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Malay singing in Pahang villages: Identity and practice

**Shafa'atussara Silahudin
2021**

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Malay singing in Pahang villages: Identity and practice

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Untuk Abah (1958-2013), guru musik pertamaku...

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'Knowing the world through sound is fundamentally different from knowing the world through vision' (Smith, 2003: 129)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Reflections on my pilot study: early encounters with Pahang musicians at two musical events

I thought it would be best to begin by describing my early encounters with musicians during the course of my pilot study in Pahang in October 2013. I had contacted some of my main informers, and explained to them my intention to learn about musicians in the area of Pahang for my doctoral dissertation. One of them suggested that I attend two musical events that were taking place in that month. Before I jumped into my pilot study, I prepared a few research questions: Who is involved in singing performances? What kinds of songs do the Malays in Pahang villages sing? Acknowledging my singing expertise, my informer suggested that I sing at these events. Thus, at both events, I both participated as an invited singer and took on the role of scholar. I thought this combination of roles offered a great opportunity for me to be identified as a singer-scholar during my pilot study, enabling me to get closer to the Pahang music community on my first encounter with it. Both musical events consisted of traditional singing, modern poetry singing, poetry recitation and theatre performance. In the following paragraphs I describe some of the songs and musicians that I encountered.

The first musical event was *Malam Citra Warisan Melayu* (An Evening of Malay Heritage) on 10 October 2013. It was held at Abu Bakar Secondary School in Temerloh, Pahang, and attended by around three hundred audience members, including district officials, schoolteachers, students and residents from nearby villages. The evening was organized by Temerloh Education Department in collaboration with *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (the Institute of Language and Literature). As I was performing on the night, I spent most of my time back stage with the rest of the Pahang musicians/singers. After the opening speech, the first performance was sixty-five-year-old Aripin Said. He performed two traditional songs, 'Angin' (Wind) and 'Indung-Indung' (Mother, Mother), while beating a *rebana* held to the right of his body. The ease with which he performed could be seen through his intertwining of song and speech. Based on my conversation with one of the local musicians back stage, Said's performance was typical of a performance of *penglipur lara*

(a vocal form of storytelling), which was once a popular form of entertainment among Pahang villagers.

At the event I met two singers, Rabiatul and Fadlina. They have been making music for quite a long time. This was actually not the first time that I had met Rabiatul and Fadlina, as we had first crossed paths during the traditional poetry singing competition in 2012. Rabiatul performed *gurindam* (an irregular-verse form of traditional poetry), while Fadlina sang *syair* (quatrains with a rhyming scheme). A keyboard player provided live music to accompany their singing. The appearance of Roslan Madun on stage was highly anticipated by the audience and he did not disappoint, delighting them with songs of *seloka* (satirical poetry) and *nazam* (poetry song). The night ended with a performance of *lagu puisi* (modern poetry songs) by Siso Koprata. More than half of the audience sang along and cherished the moment.

My introductions to Pahang musicians continued at another musical event two weeks later. On 23 October 2013, an event titled *Malam Semantan Berbunga II* (A Blooming Night of Semantan II) was held, that, according to my informer, was the continuation of a previous event that had taken place in 2012. However, I have been unable to find any information about the first event. The theme of the night was '*Mengembalikan semangat perjuangan Melayu sejati*' (To return to the real spirit of struggle of the Malay). The event was held in *Dataran Patin* (Patin Square), situated at the confluence of the Semantan and Pahang Rivers. I had previously met several of the musicians at the event two weeks prior; only a few of them were new to me.

As a result of the theme for the night, most of the songs and poetry readings performed were connected with important historical events. It was through this event that I became familiar with other musical instruments including the *gendang silat* and gong. All the instruments present were used to accompany Said's singing performance. The musical performances were intertwined with poetry readings. Abdullah Karim Hidayat, known as AK Hidayat, delivered a poem titled '*Aku Seorang Nelayan*' (I am a Fisherman) in his unusual and melancholic voice. His performance deeply moved the nearly one hundred audience members who attended the event. Through his monologic theatre performance, Azmy Ahmad presented the story of the struggle of Bahaman, a nineteenth-century Pahang warrior. He also demonstrated a *silat* (Malay martial art) accompanied by the sound of *gendang* played by young musicians aged between ten and fifteen years old. Throughout his performance, he never missed catching the *keris* (the Malay dagger) used to represent Malay spirits. During his performance of the sorrowful song

‘Menjejak Bahaman’ (Tracking Bahaman), Roslan Madun could not avoid shedding a tear. The song remembers Bahaman, who was defeated by the British in the war of 1895. In my view, all the performers gave their utmost during their performances.

The variety of songs sung at both singing events showed me that songs are important and much-cherished possessions of the Malays in Pahang villages. Through my pilot study in Pahang, I was fortunate to briefly experience several forms of music and communicate with members of the Pahang cultural scene (musicians, singers, poets and actors). My relationship with them expanded after the aforementioned musical events. I became friends with many of them, communicating through Facebook. Through this online social medium, I was able to learn about their ongoing musical activities. We exchanged information and discussed many topics relevant to my current research. Their friends also became my acquaintances and have also contributed to my ethnographical music research in Pahang villages.

1.2 Background

In Pahang villages Malays are mostly associated with musical activities involving music practitioners, supporters or both at the same time. Malay villagers enjoy singing. Unfortunately, there is little information in the scholarly literature about their vocal music and music practices. Thus I aim to investigate the ways in which individuals and groups residing in Pahang villages engage in singing and musical practices in the course of their daily social life. I aim to solve the overarching research question: What are the cultural meanings (including historical resonances) of the songs and music practices of Malays in Pahang villages? The fundamental nature and meaning of music lie not in objects, but in people’s actions. Appreciating what people do and how they participate in musical activities will help to provide evidence for the nature of music and the function it fulfils in Pahang peoples’ lives. Hirata (2009) has observed that Malays are obsessed with musicality because they are Malay and it is part of them. They engage in a variety of singing and music-related activities.

In the search for an answer to the main research question, an exploration of three thematic areas was carried out. The first thematic area concerns the historical perspective of the musical identity of the Malay world, of which Pahang is a part. To explore this theme, the guidance question that is used is: What are the historical musical and singing characteristics of Malays?

The notion of historical discussion is significant as it will help to reveal the historical depth of singing references and imageries. This will eventually help to elucidate the cultural meanings behind today's vocal music genres in Pahang villages by identifying the extent to which present-day songs are rooted in the past.

Malays who perform music can be divided into three community-generated categories: professionals, semi-professionals and amateur musicians. A professional musician depends on music as his full-time career, while semi-professional musicians have other sources of income besides music. An amateur musician, as the name suggests, is one involved in music purely out of interest and passion. Thereby, the second thematic area groups professional and semi-professional musicians into four musical genres: traditional, regional pop, *kugiran* (an abbreviation for *kumpulan gitar rancak* (lively guitar band)) and punk rock. The guidance questions for the genres included in this study are: What is their social context and how is community formed through the music?

Amateur musicians also engage in musical practices through their involvement in music performance throughout their lives. From my perspective, amateur performers are as worthy of investigation as professionals and semi-professionals as their cultural practices are more real and interesting. Thus, for the third thematic area, I report on my engagements with groups of musical amateurs. *Nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana* are two types of song performed by amateur groups in Pahang villages. In the past, both men and women performed these songs. However, today, only middle-aged and elderly women continue to perform them. Due to differences in the performance of these two forms of song, the following questions were posed: What are the cultural contexts of *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana* and how do the songs contribute to the formation of community? In the same thematic area, I posed two further questions relating to the participation in these forms of music by women aged seventeen to twenty-three: How do young women give definition to the music they practice and/or listen to? And how do they engage with the musical forms?

The purpose of this book is to uncover and reflect on the fundamental dimensions of singing and musical practices among Malays in Pahang villages. There are interesting correlations between the patterns of change within the musical culture of Malays in Pahang villages and those in many communities around the globe. In my view, Pahang villages are dynamic places. This book thus aims to provide an empirically based ethnography of professional, semi-professional and amateur musicians in Pahang in the early first quarter of the

twenty-first century, studying and discovering the types of songs sung and forms of music making undertaken by Pahang communities.

In general, each musical form creates two kinds of song community: the performers, who support themselves through performances; and the audiences/supporters. Each musical genre operates within a social context that includes community involvement in its production and consumption. As mentioned by Mattern, 'the wider context of reception and use defines a communicative arena in which meanings are created, shared, negotiated, and changed in which various individuals and groups appropriate music for different ends' (Mattern, 1998: 16). He continues by saying music 'opens social spaces for the communicative interactions that are necessary for the sharing of meaning and the creation of commonalities of identity and orientation' (Mattern, 1998: 16).

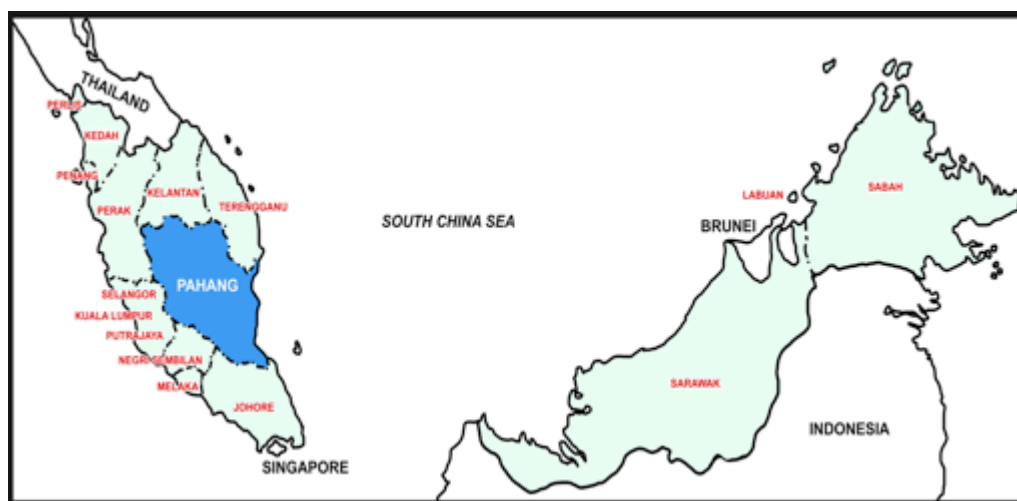
The social context of music is responsible for its implications for the community involved. One of the implications discussed by Mattern (1998) is that music serves as a record of a civilization or community. 'If music captures human experience and renders it meaningfully for contemporary audiences, then it is a legitimate window into the identity and history of a people' (Mattern, 1998: 18). Music can be seen as a vehicle for communicating with other people from other communities that consequently opens up the possibility of sharing experiences and identities with others of different backgrounds and knowledge. In addition to creating commonalities among people, music also creates differences between two or more distinct communities. However, exposure to different forms of music can differentiate experience and identity among the community.

1.3 The setting

As seen on Map 1, Pahang is the largest state in West Malaysia (36,137 square kilometres). It is also the third largest state in Malaysia, after Sabah and Sarawak on the island of Borneo/East Malaysia. The state stretches from the main mountain range in the centre of the peninsula to the east coast, which faces the South China Sea. The state is surrounded by highlands, rainforests, beaches and islands. The weather is typical of the tropics: Pahang's climate is hot and humid throughout the year. It has distinct wet and dry seasons that coincide with the seasons of the South China Sea.

Several major Malaysian attractions are located in Pahang, such as Pahang National Park, the Cameron Highlands, the Genting Highlands, Endau-

Rompin State Park, Fraser Hill and Tioman Island (Sukiman et al., 2013). Lanchang, a small town in the district of Temerloh is the central point of Peninsula Malaysia (Utusan Online, 7 September 2015). The capital of Pahang is Kuantan. Most state government agencies are located in the capital. Wan Rosdy Wan Ismail, the State Minister appointed by the Sultan, leads the state government of Pahang in administrative matters and people's affairs.



Map 1: The location of Pahang in Malaysia

The natives, also called *bumiputera* (sons of the soil), constitute the highest proportion of the population in Malaysia at 68.6 per cent, followed by Chinese (23.4 per cent), Indian (7.0 per cent) and others (1.0 per cent) (Utusan Online, 22nd July 2016). Of the native population, Malays make up 90 per cent, with the remaining 10 per cent being non-Malays, meaning members of the Orang Asli and tribespeople. This majority ethnic group is constitutionally defined and enjoys majority political power in Malaysia. The term Orang Asli was introduced around 1960 as a replacement for the earlier label 'Malayan aborigines' (Benjamin, 2004: 997). The authentically aboriginal Orang Asli of the Peninsula Malaysia are currently officially characterized as not indigenous. In official resources, 'indigenous identifies not the people whose ancestors have inhabited the peninsula for the longest time but solely the descendants of those – the Malays – who supposedly first brought civilization, presumably meaning the state, to the country' (Benjamin, 2015: 4). Officially only Malays qualify as 'indigenous' to Malaysia. In Malaysia, religion is linked to ethnicity. As a result, most Hindus are Indians, Buddhists Chinese and Muslims Malay. Of these three main religions, Islam is thus the principal religion and has become the official religion in Malaysia.

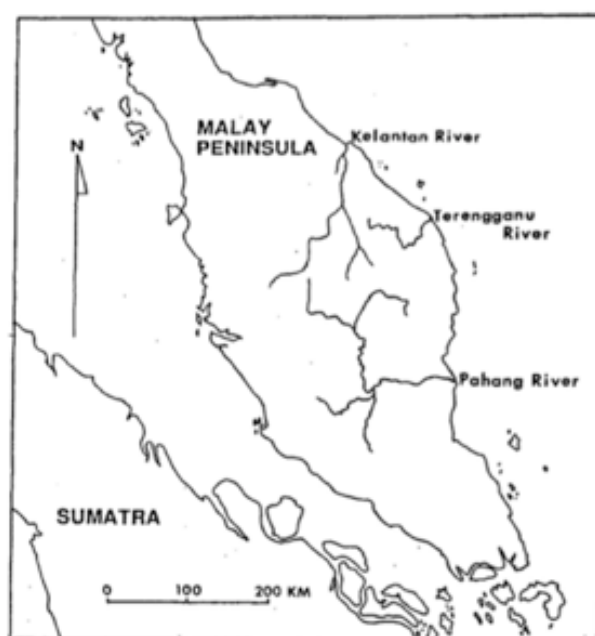
In Article 160 of the Malaysian Constitution, a Malay is defined as a Malaysian citizen who professes three recognized pillars of Malayness: practices Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language and conforms to Malay customs (Frith, 2000). Barnard et al. (2004) clarified that the Malay identity is shaped throughout history based on various overlapping and contested ideas of Malayness. ‘While the official form of Islam is not specified, the implication is that the practice should be Sunni. While Shi’ism and other practices are not technically illegal in Malaysia, they are not encouraged especially amongst Malays’ (Kinzer, 2017: 14). Hoffstaedter noted that due to Malay customs becoming less frequently practiced and an increased use of English (mainly in urban areas), the last powerful pillar of Malayness lies in the practice of Islam (Hoffstaedter, 2011: 35).

Pahang had a population of 1.6 million in 2015. Based on the 2010 census, 74.9 per cent of the population of Pahang, mainly the Malays, follow the teachings of Islam (Department of Statistics Malaysia). Meanwhile, 14.4 per cent of the population (mainly Chinese) practice Buddhism, 4 per cent follow Hinduism (mainly Indians), 1.9 per cent are Christians, and 2.7 per cent of the population are non-religious (mainly Orang Asli). During the period covered by this book, the ruler of Pahang, His Royal Highness Sultan Ahmad Shah Al-Musta’in Billah Ibni Almarhum Sultan Abu Bakar (r.1974-2019) was Head of Islam in the state. In a speech during his investiture ceremony in Abu Bakar Palace in Pekan in 2013, the Sultan commanded that even though Islam is the official religion of the country, non-Muslims should be allowed to practice their religious beliefs freely and without any disturbance (Utusan Online, 26 October 2013).

Bahasa Melayu (Malay Language) is known as and was chosen to be the national language on the independence of Malaysia. The language serves to link the multiple groups and ethnicities in Malaysia and contributes to increasing the feelings of nationhood. The Malay language is also the language of the education, modernization and social mobility of citizens of the country. However, a strong allegiance to local languages has by no means disappeared. The population in Pahang mainly speaks the Pahang dialect, which is one of the regional dialects of Malaysia. The Pahang dialect, compared to the colloquial language used by the majority of Malaysians, is somewhat different from other Malay dialects on the west coast of Peninsula Malaysia (Karim et al., 1986). The Pahang dialect forms a recognizable subgroup with the dialects of two other states on the east coast, Terengganu and Kelantan (Collins, 1989).

I first experienced the Pahang spoken language when I was in secondary school in Kuantan, Pahang. Most of the students were from Pahang,

Terengganu and Kelantan. At first glance, it was difficult for me to distinguish between the dialects because they have rather similar accents and spoken vocabularies. There are minor dialectal boundaries between the communities in the three aforementioned states. The location of three major rivers, as seen in Map 2, 'indicates the apparent factors which link these dialects to each other, despite the great distances separating them' (Collins, 1989: 254). Meanwhile Omar (1976) initially classified the dialects of Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang into separate subgroups of Malay, although she noted that Pahang is a transitional area whose language links Terengganu Malay to Johor Malay in the south. In 1985, however, Omar revised her classification, placing Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang in a single linguistic subgroup.



Map 2: The major rivers of the east coast of Peninsula Malaysia (source: Collins, 1989)

According to Junaidi Kassim, the schoolteacher wife of the former State Minister, the Pahang dialect is unique to the area associated with the Pahang River. Thus the community living along the upper reaches of the river has a faster speech than the community living downstream; this has been influenced by economics and living conditions. The community in the upper area speaks rapidly, representing the fast flow of the river in the area. In her metaphorical explanation, Junaidi notes that the river is the main communication route within the community. A slow pace of speech will make the community 'slow' in both delivering meaning and also earning a living because they will be 'abandoned' by the fast stream (Junaidi Kassim, personal communication, 31 March 2014).

There are basic similarities in culture, language (Malay) and religion (Islam) between Malaysia and Indonesia (Yaakub, 2009). The Malays in Malaysia and Sumatrans share some cultural traits that are tied to certain geographical areas (Liow, 2005). Indonesians perceive people with such cultural characteristics as ‘Suku Melayu’ (tribal Malays), with these groups residing in the coastal areas of Sumatra, the Riau Islands and Kalimantan (Milner, 2011). ‘The tribal populations of Sumatra, both current and former, live mostly in those same areas today, [...] speak Malay or other Malayic dialects as their own languages. Although current Malaysian usage would not accord the label *Orang Melayu* to these Malay-speaking tribal populations, they are sometimes called “Melayu” in Sumatra [...] and there seems little reason to doubt that they are indeed descendants of the same population from which the majority of the Malays “proper” also descended’ (Benjamin, 2002: 26).

Wee (1988) maintains that in the Riau Archipelago – an area which the *Orang Melayu* themselves regard as one of their major centres of population – the local Malays sometimes distinguish between *Melayu asli* (indigenous Malays) and *Melayu murni* (pure Malays). The *Melayu asli* ‘are members of locally derived populations, often tribal in social organization’, while the *Melayu murni* ‘are mostly higher-ranking people of exogenous non-*Melayu* (usually Bugis) origin, whose members have often tried to decide for the other Malays just what constitutes cultural Malayness’ (Benjamin, 2015: 8). Malayness is not restricted to the Malays proper, so Leach (1950) coined the label ‘para-Malay’. Para-Malays (widely found in Borneo, Sumatra and Peninsula Malaysia) share the same general background as the *Orang Melayu*, but they lack fulfilment of one or more of the criteria (Islam, ethnic identity, language, the centralized state) of full Malayness.

In the following section, I discuss the Malay community in Pahang, followed by an introduction to the Pahang River.

1.3.1 The Malay community in Pahang villages

Malay inhabitants of Pahang villages claim descent from people born in Sumatra, which corresponds with Linehan’s view (1936: 189-190) that the Malay population living near the upper and middle stretches of the Pahang River is of Minang origin. Some of the Malays themselves claim that they are of aboriginal, specifically Semelai (Orang Asli) origin. The Malay settlement of Pahang involved a degree of intermarriage with the Orang Asli and with

other pre-Melaka peoples already present in the region (Benjamin, 1997). Gianno (1990) came across several Malay-speaking populations in Pahang villages that had previously spoken Aslian.

Similar to communities in other states in Malaysia, the populations residing in traditional villages by the Pahang River have their own active and continuing cultures. The cultural continuity in their communities has attracted several academics to conduct studies in their compounds, but unfortunately a study of their music is not among them. Four main aspects of life have been emphasized in studies on Pahang River communities: education, social involvement and relationships, safety and living conditions (Shaffril et al., 2011). All four of these aspects are linked to the Pahang communities' positive relationships with their family members and neighbours. Through the studies, it was established that Malays in Pahang have average contentment levels. Abu Samah et al. (2013) conducted a study to ascertain the thoughts of the rural community that live near to the Tembeling and Pahang Rivers concerning their relationship with these rivers. In terms of socio-economic activities on the Tembeling River, locals generate income through a number of activities including eco-tourism, such as by offering water rafting and boat rides. As well as eco-tourism, the river is a source of protein. A small number of locals are river fishermen, on either a full- or part-time basis.

The Pahang River is still relied upon by several community groups who reside by the river. The Pahang is famous for its aquaculture, especially well-known freshwater species such as the *patin* (silver catfish). Some districts, among them Pekan and Temerloh, are known for their aquaculture products. Today, Pahang remains the leading state in terms of entrepreneurial aquaculture activities in Peninsula Malaysia (Department of Fisheries Malaysia, 2010). The river also provides transportation for some groups in the community. To conclude, Malays in Pahang villages have a close relationship with the Pahang River. Their daily activities are inevitably associated with the river as it is the lifeblood of community.

In the next section, I will elaborate briefly on the geography of the Pahang River and the position of the river in relation to the community.

1.3.2 The Pahang River

One of the most prominent features of the natural environment in the state of Pahang is the Pahang River (Map 3). The river basin is located in the

eastern part of the state and the Pahang is the longest river in Peninsula Malaysia (Tachikawa et al., 2004; Md Yaasin et al., 2013).



Map 3: Location of the Pahang River

The Pahang River covers 459 kilometres, covering a total area of 25,600 square kilometres (Shaffril et al., 2011). The river flows in a south-easterly and southerly direction passing through major towns such as Kuala Lipis, Jerantut and Temerloh, before finally turning eastward at Mengkarak in the central south and flowing through Pekan near the coast before discharging into the South China Sea (Md Yaasin et al., 2011). The lands surrounding the river include forests, rubber plantations, other rivers and marshes, agricultural land and urban areas (Tachikawa et al., 2004). There are two natural lakes in

Peninsula Malaysia, Chini Lake and Bera Lake, which are also found in the Pahang River basin.

For hundreds of years, the oldest Malay settlements were concentrated along the Pahang River. Prior to the establishment of roads, the river was the commercial highway. A water vehicle known as a *prahu kajang* (a boat made of waterproof matting) was widely used, especially to transport agricultural and forestry products for regional trade. It was not until the early twentieth century that major roads were constructed and surfaced with tarmac, offering a new form of communication in many rural areas and replacing the traditional role of rivers (Abu Samah et al., 2013).

Even though tarmacked roads are the predominant form of transport today, village dwellers still rely on the river to travel to certain places by boat. In Temerloh, water taxi services offered by several individuals are available from the Esplanade. Those villagers who live some distance from the town have to cross the river by boat to purchase their daily necessities (Roslan Madun, personal communication, 23 October 2013). Up until the Second World War, the Pahang River was alive with boat traffic.

Today, the river is still used for transportation but carries only a light flow of villagers going to and from farms, to nearby markets or fishing. River transit is sometimes dangerous or impossible, especially in years when water levels become too low during the dry season, or during the rainy season when the water is swift flowing. The Pahang basin experienced severe flooding at the end of 2014, during my field research. This was caused by non-stop rain falling for more than two weeks on the east coast of Malaysia. The local news reported that the 2014 *bah besar* or huge flood had caused the destruction of hundreds of houses, the breakdown of fish farming, the deaths of cattle and the destruction of many fruit trees. Villagers were evacuated to school buildings and community halls and the community's everyday life was disrupted. As I observed, no musical activity took place during this difficult time or in the subsequent several months as the villagers recovered from the tragedy.

In summary, for hundreds of years, the Pahang River has been a vital corridor for people and their goods. Today, the river still provides an important link and transports people from one place to another. During the monsoon season, the rain contributes to massive floods in Pahang. The flooding that occurred in 2014 was more intense than in previous years, reaching an unprecedented level. It had an immediate impact, including human death, loss of livestock, destruction of crops and damage to property. Musicians were among the victims to face flood losses. Musical activities stopped because

musicians feared the destruction of their musical instruments after the Pahang River burst its banks. The floodwater covered large areas of villages, pouring over music training areas and causing significant damage.

In the following section, I discuss several previous musical ethnography studies in Pahang as well as those covering other regions of Malaysia.

1.4 Previous studies of musical ethnography in Malaysia

The information in this section will focus on several published works that can be divided into two categories. First, I will discuss several studies of musical ethnography in Pahang, before evaluating studies of musical ethnography that focus on other parts of West Malaysia.

1.4.1 Studies of musical ethnography in Pahang

Several published works have dealt generally with Pahang music, but with incomplete discussions of vocal music. In her work titled ‘An introduction to the major instruments and forms of traditional Malay music’, Matusky (1985) discussed a vocal form of storytelling (*penglipur lara*), an important oral tradition among the Malays in Pahang. Through it, a folk music tradition has developed to accompany the telling of folk tales. There are five components to the storytelling: the use of stylized language, singing, chanting, musical accompaniment and drama. The two musical instruments that accompany the storytelling in Pahang are the *rebab* and the *rebana*.

As well as storytelling, the Muslim devotional genre of *zikir* was also discussed. This involves Arabic texts from the *Kitab Barzanji* (an Islamic book praising the Prophet Muhammad) being sung by groups of men and accompanied by a *rebana besar*. In 2003, the Pahang Cultural and Arts Department published a work entitled ‘*Koleksi pengenalan tarian dan muzik tradisional Negeri Pahang*’ (A collection of introductions to dances and traditional music in Pahang), which introduced fourteen types of dance music common in Pahang. I consider this work a compilation of dance music as it only offers a brief description of each song. Even though this work is non-ethnographic, it has contributed to my knowledge of song forms, including *sewang* by the Orang Asli Jah Hut and Orang Asli Temiar, *anak indung* by the Malays of Ulu Tembeling (upstream), *dikir rebana* by the Malays in Temerloh and *gamelan* songs by cultural groups in the district of Pekan, Pahang.

In addition, Said (1997) has written two prominent works on Pahang musical culture. In his book '*Lagu-Lagu tradisional rakyat Pahang*' (Pahang traditional folk songs), Said discusses a number of songs he learned of during his ethnographic work between 1977 and 1983. Throughout his research, Said centred his attention on several villages along the Pahang River. The songs that are discussed in this book include *ugam mayang* (healing songs that request the help of seven supernatural princesses), *dikir rebana* (religious songs accompanied by a frame drum) and *jampi serapah* (incantations). He also explores folk songs including 'Indung-Indung' (Mother, Mother), 'Puteri Walinong Sari' (Princess of Walinong Sari), 'Burung Kenek-Kenek' (a well-known tune with extempore verses to the refrain of *pesan datuk nenek*), 'Lagu Orang Muda' (Tune for the Young), 'Anak Ayam Turun Sepuluh' (a song sung to children), and *burdah* (an Arabic song form from the *Kitab Barzanji*). The use of the *Kitab Barzanji* as a singing text is still significant today in amateur music genres and will be explored in Chapter 5 of this book.

Seven years later, in 2004, Said published '*Nyanyian rakyat khazanah bangsa yang hilang*' (The loss of folk singing as a national treasure), in which he briefly discussed a singing tradition called *penglipur lara* (folk romance). Historically, this singing tradition was popular among village-dwelling Malays and was performed to the accompaniment of several instruments including a *rebana*, a *rebab* and a *serunai*. In this work, he examined two song types that target specific audiences: first, songs for children, and second, songs for adults. The forms of song studied are various; some use stanzas of *pantun*, others were unstructured or freestyle poetry. He includes several examples in the work, including extended narrative songs such as 'Dayang Keknong', 'Burung Agut' and 'Anak Raja Bugis'; children's songs such as 'Tebang Tebu', 'Sapu Rengit' and 'Pak Sang Bagak'; and work songs such as 'Siul Kalui', 'Tepuk Daun' and 'Hitam Manis'. Thus, these written works incompletely describe the musical culture of Pahang. No reference was made in them to singing/vocal forms, their social and cultural contexts, or to the participation of the community through the songs. Thus, these works should only be used as a brief guide to the musical culture of Pahang.

1.4.2 Works on musical ethnography in other parts of West Malaysia

Besides published works on Pahang music, I also explored several works on Malay music in other parts of the peninsula. In a study titled 'Music in Kelantan, Malaysia and some of its cultural implications', Malm (1974) gave an account of music in the north-eastern part of the peninsula from an

ethnographic viewpoint. In the same area, Matusky (1992) and Hamzah (2014) studied Kelantan's shadow play and its music. In 'Malaysian shadow play and music: continuity of an oral tradition', Matusky explained that Malay shadow play is a performance tradition that reflects deeper-level cultural ideas. Meanwhile, in her dissertation titled 'The *angin* of the *dalang* in the Kelantan shadow play', Hamzah revealed the many aspects of the *dalang* (puppeteer) who manipulates the puppet, narrates the story, sings the *mantera* (magical charm) and controls the accompanying musicians. Shadow play adopts the characters, songs and clothing of the performance of Siamese *mandora* (an operatic dance performance using wooden masks). *Mandora* is a form of Malay traditional music and will be described in Chapter 2.

Dobbs (1972), with his dissertation 'Music in the multi-racial society of West Malaysia', contributed to my knowledge of the social and religious environment of the music of the peninsula, which reflects influences chiefly from the Middle East, Thailand and Indonesia. An American influence is also prevalent in many aspects of life. Although Dobbs's primary concern was music, the close relationship between the peninsula's traditional music and ritual made it difficult to write exclusively of that one art.

Through his work titled 'Idiosyncratic aspects of Malaysian music: the roles of the *kompang* in Malay society', Abdullah (2004) suggested that Malaysian culture can be described from two different perspectives: adaptation and idiosyncratic. From the adaptation perspective, he discussed how original music or musical instruments from outside the culture have been adapted, developed and changed based on the local context in terms of vocal arrangement, mode, playing techniques, ornamentation and decoration. From the idiosyncratic perspective, the music or musical instruments still preserve their originality; the local people still use the same types of instruments and play the music as it was originally written. Abdullah used the *kompang*, a musical instrument which originated in the Arab world but is used in West Malaysia, as an example that fits both perspectives. The *kompang* accompanies singing performances during the wedding procession, on religious occasions and at many new events. In the present study, singing accompanied by the *kompang* is seen as a ritual that opens a commemorative event (Chapter 3).

Inspired by her case study titled 'Activism in Southeast Asian ethnomusicology: empowering youths to revitalize traditions and bridge cultural barriers', Tan (2008) contributed to my contextualization of the involvement of young people in performances and singing workshops. Tan looked at how a heritage project in Penang known as *Anak-Anak Kota* (Children of the City) has created awareness among young people of the

importance of preserving their traditions. Through this platform young people are able to learn and appreciate their own and other cultures. Tan concluded that the project helps to revitalize community performances through promoting musical forms, instruments (a combination of Malay drums, gongs, Chinese woodblocks and Western violins) and genres that attract audiences.

Ross's work widened my understanding of musical ethnography in the south of Thailand near the Malaysian border. With extensive experience of travelling and staying with performers to observe their musical activities and everyday lives, Ross produced a 2011 dissertation titled '*Rong Ngeng: the transformation of Malayan social dance music in Thailand since the 1930s*'. Ross provided an interesting discussion on *rong ngeng* music as a popular medium for rural courtship. *Rong ngeng* is considered a rite of passage for many young men and women. It encompasses a diverse collection of tunes lifted from a combination of Western music and many local and regional music styles that gives it a distinctive character. Slow, ballad-like poetic exchanges from Melakan *dondang sayang*, the Arab-Malay song dance from *zapin* and syncopated rhythms from India could all be called *rong ngeng*.

In 'Music and cline of Malayness: sounds of egalitarianism and ranking', Benjamin's (2019a) explanation of the notion of Malayness in music contributed to my understanding. Benjamin discussed different varieties of Malay music that encode a cline of Malayness marked by varying degrees of melismatic elaboration of the transition between melody notes among the Malay groups of tribal-Malays, *rakyat-Melayu* (peasant Malays), modern urban Malays, and Bugis-descended royals and aristocrats in southern Peninsula Malaysia, the Riau Islands and Sumatra. Benjamin's outcomes are worth mentioning here. According to his findings, the performance of the song 'Serampang Laut' by a tribal-Malay group lacks any elaboration of the transition between the notes of the melody. However, a version of the song performed by a group of *rakyat-Melayu* demonstrated a moderate but clear degree of melismatic elaboration. The melismatic elaboration of the movement is yet more obvious when a modern urban professional singer sings the same song but in a *dangdut*-like rhythm and with different words. These three versions, with their increasing degrees of melismatic elaboration, 'correspond to the different positions of performers along the cline of Malayness' (Benjamin, 2019a: 101). The cline expands into the aristocratic and royal domain, as illustrated by *ghazal* songs sung by royal Bugis-descended singers. *Ghazal* performances display rich melismatic elaboration amplified by the decorative use of vibrato. Benjamin concludes that at the royal and modern-urban end of the cline the orientation is outward-looking (transcendental) and

hierarchical; meanwhile, at the tribal end of the cline, the orientation is inwards, turning away from the outer world.

