

Intercultural Communication: A Study on Music as an Element in the *Wayang Kulit* of Kelantan

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses intercultural relations in the performing art of wayang kulit Kelantan, by examining the phenomena of communication between cultures that occur within the multi-ethnic Kelantanese community, with a focus on the element of music. In order to understand the intercultural communication that occurs in the element of music, Kumpulan Wayang Kulit Sri Campuran was chosen as the main research subject due to the group's characteristic ethnic diversity, which comprises Malay, Chinese, and Siamese, as well as the community that is directly and indirectly involved in the performance, which also comprises various ethnicities, thus illustrating the existence of the phenomena of intercultural communication. Methods of observation on the element of music in performances held at several locations by this group have been able to prove the existence of clear intercultural communications within the multi-ethnic community in Kelantan. These phenomena also show that this group specifically, and the Kelantanese community in general, upholds cultural collectivism that strengthens intercultural relations, whereby people from various cultural backgrounds can be brought together by a single performance that clearly showcases characteristics of teamwork, tolerance, understanding, compatibility, sharing, and harmony.

Keywords: *intercultural communication, performing art of wayang kulit Kelantan, music, Kumpulan Wayang Kulit Sri Campuran*

INTRODUCTION

Intercultural communication is an important element in fostering relations within a multi-ethnic community. The world's concern over social unrest and conflict caused by ethnic, religious, and cultural differences has led our society to consider the importance of effective intercultural communication. Intercultural communication can not only build intercultural relations, but it can also reduce conflict, enhance economic well-being, and increase a sense of self through tolerance. Realising the importance of intercultural communication, this research was conducted to examine the phenomena of intercultural communication that occurs in the performing art of *wayang kulit* Kelantan. In the performing art of *wayang kulit* Kelantan, there are several aspects that can be explored while discussing intercultural communication, which can be seen from aspects of storytelling, puppets or characters, customs and beliefs, music, and others. However, this article will only focus on the element of music. Participatory observations of performances by Kumpulan Wayang Kulit Sri Campuran, which were held at Kampung Pasir Parit, Pasir Mas, Kelantan on 5 January 2018; Kampung Chetok Hilir, Pasir Mas, Kelantan on 31 March 2018; and Wat Chinpraditharam (Siamese wat) in Kampung Tendong, Pasir Mas, Kelantan on 24 June 2018; were conducted to prove the existence of intercultural communication that can be seen from the aspect of music. Interviews were one of the research methodologies used to strengthen the research findings.



Photo 1 Kumpulan Wayang Kulit Sri Campuran
Source: Photographed by Eyo Leng Yan.

The entirety of this study will examine intercultural communication with a focus on the element of music in the performing art of wayang kulit Kelantan that is performed by Kumpulan Wayang Kulit Sri Campuran. This group was officially established in 1983 and is still active today. From the beginning of the establishment of this group to the present, the members of the group often change, either due to the death of its members, or members leaving this group to join another group. Even though the members keep changing, the characteristics of mixed ethnicity still remain. Now, the group is more collective and the *dalang* will call musicians from other groups to join the performance because the permanent musicians of this group have mostly passed away. This group is led by a Chinese *dalang* named Eyo Hock Seng, who is better known as Pakcu.

There is a fundamental presumption that the more a person expands their own culture's music, the wider their inner musical circles will be, which means the more a person will be receptive and tolerant towards another culture's music (Gilboa 2016). Through the workings of Kumpulan Wayang Kulit Sri Campuran we can see how music functions as an intermediary, not only between people of different cultures, but within individuals themselves. The selection of this group is ideal, as the group is comprised of an ethnic mix of Malay, Chinese, and Siamese, which can show that there is a phenomenon of intercultural communication that ultimately contributes toward intercultural relations.

This also shows the cultural and social assimilation that has occurred in the performing art of wayang kulit, which is spearheaded by Kumpulan Wayang Kulit Sri Campuran. Social assimilation is not only reflected in the group's organisational structure, which comprises a mix of Chinese, Malay, and Siamese ethnicities, but is also seen through the group's cultural practices. Assimilating forces include those of the environment, both physical and social, and those implied by intermarriage. The main factor in the physical environment is geographical features. These determine to a great extent the occupations, amusements, dress, and customs of peoples (Simons 1901). The observation has found that this group communicates in the same dialect, which is Kelantanese Malay, or in other words, they share the same language, wear the same clothes, practice the same belief system (reciting prayers, *mantera*) and so on.

