SAMPLE

The Guardian's Shadow: Bajang

Malay Folklore, the Civet Familiar, and the Spirit That Hunts Children

Aiden Nightfall

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The Guardian's Shadow

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Introduction

In the forests of the Malay Peninsula, there is a creature that moves through the trees at night — small, quick, and quiet. The villagers know it as the musang, the civet cat, a common animal that is neither feared nor remarkable. But in the villages where the old beliefs survive, the musang is not always just a musang. Sometimes it is something else. Sometimes it is the bajang.

The bajang is a familiar spirit — a created being, bound to a human owner, used as a weapon. Like the polong and the pelesit, it is kept in a container, fed by its master, and deployed against enemies. But the bajang is distinct from its counterparts in several critical ways. It is created from the body of a stillborn child — specifically, a stillborn male child. It is traditionally kept only by men — the male counterpart to the female-owned pelesit. It takes the form of a civet cat, not an insect. It is kept in a bamboo tube, not a bottle. And it is fed with eggs and milk, not blood.

Most importantly, the bajang is the spirit that targets children. Where the polong possesses adults and the pelesit scouts for the polong, the bajang's primary victims are infants and young children. It causes convulsions, unconsciousness, and delirium — symptoms that, in a pre-modern society with high infant mortality, would have been terrifying and inexplicable. The bajang was the explanation for the unexplained: the child who suddenly convulses, the baby who falls into a fever, the toddler who loses consciousness without warning.

This is the eighth volume in The Guardian's Shadow series, an educational guide to the supernatural entities of Southeast Asian folklore. As with every volume, the question is not "is it real?" but "what does this tradition teach us?" The bajang tradition teaches us about the weaponisation of stillbirth — the transformation of a family's grief into a weapon. It teaches us about the gendered division of dark magic — men keep bajangs, women keep pelesits, and the two represent parallel but distinct forms of supernatural power. It teaches us about the fear of child mortality — the unbearable reality that children died, and that their deaths could be exploited. And it teaches us about the protective instinct — the gelang bajang, the black silk bracelet given to children, represents a community's determination to defend its most vulnerable.

The bajang is the spirit that comes for your children. By the end of this book, you will understand why.

Chapter 1: What Is Bajang? The Civet Familiar

of Malay Sorcery Explained

The word bajang has multiple meanings in Malay. In its most general sense, it can refer to a type of spirit or ghost — the hantu bajang or "bajang ghost." In its more specific sense, it refers to a particular type of familiar spirit: one that takes the form of a civet cat (musang), is created from a stillborn child, and is kept by a male practitioner. The word is also associated with the idea of something stunted or incomplete — a being that did not reach its full form, which is appropriate for a spirit created from a child who never lived.

The bajang appears as a civet cat — the musang, a small nocturnal mammal common throughout Southeast Asia. The musang is familiar to every Malay villager: it is the creature that raids fruit trees at night, that scurries across rooftops, that emits a distinctive musky odour. It is common, it is visible, and it is not inherently frightening. Like the pelesit's cricket form, the bajang's civet form is a disguise — an animal so ordinary that its supernatural nature would never be suspected.

Some sources describe the bajang more broadly, mentioning that it can also appear as a weasel or even a large lizard. This shapeshifting capacity, while less emphasised than in some other Malay spirits, adds a layer of uncertainty: the bajang might not always be a civet cat. It might be any of several small, quick creatures that move through the village at night. The only certainty is that it is small, it is fast, and it is not what it appears to be.

Where the polong and pelesit are kept in bottles, the bajang is kept in a bamboo tube — the tabung buluh. Bamboo tubes are traditional containers in Malay culture, used for storing water, rice, and other provisions. The use of a bamboo tube for the bajang reflects the domestic, practical nature of the spirit's containment. The tube is sealed with leaves and locked with a magical charm — not just physically closed but supernaturally bound.

