

'Alam Melayu'

TYPES

of

GAMBUS LUTES

(Palembang & Lampung)

Version	Date	On line	Updates	
V1.0	Nov. 2016	yes	Creation	dHerduville P.
V2.0	Jan. 2017	yes	Additional pegbox patterns	dHerduville P.
V7.0	Dec 2020	yes	More addings /Lampung, Medan	dHerduville P.
V8.0	Dec 2022	yes	More addings / Medan	dHerduville P.

The **Gambus** designation nowadays took an unexplicit acception in the Indonesian archipelago, since the word became synonymous of “middle east-like lute” there. If the word is certainly rooted in the Yemeni name “Qanbus”, according to the homonymous lute of the Sana’an plateau, for sure, every current Indonesian avatars now embody various designs.

We are focusing here on the “**alam melayu**”, the historical cradle of the melayu culture including Sumatra isl, the Malacca straits, Western continental Malaysia & surrounding islands: Bengkalis, Bintan, Riau, Kepri, Bangka, Belitung and Lunik. Three main categories of **Gambus** coexist Malaysia and Indonesia:

**1. - Gambus Hijaz**, a monoxyle, long necked lute. Now rare and hardly survives reportedly in Johor state, Sarawak (near Kuching), Sabah (Semporna, and seldom in Papar, Bongawan), Kalimantan (**panting** music in Benjarsin /Banjarmasin) and various districts of Sumatra districts : Bengkalis, Penyengat, Jambi, & Medan. The Panting lute is a tiny avatar in South and South-East Kalimantan.

A minor variant is the **Gambus Bernuk** from Lampung (S-E Sumatra), produced by makers Fajar WIJAYA (Natar, Lampung) and Aang Ansyiori SOFYANA a.k.a. « Aang Gambus » (Yoghiakarta-based) . The most typical feature is a gourd-made soundbox. The local term for « gourd » is « **maja** », « **beruk / bernuk** »), and an unseen tree-like design.

**2 - Gambus Hadramawt, a.k.a. « Gambus Johor »**, an **oud**-like lute. We describe the relevant process in our doc “process\_malay\_gambus\_Vx.pdf” .A.k.a « **Gambus Johor** » in peninsular Malaysia, this is appreciated there still when performing the local “**Ghazal**” musical performance. This can be found still in Johor state, Brunei, Sabah, Java , Sumatra, Madura, Sulu. In Medan, one can observe some kind of a long necked variant, named **Gambus Misri** ( “Egyptian gambus”).

**3- Bruneian monoxyle Gambus Seludang** is a local crossover design family in Brunei and Sabah. Though often named “**Gambus Hijaz** “ , the bruneian making of “**Seludang** feature the typical 100% wooden soundboard - unlike the existing **Gambus Hijaz** and **Gambus Hadramawt** families. We describe the relevant process in our report: “process\_malay\_gambus\_Vx.pdf. Anyhow the acception of the term « **Seludang** » highly varies between Riau and Brunei - Sabah.

Now on the way to extinction in many places, the **Gambus Hijaz** lute is still (seldom) accompanying **Zapin / Jepen** dance (Ar. **Zafin**, a dance genre from Hadhramawt, still widespread in **Sawt**-like sessions in the Gulf countries) namely the local **Hamdolok** dance – Batu Pahat – and the **Zapin Banjar** - Kalimantan-. Unexpectedly, the term **Gambus Seludang** recently turned common in Riau (Sumatra) for the recent production of monoxyle lutes, where it is still lively, such as Siak and Pekanbaru.

Design speaking, the revivalism of the production in Riau province enlightens an historical prominence of the stylized hook-shaped pegbox, and the oblong, hollowed body too. The Indonesian name for pegs is **Telinga** (indones. *Ears*). The traditional shape of cross-shape section pegs is named **Tematu** (indones. *palm tree fruit*)

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The study of the **Gambus** lutery is focusing here upon

- the observation of previous production, acc. old items, as held either by privates or museums
- the observation of some few makers in activity.

