted theory that civilization moved to Southeast Asia from China in prehistoric times; rather, these scholars contended, the peoples of mainland Southeast Asia were cultivating plants, making pottery, and working in bronze about the same time as the peoples of the ancient Middle East, and therefore civilization spread from mainland Southeast Asia to China and India. Southeast Asians do not have a strong tradition of art theory or literary or dramatic criticism, for they are always more concerned with doing the actual work of producing beautiful things. Because the Southeast Asians, especially in the western half of the mainland, worked on nondurable materials, it is not possible to trace the development and evolution of art forms stage by stage. The region has always been thickly forested, so it was natural that the first material to be used for artistic purposes should have been wood. They retained the wood-carving tradition, begun in ancient times, even when they learned to work with metals and with stone; wood carving flourished long after the great age of stone sculpture and stone architecture, which ended in the 13th century. Proto-Neolithic paintings discovered in a cave near the Salween River in the western Shan state of Myanmar have very close affinity with the later carvings on posts of houses among the Nagas on the western hills of Burma. Similarly, cave paintings of a pair of human hands with open palms, one holding the sun and the other holding a human skull, are reflected in the later aesthetic tradition of Southeast Asia: the sun symbol is found as an art motif all over the region, and a suggestion of awe, triumph, and joy at acquiring a human head is found in carvings under the eaves of the Naga houses. The cave painting testifies to the continuity of the magico-religious tradition connected with all the arts of the area.

The art of casting the bronze drums found at Dong Son, near Hanoi, which are similar to the bronze drums used by mountain tribes throughout Southeast Asia, was thought to have come from China, but recent excavations in Thailand proved that the drums and the so-called Dong Son culture itself are native to mainland Southeast Asia. In any case, the continuity of the aesthetic tradition of Southeast Asia can be seen in the bronze drums that were cast by the Karen for centuries until the early years of the 20th century. The mountains of mainland Southeast Asia provided gold, silver, and other metals, and the art of metalworking must have developed quite early. Silver buttons, belts, and ornaments now made and worn by the hill peoples in Southeast Asia have behind them a very ancient tradition of workmanship. The same artistic tradition is found in textile designs.

Music, dance, and song were originally associated with tribal rituals. From the beginning, the main characteristic of Southeast Asian music and dance has been a swift rhythm. The slow and stately dances of the Siamese court were of Indian origin; when they were introduced into Burma in the 16th century, the Burmese quickened the tempo, but, even with that modification, the dances were still called Siamese dances to distinguish them from the native ones. In their oral literature—namely, in folk songs and folktales—the emphasis is on gaiety and humour. Typically, Southeast Asians do not like an unhappy ending.

THE ROLE OF ROYAL PATRONAGE AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

Fresco of the Preaching Buddha at the Wet-kyi-in, Gu-byauk-gyi, Pagan, *c.* 1113.

In all the regions of Southeast Asia, the arts flourished under the patronage of the kings. About the time of the birth of Christ, tribal groups gradually organized themselves, after some years of settled life as rice cultivators, into city-kingdoms, or conglomerations of villages. A king was thus little more than a paramount tribal chieftain. Since the tribes had been accustomed to worshiping local spirits, the kings sought a new spirit that would be worshiped by the whole community. One reason that the gods of Hinduism and Buddhism were so readily acceptable to Southeast Asia was this need for new national gods. The propagation of the new religions was the task of the kings, and consequently the period from the 1st to the 13th

J.A. Lavaud, Paris

century was a great age of temple building all over Southeast Asia. Architecture, sculpture, and painting on the temple walls were the arts that flourished. In the ancient empires of eastern Indochina and the islands, scholars of Sanskrit, the language of the sacred works of Hinduism, became part of the king's court, producing a local Sanskrit literature of their own. This literary activity was confined to the hereditary nobility and never reached the people, except in stories from the great Hindu epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Because the Hindu religious writings in Sanskrit were beyond the reach of the common people, Hinduism had to be explained to them by Hindu stories of gods and demons and mighty men. On the other side of the peninsula, in the Pyu-Burmese empire of Prome, which flourished before the 8th century, there was no such development—first, because Hinduism was never widely accepted in Burma and, second, because the more open Burmese society developed neither the institution of a god-king nor that of a hereditary nobility. Although Pali scholars surrounded the king in later Pagan, Pali studies were pursued not at the court but at monasteries throughout the kingdom so that even the humblest villager had some faint contact with Pali teachings. While the courts of the kings in Cambodia and Java remained merely local centres of Sanskrit scholarship, Pagan became a centre of Pali learning for Buddhist monks and scholars even from other lands. As in the case of stories from the Indian epics, stories of the *Jataka*s (birth stories of the Buddha) were used to explain Buddhism to the common people, who could not read the scriptures written in Pali. Just as scenes from the great epics in carving or in fresco adorned the temples in Cambodia and Java, scenes from the *Jataka*s adorned the Pagan temples.

Musicians of the Pyu kingdom played before the emperor of China in 801, and the various musical instruments at the performance have their counterparts at the present day, not only in Myanmar but throughout Southeast Asia. At Pagan the people were so fond of music that even the collection of taxes became an occasion to dance and sing, and a royal official, endowing a temple, inscribed a prayer asking that in all his future existences until he reached Nirvana "might he be woken up every morning to the strains of music sweetly played on flute and violin." In spite of this love for music and dance, no dramatic art seems to have developed in Burma, perhaps because Sanskrit, in which there was a dramatic tradition, was not studied. In contrast, at the courts of Cambodia and Java, the Sanskrit drama, Hindu dances, and native dance traditions combined and produced the court opera ballets. These dramatic elements later reached the common people by way of the shadow play.

The patronage of the king and the religious enthusiasm of the common people could not have produced the great temples without the enormous wealth that suddenly became available in the region following the commercial expansion. With the Khmer and Javanese empires, the wealth was produced by a feudalistic society, and so the temples were built by the riches of the king and his nobles, combined with the compulsory labour of their peasants and slaves, who probably derived some aesthetic pleasure from their work because of their religious fervour. Nonetheless, their monuments, such as Borobudur, in Java, and Angkor Wat, in Cambodia, had an atmosphere of massive, all-conquering power. At Pagan, where wealth was shared by the king, the royal officials, and the common people, the temples and the monasteries were built by all who had enough not only to pay the artisans their wages but also to guarantee their good health, comfort, and safety during the actual construction. The temples were dedicated for use by all monks and lay people as places of worship, meditation, and study, and the kings of Pagan did not build a single tomb for themselves. The Khmer temple of Angkor Wat and the Indonesian temple of Borobudur were tombs in that the ashes of the builders would be enshrined therein; the kings left stone statues representing them as gods for posterity to worship, whereas at Pagan there was only one statue of a king, and it depicted him on his knees with his hands raised in supplication to the Buddha. Consequently, the atmosphere that pervaded the temples of Pagan was one of joy and tranquillity.