In summary, an examination of these works has demonstrated that the ideas or contexts of Malay (traditional) music in West Malaysia have been influenced by music from many parts of the world as the Malays live in a multiracial society. The works mentioned here are significant as they also provide accounts of the social and cultural environments of the music that forms the focus of this study.

1.5 Theoretical perspectives

An important way of understanding community is through its noise (Attali, 1985), which is to say, through the types of noises the community makes. The importance of examining the cultures of sound lies in comprehending what forms an individual's or a people's identity. What sorts of theoretical frameworks might help to answer the question about the cultural meanings (and historical resonances) of songs and music practice in the context of Malays in Pahang? One can perceive that the relationship between songs and the people who produce, perform and utilize them is central to the sociology of music.

Music is not just the sounds it makes. 'People like and value some musics and not others as much because of their social and educational backgrounds, and because of the associations that accompany music, as because of musical style itself' (Ellis, 2009: 43). My study is grounded in ethnomusicology and anthropology in a broader sense. In the following sections, I discuss some considerations and theoretical notions used in this study.

1.5.1 Historical overview

My study is ethnographic rather than historical in method. However, in ethnography it is appropriate to present an overview of the historical context as this enables readers to interpret in a more informed manner the significance of the contemporary music practices described (Waterman, 1990). A historical overview contributes to the framework of my study on the past musical identity and social environment of the Malay world, of which Pahang is a part, as will be discussed in Chapter 2.

A number of Nicolas's works have been influential in this context. 'The musics of Southeast Asia developed into at least three distinct areas: firstly, the village which until today remains the repository of ancient religious and musical practices; secondly, the courts; and thirdly, the temples, which together established a new form of centralised organization and power, and consequently assumed the position as centres of musical activity, where musicians and dancers, players and puppeteers were employed in the service of the ruler, the aristocracy and the religious hierarchy' (Nicolas, 2011: 348).

Nicolas (2017) has also demonstrated that there were several types of music in existence on the Thai-Malay Peninsula in the thirteenth century. The oldest music was played by the Orang Asli, who arrived in the area in prehistoric times. The second was a type of music played at the Hindu-Buddhist temples, as exemplified by the Hindu temples in Lembah Bujang. The identity of this community remains somewhat problematic as it is unclear whether they were Mon, Indian or Malay. The third type of music was more diverse and found in the villages inhabited by the new settlers. The fourth type of music was played in the emerging courts of the Malay rulers. Finally, the fifth type of music was played by the Chinese in their own communities and temples.

Malay classical literature gives valuable data on past music forms. In searching for musical terms, Nicolas (2017) has surveyed a number of literary works dating from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries and, as a result of this historical approach, has created a list of such terms (Nicolas 1994: 105-121). In this particular study, I aim to explore the ways in which legacies from the past can still be heard in the present and to consider the extent to which musical practices in the present are shaped by ideas, beliefs and feelings about the past.

Inspired by Nicolas' prominent works, relevant Malay literary works dating from the late fourteenth century to the late nineteenth century are cited. Musical terms in Malay literary works can be interpreted as having been known for a period of time in either musical circles or literary culture.

1.5.2 Music as a cultural system

Musical culture is a concept that has a long history in ethnomusicology. Merriam (1964) approached the interrelationships between music and culture from several directions. He argued that music should be studied 'in' culture. Musical culture encompasses sounds, ideas, behaviour and

materials: instruments, clothing and paraphernalia (compact discs, posters, magazines and other ephemera). Many researchers have sought to rework the relationship between music and culture.

Herndon and McLeod (1980) integrate the two camps of ethnomusicology that privilege music as sound and music as social behaviour in the notion of musical culture. One of their principles was that music should be studied 'in' culture in specific contexts, and 'as' culture as an area of purposeful activity. Nettl (1983) essentially argues that music is a particular domain of culture, a domain that requires special attention but must also be contemplated in relation to other domains of culture and behaviour.

Titon et al. (2005) drew on models for investigating music in contexts that situate it as a fundamental feature of cultural life. In many ways, notions of musical culture are embedded in the concepts of dynamism and change central to contemporary thinking on culture. Ethnomusicological investigations frequently focus on groups or areas when interpreting musical cultures, equating a 'culture' with a 'community' (Rice, 2003: 151). Inspired by Fenn's (2004) ethnographic work on Malawian music, I have reinvigorated the concept of musical culture in my present study by presenting an analytical model that emphasizes the process and the products constituent of musical culture. Two concepts form the basis for musical culture: style and space.

1.5.2.1 Style

A characteristically defining feature of post-Second World War music genres has been the stylistic innovations that have grown up around them. In the context of Malaysia, music styles since the 1950s have been determined by the visual style of the singers/musicians associated with certain music genres. The significance of music-based style has been mapped in relation to youth, first by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the 1970s and later in Hebdige's work (1979). For Hebdige, style is at once 'refusal and appropriation', a 'profoundly superficial level of appearance' (Hebdige, 1979: 17). Style is a visual appendage of youth subcultures and, it is argued, marks out initiatives of resistance to an array of social disorders from class inequality and unemployment (Jefferson, 1976) to racism and social exclusion (Chambers, 1976). This concept clearly applies to my research on the punk-rock music community in Pahang (Chapter 4) and their ways of dressing, moving, singing and music making.

However, ‘the situating of music-related styles as youth centered seems far less productive as an analytical strategy for understanding the significance of these styles as cultural markers of identity’ (Bennett, 2013: 68). There have been attempts to position established theories of style that have been applied in the study of youth culture in relation to ageing groups. ‘There is a popular assumption that subculturalists grow up and out of their respective scenes, that youthful music communities are a meaningful but relatively inconsequential phase on the path to the more serious endeavours of adulthood’ (Haenfler, 2012: 11). Such assumptions are applicable to present-day *kugiran* musicians in Pahang (Chapter 4), given their claim to music genres from the 1950s. *Kugiran* musicians deploy their 1950s’ musical identity through a variety of stylistic expressions, while simultaneously toning down the music/performance through the use of traditional elements. This echoes Bennett (2006: 222), who said, ‘many of the features attributed to youth music are not necessarily regarded with the same importance by the older followers of 1950s’ music genres’. ‘Individuals are reflexive in their appropriation and use of particular musical and stylistic resources’ (Bennett, 2006: 223). The meanings of style are contextual and change over the course of one’s career. Thus performing 1950s’ music is part of ‘proving’ the authenticity of their youth.

Musical styles connect performers with a meaningful past, longevity and authenticity (Haenfler, 2012); thus, in many cases, musicians and singers in Pahang hold very similar views regarding displays of style, seeing them as necessary or relevant while finding satisfaction in presenting their music. For traditional musicians/singers (Chapter 3), wearing traditional costumes indicates an emphasis on identity and symbolizes a connection with the past, as well as representing nostalgia. In most areas, style helps to facilitate an imagined community. Style is also seen as a legacy.

From the perspective of ‘straight edge’ followers, Haenfler (2012) highlighted how the wearing of straight edge identifiers helps to keep the movement’s legacy alive. This aligns closely with the ideas of traditional musicians (Chapter 3) and the groups of older women associated with Islam-originated songs (Chapter 5) who feel a responsibility for the longevity of old songs.

1.5.2.2 Space

Relph (1976) outlined various kinds of culturally conceived space when he described the distinctions between actual space, symbolic space, cognitive space, sacred space and discursive space. Forman (1997) added to the list ‘the recent phenomenon of cyberspace or electronic virtual spaces that exist within digital programs and electronic communication networks’ (Forman, 1997: 18). Many researchers have investigated issues of space as they describe contextualized musical practice. In ethnographic descriptions, musical events occur in particular places. Descriptions indirectly connect musical practice/performance to the surrounding space. Some researchers have created frameworks that describe music within the context of a space. Investigating the relationship between song and space forms the fundamental interpretive core of Stone’s (1988) study, which established that the notion of space seems to be a crucial feature of many African performances. Musical events are seen as occasions for performances at which people move from ordinary communication methods to extraordinary communication forms (Stone, 1988: 3) which are designed to be performative (Herzfeld, 1988).

Seeger (2004) provided detailed ethnographic evidence of specific spatial experiences related to musical practices within the Suyá community in Brazil. He offered spatial representations of how the Suyá community operates during the Mouse’s song, which is performed as part of the Mouse ceremony rite of passage. Seeger stated that ‘singing and silence were part of the constant recreation of significant space’ (Seeger, 2004: 69).

A large body of literature was reviewed from the interdisciplinary fields of musical events (as music spaces) and music and identity. Based on the earliest studies, two main themes were found. Firstly, musical events (festivals) were seen as outward manifestations of community identity, functioning as image-maintainers or image-makers (Delamere, 2001; Quinn, 2005).

Secondly, musical events were seen to contribute to the reinforcement of cohesiveness within a community, thus strengthening the bonds between members (Ekman, 1999; De Bres and Davis, 2001). The field of ethnomusicology has made great progress in theorizing about musical places in terms of communities. Communities, including the Malays in Pahang villages, use a variety of spaces to house their collective memories. These spaces of collective memory have a strong musical component. Raimondi (2012) provided ethnographic evidence of a musical place (for example, the home-like quality of a lounge) as being a place to relive and re-experience emotional

memories. Such a musical place holds emotions and memories for its community.

Over the years, advances in technology have led to changes in how music is performed. Some literature has helped my understanding of the technology of the Internet as an interactive space. Technology influences the way people consume, create and share art, media and performance. Negroponte (1995) suggested that the Internet has become more socially oriented since the 1990s. His suggestion is supported by the development of Web 2.0 which, as Dinucci (1999) observed, provides more interactive content, consistent updates, and a more reliable and constant real-time connection to other people. Before the year 2000, the Internet was mostly a publishing medium; since then, it has become more communication-oriented (Manovich, 2008).

Other spaces relevant here are Facebook and YouTube. Facebook is the number one social networking site and has gained immense popularity. Nadkarni and Hofmann (2011) suggested that Facebook use is motivated by two primary needs: the need to belong and the need for self-presentation. Features to facilitate interaction include the wall, statuses, events, photos, video, chat, groups and the 'like'. YouTube is a video-sharing website founded in February 2005 and has become the fourth most-visited website in Malaysia (Alexa, 2019), after Facebook, Twitter and Google.

Through YouTube, users can share professional content, that is, user-produced content (Ding et al., 2011). Content, including local music, can be accessed by a global audience (Yu & Schroeder, 2018). Liikkanen and Salovaara's 2015 study considered perspectives of online music listening and watching videos with a specific focus on users' interactions and engagement patterns with recorded music. They identified that watching YouTube videos has become one of the most popular activities on the Internet.

1.5.3 Talent as representation

One of the prominent cultural notions relating to musical practice in Pahang is that of musical talent. An important aspect of the notion of talent as a cultural symbol is the fact that it brings about a discussion of social esteem, which is fundamental to any social process. Talent is assumed to be a special faculty for a specific activity, a gift that is conceptually contrasted with learned skill. In the music field, talent is viewed as being similar to an inherited position. There is a notion that an individual may well have a notable amount of talent yet not be an accomplished musician due to insufficient training. 'One

person's talent is something which is attributed to him or her by someone else and the person making the attribution of talent becomes an important element of the person's very talent' (Kingsbury, 1984: 59). In relation to my research, the village community validates the recognition and categorization of Pahang musicians: they are either considered professional or semi-professional, or amateur. The underlying notion is one of a hierarchy of terms acting as a mirror of a musician's musical values and cultural identity.

Drinker's study (1967) added to my understanding of the difference in meaning between the terms 'amateur' and 'professional' in regard to musicians. The word 'amateur' is taken from the Latin '*amator*', meaning a lover, and is similar to the Italian 'dilettante', which carries the definition of one who delights or has an interest in music. In his *Dictionary of Psychology*, Warren defined interest as 'a feeling, which accompanies special attention to some content', or 'an attitude characterized by focusing attention upon certain cognitive data' (Warren, 1934: 371). Thus, attention is a prime factor contributing to interest. Birdie explained what constitutes interest: 'choice, persistence, remembrance, success, learning, set/predisposition and emotion' (Harriman, 1946: 306). Unlike interest, talent is not transitory.

In music, amateur and professional musicians demonstrate different attitudes towards music (Juniu et al., 1996). Musical amateurs 'are serious in their participation but they do not make a living from the activity' (Juniu et al., 1996: 45). For amateurs, musical performance is more likely to be considered a leisure activity, as well as providing them with an opportunity to display their proficiency. The musical participation of amateurs is perceived as voluntary, enjoyable and fun. Amateurs can be just as committed to the activity as professional musicians. Professional musicians are 'significantly more extrinsically motivated than amateurs' (Juniu et al., 1996: 52). Professionals also perceive obligation and responsibility as connected to their musical participation. It is common to say that 'professionals make a living from the music activity and amateurs engage in music just for fun' (Juniu et al., 1996: 46).

The differentiation between professional and amateur musicians, however, has not been clearly defined by these works. Drinker suggested that, 'professional and amateur should not be thought of as opposites' (Drinker, 1967: 75). Furthermore, in Fraser's work on Minangkabau music, she asserted that, 'the most decisive factor in whether a musician is considered a professional or not is the way the activity is conceptualized and framed within the specific ethnographic and historical context' (Fraser, 2015: 35).

‘A judgment of musical talent is not something which is ever proved or disproved [... but rather] is an aesthetic judgment’ (Kingsbury, 1984: 69). Kingsbury also added that a musician’s talent should be regarded as ‘the property of cultural ideology [rather] than as a property of characteristic traits of the individual person’ (Kingsbury, 1984: 71). Talent represents a cultural experience of social hierarchy. In this study on Malay singing/songs in Pahang villages, I am very much concerned with individuals’/groups’ musical experiences in the social life within which they take place. The structure of such experiences suggests a perceived structure of society as well as of musical practice.

1.5.4 Community formation around music

My study is about musicians and their communities. I find ‘community’ as a useful term for describing the gatherings of musicians and audiences where performance of genres and a common experience become the basis for a sense of solidarity. Some scholarly sources have contributed to the notion of community formation, which is also central to my research. Community has become a topic of study (Tsing, 2005; Comaroff and Comaroff, 2009). As well as face-to-face interaction, in the post-modern setting, debates about community centre on notions of virtual community created through the Internet, social networking sites and digital media (Boellstorff, 2010).

Music can be the primary catalyst for social interaction. Putnam (2000) notes that cultural activities are one of the best ways to build a sense of community. The musical genres discussed in this book provide an essential window into the creation of community, as well as the connection between a community and the unique networks it establishes. Social interaction through music ‘is a proactive process of [individuals] interjecting themselves into their community’ (Henderson and Hodges, 2006: 67). Thus, in Chapter 3 to 5, I document musicians and their audience members who, through their music making, engage in the process of community formation around music.

1.6 Methodology

The question of how communities are selected for study has never occupied the methodological space. In the early years of the field of history, communities were selected based on serendipitous encounter with a particular musical style.

Likewise, in my situation, I became fascinated with the songs of and musical community in Pahang after I was introduced to two prominent Pahang traditional singers, Aripin Said and Roslan Madun, in November 2012. At this time, I was a contestant in a national traditional poetry singing competition. Said and Madun acted as instructors for the participants.

Since then, I have developed my relationships with Said and Madun and my friendships with both of them grew stronger when they emerged as major informants for my research about Malay vocal music in Pahang, which began ten months after that competition. In Said's work 'Nyanyian Rakyat Khazanah Bangsa Yang Hilang' ('The Loss of Folk Singing as a National Treasure'), he stated that community in Pahang villages is rich in musical tradition (Said, 2004). It was through these men's contacts that I learned about other Pahang musicians from different musical genres and contexts.

Several phases of field study were conducted. A pilot study as a point of departure was conducted from October to November 2013 to familiarize myself with the region and the context of musical performances. I also benefited from the prior development of theoretical proposals to guide my data collection and analysis. My investigation then continued with a nine-month field study conducted from June 2014 to February 2015, and a three-month field study carried out from April to June 2016. So as to enrich my understanding, I continued communicating with some informants throughout the writing of this book through several conduits: meetings, Facebook, phone calls and Whatsapp messages.

During the field studies I typically lived with the community, observing and recording a number of musical events, and interviewing musicians, patrons and audience members. As an active traditional music performer myself, I was able to participate in some of the musical performances that took place during the course of my field studies. I was fortunate to be able to learn the necessary songs in a short space of time. I believe that by performing together with the Pahang musicians, I gained a clearer insight into how they interpret their own music and meanings. In the following section, I will outline discuss the three methodological components used in this work, which are participant observation, interviewing and textual analysis.

1.6.1 Participant observation

Much of the information included in this book comes from personal experience and participant observations over the series of field studies. As a

traditional singer, I was involved in several cultural singing performances together with traditional Pahang singers. Within this context, I was able to enhance my understanding of Pahang musical culture and a variety of music genres. The cultural singing performances were not limited to locations within the Pahang region, but also took place in other regions of Malaysia including Kuala Lumpur, Johor, Melaka, Selangor and Penang. While conducting my field studies, I was given the opportunity to lead discussions on traditional Malay poetry (*syair*, *nazam*, *seloka* and *gurindam*) alongside Roslan Madun in schools and universities.

As well as contributing to an array of singing performances with Pahang traditional singers, I paid several visits to wedding celebrations, concerts, Sunday markets, district festivals, singing competitions, home-based music training sessions, karaoke restaurants, school music rooms, music training centres and music shops. All the singing performances that I attended were recorded and all appropriate vernacular texts (taking this term from Wallach 2002), including banners, posters, stickers, videos, compact disc covers and advertisements of music concerts, were collected to complement my observation.

With their permission, I spent time with singers/musicians, patrons and audience members with the aim of understanding the normative patterns of musical and social behaviours that characterize all events of a particular type. The ultimate goal was to reach and produce an interpretative description of the cultural meaning of a particular singing/music event.

Analysing these musical events allowed me to understand how these singers/musicians and this community perform songs and why they do so in this particular way. With the aim of understanding their musical culture, I learned to sing their songs and play traditional instruments, including the gong, *gendang*, *kompang* and *rebana*. In addition to learning songs and playing traditional instruments, I learned an old dance called *tari pelanduk* (mouse-deer dance). Traditional groups perform *tari pelanduk* as a supplementary element to song performance.

1.6.2 Interview sessions

I collected historical and singing data for this study in the primary form of oral interviews with Malay-speaking informants. I have categorized the interviewees into three groups. The first group consists of musicians and singing performers. The second group consists of audience members including

villagers, concertgoers, schoolteachers, patrons and state officials. Equally important, I also analysed the responses of a third group consisting of *budayawan* (cultural authorities).

The interviews were conducted in environments selected by the informants, including their homes, music practice areas, coffee shops and at performances. No formulated or structured questions were prepared before the interview sessions; there was simply an open discussion with the informants regarding the historical development of singing culture in Pahang, and their views on related topics. Impromptu interview sessions were also conducted after cultural events.

Conversations with informants continued via electronic communications, including email and text messaging on specific matters while assessing field notes and video recordings. This follow-up ensured that my interpretation of the recorded performances was in line with local supposition. I also made sure that my informants were willing to share information without compulsion and hesitation.

All the interviews were recorded, documented in video recordings and transcribed where appropriate, as well as being transliterated for future reference.

1.6.3 Textual analysis

Two types of textual analysis were used in this study: analysis of written texts (old and contemporary) and analysis of audio-visual texts, those recorded both by myself and by others (with their permission). For the written texts, I referred to a number of published and unpublished works from university and state libraries, archives, online books, websites and social media. Written texts also included those transcribed from speech, thoughts and singing performances (song texts) collected in the field. Song texts revealed literary behaviour, which could be analysed in terms of both structure and content.

Songs in Pahang villages are not only performed in Malay, but also in Arabic. The Arabic sung texts were from the popular Islamic book *Kitab Barzanji*, which, to enhance my understanding I read on my return from my field studies. To enrich my understanding of singing in the past, I depended on chronological data provided by the website of the Malay Concordance Project (MCP). The MCP website contains more than 150 works of Malay classical

literature. Some of these works are useful in studying forms of song and musical contexts dating from as early as the late fourteenth century.

A number of audio-visual texts were used in this study to give greater context to my research. First and foremost, I referred to an array of video recordings of singing performances captured by myself whilst in the field. I also studied videos recorded by individuals prior to this study (with the producer's permission). I borrowed four films of traditional Pahang music and dance performances from the Malay Documentation Centre of the Malaysian Institute of Language and Literature, Kuala Lumpur. I referred to these films to supplement my understanding of the traditional music that has been performed by Malays in Pahang villages for more than a century. Several music albums were also listened to and reviewed for this study. I learned the songs on these albums and have provided interpretations of the songs' lyrics. Equally importantly, I also analysed music videos uploaded by fans to online social media, including Facebook and YouTube.

1.7 Organization of the book

The book is divided into six chapters, including an introduction and conclusion.

This chapter has laid the foundation of this study, introducing the background of the Pahang Malays, especially those who live in villages, and the theoretical concepts of singing/vocal genres and identity.

Chapter 2 examines the past musical identity and social environment of the Malay world, of which Pahang is a part, with the aim of understanding past songs and the contexts of their performance.

The next two chapters, 3 and 4, discuss the social contexts of the musical genres performed by professional and semi-professional musicians. Chapter 3 focuses on traditional music and regional pop music, while Chapter 4 is devoted to *kugiran* music and punk rock. The formation of communities around each musical genre will be discussed in these chapters.

Chapter 5 discusses amateur musicians and their songs: *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana*. The chapter's analysis encompasses the cultural contexts of the songs as well as the formation of community through the songs. In the same chapter, I discuss engagement and music consumption by amateur women aged seventeen to twenty-three. This discussion highlights the feminine

nature of the meaning they give to the music they practice or listen to and how they engage in music as part of their leisure time.

Last but not least, Chapter 6 discusses the major findings in relation to the research questions that have been presented in this book. Four points are discussed in this chapter: the social status of musicians, continuity and discontinuity in genres, gender-related songs and community formation. As part of my analysis, I relate my findings on these points to current knowledge in the fields of musical ethnography and Malay studies.

CHAPTER 2

THE PAST MUSICAL IDENTITY AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE MALAY WORLD

2.1 Introduction

According to folk stories, the cultural practices of Pahang Malays were adopted from Melaka (Aripin Said, personal communication, 26 November 2014). This claim has been reinforced by Abdul Jalil Borham (2012), who demonstrated how cultural links between Melaka and Pahang began in the late-fifteenth century during the reign of the first Sultan of Pahang, Raja Muhammad (r.1470-75), who was the son of the Melakan Sultan Mansur Syah. Substantial migration into Pahang occurred from Melaka following the appointment of the first ruler of Pahang. Aside from the political impact this had, the people of Pahang were also introduced at this time to the art and culture of the Melakan people. Hence, in this chapter¹, I will be discussing a certain social environment that is part of the Malay world, of which Pahang is, in turn, a part. As two-thirds of my work focuses on vocal forms, which are understood to be inherited from the past, I believe that this aspect is relevant as some of the functions and meanings of historical songs have been retained in present music genres.

In his study, Nicolas (2017) explores the historical significance of musical terms mentioned in a number of examples of Malay classical literature dated from the late fourteenth to early seventeenth century. He presents musical terms using the chronological data provided by the Malay Concordance Project (MCP) website (<http://mcp.anu.edu.au>). From the late fourteenth century, Malay literary authors made use of musical references and musical imagery as mentioned by Nicolas as ‘illustrations of a musical life in that period’ (Nicolas, 2017: 5). He also adds that the musical world ‘portrayed in these texts can be deduced from these musical terms’ (Nicolas, 2017: 30). Nicolas divided the musical and literary terms into seven categories: 1) musical

¹ Part of this chapter was presented on 14 September 2017 at Garuda Plaza in Medan, Indonesia, and published in the Proceedings of the International Seminar of Oral Literature by *Balai Bahasa Sumatera Utara* (ISBN 978-602-9172-33-1).

instruments; 2) vocal music; 3) playing techniques; 4) dance; 5) theatrical forms; 6) literary genres and 7) religious texts. From these I will only look further at three categories: musical instruments, vocal music and literary genres.

According to Nicolas, terminology relating to musical instruments can be associated with four sources: Sanskrit musical terms; musical terms from the Middle East, exemplified by the term *nobat*; Javanese musical terms as products of long-term contact between the three early Malay kingdoms, namely Majapahit, Samudra-Pasai and Melaka, and exemplified by the term *gong*; and musical terms shared with the Orang Asli. Several vocal music and literary genres are also mentioned. For vocal music, Nicolas identifies *zikir/dikir* and *gurindam*. Meanwhile, rhymed verses, *pantun*, *syair*, *seloka* and prose narrative *hikayat* (narrative text), fall into the category of literary genres.

Nicolas's findings, however, are subject to at least two limitations. Firstly, there is limited evidence of how the songs mentioned above are performed within the context of the literary world. Secondly, Nicolas' work does not cover the musical instruments that are used to accompany singing performances. With these limitations acknowledged, in this chapter I hope to provide useful, additional insights into what Malay music was like in the past through a contextual analysis of Malay literary works.

2.2 Malay classical literature

Malay classical literature is part of the cultural heritage of island as well as mainland South-East Asia. Malay literature presents a consistent tradition, with form and content displaying classical values: thematic control, stylistic simplicity and formal structure (Aveling, 2002). These features perhaps have inspired Winstedt (1969), Osman (1971) and Liaw (1975) to use the term 'classical' in their writings. To study Malay music from the past, I have referred to twelve Malay classical works (historical or fictional) from the fourteenth to nineteenth centuries (Table 1).

The dates of these texts are mostly speculative. Except for *Syair Seratus Siti*, all of the works are in prose. I chose these twelve literary works on the basis of the historical context of the songs and the musical practices described in them. The language and literature derived from the written traditions in these transition periods from the late Hindu-Buddhist period into the Islamic period shaped the earliest values associated with Malays.

Table 1: Selection of Malay classical literature

Title	Dated circa
1. <i>Hikayat Bayan Budiman</i>	1371
2. <i>Hikayat Amir Hamzah</i>	<1380
3. <i>Hikayat Raja Pasai</i>	1390
4. <i>Hikayat Pandawa Lima</i>	1525
5. <i>Hikayat Indraputra</i>	<1600
6. <i>Sejarah Melayu</i>	1612
7. <i>Hikayat Aceh</i>	1625
8. <i>Bustan as-Salatin</i>	1640
9. <i>Hikayat Hang Tuah</i>	1700
10. <i>Misa Melayu</i>	1780
11. <i>Adat Raja Melayu</i>	1779, 1850
12. <i>Syair Seratus Siti</i>	1890

Many of the works are not set in a Malay context; some are adaptations of texts from other languages, for instance, Indian/Sanskrit, Persian and Old Javanese (Kawi). A question I wished to examine was: To what extent is the story-world, including its musical aspects, a reflection of Malay realities? I argue that in many of them the story-world is ‘Malayized’ in some respects. Other scholars of the subject agree: Swettenham (1878) even applied the Indian term ‘nautch’ (traditional dance in India) to a performance on the Malay Peninsula, and Sheppard (1967) links Malay instruments to Java. Malay authors repackaged stories from the original works with new and beneficial additions to appeal to the tastes of people from the Malay Archipelago. This gave new Malay interpretations to the original story adding to the existing information, wisdom, learning and entertainment they contained. This demonstrates the attitude Malay authors had towards the concept of multiculturalism, emphasizing the aspect of ‘accommodates’ but not ‘discriminates’ in Malay tradition. For instance, the Persian-Arabic genres of *ghazal*, *qasida*, *qit’ah*, *ruba’i* and *mathnawī* were sung or performed, having been adapted for the Malay population.

Ghazal emerged in Persian-Arabic countries as a genre of poetry presented to an audience through chanting and singing. As a result, *ghazal* developed as a singing genre in many local cultures. Malay *ghazal* is one of many *ghazal* genres which evolved in the Malay world by merging poetic and musical ideas from the Middle East and India. In Malay *ghazal*, the essential feature is Malay traditional *pantun* verses that are very different to the Indo-Persian (Urdu) literary adaptations. The text in Malay *ghazal* does not directly

reflect feelings of romance, which is the main subject of *ghazal* genres in Persia and India. The Malay *ghazal* performance experiences the aesthetics of the music rather than the aesthetics of the poetry. *Ghazal* and *qasida* emerged in the same time period and have influenced each other in terms of being special singing styles cultivated through the input of other cultures. *Qasida al-Burdah*, the panegyric of the Prophet Muhammad, was furnished with a translation into Malay prior to 1600. The Malay version was not in a *qasida* format, but was a type of rhyming prose. Inspired poets and singers in the Malay world have adapted the *qasida* text into their music with different musical arrangements. The modern *qasida* is often a fusion with contemporary or traditional Arabic, Western and South-East Asian idioms and has been seen as a creative means of preaching (Agha, 2019). *Qit'ah* is an occasional poem and is of greater simplicity than *qasida*. This simplicity of the language used is closer to spontaneous and direct utterances of grief. In most references that I have consulted, *qit'ah* is a term for a short rhythmic song used in the recitation of the Qur'an.

Ruba'i is usually, but inaccurately, considered a quatrain (a stanza of four lines, especially one having alternate rhymes). *Ruba'i* is rather a poem of the type which Malays call *syair*. One of the outstanding manuscripts exhibited in Aceh Museum due to 'the scarcity of its contents, the fame of authors, the beauty of calligraphy or illumination, great age or unique physical characteristics' is a *ruba'i* (Nurdin AR, 2012: 102). *Ruba'i* by Hamzah Fansuri from Aceh spread rapidly through the dissemination of copies, which were initially designated as the *syair* of Hamzah, meaning simply his 'poems' (Teeuw, 1966: 440). This general term then became the name of a specific genre and began to inspire imitation not only on the original religious themes, but also across a wider range of subjects. At present, *ruba'i* (*syair* with religious themes) is one kind of *syair* performance in Malaysia and Indonesia. Finally, *mathnawī* (spiritual couplets) has been very thoroughly studied and appreciated by scholars, devotees and men of letters from both the East and the West. *Mathnawī* is often quoted and many people know lines or longer segments of their texts by heart (Safavi and Weightman, 2009: 40).

Malays had traditionally associated with Java. Java had greater political and economic power than the Malay-speaking region. Indeed, the Javanese language was admired and Malays would appear in Javanese attire at court (Robson, 1992). The huge influence of Javanese culture upon the Malay world has been described by Cortesáo (1944), who noted that soon after the Portuguese had captured Melaka, Tome Pires wrote that its inhabitants were 'fond of the mimes after the fashion of Java'. Malay traditional literature and

performances contain elements with strong Javanese influences. The Javanese presence in Malay texts in various Malay languages is not considered to be a passive adoption. There are Malay texts with that contain episodes including Javanese characters such as *Sejarah Melayu* (c.1612) and *Hikayat Hang Tuah* (c.1700). *Hikayat Pandawa Lima* (c.1525), authored by a Javanese, is referred to as ‘Malayo-Javanese literature’ (Robson, 1992: 27).

Arps (2018) has coined a new term, Javanaiserie, in his endeavour to look at the role of Javanese elements and other cultural influences in the Malay world. Arps pays special attention to the Javanese roots of ‘*Nawaruci*’, a Javanese manuscript written in Malay. The Javanese background has, in part, been relevant to Malay literary works and performance. Here, I consider Javanaiserie with regard to the ‘prestigious singing’ (Putra and Creese, 2012: 279) of two styles of Javanese poetic texts: *kakawin* and *kidung*. The term ‘*kakawin*’ is derived from the Sanskrit word *kavya*. It refers to long epic poems, usually hundreds of stanzas in length. The oldest known *kakawin* is *Ramayana* from the mid-ninth century. The romantic and domestic aspects of court life for women in the courts of pre-Islamic Java are the dominant themes in *kakawin* (Rubinstein, 2006). Written in indigenous metres, *kidung* is a chant, song and melody that is concerned ‘with the exploits of legendary Javanese kings and religious themes’ (Putra and Creese, 2012: 274).

Hikayat Seri Rama (the Malay version of the *Ramayana*) and episodes from the *Hikayat Pandawa Lima* (a version of the *Mahabharata*) provide names and Javanese features for Malay shadow puppet play. Some changes developed as a result of local traditions. The Malay shadow puppet play uses smaller puppets than its Javanese counterpart. Also, Javanese subjects and assumptions are expressed in the Malay performer’s own style and from his own perspective and understanding. Malay shadow puppet plays have been performed in a variety of Malay languages: the Kelantanese dialect in the border provinces of Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang; the Kedah dialect in the north-east; and Javanese in the south-eastern part of Johor.