Dialect is an important element in preserving social status and close relations, as a reflection of tolerance in Kelantan's multi-ethnic community. Geographically, the Kelantanese dialect is also spoken in some districts in South Thailand, such as Golok River, Narathiwat, Yala, and Pattani (Abdul Hamid Mahmood 1977). There are also some words loaned from the Thai language that have been assimilated into the Kelantanese dialect lexicon, such as "bo" (/pho/) which means "stop." In reciting the *mantera* which is accompanied by the *bertabuh* (*buka panggung*) music, there is also a mixture of Malay and Siamese words. According to Cuisinier (1936), Kelantan and Siam (the old name for Thailand) were geographically accessible, and this had inadvertently influenced the local lingo. Such influences could be seen in the words within the Kelantanese dialect that describes the supernatural and mystical (Abdul Hamid Mahmood 1996). This is not surprising

because Kelantan and Pattani had already forged a diplomatic relationship for a very long time (Abdul Hamid Mahmood 1977). Therefore, it can be said that the social and cultural assimilation in this multi-ethnic community has existed for hundreds of years and made an impact on intercultural communication. Gordon (1964), Glazer and Mohnihan (1963) (quoted in Groenewold 2008) support the conclusion that assimilation is important for forging intercultural relations, as well as for intercultural communication. This is also supported by Caselli and Coleman (2013) who suggest that an ethnically diverse group can be assimilated through the learning of a language.

BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH

The background of this research involves a literature review because a study about the aspects of intercultural communication in the musical elements of wayang kulit Kelantan is still new. However, Matusky (1993) mention in her book *Malaysian Shadow Play and Music: Continuity of an oral tradition* that wayang kulit Kelantan is one of the most popular wayang kulit performances in Malaysia. This performing art is presented in the Kelantanese dialect of the Malay language and has been identified as one of oldest forms of wayang kulit in Malaysia (Dahlan Abdul Ghani 2012). Wayang kulit Kelantan, formerly known as wayang kulit Siam is the most popular form of wayang kulit in Kelantan, besides *wayang Jawa*, *wayang gedek*, and *wayang Melayu*. According to Wright (1980), wayang kulit Kelantan is considered to be the most authentic and is a performance art owned by the people of Kelantan. Its performance is based on the epic tale of *Ramayana*, featuring Seri Rama, Laksamana, and Siti Dewi as the main characters. The characters in wayang kulit Kelantan are divided into several categories, including deities, humans, genies, apes, and smaller creatures (Yousof and Khor 2017).

Wayang kulit has made such a big contribution to community relations that it has formed a community that could blend together and collectively enjoy this artistic performance. It is a place for the community to come together, and it acts as a medium of communication within the audience (Wan Nor Raihan Wan Ramli and Farrah 'Aini Lugiman 2012). The gathering, mixing and communication that occur within a multi-ethnic community creates an intercultural communication that contributes towards cross-cultural relationships within the community. The dalang will communicate with the audience, musicians, and community around him in conveying various ideas, messages, and information through the performance. In other words, this performing art has created a form of communication among the members of the wayang kulit group itself and the community forms a cultural and religious backdrop that is both directly and indirectly involved in the performance. The communication that takes place within a community with a varied background is considered an intercultural communication. This study examines the phenomenon of intercultural communication that occurs in the performing art of wayang kulit Kelantan that focuses on the element of music to prove the existence of intercultural communication between the dalang and musicians.

The twentieth century brought upon the initial concept of interculturalism and any distinguishable interaction, and encounter observed between differing human cultures is regarded as intercultural (Mohamed Razali and Salleh 2020). Intercultural communication is considered a direct communication between individuals and groups with cultural differences. It is therefore a form of interpersonal and face-to-face communication. It also refers to direct and indirect communication between ethnic, race, and cultural groups (Roth and Roth 1999). Piller (quoted in Kiet 2013) believes that intercultural communication has become very meaningful in handling cultural differences. Furthermore, culture must be seen as existing beyond intercultural communication, as an ideological construct that is sensitive towards the differences in social lives and among ethnic races and groups. Culture cannot be separated from communication as both are interrelated in almost every aspect. It refers to a shared system and this sharing allows its members to communicate efficiently and effectively between one another (Hall 2005).