This golden age of wealth and splendour in Southeast Asia ended in the 13th century with a sudden violence, when Kublai Khan's armies destroyed both the Burmese and the Khmer empires and his navy attacked Vietnam and Java. The tiny kingdoms that subsequently sprang up all over Southeast Asia continually fought among themselves; their kings were neither powerful nor rich, and the royal courts became centres of military planning and political intrigue. During the 13th and 14th centuries, in the new Javanese kingdom of Majapahit and the new Burmese kingdom of Ava, vernacular literatures came into being. Again, differences in social structure had aesthetic repercussions. In Majapahit the king was powerful and gave his patronage to the newly arisen literature, confining it to the court. At Ava the vernacular literature bloomed throughout the kingdom, and the king, lacking power and prestige, prevailed upon some established writers to join the court circles and give them glamour.

After Majapahit, a new cultural force—namely, Islam—reached insular Southeast Asia, and over the two layers of indigenous and Hindu–Buddhist cultures was added the third layer of Islam. In mainland Southeast Asia, a new Burmese empire arose over the ruins of the old

and continued its task of spreading Buddhism. Hindu tradition reached the Burmese court secondhand in the 18th century as the result of the Burmese conquest of Siam and was one of the factors that contributed to the rise of a Burmese drama. On the other side of the peninsula, Vietnam, reconquered by China, fell more and more under the influence of Chinese culture. After a short period of Islamic bloom, native culture in insular Southeast Asia was subjected to alien rule. In Burma and Siam alone among the states of Southeast Asia, native arts continued to flourish because, after centuries of warfare, they finally emerged as strong kingdoms.

PREDOMINANT ARTISTIC THEMES

The Great Departure of Bodhisattva, detail from …

Ciccione—Rapho/Photo Researchers

The predominant themes of Southeast Asian arts have been religion and national history. In religion the main interest was not so much in actual doctrine but in the life and personality of the Buddha and the personalities and lives of the Hindu gods. In national history the interest was in the legendary heroes of the past, and this theme appeared only after the great empires had fallen and the memories of their glory and power remained. The Buddha image, which went through various stages of development, remained the favourite motif of sculpture and painting. The depiction of scenes from his previous lives in fresco and relief sculpture also had the purpose of teaching the Buddhist ethics to the people, as the *Jataka*s emphasized certain moral virtues of the Buddha in his previous lives; it also gave an opportunity to the artist to introduce local colour by using, as background, scenes from his own contemporary time. The depiction of scenes from the Hindu epics also had the same purpose and gave the same opportunity to the artist. Many figures from the Buddhist and Hindu scriptures, such as gods and goddesses, heroes and princesses, hermits and magicians, demons and dragons, flying horses and winged maidens, became fused with similar native figures, and, gradually, folklore plots became merged in the general religious themes.

The *naga*, a superhuman spirit, was taken from Buddhist and Hindu texts and merged with native counterparts, with the result that different images of the *naga* appeared in various regions. The Burmese *naga* was a snake with a crested head. The Mon *naga* was a crocodile,

and the Khmer and Indonesian *naga* was conceived as a nineheaded snake. The demons of various kinds from all over Southeast Asia became merged under one name of Pali-Sanskrit origin, *yakkha* or *yaksha*, but they retained their separate identities in sculpture and paintings of their own different countries. The lion, which was unknown to the monsoon forest but was a figure of Hindu and Buddhist mythology, evolved into a native symbol and art motif. The worship of the snake-dragon as a god of fertility was retained in the Khmer empire; the nineheaded *naga* became a symbol of security and of royalty, and stone *naga*s guarded the palaces and temples. Buddhism frowned upon *naga* worship. In Burmese and Mon sculpture the *naga* was always shown as a servant of the Buddha, putting his body in coils to make a seat for his master and raising his great hood as an umbrella over his master's head. According to tradition, the guardian figure of a Mon temple was a two-bodied lion with a man's head, and the guardian figure of a Burmese temple was the crested lion. The Tai made themselves heirs to both the Khmer and the Mon art traditions relating to the *naga*, but the guardian figure of their temples was the benevolent demon.

Ancient symbols and animal imagery merged with Indian animals and entered the arts. The Pyu embossed the symbol of the sun on their coins as insignia of their power, and the Burmese transformed it into their favourite bird, the peacock, on the excuse that Buddhist mythology associated the peacock with the sun; the Mons adopted the red sheldrake as their symbol, and in Indonesia the mythical bird called Garuda, the vehicle of Vishnu, became merged with the local eagle. The figures of these birds also became decorative motifs. Animals of the Southeast Asian forests whose figures had adorned dwellings of wood and thatch were stylized and came to adorn palaces and monasteries. Ancient geometrical patterns mixed with new spirals and curves from India, and Indian floral designs merged with those of trees and fruits and flowers copied from the monsoon forests.

