

ARTISTIC CONFLUENCES AND CREATIVE CHALLENGES: INVENTING DANCES FOR *BORIA*, *BANGSAWAN* AND *RONGGENG* IN PENANG, 1900-1970s

Mohd Anis Md Nor
University of Malaya

INTRODUCTION

Boria, *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng* are among the oldest eclectic performing arts traditions in Penang that have survived the Second World War and prevailed up to the turn of the millennium.¹ Created and developed through the fusion of local and foreign traditions, such as the *Taziya* passion plays of the Indian Shi'te Muslims (which evolved into the *Boria*), the Parsi Theatre (*Wayang Parsi*, which is the forerunner of the *Bangsawan*), and the eclectic mix of Malay, Portuguese and Peranakan music and dance (which form the basis of the *Ronggeng* repertoire), these traditions became synonymous with Penang's hybrid culture. Although they are rarely performed and patronized by the great majority of people in Penang today, their legacy as traditions created and refined by the local inhabitants are important markers in history that tell more than just tales of creative geniuses or talents. This legacy, as myriad manifestations of artistic inventions, reflects the socio-economic and political environment of early Penang as one of the great centres of cultural confluence. This legacy also speaks of the openness in attitudes and perceptions of early Penang towards urban popular culture which provided fertile ground for the cross fertilization of performance styles that embrace music, dance, theatre and ritual. The processes must have been mutual and forbearing for they selectively allowed many cultural expressions to forge into tangible assets in the form of these three popular genres which in turn emerged as cultural landmarks and icons of popular Penang culture.

These three genres share commonalities in many aspects of the performing arts. They all have elements of drama, music, dance and frolic. The difference lies in the focus that each has on these elements. *Boria* emphasizes comical drama and chorus dancing (Ghulam-Sarwar 1994: 31-33, Mohd Anis 1978, Rafeah Abu 2002, Rahmah Bujang 1987). *Bangsawan* is a popular urban theatre newly developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a Malay opera that features sung and spoken drama, dance and incidental music (Tan Sooi Beng 1993, Ghulam-Sarwar 1994, Rahmah Bujang 1975). *Ronggeng* is an urban social dance comprising singers exchanging *pantun* (quatrains in

strophic form) in Sumatran style who are accompanied by different musical sections such as *gunung sayang (asli)*, *lagu dua (joget)*, *mak inang (inang)* and *patam-patam* (Goldsworthy 1979, Mohd Anis 1993: 49-50, Matusky and Tan Sooi Beng 1997: 323-334). However, dance as one of the performance elements is often interpolated, transposed or exchanged within these genres into a medium of creative invention that sees the blurring of boundaries as advantageous to the shared repertoire.

Popular social dances, folk and newly choreographed pieces were the mainstream expression of dance culture in the *Boria*, *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng*. They were, however, selectively chosen to fit into their respective repertoire by the performers. New movements specific to the styles of the dance genres were also created. The selection process and the invention of new dances within the genres of *asli*, *joget*, *inang* and within other novel genres were gradual and casual. New innovations and assortments of dances became permanent fixtures when each dance style and form began to be gradually accepted, imitated and replicated by other performers or people at large. The casualness of creating, appropriating and disseminating these dances, new and old, in the repertoire of the *Boria*, *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng* in Penang was partly due to the openness of attitudes towards dance. Dance was looked upon as being more than the rigidly defined concept of *tari* or *tarian* that it is today.