Intercultural communication can be better comprehended if it can be shaped by skill and a chosen language that is easily understood. In other words, intercultural communications are more successful if groups within the community understand and share the same language. It is also in line with the meaning of intercultural relationships itself, meaning an interest in other cultures, the lack of ethnocentrism, a skill in language and a cultural sensitivity. This is because barriers to intercultural communication are negative behaviours caused by perceptions such as ethnocentricity, stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination (Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern 2002). According to Lustig and Koester (2006), intercultural communication occurs when significant cultural differences produce a different interpretation. It is defined as the ability to communicate effectively and easily with people of a different culture. It refers to a communication phenomenon between individuals with different cultural backgrounds and is present in direct or indirect relationships between them (Gudykunst and Kim 1984). In other words, the success or failure of intercultural communication relies on one's understanding of

a different culture. According to Brian Spitzberg (quoted in Neuliep 2006), effective communication is also examined through the behavioural component. Yong Yun Kim (quoted in Lubis 2002), on the other hand, states that intercultural communication is an event that refers to the people involved in communication, be it direct or indirect, who possess different cultural backgrounds.

Intercultural communication is a discipline under the theory of communication for studies relating to culture (Dainton and Zelle 2017). It is divided into two, which are verbal and non-verbal communication. Verbal communication is known as digital communication that contains words. Meanwhile, non-verbal communication is known as analogic communication that involves signals or syntax (Ramsey 1979). It is more to show behaviours, feelings, and emotions (Samovar et al. 2017). Music is actually wordless and is a non-verbal form of communication (Samama 2016). Signals are sent and received in music as do words and meanings in sentences, but unlike language, it is impossible for music to relay tangible verbal definitions. For instance, music is not connected to the physical world of objects. Music cannot indicate flowers, or a cat, or shapes, but only somehow express and depict it in a sonic imagery way. So, even though music is often compared to our spoken language and frequently referred to as a language, music is actually most entirely consisting of sounds or organised sounds.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE ELEMENT OF MUSIC

Music exists in every human culture varying in its complexity and progress. In a social context, music encourages group connectivity and bonding. Music increases teamwork and unity and according to Pearce et al. (2017), an expanding group for example can maintain social connections through singing and dancing. It is because music stimulates social and pro-social behaviour through simultaneous action and joint experiences across cultures. In human evolution, music is considered a cultural product that makes use of human's existing abilities and provides significant ramifications and value for human culture (Honing et al. 2015).

The purpose of observations on the music of wayang kulit Kelantan is to examine the elements and processes of communication that are involved in this performing art. This is to prove the existence of intercultural communication that contributes towards intercultural relations. Music is a common and shared element existing in all cultures and traditions because of its universal nature and its ability to enhance communication (Gilboa 2016). Music is a form of human communication that is universal and has the ability to transcend linguistic, physical, mental, and cognitive barriers to foster understanding amongst its members (Cross 2014). Music's function is not only to complete a performance (either for entertainment or ceremonial rituals), but also as a medium to depict emotions through music, rhythm, and tempo to portray a culture (social status). In the context of this study, music is categorised under the element of kinesics (movement), which sees the relation between music and movement, especially the movement of the dalang and *patung* (puppet), and paralanguage (sound and voice) as a main form of non-verbal communication. When members of a group play music together, they are simultaneously coordinating their actions to foster understanding and ultimately harmonise their performance. This coordination involves communication between the musicians and the dalang. So, non-verbal communication, which is described as a form of intercultural communication, is demonstrated here between the musicians and the dalang. No matter the culture and country, music determinedly demands the act of listening (Gilboa 2016). Although imperceptible and not obvious, listening to music is essential when making an effort to communicate between musicians and performers, and proves a vital ability, especially in an intercultural group such as Kumpulan Wayang Kulit Sri Campuran. Putting the importance of and developing this non-verbal and listening ability becomes crucial in the ensuing stages of wayang kulit performance, where it stimulates focused listening and attention between musicians and the dalang during performances.

The observation on music has found that there are various musical rhythms and forms of singing that are divided into several episodes, for example the rhythm of *bertabuh* music, leaving the palace, the queen walking (Siti Dewi), war music, *dikir barat* music, *mak yung* music, and others. All these musical types and rhythms require compatibility and effective communication between the dalang and musician to ensure harmony in the performance. Besides acting as entertainment, music is also a medium for ceremonial rituals (believed to invoke spirits); harmonising the movement of puppets (in line with the movement of the puppet on the *kelir*); depicting self-expression, be it happiness, sadness, or anger; and communication between the dalang and the musicians, as well as being a "signal" for scene changes. The music's rhythm is accompanied by musical instruments including a pair of *serunai*, *gedombak*, *geduk*, *gendang*, *gong* (*tetawak*), *kesi*, and *canang*. The *papan kesah* also makes an impact on the music, particularly during scenes of war, through the stomping of the dalang's feet.