THE UNIQUE AESTHETIC OF THE REGION

The arts of Southeast Asia have no affinity with the arts of other areas, except India. Burma was always an important route to China, but Burmese arts showed very little Chinese influence. The Tai, coming late into Southeast Asia, brought with them some Chinese artistic traditions, but they soon shed them in favour of the Khmer and Mon traditions, and the only indications of their earlier contact with Chinese arts were in the style of their temples, especially the tapering roof, and in their lacquerware. Vietnam was a province of China for 1,000 years, and its arts were Chinese. The Hindu archaeological remains in southern Vietnam belong to the ancient kingdom of Champa, which Vietnam conquered in the 15th

century. The Buddhist statues in northern Vietnam were Chinese Buddhist in style. The essential differences in aesthetic aim and style between the arts of East Asia and those of Southeast Asia could be seen in the contrast between the emperors' tombs of Vietnam and the temple-tombs of Cambodia and Indonesia or the opulent and dignified Buddha images of Vietnam and the ascetic and graceful Buddha images of Cambodia and Burma. Islamic art, with its rejection of animal and human figures and its striving to express the reality behind the false beauty of the mundane world, also has no affinity with Southeast Asian arts. Both Hinduism and Buddhism taught that the sensual world was false and transitory, but this message found no place in the arts of Southeast Asia. The world depicted in Southeast Asian arts was a mixture of realism and fantasy, and the all-pervading atmosphere was a joyous acceptance of life. It has been pointed out that Khmer and Indonesian classical arts were concerned with depicting the life of the gods, but to the Southeast Asian mind the life of the gods was the life of the peoples themselves—joyous, earthy, yet divine. The European theory of "art for art's sake" found no echo in Southeast Asian arts, nor did the European division into secular and religious arts. The figures tattooed on a Burmese man's thigh were the same figures that adorned a great temple and decorated a lacquer tray. Unlike the European artist, the Southeast Asian did not need models, for he did not strive to be realistic and correct in every anatomical detail. This intrusion of fantasy and this insistence on the joyousness of human life have made Southeast Asian arts unique.

MUSIC

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

SOCIETY AND MUSIC

RURAL AND URBAN MUSIC

A general musical division exists between the urban and rural areas of Southeast Asia. Urban centres comprise the islands of Java and Bali and places in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar, where big ensembles of gong families play for court and state ceremonies. Rural areas include other islands and remote places, where smaller ensembles and solo

Gamelan ensemble, with drum (centre), metallophones (left), and gongs …

Courtesy of the Indonesian Tourist Board

instruments play a simpler music for village feasts, curing ceremonies, and daily activities. In cities and towns influenced by Hindu epics such as the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata,* shadow and masked plays and dances utilizing music play important communal roles, while in less urbanized areas, in lieu of musical plays, chants and songs in spirit worship and rituals are sung in exclusive surroundings—a ritual procession on the headwaters of Borneo, a drinking ceremony in the jungles of Palawan, a feast in the uplands of Luzon.

In both regions the physical setting is usually the open air—in temple yards and courtyards, under the shade of big trees, in house and public yards, fields and clearings. Many musical instruments are made of natural products of a tropical environment, and their sounds are products of this milieu. The music of buzzers, zithers, and harps is thus akin to sounds heard in the tropical vegetation of Southeast Asia. In Bali, for example, special ways of chanting and sounds of the jew's harp ensemble (*genggong*) imitate the croaking of frogs and the noise of animals.

RELATION TO SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Music in Southeast Asia is frequently related to ceremonies connected with religion, the state, community festivals, and family affairs. In Java, important Islamic feasts, such as the birthday of Muhammad or the end of the fasting month of Ramadan, as well as animistic ceremonies marking the harvest and cycles of human life, are celebrated with shadow plays (*wayang* [*wajang*]). In Bali, the gamelan gong orchestra opens ceremonies and provides most of the music for temple feasts. The *gamelan selunding*, an ensemble with iron-keyed metallophones (like xylophones but with metal keys), plays ritual music, and the *gamelan angklung*, so called because it formerly included tube rattles, or *angklung*, is used to accompany long processions to symbolic baths near the river.

In what is now Peninsular Malaysia the court orchestra, or *nobat*, was held almost as sacred as the powers of the sultan himself. Among the Bidayuh and Iban in Borneo, ceremonial chants are sung in feasts related to rice planting, harvesting, and honouring the omen bird *kenyalang* (rhinoceros hornbill) and other spirits.

THE RELATION OF MUSIC TO DANCE AND THEATRE

In the Thai masked play, or *khon*, dancers, chorus, soloists, and orchestra are all coordinated. The musicians know the movements of classical dance and coordinate musical phrases with dance patterns, turns, and movements. In the shadow play, or *nang sbek*, the dancer, who manipulates a leather puppet, must keep his foot movements in time with vocal recitations. During pauses in which the gong ensemble plays an interlude, the dancer must change steps accordingly. In general, when there is solo singing, the instrumental ensemble remains silent or plays only a few instruments in contrast to interludes of acrobatic shows or scenes of fighting, when the full orchestra clangs on all the instruments. In Balinese dancing, body movements, paces, and directions are dependent on drum strokes and signals from a wood block (*keprak*) and cymbals (*cengceng*). The dancers generally rehearse with the musicians to know exactly when choreographic changes take place.

As theatre, the stories of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have different musical supports, depending on the country. In Bali, *Mahabharata* shadow plays are presented to the accompaniment of a quartet of metallophones known as *gender wayang*. In Cambodia, where the preference is for stories of the *Ramayana* (which is called *Ramker* in Cambodia), the music is a full gong ensemble similar to the Thai *pi phat* ensemble, while in Myanmar, a percussion orchestra of drums and gongs in circular frames accompanies singing, dancing, and dialogues in all types of plays.

MUSICAL TRADITIONS AND PRACTICE

VOCAL MUSIC

The role of the voice in music making differs from that of European music in both concept and execution. Men's and women's voices are each not divided into high and low ranges but are used for their colour qualities. In the Javanese shadow play, for example, the narrator (*dalang*) assumes many singing and speaking qualities to depict different characters and scenes. Arjuna, the chief *wayang* hero, is represented with a clear voice, speaking in a single tone. Puppets with bigger bodies are given lower, resonant voices. In Thai masked plays there is no desire to produce full open tones, as in Italian bel canto. A vocal tension accounts for shades of "nasal" singing that can be discerned in commercial recordings of Thai, Javanese, Cambodian, and Vietnamese music. In the Javanese orchestra (gamelan) the voice tries to imitate the nasality of the two-stringed fiddle (*rebab*). In Bali, a particular use of men's voices is in the *kecak*, a ritual in which groups seated in concentric circles combine