DANCE AS PLAY-PERFORMANCE

Although *tari* is the Malay equivalent to the word “dance” in the English language (“a structured movement system in ethnochoreology”), the word *tari* itself is not an old terminology. The word *tari* or *tarian* came into the ever-expanding vocabulary of modern Malay language to denote dance or dancing of the twentieth century. *Tari* originated from the need to socially motivate and culturally activate the indigenous people of the Dutch East Indies and Malaya towards some form of arranged movement motifs that may represent dance as showcase entities. In the days before the advent of a modern terminology, dance had numerous terms of reference. It could, for example, be the *tandak*, *igal*, *sayau*, *totor*, *gencok*, *joget*, *main* and so on. The terms are local and reflect specific forms or styles of structured movement systems peculiar to a region, dialect group or community. They may not necessarily mean dance in the performance sense, or a genre of performance in the context of *art form*, where individual and social activities interact. Instead a structured movement system in a Malay community is a social-game, play or frolic that is executed in a specific form and style. As in the word *main* or play, a specific structured movement system is a performance participated by all which is likened to a

game. Yet the game-play-performance interfaces game, art and aesthetics within the format of a specific form and done according to a peculiar style. Thus the realm of Malay dancing involves the sharing of space that is brought to life by the interaction of the community members who are both performers and spectators (Mohd Anis 2001: 238).

The game-play-performance as a specific concept that verbalises the meaning of a structured movement system in Malay folk or social dance traditions stretches beyond the boundaries of dance as understood in common parlance. Dancing or the reconstructing of any structured movement system deals with the issues of structure that is shaped within the scope of the ethnocentric terminology. As suggested by Kaeppler (1998: 48), structure that is shaped by form and style, are slippery terms. The form and style of a particular structured movement system may not be indigenous and autochthonous but they are cultural phenomena which can be understood through the dialectical discourses of language, behaviour, perception and familiarity. It is within these contexts that the concept of dance as a structured movement system in *Boria*, *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng* is to be understood for the purpose of sourcing and identifying the artistic idioms that had shaped and challenged the dance repertoire within the genres.

Constructing dance or *tari* could either be shaped by the need to showcase a specific structured movement system, or as a discourse of non-formal play or *main*. In the case of the *Boria*, the evolution of dance was through frolicking and playfully imitating the movements of people singing and moving to music in a procession combining certain movement styles and forms. In both the *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng*, playing and imitating stylised pedestrian movements that were both aesthetically pleasing and artistically eloquent that either fitted specific scenes in a story or tunes eventually took form as different movement styles. When movement-styles and forms become a structured movement system, a dance or *tari* emerged. This evolution of the *tari* from the act of playing or *main* through the processes of casual imitation to the formal structuring of a specific movement system in the *Boria*, *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng* began from the days of their inception as popular urban performing arts in Penang.

THE CONFLUENCE OF DANCE IDIOMS IN PRE-SECOND WORLD WAR PENANG

Much is left to speculation as to the nature of the indigenous popular dances in the early decades of twentieth century Penang. Other than the occasional western

social dances performed in the colonial clubs and ritualistic dance idioms of the Taoist, Buddhist and Hindu communities, many of the early dance genres of Penang were confined to ethnic enclaves of migrant communities. They were seldom shared beyond the confines of these communities. But there were exceptions to this where new dance repertoire are concerned. Inventing new movements or dance styles without precisely imitating specific dances of specific communities but through the synthesis of different dancing styles was perhaps more appropriate and less susceptible to communal disapproval.

The dances of the *Boria* had evolved through the blending of many playful styles of body movements. During the early days of the *Boria*, only the members of the Indian *sepoy* regiments took part in some form of chorus dancing for ten days during the Muslim month of *Muharram* to celebrate the *Taziya*, the Shi'ite ritual mourning of Hussein's death (Houghton 1897). Penang's *Boria* had evolved from the *sepoy's Taziya*, and had incorporated many other elements in the local performances. The lead singer and a chorus of dancers dressed in either imitation military uniforms or robes made from sackcloth performed the *Boria* in two different sections. The dancing and singing processions that took place during the day known as *kuli kalin* or 'chicken thief' was raucous and loud. Dancers painted their faces, dressed in animal costumes and wore funny shaped hats while performing improvised dance movements to the beat of drums. They sang poetic verses praising the patrons as they moved from house to house, collecting money for their evening performances. Although the night performances were weighted toward straight drama, the comic sketches, songs and dances were on the borderline between dancing and theatre (Ryans 1962: 63). They were performed largely in the areas around the city of Georgetown southwards within the Datuk Keramat area of Jalan Hatin, Kampung Jawa, Kampung Dodol, Dhoby Ghaut and Sungai Pinang, and into adjacent Air Itam and Jelutong. By the early 1900s, these areas were also the enclaves of the *Jawi-Pekan*, people of Malay-Indian Muslim descent. The demographic distribution of *Boria* performers was a crucial factor in reconstructing images of the early dances in *Boria*. Being in an area largely dominated by the *Jawi-Pekan*, it is probable that as the dancers sang and danced to the poetic verses most of the jostling and dance movements — from the linear formations of the marching *sepoys*, to their breaking into open formations and closing into processional line — were improvised. The most significant marker of a *Boria* dance of the period was in its rather 'regimented' formation of linear floor plans with the upright dancers' body carriage, their feet side stepping inwards or outwards from the processional line, and their hands holding props such as flags, sticks, poles and confetti. The wide and expansive movements allowed during the day were probably trimmed to accommodate the smaller performance spaces held in front of the homes of the rich during the night performances.²