Furthermore, music also functions as a signal to the community that there is a performance taking place in their neighbourhood or village. Through this “signal,” the local community and those living in nearby areas, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds, will come to watch the wayang kulit performance. In other words, the music functions as a meeting point for the community to uphold this artistic culture. *Bertabuh* music functions as a signal to let the nearby residents know that the wayang kulit story will begin. Therefore, the music is played for 20 to 30 minutes to give the residents time to reach the performance area. According to Merriam (quoted in Yusoff 2008), music plays three important functions in a community, “enforcing conformity to the social norm, validating social institutions and religious ritual, and contributing to the continuity and stability of culture,” whereby music will strengthen the values within a community, social institution, and religious rituals, as well as contributes to the continuity and stability of a culture (Yusoff 2008: 2).

Verbal Form of Communication

Through music, the dalang is able to move the puppets gracefully and in an organised manner behind the *kelir*. If the musician makes a mistake in a particular scene, the dalang’s movement of the puppets will be in disarray and bland. Therefore, it can be said that music is a medium of communication between the dalang and the musician. The important thing is, musicians must be aware of the changes in the types of music based on the verbal type of communication. The dalang’s dialogue usually comes together with bodily movements, as well as the characters he develops. As an example, the dalang Pakcu might say the following (excerpt from one of the scenes performed in Kampung Chetok Hilir on 31 March 2018 entitled “Darah Halkum Pok Dogol”):

...maka Seri Mas Maharaja Hanuman Kera Putih dengan longak gadoh menuju ke balai besar hendak mengadap raja...

...maka Raktu Senggora Api akan keluar berjalan menuju ke balai, dengan langkah anjur, berlimar jarang-jarang...

Based on the dialogue above, the phrase “dengan longak gadoh” means a suspenseful situation has caused erratic behaviour, thus the music of “Lagu Hulubalang” must be played quickly. On the other hand, the phrase “langkah anjur, berlimar jarang-jarang” means slow steps and short stops in between. Therefore, the music of “Lagu Dewa” that begins with the *gedombak* will be played slowly. As such, musicians must listen to what the dalang says and look at the characters brought forth by the dalang to avoid mistakes in musical cues. Mistakes made when the music is played will cause the dalang to be unable to move the puppets, and he will have to spontaneously change the dialogue, which will certainly have a negative impact on the dalang’s spirit and concentration. For example, while this group was performing at Kampung Chetok Hilir, there was a scene where the dalang brought out the character of Sang Karki Bentara Kala and the musicians played “Lagu Hulubalang,” which begins with the *gedombak*, therefore dalang Pakcu gave a signal that they were playing the wrong music, shaking his head, and giving the signal to beat the *gendang*. It was observed that the movement of the puppet stalled for a moment as Sang Karki could not walk to “Lagu Hulubalang.” During the half-time break, the dalang was seen having a word with his musicians and correcting the music, as according to him, Sang Sarki’s music should begin with a *gendang* and not a *gedombak*, as it is categorised as Javanese dance music, while the *gong* must be repeated twice. Additionally, Pakcu gave a signal through speech, saying “langkah anjur-anjur, berlimar jarang-jarang” which is typically for the character of deities or Sang Karki only, not a *hulubalang*. The phrase “langkah anjur-anjur, berlimar jarang-jarang” is usually spoken to indicate that the character will start to walk and the dalang will ask the musicians to play music that is suitable for walking.

Non-verbal and Listening Form of Communication

In order to be considered a musician with complete knowledge of the performing art of wayang kulit Kelantan, a musician, also known as *panjak*, must be skilled enough to play all musical tempos and understand all the signals or non-verbal forms of communication that are used by the dalang as the music is played. With the presence of effective communication between the dalang and the musician, the music becomes more melodious, the movement of the puppets are more graceful and organised, and the performance becomes perfect. It indirectly gives encouragement to the dalang. The compatibility between the dalang and musicians is the result of a long-established relationship that has enabled them to understand each signal shown by the dalang.

Communication using music arrangements

Musical arrangements play an important part in harmonising a performance. They are a level of communication that is considered “intangible,” and carry certain symbolisms and meanings between the dalang and musician. Each musical arrangement was not only arranged as such, but has a sequence that has been passed down from generation to generation and possesses a meaning and symbolism that is only known to practitioners of the music.