The makers we have observed here are:

- Pak ARIFIN (Batu Pahat, Malaysia mainland)
- Othman BIN OSMAN (Batu Pahat, Malaysia mainland)
- Rahim KASIMAN (Johor Baru, Malaysia mainland)
- Tengku FIRDAUS (Siak, Riau , Sumatra)
- Irawan ROBITHAH (Pekanbaru, Riau , Sumatra)

Though obviously less standardized and smaller than Riau’s , the **Gambus** of Lampung can be spotted and segregated somehow easily from the surrounding ITEMS. In Lampung, the **Gambus** was traditioanally short (with respect to the local name bah. Indonesia **Gambus Lunik**). The oldest observed types date back to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their bulky, spade-shaped design is remnant in today’s lutery in Lampung , but the raindrop-shaped can now also be observed, as a possible influence from Riau and/or Palembang./ The skin-made resonator remains the mainstream standard.

Another amazing feature of the lutery in Lampung and Palembang is the amazing carving art . From the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, horse head-shaped pegboxes used to be observed, as a local variant of the widespread Naga pettern: hook-shaped, dragon head design, etc... Then seemingly declined, since carved finishings today are seemingly more minimalist. The hook-shaped is definitely more observed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Lampung regency, the stylized naga recently turned to a matter of less figurative carvings, i.e. amazing geometric patterns borrowed from the traditional weavings art (bah. Ind. *ikat*). Actually, such woven patterns are nowadays identity symbols for the natives of Lampung regency, they are now met for any recent pegboxes, including Gambus Hadhramawt lute. In the 2020’s the same **ikat** patterns have also been borrowed for additional painting deco purpose for the same lute.

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**Mading** blog: "Dambus : Alunan Indah Dari Negeri Serumpun Sebalai " a weblog about the maker ZAROTI at Pangkalpinang, Bangka Isl Indonesia , January 2014 <http://madingpgri.blogspot.fr/2014/01/liputan-budaya-daerah.html>

About wood-boarded **Gambus** lute making, see alternate file

[http://inthegapbetween.free.fr/pierre/process\\_malay\\_gambus\\_seludang\\_wooden\\_v8.pdf](http://inthegapbetween.free.fr/pierre/process_malay_gambus_seludang_wooden_v8.pdf)



Early Gambus type observed in a "Marwasi" trio (Palembang), by KUNST.



Carved pegbox. Palembang, 1905. (Picture courtesy of Welt Museum, Heidelberg.)



Old style Gambus Lunik in Lampung



Aang ANSYIORI SOFYANA playing the gourd made **Gambus Bernuk** (Lampung)



# GAMBUS LUTE – PEGBOX PATTERN (LAMPUNG & KAYU AGUNG)

01



02



03



04



05



06



Variations on the deco pattern of the naga. Items n° 01-06 old style (Lampung)

07



08



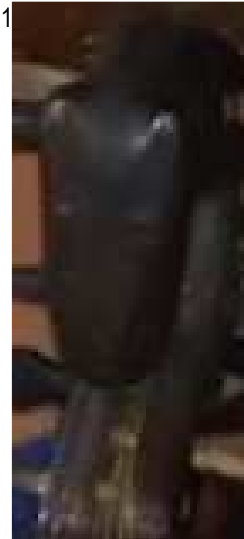
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10