The need to build temporary stages for the *Boria* came into being when performances became more commercialised and when these performances were organised into specific groups of rival performers. The two rival Malay associations allied to the Chinese secret societies were the *Bendera Merah* (Red Flag) and *Bendera Putih* (White Flag). Groups within any of these two societies danced with paraphernalia and performed while carrying their flags of allegiance which were associated with the colours they represented. The Penang colonial government eventually trounced these societies when riots became synonymous with the *Boria* leaving behind the improved sketches, dance forms and styles, and the intense sense of comradeship among the performers that had developed through the rivalries of the societies.

Dances in the *Boria* were more structured in the 1920s and the 1930s where performances were held on temporary stages built on empty oil drums or erected on tree trunks at its four corners. New corporeal expositions and styles of dancing were created as *Boria* incorporated an expanded ensemble of musicians playing the trap-set drums, trumpets, saxophones, accordions, box guitars and one or two other odd instruments in its repertoire. The eclectic ensemble of musicians and dancing styles represented the upbeat mood and attitudes of Penang urbanites that saw the emergence of new urban popular culture being redefined and represented in the proscenium stage of the *Bangsawan* and in the open mobile dance stage for taxi dancers of the *Ronggeng*.³ That was the era when *Ronggeng* dances from the mobile dance stage and new dances created for the *Bangsawan* theatre were copied in part and performed by the *Boria* dancers in single or double linear formation on stage. Processional dances of the early 1900s were replaced with *in situ* performances of music and dance on open trucks or lorries gaily decorated with flags, buntings and strips of coloured ribbons. The dances of the *Boria* on temporary stages were choreographed to a syncretic mix of Malay folk tunes that were borrowed from the *asli*, *joget*, *inang* genres of the *Ronggeng* repertoire, European *waltz*, Latin *cha-cha* and *rumba*, and sounds of Indian, Chinese and Arabic tunes. Colourful costumes of mixed origins and cuttings worn by the dancers gave rise to newer styles of performance that were equally supported by newer floor plans, dance motifs and styles of dance locomotion. Yet the dances were still loud and highly erratic in spite of the presence of some compositional form in an eclectic choreography.

The period from 1900s to 1930s saw dances of multiple ethnic origins merging into specific new forms to fill up niches created by the *Boria*, *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng*. The new dance compositions were based on some form of Malay tradition but fused with elements of dances from other migrant communities. One good example was the profusion of many new dances in the *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng* based on the *tandak* or *joget* as it was commonly called in Malaya,