Looking at musical arrangements for the *buka panggung* ceremony and *bertabuh* music before the story begins, there are at least 14 types of *bertabuh* music. All these types of music are played to represent the narration of wayang kulit from the beginning of the story until the end, depending on the characters used in a particular story. In one complete story in wayang kulit Kelantan, there needs to be at least 14 types of music or *lagu* played, namely “Lagu Seri Rama Berjalan,” “Lagu Perang,” “Lagu Hulubalang,” “Pak Dogol,” “Wak Yah,” “Dewa,” “Sinar,” “Wak Perang Hutan,” “Mak Harimau Besar,” “Lagu Kisah Pak Yong Muda,” “Kisah Barat,” “Lagu Wak Sedayun,” and “Lagu Tukar Dalang.”

Based on in-depth observations on musical arrangements, it is found that each type of music is accompanied by several specific musical instruments that can differentiate the type of music. The musical arrangements differ from one dalang to another because the arrangement was inherited from their respective teachers and musicians, in turn, learn from the dalang. Each musician must be aware of the beats and blows by the music starter, also known as the main musician, to ensure the music is played smoothly and in proper order. Musicians must be skilled in interpreting signals given by other musicians who start the ensemble, be it the *gedombak*, *geduk*, *gendang*, or *serunai*. This musical arrangement must also be compatible to the dalang’s actions in front of the *kelir*, whereby the music must be played slowly or quickly, or the music must be changed. In other words, these musical instruments have their own functions and effective communication between the dalang and musicians is crucial for a smooth performance.

The music can also portray the social status and cultural background of the local community (culturalism). This social status can also be seen through musical arrangements that have a hidden symbolism. For example, it is observed that after *bertabuh* music is played, the arrangement begins with “Lagu Babu Sanam” first, although it is generally known that this character is not a main character in the performing art of wayang kulit Kelantan. Babu Sanam is the Prime Minister of Seri Rama and only appears for a while in certain stories. However, he is placed at the beginning of the arrangement to symbolise his character’s rank. Meanwhile, the music for “Lagu Pak Dogol” is placed in the sixth arrangement, although he is an important or main character in the storytelling of wayang kulit Kelantan. According to an interview on 21 November 2019 with Wan Mohd. Azmi Wan Abdul Rahman, a musician who often performs with Kumpulan Wayang Kulit Sri Campuran (also a lecturer who teaches wayang kulit music at the Faculty of Film, Theatre and Animation Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam), Pak Dogol typically appears at the end of the story as a saviour to Seri Rama and brings peace to chaos. Therefore, it is a symbol of the Malay character that is described by Wan Mohd. Azmi as “hero tak gadoh” (hero who does not want to fight at first).

Communication using music instruments

The *panjak* (musician) learns wayang kulit music based on the *canang* and there are no musical notes. This means the music’s tempo, be it fast or slow, follows the *canang*, while the *gong ibu* serves as a closure. The music’s fast or slow tempo relies on the dalang’s signals, either through speech (verbal), movement (kinesics), or character (physical appearance), that can be used by the dalang. A pair of *gedombak*, a pair of *geduk*, a pair of *gendang*, a pair of *gong*, *canang*, *kesi*, and *serunai*, which are categorised as traditional Malay musical instruments, have a sound that can illustrate how the instrument is played. Veteran musicians called “orang lama” learnt to play wayang kulit music solely through listening (element of paralanguage in non-verbal communication through sound and voice), also known as learn by heart and not through musical notes (verbal). Provided here is a depiction of the sounds for these musical instruments, as follows:

1. *Gedombak*, sounds like “cak...dong...pak...bong...tik...bok...”
2. *Gendang ibu*, sounds like “duh...pak...”
3. *Gendang anak*, sounds like “cak...ting...”
4. *Geduk*, sounds like “trup...trup”
5. *Gong*, sounds like “kung”
6. *Canang*, sounds like “ting...tong”
7. *Kesi*, sounds like “cin...cak”

“Lagu Pak Dogol,” which is played as the character of Pak Dogol appears is as follows:

pak tik pak tik pak kung ge dong pak kung pak tik pak kung pak tik...

Meanwhile, the music of “Lagu Hulubalang” which is played when the character of Hanuman Kera Putih appears, is as follows:

dong cak dong dong dong dong...tik cak tik cak ti cak dong dong dong cak dong dong
dong cak...

