



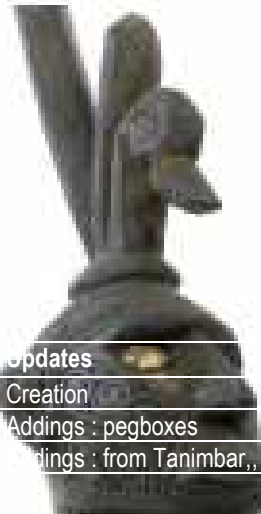
**-MOLUCCAS-**

**PEGBOX MEETS WOOD CARVING ART**



Version	Date
V1.0	Sept. 2017
V7.0	March. 2022
V8.0	Dec. 2022

On line  
yes  
yes  
yes



Updates
Creation
Addings : pegboxes
Addings : from Tanimbar,, Halmaera:

dHerouville P.  
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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’a plateau, for sure, every current Indonesian avatars now embody various designs. In the province of Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB), the “Gambus” name was corrupted to “Gambo”. This lute meets seldom the orthodox criteria with the three main categories of **Gambus**, as usually found in 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.

2 - **Gambus Hadramawt, a.k.a. « Gambus Johor »**, an **oud**-like lute. This can be found still in Johor state, Brunei, Sabah, Java, Sumatra, Madura, Sulu.

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** family. 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-. Considering that Johore’s **Ghazal** music now substituted **Gambus Hijaz** lute with **oud** in continental Malaysia, the relevant regional musical avatars for **Zafin & Gambus Hijaz** are nowadays **Hamdolok** (Batu Pahat), **Tingkilan** (Kutai tribesmen, south Kalimantan) and **Panting-Banjar** (south Kalimantan and surroundings of Benjarsin/Banjarmasin city). The name **Banjar** echoes obviously “**Banjarmasin**”, which is a harbor-city, situated south of Kalimantan.

Having said that, the Nusa Tenggara Barat province features a versatile lutery, possibly under influence of a late introduction. The instrument is mainly found in there in Lombok and Sumbawa as the “Gambo”. Due to the Hinduist culture in Bali, there is virtually no such gambo lute was observed in this later Island.

## THE “GAMBUS” LUTES IN THE MOLUCCAS

Among the thousands of islets in the Moluccas, the presence of the **Gambus** is difficult to spot.

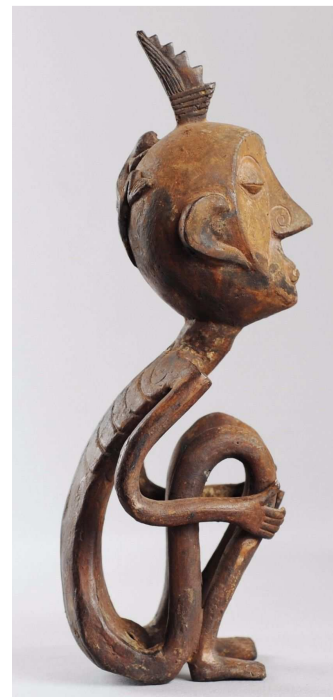
1. In the North & central Moluccas: even though more visible, the Islamic musical culture keeps on being rampant, in a context of competition with Christianity. In the popular culture, the lute is struggling with the prominent **keronchong** style.
2. In the south Moluccas: Islam was possibly not present when the Christianity finally landed the archipelagos Tanimbar, Wetar, Babar, Kai...in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The foreexisting culture was the animist religion of the austro-melanesian groups (Leti language). Indeed, a limited quantity of Bugis Seafarers might have imported the Gambus: some very few items have been recently reported in Tanimbar, now bearing influence of the local artwood..

Here we are speaking about a rare instrument, and few items have been observed so far. Technology speaking: all are monoxyle, hollowed out structure. The wooden resonator seems to have become the standard, even though the skin-made resonator is still observed in the North. Pegboxes seem to be mainly hook-shaped – not to say : “seven-shaped” -.

Indeed, the woodart of the Tanimbar / Leti Islands is unexpectedly observed in the recent lutery in Tanimbar. The animist religion of this area used to be a source of inspiration for a prolific art of wood-made and coral-made. Such figurative statues have been observed as far these islands have been explored, so that they are they turn to an identity artefact of these islands. The style of the statues is formally remnant of the Polynesian **Tiki**: That said, the sculpture of the seating male characters embody the seafaring or life-taking ancestors. The female characters are mostly representing the prolific mother goddess LULI. These later used to be represented while crossing legs.