Singapore, British Borneo and other parts of the Malay world. It is generally assumed today that *joget* dance is a syncretised genre that was developed from Portuguese sources in Malacca after 1511 (Mohd Anis 1991). It is also called *tandak* to depict the way dancers move. Thrusting their heels to the ground, **sustaining their torsos upright, they swayed their arms to the duple and triple** beat divisions of the *joget* rhythm. *Tandak* could have been a much older dance tradition before it was synchronically fused with some form of Portuguese folk dance. The Portuguese descendants, Luso-Malays or Malaysian-Portuguese of the Portuguese settlement in Malacca still dance Portuguese dances composed by the musically literate upper class elites in the 1950s or dances composed by settlement residents from 1967 to 1972 or dances introduced after 1974 (Sarkissian 2000: 89-94). One particular dance, the *branyo*, predates all of the dances currently performed in the Portuguese settlement and provides the only plausible link to the past. This, too, is a hybridised dance form found only in Malacca.⁴ *Joget* is believed to have developed from the synthesis of the *tandak* and the *branyo*. *Joget* is a word that denotes dancing and is widely used in the Malay world to refer to dance. It is also a specific dance form that had its origin in Malacca after the sixteenth century.

The differences between the *tandak* and the *joget* lie in the way the dance is executed. The grounded feeling and thrusting of heels in the *tandak* is replaced by the alternate stepping on the ball of the feet with the bearing of the foot by the weight, thus creating the feel of dancers bouncing a little as in square dancing. Arms are normally raised at mid torso level in the *joget* while they are allowed to sway forward and backward rather freely in the *tandak*. Movements in the *joget* are kinaesthetically wider, broader and more specific than in the *tandak*. The *joget*, however, became the base for many new dance compositions in the *Boria*, *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng* due to its versatility to adapt with other dance movements that used properties such as sticks, poles, umbrellas and headscarves.

As in the *joget*, many new dances were invented for the *Bangsawan* through the proliferation of Malay folk dances in the guise of social dances of the 1930s in Penang. The acting-dancing-singing scenes of the *Bangsawan* had incorporated all forms of Malay folk dance (including Javanese) and foreign dance styles that represented Indian, Middle Eastern, Chinese and European dances. These were showcase pieces and were performed within the operatic plays or during the extra-turns in front of the plain curtain in between scenes. The shift of dancing space from a communal or village centred environment to the proscenium stage had transformed ordinary folk or social dance into highly polished dance routines that made viewing the sole purpose of dancing on stage rather than physically participating in the dance as in the village.⁵ At this juncture, Malay folk dance took new forms and styles, one was old and village

based, the other was new and stage based. The former remained as village versions; the latter became synonymous with modernity and urban lifestyle.

Dances in the *Bangsawan* were composed to fit into two sections: dances within scenes and dances for extra-turns. Dances within scenes were composed to enhance the acting and singing of the star actors and actresses, *orang muda* and *seri panggung*, with the aid of a chorus of dancers. Usually the chorus was made up of female dancers who sang and danced in front of the painted backdrops of palaces and gardens. Since female performers form the bulk of the chorus dancers, many of the dances were pretty and charming. Thus, the dancing styles were more effeminate rather than coarse and masculine. Tales with Islamic or Arabic flavour such as popular stories of *Abu Nawas*, *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, *Laila Majnun* and tales of the Arabian nights such as *Sharifah Al-Banun*, for example, were enhanced with songs and dances that were a reminder of those from the Middle East. These dances were locally composed to resemble *raqs* or *raqasa*, the Arabic word for dance or dancing. They were, however, not pure *raqs* in the strict sense of the word since belly dancing (which was the mainstream of *raqs* as in *raqs al-sarki* [dance of the east]) would have been the focus of their compositions.⁶ Instead the dances were a mixture of *raqs* and an eclectic fusion of Hindustani, Persian and Malay folk dances.

Extra turns in the *Bangsawan* became the most important venue for new dances. At some point, extra turns alone, similar to the vaudeville, were performed when the popularity of dances, songs and sketches surpassed the *Bangsawan* play. The new dance compositions based on the older *tandak* or *joget*, *mak inang*, *dondang sayang* or *gunung sayang* and *gambus* dance (*zapin*)⁷ were performed with the singers crooning their songs while dancing with the chorus. These dances became more interesting when European dances such as the *foxtrot*, *quickstep*, *waltz*, *paso doble*, *rumba*, *tango* and *charleston* were incorporated into existing dance styles. Thus, two dance forms emerged: old Malay folk or social dances that were fused with European dances, and compositions of entirely European dances which were performed to new Malay songs. All these were eventually imitated by the patrons of the *Bangsawan* and were performed during the extra turns and on the *Ronggeng* dance stage.