Communication using body language

The *panjak* also has to be aware of the dalang’s body language before the story begins, just after finishing the *bertabuh* music. Dalang Pakcu always recites a *doa* and *mantera* in Siamese called “wai kru” (paying homage/honoring the teacher or *sembah guru*), then touches his middle finger to his head and covers his forehead with his hand. Pak Dogol and Wak Long puppets are brought closer and smoked using incense as a *mantera* is recited (a reminder to Pak Dogol to look after the *panggung*). The dalang then places a thumb on the roof of his mouth (seeking a melodious voice that can hold out until the end of the story) and touches it to the bodies of Pak Dogol and Wak Long (the hand is rotated on the puppet’s bodies thrice). Then, the dalang touches the lamp (seeking enlightenment in the hearts of the audience and musicians). At this time, the music grows faster, and the dalang, as if clasping his hands from the outside in, recites a *mantera* (followed by war music), then writes a sentence on the lamp (seeking the audience’s attention until the end). During this time, the speed of the music is a culmination of the communication between the dalang and supernatural beings, whereby the music plays a role in uplifting the spirits. This shows that there is something symbolic in the dalang’s actions, as he is accompanied by the rhythm of the music. It also shows that there is a cultural mixture between Malay, Siamese, and Chinese cultures, where the prayers recited begin with a *doa selamat* that includes the word “bismillah,” which is later followed by prayers in the Siamese language, with words such as *dokma* (flower) and *pukcha* (worship). The dalang’s actions, such as worshipping (pulling his hands inwards from the *kelir* and clasping his hands) while the “Lagu Perang” changes, are reminiscent of elements in Chinese culture, particularly during prayers and the seeking of blessings. This act of “worship” is also the dalang’s signal to the musicians to change “Lagu Hulubalang” to “Lagu Perang.”



Photo 2 Dalang Pakcu, Eyo Hock Seng gives a signal for the music to change to battle music.
Source: Photographed by Eyo Leng Yan.

Communication using “papan kesah”

Papan kesah is a wood that looks like a clamp, which will be used by the dalang during the performance. The *papan kesah* will be tucked under the dalang’s thighs and will give a signal to the musicians during a performance. The beating of the dalang’s hand on the *papan kesah* is also a signal to fasten or slow down the music’s tempo. For example, during “Lagu Seri Rama Berjalan,” the music is initially played slowly. However, after the character of the *pengasuh* (the servant) or *rakyat biasa* (the common people) that accompanies Seri Rama appears, the dalang will beat his hand on the *papan kesah* as a signal to the musicians to increase the music’s tempo. Through my field observations, it was found that when “Lagu Seri Rama Berjalan” is played,

at first the music is played slowly. But when the character of the *pengasuh* appears, like Wak Long, Said, Wak Yah, and Samad, who accompany Seri Rama, the *dalang* will beat his hand on the *papan kesah* to give a signal to the musicians to quicken the musical tempo. This is because the *pengasuh* character has fast, frantic movements befitting its character as a *pengasuh* and “comic” in the storytelling of wayang kulit Kelantan. Therefore, the musicians must be aware of the signals from the *dalang* as the beating on the *papan kesah* is a point to either increase or decrease the tempo, or to change or stop the music. The beating is divided into two types, namely beating to increase the music’s tempo when the character is still walking, and another type of beating to ask the musicians to stop the music when the character stops. Therefore, when playing music, musicians must be aware of the *dalang*’s hands. When the *dalang* raises his hand to beat the *papan kesah*, the musicians must be ready to arrange the rhythm so that the closing of the music is not off key. Another hand signal is used in “Lagu Tukar Dalang.” The *dalang* will raise both hands as a mark for the *geduk* to start the music, which is a signal that “Lagu Tukar Dalang” has reached its end. During this time, all music instruments are played in a fast tempo until the *dalang* beats his hand on the *papan kesah*, asking for the music to be stopped. On the other hand, stomping with the feet is done to provide an impact to the characters, especially during battle. In other words, musicians must understand all of the *dalang*’s signals, which are considered a form of communication between the *dalang* and the musicians, forging effective communication.

Supernatural Realm Form of Communication

Wayang kulit music is also believed to be a medium of communication between spirits or supernatural realms. For the Chinese Peranakan who live in villages, they subscribe to a belief in *semangat keramat* (holy spirits) and that *dewa-dewi* (deities) can protect them from misfortune, give them health and wealth, as well as heal illnesses. *Semangat keramat* and *dewa-dewi* often appear during the *lok tang* ceremony or possession of the body of a selected individual, who becomes the *perantara* or medium (known as Tang Ki). Tang Ki is someone who is possessed and will bear the behaviours and character of the *keramat* and *dewa-dewi* that has possessed him. It is believed that the spirit that possesses the body of a selected individual will enable him to harm himself without causing pain, communicate with God, give advice to devotees, and heal someone’s illness.

Lok tang ceremony is often accompanied by wayang kulit music as it is believed to invoke the spirit of the possessing *dewa-dewi*, whereby the louder the music is played, the more aggressive the behaviour of the spirit. It is believed that *bertabuh* music will invoke the spirit of Datuk Janggut during the *upacara menurun* (trance ritual) to reside in and looks after a property for the owner from generation to generation, beginning with the first generation of people who discovered and lived on the land.