markedly pronounced syllables into pulsing rhythmic phrases. In village settings among the Kalinga of Luzon, in the Philippines, singing, speaking, or whispering of vowels is so subtle as to blur the border line between speech and song. On the Indonesian island of Flores, leader-chorus singing, with the chorus divided into two or more parts, is accompanied by a prolonged note (drone) or by a repeated melodic, rhythmic fragment (ostinato). In Borneo, or Mindanao and Luzon in the Philippines, a man or woman may sing an epic or a love song in a natural voice with little or no attempt to nasalize it. Epic singing, with long or short melodic lines, goes on for several nights, and some of the sounds are mumbled to give words and their meanings a particular shading. Further, a sensuousness in the quality of Islamic singing is achieved through the use of shades of vowel sounds, vocal openings, and a bell-like clarity of tones.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Although gong orchestras consisting of gongs, metallophones, and xylophones bind Southeast Asia into one musical cultural group, the types of ensembles and sounds they form may be classified into four areas. Java and Bali make up one unit because of their predominant use of bronze instruments in orchestras that make one homogeneous sound. Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia form another subdivision, with families of musical instruments producing heterogeneous sounds: the bronze group makes slowly decaying sounds, wooden xylophones play short sounds, and a reed blows a penetrating melody accompanied by a fourth group of cymbals, drums, and another gong. Burmese orchestras differ from the Indonesian and Thai groups by the unique use of a row of tuned drums (sometimes called a drum circle), with sounds consisting of sharp attacks and quick-vanishing waves. The fourth area, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, uses several types of suspended and horizontally laid gongs. These gongs produce various combinations of sounds. In Nias, an island west of Sumatra, one group of three heavy suspended gongs plays three rhythms of homogeneous sounds. Suspended gongs with a wide rim and a high knob (or boss) are played alone, with another gong or with a drum on the Philippine islands of Mindanao and Palawan and the Indonesian island of Kalimantan (Borneo). Gongs laid in a row, called *kulintang*, are melody instruments accompanied by a percussion group. The most developed melodies are found in Mindanao, and the area of distribution extends to Borneo, Sumatra, and Celebes, in Indonesia. The sets of tuned gongs found throughout Southeast Asia are also called gong chimes, gong kettles, and gongs in a row.

TONAL SYSTEMS

In contrast to the Western diatonic-scale system (based on seven-note scales comprised of whole and half steps) and its association with relatively “fixed” pitches, there prevails a gapped system in Southeast Asia (i.e., scales containing intervals larger than a whole step) with elastic intonation. Examples include the five-tone *slendro* and the seven-tone *pelog* of Java and the seven-tone scale of Thailand. In each of these systems the distances between corresponding tones in two different sets of octaves are not exactly the same. For example, one Javanese *slendro* octave has the following intervals expressed in cents (a unit of pitch measurement; 1,200 cents make 12 semitones or 1 octave): 246, 241, 219, 254, 246; another has 245, 237, 234, 245, 267. In contrast, two tunings of the Western chromatic scale theoretically always have 12 semitones of 100 cents apiece.

Related to tonal systems are modes, which in Southeast Asia use tones of a particular scale system to form melodies. Associated with a given mode are a hierarchy of pitches, the principal and auxiliary tones, endings of melodic phrases (cadential formulas), ornaments, and the vocal line. Modes express emotions and are applied to different times of the day and night and to particular situations in stage plays. They are clearly present, with local variations, in Java, Vietnam, and Myanmar but are less distinct in Bali, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia.

In rural areas a multitude of scales with mixed diatonic and gapped systems and no modes are used.

MUSICAL TIME AND IMPROVISATION

Musical time is generally divisible in units of two or four in urban music, but it occurs more freely and without a metric pulse in rural areas, especially in singing. Musical improvisation or the use of variations based on a melodic theme is not universal. It is essential to the playing of the *rebab* and singing in the Javanese gamelan, the tappings on the Burmese circle of drums, and the percussive playing on the *kulintang*. But, in fast playing in the Balinese gamelan, exact repetitions of patterns are necessary, for there is no time for the performer to think of alternative formulas. Similarly, the separate rhythmic patterns of five instrumental parts do not change in the gong (*gangsa*) music of the Ibaloi of Luzon. Repetition is the essence of the music.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS

ORIGINS

EARLY BAMBOO INSTRUMENTS

The widespread use of bamboo musical instruments in practically all parts of Southeast Asia points to the antiquity of these instruments and, probably, that of the music they play. A historical citation of mouth organs and jew's harps in the Chinese *Shijing* ("Classic of Poetry") shows that these instruments were known in the 8th century BCE. Prior to this time, other bamboo musical instruments were probably in use, just as bamboo tools were used in pre-Neolithic times.

The music of pre-Neolithic types of bamboo musical instruments, such as are played in the 21st century, may be just as old as these instruments. One general feature that points to this antiquity is the widespread and frequent use of a very simple musical element: a sustained tone (drone) or repetition of one or several tones (ostinato). Sustained tones appear in the mouth organ, where one or two continuous sounds are held by one or two pipes while a melody is formed by the other pipes. Prolonged tones may also be heard in rows of flutes played by one person in Flores. One flute acts as ostinato and the rest make a melody. In group singing, an underlying held tone is common. Repetition of tones occurs in bamboo instruments (jew's harps, percussion tubes and half percussion tubes, zithers, clappers, slit drums) as well as in nonbamboo instruments. In the *kudjapi*, a two-stringed lute, one string is used for the ostinato and the other to pluck the melody. In the log drum, two players play fast rhythms of continuous sounds while another player taps improvised rhythms.

Bronze instruments in gong families of Indonesia, Thailand, and Myanmar employ repeated sounds acting as ostinati. A widespread and preponderant use of dronelike or repeated sounds in Southeast Asia shows that they are probably an ancient fundamental musical element.

EARLY BRONZE INSTRUMENTS

Kettle gongs.

© Ignatius Wooster/Fotolia

The earliest bronze musical instruments are kettle gongs (deep-rimmed gongs), which date back to *c.* 300 BCE and are found in Vietnam, Bali, Sumatra, Borneo, Thailand, and Myanmar. In Burmese gongs the use of a heavy beater for the centre and a lighter stick to strike the side denotes an opposition of a full and a tiny sound applied today also to the *babandil* and other gong ensembles in Palawan and Borneo.

Gongs that predominate in Southeast Asia are those with a boss, or central beating knob. The many varieties differ according to their shapes, chemical properties, playing position, number in a series, manner of playing, musical function, and sound. Flat gongs without a central boss are not as widely used. They are found in the hills of Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, in some parts of Indonesia, and in the northern Philippines and may have come to Southeast Asia either through China in the 6th century or from the Middle East.