The dances created for the *Bangsawan* became popular in the *Ronggeng* when patrons of the *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng* were able to dance with the taxi dancers, who were young female dancers trained in the folk dances adapted from the *Bangsawan* theatre. From the economic point of view, the relationship of *Bangsawan* dance repertoire and mobile dance stage dancers was one of optimum return. Taxi dancers were able to earn a living by working out the

popular dance routines often seen on the proscenium stage of *Bangsawan* theatre while the theatre thrived on the popularity of their new choreographies, other than from the pool of good looking actors, attractive actresses and talented singers. This led to the evolution of Malay folk dance from village dance spaces to modern dance stages which became more pronounced with the advent of large-scale amusement parks sited at strategic locations in the urban centres of Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Penang. In the 1930s, Penang-based amusement parks (such as the Fun and Frolic Park and Wembley Park) and the Kuala Lumpur-based ones (such as The Hollywood Park, the Great Eastern Park and the Fairyland) became venues where urban popular dances spilling over from *Bangsawan* theatre were re-enacted by the masses. *Ronggeng* reached its height in terms of popularity in the 1900s and well into the 1930s when the patrons of the *Ronggeng* adapted new dances in the *Bangsawan*. *Bangsawan* choreographers adapted dance motifs that appeared in the *Ronggeng* repertoire in their compositions. Thus, the relationship between *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng* as avenues for the exchange of new dance compositions was crucial to the development of the Malay popular social dance. This relationship lasted well into the post Second World War period where the fusion of many European dances with the highly evolved Malay folk dances of the amusement parks were projected far and wide through the Malay films that emerged in the 1950s.

INVENTING DANCES AFTER POST - SECOND WORLD WAR PENANG

A final thrust to the socially-engineered evolution of Malay dance in the twentieth century through the *Boria*, *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng* in Penang came with the inclusion of the dances into the nascent Malay movie industry at the end of the Second World War in Singapore. By the 1950s, Malay folk dances became indispensable items for the Malay film industry.⁸ Each and every film produced in the major studios in Singapore had to include dancing scenes to accompany newly released songs, composed and arranged specifically for each new film. This was also the period of prosperity for the Malay film industry. Every town and city in Malaysia witnessed the construction of new cinema theatres. Screen movies became the single most important media that linked villages and towns to the glorious celluloid world. Malay folk dance took a completely new meaning and direction, detaching from the old and archaic styles of performance in small village enclaves, and blossoming into new performance styles of popular culture.

Singapore, however, took a new lead in the development of Malay dance from the *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng* genres. From the 1930s, *Bangsawan* and

Ronggeng were already being performed in other towns in Malaya including Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and in Indonesia. However, it was Singapore that became the centre of all urban popular culture due to its importance as a trading and political centre for the British government after the Second World War. Two major movie companies, Cathay Keris Film Production (Cathay Keris) and the Shaw Brothers Malay Film Production (MFP) had a monopoly over Malay movie production in Malaya and Singapore. Like the *Bangsawan*, Malay movies employed famous stars most of them from *Bangsawan* theatre to attract audiences. Dances in Malay movies were adapted from the extra turns of the *Bangsawan* and from popular *Ronggeng* dances of the amusement parks in Singapore, such as the Happy World Park, the Great World Park and the New World Park. *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng* dancers found employment as resident dancers and choreographers with movie companies when *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng* began to decline in popularity. By the middle of the 1950s, many new dances were created for the Malay movies just as it was the case in *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng* of the 1920s and 1930s. The drive towards better dance repertoire and professionalism among dancers, instructors, choreographers and directors contributed to the rapid development of new choreography in all the dances performed in Malay movies. 'This was further enhanced by the borrowing of dance motives from popular Latin dances. The film choreographers continued the tradition of creating new dance motives from foreign sources as practised by the former *bangsawan* choreographers such as Minah Yem, Minah B, Ainon Chik, and Zaharah Agus. The movie industry not only encouraged new dance repertoire but also provided the opportunity for making these new dance styles popular with the public' (Mohd Anis 1993: 57). Penang was on the receiving end of these developments as many artists moved to Singapore for new pasture. P. Ramlee, L. Krishnan, Zaharah Agus were among the many talented artists, singers, dancers and directors who immigrated to Singapore and became new artistic icons. However, dance in Penang did not wither either.