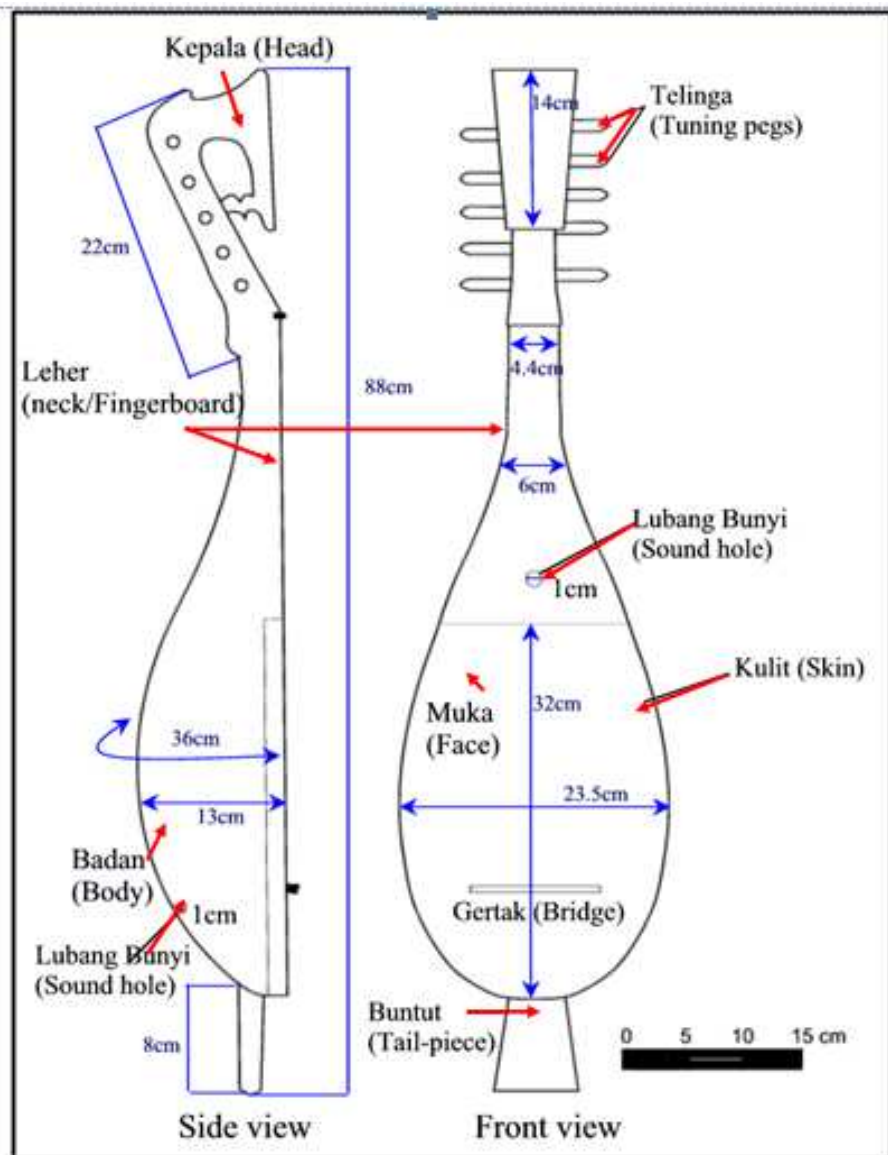
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12



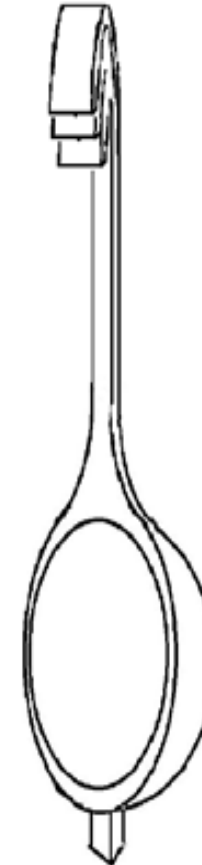
Various shapes. Modern ITEMS n°07-09 (geometric design borrowed to *ikat* weaving art Lampung),  
Horse head shaped: n°10 (Lampung), 12 (Kayu Agung)



08



09



The artist Hilmi Azia BATUBARA playing a **Gambus Misri**. Typical production of the region of Medan (N. Sumatra).