In summary, the wealth of other cultures (mainly Persian-Arabic and Javanese) blended aesthetically with local beliefs in many aspects of Malay culture in the past. Musical references and musical imagery in Malay literary works offer perspectives on musical life of that time. Some of these have been discussed by Nicolas (2017), but with limited information on vocal music. Before I analyse the past musical forms/songs, below I provide an introduction to the Malay literary works used in this study.

2.2.1 Hikayat Bayan Budiman

Hikayat Bayan Budiman (The Tale of the Wise Parrot) derives from the Hindu/Sanskrit work, *Sukasapti* (Aveling, 2002: 163), and takes its Malay title from the bird that relates the seventy stories included in the manuscript. The manuscript of *Sukasapti* has been translated into many languages. The most important translation is *Tutinameh*, a Persian translation by someone called Nakhshabi (Aveling, 2002: 164).

The Malay version is considerably shorter than Nakhshabi's work, because it skips many plots of the stories. The Malay version was adapted from an earlier Persian version. This work has other names in Malay such as *Hikayat Khoja Maimun*, *Hikayat Khoja Mubarak* and *Cerita Taifah*. Besides the Malay version, there are also versions of it in Buginese and Makasarese. The Malay version differs in a significant number of ways from the original work. In the original manuscript, the major characters are named Haradatta, Madanasema and Prabhawati, while in *Hikayat Bayan Budiman* they are called Khoja Mubarak, Khoja Maimun and Bibi Zainab (Aveling, 2002: 165).

2.2.2 Hikayat Amir Hamzah

The region of North Sumatra has been the centre of Malay traditions ever since the emergence of Melaka in the fifteenth century. *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* came from the region of North Sumatra as it was translated from Persian. The manuscript tells of the courage and nobility of Amir Hamzah, an Islamic figure. Interestingly, the Sultan of Melaka asked his defenders and soldiers to read this work as a way of raising their spirits on the night before the Portuguese stormed the city of Melaka in 1511 (Braginsky, 2004).

2.2.3 Hikayat Raja Pasai

The fourteenth-century *Hikayat Raja Pasai* (Tale of the Kings of Pasai) is of North Sumatran provenance, and was influenced by the *Hikayat Amir Hamzah*. This prose work combines the genres of historical chronicle and heroic epic. The histories provided in this work are a mixture of facts and fascinating myths (Aveling, 2002).

2.2.4 Hikayat Pandawa Lima

Hikayat Pandawa Lima (Tale of the Five Pandawa) is based on an Old Javanese *kakawin*, *Ghatotkacasraya*, and the *kakawin Arjuna Wiwaha* (Zoetmulder, 1974), which was adapted from the Indian-inspired epics of either *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata*. This work is considered ‘*hikayat* literature’ (Aveling, 2002: 13). The *Hikayat Pandawa Lima* appears in Malay literature between the late-fourteenth and early-sixteenth centuries and was known under various titles including *Hikayat Pandawa Panca Kelima*, *Hikayat Pandawa Jaya*, *Hikayat Pandawa*, *Hikayat Darmawangsa*, *Hikayat Pandawa Lebur* and *Hikayat Gilaran Pandu Turunan Pandawa* (Hussain, 1964).

The language used is similar to the language used in other Hindu-derived *hikayats*, and differs from the language of strongly Islamic texts, for instance, *Hikayat Amir Hamzah*. *Hikayat Pandawa Lima* was translated into Malay at about the same time as the composition of the Malay literary version of the *Ramayana*, the *Hikayat Seri Rama* (Chronicle of the Great Rama), between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries. Javanese authors may have composed these two works. ‘In Suma Oriental (1944)’, said Aveling, ‘Tomé Pires tells that many Javanese migrated to Melaka when it was at the height of its prosperity and power. The Javanese embraced Islam and settled in the Malay capital for lengthy periods. A few would have had an interest in literary course. *Hikayat Pandawa Lima* bears no name of its author or a date of composition. It was composed at the request of some major figures’ (Aveling, 2002: 134). In *Hikayat Pandawa Lima*, reference to singing appears to be used to praise a person’s beauty.

2.2.5 Hikayat Indraputra

Hikayat Indraputra is the epitome of romantic *penglipur lara* or ‘rhapsodist’ literature. It contains what were originally Hindu stories with a strong overlay of Islamic elements (Aveling, 2002: 146). As a ‘transitional *hikayat*’, Aveling (2002) also mentioned that this work was composed at the time when Hinduism and Islam were equally potent influences on Malay culture. Roolvink (1975: 9, 13) points out that *Hikayat Indraputra* was probably written during the seventeenth century, when Malay literary activity was focused on Aceh and not on other parts of the Archipelago. He also points out that the *Hikayat Indraputra* is written in good Malay and is unlikely to be a translation from any other language. Several texts may have influenced this work including *Hikayat Amir Hamzah*. *Hikayat Indraputra* was recited to the

accompaniment of tambourines, an instrument very popular among Malays (Braginsky, 2004).

2.2.6 *Sejarah Melayu*

Sejarah Melayu or *Sulalatus Salatin* is one of the finest literary and historical works in the Malay language, which Winstedt (1938a) has dated as being written not later than 1535-1536. The recension of *Sejarah Melayu* was composed around 1536 by an author who may have lived in Melaka before being captured by the Portuguese and who could still remember life in the Melaka court environment. *Sejarah Melayu* is an important source of historical information about Melaka and the Malay world prior to Melaka's defeat by the Portuguese in 1511. It relates the history of the Malay Sultanate in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, the period of the transformation of the Malays from a Hindu-Buddhist culture to an Islamic one (Nicolas, 2017).

Sejarah Melayu has a number of versions (Roolvink, 1976; Braginsky, 2004). Braginsky (2004) indicates that in *Sejarah Melayu*, the word *nyanyi* designates popular *pantun* (stanzas with cross rhyming). He also added that in the post-1612 recension of *Sejarah Melayu*, stanzas of *syair* describing the garden owned by the magical princess of Mount Ledang are found. However, each *syair* stanza in *Sejarah Melayu* correlates with special occurrences or celebrations. *Sejarah Melayu* indicates that dance was a form of social contact between Malays (Melaka) and the Javanese (Majapahit). In it, Tun Bijaya Sura of Melaka was asked to perform a dance that used to be danced by the clerics of Majapahit. Prior to this in the story, the clerics of Majapahit had requested that Laksamana of Melaka perform a dance, as the former had declared that he had never seen Laksamana, who was not only great in battle but had a talent for and fame in dance.

2.2.7 *Hikayat Aceh*

Aceh produced many anonymous works, including the *Hikayat Aceh* (Tale of Aceh). This work is a seventeenth-century epic composed after the enthronement of the famous ruler of Aceh, Iskandar Muda (1606-1636) in 1607, and before the late-seventeenth century. A blending of Hindu and Muslim beliefs is found in this work: both Alexander the Great (considered an early Islamic prophet) and the Hindu god Vishnu play a role in the chronicle's foundation story (Aveling, 2002: 271). Kloos (2015) interprets this Malay-

language work as hagiographic of the life and rule of the Sultan, and representative of an older hagiographic tradition, fashioned after Persian examples. In this work, it was stated that the French admiral, Beaulieu, who visited the court of Sultan Iskandar Muda in 1621, had heard that there were female singers who glorified the sultan's military exploits in their songs (Lombard, 1986). Based on that, this gives the impression that vocal music began to reach its peak in the early seventeenth century.

2.2.8 *Bustan as-Salatin*

Jelani Harun (2004) reveals that the Persian tradition of universal history and the Indo-Persian tradition of precision in historical writing were brought to the Malay world in the seventeenth century by the Gujarati theologian, Nuruddin al-Raniri through the work of *Bustan as-Salatin* (the Garden of Sultans). This work was written in Malay and was composed between 1638 and 1641 on the orders of Sultan Iskandar Thani, son of the Pahang ruler Sultan Ahmad Shah, who had been brought to Aceh at the age of seven when his native country was conquered by Sultan Iskandar Muda in 1618. Sultan Iskandar Thani was the son-in-law of Sultan Iskandar Muda. Even though Nuruddin did not mention that Sultan Iskandar Thani ordered him to write this work, one would guess that the work is closely linked to the monarch because of the fulsome praise he, the king, receives in part of this work to detriment of the other kings mentioned (Aveling, 2002: 274). Several works, including *Sejarah Melayu*, influenced the author of this work. *Bustan as-Salatin* is considered a theological and historical treatise.

2.2.9 *Hikayat Hang Tuah*

Hikayat Hang Tuah (Epic of Hang Tuah) from the early eighteenth century is a well-known and popular work that began as oral tales associated with the legendary heroes of the Melaka kingdom in the fifteenth century. *Hikayat Hang Tuah* was probably composed in Johor on a single occasion at some time between 1688 and the 1710s. Compositionally, *Hikayat Hang Tuah* strongly resembles traditional Malay historical works, particularly *Sejarah Melayu*. One of the best known stories about Hang Tuah, the most well-known warrior from Melaka, is that he was sent to Pahang on a mission to present a proposal of marriage from the Sultan of Melaka to Tun Teja, the beautiful daughter of Bendahara of Pahang. The importance placed on the Pahang River in this work as the main route used by Hang Tuah to bring Tun Teja to Melaka

is discussed in Shaffril et al. (2011). The phrase '*tanah Melayu*' (land of Malay) is scattered throughout this *hikayat* to refer to the peninsula, rather than Sumatra (Andaya, 2011). There is an indication in *Hikayat Hang Tuah* that the people of Melaka were pleased to listen to songs by a singer from Inderapura (Pahang). There is also mention in this work of '*bunyi-bunyian cara Melayu*', which literally translates to 'Malay ways of making sounds'. Dancing also features in this *hikayat*, as indicated by '*menari cara Melayu*' or, literally, 'dancing in Malay style', and a *laksamana* (a warrior) of Melaka demonstrates a dance in front of the people of Inderapura who proclaim that they have never seen such dance performed by the *laksamana* before.

2.2.10 *Misa Melayu*

Misa Melayu belongs to what Winstedt referred to as Malay Histories (1969: ix) or what Liaw calls *Sastra Sejarah* (History of Literature) (1975). The author of this work is Raja Chulan bin Raja Abdul Hamid. He was a member of the royal family of Perak in the eighteenth century and had the title of *Raja Muda* (Crown Prince). Sultan Muzaffar Shah asked Raja Chulan to write *Misa Melayu* twice, once in prose and once in verse (Aveling, 2002: 268). Other names for *Misa Melayu* include *Misal Melayu*, *Hikayat Salasilah Perak* and *Hikayat Raja Ke Laut*.

Misa is probably taken from the word '*misal*' ('example'), as noted by Maxwell in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland (JRAS) in 1878. Maxwell corrected his interpretation in the same journal, suggesting that *Misa* was based on the name of a very popular Javanese romantic story in Perak at that time, *Misa Perbu Jaya* or *Misa Jawa*. As far as I am able to ascertain, the title of the Javanese romance in Perak, however, is unknown. The comparison between the Javanese romance in Perak and *Misa Jawa* resulted in the name *Misa Melayu* (Sutrisno, 1983). *Misa* in Sanskrit means war-buffalo, champion of the arena, and was used as a title for warriors in medieval romance. *Misa* is also an ancient Javanese title. According to Buyong Adil (1966) the buffalo in *Misa Melayu* has a symbolical meaning of courage and bravery and thus, *Misa Melayu* means the hero of Malay.

According to Winstedt (1969), *Misa Melayu* is a historical work, as the focus of attention is on historical events rather than its fictitious aspects. While *Misa Melayu* is initially a narrative work with aesthetic and fictitious elements like other literary works, it has a historical background. This kind of

writing gives a picture of the past in a certain period and at a certain location. *Misa Melayu* is based on genuine history, emphasizing real places, people and events (Aveling, 2002: 13). This work also provides information on the reigns of various sultans of Perak, placing its greatest emphasis on Sultan Iskandar Zulkarnain Shah (Aveling, 2002: 62). The power struggles and the enmity of the nobles, the frequent interference of outside powers such as the state of Selangor, the Buginese and the Dutch are also recounted in *Misa Melayu*. The events recounted in this work were contemporaneous with the author, suggesting that Raja Chulan lived from about 1720 to 1786.

In *Misa Melayu*, Raja Chulan included accounts of a number of interesting events, such as royal fishing festivals (Aveling, 2002: 62). Sutrisno (1983) discusses the various musical instruments used at a royal ceremony mentioned in *Misa Melayu*. These included gong, *gendang*, *serunai*, *nafiri*, *negara*, *ceracap*, *rebab/harbab*, *rebana*, *bangsi* and *biola*. However, Sutrisno has not provided evidence as to whether or not these instruments were used to accompany song performances.

2.2.11 Adat Raja Melayu

This work describes the ceremonies and customs related to pregnancy, birth, betrothal and marriage, as well as coronation and funeral ceremonies as recorded in Malay courts and as noted by Tuan Abdulmuhit, an eighteenth-century observer and mosque official. This work has several versions: *Peraturan Adat Raja-Raja* (Customs of the Rulers), *Perintah Adat Raja-Raja dan Bidan* (Customary Order of the Rulers and Midwives) and *Bahwa Ini Kitab Adat Segala Raja-Raja Melayu Dalam Segala Negeri* (The Customary Book of Malay Kings in all States).

2.2.12 Syair Seratus Siti

Syair Seratus Siti is a Malay work of nineteenth-century literature associated with singing/songs. Junaidi Kasdan (2004) highlighted that, apart from the Malay language, some dialects from the states of Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang on the east coast of the Malay Peninsula, as well as Arabic-Persian and Javanese can be found in this work. It was written, as the title suggests, in *syair* stanzas and had a social function, serving both as entertainment and for didactic purposes.

In summary, the twelve works described above, dating from the late fourteenth century to the late nineteenth century, are part of the cultural heritage of the Malays of South-East Asia. They demonstrate form, provide content and exhibit certain classical values. In the next part, I will discuss the song forms and perspectives illustrated in these works.

2.3 Songs from the past in Malay classical literature

A remarkable range of genres, musical practices and instruments is mentioned in Malay classical literature (Andaya, 2011), suggesting that music in the past was diverse and broad-ranging. In this section, three specific areas will be examined: song forms, the representation of songs and songs with instrumental accompaniment.

2.3.1 Song forms

Malay literary writers made use of songs and musical imagery as illustrations of musical life in the period in which they were writing. Song reference is a literary device used to record musical events that were part of the narrative of a particular event in Malay classical literature. Song imagery, mostly short, is a literary technique used to embellish narrative flow and the literary appeal of a prose or verse form in Malay literary texts. None of the Malay literary texts ‘take music as their principle topic, neither are they written for a specialist musical audience, meaning that no technical details are provided’ (McCallum, 2019: 106).

The following is a reflection on the poetic forms mentioned in Malay classical literature as songs that incorporate context. All quotations listed below are transcribed from the website of the MCP and translated by the author.

1) In Winstedt’s (ed.) edition of *Hikayat Bayan Budiman* there is a quotation that mentions four written song forms, *syair*, *gurindam*, *pantun* and *seloka*. Raja Harman Syah used these song forms to express his passionate love. The related quote reads:

[S]erta diambilnya kertas yang tersurat beberapa syair dan gurindam, pantun dan seloka yang menyatakan berahinya akan Raja Harman Syah itu. (Bayan 149: 16)

Then, Raja Harman Syah took a piece of paper containing stanzas of the *syair* and *gurindam*, *pantun* and *seloka* which to reflect his intense love.

Hikayat Bayan Budiman also includes mention of the term *berhikayat*, which means a romantic/historical text (*hikayat*). The text includes *pantun* and *seloka*. In this context, *pantun* and *seloka* are mischievous or witty quatrains that would distract the listener, making him/her forget about his/her emotion (*lalai*). For example:

[M]aka kata Bibi Zainab, 'berhikayatlah dahulu, supaya suka hatiku'. Maka dalam hati Bayan, 'Baiklah. Boléh hamba berhikayat tetapi dengan hikayat juga aku perlalaikan. Dengan pantun seloka itu, maka padamlah hawa nafsunya'. (Bayan 73: 22)

Thus, Bibi Zainab says, 'Please tell me a story to delight me'. The parrakeet reflects, 'Fine. I will narrate but with the narration, you will be distracted. Thus, the *seloka* verses will make you forget the Prince'.

Another form of song, *madah*, is commonly referenced in *Hikayat Bayan Budiman*. A *madah* is a praising song. *Madah* is mentioned along with *pantun*, *seloka* and *syair*, as shown in the following quotation:

[S]etelah ia sampai kepada Bibi Zainab itu, maka dikhabarkannya segala pesan perkataan anak raja itu, semuanya habis disampaikan orang tua itu, serta lagi dengan beberapa pantun seloka madah dan syair akan memberi ghairat berahinya dengan pujuk yang lemak lembut. (Bayan 6: 29)

Once he reached Bibi Zainab, he conveyed all the messages of the Prince, including the *pantun*, *seloka*, *madah*, and *syair* to instil her love and passion for the Prince through gentle coaxing.

In brief, *Hikayat Bayan Budiman* provides examples of five forms of song: *pantun*, *seloka*, *madah*, *syair* and *gurindam*. From these song forms, this work demonstrates that *pantun* and *seloka* are included as part of the *hikayat*.

2) In *Hikayat Amir Hamzah*, several forms of song are found. *Pantun* continues to be mentioned in this work and, in the following quotation, it is referred to as the 'sayings' of the elders:

[M]aka titah Raja Nusyirwan, 'Pekerjaan ini tidak dapat tiada seperti pantun orang tua-tua'. (AHmz 127: 26)

Thus, Raja Nusyirwan declares, 'This work can never be like the *pantun* of the elders'.

Syair, like *pantun*, continues to be mentioned in this work. *Syair* is part of *hikayat*. In this context, the *syair* is about the Prophet Muhammad. The relevant quotation reads:

[M]aka Amirul Mukminin Abbas pun menceterakan kisah ini kepada segala sahabat Rasulullah seperti kata *syair*: Muhammad itu lebih daripada Kaf dan Nun. Bahawa apabila hari dukacita, bacalah hikayat ini, nescaya hilang dukacita itu. (AHmz xxx: 1)

Thus, Amirul Mukmini Abbas narrated the story of the Prophet Muhammad to his friends like a stanza of the *syair*: The qualities of the Prophet Muhammad were more than that of the Kaf and the Nun. Hence when you experience sadness, your sorrow will be lessened after reading the story of the Prophet.

It is in the *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* that two songs, *zikir* and *bait*, are mentioned for the first time in Malay classical works. *Zikir* (a loud chanting of religious sayings, from Arabic) is a form of prayer that, in this context, is recited after a meal. A quotation mentioning *zikir* reads:

[S]etelah sudah makan, maka ia pun membaca doa dan membaca *zikirullah*. (AHmz 608: 16)

After dinner, they offered prayers and recited *zikir* in prayers of Allah.

The word *bait* comes from the Arabic word *bayt* meaning a poem with two lines. It is performed for Arabian warriors whilst eating. The quotation mentioning *bait* is as follows:

[M]aka segala pahlawan Arab, pahlawan Zamin Ambar, dan pahlawan Zamin Tauran pun makan minum bercampur baur. Maka ketika itu Amir Hamzah pun berbait. (AHmz 671: 9)

Thus, all the Arabs, Zamin Ambar and Zamin Tauran warriors even ate and drank together. Then, Amir Hamzah recited a *bait* poem.

In summary, the *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* illustrates the existence of four forms of song: *pantun*, *syair*, *zikir* and *bait*. Thus it was not until the late fourteenth century that the author became familiar with Arabian people and things and started including Arabic terms (*syair*, *zikir* and *bait*) in his work.

3) *Syair* and *pantun* continue to be mentioned in *Hikayat Raja Pasai*. The work includes *syair* in the form of two lines (in Arabic, with Malay translation) as follows:

Sabbat'alaiya 'I-masa'ib,
(*Telah didatangkan atasku percintaan,*)
Alaiya 'I-ayyam sarat layaliyan,
(*Jikalau percintaan didatangkan atasku segala hari*
ini.) (Pasai 116: 10)

Love has been presented to me,
Today, love came to my life.

Pantun appears infrequently in this work. In one of the contexts, a quatrain of *pantun* is presented by an administrator who was making obeisance to honour a king. A related quotation reads:

[M]aka Tun Perpatih Tulus Agung Tukang Sukara pun berdatang sembah seraya ia berpantun, 'Lada siapa dibangsalkan? Selama lada sekerati, Pada siapa disesalkan? Tuan juga empunya pekerti'. (Pasai 125:10)

Thus, Tun Perpatih Tulus Agung Tukang Sukara recited a *pantun* to honour the King, 'Whose pepper is kept in the hut? For the pepper is to be severed, To whom does one express regret? You are indeed the source, my lord'.

An interesting insight is that there is an indication that an Arabic *syair* was borrowed and translated into Malay by the author of this work. It seems that the Malay authors in the late fourteenth century were acquainted with Arabic *syair*. The translation of Arabic poems (in this case, *syair*) into Malay is likely to have been part of the process of creating in Malay literature.

4) In *Hikayat Pandawa Lima*, two Javanese literary terms, *kakawin* and *kidung* are mentioned, as is the Malay *pantun*. *Kakawin* and *kidung* are mentioned six times in this work and are associated with singing, with *kakawin* performed in a light-hearted, jesting manner. A quotation related to this reads:

[A]da yang menyanyi, ada yang mengidung, ada yang berkakawin bersenda gurau. (PandL 29: 29)

Some chanted poems and made jokes.

The rendition of *kakawin* and *kidung* is envisaged as harmonious and pleasant, as the following quotation indicates:

[M]aka Sang Bimanyu diambilnya bunga cempaka disuratnya dengan kidung dan kakawin terlalu manis bunyinya. (PandL 30: 16)

Thus, Sang Bimanyu took a frangipani flower and wrote sweet *kidung* and *kakawin* on its petals.

Hikayat Pandawa Lima describes *pantun* as a sung text performed by maidens for the leader, as the quotation below indicates. This strengthens the notion that *pantun* as a sung text has developed since ancient times.

[M]aka kata segala dayang-dayang itu, 'Haruslah Sang Bimanyu itu diperbuatnya pantun dan nyanyi kerana terlalu amat baik parasnya'. (PandL 27: 4)

Thus, the maidens said, 'Let us prepare verses of the *pantun* and song to praise the good appearance'. Because of Sang Bimanyu's good appearance, we shall prepare verses of the *pantun* and sing'.

In summary, *Hikayat Pandawa Lima* exhibits both Javanese and Malay forms of song.

From the first work (*Hikayat Bayan Budiman*) to the fourth work (*Hikayat Pandawa Lima*), *pantun* is seen as a popular song form that appears in every work. This suggests that *pantun* is largely understood as Malay's finest, most effective and touching poetic style.

5) Until the sixteenth century, five significant forms of song appear to be popular in Malay literary works: *syair*, *pantun*, *seloka*, *madah* and *bait*. This situation continues in the fifth work, *Hikayat Inderaputra*. A quotation mentioning *syair*, *madah*, *pantun* and *seloka* reads:

[M]aka didengari oleh Indraputra bunyi suara orang bernyanyi dan orang bersyair, dan suara orang bersyair dan suara orang bermadah dan berpantun dan berseloka. (Ind 60: 9)

Thus, Indraputra could hear the sound of people singing verses of the *syair*, *madah*, *pantun* and *seloka*.

Bait is also mentioned alongside *syair* and *madah*. The mention in the text of three different kinds of birds: the talking-bird of romance, the mynah and the parrot suggests that these informal terms for young women are associated with the songs. A quotation in this context reads:

[M]aka bayan itu bersyair dan tiung bermadah dan nuri
berbait, bagai-bagai rupanya ragamnya. (Ind 79: 22)

Thus, the parrakeet sang *syair*, the mynah recited the *madah* and the parrot uttered the *bait*.

This suggests that the author of *Hikayat Indraputra* may continue to use these well-known forms of song in his work. I will examine whether this is the case in the next work.

6) It seems that the trend does continue to appear in the sixth work, *Sejarah Melayu* in which five stanzas of *pantun* can be found:

Quatrains	Translations
(1) <i>Mana Sultan Abu Syahid? budak-budak bermain bantak, Tuan seorang dipandang baik, bagai cincin dengan permata.</i>	Where can Sultan Abu Syahid be? the boys are at their games, you, Sir, are well regarded, like a ring with precious stones.
(2) <i>Cau Panden anak Bubunnya, hendak menyerang ke Melaka, ada cincin berisi bunga, bunga berladung air mata.</i>	Cau Panden the son of Bubunnya, who wishes to overrun Melaka, there is a ring decorated with blossoms, and the blossoms are wet with tears.
(3) <i>Lalai-lalai mana bubutan? bubutan lagi di kelati, kakak Tun Telanai, di mana pungutan? pungutan lagi di Tanjung Jati.</i>	Where is Bubutan, Lalai? bubutan is in <i>kelati</i> , the sister of Tun Telanai, where was she picked from? she was picked from Tanjung Jati.
(4) <i>Kota Pahang dimakan api, sampai ke tepi hampir titian, bukan kularang kamu berlaki, bukan begini perjanjian.</i>	Kota Pahang is consumed by fire, which reached the edge of the bridge, I did not forbid you to be married, but this is not as we promised.
(5) <i>Apa dijeruk dengan belimbing? geranggang mudik muara,</i>	Why mix lime with star fruit? the bamboo rafts is rowed upstream,

apa ditengok di balik dinding?
Tun Hassan Temenggung
anak Bendahara.

what do you see behind the wall?
Tun Hassan, son of the Chief Minister.

There is a quotation mentioning *syair*, *bait*, *gurindam* and *seloka* in which these forms of song are associated with the game of chess. The quotation reads:

[M]aka bercaturlah Tun Bahara itu dengan orang Melaka.
Lawannya itu berlikir, ia tiada berlikir, pandang kiri,
pandang kanan, sambil ia bersyair, dan berbait, dan
bergurindam, dan berseloka. (SM 144: 18)

Thus, the chess-like game began between Tun Bahara and the inhabitants of Melaka. The foes drank liquor; he did not, but looked to the left and to the right, while singing the *syair*, *bait*, *gurindam* and *seloka*.

Like others, this author has incorporated well-known Malay songs in his work, with *Sejarah Melayu* containing five stanzas of *pantun* covering different themes. In my analysis, *Sejarah Melayu* is the first Malay classical work of literature to include stanzas of *pantun*. This inclusion indicates that the author of *Sejarah Melayu* is highly skilled in his writing and familiar with Malay tradition.

7) After about two hundred years, the term ‘*dikir*’ reappeared in literary work, as in the word *padikiran* in *Hikayat Aceh*. *Dikir* comes from the Arabic ‘*zikir*’, which means remembrance and the act of praising Allah. It is interesting to note, however, that, in the context of *Hikayat Aceh*, the chanters (*padikir*) perform *dikir* with body movements or dance as indicated in the following excerpt:

[M]aka ada di lepau istana itu beberapa dari padikiran yang
menari dan segala perhiasannya dan beberapa daripada
biduan yang maha merdu suaranya. (Aceh 105: 2)

Then, several singers with melodious voices sang, and at the same time they danced in the throne room of the palace.

This discovery reinforces the present-day notion that Aceh in North Sumatra has long been associated with a musical culture of *dikir*, and that, according to Kartomi (2012: 16), there are ‘many commonalities between the musical arts of the various Malay subgroups around Sumatra’s coast’.

8) In *Bustan as-Salatin*, two ancient musical instruments, the *dap* (tambourine) and the *rebana* are mentioned as being used to accompany performances of *dikir*. These instruments are embellished with gold, gems and silver. This work also identifies the term *biduan* to refer to the chanter or singer of the *dikir*, who is visualized as having a melodious, tuneful voice and wearing gold and jewellery. The related quotation reads:

[B]iduan yang baik suaranya pun bernyanyilah dengan memalu dap emas bepermata, dan suasa, dan perak, dan rebana pun demikian jua. Maka pedikiran yang berbagai-bagai jenis pun memakai sekaliannya emas bepermata dan belazuardi dan suasa. (BS.L 2/13: 32)

The singer with a melodious voice sang, accompanied by an ornateny-decorated drum sprinkled with diamonds, silver and other precious stones. Thus, the singer sang several songs, well decorated with jewellery and gold.

The Javanese term, ‘*kidung*’ appears in *Bustan as-Salatin*. A singer performing *kidung* is called a *pedendang* (chanteuse). *Kidung*, according to this work, is performed as part of a religious ceremony, as indicated in the following quotation:

[K]emuncaknya daripada mulamma dan sulur bayungnya daripada perak dan di bawah sulur bayung itu buah pedendang daripada cermin, kilau kemilau mengidung orang. (BS.R 2/13: 251)

At the climax of the religious ceremony, from the religious *mulamma* from silver and fruit, people then recite the *kidung*.

It is interesting to note from this work that two terms – *biduan* and *pedendang* – used to signify a Malay singer and that these terms continue to be used in contemporary song culture in Pahang and many parts of Malaysia. Equally, a new insight demonstrated in this work is that *kidung* (Javanese poetic form) has been ‘Malayized’ and is performed in religious ritual. Finally, it is worth noting that, so far, three Sumatra-based literary works have mentioned *dikir*: *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* (before 1380), *Hikayat Aceh* (c.1625) and *Bustan as-Salatin* (c.1640).

9) In *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, the Melakan warrior Hang Tuah delivers the *pantun* and *seloka* that is adored by Tun Teja, the Princess of Pahang. A related line reads:

[M]aka Tun Teja pun terlalu sukacita hatinya mendengar pantun dan syair Tun Tuah itu, kerana Tun Teja tahu erti pantun dan syair itu memberi jalan hati sabar. (Tuah 210: 7)

Thus, Tun Teja was moved to listen to the lyrics of the song sang by Tun Tuah, because she understood their meaning as an encouragement for her to be patient.

Similarly to the way *pantun* occurs in *Hikayat Bayan Budiman*, *pantun* in *Hikayat Hang Tuah* is intertwined with *seloka* (witty poetry). *Pantun* in this context is regarded as having a mocking and critical quality. For example:

[S]udah makan buah-buahan itu maka ia duduk mengarang bunga sambil bersenda bernyanyi dan berpantun dan berseloka berbagai-bagai ragamnya. (Tuah 173: 2)

After consuming the fruits, they sat and created a necklace of petals while singing witty verses, and reciting varies of forms of the *pantun* and *seloka*.

Mention of *dikir* is found in *Hikayat Hang Tuah* and in this context is performed in a dance as the relevant line indicates:

[S]yahdan adalah segala merpati itu sekaliannya tahu menari, bergelar padikiran. (Tuah 491:10)

Meanwhile, all those who know how to dance stood up and dance were known as *padikiran*.

In brief, *Hikayat Hang Tuah* resembles the traditional Malay historical work *Sejarah Melayu*, and mentions *syair*, *pantun*, *seloka* and *dikir*. The story about Tun Teja and Hang Tuah remains one of the popular themes in *bangsawan* (Malay traditional theatre) to this day. The story is enhanced with the performance of *syair* and *pantun* as one of the essential elements in the story.

10) Mention of *pantun*, *seloka* and *syair* continues in the tenth work, *Misa Melayu*. As in *Hikayat Bayan Budiman*, the song forms of *pantun* and *seloka* in *Misa Melayu* are regarded as light-hearted quatrains. A great number of these can be found in *Misa Melayu*. I was fortunate to be able to personally access this work physically from the Leiden University Special Collection as a primary source. The quatrains are taken directly from the original work. The following quatrain is presented to ask forgiveness from a member of the nobility and imploring him or her not to be angry. It reads:

*Mohonlah ampun jangan murka,
sembah sekadar berjenaka,
ini satu pantun seloka,
persembahan patik akan penyuka.*

Please forgive me and be not angry,
this salutation is only to amuse you,
it is a *pantun seloka*,
I hope my song will please you.

Reciting *syair* in the context of *Misa Melayu* was the way to impress members of the nobility who followed the teachings of Islam (*Hadith*). Here I paraphrase a stanza of *syair* containing the notion of Sultan Iskandar departing for the sea (*bermain ke laut*):

*Tuanku raja sangat budiman,
mengikut hadith menurut firman,
dikarangkan syair suatu zaman,
berangkat bermain sempurna iman.*

Your Highness, you are so wise,
you imbibe traditional wisdom and the Prophet,
I wrote this *syair* of the times,
so that you may dedicate in complete faith.

Misa Melayu provides an example of another kind of Malay song, the *lagu gendang nobat*, or royal drum song. 'It generally receives the greatest respect. It sounds certain time signals and performs at specific places in court ceremonies, particularly at the installation of rulers' (Dobbs, 1972: 95). *Lagu gendang* has between eight and sixteen tunes². The Malays regard the *nobat* instruments with respect. Only privileged people, usually those with hereditary rights, are allowed to play or handle them. This attitude of respect is linked unconsciously, 'with their religious beliefs for the royal band provides a meeting place for the three religious forces, Islam, Hinduism and animism, that have influenced their thinking and moulded their character' (Dobbs, 1972: 90).