In spite of Singapore being the entertainment centre in this part of the world in the 1950s, Penang's resilience as the confluence of creative energies was forged in the new dance compositions for the *Boria* and in nightclubs. Although the social dances of *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng* that were trendy in the twenties and thirties were on the wane, Penang re-emerged with newer styles influenced by Malay movies from Singapore. Dances in *Boria* began to borrow from the styles of dancing observed in the Malay movies, and from the social dances performed in local nightclubs. It was during this period that dances such as *serampang dua belas*, *tari saputangan*, *mak inang pulau kampai* and many others of Melayu-Deli from Medan, Indonesia, were performed in Singapore together with other new dances such as *tudung saji*, *tari payung*, *tari piring* or

tarian lilin composed by young Malay dancers from Penang and Sumatera. The former extra turn dances and the newly composed dance repertoire were performed by school children, adults and even senior citizens in Penang. Penang Malay school teachers were the purveyors of new folk and social dances, as they became the source for the teaching and the disseminating of dances among school going children in Penang. Many of the Penang Malay school teachers who graduated from the Malay Women Teachers' College in Malacca and the Sultan Idris Training College in Tanjung Malim in the 1950s had learnt and performed some of these dances. They taught and promoted Malay dances in schools. Obviously there was a shift of patronage; the dances that had evolved from the days of the early *Boria*, *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng* in Penang became the new repertoire for extra curricular activities in schools and social clubs. Although *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng* had lost their commercial appeal, the dances created for them had gained a new lease of life in Malay movies, schools and clubs.

By the middle of the 1960s, television took over the role of the cinema as propagator of popular folk culture, including Malay folk dance. By this time, *Bangsawan* as a living theatre and *Ronggeng* as a manifestation of social dancing ceased to exist as commercially viable entities. Some folk forms were recorded and televised by Radio TV Malaysia (RTM), the only single TV station in the form of short dramas or dance excerpts. An effort was made in the 1970s to promote folk culture through a series of competitions called *Dendang Rakyat* on Radio and Television Malaysia (RTM). *Boria* was the only genre from Penang that was recognised as living heritage which was listed for the competition due to its continual support by the Penang Malays. By the 1970s, *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng* in Penang had disappeared from the public altogether. During this period, dances in *Boria* had taken different styles and format from the many sources that had emerged through television broadcast. Its dynamism lies in the freedom of selecting any particular dance style that was customised to the structure of double line floor plans, music composition and chorus dancing. By the end of the 1970s, many of the old and new dances that were created for the *Boria*, *Bangsawan*, *Ronggeng* and for the Malay movies were not only performed in Penang but had also spread far and wide across the country. Some of these dances had evolved further and became completely new entities quite unrecognisable from the older styles although many musical and dance traits were reminiscent of older forms.

CONCLUSION

The processes of change in the dances of the *Boria*, *Bangsawan* and *Ronggeng* from the 1900s to the 1970s were not only determined by the forces of commercialism, vibrant cultural interfacing and social interaction between the

many ethnic communities *vis-à-vis* the Malay and the *Jawi-Pekan* communities but also due to the development of viable entities such as amusement parks and the Malay movie as outlets for creative energies. Penang had played such a vital role in the perpetuation of the dance tradition due to the openness of its people towards an eclectic fusion of dances, musical ensembles and diversity of the performance styles, which in turn mirrored the vibrant tenacities of its people and its culture to embrace the new world. Perhaps the most important factor that made Penang an artistic confluence for all kinds of traditional and modern creative energies was its history as a place where indigenous and new cultures met, diversified, fused and forged without prejudices and hang-ups that would have in any way obstructed progress and change.