**Gambus** player Sylvanus, as observed in Yamdena Isl (S. Moluccas)



Traditional sculptures of the deity – Leti & Yene culture – Tanimbar



**Gambus** lute player in Desa Amdasa, Tanimbar (S. Moluccas)



**Gambus** lute in Tanimbar (S. Moluccas)

Having said that, the boom of the Cilokaq genre as a widespread entertainment music among the Sasak froze the instrument as an identity accessory, rather than a real imitation of the Arabian style.

1. The existing tradition of wood carving in Lombok caused a *decorative digression of the lute artwork*, also involves the overall appearance of the lute, such as its colorful paintings, much regardless to the arab forecomers. The soundboard might be also be decorated sometimes with wooden carvings. Such unseen artwork of the wood became lately a standard in the manufacturing of the soundboard and pegbox. This turned out to a typical feature of the colorful lutes in Lombok. The carved patterns evoke obviously animals, or ancestor's and spirits faces.

2. Step by step, the **Cilokaq** style borrowed the usual instrument of the western pop, such as the acoustic guitar. Then the lute of the sasak **Gambo** went through the latest *Dejã-Vu* of the middle eastern **Gambus** and experienced western guitar-like accessories instead. Today's urban **Gambo** gears - namely: uke-like pegs, Flying V design, etc... - differs significantly from the (previous) middle eastern standards.

3. A growing trend to a late post-modern, junkyard lute, merging the latest trend in Cilokaq music and the cheap materials (wood, metal strings and guitar pegs, )

4. A marginal trend for "purist" traditions in Sasak music, or some kind of old style Cilokaq.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Mbojo and the Sasak 100% diverted from the original melayu art & backgrounds. The religious musics was possibly a temporary avatar, and the lute music seems to have definitely turned to some newly created secular genres.

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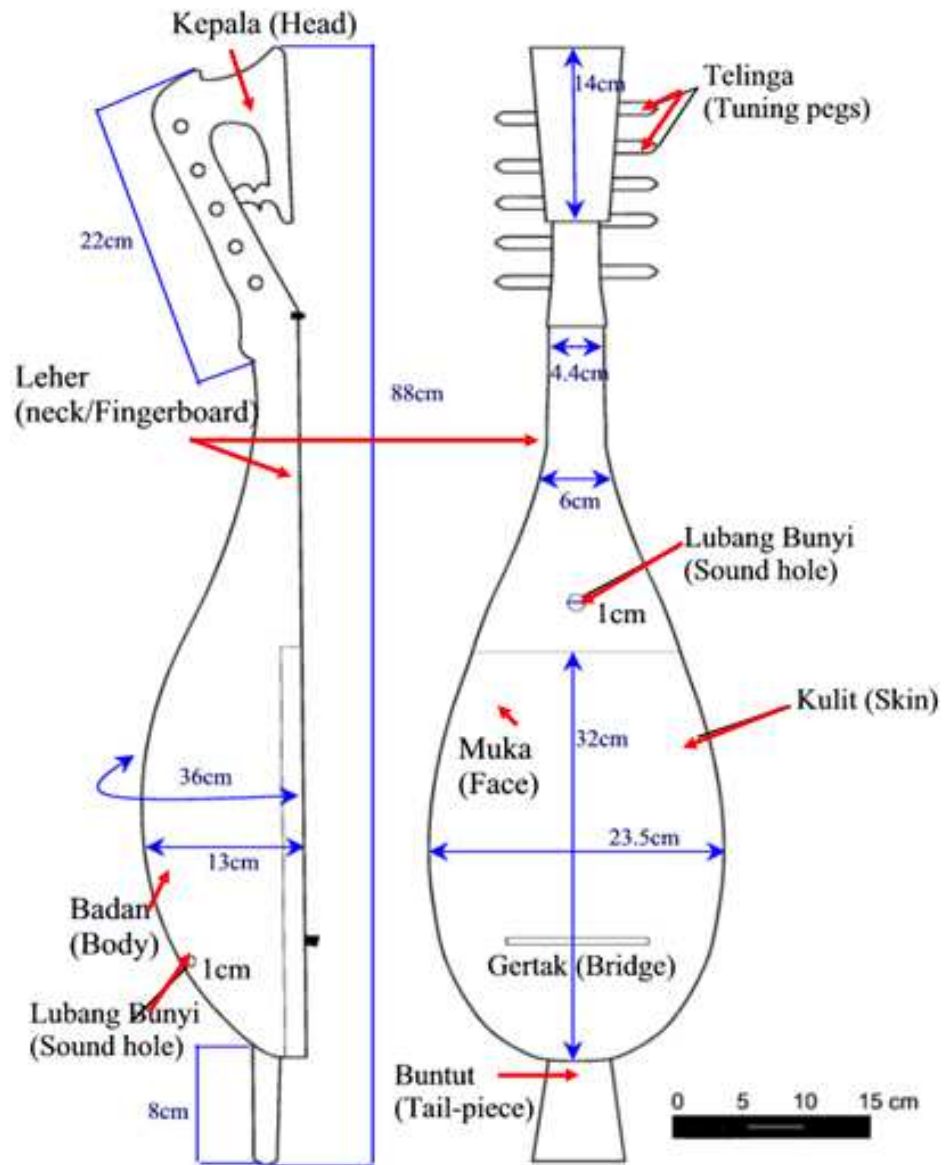
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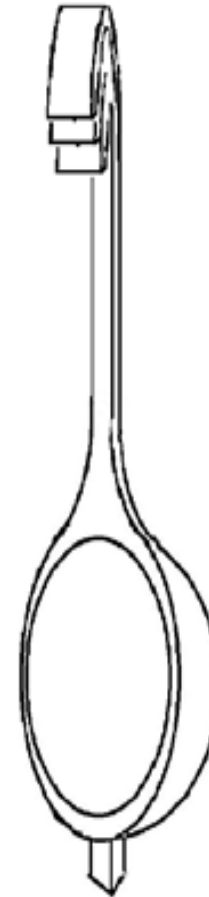
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Malay name of the components , drawing and data from Larry Francis HILARIAN

