Institutionalising the Kompang for Primary School Students in Malaysia

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Malaysia is a country with diversity of culture and heritage. Subsequently it possesses varied traditional musical arts. One of the instruments of Malaysian traditional musical arts is the kompang, which has been played since the period of the Malacca Malay Sultanate. Nonetheless, the playing of this instrument has been decreasing among the community of late. Only passionate and interested parties such as art institutions, and cultural and arts agencies are still striving in upholding the arts of this traditional heritage. To foster the arts of this tradition, it needs to be nurtured from a young age. Therefore, a study was conducted to identify the functions of Kompang from an ethnomusicology view and children’s musical learning achievement by using Kompang. A library analysis method and statistical method have been adopted during field data collection. The study was carried out in a Malaysian primary school involving 70 children aged nine. This study was conducted for 12 weeks, including the practical tests in week 1 and week 12. Results show that the functions of kompang are as a welcoming instrument, entertainment, vocal accompaniment, communication, aesthetic arts, education and unity agent. The children’s achievement using the kompang showed a significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test scores. The results of this research are expected to provide information about kompang as Malay traditional music instrument, which needs to be preserved in this modern era. As kompang fits to be a tool in music learning, it brings a new perspective to all music educators to integrate kompang as an effective teaching aid. Furthermore, it is a traditional musical instrument that should be duly appreciated and maintained by the whole community.

Key words: Music, kompang, ethnomusicology, education, arts.
Introduction

Ethnomusicology refers to the study of non-Western music within the context of culture, exploring a wide range of topics including folkloric musical practices throughout the world (Bodenheimer, 2019). Traditional music art is one of the forms of performing arts that is owned and practiced for generations and associated with values. It implies belief in the social and cultural life of a community. Aristotle and Plato describe art as a beneficial and enjoyable beauty (Adams, 2018). Matusky and Tan (1997) defined traditional music as ‘folk culture’ that has been naturally handed down verbally in villages and rural areas. Arts and music have a close relationship with human life and nature. Music arts in the Malay world are perceived as beautiful art. Behind the beauty of the rhythms and melodies of music presented through the playing of music and singing, interesting stories and messages are conveyed. Music can present social behaviour and knowledge, as well as be applied effectively for those who have the ability to listen and practice local culture (Ho, 2019). One of the arts of musical heritage that must be preserved in Malaysia is kompang.

The uniqueness of kompang in Malaysia is that it can be played by various nationalities, and as such it could be one of the most important platforms for fostering inter-racial relations. However, lately, this heritage seems to have been forgotten and marginalised, and is only practiced by specific organisations such as cultural departments, arts associations and educational institutions. Kompang is becoming less popular in the community especially by younger generations. Its late fame has made it a popular instrument and in demand to be played in official, business and daily entertainment. However, the art of kompang is observed to be diminishing of late, since it is no longer being practiced by members of the community. This is also acknowledged by Rakasiwi, Syeilendra, and Putra (2018) who found that kompang is becoming silenced, as the community is unaware of the importance of the arts.

Based on researcher’s observation, kompang performance is not given much attention in Malay cultural events including wedding ceremonies. Compared to previous decades, where kompang was the main instrument which steered almost all Malay cultural events as entertainment. This worsened when some parties discovered that kompang audio could offer a short cut to the actual Kompang playing in cultural events. Moreover, the younger generation is progressively forgetting the art of kompang, as they spend more time on social media and gaming. Kompang has lost its grace to the locals (Lestari, Florentinus, & Utomo, 2019). In this regard, the critical significance of kompang to the community and to further educate the younger generations to participate in upholding the arts of kompang, especially to children. This awareness is crucial for a country which possesses multiculturalism, as it helps to strengthen the identity and further avoid the extinction of custom and culture.