MUSICAL TRADITIONS

The influence of the great traditions of Asia—Indian, Chinese, Islamic, and Khmer (Cambodian)—on native Southeast Asian music varies in different countries. From India come principally two ancient Sanskrit epics—the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. Deep attachment to themes from the *Ramayana* pervades the whole Southeast Asian region, except the Philippines, where Indian influence was weakest. Musical instruments attributed to India and appearing in 9th-century reliefs at the Buddhist temple of Borobudur and Hindu temple of Prambanan, in Java, are bronze bells, bar zithers, cymbals, conical drums, flutes, shawms, and lutes. They may still be found in several islands of Indonesia. Khmer gong circles, stringed instruments, mouth organs, drums, and oboes still in use in rural Cambodia and Vietnam are depicted in the 12th-century ruins at Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Prehistoric lithophones, or stone chimes, excavated in Vietnam in 1949, may have been the ancestors of kettle gongs. Chinese-type musical instruments (two- and three-stringed fiddles, bells, and drums), the use of the Chinese pentatonic (five-tone) scale, and duple and quadruple time (typical Chinese metres) are used in Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia, Islamic musical instruments—drums, two-stringed fiddles (*rebab*), and three-stringed lutes—may be heard in Java, while melismatic singing (many notes to one syllable), especially in Islamic rituals, is usual among the Malay groups on Borneo.

There are also musical instruments and elements that have developed locally. The mouth organs of Borneo, Laos, and Cambodia are probable ancestors of the Chinese *sheng* and the Japanese *shō* (mouth organs). Jew's harps, tube zithers, ring flutes, buzzers, xylophones, two-stringed lutes, and various types of gongs with boss (knobbed centre) are some of the most typical instruments of Southeast Asia. A probably ancient manner of measuring flute stops in Mindanao—dividing flute segments into proportional lengths to produce the octave, fifth, and other intervals—recalls a very old Chinese account of cutting bamboo tubes into lengths that would sound these same intervals.

In general, music in Southeast Asia is a tradition taught to each succeeding generation without the use of written notation. From exclusive families of musicians in courts, gamelan music was transmitted to the people. Epic and ritual songs are learned by rote and handed down from older to younger generations. Hence, skill in instrumental music is developed by imitation and practice.

MYANMAR

Just as today all types of Burmese plays are accompanied by the traditional Burmese orchestra, the beginnings of Burmese theatre contained a music that, like the theatre, was probably based on ancient religious rituals. Before Indian and Chinese musical influences, the inspirational source of Burmese music and dance was the miracle plays (*nibhatkhin*), which, in turn, were based on singing, dancing, and entertainment in local folk feasts that date back to antiquity. The worship of spirits (*nat*s) at Chinese festivals was accompanied by women who, through song and dance, communicated with and were possessed by these spirits. Following this practice, professional entertainers taking the place of women danced, sang, and played instruments during the first *nibhatkhin*. These practices led to the dancing and singing associated with the *pwe*, a popular play for public and courtly entertainment.

Foreign musical influences came from India, China, and Thailand. Indian elements appear in musical terms, theories about scales, and in some musical instruments—oboe, double-headed drums, cymbals, and the arched harp. Chinese influence appears to be older and is apparent in the use of the pentatonic scale and such musical instruments as table zithers (related to the Chinese *qin*), a dragon-head lute resembling a Chinese *pipa*, and two- and three-stringed fiddles. From Thailand and the Khmer civilization of Cambodia probably came both the use of gongs in a circular frame and the dramatization of episodes from the

Ramayana. In the traditional orchestra for state ceremonies, for the theatre, and, formerly, for royalty, three simultaneous variations of the same theme are performed by two sets of melodic percussion—a circle of about 21 tuned drums (*saing-waing*) and a circle of about 21 tuned gongs (*kyi waing*)—and at least one oboe (*hne*) or a flute (*pulwe*). To this is added a playing of a percussion group comprising a double-headed drum (*patma*), a pair of cymbals (*la gwin*), and clappers playing a duple or a quadruple metre. In three rhythmic patterns applied by these percussion groups to specific song types, the strong beats are always marked by the clappers.

Melodies played on traditional instruments (*saing-waing*, harp, *pattala* or xylophone) are frequently broken by rests and consist of segments of two, three, or four notes that form phrases, usually of 8 or 16 beats. Several phrases make up a number of verses to complete a musical rendition. Melodies, based on modes, are constructed according to the previously discussed elements usually found in the modal music of Southeast Asia. Song types exist in Burmese music and are assigned to specific modes.

The Burmese arched harp (*saung gauk*) has features that may be traced back to pre-Hittite times and the Egyptian 4th dynasty (*c.* 2575–*c.* 2465 BCE). Scarcely existent outside of Myanmar, this instrument underwent a renascence in the 20th century. A more popular solo instrument is a wooden xylophone *pattala*.

The following instruments may be found among Myanmar's rural ethnic groups: idiophones, or resonant solids—bamboo jew's harps, clappers, cymbals, wooden slit drums, bronze kettle gongs, drums; membranophones, or vibrating-membrane instruments—goblet drums; chordophones, or stringed instruments—crocodile zithers, monochords with calabash resonators, three- and four-stringed fiddles; aerophones, or wind instruments—lip-valley flutes, ring flutes, panpipes, double-reed winds, buffalo horns, and mouth organs.

THAILAND, LAOS, AND CAMBODIA

Although their individual political histories differ, the music of Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia is almost identical. The musical instruments and forms of this region spring from the same sources: India, the indigenous Mon-Khmer civilizations, China, and Indonesia. In Thailand, three types of orchestras, called *pi phat*, *kruang sai*, and *mahori*, exist. The *pi phat*, which plays for court ceremonies and theatrical presentations, uses melodic percussion (gongs in a

circle, xylophones, metallophones) and a blown reed. The *kruang sai* performs in popular village affairs and combines strings (monochords, lutes, and fiddles with two and three strings) and wind instruments (oboes and flutes); while the *mahori*, as accompaniment of solo and choral singing, mixes strings (floor zithers, three-stringed fiddles, and lutes) and melodic percussion (gongs and xylophones) with the winds (flutes and oboes). All three ensembles are provided with a rhythmic group of drums, cymbals, and a gong to punctuate the melody parts. Some of the above musical instruments and their functions may best be illustrated in the *pi phat* ensemble below.