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NOTES

¹ This paper was presented at The Penang Story – International Conference 2002, 18 – 21 April 2002, The City Bayview Hotel, Penang.

² The description of the *Boria* dances during the first quarter of the twentieth century is purely speculative. It is an attempt to reconstruct the dances of the period from the memories of many former *Boria* performers who had either performed some version of it in the 1930s and 1940s or heard stories of it from older performers. The most reliable sources of information were gathered from Abu Bakar Jaafar (Pak Khan), Daud Ibrahim, Abdullah Jaafar and Ibrahim Muhammad (Ba'in).

³ Taxi dancers were female professional dancers who were hired to dance with male patrons through the purchase of dancing coupons. The length of dancing-time allowed to the male patrons depended on the number of coupons purchased. Taxi dancers were paid a nightly fee, a nominal amount by the owners of the mobile dance stages and a good percentage from the dance coupons they received from male dancing partners.

⁴ However, the scarcity of information on the *branyo* from Malaysian and Portuguese sources may only suggest that the *branyo* itself could have been a derivative of *brundo* or *branle*, which was popularly performed in the courts and countryside of Portugal, Spain and Italy in the sixteenth century. There are many stylistic similarities of *branyo* with *brundo* or *branle*, which are performed in duple meter (Mohd Anis Md Nor 1993: 39-40).

⁵ Dancers in a *Bangsawan* troupe consisted of male and female performers trained in Malay traditional folk and western social dance. The dance routines in *Bangsawan* Malay Opera often borrowed the period's most contemporary Latin or western social dances to be performed with their repertoire of Malay folk dances. This eventually led to the practice of cross-cultural interchange of dance styles, mainly from the European to the Malay dance repertoire. Consequently, Malay folk dancers began to add new motifs, from the diffusion of non-traditional, European and Latin dance motifs, into the choreography of Malay dances (Mohd Anis Md Nor 1994: 132-133).

⁶ *Raqasa* implies folk dancing and other forms of dancing in a less respected or honoured gathering that are sensuous and erotic (Mohd Anis 1993: 16). The Arabic word *raqs* is a neutral term for dance. When added with the Persian verb 'to make' or 'to do', *raqs* becomes *raqs kardan* or *raqsidan* – 'to dance' or 'dancing' (Koepke 2000: 94). The reasons behind the deliberate attempt of avoiding full representation of *raqs* in the *Bangsawan* could be justified from the lack of knowledge of dance techniques required of *raqs* genres, or to the absence of qualified *raqs* teachers in Penang in the 1930s. Masculine dances (such as *bara'*, the *jambiya* dagger dance or the *lu'bah*, couple dancing amongst same gender groups of the *Hadhramaut* Arabs) were too energetic and gender specific to make it into the *Bangsawan*.

⁷ *Gambus* music is often associated with the sound of the 'ud, which plays Middle Eastern tunes. In parts of Southeast Asia, the word *gambus* is an indigenous term for a plucked lute, which is represented either by the 'ud or locally made long-necked plucked lutes referred to as *gambus seludang* or *gambus biawak*. *Gambus* music is accompanied with songs and dances (often performed by men only) in the form of *zapin* or its variants such as *jipin*, *jepen*, *japin*, and *dana*.

⁸ "All Malay movies produced before the Second World War were very much tied to the format of the *Bangsawan* theater tradition. Music, dances, songs, dialogue and comedy formed the basis of film making...The possibility of cutting and editing dance scenes in film-making enabled the film producers to use different camera angle shots to produce multi-perspective dance performances during the duration of a single song. The net result of splicing the different perspectives of the same dance repertoire was a collage of dance motifs, which bedazzled the moviegoers... Although the impact of Malay movies on the promotion of Malay dances was more significant after the Second World War, the period before the war was equally important in spreading awareness of the versatility of [Malay dances]," (Mohd Anis Md Nor, 1994: 143-144).