**Two body concept assy are present in the Alam Melayu:**  
MONOXYLE hollowed neck vs Plain wood neck.



# OLD STYLE GAMBUS SELUDANG (SUMATRA)



Item n°01 (Sumatra, 1871), n°02 & 03 (Palembang, 1905) , n°04 (Palembang, 1930), n°05-07 (undefined location in Sumatra),

OLD STYLE "GAMBUS LUNIK" (LAMPUNG)

01



02



03



04



05



06



07



Item n°01-07 (Lampung), n°07 (Bandar Lampung)



OLD STYLE "GAMBUS LUNIK" (LAMPUNG)



Item n°09-11, 12 (Bandar Lampung), n°13, 14 (Lampung)

OLD STYLE "GAMBUS LUNIK" (LAMPUNG)

15



16



17



18



19



20



Item n°15-19 (Lampung), n°20 (Kota Agung, Lampung)



OLD STYLE "GAMBUS LUNIK" (LAMPUNG)

15



16



17



18



19



20



Item n°15-19 (Lampung), n°20 (Kota Agung, Lampung)

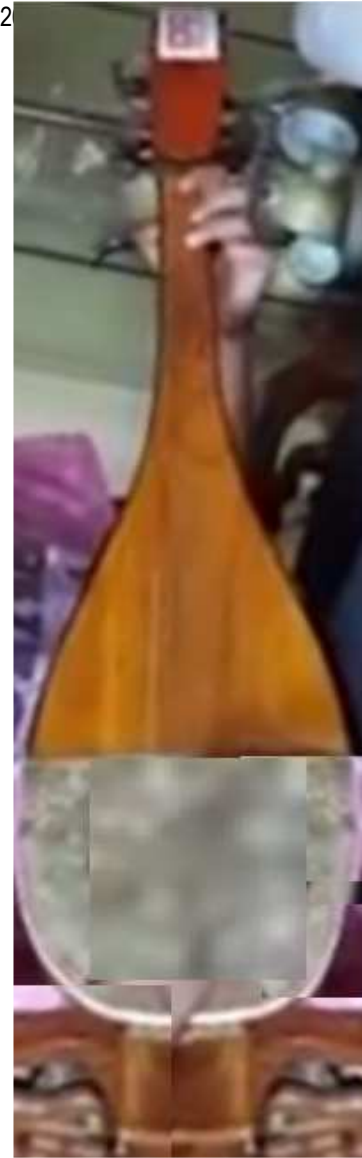


MODERN "GAMBUS LUNIK" (LAMPUNG)



Item n°21-26 (Lampung), except n°23 (Kota Agung, Lampung)

MODERN "GAMBUS LUNIK" (LAMPUNG)



Item n°27-32 (Lampung),

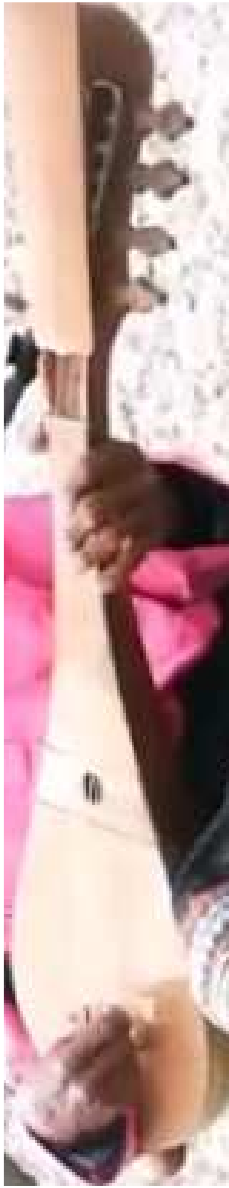


# MODERN GAMBUS (NATUNA & PALEMBANG)

01.



02



03



04



05

06



07



ITEM n°01, 04 (Palembang), n°02, 03 (Natuna Isl, Riau arch.), n°06-07 (Batu Brak, Lampung)