A slow-moving theme is played by gongs arranged in a circle (*khong wong yai*) with variations in smaller gongs (*khong wong lek*), two wooden xylophones (*ranat ek*, *ranat thum*), and two box-shaped metallophones (*ranat thong ek*, *ranat thong thum*). The last three pairs of instruments vary the theme by playing twice as fast or by repeating, anticipating, and revolving around it. A double-reed oboe (*pi nai*) hovers above the melodic percussion, providing the only blown sound in the ensemble. Together with the punctuating gongs and drums, the whole orchestra displays a polyphonic (many-voiced) stratification of instrumental parts, using unisons and octaves mainly in the strong beats.

A melody may be broken down into phrase units consisting of two or four measures that may be joined by four other phrase units to make a phrase block, and a given number of blocks constitutes one musical composition. Three speeds of rendition—slow, medium, fast—in either duple or quadruple time are marked by two alternating strokes in a pair of cymbals; a dampened clap marks a strong beat, and a ringing vibration denotes a weak beat.

The tuning system is made up of seven tempered (approximately equidistant) tones to an octave. But the melodies constructed out of this system use only five tones out of seven—which sound close to a Chinese pentatonic scale. This scale may be constructed in any of seven levels or tones of the Thai tuning system. Further, through a process called *metabole*, melodies may move from one level to another.

In the Cambodian shadow play (*nang sbek*) two narrators alternate in chanted recitative to explain the role of the leather puppets. Dancers parading these figures across the screen and simulating their actions are accompanied by an orchestra. A limited number of tunes is played to eight dance positions (walk, flight or military march, combat, meditation, sorrow

or pain, promenade, reunion, and metamorphosis). In the play these poses are assumed by princes, princesses, monkeys, demons, peasants, or ascetics.

Among different ethnic groups, such as the Khmer Chung (Saoch), Pwo Karen, Bu Nuer, Kae Lisu, Kuay, and Samre, a rural music related to that of the ancient Khmer peoples is played by aerophones (buffalo horns, mouth organs, vertical flutes), idiophones (flat gongs, gongs with boss, cymbals, jew's harps), chordophones (bamboo zithers), and membranophones (circle of drums). Other important instruments for solo performance or as accompaniment to songs are the three-stringed crocodile zither (*chakhe*), a four-stringed lute (*grajappi*), a plucked monochord with a gourd resonator (*phin nam tao*), and a bamboo whistle flute (*khlui*).

VIETNAM

Although Vietnamese music belongs to the great Chinese musical tradition, which includes the music of Korea, Mongolia, and Japan, some of its musical elements are indigenous or come from other parts of Southeast Asia, and some derive from Champa, an ancient Hinduized kingdom of Vietnam. Archaeological finds in the village of Dong Son revealed that the ancient Vietnamese used kettle gongs, mouth organs, wooden clappers, and the conch trumpet. From the 10th to the 15th century a joint Indian and Chinese element left its musical imprint. The Chinese seven-stringed zither (*qin*) and a double-headed drum were played together, or a Champa melody was accompanied by a drum. It was at this time that two traditional Chinese ensembles—Great Music and Little Music—and an elementary Chinese theatrical art were introduced. From the 15th to the 18th century the Chinese influence reached its height. Court music (*nha nhac*) was played by two orchestras. One, located in the Upper Hall of the court, consisted of a chime of 12 stones, a series of 12 bells, a zither of 25 strings (Chinese *se*), a zither with 7 strings (Chinese *qin*), flutes, panpipes, a scraper in the shape of a tiger, a double-headed drum, a mouth organ, and a globular whistle. The second orchestra in the Lower Hall used 16 iron chimes, a harp with 20 strings, a lute with 4 strings (Chinese *pipa*), a double flute, a double-headed drum, and a mouth organ. Ceremonial music, almost nonexistent in the 20th century, was patterned after court music.

In Buddhist ceremonies, prayers were recited in three ways: as recitation in a low voice, as a cantillation (sung, inflected recitation) following the six tones of the Vietnamese language,

and as chant accompanied by an orchestra of two drums, bell, gong, cymbals, and fiddles.

Music as entertainment is mostly a vocal art played without ritual outside the court and still enjoyed by many people. The *hat a dao* found in the north is the oldest form. It is a woman's art song with different instrumental accompaniments, dances, a varied repertoire, and a long history of evolution.

From the 19th century to World War II, Vietnamese music reaffirmed its character. Although the playing of court music was restricted, popular music was encouraged, leading to northern and southern styles that were patronized by both the aristocracy and commoners. Western musical influence in this period was manifest in the use of the mandolin, the Spanish guitar, and the violin, as well as by the introduction of European classical music and composition following Western forms. In the later 20th century traditional Vietnamese music began to disappear, but attempts to revive it began in the early 1970s.

Vietnamese rural folk music is built on the same musical principles as court music. The main difference lies in its application to village activities—work, games, courting, marriage, cure for the sick, entertainment, feasts.

Common elements characterize and unify all Vietnamese music. It is based on an oral tradition, with written notation serving only as a reading guide. Melodies are generally built out of a pentatonic system (for example, C, D, F, G, A) to which two auxiliary tones (E, B) may be added to make other pentatonic melodies. A song, usually preceded by a prelude, may be sung in slow, moderate, or fast tempo divisible by two or four, with a simple contrapuntal (countermelody) accompaniment using unisons and octaves at beginning points of phrases. Outside of the first beats, intervals of fifths, fourths, thirds, and even seconds are allowed. An important aspect of melodies is the idea of mode (*dieu*), the elements of which do not essentially differ from those of Javanese and Burmese music.

INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA

JAVA

Side view of a *bonang*, one of the instruments that elaborate the main melody …

Wesleyan University Virtual Instrument Museum (www.wesleyan.edu/music/vim)

A Javanese philosophical concept based on mysticism, the state of being refined (*alus*, Indonesian *halus*), and the inner life as related to Hindu, Islamic, and Indonesian thought may best be represented in music by the Javanese gamelan, an orchestra made up mostly of bronze instruments producing homogeneous blended sounds. The instruments in the ensemble may be divided into three groups of musical function. The first group comprises thick bronze slabs (*saron demung*, *saron barung*, *saron panerus*) on trough resonators playing the theme usually in regular note values without ornamentation. The second group consists of elaborating or *panerusan* instruments, which add ornaments to the main theme. In this group gongs in double rows (*bonang panembang*, *bonang barung*, *bonang panerus*) play variations with the same ratio of speed as the *saron* group. In softer sounding music for indoor performance, other *panerusan* instruments with very mellow sounds come in. These are three sizes of thin bronze slabs with bamboo resonators—*gender panembung* or *slentem*, *gender barung*, and *gender panerus*. Other elaborating instruments are the wooden xylophone (*gambang*), the zither (*celempung*) with 26 strings tuned in pairs, an end-blown flute (*suling*), and a 2-stringed lute (called a *rebab* by the Javanese), which leads the orchestra. In loud-sounding music, the soft-sounding instruments are not played, and the drum (*kendang*) leads the orchestra. The third group provides "colotomic," or punctuating beats in four rhythmic patterns played separately by four types of heavy, suspended, or horizontally laid gongs.

Side view of a *celempung*, one of the instruments that elaborate the main …

Wesleyan University Virtual Instrument Museum (www.wesleyan.edu/music/vim)

Two tuning systems prevail. The *slendro* tends to have five equidistant but flexible (or varying) pitches in an octave, while the *pelog*, with seven equally flexible tones, has a more varied structure. One tuning with intervals expressed in cents (140, 143, 275, 127, 116, 204, 222) may roughly be represented by the following notes in a descending scale: C↑, A ♯, G ♯, G↓, F↑, D ♯↓, C ♯↑, and C. (Arrows up are tones slightly higher than Western tempered tuning [in which a semitone is equivalent to 100 cents] and vice versa for arrows down.) Melodies from these tunings are governed by a modal structure (*patet*) the elements of which are

similar to those of Vietnamese and Burmese music.

A *suling* (flute) atop a …

DiN (Kacapi-suling.jpg: Creative Commons BY-SA 3.0)

In West Java the most popular ensembles use a vocal part, a two-stringed fiddle (*rebab*) or a bamboo flute (*suling*), and a box zither (*kacapi*). In the gamelan, submodes (*surupan*) are formed by the use of vocal tones—sung or played on the *suling* or *rebab*—which amplify the number of scales in both the *pelog* and *slendro* systems.

BALI

In contrast to the introspection of Javanese music, the Balinese gamelan exudes a music of brilliant sounds with syncopations (displaced accents) and sudden changes, as well as gradual increase and decrease in volume and speed and feats of fast, precise playing. The tuning system, musical instruments, and polyphonic stratification are similar to those of the Javanese gamelan, although in Bali the seven-tone *pelog* is not popular. Most gamelan are tuned to a five- or four-tone system, and the concept of modes is not as clearly developed as in Java. A variety of gamelan exists, each with a special function, instrumentation, repertoire, and tuning system. The *gamelan gong* orchestra is among the most extensive in its number of instruments. A modern version, *gong kebyar*, omits the *trompong* (gongs in a row) and *saron* (bronze slabs over a trough resonator) and replaces them with *gangsa gantung* (metallophone with bamboo resonators) and *reyong* of four gongs to produce exuberant outbursts of sound. The *gamelan gambuh*, now rare, comprises four end-blown flutes, one *rebab*, and a group of percussion. The *gamelan semar pegulingan*, played formerly in royal courts but now almost disappeared, emphasizes the *trompong* as a solo instrument. The *gamelan pelegongan* is a virtuoso orchestra that accompanies *legong* dances, while the *gamelan pejogedan* is an orchestra of xylophones for dance (*joged*) and entertainment in the marketplace. The *gender wayang* is a quartet of *slendro* tuned metallophones specially employed for shadow plays. The *gamelan angklung*, a village orchestra assembled during ceremonies, anniversaries, and cremations, originally consisted of rattling tubes that are now replaced by metallophones. The *gamelan arja* is characterized by a soft timbre (tone colour) and the use of a one-stringed bamboo zither, the *guntang*, to accompany musical comedy and popular plays.

OTHER PARTS OF INDONESIA

In the islands of Flores, Nias, New Guinea, Celebes, and Borneo, idiophones make up perhaps the most varied collection of musical instruments—gongs of various profiles, slit drums, jew's harps pulled with a string, clappers, bells, xylophones, percussion sticks, bull-roarers, and stamping tubes. Particularly interesting are idiophones made of bones, shells, skulls, fruits, seeds, planks, pellets, crab claws, clogs, coconut, and shark bones. Membranophones are represented by drums shaped like a cylinder, goblet, vase, round frame, hourglass, cone, cup, barrel, or a tube. Aerophones present an array of vertical and transverse (horizontally played) flutes, panpipes, ring flutes, shawms, clarinets, gourd trumpets, conch shells, ocarinas, and flutes with different mouthpieces. Chordophones include bamboo zithers, spike fiddles (in which the neck skewers the body), one- and two-stringed lutes, musical bows, monochords, guitars, *rebab*s, bar zithers, and sago zithers. In Flores, part singing with a sustained drone is frequent. Songs in Nias use diatonic (whole and half steps), chromatic (half steps), and gapped melodies largely less than an octave in range. In Borneo descending melodies often make up a tetrachord (four adjacent tones forming the interval of a fourth). In Indonesian New Guinea departures from songs with gapped scales include fanfare, stair descent, and tiled melodies (the last consisting of short phrases repeated at different pitch levels).

MALAYSIA

At least three principal cultural influences—Indonesian, Hindu, and Islamic—left their musical marks in Malaysia. The Indonesian influence is seen principally in musical forms, participants, and paraphernalia of the Malaysian shadow play (*wayang kulit*). It is said that the Indian epics and, especially, the *Panji* tales of Java came to Malaysia via Indonesia, but there are songs in certain plays and musical instruments (e.g., the double-headed drum and oboe) that could have reached Malaysia from India through other routes. Islamic traces are evident in melismatic songs among the Malay groups in songs connected with religious rituals and in choral singing in the *mak yong* plays. Chinese music, a more recent development, is largely practiced among the Chinese communities, principally in Singapore.

Before Malaysian independence, the *nobat*, an old royal instrumental ensemble dating back to about the 16th century, played exclusively for important court ceremonies in the palaces of the sultans of Perak, Kedah, Selangor, and Trengganu. Today, in Kedah, the ensemble

consists of five instruments: one big goblet drum (*negara*), two double-headed drums (*gendang*), one long oboe (*nafiri*), one small oboe (*nafiri*), and one gong. The music, which consists of 10 surviving pieces, is broadcast today and performed live.