09



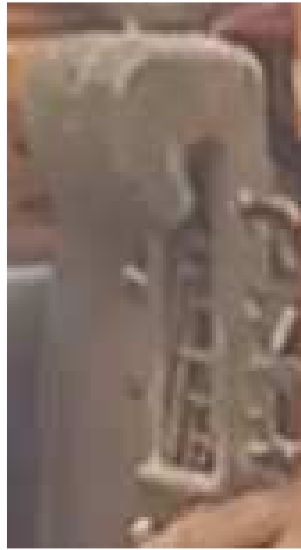
08



Assy concepts observed in Lombok



## GAMBUS LUTE – SHAPING THE PEGBOX (MOLUCCAS)



ITEMs n°01 (Kota Tual, Kei Isl) n°02 (Aru Isl, Moluccas), n°03 (Kur Isl, Moluccas), n°04 (Sula Isl, Moluccas), n°05 (Tidore), n°06 (Seram Isl, N. Moluccas),

07

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ITEMs n°11 (Tanimbar, S. Moluccas)

# GAMBUS LUTE – SHAPING THE PEGBOX (MOLUCCAS)

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ITEMs n°17 (Tanimbar Isl, S. Moluccas),

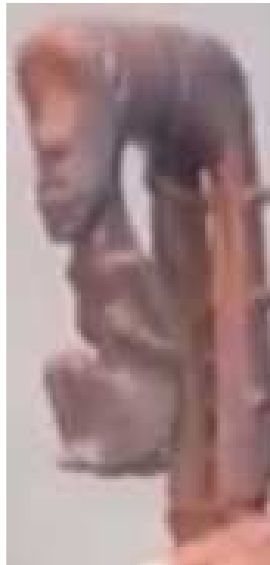
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21



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23



24



ITEMs n°19 (Tanimbar, S. Moluccas), n°20, 21 Tiki-shaped (Desa Amdasa, Tanimbar), n°23 (unclear in S. Maluku), n°24 snake shaped (Yamdena Isl, S. Moluccas)

# GAMBUS LUTE – SHAPING THE PEGBOX (MOLUCCAS)

01



02



03



ITEMs n°01-03 ; this unknown, antique pegbox was observed in an auction in Hawai , 2022. This possibly originates from Tanimbar, Moluccas.



## GAMBUS LUTE – SHAPING THE PEGBOX (MOLUCCAS)

01



02

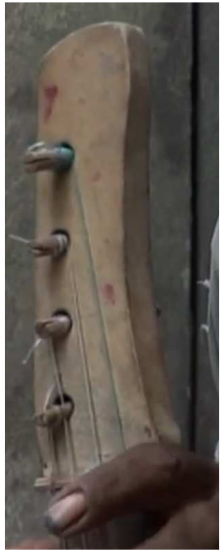


03



ITEM n°01 figurative deco of a resonator (Tanimbar), ITEMS n°02-03 ; this unknown, antique pegbox was observed in an auction in Ebay , 2022.  
This may originates from S. Moluccas.

## GAMBUS LUTE – SHAPING THE PEGBOX (MOLUCCAS)



03

04

05

06



ITEMs n°01, 06 (Cak?, Halmahera, Ternate Isl)

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ITEMs n°07 (Tanimbar, S. Moluccas)