Mandora is also mentioned in *Misa Melayu*. *Mandora* is an operatic performance of the *topeng* (mask) akin to the *makyong* (a theatrical

² In *lagu gendang* or *lagu gendang nobat* has sixteen songs. They are 'Gendang Berangkat', 'Arak Antelas', 'Kubang Si Kumali', 'Rama-Rama Terbang Tinggi', 'Arak-Arakan Panjang', 'Arak-Arakan Pandak', 'Dang Gidang', 'Puteri Mandi Mayang', 'Juang Beraleh', 'Lenggang Enche Kobat', 'Gendang Perang', 'Anak Raja Basoh Kaki', 'Tabal', 'Nobat Khamis', 'Nobat Suboh', and 'Nobat Isha'.

performance in the northern states of the Peninsula). In *mandora*, according to Sujiman (1983), some hundreds of women with good voices who know the art of bantering in verse and speaking in parables will compete with a few hundred of men. I paraphrase the quotation mentioning *mandora*:

[M]aka bermainlah mandora itu, berbunyiilah segala bunyi-bunyian terlalu ramai, sangatlah gemar orang yang melihat mandora itu bermain-main. (Misa 86: 13)

Thus *mandora* was performed, the music was loud and the audiences were enjoying it to the fullest.

It is interesting to note that *Misa Melayu* is the primary work that introduces the royal drum song and *mandora* in Malay writing. Sixteen names of royal drum tunes are found in this work. However, to discuss all of them is beyond the scope of this study. The *nobat* drum, the drum of sovereignty, is an important item at all court ceremonies, and is not related to contemporary song culture in Pahang.

11) *Adat Raja Melayu* makes frequent mention of three forms of song: *nasyid*, *zikir* and *mandora*. *Nasyid* and *zikir* are regarded as mystical songs and are accompanied by the frame drum. Generally, men perform both of these types of song. *Nasyid* and *zikir* are performed during a ritual procession. The quotation translated by Sujiman (1983), referring to the context of *nasyid* and *zikir* in this work reads:

[T]atkala diarak sirih itu, didudukkan segala laki-laki yang muda-muda belia, memukul rebana serta berzikir dan bernasyid. (ARM 34: 1)

When the ceremonial betel leaves arrangement, several young men were given seats. They beat on the frame drums while chanting loudly the praises of Allah.

Mandora is also mentioned in *Adat Raja Melayu*. However, the form of *mandora* mentioned in this context relates to that performed in Siam, which today is the southern part of Thailand. The performance of *mandora* incorporates dances, *joget* and *tandak*, accompanied by several traditional instruments. The term ‘*joget*’ (a Low Javanese term for dance – it is the most popular traditional Malay dance, originating from a Portuguese dance, and has a fast tempo) and ‘*tandak*’ (an old Javanese term which means ‘to dance with song’) can be traced back to Javanese sources (Winstedt, 1938). The quotation relating to this reads:

[S]etelah sudah mustaib segala pekerjaan sirih itu, serta melengkapi segala arak-arakan, segala topeng, wayang, joget, tandak, mandora Siam, rebab, kecapi, dandi, muri (berlengkap), serdam, kopok, ceracap, sekalian itu diperbuat dalam sembilan bulan lamanya, berlengkap diperbuat segala mereka itu. (ARM 35: 9)

After all the observers around ceremonial betel-leaves have been completed, the betel was taken in the parade along with the masks, shadowplay, *joget*, *tandak* dance, Siamese *mandora*, *rebab*, *kecapi*, *dandi*, *muri*, *serdam*, *kopok* and *ceracap* were used; all these were completed within nine months.

An important insight from the *Adat Raja Melayu* is that it is seen as the first Malay literary work to mention *nasyid*. This discovery suggests that operatic performance of *mandora*, alongside *nasyid* and *zikir*, is part of Islamic culture. To this day, *mandora* has been the iconic musical culture of the community in Terengganu, the state neighbouring Pahang.

12) The work *Syair Seratus Siti* includes seven forms of song: *syair*, *gurindam*, *dana*, *nazam*, *lagham*, *nasyid* and *zikir*. All songs are introduced within stanzas of *syair* that form the basis of the work. *Syair* and *gurindam* are mentioned in one stanza. Both songs are associated with *bersiram* – the bathing – of a princess with maidens in a pond. The quotation mentioning *syair* and *gurindam* in this work reads:

*Bersiramlah puteri di dalam kolam,
Siti dayang-dayang selam-menyelam,
berapa gurau syair gurindam,
gurau dan senda berbagai ragam.* (SSiti 90: 5c)

The princesses took a ceremonial bath in the royal pond,
playing, spotting and diving the water,
how wonderful their witticism,
jests of various styles.

Dana from the Arabic, means ‘babble’; *nazam*, also from Arabic, signifies song composition; and *lagham*, from Persian, means a string of songs. All of them, including *nasyid* and *syair*, are mentioned in the same stanza. They are described as melodious and climactic song. The related quotation reads:

*Ada yang berdana ada yang bernazam,
terlalu merdu lagunya lagham,*

*nasyid dan syair beragam-ragam,
bedil seperti merendang garam. (SSiti 234: 10d)*

Some intone the verses of poetry,
how melodious their refrains,
and the verses of the *nasyid* and the *syair* of various kinds,
and a cannon exploding like salt erupting in the pan.

In this work, *zikir* and *lagham* are associated with the community of Mecca and Medina. Both are holy lands according to Islam. Stanzas illustrating this connection read:

*Sekalian kaum Madinah dan Makkah,
memalu rebana berzikrullah,
laghamnya elok Subhanallah,
lidahnya fasih memuji Allah. (SSiti 235: 1a)*

And all the inhabitants of Medina and Mecca,
beat on the *rebana* drums and sang praises to Allah,
the cadences of such beauty, most Holy Allah,
their lips eloquent in praising Allah.

However, *Syair Seratus Siti* provides limited description or context of how these songs, excluding *zikir*, are performed. Performance of the *zikir* in *Syair Seratus Siti* is, like the *dikir* in *Bustan-as-Salatin*, accompanied by the frame drum.

An important insight from the literature then is that in the nineteenth century, many Islamic-influenced songs were widely performed among the Malay population. There is also an indication that *zikir* was popular among the people of Johor and Pahang. *Zikir* is one of the musical practices in Pahang contemporary musical culture that will be discussed in Chapter 5.

From this research, I have identified fifteen song styles portrayed in twelve Malay literary texts. All fifteen songs are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Forms of songs in Malay classical literature

Song forms	Malay classical literature
1. Pantun	<i>Hikayat Bayan Budiman, Hikayat Amir Hamzah, Hikayat Raja Pasai, Hikayat Pandawa Lima, Hikayat Indraputra, Sejarah Melayu, Hikayat Hang Tuah, Misa Melayu</i>

2. <i>Seloka</i>	<i>Hikayat Bayan Budiman, Hikayat Indraputra, Sejarah Melayu, Hikayat Hang Tuah, Misa Melayu</i>
3. <i>Madah</i>	<i>Hikayat Bayan Budiman, Hikayat Indraputra</i>
4. <i>Syair</i>	<i>Hikayat Bayan Budiman, Hikayat Amir Hamzah, Hikayat Raja Pasai, Hikayat Indraputra, Sejarah Melayu, Hikayat Hang Tuah, Misa Melayu, Syair Seratus Siti</i>
5. <i>Gurindam</i>	<i>Hikayat Bayan Budiman, Sejarah Melayu, Syair Seratus Siti</i>
6. <i>Zikir/dikir</i>	<i>Hikayat Amir Hamzah, Hikayat Aceh, Bustan as-Salatin, Hikayat Hang Tuah, Adat Raja Melayu, Syair Seratus Siti</i>
7. <i>Kakawin</i>	<i>Hikayat Pandawa Lima</i>
8. <i>Kidung</i>	<i>Hikayat Pandawa Lima, Bustan as-Salatin</i>
9. <i>Bait</i>	<i>Hikayat Amir Hamzah, Hikayat Indraputra, Sejarah Melayu</i>
10. <i>Lagu gendang nobat</i>	<i>Misa Melayu</i>
11. <i>Nasyid</i>	<i>Adat Raja Melayu, Syair Seratus Siti</i>
12. <i>Mandora</i>	<i>Misa Melayu, Adat Raja Melayu</i>
13. <i>Dana</i>	<i>Syair Seratus Siti</i>
14. <i>Nazam</i>	<i>Syair Seratus Siti</i>
15. <i>Lagham</i>	<i>Syair Seratus Siti</i>

The twelve Malay literary texts are rich sources of information on these song forms and their contexts. In the following section, I discuss the representation of songs in the period from the late fourteenth until the nineteenth century, exploring what the descriptions of songs in these texts tell us about their significance in this context.

2.3.2 The representation of songs

In this part, I explore descriptions of songs based on three fundamental concepts that emerge from the Malay literary texts already identified in no special order of significance. Firstly, songs most often mentioned and favoured by the nobility; secondly, songs associated with celebrations and festivals; and thirdly, human voice perception.

2.3.2.1 Songs relating to the nobility

It is explained that the King used *pantun*, *seloka*, *syair* and *gurindam* to deliver passionate messages. For example, a relevant line in *Hikayat Bayan Budiman* reads:

[S]erta diambilnya kertas yang tersurat beberapa syair dan gurindam, pantun dan seloka menyatakan berahinya akan Raja Harman Syah itu. (Bayan 149: 16)

Then, Raja Harman Syah took a piece of paper containing stanzas of the *syair* and *gurindam*, *pantun* and *seloka* which to reflect his intense love.

There is evidence in *Misa Melayu* that *syair* is sung to amuse the King, as the following extract illustrates:

Tuankulah raja sangat budiman,
Mengikut hadith menurut firman,
Dikarang syair suatu zaman,
Berangkat bermain sempurna iman. (Misa 116: 26)

My lord, a man of generosity,
devoted to the words of the Prophet and of Allah,
they composed a *syair* of the times,
according to the percept of a true believe.

The King also employed *kidung* to entice his wife, as indicated in the following related lines drawn from *Hikayat Pandawa Lima* read:

[M]aka oleh Maharaja Salya pun lalu memimpin tangan isterinya dibawanya ke peraduan. Maka Maharaja Salya pun mengkidung dan berkelakuan membujuk isterinya, suaranya terlalu manis seperti laut madu. (PandL 165: 39)

Thus, the Emperor led his wife to the bedchamber. He recited verses of the Javanese *kidung* and soothed her emotion with romantic words. His voice as sweet as the Sea of Honey.

Mandora involves the presentation of music for all, including kings and governors, as this relevant quotation taken from the *Misa Melayu* reads:

[T]etapi yang terlebih gemar orang melihat dan segala raja-raja dan orang besar-besar pun permainan mandora yang terlebih elok daripada permainan yang banyak itu. (Misa 87: 2)

However, the audiences were extremely excited to watch the *mandora* performance, which was more enchanting than the other performances.

The King demanded *mandora* performers from Kedah to be brought back to him. Such a description tells us that *mandora* practitioners, borrowed from the Siamese (in the southern part of Thailand), were popular among Malay in Kedah, the northern part of the Malay Peninsula. This is described in the following quotation:

[S]etelah sudah membuat surat itu, maka baginda pun menitahkan sebuah perahu belayar pergi ke negeri Kedah mengambil *mandora* itu. (Misa 83: 12)

After the letter is made, His Majesty directed for a boat to sail to Kedah to fetch the practitioners of *mandora*.

Because of the significance of *mandora* to the King, *mandora* performers were bestowed with good clothes. This act is noted in the following line:

[S]etelah itu, maka *mandora* itu pun dikurnia baginda persalin dengan kain yang baik-baik dan disuruh baginda bermainlah. (Misa 86: 8)

After that, the *mandora* performers were bestowed with good woven fabric and were advised to continue performing.

In sum, songs favoured by the nobility such as *pantun*, *syair*, *seloka*, *gurindam* and *mandora* feature prominently in literary accounts. These songs symbolized the musical expression of a ruler and constructed a soundscape that reflected his superiority.

2.3.2.2 Songs associated with activities

Another significant aspect of songs in the identified classical literary works is the variety of them associated with celebrations and festivals. A text that demonstrates this particularly well is the *Misa Melayu*. *Zikir* is performed in celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*mawlid*). The related line reads:

[M]aka baginda pun mauludlah di dalam mahligai itu, pada segenap tingkat mahligai itu tempat orang membaca maulud

itu dan berzikir. Adapun kepada tingkat yang di atas pada peranginan itu, Syarif dan raja-raja membaca maulud dan zikir (Misa 94: 33)

Thus, His Majesty celebrated the Prophet's birthday in the palace; at each and every level in the palace were people who read the *mawlid* and recited the *zikir*. At the highest-level, resident kings and governors read the *mawlid* texts and praises of Allah.

There is an indication from the above quotation that the practitioners of *zikir* consist of multiple groups. The king and governors are at the highest level. Another quotation mentions Muslim scholars and governors being at the second level; and there being a third level for spiritual leaders and state proclamation officers. The quotation reads:

[M]aka pada tingkat yang kedua segala ulama-ulama dan segala orang besar-besar membaca dia; dan kepada tingkat yang ketiga segala imam dan segala bentara membaca maulud dan berzikir. (Misa 95: 6)

So too on the second level, the scholars and governors; and on the third, all the imams and the courtiers.

Religious beggars (*fakir*) and travellers, as well as travelling traders, also communicated *zikir*. They were grouped in the bottom level as mentioned in the following line:

[D]an pada tingkat ketujuh segala fakir dan musafir dengan segala dagang senteri membaca zikir. Maka sekaliannya itu semuanya membaca maulud dan pedikiran. (Misa 102: 22)

And on the seventh level, religious beggars, travellers and travelling traders recited the *zikir*. All of them recited the *mawlid* and *pedikiran*.

Zikir is also chanted during the recitation of the holy Qur'an from its beginning to its end – an occasion called *Khatm al-Qur'an* – which takes place over a period of three nights. In Islam, *Khatm al-Qur'an* is performed either individually or collectively. Buffaloes were slaughtered for food for the Qur'an reciters and attendees, and the recitation of *zikir* (also of the Qur'an) took place in a hall. *Misa Melayu* provides a descriptive quotation of this:

[T]elah datang semuanya berkampung ke Berahmana Indera, maka baginda pun memulai berjaga-jaga mengaji dan

berzikir tiga hari tiga malam. Maka beberapa kerbau disembelih akan makanan orang mengaji khatam itu dan makanan segala orang yang berhimpun di dalam balai itu. (Misa 58: 33)

All were arrived in Berahmana Indera, thus, His Majesty began to read the Qur'an and recited *zikir* for three nights. Then, several buffalos were slaughtered for food for all the Qur'an reciters and attendees gathered in the hall.

In the *Hikayat Aceh* it is noted that *zikir* is performed mainly on Fridays. The related quotation reads:

[M]aka segala hulubalang pun dipanggil serta segala orang dzikir itu. Maka ada tatkala itu berzikir Allah di lepau Jum'at. (Aceh 74: 8)

Then, all the warriors and the reciters of the *zikir* were invited. On the Friday balcony, they sang praises to Allah.

In *Hikayat Amir Hamzah*, *zikir* is featured as taking place after a meal. In many ways, the recitation of *zikir* after a meal shows thankfulness and gratefulness to Allah for His blessings. A line referring to this reads:

[S]etelah sudah makan, maka ia pun membaca doa serta membaca zikirullah. (AHmz 608: 16)

After dinner, they offered prayers and recited *zikir* in prays of Allah.

The same literary work mentions a poet performing *bait* during a meal at a specific celebration attended by warriors. Lines related to this account read:

[M]aka segala pahlawan Arab, pahlawan Zamin Ambar, dan pahlawan Zamin Tauran pun makan minum bercampur baur. Maka ketika itu Amir Hamzah pun berbait. (AHmz 671: 9)

Thus, all the Arabs, Zamin Ambar and Zamin Tauran warriors even ate and drank together. Then Amir Hamzah recited a *bait* poem.

As mentioned in *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, *pantun* and *seloka* are sung after eating fruit and while forming a chain of flowers as indicated in the following quotation:

[S]udah makan buah-buahan itu maka ia duduk mengarang bunga sambil bersenda bernyanyi dan berpantun dan berseloka berbagai-bagai ragamnya. (Tuah 173: 2)

After consuming the fruits, they sat and created a necklace of petals while singing witty verses, and reciting varies of forms of the *pantun* and *seloka*.

The singing of *syair* on royal feast days is also noted. In an example drawn from the *Hikayat Indraputra*, on one such occasion kings were competing with yachts and boats (ancient ships) on a lake in front of lively and noisy crowds. The quotation includes mention of *syair*:

[M]aka segala raja-raja bermain lancang dan pilang di tasik itu berlomba-lomba dan berlanggar-langgaran dengan tempik soraknya dengan bunyi-bunyian, ada yang bersyair, ada yang bernyanyi terlalu ramai. (Ind 97: 20)

Thus, all kings played and competed in yachts and ancient ships on the lake. The boats collided to cheers, shouting and music, some recited the *syair*, some sang too much.

In the context of the people in Melaka, they sing *syair*, *bait*, *gurindam* and *seloka* in a chess-like game in order to divert their opponent's attention. A related quotation from the work *Sejarah Melayu* reads:

[M]aka bercaturlah Tun Bahara itu dengan orang Melaka. Lawannya itu berlikir, ia tiada berlikir, pandang kiri, pandang kanan, sambil ia bersyair, dan berbait, dan bergurindam, dan berseloka. (SM 144: 18)

Thus, the chess-like game began between Tun Bahara and the inhabitants of Melaka. The foes drank liquor; he did not, but looked to the left and to the right, while singing the *syair*, *bait*, *gurindam* and *seloka*.

Singing *syair* is an additional element in the activity of reading Javanese history (*hikayat Jawa*). This impression is mentioned in the *Misa Melayu*:

[A]da yang bermain jogar dan ada yang bermain barang yang digemarnya dan ada yang bermain membaca hikayat Jawa dan syair ikat-ikatan berbagai-bagai ragam bunyinya riuh-rendah siang dan malam. (Misa 55: 24)

Various games like the *jogar* and the *barang*, some read the Javanese narratives and the verses of *syair* in all styles in a great commotion day and night.

Maidens entertained themselves by singing *kidung* and *kakawin*, as this quotation from *Hikayat Pandawa Lima* indicates:

[S]etelah datang ke taman, maka segala dayang-dayang Dewi Banuwati pun bermain masing-masing pada kesukaannya. Ada yang mengkidung, ada yang berkakawin, ada yang bertandak, ada yang mengerang-ngerang, ada yang bercelempung, ada yang berbisikan mengatakan berahinya. (PandL 106: 4)

Once they arrived in the garden, all the Banuwati's ladies-in-waiting chose their favourite melodies. Some read the *kidung*, some chanted the *kakawin*, some danced and groaned, some played the *gamelan*, some whispered their passion and desire.

In addition, *kidung* is performed in religious ceremonies, as mentioned in *Bustan as-Salatin*:

Kemuncaknya daripada mulamma dan sulur bayungnya daripada perak dan di bawah sulur bayung itu buah pedandang daripada cermin, kilau kemilau mengidung orang. (BS.R 2/13: 251)

At the climax of the religious ceremony, from the religious *mulamma* from silver and fruit, people then recite the *kidung*.

The literary works suggest that *nasyid*, *dana*, *nazam* and *lagham* are likely to be performed on religious occasions. A related stanza from the *Syair Seratus Siti* reads:

Ada yang berdana ada yang bernazam,
terlalu merdu lagunya lagham,
nasyid dan syair beragam-ragam,
bedil seperti merendang garam. (SSiti 234: 10a)

Some intone the verses of poetry,
how melodious their refrains,
and the verses of the *nasyid* and the *syair* of various kinds,
and a cannon exploding like salt erupting in the pan.

To summarize, these examples indicate that *zikir*, *bait*, *pantun*, *syair*, *gurindam*, *seloka*, *kidung*, *kakawin*, *nasyid*, *dana*, *nazam* and *lagham* are

valued in celebrations and festivals, and encourage a range of people to engage with the songs.

2.3.2.3 Human voice perception

The human voice is one of the greatest musical instruments. Different types of voice and vocal sounds are noticeably represented in Malay literary works, with many traits of human vocalization recorded. The authors of literary works paid close attention to the particular sounds of voices, expressing them distinctly and mentioning them repeatedly. It seems that this concern with voices played an important part in the Malay literary authors' affective world.

In Malay literary works, specific aspects of the sounds of voices are often mentioned. In *Hikayat Bayan Budiman*, for example, the voice is characterized as *baik* (good) as the following quotation indicates:

[B]iduan yang baik suaranya itu pun bernyanyilah berbagai-bagai ragam lagunya. (Bayan 264: 13)

The singer with a melodious voice sang many different songs.

In *Hikayat Amir Hamzah*, human voices are attributed with *manis merdu* (a sweet tone). This point supports the thoughts of Moor in his influential work 'The Hindu Pantheon' that Malay music is, indeed, proverbially sweet' (Moor, 1810: 66). A related quotation from *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* reads:

[B]erbagai nyanyian dan berbagai lagunya dengan suara yang manis merdu didengar oleh Amir Hamzah telah dinyanyikan oleh kedua perempuan itu. (AHmz 173: 1)

Their many songs in different styles were heard by Amir Hamzah.

The author of *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* also made comparisons between singing voices and the Prophet Daud's melodious voice, as the following quotation indicates:

[M]aka dikeluarkannya kecapi dari dalam bocaknya serta dipetikinya pelbagai ragam yang indah-indah sambil menyanyi selaku suara Nabi Allah Daud merdu bunyinya (AHmz 610: 28)

Then, he fetched the *kecapi* from his box and he played tuneful melodies while singing with a voice like the Prophet David's.

In *Hikayat Inderaputra*, the voice is attributed with *halilintar* (thunder).

[M]aka Gur Akas pun bersuara seperti halilintar bunyinya.
(Ind 140: 51)

Then, Gur Akas exploded in a voice like that of a thunder.

In *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, human voices are characterized as *nyaring* (having a high-pitched tone).

[M]aka Laksamana dan Seri Maharaja Lela pun berseru-seru dengan nyaring suaranya. (Tuah 217: 2)

Subsequently, the Laksamana and Seri Maharaja Lela exclaimed in a high-pitched tone.

In some notes, the human voice is allegorically described as *buluh perindu* (yearning bamboo). 'It is a rare dwarf bamboo a sliver of which placed in the mouth was believed to make a person's voice irresistible' (Dodge, 1981: 12). The related quotation reads:

[M]aka raja pun terlalu sukacita mendengar Hang Jebat membaca hikayat itu, suaranya terlalu manis seperti buluh perindu. (Tuah 313: 11)

Then, the Raja was very pleased to hear Hang Jebat reading the *hikayat* with his melodious voice like the singing bamboo.

The same work indicates that someone reciting *pantun* is comparable with a Qur'an reciter. An extract that supports this idea reads:

[S]yahadan lakunya seperti laku orang membaca Qur'an. Maka Tun Teja dan segala dayang-dayang yang mendengar Tun Tuah berpantun itu terlalu hairan dan berahi hatinya akan Tun Tuah itu. (Tuah 210: 10)

Furthermore, his voice was like a chanter's reciting verses of the Qur'an. Tun Teja and all the maidens were filled with passion, subsequently falling in love with Tun Tuah.

In *Syair Seratus Siti* frequent mention is made of the characteristics of voices within the storylines. Singing *nasyid* is identified as *lantang* (out loud), as in the following stanza:

*Seraya berjalan pergi datang,
sambil bernasyid suaranya lantang,
diambil mahkotanya lalu ditatang,
di hadapan baginda duduk bertentang.* (SSiti 243: 9b)

While walking to and fro,
while singing verses of the *nasyid* with a high-pitched voice,
he picked the crown and carried it in his hands,
and sat before the King.

Religious leaders read religious sermons with soft voices (*latib*) and performed *nazam* and *tasydid* (represented by the smallest letter, *sin*, as an indicator of the emphasis in certain words in the Qur'an) with melodious voices (*merdu*). This is demonstrated in the following stanza:

*Tampilah imam kadi dan khatib,
menjadi saksi terlalu tertib,
membaca khutbah suaranya latib,
terlalu merdu nazam dan tasydid.* (SSiti 243: 9b)

The prayer leaders, and the *kadis* came forward,
acting as polite witnesses,
reciting the pledge of marriage,
while the *nazam* and the *tasydid* were sung in beautiful tunes.

Another interesting aspect to be considered here is that there are also characteristics not associated with the human singing voice. In many ways, the literary authors used these so as to strengthen their storylines. *Menderam* (a grumbly voice) is related to loud voices learning Islam, *dengung* (buzzing voice) with the sound of mountains, *nyata* (authentic voice) is related to shouting, *tertahan-tahan* (enduring voice) connects with a feeling of longing for parents and *gementar* (spooky voice) relates to war news. In certain contexts, the human voice is allegorically addressed as *tagar* (thunder/loud deep sound) or as sounding like sheep bleating.

In conclusion, different vocal characteristics are associated with different identities. The human voice, both singing and non-singing, produces a

range of different sounds. Descriptions of the affective impact of voices in Malay literary texts indicate the position and stance of the authors of literary works in relation to the potential of such voices in real life.

The matter of musical instruments is equally important and is frequently mentioned in literary works. In the following section, I shall discuss musical instruments and their relationship to songs.

2.3.3 Songs with instrumental accompaniment

In some Malay classical works, one may detect repetitive references – *bunyi-bunyian* (sounds in plurality) – that refer to the employment of musical instruments in song. However, not all songs are accompanied by music. In the analysis that follows I describe the musical instruments employed in particular songs and/or in particular singing activities.

Lagu gendang nobat is one of the fifteen song forms identified in this study. As indicated by its name, the *gendang* or native drum is the primary instrument used in the song. *Lagu gendang nobat* is mainly performed at royal events in Perak and several states in Peninsula Malaysia, and has between eight and sixteen tunes (Raja Chulan, 1991).

Syair is performed in a hall, and is usually accompanied by several musical instruments including the *rebab*, *kecapi*, *muri*, *bangsi*, *serunai* and *dandi*. *Syair* is popular among young people, as the following indicates:

[D]i atas balai itu orang memalu bunyi-bunyian, rebab, kecapi, muri, bangsi, serunai, dandi. Segala orang muda-muda bermain; ada yang berpantun, ada yang bernyanyi, ada yang bersyair, ada yang bermadah, masing-masing dengan tahunya. (Ind 186: 17)

In the audience hall of the palace, those present made music with exotic musical instruments: the *rebab*, *kecapi*, *muri*, *bangsi*, *serunai* and *dandi*. All the young men and women spotted and sang the *pantun*, some recited the *syair* and the *madah*; everyone with his or her own talent and skill.

The performance of *pantun* and *seloka* song forms is accompanied by a *redap*, a *rebana*, and a *biola*. The singer plays the *rebana* to accompany the singing performance, as the following indicates:

[M]aka segala biduanda pun memukul rebana serta menyanyi berbagailah kelakuannya. (Misa 40: 21)

Subsequently, the royal singers beat the *rebana* drums and sang in many different styles.

Zikir is another song form that is accompanied by *rebana*. It is played while praising *Subhanallah* (the Greatness to Allah). The related stanza reads:

*Sekalian kaum Madinah dan Makkah,
memalu rebana berzkrullah,
laghamnya elok Subhanallah,
lidahnya fasih memuji Allah.* (SSiti 235: 1a)

And all the inhabitants of Medina and Mecca,
beat on the *rebana* drums and sang praises to Allah,
the cadences of such beauty, most Holy Allah,
their lips eloquent in praising Allah.

Besides the *rebana*, some other instruments including *genderang*, *gung*, *dap*, *harbab/rebab*, *dandi*, and *kecapi* are employed to accompany the performance of *dikir*. Some people would also perform dances. This is referred to in *Hikayat Aceh*:

[G]enderang dan gung dan dap dan segala bunyi-bunyian daripada harbab dan dandi dan kecapi, dan beberapa daripada orang bertandak dan mengigal dan menghiasi segala pedikiran akan menari. (Aceh 121: 16)

The *genderang*, *gong* and *dap*, and all instrument sounds of the *harbab*, *dandi* and *kecapi*, and several people danced and praised verses to Allah.

There are also young men, who perform *zikir* and *nasyid* to the accompaniment of the frame drum within processions. In processions, betel-leaves (*sirih*) are arranged in a mountain-like shape, call *gunung beredar*, and carried. Serving *sirih* is an essential part of almost all ceremonies. The leaves are either served in a betel-casket to be chewed, or are presented as a gift (Sujiman, 1983). An extract describing the performance of *zikir* and *nasyid* in the procession reads:

[T]atkala diarak sirih itu, didudukkan segala laki-laki yang muda-muda belia, memukul rebana serta berzikir dan bernasyid. (ARM 34: 1)

When the ceremonial betel leaves arrangement, several young men were given seats. They beat on the frame drums while chanting loudly the praises of Allah.

The performance of *mandora* is also complemented by the sound of music (*bunyi-bunyian*) as this quotation shows:

[M]aka bermainlah mandora itu; berbunyilah segala bunyi-bunyian terlalu ramai; sangatlah gemar orang yang melihat mandora itu bermain-main. (Misa 86: 13)

Then, the *mandora* was performed; a variety of instruments were played; the audiences were pleased to watch the performance.

Mandora is related to the Siamese culture and is performed within processions. Several instruments accompany *mandora* and these include *rebab*, *kecapi*, *dandi*, *muri*, *serdam*, *kopok* and *ceracap*. This is mentioned in the following quotation:

[S]etelah sudah mustaib segala pekerjaan sirih itu, serta melengkapi segala arak-arakan, segala topeng, wayang, joget, tandak, mandora Siam, rebab, kecapi, dandi, muri (berlengkap), serdam, kopok, ceracap, sekalian itu diperbuat dalam sembilan bulan lamanya. (ARM 35: 9)

After all the observers around ceremonial betel-leaves have been completed, the betel is now taken in the parade along with the masks, shadowplay, *joget*, *tandak* dance, Siamese *mandora*, *rebab*, *kecapi*, *dandi*, *muri*, *serdam*, *kopok* and *ceracap* are used; all these were completed within nine months.

Some works mention the adoption of Javanese instruments to produce sounds, as indicated in the *Sejarah Melayu*:

[D]engan bunyi-bunyian Jawa pun bertarulah bunyinya; gong, gendang, serunai, nafiri, nagara, gendir, sambianya, sekati, kopok, ceracap, celimpong dan rebab, gelinang, suling, gambang, dandi, tiadalah sangka bunyi lagi. (SM 117: 15)

With such wonderful sounds of Javanese instruments fill the air: *gong*, *gendang*, *serunai*, *nafiri*, *nagara*, *gendir*, *sambianya*, *sekati*, *kopok*, *ceracap*, *celimpong*, *rebab*, *gelinang*, *suling*, *gambang*, and *dandi*.

The *gedombak* (a single-membrane drum) is identified as another Javanese musical instrument associated with cultural performances, specifically with *makyong* (operatic play) and *mandora* (operatic dance). A related quotation reads:

[D]an adalah lagu nyanyi yang dinyanyikan bujang Nanta Berahi itu berbagai jenis. Dan ada setengah mereka itu melihat orang bermain gedombak, dan ada setengah melihat Jawa bermain tombak, dan beberapa pula permainannya cara Jawa, daripada wayang, dan topeng, dan tandak, dan beberapa ratus ragam bunyi-bunyian. (BS.L 2/13: 66)

And there were various kinds of songs sung by the young Nanta Berahi. Some spectators watched performers playing the *gedombak*, while others watched Javanese games with spears operatic plays. Others still were enthralled by the various performances of other musical instruments.

To summarize, evidence from the literary works suggests that several musical instruments were used to complement specific songs in the past. However, a huge number of the aforementioned instruments are no longer played in Malay compositions in the present day and are now obsolete. Nevertheless, two musical instruments: the *gendang* and the *rebana*, which were used to accompany *lagu gendang nobat*, *zikir* and *nasyid* in the past, are still used in contemporary Malay music. It is interesting to note that it was only in the early seventeenth century that the *rebana* began to accompany singing performance. The use of *gendang* and *rebana* as an accompaniment in contemporary Pahang music will be explored in the following three chapters.

2.4 Concluding thoughts

In this chapter, I have identified fifteen songs or vocal genres mentioned in twelve literary works. They are derived from Sanskrit/Indian (*seloka* and *gurindam*), Persian/Arabic (*madah*, *syair*, *nasyid*, *bait*, *zikir/dikir*, *dana*, *nazam* and *lagham*), Siamese (*mandora*), Malay (*pantun* and *lagu gendang nobat*) and, last but not least, Javanese (*kakawin* and *kidung*) backgrounds. This chapter also demonstrated the historical views of the uses of songs that I would loosely call ‘authentic’ in the context of literary works.

The identification of these styles through literature raises a number of questions. Which traditions continue to represent the identity of the Malay people of Pahang in the present day? How do the Malays perform or sing all of

the songs from the past? How do songs from the past feature in today's music making? And how are the songs remembered?

In order to answer these questions, the musical styles and musical practices performed by the Malays in Pahang need to be examined and analysed through fieldwork. My initial response to the questions focuses on two ideas: adaptability and relevancy. I hypothesize that the continued use of certain song forms today is partly due to these songs' ability to be adapted for different performance outlets. Furthermore, since these song forms are open to change, the topics of the songs have enabled them to remain relevant. In the following three chapters, I will share my experiences of discovering the musical world of the Malay population in present-day Pahang villages and its future prospects.