Photo 3 Datuk Janggut approaches the *bangsal* wayang kulit where the musicians are playing wayang kulit music to accompany the worshipping ceremony.

Source: Photographed by Eyo Leng Yan.



Photo 4 Communication among the spirits—from left: Datuk Janggut, Datuk Merah and Datuk Api.
Source: Photographed by Eyo Leng Yan.

Although this invoking ceremony is accompanied by a traditional Chinese musical instrument called *beng kecil* (small drum) to enhance the spirit invoked, however the *bertabuh* music is played simultaneously to invoke the spirit of Datuk Janggut. Here, it can be observed that there is a unification of traditional Chinese music and traditional Malay music in a religious ceremony conducted by the Chinese community in this village. It proves the existence of a two-way communication between the humans who are playing the musical instruments and supernatural beings, or the spirits invoked. As the spirit is invoked, there is “chemistry” between the spirit and the wayang kulit music.

This means the spirits that were invoked knew that wayang kulit music accompanied them as they emerged, and that the music is much preferred by these deities and spirits. It was also observed that during the apex of the *lok tang* ceremony, the spirit of the Dewi Kuan Yin (deity) called upon dalang Pakcu who at the time was at the wayang kulit shed, ready to descend and perform the *pelepas* ritual to keep misfortune at bay. Dewi Kuan Yin stroked a piece of prayer paper on the dalang’s body while chanting a *mantera* with the intention of casting away misfortune and bad spirits that may appear during the *lok tang* ceremony, so that the dalang and his musicians will not be disturbed.

For the Siamese community, on the other hand, they too believe that wayang kulit music can fortify weak spirits and cure illnesses. This was proven when the Siamese community at Wat Chinpradittharam in Kampung Tendong, Pasir Mas, Kelantan invited this group to hold a performance at a Siamese wat on 24 June 2018, to heal Bikkhu Ngoi, who was suffering from illness. Bikkhu Ngoi, who was 82 years old at the time, was the head monk there and had been ill for a long time. He had expressed his desire to watch a wayang kulit performance by Kumpulan Wayang Kulit Sri Campuran. During the performance, Bikkhu Ngoi could only lie on a bed that was carried out of his bedroom. It was observed that Pakcu, the dalang of the group, had incorporated Siamese elements to the performance to suit the location, which was at a Siamese wat. He inserted Siamese characters, Siamese dialogue and sang a traditional Siamese song called “Loy Krathong.” As Bikkhu Ngoi watched the performance, happiness was clearly etched upon his facial expressions. It shows that the music and songs in this wayang kulit performance was capable of becoming a medium of communication between the dalang himself and the patient, who hopes that his illness can be cured. It also shows the existence of an intercultural relationship between communities of different cultures, as they understand and can share a similar culture, or in other words, create a similarity. Similarity play an important role in developing intercultural relations, as put forth by communications researcher Steve Duck (quoted in Neuliep 2006: 355), “All communication and all relationships are likewise founded on a necessary base of similarity of understanding or similarity of meaning that facilitates the development of each.”



Photo 5 Bikhu Ngoi watching a wayang kulit performance by Kumpulan Wayang Kulit Sri Campuran.
Source: Photographed by Eyo Leng Yan.

Various Rhythms of Song/Music as a Form of Communication

In each performance, *dalang* Pakcu, who also serves as the *tukang karut dikir barat*, often sings songs in various rhythms, such as Hindustani, *dikir barat*, Siamese, and Chinese. The music that accompanies these songs attracts the youth who are interested in the more modern aspects of wayang kulit Kelantan. Modern songs are usually inserted into scenes that depict a character's journey to a destination, meetings, the love between two characters, or during scene changes. This is to avoid the use of too much dialogue that may cause the audience to become bored. The *dalang*'s ability to sing songs in various rhythms has caused his performances to be well-liked by the audience, which comprises various ethnicities. This is acknowledged by Lim (2011: 18), "Eyo Hock Seng [refer to Pakcu] represents the most modern and flexible position, which tends to attract a wide audience, and was the most optimistic."