**Kompang History**

The existence of *kompang* can be traced back to Java in the 13th century. *Kompang* was first used by traders from the Middle East, as a way to attract customers to their merchandise, as was undertaken by traders in Arabia at that time (Aziz & Wan, 1994 in Siti Mazni, 2007). Since its appearance in Java, *kompang* has evolved into Malaya, brought in by the Javanese. The Arabs who were also trading in Malaya influenced the culture of the Malay community. Later, the Malay community in someways adopted the culture brought by Arab traders and continued the practice at religious events, as well as celebrating dignitaries.

*Kompang* can be categorised into membranophonic percussion instrument. This is based on Banoe’s (2003) interpretation that percussion is played by a musical instrument where sound is produced by hitting, shaking, or striking against it, Thus the *kompang* falls into the category of the membranophone family of percussion instruments. Asral, Nursyirwan and Minawati (2017) defined *kompang* as a one-faced drum resembling a *rebana* and typically measuring 35 to 40 centimetres (cm). The shape of the *kompang* is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Kompang**

According to Asral, Nursyirwan, and Minawati (2017), *kompang* is closely associated with the Malay community. The physical shape of *kompang* is said to resemble a wok and has two parts; called the body (*baluh*) and hide (*belulang*). It is made of hardwood with a layer of female goat skin that comes with a leather grip called *sedak*. Amin and Baharul (2015) explained in more detail that *kompang* can be made from nyatuh (*kayu nangka*), leban, pulai and cengal. The quality of the wood determines the quality of the sound produced. *Kompang* parts including the body (*baluh*) and hide (*belulang*) are, nails, red cloth, *sedak* and *penyedak*. 

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Siti Mazni (2007) stated that kom pang has a specific size ranging from 22.5, 27.5 and 32 centimetres. Meanwhile, the biggest size of kom pang is 35 centimetres. Erwan (2011) added that the size represents the age of the player who plays it. Those aged 12 and below play the 10 to 12 inch, 13 to 15 year olds play the 13 and 14 inch, 15 to 21 year olds play the 14 inch, and adults play 15 to 16 inch kom pang. Matusky and Tan (2017) explain that the size of a kom pang is 20 to 38 centimetres in diameter. It is suitable for adults to play the 33 to 35 centimetres diameter kom pang while children are more likely to play at a diameter of less than 30 centimetres.

Matusky and Tan (2017) pointed out that good kom pang membranes are made of female goat skin. This is because the goat's skin is thin, clean and can produce vibrations when stretched and beaten. Sedak is a type of rattan used to stretch the membranes by inserting them into the kom pang, inbetween the skin and the body. The sedak is inserted using a wood known as a penyedak. Erwan (2011) claims that there are two parts of a kom pang that is the frame (baluh) to hold, while the hide (belulang), is the part to be beaten.

There is a belief that kom pang was originally brought by Indian Muslim traders who came from the Middle East. Traders have expanded the influence of the kom pang throughout the Malay Archipelago and have become a kindred art instrument (Pravina, Mohd Azam, & YM Raja, 2009). According to Siti Mazni (2007), kom pang is believed to have appeared in Java in the 13th century brought by Arab traders.

**Methodology**

The researcher collected data through library analysis from an ethnomusicology context. This is portrayed by analysing reading material from newspapers, magazines, books and articles from various periods to identify the arts functions of kom pang. Library analysis comprises methods of collecting data from library materials that have been carried out in studies as proposed by Saidin and Majid (2012). In addition, researchers conducted fieldwork to identify the achievement of children learning music using kom pang, by looking at musical practice test scores conducted before and after the study. The music tests focused on aspects of singing and playing percussion instruments. Two hypotheses are constructed to be proven using T-Test. The hypotheses are:

**H₀₁:** There was no significant differences between pre-singing tests with post-singing test scores.

**H₀₂:** There was no significant differences between pre-playing percussion with post-playing percussion test scores.
As a result, 70 children aged nine from a primary school in Putrajaya, Malaysia were exposed to learning music and playing percussion instruments. The children were given a three-month intervention, once a week for 30 minutes. To assess the children's achievement, researchers developed a scoring rubric and had it validated by experts. The singing test scoring rubric includes aspects of pitch, tempo, rhythm and expression. Whilst the percussion playing rubric includes tonality, tempo, rhythm, and playing technique. Three evaluators involving music major teachers and students were assigned to evaluate the children's practical music tests.