CHAPTER 3

TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND REGIONAL POP MUSIC

3.1 Introduction

This chapter³ focuses on two music genres: traditional music and regional pop music. I have combined these two musical styles in the same chapter as both genres are considered part of Pahang's musical heritage (Pahang art music). The fundamental question that guides the exploration in this chapter is: To what extent is today's traditional music and regional pop music similar to that of the past musical world discussed in Chapter 2? In an attempt to answer this question, in the following section, I shall discuss the background of each music genre.

3.1.1 The background of traditional music

Malays in Pahang villages consider traditional music to include music inherited from the past and attached to older traditions. The term 'traditional music' refers to established musical traditions in which the music consists of vocals, instrumental accompaniment and instrumental dance music.

In the context of Pahang villages, traditional music can be categorized into five sub-categories: 1) *lagu tradisi rakyat* (traditional folk song), 2) *lagu rakyat baharu* (new folk song), 3) *lagu puisi tradisional* (traditional poetry song), 4) *lagu tarian* (dance music), and 5) *lagu puisi kontemporari* (contemporary poetry song). The frequent affiliation of traditional music with the state's customs and rituals ensures the continuity of the music with its past forms. The lyrics of traditional songs are 'of literary context that is an integral part of the music composition' (Proehoeman, 2012: 102).

Songs taking traditional forms continue to appear today as musicians are spurred on to attempt a return to the old or traditional ways of singing/music making. The musical community (including music practitioners)

³ A part of this chapter has been published as Shafa'atussara Silahudin. 2019. 'The formation of traditional music and regional pop music community in popular social media', *Malaysian Journal of Communication* 35,4: 422-439.

finds satisfaction in traditional songs that provide links to the past. Malay in Pahang, especially the older members of the community, believe that it is their obligation to perform historical songs/vocal genres at singing events as a way to ensure continuity with the past. They see it as their obligation and responsibility to make sure that their musical heritage survives and thrives.

Traditional songs serve a wide variety of objectives. Nostalgia, in vocal form, can act as a powerful tool for a community trying to understand its present existence. Furthermore, singers/music practitioners have long practised and used their abilities to ensure that traditional songs are remembered for a long time. They reinvent musical traditions in order to preserve their heritage. Traditional songs are performed at present-day singing events. Some songs can only be sung in specific contexts, while others are appropriate for a range of contexts.

To summarize, traditional songs have indeed become part of Malay traditions. The songs are remembered because they have a considerable impact on the community. Hence a number of strategies have been employed to create new opportunities for performance.

3.1.2 The background of regional pop music

Regional pop (*pop daerah*) is another music genre that is well known in Pahang, with its first emergence being traced to the late 1970s, which was a period of technological change (including the emergence of cassette technology, although vinyl records were still used by some), and economic and organizational development in the music industry. 'Regional' in this context is classified as using the Pahang spoken language (Pahang dialect) in song lyrics. Borrowing the definition from Wallach, regional music is 'a catch-all category that includes every style of music sung in regional languages, from the most westernized pop to the most stable indigenous performance tradition' (Wallach, 2008: 34).

Pahang regional pop has been seen as innovative because the genre adopts multiple elements of global sounds. In other words, Pahang regional pop is a term that refers to a mixture of traditional verbal arts and national/international musical influences, with song lyrics in the Pahang dialect written by local songwriters and sung by local singers.

In summary, regional pop combines something new and modern with the use of traditional melodies. Pahang regional pop acknowledges modernity

in a local context without losing its local flavour. Its aesthetic aspects, including rhythm, melody, tempo and formal structure, however, are quite similar to traditional music.

3.2 Traditional music

During my musical fieldwork in Pahang villages, I encountered several individuals and groups of musicians who were directly involved in traditional music. However, only three prominent names will be discussed further in this chapter: Aripin Said, Roslan Madun and a group called Anak Kayan. All of them are professional musicians. To many, they are the backbone of traditional music in Pahang. Each of them has contributed to the practice of traditional music in a number of ways. All of them are motivated to work hard to develop the traditions of their music through creative activities that they feel are crucial to themselves and to those with whom they associate. The discussions that I had with them covered their backgrounds, modes of performance, music styles and repertoires, as well as the use (or reception) of their music and its purpose. In this section I will also look at the formation of community around different music genres.

3.2.1 Aripin Said

Aripin Said (Figure 3.1) was born in 1948 in Temerloh, Pahang. He is a major performer of traditional music, not only among the Pahang people but also nationally, having been a constant advocate of *lagu tradisi rakyat* (traditional folk song) for more than fifty years. Aripin Said was raised by his grandmother, who was a midwife in their village. From a young age, Aripin Said frequently heard old folk stories, traditional axioms (*petua*) and Malay proverbs from his grandmother. Aripin Said began singing when he was a teenager, when he sang songs to entertain his friends. Aripin learned the songs from several village folk who were family friends. He also favoured playing traditional instruments, for instance, the *rebana*. Aripin is now a retired civil servant, having spent more than thirty years in service as a schoolteacher in several schools in Pahang and the neighbouring state of Terengganu.

Due to his passion and enthusiasm for traditional folk music, by the end of the 1960s, Aripin Said had started to collect the repertoires that were still being performed by people in villages at that time. This led to his involvement in traditional singing in the 1970s, driven by a desire to ensure the continued existence of traditional folk music in village communities. At that

time, he mainly performed his songs at school events and school pupils were among his first audiences. Even today, he is frequently invited to perform by government departments and private agencies.



Figure 3.1: Aripin Said on a single frame drum (*kompang*)

As a result, after thirty years of research into hundreds of traditional performances, Aripin Said has produced four albums of traditional folk songs, released in CD format (Figure 3.2). On these albums, he sings all of the songs and is accompanied by three traditional musical instruments: the Pahang single-framed drum), the flute and the double-framed drum. Aripin's first commercial album was released in 2002 (Figure 3.2, picture 1), produced by the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur. The Pahang Corporation Library then released his three subsequent albums: two in 2008 (pictures 2 and 3), and one in 2012 (picture 4). It is immediately clear that one aspect of the albums that exhibits a local influence is the titling of the songs (see Appendix I), which are mostly story songs. 'Angin' (Wind), 'Puteri Kayang' (Princess of Paradise) and 'Indung-Indung' (Mother, Mother) are among Aripin Said's best-known songs. Most of the songs on his albums can be characterized as laments. The lyrics are mainly in the form of *pantun*, a traditional genre of poetry that uses a lot of allegory and metaphor. With the publication of traditional folk songs on CD, this subcategory of traditional music was no longer limited to live performance as it had been in the past. The consumption of traditional folk songs on CD also opened up the genre to a larger audience.



Figure 3.2: Front covers of Aripin Said's music albums

In 2015, Aripin Said was awarded the title of *Tokoh Warisan Kebangsaan* (National Heritage Figure) in the category of *Orang Hidup* (Living People) by the Malaysian government. This honorary award was introduced in 2007 by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture of Malaysia to acknowledge individuals who have contributed over a long period to uplifting cultural heritage and tradition in music, dances or the visual arts.

Aripin Said sings traditional folk songs at a variety of events. In the following section, I discuss the performance of traditional folk songs by Aripin Said at two singing events that I attended in 2013 and 2014. The first event was

Malam Semantan Berbunga II, held on 23 October 2013 at *Dataran Patin* (Patin Square) in Temerloh. The second event was a wedding reception held on 29 November 2014 for a member of the Malay elite of Pahang, who lives in one of the most prestigious neighbourhoods in Kuala Lumpur.

3.2.1.1 Singing event 1: Traditional folk songs at the commemorative event *Malam Semantan Berbunga II*

Malam Semantan Berbunga II was held to honour and recognise the Pahang warriors who fought against the British between 1891 and 1895 during the British occupation of Pahang. This event was a collaboration between three prominent agencies: *Majlis Teater Negeri Pahang* (Pahang State Theatre Council), *Majlis Perbandaran Temerloh* (Temerloh Municipal Council) and Anggun Performing Arts.

The event drew an audience of approximately two hundred people and was held at Patin Square, located at the confluence of the Pahang and Semantan Rivers. Alongside Aripin Said, other cultural performers including Roslan Madun, Fadlina, Siso and the traditional music group Anak Kayan participated in this event. *Lagu tradisi rakyat* (traditional folk songs) were presented along with other subcategories of traditional music, including *lagu puisi tradisional* (traditional poetry song) and *lagu rakyat baharu* (new folk song).

The event opened at about 9 pm with a performance of the traditional folk song ‘Angin’ (Wind) by Aripin. He began the song by beating a *kompang* for a few seconds. According to Aripin Said, there were several reasons for this. Beating the *kompang* before singing is a ritual for Aripin Said, allowing him to express his hope of a peaceful, dry night, which was especially important when the event took place (in October) as it was the rainy season in Pahang. In addition, the sound of the *kompang* would have called the audience to attention. Once he was satisfied that the audience was ready for him to begin, Aripin Said then began to sing ‘Angin’.

According to Aripin Said, ‘Angin’ was composed to praise the wind for its sound, constant flow and production of waves (Aripin Said, personal communication, 23 October 2013). He believes that human beings should learn the characteristics of the wind. Through the lyrics, Aripin Said invites the audience to appreciate the content of the Malay work of *Sejarah Melayu* regarding the greatness of the empire of Melaka (the first Malay empire on the Malay Peninsula) in the fifteenth century. He urges the audience to be proud of

Hikayat Pahang (a classical text which originated in Pahang), a work that features the stories of Pahang warriors. Equally important, through ‘Angin’, Aripin Said reminds the audience of the importance of the Semantan River, which is historically important, not only to local people, but also to the nation.

Before Aripin Said appeared on stage for the second time, several other cultural performers took to the stage and performed other forms of traditional music. For his second and final appearance of the night, Aripin Said collaborated with a group of four young musicians known as Anak Kayan (Figure 3.3). Two traditional folk songs, namely ‘Indung-Indung’ (Mother, Mother) and ‘Puteri Kayang’ (Princess of Paradise), were performed.



Figure 3.3: Aripin Said’s performance accompanied by young musicians

The musical instruments used in these songs were an aesthetic part of the performance. Two young musicians played the *rebana anak* (small frame drum), one played the *rebana ibu* (big frame drum) and one was on the gong. Before he sang each song, Aripin explained the song’s background to the audience. Both of these traditional folk songs embrace folk stories. ‘Indung-Indung’ for instance, tells the unique double-edged story of the asymmetrical Malay weapon, the *keris*, and its related reverence rituals. From the perspective of an audience member whom I met after the show, Aripin Said’s performance was honest and pleasing, and improved by his inclusion of traditional *pantun* quatrains.

Below, I discuss the performance of traditional folk songs at a second singing event, which took place in 2014. I was fortunate enough to be

personally invited by Aripin Said to watch his performance at a wedding reception held by Pahang elites living in Kuala Lumpur.

3.2.1.2 Singing event 2: traditional folk songs at a wedding reception within the Pahang elite community

On 29 November 2014, I had the opportunity to watch a performance of traditional folk songs at a wedding reception held by the Pahang elites community who live in one of the most prestigious neighbourhoods in Kuala Lumpur. Aripin Said was entrusted to perform a traditional music set in front of about two thousand guests as the wedding's host came from the same village as Aripin Said. The former had moved to Kuala Lumpur more than forty years ago. Growing up in the village with tradition and music, the host wished for the songs of his childhood to be played at the wedding reception. To cater to the host's wishes, Aripin Said brought a *Gendang Silat Pesaka* ensemble (Figure 3.4) from his village to accompany his singing.



Figure 3.4: The martial art ensemble of the *Gendang Silat Pesaka*

The ensemble of the *Gendang Silat Pesaka* consists of five instrumentalists: one player of the *serunai*, one player of the knobbed gong, hung from a wooden rack, one tambourinist and two players of the *gendang*. *Gendang Silat Pesaka* were initially intended to provide music for the performance of *silat* (a fencing dance without weapons). Interestingly however, the ensemble evolved to be capable of accompanying traditional folk song performances. During the performance, all the instrumentalists were seated on the floor mat, with Aripin Said standing to sing. A large tent was set up in front

of the host's neighbour's bungalow to provide shelter for the performers. Supported by the sound system, the music could be heard by the guests through six speakers scattered around the event space.

Among the traditional folk songs played were 'Joget Burung Tiong' (Dance of the Mynah), 'Puteri Kayang' (Princess of Paradise), and 'Puteri Walinong Sari' (Princess of Walinong Sari). Alongside traditional folk songs, *irama Melayu* (Malay tunes) was also performed. *Irama Melayu* uses five song patterns: *asli*, *inang*, *zapin*, *masri* and *joget*. *Irama Melayu* was a popular music style that began to appear in the traditional theatre of *bangsawan* in the 1920s and 1930s and was, according to Seneviratne (2012), performed live in theatres, at amusement parks and in dance halls in urban centres. 'Since its very start, *bangsawan* had been dubbed as a "Malay" or "native" theatrical form' (Putten, 2014: 282).

Why did the wedding host choose to have traditional folk songs performed at his wedding reception? What is so special about this kind of music that he gave it the privileged status of the main form of musical entertainment at the wedding reception? Aripin Said explained to me that traditional folk music is associated with traditional community in Pahang villages (Aripin Said, personal communication, 29 November 2014). While traditional folk music clearly has nothing to do with the wedding ritual, its adoption at the wedding reception appears to be about more than titular and textual references to the wedding. The performance of Pahang traditional folk songs at a wedding reception is often a nostalgic gesture, especially for the Pahang diaspora (in this case, those in Kuala Lumpur). It generates feelings of nostalgia for others who have moved away. The performance of traditional folk songs at such an event is a way to articulate the Pahang identity, especially among the people of the diaspora, as well as adding value and meaningful elements to the wedding celebration.

Although the host was one of the members of the elite community, he had expressed a deliberate preference for traditional music, identified as containing stories in the songs and instrumentation, over more cosmopolitan genres. Sharing and appreciating traditional music at weddings helps to create an awareness of the musical heritage of Pahang among the wedding guests. Performing traditional folk songs at a wedding reception is a sentimental way to represent the Pahang community in the diaspora. It provides an avenue through which the traditional identity of Pahang is experienced and defined internally by creating a sense of Pahang tradition among the diaspora through the use of metaphors in the songs.

To conclude, Aripin is recognised mainly for his expertise in the traditional folk genre. He has recorded and released four albums of Pahang traditional folk songs. The songs are very closely related to old folk stories that are becoming somewhat forgotten by the present-day community. The performance of traditional folk songs, I argue, is limited and only welcomed at certain events. Aripin Said, in his capacity as a Pahang musician, persists with singing traditional folk songs as a part of his musical identity as he feels a sense of responsibility to preserve traditional folk music within the contemporary community.

As a Pahang traditional singer, Aripin Said's performance is incomparable. Listening to Aripin Said's music led me to discover another traditional music singer, Roslan Madun. In the following section, I shall describe his work, as he is one of the most prominent traditional music singers in Pahang.

3.2.2 Roslan Madun

Roslan Madun (Figure 3.5) was born in Temerloh, Pahang in 1952. In his teenage years, Roslan Madun was exposed to stage performance through the traditional theatre of *bangsawan* in his village. When he started performing, he was the youngest actor in the *bangsawan* company. Roslan Madun's first attempts at musical performance were dismissed by his father, who was a religious teacher and practitioner of Islamic *dikir* in the village. Regarding his singing, in a talk given on 4 December 2018, Roslan Madun noted that *pop yeh yeh* (a type of popular music in the 1960s) was the first music genre in which he took an interest. His attachment to *pop yeh yeh* did not last long; he then switched to performing traditional music. Roslan Madun began to sing professionally in the 1980s. The most important figure in Roslan Madun's development as a traditional music singer was Aripin Said, who used to be his teacher.

Roslan Madun's musical journey has not been limited to the Pahang area. In the early 1980s he moved to Kuala Lumpur to work as a journalist for a Malaysian publishing company. His passion and enthusiasm for traditional music never waned though. He continued to sing traditional songs at many kinds of singing events. During this period, he earned a living from both his journalism and his singing. After spending some twenty years in Kuala Lumpur, in the 2000s Roslan Madun returned to Pahang. Collaborating with local friends, he established an organization called Anggun Performing Arts.

This organization aims to expand art- and culture-based programmes in Pahang. Between 2001 and 2006, Anggun Performing Arts collaborated with the state government to host several music festivals and theatrical performances that were mainly held in the vicinity of Temerloh. With more than thirty years of involvement as a traditional music singer, Roslan Madun has been involved in hundreds of song events at the local and national levels. In addition, Roslan Madun is one of the regional musicians who has taken part in national cultural missions to other countries including Korea, Japan and Cambodia, not to mention the neighbouring countries of Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei.



Figure 3.5: Roslan Madun

Roslan Madun is usually linked to two out of five subcategories of traditional music: *lagu rakyat baharu* (new folk song) and traditional poetry song. Roslan Madun currently has a repertoire of more than eighty songs and has released more than sixteen albums, many of which were self-financed. To create the albums he hired recording studios from several different independent recording companies located in Pahang, Kuala Lumpur and Melaka. The synthesizer keyboard is the most prominent instrument used in the accompaniment on these albums. Malm and Wallis (1984), in their study of patterns of change in the music industries in several countries, found that synthesizers offered the production of new sounds that traditional instruments could not produce. As well as synthesizer keyboard, bamboo flute and frame drum also feature.

As seen in Figure 3.6, the visual images on the CD artwork are suggestive of the repertoire. Each illustration on the cover encapsulates the

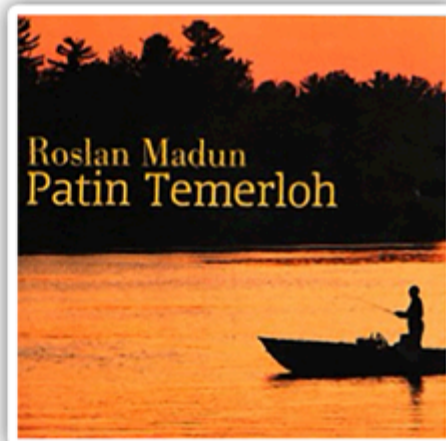
content of the songs. Half of the album covers depicted in Figure 3.6 include Roslan Madun as the main figure. In album 4 of the figure, Roslan Madun is wearing the traditional attire of *baju Melayu*, or the Malay traditional blouse, in a different way, combining this traditional costume with a *songkok* (Malay male head-dress), or a piece of cloth tied around his head. The traditional musical instrument of the Pahang frame drum is included to complement the look. The frame drum is styled in several different ways on his album covers.

Several other figures are also displayed on Roslan Madun's album covers. On album 1, for instance, there is a photograph of the previous ruler of Pahang, His Royal Highness Sultan Ahmad Syah. On another cover, Roslan Madun uses a photograph of Pahang-born Tun Abdul Razak, the second prime minister of Malaysia, who governed the country from 1970 to 1976; in this way he commemorates the latter's devotion to the country. The inclusion of these two important figures on his album covers emphasizes the value of tradition and the development of Pahang. These two important figures are significant to Pahang people. The photograph of Sultan Ahmad Shah signifies the sovereignty and wealth of Malaysia. Meanwhile, the photograph of Tun Abdul Razak, known as the Father of Development of Malaysia, indicates his importance to the country, which experienced strong economic growth under his governance. The Pahang people benefited under his tenure in terms of the opening up of new areas for plantations and, later, the implementation of a new economic policy (*Dasar Ekonomi Baru*) intended to improve the lives of Malays.

Roslan Madun believes that views of his village in the background of his albums are reflective of his music. Open fields, a temporary shelter (*pondok*), a swamp area and the Pahang River are among the landscape views displayed on the album artwork. On album 2 (Figure 3.6), there is an image of a villager rowing a small boat (*sampan*) on the Pahang River. Together with the image is the name of the album 'Patin Temerloh'. A *patin* is a freshwater catfish that inhabits the Pahang River. The district of Temerloh has been called the town of *patin* (*bandar ikan patin*). During the course of my field research, I saw see many posters which said 'Temerloh Bandar Ikan Patin' (Temerloh, the City of Catfish) posted on pillars along the main roads in the city. Thus, the Pahang River is an important image that appears on Roslan Madun's album covers, reflecting the local identity.



1



2



3



4



5



6

Figure 3.6: Album artwork from several of Roslan Madun's albums

On albums consisting entirely of traditional poetry songs, intended to be used by educational institutions, the covers have backgrounds of floral embroidery, as can be seen on album 6 (Figure 3.6). This kind of album includes the full range of traditional poetry songs: *syair*, *gurindam*, *nazam* and *seloka*. These repertoires are used as teaching materials by teachers, and are taught to younger listeners at primary and secondary schools. They are also used as reference material by students taking traditional poetry courses at university.

In 2013, Roslan Madun produced an exceptional album, which was intentionally released as supporting material for teaching *Penghayatan Sastera dan Budaya* (Appreciation of Literature and Culture), one of the main courses of the National Service Training Programme (*Program Khidmat Latihan Kebangsaan*). The album was funded by the national agencies the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (Institute of Language and Literature) and the *Jabatan Latihan Khidmat Negara* (National Service Department). On this album, Roslan Madun showcased the voices of three other young singers: Shafa'atussara (the present author), Zafirah Bahiah and Ariffin Uzir, each of whom had won first prize in the *syair*, *gurindam* and *nazam* categories, respectively, in a traditional poetry singing competition in 2012.

3.2.2.1 New folk songs in a social context

There are several elements of new folk songs that are considered traditional. The musical patterns in new folk songs are drawn from *irama Melayu* (Malay tunes) and/or a combination of five tunes: *asli*, *inang*, *zapin*, *masri* and *joget*. In addition, new folk songs can be played on both traditional and modern musical instruments. While *pantun* is the primary lyrical form in many traditional songs, the situation differs for new folk songs. In new folk songs, lyrics are not restricted to the *pantun* form. New folk songs are mostly used to commemorate historical events in Pahang. The song 'Menjejak Bahaman' (Tracking Bahaman), for instance, is about the life of Bahaman, a Pahang warrior who rebelled against the British in the Pahang War of the late nineteenth century.

Roslan Madun has performed this song at several singing events. One of them was the *Malam Semantan Berbunga II* on 23 October 2013. This event highlighted the theme of struggle and unity and was partly intended to commemorate the struggle of Pahang warriors against the British. Before he began to sing, Roslan Madun briefly introduced the story behind the song.

According to him, giving his explanation is important for the audience, especially the younger generation, who might otherwise disregard local history.

During his singing performance, I could see that Roslan Madun sang with his whole being. The first two verses of the song are about the historic Semantan River, where the struggle of Bahaman began. The chorus concerns the struggle of Bahaman, which is likely to have been forgotten by today's community. It is then followed by a final verse that urges people to unite for a better nation. I was glad to be part of this event as an invited singer as I was able to appreciate the significance of the event from the perspective of a participant. This singing event acted as a medium that helped to engage the community with the cultural dimensions of local history. The location of this singing event was of prime importance, held in a historic place on the banks of the Semantan River (a branch of the Pahang River). Legend has it that this was where the British killed Bahaman, the Pahang warrior.

Roslan Madun also sang 'Menjejak Bahaman' at a dinner event titled *Malam Inspirasi Perjuangan* (Night of the Inspiration of the Struggle), which was held in September 2016 in Selangor. The *Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia* (ISMA, Malaysian Muslim Alliance) organized this event in collaboration with the *Persatuan Belia Islam Nasional* (PEMBINA, National Islamic Youth Association). The event remembered the struggle of prominent Malay nationalists as well commemorating the progress of Malays and Islam. This song, which is popular nationally as a patriotic song, was, remarkably, chosen as the theme song for the evening.

Another new folk song worth mentioning here is 'MH370 Sebuah Misteri' (The Mystery of Flight MH370). In collaboration with Amir Atan (a music arranger), Roslan was inspired to write this song as a result of the mysterious loss of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 on 8 March 2014. This Boeing 777 flight disappeared during a scheduled flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, China. It became a matter of concern not only for the nation, but for the whole world. During this difficult time for the country, Roslan Madun wrote this song to express the grief of the family members and relatives of the perished passengers of Flight MH370. Through this song, he articulated this unexpected national anguish. The song concerns people's anticipation of the fate of the victims, whether or not they were alive, and placed hope in God as a way to face up to and deal with this tough situation. This song was dedicated to the family members of the unfortunate flight passengers of MH370, especially those in the district of Maran, Pahang. Roslan Madun only performed this song live once, on the morning television programme, *Malaysia Hari Ini* (Malaysia

Today). After that it was only aired on Pahang public radio, which played the record for several months.

Moving on, the song ‘Lemak Manis’ is popular among *kompang* music groups in Malaysia. Roslan Madun first released this song in the early 2000s. The song is composed in the *joget* style and the lyrics follow the *pantun* format. This song is frequently played on Pahang radio stations and is considered a traditional Pahang song. It is widely performed at many singing events. Because of its popularity, since 2014, Roslan Madun has been invited to sing this song at every graduation ceremony of the Pahang branch of MARA University (*Majlis Amanah Rakyat*).

Further evidence of the popularity of ‘Lemak Manis’ can be found in the following examples. A university music group, for instance, sang the song using creative rhythmic body movements at a *kompang* music competition held at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur (GT SHL, YouTube, 29 March 2013). Harmonik Perdana, a group of young musicians from Kuala Lumpur performed this song in the pilot episode of the music competition programme *Dendang Rakyat* (Traditional Folk Flavour). This episode was aired on national television in January 2016. The group rearranged the song to appeal to contemporary tastes by adding the sound of a *sape* (a non-Malay musical instrument which is popular among the Dayak ethnic group in Sarawak in Eastern Malaysia).

‘Menjejak Bahaman’, ‘MH370 Sebuah Misteri’ and ‘Lemak Manis’ are among the new folk songs that perform certain functions for the community in the present. Roslan Madun is one of the few singers in Pahang who actively chooses to perform this kind of music at singing events. As well as new folk songs, Roslan Madun also performs traditional poetry songs.

3.2.2.2 Traditional poetry songs in a social context

Traditional poetry songs include the song forms of *gurindam*, *nazam*, *seloka* and *syair*. They have emerged as a poetry genre, and are performed to an audience by chanting and singing. Roslan Madun began to sing traditional poetry songs professionally in the 1990s. Traditional poetry songs are mainly performed creatively, with or without a musical accompaniment of modern and traditional instruments. The lyrical poetry is taken from well-known texts written by prominent poets/writers. For certain occasions, new traditional poetry is composed.

In the performance of *gurindam*, lyrics are adopted mainly from the classical work *Gurindam Dua Belas Fasal Keenam*, written in the year 1847 by Raja Ali Haji (1808-1873). Haji was a nineteenth-century historian from Penyengat Island, Riau Island in Indonesia, once the administrative centre of the Riau-Lingga Empire as well as the cultural capital of the Malay world. The most popular tune it is performed to is '*Bangsawan*', inspired by a song from the traditional theatre of *bangsawan*. Yet, *gurindam* is not restricted to a specific tune; other appropriate tunes can also be used (Roslan Madun, personal communication, 23 January 2020). *Gurindam* conveys moral instructions based on the principles of religion (Aveling, 2002). In general, it contains useful advice, teaches good behaviour and reflects Haji's rich life experience and observations of society, which remain largely relevant today (Amin, 2014).

Nazam has been performed in villages since the nineteenth century. Its popular sung text is 'Sifat Dua Puluh' (Twenty Characters), which is usually performed to one of two prominent tunes: '*Serkam*' or '*Tanjung*'. Roslan Madun has also composed a new *nazam* song, namely 'Nazam Hati Mulia' (Couplets of Pure Heart). This song provides useful advice for Muslims to follow the path of Islam and respect one another. The song form of *seloka* is full of *jenaka* (humour). In his Malay-English dictionary, Wilkinson (1903) explains that *jenaka* means wily and full of stratagems. The song form utilizes *cerita jenaka Melayu* (Malay comic tales), for example, featuring the ludicrous character of Pak Pandir; wily characters, such as Si Luncai; and extremely down-on-their luck characters, such as Lebai Malang (Liaw, 2013), who are, nevertheless, relevant to this day. The song form expresses criticism of current societal and environmental problems yet from a light-hearted perspective. The performance of *seloka* should provide amusement and education at the same time. Today, only a few people would have the skill to write new sung *seloka* texts.

Syair has become an essential song form for Roslan Madun. Malay *syair* can be classified into a number of categories, including romantic *syair* and historical *syair*. The singing of *syair* is monophonic and is presented using the technique of *ad libitum* (at one's pleasure). *Syair* singing, to some extent, bears a resemblance to Qur'anic cantillation or *tarannum*. Farmer (1965: 1073) defined *tarannum* as 'unpretentious psalming varied and embroidered by the singer'. *Tarannum* is a kind of chant, 'a monophonic style of singing or recitative in free rhythm... used as a heightened speech-song...' (Brakeley, 1949: 210).

In a historical context, Malay *tarannum* reciters were trained by Arab experts whose *tarannum* recitation was based on *maqamat* (a melodic mode used in traditional Arabic music). ‘The call for prayers and other Islamic vocal practices are examples of Islamic recitations must likely have tremendously influenced the melodic perception and aesthetic preferences among the Malays. Since Malays are Muslims by birth, they become familiar with *tarannum* recitations through family members and subsequently learn Islamic recitation in school and other Islamic education centres’ (Meddegoda, 2016: 48).

Since 2013, Roslan Madun has carried out a series of tours titled ‘Menjejak Syair’ (Tracking *Syair*) in the neighbouring countries of Brunei and Indonesia. Brunei was his first destination. While in Brunei, Roslan Madun and his theatre group from Pahang visited several important places related to the chronicle mentioned in the prominent sung text ‘Syair Rakis’. Pengiran Shahbandar Pengiran Md Salleh wrote this text in the 1840s. The text takes the form of a reminder given by the Sultan to his people that the danger they were facing came from the attempt by foreign forces to set aside the sovereignty of the Sultan. This text exposes the tricks that the foreign forces used to expand their powers over Nusantara (Malay world). I was lucky enough to be able to follow this tour and learnt that the sung text of ‘Syair Rakis’ originates from Brunei, and was widely appreciated by the fans in Malaysia.

The tour continued in September 2014. This time, Roslan visited Pekanbaru in the Province of Riau, Indonesia. Roslan’s intention was to attend the annual *Pekan Sastra Sumatra* (Sumatra Literary Week) organized by *Balai Bahasa Riau* (Riau Language Centre), held at the Pangeran Hotel, Pekanbaru. A variety of arts competitions, including *lomba syair* (*syair* singing competition), featured at this event. The contestants came from every province of Sumatra and each contestant represented his/her own province. Roslan Madun was delighted to be appointed as one of the judges for the *syair* singing competition. While he was judging the singing of each contestant, he learnt several ‘new’ *syair* tunes that were unfamiliar to his ears. I presume that this visit to Pekanbaru was the first chance that he had had to collect *syair* tunes practiced by distinct community groups.

Roslan Madun actively performs *syair* at many kinds of singing events. As well as performing, he frequently gives lectures on traditional singing. Between 2013 and 2016, I attended five workshops held at different institutions (see Appendix II). The attendees were students of primary and secondary schools, schoolteachers and university members. At the beginning of each workshop, Roslan Madun would give an introductory description of traditional sung poetry forms (*syair*, *nazam*, *gurindam* and *seloka*). This would

then be followed by a demonstration of *syair* tunes. Whenever I attended the workshops during my field research, Roslan Madun would invite me to demonstrate the several methods of *syair* singing that I had learned from him.

In October 2013, Roslan Madun was invited to perform traditional poetry songs at the presentation ceremony for the *Malam Penyampaian Hadiah Sastera Darul Ta'zim* (Night of Darul Ta'zim Literary Presentation Award) held in Johor, the southern state of the peninsula. Roslan Madun invited Amir Atan (on keyboard), Zafirah Bahiah and me (on vocals) to collaborate with him at this special event. This annual state-organized event highlighted and celebrated three hundred writers from Johor. Within the twenty-five-minute slot allocated to our group, we performed songs from four traditional poetry song forms: *syair*, *nazam*, *gurindam* and *seloka*. During the *syair* performance, three tunes were presented ('*Batu Belah*', '*Sarawak*' and '*Perindu*'); for the *gurindam* performance, only the tune of '*Bangsawan*' was chanted; for the *nazam* song, we used a '*Serkam*' tune; and lastly, for the *seloka* example, the song '*Si Luncai*' was performed.

Roslan Madun disseminates traditional poetry songs in several ways. First, through his continuing research on the innumerable *syair* tunes he has collected since 2013 from several regions in the Malay-speaking world (Malaysia, Brunei, Riau, Riau Island, Jambi and Medan). Second, Roslan Madun is regularly invited to give traditional singing workshops for schoolteachers and students at various institutions not only in Malaysia, but in the neighbouring countries of Indonesia and Singapore too. His contribution to preserving the musical genre of traditional poetry singing, especially among the younger generations, has caused him to be given the title 'King of Syair' by Awang Sariyan, former director of the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (the Institute of Language and Literature). Roslan has also been honoured with the title 'King of Traditional Folk Song' by a non-governmental organization in Perak (Roslan Madun, personal communication, 10 February 2017).