Pakcu writes the lyrics to all the songs that he sings himself, using existing rhythms like the "Ayam" song, which has a modified Hindustani rhythm adapted from a song from *Jangali*, a Hindustani film starring Sara Banun and Sami Kaapor. This song is sung by Pakcu in the story "Darah Halkum Pak Dogol." In this story, Pakcu also sings a song called "Mabuk," which has a *dikir barat* rhythm, inspired by an original song entitled "Pulut," sung by Mat Rof Siam (a popular *dikir barat* singer from Thailand in the 1990s). Pakcu modified the lyrics using his own creativity. In the story "Riwayat Seri Rama dan Raja Rawana," Pakcu sings a song with a fast beat entitled "Pok Katok Gomok." This song, with a Hindustani beat, was originally sung by Pok Ku Kamal, who is better known as Pok Ku Mat. A song entitled "Suko Nok Bini," on the other hand, is sung while performing a story entitled "Darah Hanuman" and "Kelana Kaya Pati dan Kelana Kaya Muda." This song was originally sung by a well-known *dikir barat* singer named Mat Yeh Anak Singa and entitled "Hari Ni Aku Suko." In the story "Kelana Kaya Pati dan Kelana Kaya Muda," Pakcu also sings a Siamese song called "Loy Kratong" and a Chinese song entitled "Wo Ai De Ni" which befits their location in an area with Siamese, Peranakan Chinese, and some Malay settlements. The following is a Mandarin song that is sung in this performance:

Jin tian bu hui jia

今天不回家

wo ai te ni ya wo ai te ni,

我爱的你啊我爱的你

ni zai na li ya zai na li...

你在那里啊在那里

Although only a few verses of this song are sung, it is an effort by this group to attract ethnic Chinese who are also interested in their performing art. Realising that the audience comprises a mixture of various ethnicities, Pakcu ensures that the music and song lyrics represent all three ethnic groups, which are Malay, Chinese, and Siamese. For the story “Anak Kera Belera Sakti,” on the other hand, Pakcu sings the song “Mabuk” and “Nak Cium Hidung.” The song “Nak Cium Hidung” was originally sung by Mat Yeh Anak Singa. The variety of musical rhythms and songs performed by Kumpulan Wayang Kulit Sri Campuran shows that there is an element of mixed ethnicities namely Malay, Chinese, and Siamese that proves the existence of the phenomenon of intercultural communication that contributes to relations between cultures when the audience understands and receives the musical elements conveyed by the group.

CONCLUSION

Research on intercultural communication is very appropriate as the performing art of wayang kulit Kelantan is a medium of communication that involves performing arts and the group itself. Music is a very important element in the performing arts, as it serves as an intermediary or medium of communication between cultural practitioners and the community. Music determines whether a performance is harmonious or otherwise, as musical sound, rhythm and tempo will determine the movement, scene changes and emotions in the performance. Intercultural communication is said to occur when the community, which is involved directly or indirectly in the performing art of wayang kulit, comprises various ethnicities with different cultural backgrounds, but can communicate well because they understand the language and culture of another ethnicity. Effective communication, be it verbal (dialogue) or non-verbal communication (using music arrangement, music instrument, body language, and *papan kesah*) between the dalang and musician, also showcases elements of “compatibility” and “understanding” that contributes to a harmonious performance and relationship. The mixing of Malay, Chinese, and Siamese music also indicate the occurrence of cross-cultural in the performing art of wayang kulit Kelantan.

In ensuring a smooth performance, effective communication between the dalang and musicians is crucial. The musician’s failure in interpreting the verbal and non-verbal communications by the dalang will cause disruption to the performance. Here, harmony can be seen through the discipline that is incorporated into the performance from start to finish, which sees the dalang moving the puppets along to the music. This phenomenon shows that this group upholds a collectivist culture, whereby people from various cultures are brought together in a group that clearly shows elements of cooperation, tolerance, understanding, compatibility, sharing, and harmony. Music also plays an important role in strengthening relations in Kelantan’s multi-ethnic community, as well as strengthening the concept of cultural assimilation. This means, the Chinese and Siamese communities, which believe that music can enhance the spirits invoked and cure illnesses, have made the element of music a medium of communication between the spirits and the patient. This phenomenon can only be seen through this group as they are often invited to play a *bertabuh* music to accompany the worshipping ceremony in the temple or wat (Siamese temple).

In other words, intercultural communication strengthens intercultural relations within members of the group specifically, and the community in general. Intercultural communication and intercultural relations have contributed towards the continuation of the performing art of wayang kulit Kelantan to this day. Therefore, it can be concluded that as long as there is a mix of ethnicities in the performance of wayang kulit Kelantan that is pioneered by Kumpulan Wayang Kulit Sri Campuran, intercultural communication will continue to occur. When intercultural communication occurs, it strengthens the intercultural relations within the community in Kelantan.

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