**Procedures for Music Learning Activities Using Kompang**

A summary of learning activities conducted is shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Learning Activity</th>
<th>Activity Summary</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Children sat for Practical Singing Test and Playing Percussion Instruments</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
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| 2.   | a) Children walked while patting beats of the song with *kompang* when the music was playing and stopped when the music stopped.  
    b) Children walked while patting rhythm patterns using *kompang*.  
    c) Some children volunteered or were randomly selected to play *kompang* and sing. | Recognition tempo activity.  
Application of movement components |
| 3.   | a) Children walked four steps forward and four steps backward, counting 1,2,3,4 in groups.  
    b) Children sang while patting *kompang* rhythmic patterns.  
    c) Children sang while patting *kompang* rhythmic patterns. | Singing activity, patting *kompang* to a rhythmic pattern |
| 4.   | a) Children sang as they walked and jumped in rhythmic patterns in a circle formation.  
    b) Children sang as they patted the *kompang* rhythm pattern with the accompaniment of music. | Singing and playing *kompang* activities. |
| 5.   | a) Children tapped the shoulder of their friend following the rhythm with accompaniment of song. The child standing in front of each group tapped the *kompang*.  
    b) Children sang as they played the *kompang* with accompaniment of music. | Recognising tempo and playing the *kompang*. |
<p>| 6.   | a) In pairs, children played body percussion in a rhythmic pattern sounded. | Body percussion, |</p>
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| 7. |   | b) Children sang along while patting to two rhythmic patterns that have been learned using the *kompang* with accompaniment of music.  
   |   | singing and playing *kompang*.  
|   | a) Children listened to songs as they moved in different directions.  
   |   | Si   ng to the tempo of the song and playing the *kompang*.  
|   | b) Children tapped to the rhythmic pattern they have learned as the song was heard as they moved in different directions.  
   |   |   
|   | c) Children sang along while patting to two rhythmic patterns that have been learned using the *kompang* with accompaniment of music.  
| 8. |   | a) Children patted to the rhythmic patterns on the *kompang* that a friend was holding, in a group. Activities were performed while singing songs.  
|   |   | Pat to the rhythmic pattern, sing while playing the *kompang*.  
|   | b) Children performed.  
|   | c) Children sang along while patting to two rhythmic patterns that have been learned using the *kompang* with accompaniment of music.  
| 9. | a) Children walked on tip-toes (lightly) while singing with soft dynamics and tip-toe heavily while singing with loud dynamic.  
|   |   | Making movement, singing while playing the *kompang*.  
|   | b) In pairs, children practiced singing while playing the *kompang* according to the sign or dynamic gestures shown.  
|   | c) Children sang while playing the *kompang* together.  
| 10. | a) Children walked and jumped in their own style according to rhythmic patterns played while singing songs dynamically.  
|   |   | Singing with movement and performing with the *kompang*.  
|   | b) They could also move in various directions and apply dynamics according to the creativity of the group.  
|   | c) Children performed group performances.  
| 11. | a) Children chose rhythmic patterns and planned appropriate movements while singing songs according to the dynamics of their groups.  
|   |   | Singing and playing the *kompang* dynamically.  
|   | b) Children performed group performances.  
|   | c) Children sang songs they have learned while playing *kompang*.  
| 12. | Children took the Practical Singing Test and Playing Percussion Instruments | Post-Test  
|   |   |   

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Results

*Ethnomusicology Library Analysis*

Based on the academic material studied, library findings on the functions of kompang are presented as follows. In the early stages, kompang was played to welcome the arrival of royalty and palace dignitaries (Pravina et.al, 2009). The presence of kompang music can be found in the presentation of the Majlis Tepung Tawar, Majlis Berinai, accompanying the bride, accompanying Pencak Silat, sending and welcoming Muslims to perform the pilgrimage, and welcoming the arrival of state dignitaries. Today, playing kompang is expanding and can be played at almost all official events, national day parades, to liven up sports activities, orchestras, and inaugural gimmicks (Erwan, 2011). During the events, kompang was found to welcome and accompany the very important guests (VIP) to launch the event.