To summarize, Roslan Madun is recognized mainly for his performances of two types of traditional music: new folk songs and traditional poetry songs. Because of his extensive involvement in traditional music, especially *syair*, he is known as the 'King of Syair'. During the period when my fieldwork was being carried out, Roslan was continuously engaged in cultural work (*kerja-kerja budaya*), for instance, delivering traditional singing workshops for educational institutions, judging traditional music competitions, performing songs at singing events and acting as a consultant on cultural music matters in several states of Malaysia. Roslan Madun also continues to produce 'new' sung texts to meet the objectives of certain singing events.

Learning about traditional music in Pahang led me to a music group called Anak Kayan, whose music offers a different perspective on traditional music. In the following section, I shall discuss this group, which is active in the traditional music genre and performance contexts.

3.2.3 Anak Kayan

‘*Anak*’ means children, and ‘*kayan*’ implies wood, which is an important material for Malays (Man Kayan, personal communication, 4 June 2016). Anak Kayan was established in 2009. The founder of the group is Noor Azman Norawi, who was born in 1967. He is known among friends as Man Kayan and previously worked as a bank officer in Temerloh. Anak Kayan consists of thirteen members (eleven men and two women) aged between ten and fifty years old. They are Man Kayan’s wife Suhada on the gong, and two sons, Noor Ashraf and Noor Alif, on guitars; Zuharidan on bass guitar; Afiq Syahmi, Muhaimin and Iskandar on frame drums; Farah Aqilah on (female) vocals; and Najman, Amry, Shah and Shazwan as fencing dancers.

The group’s main objective is to broaden the appeal of traditional music by using the two-faced frame drum (*gendang*) – normally mainly used to accompany the performance of *silat* (a fencing dance without weapons) – as musical accompaniment. Besides the frame drum, the other musical instruments the group uses are the gong, bamboo flute, cowbell, snare drum, cymbals, *gedombak* (a single-skinned drum), *tetuang* (buffalo horn), *rebana kercing* (tambourine rattles), accordion, tambourine, *darbuka* (goblet drum), acoustic guitar and bass guitar. As well as promoting traditional musical instruments along with modern ones in their songs, they also advocate *Kemelayuan* (Malayness) by donning Malay traditional attire for their performances. As seen in Figure 3.7, the male members don different styles of *tanjak* (head-wrapping) with brooch adornments. Some wear waistcoats or jackets with trousers layered with a *samping* (sarong-style cloth). The clothes are made of embroidered silk. The female members wear Malay *kurungs* (a traditional Malay costume) with headscarves. This notion of Malayness is driven by their desire to look back to their neglected heritage.

As far as Man Kayan is concerned, the musical journey of Anak Kayan has just begun. The members of the group have never received any formal musical education; rather they are self-taught. This non-systematized approach to learning musical performance has tended to make it a social activity. Some group members were sent to a village in the district of Jerantut

(on the upper reaches of the Pahang River) with the aim of learning how to play the traditional drums from the elderly practitioners who still perform frame drum music. They learned the tunes from the older players through a combination of aural, visual and tactile training. I believe that this is a great way to preserve traditional musical skills among young enthusiasts. ‘I will never stop challenging myself to learn aspects of music by composing and experimenting with the songs,’ noted Man Kayan enthusiastically (Man Kayan, personal communication, 4 June 2016). Anak Kayan also participates in song-writing contests at the state level. In 2010, Anak Kayan achieved second place in a music competition.



Figure 3.7: Anak Kayan in traditional Malay costume

As a new style of traditional music group, Anak Kayan mainly played cover songs in the first year after the group was formed. The identity of the group has gradually developed through its performance of traditional music, specifically traditional dance songs and contemporary poetry songs. In the context of traditional dance songs, Anak Kayan’s performance of the ancient dance song ‘Tarian Pelanduk’ (Mouse Deer Dance) is significant. Because of the dance’s infrequent performance in the community, Anak Kayan is always invited to perform the dance at the state’s official singing events. The Pahang state cultural department has filmed this ancient dance song performance and documented it as Pahang musical heritage.

In 2015, responding to the increase in popularity of poetry songs within the state’s communities, Anak Kayan began to write their own

contemporary poetry songs. According to Man Kayan, he has composed more than a hundred contemporary poetry songs. Most of the lyrics to the songs come from published contemporary poetry, written mainly by Pahang poets. The year 2017 was significant for Man Kayan as, with the help of the *Perbadanan Perpustakaan Awam Pahang* (Pahang Public Library Corporation), he published an album of twelve contemporary poetry songs (Figure 3.8). Among the poetry songs on this album, entitled *Man Kayan Lagu Puisi Penyair Pahang* are ‘Di Tebingmu Semantan’ (The Cliff of Semantan) by Kelompen Koe, ‘Sinar Rawi’ (A Ray of Narration) by Rashid Mohamad and ‘Sepi Seorang Lelaki’ (A Deserted Man) by Rosni. Both traditional and modern musical instruments were employed to accompany the songs, lending them more sophistication and elevating the art form (Man Kayan, personal communication, 1 July 2018).



Figure 3.8: Man Kayan produced an album of contemporary poetry songs

Anak Kayan receives many invitations to participate in singing events, including Malay weddings and *berkhatan* (male circumcision celebrations). Anak Kayan has also been invited to perform in several retail spaces, for instance at car boot sales in Pahang. Anak Kayan has been permanently appointed by the state to play their repertoire at the monthly cultural *Program Merakyatkan Seni* (Programme of Bringing Arts to the Community) in Kuantan, Pahang, to promote traditional values (*nilai-nilai murni*) through music.

Among the group's greatest achievements is their participation in several international singing events. In 2011, Anak Kayan represented the country in a cultural exchange programme in the Province of Riau, Indonesia, with the mission of promoting the traditional music of Pahang. With their burgeoning reputations, in 2014, they were invited back to Indonesia to perform in Medan. In 2012 and 2015, Anak Kayan participated in *Festival Puisi dan Lagu Rakyat Antarabangsa Pangkor* (Pangkor International Festival of Poetry and Folk Song), which was held on Pangkor Island, Perak. This annual singing event, organized by the state of Perak, provides a platform for national and international poets and musicians to come and celebrate their body of work.

During my shorter period of field research in 2016, on 4 June 2016, I was delighted to attend a singing event at which Anak Kayan performed, held at Man Kayan's home, which acts as a music school, in the village of Permatang Badak in the district of Kuantan, Pahang. In the following session, I describe the group's musical performance and the performance context.

3.2.3.1 A singing event in the village of Permatang Badak

From Kuala Lumpur, it took me about four hours to arrive at Permatang Badak. When I arrived at around 8 pm, Man Kayan introduced me to the group of people who had been invited to watch the singing event. I was also introduced to an official representative from the *Jabatan Kebudayaan dan Kesenian Negara Cawangan Pahang* (National Department for Culture and Arts, Pahang Branch).

After a few minutes' talk, we were taken to the music rehearsal area located to the rear of the house. I could see a big mat spread out on the ground. Around the edges of it, traditional and modern musical instruments as well as a sound system had been placed. The streetlights at the corner of the house helped to illuminate the area. Several foldable plastic chairs had been set out and there were also mats scattered about for the audience members, who were family, friends and relatives.

The night started at around 8.45 pm. During their long-hour performance, Anak Kayan presented a variety of traditional songs in front of approximately a hundred people from the village. Before they started their set, Man Kayan announced that it was a tradition of theirs to play some traditional folk songs by Aripin Said, the most well-known singer in Pahang. The first two songs thus performed were 'Indung-Indung' and 'Tebang Tebu'. The

drummers began playing and the rest of the group joined in. The group then executed a new folk song of their own creation, 'Semalam Di Kuala Pahang' (A Night Downstream of Pahang). This song is an evolution of the song 'Menghilir Di Sungai Pahang' (Downstream of the Pahang River) by the respected singer, Roslan Madun.

As well as Man Kayan as the lead singer, this singing event also furnished performances by the group's young female singer, Farah Aqilah. The repertoire of a female singer is somewhat different to that of a male singer. At this event, Aqilah sang the dance song 'Tari Tualang Tiga (Toalang Three Dance). This song reminded one audience member of the classic Malay film of 1958, *Sumpah Orang Minyak* (Oath of the Oil People). The lead role in the film was filled by P. Ramlee (1929-1973), born Teuku Zakaria bin Teuku Nyak Puteh, Malaysia's most prominent actor of 1950s. The music was by P. Ramlee and the lyrics by S. Sudarmadji (1923-1989). And, just as in Hindi cinema songs are dubbed by recorded singers, in this classic Malay film, the angelically voiced singer Saloma (1934-1983) dubbed this song.

At this singing event, a special segment featured a performance of the ancient dance song 'Tarian Pelanduk' (Mouse Deer Dance). It was performed by a male dancer (Figure 3.9) and accompanied by *rebana* music. The motion of the dancer is intended to resemble the movement of the mouse deer. The community in the district of Kuala Lipis, Pahang first invented the dance. The idea of the 'Tarian Pelanduk' is taken from the historical way of trapping animals, especially mouse deer, in the jungle. It is mainly performed at wedding celebrations and other community events. Each performance lasts no more than thirty minutes. To someone who is new to this ancient dance song, it seems inconsequential, but to the communities involved, it is significant. This was proven in the feedback interview I held with members of Anak Kayan, in which they pointed out that the aesthetic aspect is among the reasons that this ancient dance song continues to be performed. The dance song represents the traditional community but this does not mean that its interpretation is completely static. Anak Kayan chooses to incorporate soft vocal sounds into the performance, while the structure of the music continues to emphasize an indigenous aesthetic.

This singing event also featured the performance of poetry readings by several major Pahang poets who are close friends of Anak Kayan. Instrumental music played by Anak Kayan accompanied the poetry readings. Listening to a poet reading his or her work is illuminating. Some poets also read other poets' work with intelligence and sympathy. The act of listening to a poem being read required the audience to concentrate fully and focus.

According to Kelompen Koe, one of the poets who performed on the evening, his poems are no different to songs, but he cannot sing (Kelompen Koe, personal communication, 4 June 2016).



Figure 3.9: A dancer performing *tarian pelanduk* accompanied by *rebana* and *gendang* players

I was informed that poetry reading has long been a common cultural activity within the community and it is not unusual for it to be performed at such an event.

To conclude, Anak Kayan first became established as a covers group that would be asked by the community to play popular traditional tunes (mainly from the repertoires of Aripin Said and Roslan Madun). The group has since expanded its repertoire into traditional dance songs and contemporary poetry songs. The use of the *gendang* is an important part of the group's musical identity, as well as its use of other contemporary instruments. Its musical performances act as a storage device and provide a collective memory for the community.

In the following section, I shall discuss the social contexts that describe how community forms around the performance of traditional music.

3.2.4 Community formation around traditional music

To discuss community formation around traditional music, I will focus on the community built around traditional poetry songs, that is to say,

syair. My discussion of community formation around *syair* will be divided into three parts: the institutionalization of *syair* singing practice through the establishment of the *Syair* Academy, *syair* concerts and *syair* singing competitions.

3.2.4.1 The *Syair* Academy

In 2014, Roslan, with the support of his friends, created the *Syair* Academy. He believes that the practice of *syair* singing needs to be fostered and introduced to the community. Unlike the institutions of Minangkabau Arts in West Sumatra, Indonesia (see Fraser in 2015) or the *Akademi Seni Budaya dan Warisan Kebangsaan* (National Academy of Arts Culture and Heritage), the Malaysian higher learning institution for performing arts, this academy is an independent organization that functions as a *syair* learning centre, offering several specialist study modules. The details of the study modules available go beyond the scope of this present study.

In its first year, the *Syair* Academy was based in Temerloh, Pahang. The teachers at the academy included Roslan Madun himself and a few of his previous students (including the present author), who had become experts in the subject matter in their own right. However, in 2015, the academy moved to Kuala Lumpur as Roslan Madun began to develop his singing career outside of Pahang. The *Syair* Academy then changed its name to the N.D. Lala Academy of the Arts, to honour its new patron. N.D. Lala is the stage name of Amir Amzah Salleh, a male singer who came to prominence in the 1980s and is known for his humorous traditional songs that express cynical views. Since the establishment of the academy, many *syair* singing workshops have been organized in schools and universities.

From the beginning, the N.D. Lala Academy of the Arts has offered a *syair* singing course for young and amateur singers. The course mainly takes place on Saturdays or during the school holidays. Roslan is involved as a teacher in these workshops, alongside several established *syair* performers who are former students of his. As well as the *syair* course, the academy also offers theatrical classes for inexperienced actors. Several established actors are invited to give acting lessons that take place once a week for three months. This theatre course costs RM100 per month for each learner. As an add-on to this acting course, students can choose to study *syair* singing and other subcategories of traditional music.

In October 2014, the N.D. Lala Academy of the Arts was invited by the University of Science in Penang to give a workshop on the practice of traditional poetry singing. Roslan Madun and the present author were invited as panellists to a three-hour workshop. The audience members, who were mostly literature-studies students were introduced to several tunes of *syair*, as well as learning about other traditional song forms, including *gurindam* and *nazam*. The students then used their new skills to sing at the end of the workshop. The highlight of this singing workshop was a traditional music concert on the evening of the same day. As seen in Figure 3.10, a student took part in this concert and delivered a traditional song that she had learned during the day alongside Roslan and the present author.



Figure 3.10: A female student (right) delivering a traditional song at the concert alongside Roslan and the present author

The academy is also responsible for the emergence of a community of contemporary *syair* writers. In 2014, Roslan made a request on Facebook for writers interested in Malaysia to compose *syair* texts related to Pahang culture for a new project. This created an opportunity for Malaysian writers who had no prior experience in the writing of *syair* texts. Most of the writers who contributed were modern poets, novelists and screenwriters.

As a result, in 2018, some forty-two *syair* texts by twenty-five writers were compiled by Madun (2018) and published by *Perbadanan Perpustakaan Awam Pahang*. The books were distributed and sold to organizations, schools and interested individuals at a price of RM24 (GBP4.35) per book. Several performers have used *syair* texts from the book in their performances. One of the *syair* texts, 'Cikgu Jantan Pendekar Handalan' (Teacher Jantan, the

Excellent Warrior) was performed by Roslan Madun at an official poetry reading in Kuala Lumpur, attended by delegates and officials, that was organized by the International Institute of Islamic Civilisation and Malay World in conjunction with Malaysia's Independence Day celebrations.

The N.D. Lala Academy of the Arts has also contributed to the development of new *syair* performers, some of whom have gained international reputations. Amira, a twenty-five-year-old schoolteacher began *syair* singing at the academy in 2015. Then, in November 2018, she and another singer represented Malaysia in a *syair* singing competition organized by the Education Department in Tanjungpinang, Indonesia. Amira was the runner-up, coming second to a contestant from Pekanbaru, Indonesia. In a conversation with Amira after the competition, she told me that she was grateful to have received this recognition. Her involvement in *syair* singing has moulded her musical identity and inspires her to maintain this practice (Amira, personal communication, 16 January 2019).

To conclude, the impetus for establishing the N.D. Lala Academy of the Arts – the first of its kind in Malaysia and probably in the Malay world – was partially conservationist: to develop, discover and cultivate the practice of *syair* singing in the framework of enriching and preserving traditional Malay music culture. Through a number of workshops provided by the academy, several young *syair* performers have appeared in Malaysia and neighbouring Singapore and Indonesia, enabling continuity of the practice of *syair* singing in the community. The N.D. Lala Academy of the Arts is also one of the main organizers, in collaboration with the Institute of Language and Literature and the Malaysia Institute of Translation and Books (*Institut Terjemahan dan Buku Malaysia*), of an annual *syair* concert in Kuala Lumpur.

In the following section, I shall discuss the first of these *syair* concerts, which was held in September 2016.

3.2.4.2 The 2016 *syair* concert

Examining community formation around *syair* singing can notably be explored at musical events, that is to say, at *syair* concerts. This *syair* concert was the first of its kind, and was organized as part of the yearly programme of the Kuala Lumpur Diversity Arts Festival. The Malaysia Institute of Translation and Books and the Institute of Language and Literature, in collaboration with the N.D. Lala Academy of the Arts, were the organizers of this concert. With the theme of '*Syair Merentas Benua*' (*Syair Across the*

Continent), this concert featured fourteen *syair* performers from five South-East Asian countries: Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore and Thailand. The concert was held in the auditorium of the Institute of Language and Literature in Kuala Lumpur.

The presence of fourteen *syair* performers from the aforementioned countries is obvious evidence that a transnational Malay traditional music community has formed. Having been a *syair* performer for more than twenty years, through his endeavours since 2014, Roslan Madun has brought together *syair* performers not only from Pahang, but also from other regions of the Malay-speaking world. This *syair* concert was held as a way to commercialize *syair* singing in line with other popular music (Roslan Madun, personal communication, 15 December 2017).

Every *syair* performer comes from a different background and is blessed with his/her own faithful followers. Through this annual concert, *syair* fans from other regions converge in Kuala Lumpur, and this encourages the development of a global *syair* community. Table 3 provides a list of the *syair* tunes and the themes of the *syair* texts presented at the 2016 concert. Some thirteen tunes were delivered to the accompaniment of a combination of modern and traditional music ensembles. Six *syair* tunes from Indonesia were performed at this concert: ‘*Tukutur Balam*’, ‘*Rawi*’, ‘*Burung*’, ‘*Kepulauan Riau*’, ‘*Beghondak*’, and ‘*Pekanbaru*’. One *syair* tune from Brunei, known as ‘*Tambang Bengawan*’, and six *syair* tunes from Malaysia, ‘*Sarawak*’, ‘*Hiasan*’, ‘*Batu Belah*’, ‘*Perindu*’, ‘*Selendang Delima*’, and ‘*Dodoi*’ were also performed.

Table 3: Themes of *syair* texts and names of *syair* tunes

No.	Theme	Tunes
1.	‘Usulnya Bangsa Melayu’ (The Beginning of the Malays)	‘ <i>Sarawak</i> ’
2.	‘Sultan Muzaffah Syah Raja Undang-Undang Melaka’ (Muzaffah Syah, The Sultan of the Laws of Melaka)	‘ <i>Hiasan</i> ’
3.	‘Sultan Alauddin Panglima Islam’ (Sultan Alauddin, the Islamic Warrior)	‘ <i>Tambang Bengawan</i> ’
4.	‘Kemangkatan Seorang Panglima’ (The Death of a Commander)	‘ <i>Tukutur Balam</i> ’
5.	‘Cerdiknya Akal Seorang Tun Perak’ (The Intelligent Tun Perak)	‘ <i>Batu Belah</i> ’

6.	(Same as number 5)	'Perindu'
7.	'Serikandi Alam Melayu' (Heroines of the Malay World)	'Rawi'
8.	(Same as number 7)	'Burung'
9.	'Sultan Mansur Syah Raja Diplomasi' (Sultan Mansur Syah, the King of Diplomacy)	'Kepulauan Riau'
10.	'Sultan Mahmud Pertahankan Negeri' (Sultan Mahmud Defending the State)	'Beghondak'
11.	(Same as number 10)	(Same as number 1)
12.	'Hayati Sejarah Orang Melayu' (Appreciating the History of the Malays)	'Selendang Delima'
13.	'Peliharalah Khazanah Kita' (Guarding Our Treasure)	'Pekanbaru'
14.	'Ketahanan Diri' (Self Resilience)	'Dodoi'

The audience was also able to see several distinct themes in the *syair* texts. I found that most of the themes related to the history of the Malays; this history belongs not only to the Malays in Malaysia but also to those in other parts of the Malay world. This showed me that through *syair* singing the audience at this concert had historical and cultural bonds with one another.

As one of the *syair* performers at this concert (Figure 3.11), I could see that this event successfully assembled a highly respectable audience, consisting of policymakers, academics, teachers, school and university students and government-employed artists. They were delighted by the *syair* tunes performed. I remember the response of one of the audience members after the concert. She came up to me and said that she was surprised to have been introduced to and to have learnt a number of the *syair* tunes by the end of the concert. All the tunes were categorically new to her. For a very long time, she had only known one *syair* tune, that of '*Selendang Delima*'. She noted that attending the *syair* concert had broadened her view of *syair* singing, and she had discovered that *syair* can be performed to a variety of melodious tunes.

Based on several short conversations with audience members, this concert indirectly motivated them to want to learn more about *syair*, and encouraged them to attend the *syair* singing course run by the N.D. Lala Academy of the Arts. The concert also attracted several retailers. Outside the auditorium, there were several stands selling concert t-shirts and books on a

variety of subjects, including historical, socio-cultural and musical topics. When the concert ended, the audience browsed the bookstands, enquiring about, discussing and purchasing the books on display. The audience members also mingled with each other and talked about the *syair* concert they had just enjoyed.



Figure 3.11: The 2016 Malay Archipelago *syair* concert (courtesy: Noor Kasmara)

A *syair* community rooted in one place does not exist, but rather cyber communities from different backgrounds form its make-up. The *syair* community continued to grow after the concert. In this digital age, people create communities around *syair* songs online and participate in ongoing conversations about *syair* on popular social media, for instance, Facebook. Online *syair* communities are not formed of people from Pahang in the main, but rather from people of different backgrounds, including non-Malays. I have observed several individuals in the online community who are *syair* fans and had attended the *syair* concert discussed above. However, within the limitations of this study, I only observed online interactions among the *syair* community in Malaysia on Facebook, which was used to engage in community building and activism. Here are some of their stories.

Lim, a middle-aged Chinese woman, teaches the Malay language in a school and actively participates in the online *syair* community on Facebook. I got to know her when she introduced herself to me after the *syair* concert. Lim and I continued our conversation about *syair* on Facebook. Through the platform, she began to learn to sing *syair* from several videos posted by the online *syair* community. Many of the videos are shared from YouTube. Lim

feels that by learning to sing *syair*, she is able to enrich her teaching of Malay for her students (Lim, personal communication, 2 May 2018).

On her Facebook wall, Zurinah Hassan, the first female laureate of literature from Kuala Lumpur, shared her reflections about *syair* singing with her followers. On 8 July 2017, Zurinah opened a discussion on the topic of tunes and themes in *syair* songs. This drew her followers into a conversation, and contributed to a productive debate among them.

From his comments on Facebook, Amran Ibrahim from Perak, who also attended the *syair* concert, was inspired to widen the appeal of *syair* by commercializing it. By using a *gambus* (a six-stringed Arab musical instrument), Amran incorporates an Arabic element into the musical accompaniment to *syair* singing. As an independent young poet, Amran is actively involved in online conversations about *syair* among the online community. A study of Amran's Facebook profile shows that he also posts videos of himself performing *syair* and asks for feedback from his Facebook followers.

On 12 October 2016, a schoolteacher known as Seni Jiwa noted that, after attending the *syair* concert, he had continued to learn to sing *syair* by attending a traditional singing workshop. At the time of writing, he listens to *syair* songs on YouTube. A YouTube channel is the main source of *syair* songs for him, as it is difficult and almost impossible to find recordings of *syair* for sale (Seni Jiwa, personal communication, 20 December 2017).

To conclude, it can be said that singing events such as the *syair* concert can provide a communicative forum through which the commonalities of a community are constructed and developed. The bonds of the (diasporic) *syair* community – in this context, the concertgoers – then continue to develop through various online activities on Facebook. Their active participation on Facebook with regard to *syair* songs and traditional Malay musical culture influence the flow of their discussions with other members. The social medium of Facebook provides an informal meeting place which the *syair* community uses to share information and to talk about the subject.

In the following, I shall discuss another *syair* singing event, which may have helped to form the community, which I witnessed during my field research in May 2016.

3.2.4.3 *Syair* singing competition

In the preface to ‘Contesting Tradition: Cross-Cultural Studies of Musical Competition’ in the 2003 special edition of the journal *World of Music*, Gunderson notes that studies of global music traditions have demonstrated competition’s ‘role in defining and refining performance practice and repertoire, as well as its importance in forming and solidifying visions of community identity’ (Gunderson, 2003: 7). *Syair* singing competitions have been organized annually since 2010 by the Malaysian Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Institute of Language and Literature. This government-sponsored event comprises three stages of evaluation: district, state and national level. A concept paper for this singing competition is disseminated to primary and secondary public schools in each state. Having seen the concept paper for the *syair* singing competition, I know that it contains a list of *syair* texts with nine tunes⁴ to choose from.

The concept paper also includes the rules of the competition, with detailed information concerning scoring and judging aspects. Three criteria are to be judged: mastery of *syair* tunes (40 per cent), vocal suitability (40 per cent) and performance style (20 per cent). Based on my personal experience as a judge of *syair* singing competitions in Pahang and elsewhere in Malaysia, the winner generally ensures that their voice is considered melodious by inserting melismatic elaborations or decorations into his/her *syair* singing. These decorations are referred to as *patah lagu* (song fracturing) or *lenggok* (twisting). The *syair* competition was established for several reasons. First of all, the competition serves to uncover students’ talent in *syair* singing. Secondly, this kind of event aims to instil and nurture a love of the Malay language and culture among young people.

On 26 April 2016, I attended a district level *syair* competition held at Jengka 12 Secondary School in the district of Maran, Pahang. Seventeen contestants (fourteen female, three male) from secondary schools in the district of Maran participated in this competition. The contestants were dressed in traditional costume (Figure 3.12), as were the teachers who accompanied them. For me, the competition day had a similar atmosphere to that of a Malay wedding as the guests at a wedding would also wear traditional Malay attire.

⁴ The nine *syair* tunes are ‘Siti Zubaidah’, ‘Sarawak’, ‘Mayang’, ‘Batu Belah’, ‘Hiasan’, ‘Perindu’, ‘Dodoi’, ‘Dandan Setia’, and ‘Selendang Delima’.



Figure 3.12: Several contestants in the *syair* competition in Maran, Pahang

Several components were to be evaluated during the competition: vocal technique, proficiency in performing the *syair* tune and the appearance of the contestant. Each contestant delivered one *syair* text chosen from the sixteen on the list provided by the organizer. Each contestant could only choose one *syair* tune. I was informed that in many cases, the contestants would have been coached by their schoolteachers. Several techniques are used to develop singing skill among the contestants, including referring to the *syair* performances by Roslan Madun on his *syair* albums. This information supports the idea that a *syair* community was formed during the preparation for the competition. Roslan Madun was one of the judges of this *syair* competition.

Before the competition started, some contestants had come to Roslan Madun asking for singing advice. It is worth mentioning here that Roslan Madun's *syair* albums were a major source of reference for the contestants. As far as I am able to ascertain, there is inadequate reference material on *syair* singing available for sale. For the contestants, meeting with Roslan Madun, the

leading *syair* performer, before the competition would have inspired them to perform their best in the competition. This suggests that through the *syair* competition, a community could be formed. *Syair* singing has the ability to attract followers through its texts and the music.

Every winner at the district level then competed at the state level in the following month. On 12 May 2016, I attended the Pahang state level of the *syair* competition, which was conducted at Abu Bakar Secondary School in Temerloh. The winners from all eleven districts in Pahang gathered and competed against each other for first place in the competition and, consequently, the chance to represent the state of Pahang in the national level of the competition in Kuala Lumpur. At the state level, the audience was naturally larger than it had been at the district level; it included state officials, schoolteachers, university lecturers, Pahang poets and parents. At this stage, the parents of the contestants had taken leave from work to attend the event and support their child. In this regard, the *syair* competition clearly stimulates family values in the community. How did the audience view the students' participation in this competition? In terms of the positive aspects of this singing competition, several parents shared that it was impressive how the students' talent had developed as a result of participating in the competition. They felt that it was useful as a means through which to motivate the students to attain a higher level of achievement.

Musical development is meaningful in various ways. Ain, who I spoke to after the competition, represented the district of Temerloh. She shared with me her nervousness on entering the competition, even though the 2016 competition was her second time competing at the state level. Entering the *syair* competition for two years in a row suggests that she is very fond of *syair*. Ain also shared how this competition provides the contestants with a chance to develop their skills in *syair* singing. A male contestant indicated that this competition had motivated him to take diverse approaches to music learning. For the teachers, the competition provided motivation for them to try their best for their students. They also noted that rather than winning, it was their students' exposure to performing within the process of the competition that was important.

At the competition, booksellers from the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Cawangan Pantai Timur* (east coast branch of the Institute of Language and Literature) sold discounted books to the audience members. A mobile book truck was parked outside the competition hall. While waiting for the judges to announce the results, the audience members browsed the selection available in the book truck. I felt that the participation of the bookseller at this event was

appropriate, and would certainly cultivate a sense of appreciation of and passion for Malay literature, as well as traditional Malay culture, among the community.

To summarize, competition is uniquely important in the music world. It is significant that competition appears to play a role in musical traditions. The *syair* singing competition offers opportunities to strengthen the community by bringing it together. The value of the *syair* singing competition is recognized primarily in terms of its ability to act as a motivational tool that creates commonalities among the community. Among the positive aspects listed, traditional music appreciation is the most popular unifying theme. The students' attitude towards their participation in the *syair* singing competition becomes increasingly focused as they aim to achieve their potential.

3.3 Regional pop music

Individual and group musicians performing Pahang regional pop include Chik Asan, Razak Ahmad and vocal music group Anok Semantan. The regional pop musicians are also active members of the *Persatuan Pencinta Loghat Daerah Negeri Pahang* (Association of Fans of Pahang District Dialects) established in 2016. In this chapter, I focus on the group Anok Semantan as a model for the musical style.

3.3.1 Anok Semantan

Anok Semantan was established in 2006 in Temerloh. 'Anok' means child, while 'Semantan' refers to the Semantan River in Temerloh. The combination of these two words literally means that members of the group are natives of Temerloh. Anok Semantan is considered a pioneer of Pahang regional pop music. The group's founder, adviser and composer is Afzainizam Ismail, aged seventy-six. In the 1970s, Afzainizam became a famous singer after participating in a national singing competition in Kuala Lumpur organized by *Radio Televisyen Malaysia*, the Malaysian public broadcaster. After about thirty years of involvement in mainstream music, in the late 1990s Afzainizam returned to Temerloh, Pahang, and began to compose songs in the Pahang dialect, as well as setting up a new group. Anok Semantan consists of five young singers: Putra, Fadlina, Zurin, Hariz and Pyan, all of whom are aged between twenty-nine and forty-four and are based in Temerloh. Some of the members were formerly *nasyid* singers. Hariz and Pyan are Afzainizam's sons.

From this perspective, it seems to me that Anok Semantan is partly a musical family. All of the group's members have other employment in the private and government sectors, with singing only forming part of their careers. All five singers attended university or college for tertiary education; they are highly educated singers.

One of the group members, Fadlina, explained to me that Anok Semantan 'was established with the intention of upholding the Pahang spoken language among the state's communities, based on the national slogan "Language Represents the Nation's Cultures"' ("*Anok Semantan ditubuhkan untuk memartabatkan bahasa pertuturan di negeri ini, berasaskan satu cogan kata nasional "Bahasa Melambangkan Budaya Bangsa"*") (Fadlina, personal communication, 2 June 2016). It is useful at this point to turn to Maros's explanation of the situation in one of the districts in Pahang. Most Malays in this district speak variations of Kelantanese, Terengganu or standard Malay, rather than the Pahang dialect, and it is assumed that migration and language-contact situations contributed to these changes in the usage of the Pahang dialect. The dialect is probably 'in a transitional stage as the native speakers' linguistic repertoire increases with contact from other varieties of the Malay language' (Maros, 2010: 75). Thus, my understanding of the remarks by Fadlina is that regional pop music is an important instrument in inculcating interest among locals to proudly speak the Pahang language in their everyday conversations.

3.3.1.1 Anok Semantan's album

In 2009, Anok Semantan produced a commercial karaoke CD with the title *Lagu-lagu Loghat Pahang*. The album contains twelve songs (for the list of song titles please refer to Appendix III). Among the most-famous songs are 'Makwe Koi' (My Girlfriend), 'Ngape Bio Semok' (Why Let the Bush Grow?), 'Gone Gamoknye' (How About It), and 'Meling-Meling' (Indifferent). All of the songs on the album were recorded in Afzainizam's home recording studio. The songs were recorded and sold on commercial video compact discs (VCDs), which at the time was the most popular and most affordable format for music and video distribution in the community.

To summarize my understanding of the Pahang regional pop music genre from the music on the album, the music has several distinctive characteristics or stylistic traits. It can use a variety of rhythms (strong beats, or slow and emotional rhythms) and melodies adapted from the repertoire of

traditional songs (for instance, *joget*) and ornamentation. Music in this genre is played predominantly in 4/4 time. The songs incorporate diatonic scale systems and Western instruments such as electric guitar, bass guitar and digital keyboard, enriched with the sounds of traditional Malay musical instruments such as the bamboo flute and frame drums, which give the music a nostalgic and melancholic quality. The guitars provide continuous rhythm and occasionally solo lines, the bass guitar plays the bass accompaniment, and the keyboard provides rhythm and sometimes offers solos.

The compositions are mainly simple in lyrical structure, with a limited number of *pantun* verses. Some songs are melancholy, while others have a cheerful character, sometimes requiring the listener to dance. The songs encapsulate normal issues in the community. The lyrics and melodies alike are fairly straightforward but are beautiful and pure. In Anok Semantan, the male members mainly sing the lead melodies. A harmonic texture is part of Anok Semantan's regional pop songs. The easiest place to hear this is in the background melodies sung by the group. At a certain point in the songs, the group uses passages in vocal harmony to emphasize certain words, often the refrain or the end of a verse.