Three shadow plays exist, principally in the state of Kelantan. The *wayang gedek* is the Thai form; *wayang Jawa*, a Malay form, is almost extinct; and the *wayang Siam*, which is a combination of Thai and Malay influences, is the most popular form of puppet shadow play. The operator of the performance is the narrator (*dalang*), who manipulates the leather figures, introduces important characters, and describes different scenes with the accompaniment of the orchestra. The music is led by a two-stringed lute (*rehab*) in the *Ramayana*, or an oboe (*serunai*) in the *Mahabharata* and *Panji* cycles. The melodic instruments are supported by a percussion group consisting of pairs of goblet-shaped drums (*gedombak*), cylindrical drums (*gendang*), barrel drums (*geduk*), gongs lying on a support (*canang*), suspended gongs (*gong*) or, sometimes, a row of gongs played by two or three men, and one pair of cymbals (*kesi*). The music usually begins with a prelude followed by a list of pieces the sequences of which are dictated by the narrator.

The *mak yong*, a dance drama that probably dates back more than 1,000 years, was introduced in Kelantan under the patronage of the royal courts. In the 20th century it existed as a folk theatre with an all-female cast. The music that accompanies 12 surviving stories is played by an orchestra of one bowed lute (*rebab*), two suspended gongs, and a pair of double-headed drums (*gendang*). A heterophony (simultaneous variation of the same melody) between a solo voice, a chorus, and the *rebab* creates a music with a Middle Eastern flavour.

A rich musical heritage in the rural sections of Malaysia is shown in musical instruments used by Malay, Thai, Semang, and Senoi groups. Idiophones include shell and coconut rattles, the jew's harp (mostly pulled by a string, rather than plucked), bull-roarers, bamboo clappers, and the bamboo slit drum. Aerophones include the buffalo horn, wooden and clay whistles, nose flutes, end-blown flutes, and the oboe. Chordophones are two- and three-stringed fiddles with coconut resonators, monochords, and tube zithers. One membranophone is a double-headed cylindrical drum.

In Borneo among the Malay, Kadazan, and Iban groups, the principal instruments are gongs in a row (*gulintangan*) played with suspended gongs of different types (*canang*, *gong*,

tawak-tawak). Among the Murut, Kenyah, and Iban the mouth organ with a calabash resonator (*sompoton*) plays a melody with a drone accompaniment. The jew's harp (*ruding*), bamboo zither (*tongkungon*), nose flute (*tualí*), hourglass drum (*ketubong*), and vertical flute (*suling*) may be heard among different ethnic groups. Iban ceremonial songs are sung in connection with rice festivals and rituals to prevent sickness, while mourning songs make up a rich repertoire of solo and leader–chorus singing. The Kenyah are particularly adept at blending low voices of men singing a melody supported by a drone.

THE PHILIPPINES

Two musical cultures—Western and Southeast Asian—prevail in the Philippines. Western music is practiced by some 90 percent of the population, while Southeast Asian examples are heard only in mountain and inland regions, among about 10 percent of the people.

The Western tradition dates back to the 17th century, when the first Spanish friars taught plainchant and musical theory and introduced such European musical instruments as the flute, oboe, guitar, and harp. There subsequently arose a new music related to Christian practices but not connected with the liturgy. Processional songs, hymns in honour of the Blessed Virgin, Easter songs, and songs for May (Mary's month) are still sung in different sections of the country. A secular music tradition also developed. Guitars, string ensembles (*rondalla*), flute, drum, harps, and brass bands flourished in the provinces among the principal linguistic groups and still appear during town fiestas and important gatherings. Competing bands played overtures of Italian operas, marches, and light music. Young men, like their counterparts throughout the Hispanic world, sang love songs (*kundiman*) in nightly serenades beneath the windows of their beloved. It was not uncommon in family gatherings for someone to be asked to sing an aria, play the harp, or declaim a poem. Orchestral music accompanied operas and operettas (zarzuelas), while solo recitals and concerts were organized in clubs or music associations. With the advent of formal music instruction in schools, performance and composition rose to professional levels. Beginning in the 20th century, several symphony orchestras, choral groups, ballet companies, and instrumental ensembles performed with varying regularity.

A Southeast Asian musical tradition exists completely apart from the Western tradition. In the north, flat gongs are played in different instrumental combinations (six gongs; two gongs, two drums and a pair of sticks; three gongs). In the ensemble with six gongs, four are

treated as “melody” instruments, one as ostinato, and another as a freer layer of improvisation. The melody consists of scattered tones produced by strokes, slaps, and slides of the hands against the flat side of the gong. Other musical instruments in the northern Philippines are bamboo. These are the nose flute (*kalleleng*), lip-valley or notched flute (*paldong*), whistle flute (*olimong*), panpipes (*diwdiwas*), buzzer (*balingbing*), half-tube percussion (*palangug*), stamping tube (*tongatong*), tube zither (*kolitong*), and jew’s harp (*giwong*). Leader–chorus singing among the Ibaloi is smooth and sung freely without a metric beat, while the same form among the Bontoc is emphatic, loud, and metric. Scales in songs and musical instruments use from two to several tones within and beyond an octave and are arranged as gapped, diatonic, and pentatonic varieties.

In the southern Philippines (particularly the Sulu archipelago and the western portion of the island of Mindanao), the more-developed ensemble is the *kulintang*, which, in its most common form, consists of seven or eight gongs in a row as melody instruments accompanied by three other gong types (a wide-rimmed pair; two narrow-rimmed pairs; one with turned-in rim) and a cylindrical drum. The *kulintang* scale is made up of flexible tones with combinations of wide and narrow gaps sometimes approaching a Chinese pentatonic variety and oftentimes not. Its melody is built on nuclear tones consisting of two, three, or more tones to form a phrase. Several phrases may be built, repeated, and elongated to complete one rendition lasting two to three minutes. Pieces of music are played continuously for a long period during the night.

In the central west Philippines on the island of Mindoro, love songs are sung that are based on reciting tones with interludes played by a miniature copy of the Western guitar or a small violin with three strings played like a cello.

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