Furthermore, the function of kompang is for entertainment. Soedarsono (1998) in Ruseli and Minawati (2017) professed that kompang is an art of entertainment in the community and an identical notion was claimed in research conducted by Rakasiwi, Syeilendra, and Putra, (2018). Kompang is considered as a traditional art to express feelings, as well as an aesthetic complement for entertainment. Ramadona and Nursyirwan (2014) explain that kompang performance by certain groups of people accompanying the guests and the bride is assumed as entertainment. Among the most entertaining performance is the Pertunjukan Atraksi Kompang and Persembahan Kompang Formasi, which involves singing and movement (Amin & Baharul, 2015; Ramadona & Nursyirwan, 2014).

Kompang serves as a vocal accompaniment. According to Ruseli and Minawati (2017) the rhythmic pattern of playing is usually in line with the singing of syllables as in Figure 2. The rhythmic pattern of playing also accompanies the movement of vocal melodies, hence the concept of presentation between playing a rhythm and the singing of vocal melodies, can be said to be a unity formed concept of playing kompang. This is strengthened by the study of Rakasiwi, Syeilendra, and Putra (2018) who practised kompang to accompany the songs of Shalawat Badar, Pillars of Islam, and Asholla. Asral, Nursyirwan, and Minawati (2017) state that the melodies are in line with the playing rhythmic pattern beat of the kompang, where sometimes the rhythm of the beat accompanies the vocals and sometimes the rhythm pattern beats on its own, without the vocals.
Playing kompeng is one of the methods that can be applied as a medium for communicating and educating. This is because playing kompeng is not an obligation but a way of appreciating
culture and equipping people with religious, moral, cultural, beauty, and aesthetic values. It is said to be extremely valuable in giving the community an opportunity to experience the art traditionally, and to produce cultured people (Syahroni, 2011). This is related to Hidayat, Nursyirwan, and Minawati’s (2017) notion that the art of kompong fosters social product of society, that promotes interaction between residents in cultural events. Subsequently, a cultural event is observed as giving the kompong performer a chance to entertain guests and to attract the community to celebrate the country's musical heritage.

Asral, Nursyirwan, and Minawati (2017) explain that the art of kompong influences the aesthetics of Islam and the Malay world. Kompong is presented in Islamic religious activities and specific Malay cultural activities, in controlling the tempo of the religious songs. Singing with kompong accompaniment may smooth the tongue, whilst the reciting of letters in the kitab at Malay cultural festivals. Religious activities which exercise kompong such as marhaban and berzanji are a platform for fostering unity among members of the community as declared by Chan (2019). People sing the Arabic text in the holy book (kitab) as Figure 3. Also, kompong is perceived to be a preserver of the nation's heritage and fosters closer relationships (Samat, Tibek, Muhamat, & Hamzah, 2015). Syahroni (2011) emphasised that the art of kompong does not only provide insight into the history of religion, the preaching medium and entertainment media for the people; but also contains aesthetic values and good and beneficial moral messages for society.
The functions of *kompang* also exist as a medium of education in schools. *Kompang* has been recognised as a privileged tool that enhances children's learning in line with western music science, as it is embedded in the educational curriculum (Ismail et al., 2018). Abdullah (2009) described the content of the syllabus formulated by incorporating an ensemble of choice is one of the efforts to bring art heritage, formerly learned informally, into formal education such as *kompang*, *gamelan*, and *caklempong*. Through the application of the art of *kompang* in formal education, children can learn *kompang*, which is one of the country's traditional musical instruments (Abdullah, 2004). This is aligned the researcher’s experience that when pupils are taught to play *kompang* in class, the sound and *kompang* playing techniques can improve the pupils’ sensitivity towards music. Pupils’ music skills especially in rhythm, melody, tonality and expression were obviously improved. Values such as discipline, respect and cooperation are also reflected in the activities undertaken as mentioned by Md Jais and Loo (2018).
In addition to being taught in the classroom, playing *kompang* can serve as a supportive curriculum activity and can be applied in competition. There is a potential to compete at district, state and even national levels. The press statement written by Nandu (2012) clearly demonstrates that *kompang* is well played and competed between primary schools throughout the country. The success of Victoria Secondary School, Kuala Lumpur, which incorporated the percussion *kompang* in its band in Kerkerk, Holland in 2005, clearly exhibits that the art of *kompang* has the potential to be promoted internationally (Nandu, 2012). Moreover, *kompang* activity that was competed at the primary and secondary levels was the *Kompang Formasi* as Figure 4. The competition was first pioneered by the Perak State Education Department in 2001. Later, the ministry allowed the competition to be extended to all primary schools (Amin and Baharul, 2015). According to Amin and Bahrul (2015), through this competition, *kompang* functions to nurture and develop children's potential, to provide experiences, to generate creative ideas, and to build children's confidence and skills.