The album cover illustration projects the aesthetic agenda of the music. Anok Semantan's album artwork portrays the group in traditional humility (Figure 3.13). The male singers are wearing different coloured *baju Melayu* (a loose-fitting shirt with long sleeves) and long trousers. *Baju Melayu* comes in two styles. The first has a raised stiff collar known as a *cekak musang* collar (literally a 'fox's leash'). The second does not have the *cekak musang* but instead the opening is hemmed with stiff stitching and ends with a small loop at the top of one side that hooks onto a single button. This style is known as the *teluk belanga*.

Baju Melayu is worn with long trousers with a *samping*, which is wrapped around the middle of the body. The *samping* is a three-quarter-length sarong-style woven cloth embroidered with traditional patterns. To create a relaxed look in the photos, the male singers had either attached the *samping* to their shoulder or tied it around their waists. Meanwhile, both female singers had donned *baju kurung* (long blouse for women). To increase the Malayness of her appearance, Fadlina had personalized her look with an untied batik cloth on her head and a white flower behind her ear. The appearance of Anok Semantan in traditional attire on the album's cover may have played an important role in the promotion of the product, as it may have attracted an audience specifically interested in regional pop music.



Figure 3.13: Anok Semantan (taken from the album cover) in traditional Malay costumes

The group identifies that local radio was a powerful ally in exposing (new) listeners to their music. On an afternoon in April 2018, while on my way to Kuantan, Pahang, I tuned into a radio programme on a Pahang radio station. The DJ used the term '*lagu tradisional Pahang*' (Pahang traditional song) to denote a regional pop song by Anok Semantan. I could not understand why he called the song 'traditional'. I think that perhaps in this context his use of the term was probably related to the use of the Pahang dialect in the song's lyrics, which is the prominent element in Pahang regional pop music.

In brief, employing the Pahang dialect in song lyrics gives regional pop songs additional aesthetic and authentic elements. As well as the Pahang dialect, there are non-verbal elements that make this music distinctive, in particular the distinct rhythm, melody and harmony that provide the texture of the sound. In the following section, I discuss the local features depicted in the music videos of Anok Semantan that can be viewed on the popular music website of YouTube.

3.3.1.2 Local features in music videos

The aesthetic characteristics of regional pop songs have been translated into several music videos, which has consequently opened up a platform for responses from the community. In this section, I take a closer look at several videos of Anok Semantan's regional pop songs disseminated on

YouTube. All the music videos were recorded against the backdrop of Temerloh, and depict traditional and modern elements. To give a sense of tradition to some of the music videos, they were recorded against backdrops of village landscapes (an abandoned old house, the Pahang River and the Pekan Sehari traditional market) and traditional/village lifestyles (people bathing in the swamp, and children playing hide and seek, chasing chicks and fishing in the pond).

As seen in Figure 3.14, the music video of the song ‘Ngape Bio Semok’ was recorded against the backdrop of an abandoned old house to depict a traditional setting.



Figure 3.14: A screenshot from the music video for the song ‘Ngape Bio Semok’ with the backdrop of an abandoned old house

This somehow offers a juxtaposition with the image and fashions of the singers, which simply symbolize modern elements. The male singers appear in Western-style shirts and jeans, while the female singers wear modern Muslim headscarves, and modern dresses and trousers. To depict a contemporary or modern scene, some of the videos were recorded in industrial areas and at popular attractions, including parks around Temerloh (Kenangan Garden, Kubang Gajah Square and Temerloh Lake Park). Both the traditional and modern elements form part of the collective memories of the community.

Anok Semantan’s regional pop music also features social criticisms, including of unproductive behaviours, incompetence regarding the management of family wealth due to a lack of education, loitering and street

racing problems. Such criticism is considered *madah* (a polite observation made through song). As an example, the following transcription of the Anok Semantan song ‘Ngape Bio Semok’ indicates their feelings towards lazy people. Among others, this song provides useful advice for people to work hard and reach their goals.

Ngape bio semok? (2x) / Why Let the Bush Grow?

Tanah sekangkang kere ngape bio semok? (2x) / Why let the weeds grow in a small land?

Ngape bio lari? (2x) / Why let the buffalo run?

Kerbanye ande seko ngape bio lari? (2x) / There is only one buffalo but why has it been released?

Ngape mudah lepe? Ngape mudah ghalek? (2x) / Why is it easy to be forgotten? Why is it easy to be infatuated?

Kalanye ngendok senang kenela beringat-ingat, / If you want to live happily be mindful,

Kalanye ngendok menang kenela bekerja kuat, / If you want to win, you need to work hard,

Orang lepaih ke bulan awak dalam selimut, / Others have already reached the moon, but you’re still in bed,

Orang naik kapeterebang awak tengesot-ngesot. / People are on a plane, but you’re still crawling.

Some lyrics mention values with the intention of cultivating and nurturing a healthy lifestyle; some even include Malay proverbs in the song: for instance, *sikit-sikit lama-lama jadi bukit* (little by little, in the end it becomes a hill) and *berakit ke hulu berenang ke tepian biar sakit dulu asal senang kemudian* (it is necessary to work hard in order to succeed). In my view, these Malay proverbs in songs can be considered examples of *bait*. Accounts of important historical places can also be conveyed through song lyrics. The song ‘Kole Semantan’ (Mouth of the Semantan River), for instance, appraises the important place of Kuala Semantan, which is located at the confluence of two major rivers, the Semantan and the Pahang. This song also features the history of Mount Senyum, a popular limestone mountain associated with folk stories and myths.

To summarize, there is a cultural significance to Anok Semantan's regional pop music. The various symbols and aesthetic concept of regional pop represented in visual and audio forms are inevitably a cultural expression of the Pahang dialect's spoken community. Symbols in music, to quote Wolvers, 'may have a certain cultural connotation which is familiar to those who share a specific group identity' (Wolvers, 2010: 12). In a national context, Pahang regional pop music is termed 'folk music', as it is influenced by traditional elements. Anok Semantan regional pop music is dependent on the VCD medium for distribution and consumption. The music has also been disseminated through the Internet as it appeals both to a regional audience and the Pahang diaspora. The next section concerns the formation of community around Pahang regional pop music, especially on the Internet.

3.3.2 Community formation around Pahang regional pop music

How did a community form around Pahang regional pop music? To discuss community formation around Pahang regional pop, I focus on two themes. The first explains the intrinsic benefits of watching regional pop songs being performed live by Anok Semantan at a huge concert, as noted by members of the fan community. The second concerns online community building on the participatory website of YouTube.

3.3.2.1 Intrinsic benefits of attending Anok Semantan's concert performance

Intrinsic benefits, as categorized by McCarthy et al. (2004), are those that individuals can gain through participating in the arts that consequently affect them internally. Intrinsic benefits entered the conversation among fans who attended Anok Semantan's performance in the *Konsert Pesona* (Incantation Concert) on 4 November 2017, which was held outdoors at Serambi Teruntum in Kuantan, Pahang. The concert was aired on TV2, a television channel operated by *Radio Televisyen Malaysia*. As well as Anok Semantan, a number of singers/musicians performing an array of music genres also featured in this concert. Anok Semantan was, however, the only Pahang regional pop group that was given a chance to perform on the same stage as several prominent musicians.

I was not in Pahang for the concert, so I watched it on television at home. During the first part of the concert, my focus was on Anok Semantan's

singing performance. In general, I did not benefit much from watching the concert on television apart from listening to the music. I wanted to know how avid fans felt about and what their reaction had been to Anok Semantan's performance at the concert. The day after the concert, I spoke to my contacts in Pahang by phone. Not long afterwards, I was able to interact with several individuals who attended the concert and heard about their experiences.

Salman is a fan of Anok Semantan's music. Living in Kuantan, he was excited that the concert was being held in his area. Salman attended the concert with several friends to experience the live performance of their favourite music group. On being asked to what degree he was absorbed in the performance, Salman realized that Anok Semantan's live performance had had an intrinsic impact on him. The live performance of regional pop songs had captivated him and his friends and made them appreciate and have pride in Pahang's dialect. This levelled their engagement, as well as creating an increased sense of community among the fans of regional pop music.

Anok Semantan's live performance in the concert included several forms of acting. This increased the affectivity of the group by activating the fans' feelings of unity. Salman, in addition to his previous remarks, demonstrated the gestures made by fans during the group's performance and described the situations in which the gestures were made. He then offered an interpretation of this: the fan community which knew Anok Semantan's songs participated in a group display of positive hand gestures and verbal call-and-response to Anok Semantan's performance. To support his account, Salman shared with me several obscure photographs of fans' reactions to the group's performance that he had captured during the concert.

Afzainizam also shared his thoughts on the fans' reaction to Anok Semantan's live performance. He remembered how the fans responded to the songs with a joyous and friendly atmosphere. They experienced transcendence and felt that they were part of the performance. Anok Semantan's set was seen as uplifting and enjoyable, providing a supportive environment for fans' emotional responses. After the concert, Afzainizam and others met up and had a sincere and passionate discussion, displaying their dedication to the performance. The performance of regional pop songs encourages their fan community to reminisce about collective memories. The individuals who I have spoken with were pleased that the concert was broadcast live. The concert increased the visibility of the town of Kuantan, Pahang in the national media. This benefited the town, local people and local culture. As a result of Anok Semantan's performance at the concert, local people have an increased sense of place and have seen their identity reinforced in the songs.

In summary, the fan community that attended this concert had a common bond and frame of reference. Regional pop music, such as that performed by Anok Semantan is a symbol that establishes pervasive, long lasting feelings and motivation among its fan community. It brings about a sense of belonging and a sense of community that creates a specific meaning and dimension in their lives. At this point, I should not forget to mention an online Anok Semantan community in which I participated. The following section explains how the availability of regional pop songs on social media, primarily YouTube, has helped to form a virtual community, and indicates the importance of these songs in the lives of the members of the community.

3.3.2.2 Virtual community on YouTube

The availability of Pahang regional pop music in digital environments has generated a community. An example of the emergence of community on the Internet is represented by people participating in conversations on YouTube, one of the most popular video sites. I consider this an important topic in understanding the relationship between the online music-watching community and Pahang regional pop music in the terrain of digital technology. Music ranks as the highest of the video categories visited on YouTube and acts as a focal music platform that provides social spaces and cultural resources for affiliation. People primarily use YouTube to look up artists, videos or live events. There is no doubt that YouTube plays a significant part in the experience of the contemporary music listener.

My examination of YouTube shows that all twelve songs from Anok Semantan's first album have been uploaded to this video-sharing website. These videos were professionally made and there was typically no information embedded in them. Interestingly, neither the producer nor the singers uploaded their music from the album; instead, the videos have been uploaded to YouTube by fans (user-uploaded copies). Anok Semantan's songs were uploaded to the website as early as 2010, a year after Anok Semantan's first album was released in 2009. The number of views of each video ranges from the thousands to hundreds of thousands, showing that interest in Anok Semantan's songs is relatively high. The following paragraphs describe how online Anok Semantan's regional pop music is used and discussed in specific contexts.

Aiman, an online music user from Pahang, shared with me that YouTube is an important medium for him (Aiman, personal communication,

23 January 2019). If he wants to listen to Anok Semantan's songs, he searches directly on YouTube, facilitated by mobile digital technologies, primarily his mobile phone. This is in line with Hartley's view that 'the site has been seen an archive' (Hartley, 2012: 165), with Vernalis even calling it 'an archive without a librarian' (Vernalis, 2013: 152). In addition, online music consumption encourages communication on the topic. While listening to songs on YouTube, Aiman explained that he would share, communicate and comment on Anok Semantan's song with other online music users.

The presence of Anok Semantan's songs on the site enables the participation of online music consumers in the community. They participate in dialogues and share their feelings about songs. It is likely that these online music consumers are from the Pahang and/or have a cultural relationship with Pahang. Commenting on the song 'Makwe Koi' (My Girlfriend), one viewer says that she misses her village in Pahang. Another viewer left a comment saying how lucky he had been to find this song on YouTube. These comments are inspired by the stated view that by listening to the song, it brings back memories of their village in Pahang, as well as evoking nostalgic thoughts.

I refer to an online conversation between Mohamad Azmi and Mohamed Ibrahim regarding the song 'Ngape Bio Semok' (Why Let the Bush Grow?). They have something in common – both are married to Pahang women. Through marriage, they have learned about Anok Semantan's regional pop, and have subsequently become fans of the music. Inspired by the same song on YouTube, Emma Salleh (from Sarawak in north-west Borneo Island) and Amir Daniel (from the south of Johor) agreed that Anok Semantan's songs have played an important role in introducing the Pahang dialect to them. It is evident that the presence of Pahang regional pop music online induces digital music consumers to learn more about the culture of Pahang.

Some viewers have thought that the Pahang dialect used in Anok Semantan's songs is identical to the dialects of several other regions. Reza Khadafi commented on the song 'Gone Gamoknye' (How About It), saying that the Pahang dialect is nearly identical to the spoken language in Padang, West Sumatra, Indonesia. Mizi Amanah left a comment on the music video for 'Kole Semantan' (Mouth of the Semantan River) observing that the Pahang dialect is identical to the spoken language of the people in the state of Perak.

Most online viewers describe Anok Semantan's songs as simple and state that they can listen to them while driving and working. As demonstrated, the availability of Pahang regional pop music on YouTube has transformed listening modes (from offline to online listening) and meanings in the lives of

the members of the Anok Semantan's regional pop community. These shifts have helped online consumers to communicate with like-minded and differently minded individuals about music in conversations that meld together and cannot easily be separated.

As well as uploading original, 'authentic' music videos from Anok Semantan, some fans engage with other types of videos. In some cases this involves reproducing clips of music videos where they retain the original audio content but add user-created elements to the video. I also found videos that had discarded the motion picture and replaced it with a still photo. In a third variation, the videos used stills, but the visual content also included the song's lyrics rolling across the screen in a similar way to karaoke videos. A consumer named 'Odexers', for instance, created an 'alternative' music video for 'Ngape Bio Semok', with the lyrics provided to invite viewers to sing along, and a request to rate and comment on the video.

The fourth and fifth types of videos are amateur recordings of live performances of Anok Semantan in concert and videos of cover versions, respectively. The different types of videos clearly invite attention from consumers but elicit different engagement patterns. The original videos of Anok Semantan's music receive more views, votes and comments than those containing the lyrics or still videos. This is probably because when viewers feel the need to discuss a song, they are more likely to share their opinion in the context of the 'authentic' music videos.

In a nutshell, YouTube is a participatory site. In relation to online music consumption, a participatory culture can be used to describe fan community activities. Anok Semantan's music videos on YouTube have hundreds of thousands of viewers. Participants engage with each other through three public ways of interacting with music videos: viewing, commenting and voting. The comment field offers space for qualitative taste judgements, and discussions often concern the artists, videos, and music. However, discussion can also go off-topic and address different issues.

3.4 Concluding thoughts

This chapter has provided accounts of social contexts and the formation of community through the sounds of two music genres. I have identified that both traditional and regional pop music have features in common with songs from the past. The poetic forms of *pantun* and *seloka* are a common source of inspiration for traditional and regional pop musicians. As well as *pantun* and

seloka, in traditional music Malays in Pahang villages incorporate other historical song forms: *syair*, *nazam* and *gurindam*. Meanwhile, *madah* and *bait* are used in regional pop music. There are various cultural elements in the lyrics of both traditional songs and regional pop songs.

The musicians in these genres, who cite their love of Malay arts and culture, have made changes to the songs to keep them relevant. By all accounts, the traditional poetry songs that originated long ago have been hugely revitalized. In this sense, innovations and significant changes in the function, performance practice and style have occurred in *syair* under the leadership of Roslan Madun and other singers and musicians who have provided music for *syair*. Innovations can noticeably be seen in performance practices (annual cultural events, concerts, singing workshops and competitions), the role of *syair* performers and the function of *syair* in the community. The performance of *syair* and other traditional poetry songs, once popular forms of sung entertainment for nobles in palaces, has been transformed into a cultural, government-sponsored form of entertainment, considered ‘revitalized performance’. Traditional poetry songs are performed at the request of the government and state agencies in the interest of preserving a traditional art form, as well as being incorporated in the school curriculum. At the time of writing there is also an attempt underway to establish official names for several other unidentified *syair* tunes.

Regional pop music, supported by a mixture of music genres adopted from local and global sources, has made the use of *pantun* verses and other traditional elements admissible in contemporary music. In regional pop, the significant innovation is that poetic forms (for instance, *pantun*) are sung as song lyrics in the Pahang dialect, something that has never previously happened. This gives the music genre a distinct character. Regional pop musicians have made these traditions relevant in the modern world.

The community at large has shown pride in traditional music and regional pop music as both form part of their own cultural and artistic heritage. The genres continue to succeed today both because their performers have been able to adapt to using different performance outlets and due to the availability of technology and the modernization of musical traditions. Through several performance outlets, communities around both traditional and regional pop music have been formed, created and maintained.

Special associations have been established to ensure the upholding of musical traditions. Two examples are the *Syair* Academy (now the N.D. Lala Academy of the Arts) and the Association of Fans of Pahang District Dialects,

which both support the performance of these Pahang music forms. The activities of the musicians in both these genres intertwine with other activities in the local community. The genres seem to play a decisive role in the formation of the identity of individuals and their belonging to a group. The music types also have historical dimensions, carrying on traditions handed down from the past. Musicians in traditional music and regional pop music are very important actors on the music scene.

My musical fieldwork in Pahang villages did not concentrate on just one musical tradition but tried to consider all those features important to the locality. My journey became more interesting when I met musicians in Pahang villages who had chosen non-traditional sounds for their music. In the next chapter, I share my experience of *kugiran* and *punk rock* music.

CHAPTER 4

KUGIRAN MUSIC AND PUNK ROCK

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, two modern Malaysian music genres will be discussed: *kugiran* and punk rock; genres which in many ways, are not associated with the songs from the past discussed in Chapter 2, and which have backgrounds with foreign influences. I aim to understand why Malays in Pahang villages are attracted to *kugiran* and *punk rock* and to clarify how their views of certain musical forms are used to express their identity.

I have included these two genres together in this chapter for two reasons. Firstly, both genres have been fuelled by socio-economic development in Pahang, and secondly, the two genres are interrelated. Two semi-professional bands will form the focus of discussion, each representing one of the music genres. *Kugiran* music is represented by the band Kugiran Muzik Asli from Paya Luas village, Temerloh, while the band Hibiscus, also from Temerloh, represents punk rock. In the first section, I explore the background of *kugiran* music and its association with the birth of rock and punk music.

4.1.1 The background to *kugiran* and how it relates to the emergence of rock and punk music

In the mid-1960s a number of Malay youth bands known as *kugiran* began to emerge in Malaysia (and in Singapore). The word *kugiran* came from the abbreviation for the term *kumpulan gitar rancak* (lively guitar band) (Matusky and Tan, 2004). The word was first used on a Singapore radio station in the weekly *Lagu Pujaan Minggu Ini* (Best Songs of the Week) segment hosted by the first Malay radio host, Mohd Ismail Abdullah. It was also rumoured that P. Ramlee (1922-1973), a key and well-respected figure in the Malay entertainment industry in the early 1950s, was the first person to use the word *kugiran* to distinguish these bands from previous Malay bands (Jaafar et al., Unpublished).

Many changes occurred in Malaysian music during the 1960s and 1970s, decades which were dominated by Western pop star imitations. The period between 1965 and 1971 could be termed the era of *pop yeh yeh*,

referring to the lyrics of the hit by British pop group The Beatles, 'She Loves You, Yeah Yeah Yeah'. The *kugiran* bands at that time played *pop yeh yeh*, the latest rock and roll hits, and Latin American Santana-style pop with Malay lyrics. Soon, a flood of Beatles' imitators appeared, singing in Malay and other languages (Lockard, 1996). Lockard states 'the *pop yeh yeh* music was more Western in sound than much of the earlier Malay music, although some singers utilized traditional vocal influences' (Lockard, 1996: 9).

Kugiran bands, comprising three guitars and a drum, became all the rage in Malaysian towns and villages in the 1960s (Tan, 2006). These bands had basic stylistic traits: simple lyrics, simple background accompaniment, simple drumbeat, rhythmic patterns and simple bass lines. The lyrics had relatively little creativity. Mohd Osman Mohamed's 1964 hit 'Suzanna' may have been the first Malay song in this genre, but it was soon followed by dozens of others. Most *kugiran* bands used English names, even though the songs were sung in the Malay language. Among the popular *kugiran* bands in the 1960s were The Rhythm Boys, The Mods and The Singlap 5, who frequently received invitations to play at weddings. These bands played The Twist, blues, country and western, a-go-go and bossa nova music (Tan, 1989). *Kugiran* concerts were staged not only in big cities and towns, but also in small towns and villages.

Kugiran bands were characterized by their original musical compositions and the dialectal or *asli* (indigenous) features that were applied to the Malay lyrics and complemented by Western musical style and instrumentation (Adil Johan, 2014). Most of the *kugiran* songs had themes revolving around regret and unhappiness. Apart from the song lyrics, *kugiran* was welcomed by the community because the musical rhythm differed considerably to that of the existing music of the time (*kroncong* and *asli* were still popular in the nation). *Kugiran* fans were mainly Malay youths and they followed the trends and imitated the styles, attitudes and fashions introduced by the members of *kugiran* bands.

Kugiran stars sold thousands of records, and appeared on television music shows and in band competitions. They also dominated the entertainment magazines. However, the glory days of *kugiran* music were over by 1971 (Jaafar et al., Unpublished). For many middle-aged Malaysians today, *kugiran* is the music of nostalgia. The development of *kugiran* music undoubtedly led to the emergence of more upbeat music including rock and punk (Annuar et al., 2016). Yusof (2010) affirms that rapid urbanization, religious constraints and boredom among working-class Malay youths were important factors in the emergence of rock music. In the mid-1980s, the country saw the growth of

rock music bands. They received support and coverage from the print media, covering concerts and music albums. The album 'Battle of the Bands' sold in excess of one hundred thousand copies and opened the door to the appearance of rock music in Malaysia. Meanwhile, in the same period, only a limited number of *kugiran* bands were still active, including The Zurah and Nirwana.

However, the rise of rock music raised issues of compatibility with the *Dasar Kebudayaan Kebangsaan* (DKK) (National Cultural Policy) which was enacted in 1971. Any element contrary to Islam and the Malay culture, both important features of the DKK, was perceived as a cultural threat (Ibrahim, 2016). The Malaysian Islamic Party (*Parti Islam Se-Malaysia*), an Islamist political party based in Malaysia's rural and conservative north, stated that music from the West was immoral and inappropriate for the country. The party believed rock music could have a negative impact on youths.

In September 1986, after a statement by the Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, the Malaysian government banned public rock concerts. This action came about after a number of letters of complaint were sent to news agencies after youths threw bottles, chairs and other objects at a rock concert organized in Penang. The government claimed that this music had a terrible influence on teenagers. Later that same year, the government eased its ban on outdoor rock concerts, limiting the ban to heavy-metal music (Malaysiaasia, 2014). In an article published by the Institute of Language and Literature shortly after the disorder at the concert in Penang, Samantha Tay (cited in Anuar et al., 2016) argued that the act of banning rock music concerts was improper, as only a small number of people were involved in the commotion. Moreover, the act failed to affect the growth of rock music which continued to increase in popularity, becoming an important part of the culture. The development of rock music was also the result of a need for escapism due to an economic downturn that had resulted in youth unemployment. Most rock music fans were poor and were unable to access expensive entertainment.

In 1989, several rock bands including Search, Wings and May, gained popularity after they performed in the final round of the music competition, *Muzik-Muzik*, organized by a local private television station. This television phenomenon influenced the growing number of non-professional rock bands. However, this did not necessarily mean that there was sufficient confidence within government to recognize rock music as a culture. Furthermore, politicians assumed that rock music and the pleasure it elicited interfered with their political power. The development of rock music was seen to have the potential to allow the voices of those oppressed by the government to be heard. In 1992, a restriction was brought in prohibiting rock musicians with long hair

from appearing on television. This restriction, however, was lifted in 2002 when the popularity of rock music began to decline. During this time, other music genres, including *nasyid* and ballads, began to dominate the music industry in Malaysia.

The bad reputation and impression of rock music continued due to the emergence of black metal music. Since the 1990s heavy metal, an underground music genre, had tried to rival rock music. The underground scene comprised a variety of music genres such as punk, thrash metal, black metal and alternative. Underground music bands exhibited anti-commercial qualities, and believed that rock musicians conformed to the priorities of international recording companies and their commercial interests (Tan, 2002). Black metal music has been associated with the devil's influence and the slaughter of animals for worship (Utusan Online, 2001). The Malaysian government has taken several actions including prohibiting this music from being played on radios and televisions, performing raids on shops selling souvenirs and vetting foreign groups who wish to perform in Malaysia. The public perceives the punk lifestyle as 'too westernized' and 'un-Islamic' (Lockard, 1998). To maintain their reputation, rock musicians explained to critics that their music has no connection with underground music. Until this day, rock music is still enjoyed by its followers in the undercurrent spaces.

4.1.2 The background to punk rock music

Both *kugiran* and rock music are inextricably intertwined with the emergence of punk rock. 'Punk combines a variety of creative forms in order to make a movement distinctly different from the dominant mainstream culture, socially, politically and musically' (Donahue, 2001: 89). Punk rock is the style commonly related to the punk scene. There are two views of how punk rock became known in Malaysia: one takes an international perspective and the other considers domestic influences. At an international level punk was known about and brought to the local population via three different routes. Firstly, Malaysian students who were studying in the United Kingdom brought back punk music to the country. Secondly, punk culture circulated in elite schools. Thirdly, punk rock was introduced through the use of shortwave radios and through magazines from overseas (Annuar et al., 2016).

For domestic influences I referred to Zulkifli Zakaria, known as Joe Kidd. He is a Malay guitarist with Carburetor Dung, one of Malaysia's earliest punk bands. Joe Kidd is also known as the father of punk music in Malaysia.

According to him, the punk scene in Malaysia has been identifiable since 1979 through the input of individuals who were fans of punk music in Terengganu, Pahang's neighbouring state. At that time, most of these fans were at secondary school. Joe Kidd, himself, was inspired through British magazines such as *NME*, and started one of the first punk fanzines in Malaysia, *Aedes* in the mid-1980s. Later, he helped arrange for a record company to finance the punk label, Sonic Asylum Records.

Historically, the punk scene in Malaysia developed earlier than in neighbouring countries, including Indonesia (Fiscella, 2012). During the early phase of punk in Malaysia, the followers were teenagers from working-class backgrounds. At that time, jamming studios did not exist. The punk scene was still in its early phase of development with followers involved in activities such as exchanging fanzines and punk cassettes from overseas. The phenomenon of music studios in which groups could jam only existed from the mid-1980s, and then only in big cities.

The first punk music band in Malaysia was called Malaria and came from Terengganu. A typical punk music band had four members playing lead guitar, bass guitar, rhythm guitar and drum. One of them would be the singer. Keyboard and synthesizers were also used and preferred wherever possible. The players were regularly self-taught and normally rehearsed at least once a week. The establishment and spread of small local studios made it possible for bands to make recordings for their own use or for informal demonstration tapes, in a more permanent and technically sophisticated form than they could otherwise achieve. The music was usually of their own compositions.

Due to its nature, punk rock music can be inappropriate to be performed in open public spaces, including in concert. Ferrarese (2016) points out that punk music is not for everybody. The youth culture of punk tends to be associated with anger and self-destructive behaviour. Punk rock bands are frequently forced to accept whatever venue they can get because nobody in the local music scene wants to deal with them. However, spaces to perform punk rock music are central to the punk music scene and punk rock musicians can access and play at all typical punk venues, including *Rumah Api* (Lighthouse) and Beatnik, both venues located in Kuala Lumpur, because of the musicians' reputation for moral integrity.

Punk is not merely a genre, but also a philosophical approach to life and art, promoting empowerment through self-sustenance, and socio-cultural and political awareness through a 'Do It Yourself' (DIY) ethos (Guan, 2010). The term 'Do It Yourself' first emerged in a 1912 article about home

decoration written by Garrett Winslow in the American magazine *Suburban Life* (Gelber, 1997). The DIY ethos is associated with the attitude behind the production of low-budget and self-distributed fanzines in the United States and Europe (Spencer, 2005). The DIY ethos, Spencer adds, is ‘the urge to create a new cultural form and transmit it to others on your own terms’ (Spencer, 2005: 12). In addition, rock critic Marcus identifies the ethos behind punk rock as the notion ‘to live not as an object, but as a subject for history’ (Marcus, 1989: 6).

For Luvaas (2012), the term ‘DIY ethos’ is too fluid a concept to be defined, or limited in such a way. While conducting his research on DIY cultural production in Yogyakarta and Bandung in Indonesia, Luvaas identified that DIYers (who come from many ethnic backgrounds including Javanese, Melayu, Sundanese, Batak, Dayak, Balinese and Makassarese) are actively ‘getting together and making stuff, then selling and distributing it through their own peer network, without direct investment or mediation from larger corporate, state, or financial interests’ (Luvaas, Section DIY in *DIY (Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta: Everyday Production in the Indonesian Indie Scene. In ‘DIY Style: Fashion, Music and Global Digital Culture’)*). Even though I have not conducted in-depth research into DIY cultural production in Pahang during the course of this study, but, I nonetheless believe that the experiences of DIYers in the punk scene in Pahang are not that different to those of DIYers in Yogyakarta and Bandung in Indonesia in terms of, for instance, producing cheap, demo music albums and punk fashion.

In the sense of DIY in music, noted Luvaas, ‘it was punk rock arising from the post-industrial metropolises of the United States and the United Kingdom in the mid-1970s that would most stridently hoist the banner of DIY, popularizing the term for a new generation, and forging a conceptual template of DIY that is still very much in use today’ (Luvaas, Section Introduction: The DIY Ethos. In *‘DIY Style: Fashion, Music and Global Digital Culture’*). Like punk bands in Indonesia, punk bands in Pahang developed and replicated the sounds of the well-known punk bands that they heard through demo cassettes. As their skills improved, the bands began playing their own songs which were mostly energetic and simple. They also began to produce demo tapes and fanzines, and perform gigs (small-scale concerts).

A very well-known punk band in Pahang was Hijrah (later The Pilgrims). This band produced an album named ‘Perfume Garden’ under the independent label of Sonic Asylum Records which was reported to have sold as many as twenty thousand copies. This album received an encouraging response from the fans. Many punk followers in Malaysia are Malay youths and they adhere to the Islamic religion. However, this is not an aspect of their

lives that comes under scrutiny from the punk community as it is considered personal and private. Punks believe in the freedom to choose to be religious or not (Noor, 1999). This is not to say that these punk followers completely separate themselves from the practices of the Malay community. Certain things are accepted, especially the practice of returning home and celebrating Eid, a Muslim festival that celebrates the end of the holy fasting month. In this instance it is simply important to honour, celebrate and enjoy time with their family or friends, even though they may have different beliefs.

In the early years, followers were very much attracted to the punk lifestyle because punk was considered new music and it had a unique fashion to go with it. Youths chose a punk lifestyle due to the style of music, lyrics, symbols and images on display. Punk provided opportunity and hope to youths who considered themselves marginalized. Punk was seen as the light of freedom and a means through which young people could express their anger at what was happening in the country. The news in 2015, for instance, reported that more than a hundred punk followers were arrested at a punk music event in Kuala Lumpur. The arrests took place as the gathering was seen as bringing harm to the country as well as being an illegal assembly that could have threatened the country's political security (Malaysiakini, 30 August 2015). Ibrahim (1993) indicated that Malaysia experiences conflicts of tradition and moral values at the prospect of the growth of new cultures which are considered to be of 'poor quality'. This term seems to describe public anxiety surrounding the conflict of values among locals. Most members of the community in Malaysia still rely on and practise traditional values. This has led to the emergence of disagreements between the two parties.

4.2 *Kugiran* music

Today, after more than three decades of popularity, the number of *kugiran* bands has decreased. In a *pop yeh yeh* talk organized by the Music Department of the Malaysia National Museum on 25 January 2018, Rahman Hassan, singer and guitarist of the *kugiran* band Nirwana observed that there are less than ten surviving *kugiran* bands in Malaysia. I would argue that this figure only represents *kugiran* bands in big cities, and excludes *kugiran* bands in villages. This study indicates a more profound change in the presentation of *kugiran* music and its community. *Kugiran* music has travelled from the big cities to village settings. During my field research in April 2016, I had the opportunity to learn about *kugiran* music and its function at wedding receptions.

Currently, a Malay wedding in Pahang and other places in Malaysia comprises two events: a solemnization ceremony and a reception. The solemnization is an emotional moment which typically takes place in a mosque prior to the main wedding reception and is witnessed only by close family members and officials. This religious ceremony accomplishes the declarative act of marrying the bride and groom (Schrauwens, 2000). Meanwhile, the reception is a party or celebration that will often have food and where everyone has a good time. The wedding reception entails the delivery of the groom to the bride's family. It is about the presentation of the bride and groom as a married couple to the wider community.

In the village of Paya Luas near Temerloh, Pahang, I observed a *kugiran* band best known to the village community as Kugiran Muzik Asli. Even though I did not have a chance to see them perform live at a wedding reception, I had the opportunity to attend two of the group's rehearsal sessions as a way to experience their music playing and to learn about the band's repertoire. To deepen my understanding of the position of the *kugiran* band within the community (in the context of wedding receptions), I was able to refer to photos of performances at several wedding receptions, as well as conduct interview sessions with some *kugiran* band members and members of the village community.