The bamboo tube distinguishes the bajang from the polong and pelesit in a subtle but important way. A bottle is a manufactured object — glass, metal, something made by a craftsperson. A bamboo tube is a natural object — cut from the forest, prepared by hand, organic. The bajang's container is of the forest, just as the bajang's form (the civet cat) is of the forest. This connection to the natural world is a recurring theme in the bajang tradition: the spirit is not entirely separate from nature but is embedded in it, using natural forms and natural containers.

The bajang is fed with eggs and milk — not blood. This is a significant distinction from the polong (which feeds on blood from the ring finger) and the pelesit (which feeds on blood from a finger). The bajang's diet is gentler, more

domestic, more associated with sustenance than with sacrifice. Eggs and milk are foods of nurture — the foods given to children, to the sick, to the weak. There is a dark irony in feeding a child-killing spirit with the foods of childhood.

The feeding must be done by the owner personally. The bond between bajang and owner is maintained through this act of feeding — a regular, intimate interaction that keeps the spirit dependent and contained. If the feeding stops, the bajang will turn on its owner, just as the polong and pelesit will. But the nature of the feeding — eggs and milk rather than blood — means that the physical cost to the owner is lower. The bajang's owner does not need to cut himself. He does not need to offer his own blood. He needs only to provide food — a less demanding, less visible form of sacrifice.

The bajang is traditionally kept only by men. This is one of its most distinctive features and the direct counterpart to the pelesit's female-only ownership. Together, the bajang and pelesit represent a gendered division of dark spiritual practice: men keep bajangs, women keep pelesits, and the two spirits occupy parallel but separate spheres.

The gendering of the bajang may reflect the fact that the bajang is created from a stillborn male child. The male practitioner, in this reading, is reclaiming the male potential of the dead child — the son who never lived, the heir who never was. The bajang becomes a dark substitute for the male lineage that the stillborn child represented.

The male ownership of the bajang also reflects the broader structure of Malay spiritual practice. Male bomohs were public figures — recognised, consulted, embedded in the community's formal hierarchy. The bajang, as a male-owned spirit, fits within this public framework. It is a weapon wielded by a man who is already known as a spiritual practitioner, not a hidden danger kept by a woman in a domestic space.

- Form — Bajang: Civet cat (musang); Pelesit: Cricket/grasshopper; Polong: Invisible (miniature woman); Toyol: Small child/toddler - Owner gender — Bajang: Male; Pelesit: Female; Polong: Both; Toyol: Both - Created from — Bajang: Stillborn male child; Pelesit: Dead first-born child's tongue; Polong: Murdered person's blood; Toyol: Dead foetus - Container — Bajang: Bamboo tube (tabung buluh); Pelesit: Bottle; Polong: Bottle; Toyol: Jar - Fed by — Bajang: Eggs and milk; Pelesit: Blood from finger; Polong: Blood from ring finger; Toyol: Milk, sweets, blood - Primary target — Bajang: Children (convulsions); Pelesit: Adults (hysteria); Polong: Adults (possession); Toyol: Wealth (theft) - Primary function — Bajang: Attack; Pelesit: Scout/attack; Polong: Possession; Toyol: Theft - Protection — Bajang: Gelang bajang (black silk bracelet); Pelesit: Cricket rule; Polong: Exorcism by bomoh; Toyol: Not

applicable

As the table shows, the bajang occupies the niche of the child-attacker in the Malay familiar spirit ecosystem. It is the spirit that comes for your children, and the tradition responds with the gelang bajang — the black silk bracelet — as a specific, named countermeasure. No other Malay familiar spirit has a comparably specific protective item associated with it. The gelang bajang is unique, and its uniqueness reflects the unique terror of the bajang: a spirit that targets the most vulnerable.

The bajang is a familiar spirit that appears as a civet cat, created from a stillborn male child through incantations over a freshly buried grave. It is kept in a bamboo tube, fed with eggs and milk, and traditionally owned only by men. Its primary targets are infants and young children, whom it afflicts with convulsions, unconsciousness, and delirium. Its closest analogue is the pelesit — its female counterpart — and together they represent the gendered division of dark spiritual practice in traditional Malay society. The bajang's unique feature is its specific protective countermeasure: the gelang bajang, a black silk bracelet given to children to ward off its attacks.

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