**Figure 4. Kompang Formasi**

The participation of students from all walks of life learning to use *kompang* in schools has implicitly made it a unity agent. It serves as a symbol of strengthening multi-racial students’ relationships while also acts to create a community that loves the national culture and furthers national integration. Through this activity, it can also nurture students to be creative, innovative and disciplined. This is in line with Fadilah (2012) who professed that arts activities conducted in schools can attract students to learn, improve vocabulary, encourage collaboration and enhance creativity.
Kompang playing activities should be taught in schools, institutes of higher learning and government departments in Malaysia (Pravina et.al, 2009). Kompang performances appear to be tied to traditional methods but have the potential to offer new life in line with current development trends. It can be an agent of unity in a multiracial country such as Malaysia and is an important tool in shaping children's identity in schools (Amin & Baharul, 2015). In keeping with the modern flow, kompong is played along with popular songs and not only accompanying Islamic-themed songs. Siti (2016) explained that it does not only serve as entertainment but is also a source of income. It is regarded as an art that is full of religious lessons, as well as good and beneficial values to preserve and serve as cultural heritage (Syahroni, 2011).

Data Analysis

The scores obtained from the music performance tests were analysed using statistical methods. The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to obtain the significance and to prove the hypotheses.

Ho1: There was no significant difference between pre-test and post-test singing scores.

Paired T tests was carried out to compare pre-test and post-test singing scores. Based on Table 2, it was found that post-test scores (M = 68.4, SP = 13.62) showed higher achievement than pre-test scores (M = 62.83, SD = 15.11). The results of the paired T test results with values of t (69) = −3.22, p = 0.002, 95% CI [−9.03, −2.12], indicated that the significance value is smaller than alpha (p <0.05), proving the null hypothesis to be rejected. Therefore, there was a significant difference in pre-test and post-test singing scores.

Table 2: Paired T Test of Singing Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre- Test</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>62.83</td>
<td>15.11</td>
<td>-3.22</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Test</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>13.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ho2: There was no significant difference between pre-test and post-test percussion scores

Paired T tests were carried out to compare pre-test and post-test percussion scores. Based on Table 3, it was found that post-test scores (M = 67.11, SP = 9.09) showed higher achievement than pre-test scores (M = 59.31, SP = 8.19). The results of the paired T test results with t (69) = −5.64, p = 0.000, 95% CI [−10.56, −5.04], indicated that the significance value is smaller than alpha (p <0.05), proving the null hypothesis to be rejected. Therefore, there was a significant difference in pre-test and post-test percussion scores.
Table 3: Paired T-Test for Percussion Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-Value</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>59.31</td>
<td>8.19</td>
<td>-5.64</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post test</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>67.11</td>
<td>9.09</td>
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</table>

Discussion

Based on the study results, we found kompong possesses vital functions as entertainment in the palace, religious and customary ceremonies from past centuries. It has the potential to expand into many other events today such as sports events, independence celebrations, retirement ceremonies, and weddings. It also serves to showcase the aesthetics of the Malay arts through unique physical design and playing techniques. Kompong is also found to be very important as a mechanism for unity not only among Malays, but also deepens relationships with other nationalities. This benefits the countries which consist of many nationalities as explained by Crawford (2018), music arts motivate people in multicultural to be united using socially inclusive practices. Individuals of different nationalities have the opportunity to play kompong in events. Its functions are becoming increasingly significant, as it is integrated into the national education system through learning activities across academic fields. It is also brought up at national level competition. It demonstrates the function of kompong as arts to educate students in the school of cognitive, social and spiritual aspects associated with studies by Harrison (2019), Moss (2019), and Katsaros (2018).

Kompong’s effectiveness in music learning activities in schools has also been demonstrated in data analysis. Results revealed that children learning music using kompong showed significantly improved achievement in singing and percussion playing. These results also indicated that the use of kompong is relevant and appropriate as learning aids which can greatly influence children's achievement as proposed by Md Jais and Loo (2018). Its usefulness as a teaching tool indicates that traditional arts may help in mainstream education, especially in music classes involving singing and playing musical instruments. To conclude, kompong is an effective arts tool that has potential to enhance students’ academic and non-academic achievements as stated by Miller and Bogatova (2018).

In general, kompong plays a salient role in upholding a community identity and culture. Pertaining to current situations, kompong has the important functions of welcoming guests, accompanying muslim maulidurrasul celebration, entertainment in school events such as teachers’ day and retirement of staff. Additionally, kompong lessons may also enrich music curriculum. Teachers may employ kompong in their music class as a tool to explore the elements of rhythm, tempo, expression and texture. It has potential to be an effective tool beyond music subjects, as non-music teachers can teach it in the classroom to relate kompong as the arts and heritage of the nation. The aesthetics of kompong can also be developed by
technology. With the rapid development of technology, the teaching of kompang can be diversified with modern teaching using software, virtual and visual learning as explained by Leng, Norowi, and Jantan (2018). In the globalised world, many traditional instruments have gone through various transformations and they are used even in other traditional or popular genres, as found in other research (Loo & Loo, 2012; Loo & Loo, 2014; Loo & Loo 2016). In contrast, traditional theories used in modern or Western education or performances, was also examined (Loo & Loo, 2011 & Loo & Loo, 2012). These hybrid performances received positive reception among audiences due to the transformation and fusion with popular genres (Loo, Loo & Tee, 2014; Loo, 2019; Loo, Loo & Toon, 2016), and could be one of the encouraged approaches in introducing traditional genre to the community.

Conclusion

Kompang is a traditional musical instrument that should be upheld and preserved. The community should be aware that through kompang, it can showcase the arts and culture of particular nationalities. It is essential that it is handed to the next generation to foster, strengthen and maintain the spirit of national unity and integration among the people. Kompang is part of the nation's artistic heritage, which portrays the identity of the community that should be preserved in pluralistic society, especially in Malaysia. The researchers suggest that the younger generation should be exposed to kompang at school, as it acts as a fair platform to illustrate the arts of kompang. It should be nurtured at an early age by utilising kompang as a teaching aid in all schools. Moreover, traditional kompang is a mechanism that enables communication, improves education and upholds the arts of the nation as recommended by Roy, Baker, and Hamilton (2019). Although the playing of kompang is not a must, but it is a culturally competent way of equipping oneself with religious values, moral, customs, beauty, and gracefulness. It is hoped that this study may render the grace of kompang to locals, and become an effective tool to assist music education in school.
REFERENCES