4.2.1 Kugiran Muzik Asli of Paya Luas village

Kugiran music is one of the most popular forms of village entertainment in Pahang. Generally, *kugiran* means a group that plays upbeat music. The Malay word *asli* is perhaps the most common term used to refer to traditional music. It literally means 'original' and is derived from the word *asal*, which means 'origin' (Coope, 1976: 13). The term *asli*, Chopyak suggests, 'has a wide variety of musical meanings and uses that depend on the context in which the term is being used' (Chopyak, 1986:114). *Asli* also refers to an ornamental style of singing, is closely identified with *bangsawan* and often incorporates popular Western dance beats (Lockard, 1996). In the Malaysian scholarly context, *asli* is a type of music that suggests a specific melody, demanding vocal techniques, *pantun* verses as the song lyrics and *asli* bands (Silahudin, 2011; Nasruddin, 2003; Matusky & Tan, 1997). *Asli* is also considered a form of Malay folk singing and dance music in modernized form (Seneviratne, 2012). A few examples of *asli* songs are 'Patah Hati', 'Seri Mersing', 'Seri Serawak', 'Jalak Lenteng' and 'Damak' (Silahudin, 2010). Most *asli* songs are derived from and gained popularity during the eras of

bangsawan theatre and Malay classical films in the second quarter of the twentieth century (from the 1930s until the early 1950s).

The popularity of *asli* music decreased in the second half of the century due to socio-cultural and political changes. People were more attracted to, as Lockard (1996) proposed, ‘Western social dance’ (such as Twist), and at the same time ‘the introduction of television killed off the great amusement parks’ (Lockard, 1996: 3). In the last three decades of the twentieth century, the government widely reintroduced *asli* music to the mainstream community, especially young people, by holding several annual *asli* singing competitions at district, state and national levels.

The use of *asli* in the band’s name at first suggested to me that they were playing a type of music from the era of *bangsawan* theatre and Malay classical films. However, I was wrong. Kugiran Muzik Asli, in fact, plays a series of songs originating from the 1950s to the early 1980s, a time of growing influence of the West on Malay socio-cultural life. This is one of the distinctive and conspicuous characteristics of the band. The evidence suggests that the use of *asli* in the band’s title is not connected to *asli* music as mentioned above, but rather, refers to the traditional musical instruments that they have included as part of their musical assemble in addition to modern music instruments.

The band Kugiran Muzik Asli was formed in 2006. Members of the band come from various villages in the vicinity of Temerloh, Pahang. The band consists of fourteen male musicians, aged between eighteen and seventy years old. The members playing modern musical instruments are: Manaan on first guitar and accordion, Kutak on second guitar, Wan on bass guitar, Sulaiman on conga drum, Deli on timbale, Aziz on keyboard and Epaak on flute. On request, the band can also call on a saxophone player to vary the sound of their music. The members playing traditional musical instruments are: Long Mat on gong, Paklah, Meda, Nazri and Sukur on frame drums, and Nasa on tambourine/maracas. Lastly, Gee is the vocalist of the band. They are all self-taught musicians. It is interesting to note that all of the band members are related to others, for instance, a frame drum player is the nephew of the conga player, and the bassist is the second guitarist’s son.

The band rehearses at a *bangsal* (a shed for martial arts training) located in Paya Luas (Figure 4.1). The *bangsal* is also the training place for a martial arts dance group from the same village. Nazri, the frame drum player in the *kugiran* band is a coach at the martial arts group and the keyholder for the *bangsal*. The musical instruments and appliances are stored in a room at the back of the *bangsal*. Rehearsals take place twice a week to polish the skills of

the instrumentalists. Further rehearsals also occur in the weeks prior to a wedding.



Figure 4.1: Kugiran Muzik Asli at rehearsal in the *bangsal*

When asked about what inspired them to play music and set up their band, Manaan made it clear that there is a considerable demand from village communities for ‘new-fashioned’ wedding reception music. Manaan stated that several years ago it was difficult to find *kugiran* music players to perform specifically for wedding receptions in the vicinity of Temerloh. Manaan could remember a time when his neighbours held wedding receptions and insisted on having *kugiran* music to entertain their wedding guests. As a result, and with encouragement from the village community, Manaan and several friends built up their previous unplanned, *kugiran* band. The band began to collect or buy musical instruments.

They also learnt many beautiful songs dating from the late 1950s to the 1980s which work well at wedding receptions. Even though there is demand for the *kugiran* band to play at weddings, it does not mean that they have sacrificed their main jobs. The majority of the band members have other employment besides playing in the band. Playing music at wedding receptions is a supplementary job. Each of them earns between RM100-RM150 (GBP20-GBP30) for each performance.

In the following section, I will discuss their repertoire of songs as well as how *kugiran* music is performed at the reception.

4.2.1.1 Repertoire and musical performance

In general, no instruction or guidelines are given to the band as to what type of music they should play at a reception. The combination of their traditional and modern musical instruments (Figure 4.2), amplification and musical skill mean that Kugiran Muzik Asli plays a variety of music styles.



Figure 4.2: Kugiran Muzik Asli at a wedding reception (courtesy: Manaan)

The types of song the band play at wedding receptions include *pop yeh yeh* and classic Malay songs (dance rhythms such as *masri*, *joget* and *inang* with western folk and pop elements) as well as a number of Indonesian classics from the 1960s to early 1980s. I noticed that the band also plays Malaysian *dangdut* songs. *Dangdut* is ‘a form of Malay folk music which has graduated from the village setting into the modern entertainment scene’ (Seneviratne, 2012: 12). There are two forms of *dangdut*: *dangdut* pop and traditional *dangdut*. Based on informal conversations with several acquaintances who are also Malaysian singers, the *dangdut* music played in Malaysia is *dangdut* pop. It is this category of *dangdut* that is mostly played by Kugiran Muzik Asli.

When I asked why the band chooses to play these music styles, Manaan responded, ‘Those are the songs that our community likes the most. We hardly listen to these songs nowadays. The modern ones, especially Malay film tunes, are of little worth.’ Manaan added that most of the songs they play had been introduced to the public mainly through records played on turntables at the time when there was no ‘big radio with moving pictures’ (television). In the eyes of the *kugiran* band’s members, playing songs that date from the 1960s until the early 1980s corresponds to the decline of such songs (especially

pop yeh yeh). In addition, wedding hosts and their guests enjoy these songs because they remind them of their youth. The performance of the *kugiran* band may bring back feelings and emotions attached to their memories of *pop yeh yeh*, acting as a nostalgic recollection of times past. Here, I refer to the idea by Lockard (1996) that, for many middle-aged Malaysians today, songs from those decades are nostalgic.

Compared to *pop yeh yeh*, which was popular in the 1960s, *dangdut* only became popular in Malaysia in the 1990s. Several people talked to me about the choice of Malaysian *dangdut* that is played at wedding receptions. They acknowledged that, even though *dangdut* derives from Hindustani film music, it is somehow a Malay music and popular among local people. In his investigation of *dangdut* in Malaysia, Seneviratne noted that *dangdut* ‘is very much the dance of Southeast Asia because it draws so much from traditional rhythms, which have derived from traditional popular dance music and has been updated with the use of technology’ (Seneviratne, 2012: xi-xii). Seneviratne (2012: xi-xii) suggested that *dangdut* may have an image problem nationally in Malaysia, however this view is clearly not representative of all communities, as my research shows.

The wedding reception is a unifying social party that aims to include everyone from the local community. The songs played at reception parties can bring back good memories from the past among the village community, especially the elders. *Pop yeh yeh* was omnipresent in public spaces, such as villages, shops, buses, taxis and homes, at the height of its popularity in the 1960s. This kind of popular music became a component of the background to daily life, and images of popstars were displayed in many places. Music from this era is considered dynamic and creative, with highly innovative song lyrics that encourage musicians to play such music at social events, including wedding receptions.

At most wedding receptions, Kugiran Muzik Asli play music throughout the day, usually from eleven in the morning until four in the afternoon. There are three distinct sets to the performance: a beginning set, a middle set and an end one. At the beginning upbeat and ‘feel good’ songs are the favoured choice. At this stage of the musical performance the band is encouraging the growing audience’s enthusiasm. Furthermore, playing cheerful, lively music in the first set acts as an introduction to the band and brings the wedding reception to life.

The first set lasts for around one hour until the announcement of the arrival of the bride and groom at the reception. Instrumental music will then be

played as the couple moves to the bridal dais. In contrast to the upbeat songs of the first set, tunes in the second set are of a slower tempo. Continuous music is played after the host has attended to the ceremony of the *bersanding* (enthronement) of the bride and groom, which usually takes place inside the bride's parents' house. One of the musicians, usually the band's leader, will announce to the guests that the bride and groom are having the *makan pengantin* (bride's meal). A special dining table for the couple will have been set up in the marquee (or at some receptions, dining takes place in an open garage) facing the guests. The special wedding song 'Selamat Pengantin Baru' (Happy New Bride) is often played as the accompaniment to *jamuan makan pengantin* (the bride's meal ceremony).

During the second set, music is played without any interruption for at least an hour or longer. At this time the number of guests in attendance will have reached its peak. The slower tempo is a way to make the wedding reception calmer and more laid-back. Furthermore, the music played in the second set will be easy to talk over.

In the third and final set, Kugiran Muzik Asli will add to their musical performance by encouraging guests to participate. The band's leader will ask if anyone at the reception (regardless of age or role in the wedding) would like to come forward and share their musical talents, especially in their vocal talent. At this point, it is a good thing to have a special family member or friend lined up to sing – it provides a touching and memorable moment. Conversation takes place between the individual and the musicians to come to an agreement on song selection. The final set of music aims to enrich the guests' enjoyment and ensure that they have a good experience at the wedding.

To conclude, Kugiran Muzik Asli of Paya Luas plays music for wedding receptions. The inspiration to form their *kugiran* band in 2006 arose when there was demand for music from the 1960s to the early 1980s to celebrate weddings. Besides creating a celebratory atmosphere, the band's inclusion of songs from this era is due to their ability to invoke feelings of pleasure and joy, especially among middle-aged people.

4.2.2 Community formation around *kugiran* music

Music is one of the most important elements at wedding celebrations in Pahang. Through music, guests can relax and enjoy themselves at the party and, invariably, music at the reception brings people together. The discussion about how this happens and what it means is based on a summary of my

findings from interviews with wedding hosts, *kugiran* musicians, wedding DJs and wedding guests in Temerloh, Pahang.

Two sub-themes are considered in the next section: the wedding host's considerations when deciding on a live music band or a DJ (with music in MP3⁵ format); and the segment containing song requests.

4.2.2.1 The wedding host's options: a live music band or a DJ with music in MP3 format

Wedding hosts play an important role in a wedding reception. In their view, choosing the appropriate music is fundamental. Some choose a band, others prefer a DJ for wedding entertainment. The latter may think that a DJ can more easily play music from a wide variety of genres, and that bands tend to have a more limited repertoire because the musicians have to learn the songs beforehand. Furthermore, hiring a band (more than three musicians) for a reception party is likely to be costlier than hiring a DJ because there are more people to be paid.

For wedding hosts, the ideal combination for a wedding reception would be to have a band and a DJ at the same time. People may choose a band to play their own style of music and then contrast it with a DJ playing MP3 music (Figure 4.3). However, it could be costly to have both for a wedding party. Whichever choice they make, the wedding host has to employ a sound person who will manage the sound system for the wedding.

It is understandable that wedding hosts try to keep the costs incurred for the wedding low. A DJ is a very good choice since he/she will provide a variety of background music in a particular order. Or, as a back-up, a background track on CD is a reliable option as long as the CD player and sound system work. It is easy to find background tracks as some music stores stock these. Nevertheless, the easiest way for a DJ to get background tracks is to search online and download the tracks (subject to copyright) from websites. If the MP3 option is chosen then it is important to have an experienced DJ who understands the importance of the correct order of songs and how the little

⁵ MP3 stands for Motion Picture Experts Group One, Audio Layer Three – a reference to its origins as an inter-standard compression program when it was invented in 1991 by a German research firm, initially for broadcast use. Of more interest to the world's music fans, MP3s operate in an open file format, allowing users to convert the masses of data that make up audio files into much smaller, near-CD-quality MP3 files (Mewton, 2001).

things matter, for example, how a small gap between songs can seem an eternity.



Figure 4.3: A wedding DJ with a sound person at a reception party in Temerloh, Pahang

The age range of wedding guests is broad. If a wedding host hires a band to perform music at a wedding party, the band will be asked to play music for all age groups. Different groups of people have different tastes in music, and guests tend to prefer to listen to music they know and love. Whenever a band or a DJ, the entertainment has to make a good impression on the wedding hosts, as well as the wedding guests, through playing songs they enjoy.

This section has shown that wedding hosts are important people in determining the success of wedding receptions. Choosing the appropriate music for the wedding reception is essential and all the options available need to be evaluated: both DJs and bands have advantages and disadvantages. Within this process, wedding hosts can be seen as key figures who take responsibility for the musical style, content and even changes between music types at wedding receptions.

4.2.2.2 Song requests

Whether or not a band will take songs requests is likely to affect whether it is hired by a wedding host. If musicians do not take requests, they may not be hired. When attending weddings people may well have certain songs they want to hear. As guest participation is an important aspect of the

wedding celebration, the songs request section of the musical performance is important and the way in which a *kugiran* band helps guests to enjoy the party. The *kugiran* band will guide guests through their favourite songs. During a performance, Kugiran Muzik Asli may take song requests from the wedding hosts as well as the wedding guests. The wedding host's knowledge of the guests will help guide the *kugiran* band by anticipating what songs will be appreciated by the guests and making a note of these. This creates the best possible celebration for everyone at the reception party. Important songs will be at the top of the list. Guests tend to respond well to familiar songs, while obscure ones are less well received.

Wedding guests may request songs by jotting down the song titles on a piece of paper. The *kugiran* band collects all the requested songs together during a short break after performing a few songs. By gathering all the requests, some important information about the musical tastes of the wedding guests is provided. The *kugiran* band has a certain degree of flexibility. The opportunity to have song requests played by the band can make the reception even livelier and more spontaneous. It promotes a good time at the party and ensures that guests feel part of the celebration. While it may work well, it depends on the songs requested by the guests. If an individual picks unknown songs, it makes it difficult for others to join in; yet the *kugiran* band will not want to upset the guests by not playing their requested songs. The *kugiran* band would, however, impose some control over the songs if they felt that the guests were trying to influence the music at wedding reception.

There is another benefit to having a *kugiran* band at a wedding reception. It is as part of the song request section that family members and wedding guests can sing their favourite songs accompanied by the band. As indicated earlier, personal performances by special family members and friends at a wedding can make it more special and memorable. However, the *kugiran* band will only play songs which they have rehearsed and can play well. The danger of requesting songs that the *kugiran* musicians do not know is that they may not be performed very well. Therefore, it is a safe and wise decision to go with songs that the *kugiran* musicians play and know well. As well as song requests, the guests also provide written messages wishing the bride and groom a good life that are to be announced by the *kugiran* band. The messages usually come from those nearest to the couple. In this way, the guests can convey their hope of everlasting marriage between the bride and the groom. This approach establishes bonds between the three parties: the *kugiran* band as the mediator, wedding guests and the wedding hosts.

To summarize, the *kugiran* band offers live music at wedding receptions that provides a way for guests to be part of the wedding through the song request section. While guests may list their song requests, the *kugiran* band will only choose to play songs that they have already rehearsed. While family and guests attending the reception will generally enjoy the music, it is through song requests that the *kugiran* band helps to bond everyone and create a good feeling among them.

4.3 Punk rock music

According to Fiscella (2012), ‘punk’ is a term that was loosely thrown around by musicians including Frank Zappa (in his 1968 song ‘Flower Punk’), Suicide (self-described as a ‘punk music’ band in 1970-1971) and Lenny Kaye (who used the phrase ‘punk rock’ in 1972). The Asian punk scene is among the biggest in the world. In 2016, Ferrarese, an Italian musician, wrote about punk music in his ethnographic book ‘*Banana Punk Rawk Trains: A Euro-Fool’s Metal Punk Journeys in Malaysia, Borneo, and Indonesia*’. He presented an honest literary treatment of Malaysian underground music. In Malaysia, punk music still seems to have a sense of social rebellion, which is built on the country’s a long and inglorious punk history. Ferrarese feels that the punk scene in Malaysia is both exotic (that is, it has its own identity) and yet has not been fully surveyed.

I use the term ‘scene’ rather than ‘subculture’ to refer to a ‘cultural space in which a range of musical practices co-exist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization’ (Straw, 1991: 373). My ethnographic research on the Malay punk scene in Pahang provides a different story to that of Ferrarese as his research is based in Penang and Kuala Lumpur. On 21 April 2016 I, accompanied by my youngest brother Ahmad Kamil, acting as a research assistant, attended a private punk gig held at the Orchid Studio, located less than ten kilometres from Temerloh town. As neither of us was familiar with the punk community in Pahang at that time, we were accompanied by Naem, the eldest son of a musician from a *kugiran* band in Paya Luas.

The organizer of the gig was the Pahang Punk Association but there was no corporate sponsorship. I do not know, however, whether the gig had received permission from the local authorities to go ahead. Two prominent Malay punk bands from Pahang were involved in this gig: Hibiscus and

Keledexx. In addition, three punk rock groups from neighbouring Indonesia also performed: Forgotten Generation, Moonstomp and Brawlers86. Interestingly, this event featured the exceptional appearance of a punk band from Europe, Bakudan of Germany. The gig formed part of Bakudan's musical showcase in conjunction with its Asia Tour in 2016. The state of Pahang had been selected as one of Bakudan's tour stops. For the local punk bands, the opportunity to play alongside international bands – bands with good reputations from Germany and Indonesia – was personally rewarding. In this sense, the punk scene in Pahang has shown a high degree of cooperation in hosting bands from Europe and other parts of South-East Asia.

The gig started at 9 pm. Each spectator was asked to pay RM15 (GBP2.80) at the entrance to the hall. Having paid, we entered and I took the opportunity to have a look around. Unlike the usual music events I attend, there was no stage. The musical instruments, a drum set, an electric guitar and the sound monitors, rested on the carpeted floor. The gig lacked a professional sound system. There were two stalls: the first was located near the stairway into the hall; the second was right in the corner of the music hall. Both were selling music merchandises, for instance, CDs, group stickers, posters and tour t-shirts.

The night opened with music from the Malay punk rock group, Keledexx. The band performed two songs. During the opening music, the crowd started to grow. From my position in the middle of the hall I could see some of fans start to dance and move wildly to the song. Keledexx's performance was aggressive, full of anger and outlandish. After Keledexx's set, BrawlerS86 continued the gig with a few songs. In my opinion, BrawlerS86's music was similar to Keledexx: chaotic, fractious and a little frustrating to understand. To outsiders, punk rock playing is 'quite a noise', but insiders understand what is happening and what lies behind a particular performance. Common song structures in punk rock music follow a standard pop structure: intro-verse-chorus, played at a high tempo with distorted electric guitar. Punk rock music uses only three or four chords and the drums are played fast and furiously.

The identifiable punks in the audience totalled about eighty and were almost all male. Some displayed punk regalia: locally made t-shirts depicting foreign and domestic band logos. From my observation, the punk rock audience members at the gig somewhat resembled a rebellious assembly. Several male fans in their early twenties reported that they had never attended a punk gig before, and had only experienced the music through reviews or through listening to punk rock albums owned by older people. I could also see

a small number of women in a corner of the Orchid Studio who were enjoying the show. Having introduced myself to one of the female fans, I asked her why she was there. The young lady replied to me that she had accompanied her husband, who was a big fan of punk rock music. She had been to several gigs and had enjoyed each and every performance. This newly married couple had been punk rock music fans since they were in secondary school.

While the gig was taking place in the Orchid Studio, other fans outside the hall (in the parking area) were blasting out punk rock music on car stereos. They were listening to the just-released album they had bought from the vendor standing outside the venue. I could see their response to the music – for instance, they would be repeatedly nodding their heads to indicate acceptance while simultaneously attempting to sing. The punk gig is where fans can meet and bond with familiar faces and with newcomers to the punk scene. I only watched the first half of the show and left an hour early, before it finished at about 1 am. I was informed that Bakudan from Germany were leaving immediately for Singapore to continue with their music tour. It is inspiring to see the punk rock community in this region appears to be considered equal by their counterparts outside of Malaysia. Overtly or covertly, the Malay punk rock community in Pahang is part of the international punk network regardless of political or theological differences.

My field research indicated that there are several earlier-established Malay punk bands in Pahang including Paradive, Anguish, Soul Savior and Torch, and I was told that the punk scene in Pahang emerged as early as the 1970s. However, no further information about the punk community in Pahang during that time is available. Through conversation with several punk followers, I learnt that fanzines emerged in the late 1990s and were popular until the early 2000s. Fanzines were mainly produced by amateurs for fans of a particular performer, group or form of entertainment. Local fanzines during this era included ‘Switch Stance’, ‘Kaum Muda’ (Youth), ‘Rodong’ (Friends), ‘Grind Your Ass’, ‘Militia’, ‘Scum Attach’ and ‘Love Grass’.

In the following section I describe the musical identity of Hibiscus, one of the Malay punk rock bands from Temerloh, Pahang. This will provide a better understanding of the social context of the punk music scene in Pahang.

4.3.1 Hibiscus

The Malay punk rock band Hibiscus was established in 2001 and originally consisted of four male members: Ajan on vocals, Pokcix Sham on guitar, Fadil on bass, and Wea on drums (Figure 4.4). All of them have a university- or college-educated middle-class background, and were in their early thirties during my first meeting with them in May 2016. None of them rely on the band as their main source of income. Ajan and Fadil work for government agencies, Pokcix Sham is employed as an office worker in the private sector, and Wea has his own printing business. Their formal jobs do not stop them taking an enthusiastic part in punk rock music. When I asked why they were involved in punk rock, Pokcix Sham replied that this kind of music took him and other members out of the boredom and routine of their lives and articulated the things that they were feeling. It was a source of escape rather than a profitable enterprise.



Figure 4.4: Hibiscus (courtesy: Pokcix Sham)

The band was named Hibiscus after the Malaysian national flower, *Bunga Raya*. Before the band's formation the members had already played for other underground bands. At the end of 2003, the band members took a break. However, eight years later, the band became active again and worked on a recording project. Local and international music groups have influenced this band's artistic work and performance. Internationally such bands include The Business, Oxymoron, The Oppressed, Discharger, Rancid and The Casualties. At a local level, Hibiscus's music has been influenced by several Malaysian

underground bands including Acab, Roots and Boots, Subculture, The Bollock, Caburetor Dung and The Official.

Hibiscus is a hardworking band and is credited with attempting to revive interest in punk rock among sections of the community in Pahang. The band emerged at a time when punk rock was not widely known, but slow rock was popular. Punk followers have positioned this band as influential in Pahang. For the band's followers, Hibiscus's fast, aggressive, chaotic music and live performances combined with DIY ethic has put them in the hard-core category, alongside *otai* (established) bands in Malaysia such as Acab and The Officials. For those who are new to the punk scene, the style of Hibiscus's music could be perceived as rock and roll.

The identity of the band Hibiscus is illustrated in a logo as seen in Figure 4.5. The descriptively designed words 'Swallow City Skinhead', at the top of the logo give a direct indication that Hibiscus has adopted what Knight (2011) briefly identifies as unpleasant and ugly aspect of youth: skinheads (or 'Skins', as some call them). At the bottom of the logo the phrase 'Punk Rock 'N' Oi!' clearly identifies that this skinhead-oriented band is associated with the music genre of punk rock and its sub-genre, 'oi!'



Figure 4.5: Hibiscus's logo

A skull is a symbol favoured in punk clothing and jewellery. It also conveys the message of darkness and rebellion that is reflected in punk music. Superimposed on the skull is an illustration of the hibiscus flower. In a national context the hibiscus, Malaysia's national flower, has inspired logos for the Kuala Lumpur 1998 Commonwealth Games and for Tourism Malaysia. The illustration of rice grains (paddy) reflects the background of the members of

Hibiscus, who originated from Pahang, as paddy is a symbol of the main crop in Pahang and is a staple food for the local community (Zulfadli et al., 2016). The two swallows both depict freedom of expression in music and signify the place of Temerloh, where the members live. The black and white used in the logo represent the colours of the Pahang flag, while the yellow denotes the spirit of solidarity and respect.

Hibiscus is popular and has earned the nickname the Mentakab Skinhead Crew. Mentakab is a business area in the district of Temerloh. The nickname suggests that this punk rock band is motivated by an expression of alternative values incorporating contemporary skin-related trends. Their hair is usually closely trimmed or they are suede-headed, they have no facial hair and do not usually wear hats. Above all, according to Pokcix Sham, the leader of the band, members of the band have never been had any major issues such as drug or alcohol abuse, unlike the members of several other punk groups.

4.3.1.1 Repertoire of songs

The punk rock music genre is not one that is readily accepted by major entertainment organization, radio or television. Record companies refuse to sign bands that adopt a punk sound. Hibiscus independently produced a music album released in early 2016 (Figure 4.6) which was recorded at the Elephant Army Studio, an independent recording studio. The album production process therefore differs from that of an album produced commercially – instead, it is a product of DIY cultural production. For punk bands, a recording event is one among several engagements in their cycle of performances, and the importance of a recording session is comparable to a live performance because of the special challenges it poses. Recording at an independent local studio like this marks a significant addition to what is a familiar round of local live performances of punk rock music.

Hibiscus sold five hundred copies of its album within two months of release. The image on the album cover shows it is called ‘Hibiscus, Music for bootbois’. ‘Bootbois’ refers to boot boys, reflecting the skinhead culture of wearing boots and the identity of the band members. Also on the album cover is an illustration of an underground railway as a reference to the covert and dissident nature of the underground music scene. The CD booklet contains photos of the band at gig performances, song lyrics and credits.

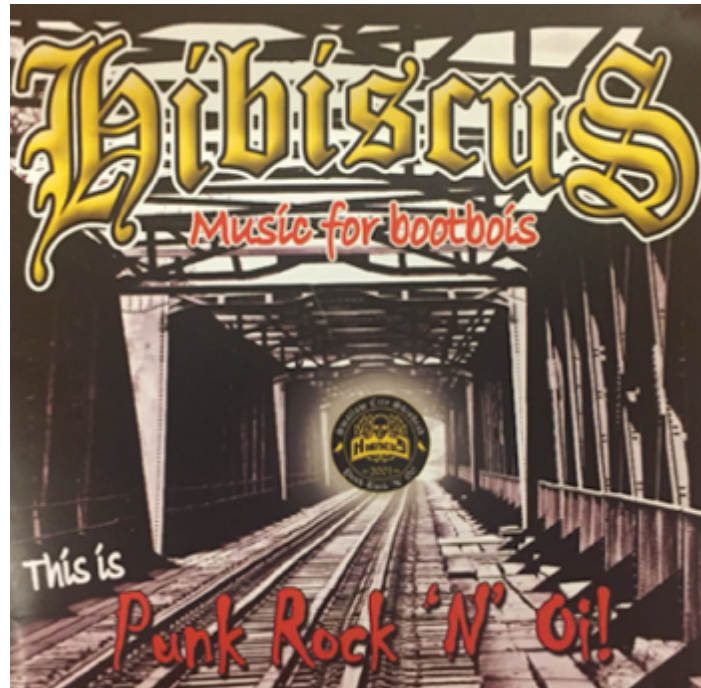


Figure 4.6: Front cover of Hibiscus's album

The album consists of seven tracks, three of them are sung in English and the rest in Malay. The songs mainly consist of three chords and a lyrical structure of verse-chorus-verse. Punk music can be seen as really powerful and exciting, and as such, it is a great 'weapon' to ensure others listen. The music offers an opportunity to address social and political issues through punk messages. The band leader explained to me that all their songs basically feature positive messages concerning unity, brotherhood, democracy and equality with their music followers. Most of the songs are not related to riots or uprisings.

The first track on the album is an English song entitled 'Here We Are' written by The Blades. This song addresses the spirit of brotherhood and an awareness that punk will rise above society's control and its attempt to stop the punk rock movement.

We stand strong in the scene,
Together fight for our right,
Kick down all the bastard person,
Life in our lifestyle,

Together we searching for the new thing,
Spread our knowledge to everyone new,
Communicates with the old timers,
Fight everyone we hates us,

Making friends for our scene going bigger,
Jamming everywhere spread our message,
Tell the truth in what we are saying,
And try to make something nice,

Here we are.

The lyrics of the second track, ‘Kawan’ (Friends) written by Ajan (vocalist) is on the theme of true friendship and the idea that being a good friend includes loyalty, love, warmth and being non-judgemental. Among others, this song stresses that friendship is one of the most important parts of life. The song can be found on the band’s 2016 album.

*Ada lagi kita di sini, / We are here again,
Bukan fantasi dan mimpi, / Not in the fantasy and dream,*

*Tetap dekat tetap sama, / Stay close and remain the same,
Haluannya tiada bezanya, ooohhh / The direction is no
different, ooohhh*

*Kawan kau selamanya, / Forever friends,
Kawan yang ku hargai, / A friend I appreciate the most,*

*Kawan kau selamanya, / Forever friends,
Kawan kau yang ku percayai, / A friend I believe the most,*

*Semangatmu seperti dahulu, / Your spirits are just like
before,
Menerima cara hidup ini, / Receive this way of life,*

*Tak pernah beralih arah, / Never switch directions,
Kekal sehingga kini, ooohhh / That remains till today,
ooohhh*

Interestingly, there is an indication that the lyrics of the fourth track, ‘Topeng Hitam’ (Black Mask) are similar to *syair* lyrics, in that it is written in stanzas. Each stanza consists of four or five words on each line, employing an a-a-a-a rhyming scheme. This exemplifies the transmission of Malayness through a non-Malay musical format and the idea that a sense of Malayness can be conveyed through non-traditional forms.

*Telah lama kami sengsara,
semangat makin membara,
biarkan kau pula berputih mata,
kau yang mulakan sengketa.*

*Pedih hati tidak tertahan,
melihat segala penipuan,
berapa lama bisa menahan,
lambat laun kau ku tawan.*

Translation:

For a long time we have suffered,
our spirit is burning up,
let your eyes turn to blindness,
you started the dispute.

Heartache is unbearable,
when looking at all the fraud,
how long can it last,
slowly, I will capture you.

The band also introduces a religious touch to their music and imagery and raises the theme of the humanitarian disaster in Gaza in the final track on their album, 'Tangisan Gaza' (The Cries of Gaza). This song is about the crying children and the wailing of elderly people in Gaza who are suffering in the Israeli-Palestinian war. As well as calling for people's awareness of this unstoppable war that is detrimental to the Gazans, Hibiscus also urges people to pray to Allah and to help rebuild the destruction wrought by the Israelis. Despite their music being neglected by the majority of people, the band demonstrates their concerns about a war occurring in the Islamic country of Palestine, located more than 9,500 miles away.

The religious touch in Hibiscus's song reminds me of the phenomenon of Taqwacore, a collection of young immigrant Muslim populations who formed a subculture in the USA and other places who identified with the punk ethos in its heyday in South-East Asia in the early 2000s to the 2010s (Dougherty, 2017). I agree with Dougherty that 'Muslim punks do not rebel, but feel frustration in the face of rules and social forces and have political opinions or want to explore alternate definitions of social norms. They had to borrow models from the West in the form of punk applied to Islam in order to express what could be seen as predictable rites of passage' (Dougherty, 2017: 207). Taqwacore bands, or what I would loosely term Muslim punk bands, on the one hand express their religion in music without explicitly challenging Islam, while on the other, involve the reimagination of Islam through punk eyes and the challenging of religious authority (Fiscella, 2012).

To summarize this section, the punk band Hibiscus has addressed social and political topics through its songs. The lyrics in punk rock provide an opportunity for the band members to share their concerns and to send a direct message to their followers.

4.3.1.2 Orchid Studio as a music space

Orchid Studio is the main performance space for Hibiscus and other punk rock bands in Temerloh and neighbouring areas. The space has a cosmopolitan feel and provides a common meeting ground where news about bands, events, and the social and artistic experiences of the local and international scenes is communicated and exchanged. According to Pokcix Sham, Orchid Studio is a rented space owned by an anonymous individual. Orchid Studio is known as an environment where friendships are made and where positive human interaction thrives. It is somewhere to find a network of like-minded people to hang out and jam with. Orchid Studio can be equipped with a sound system, which is usually supplied by some close friends of Hibiscus, who are also musicians.

I would characterize the music space at Orchid Studio as poor quality with many disadvantages. It only provides a small space for punk local fans to fit into. The studio's ventilation is poor, and yet there is no restriction on music fans smoking inside. It has two ceiling fans, but only one works. There is only one access door. Orchid Studio is located on the first floor of the building, in front of a tailoring shop, and near to industrial and residential areas.

Punk rock bands in Pahang can be categorized in a number of ways. A significant method is by looking at the names of the band. Most bands utilize English names; only a small number are in Malay. Several bands have unusual, striking names, for instance, Rejected Youth and Dead Cities. Some use venomous and mysterious names of animals, for instance, *Kala Jingga* (Dark Yellow Scorpion) and *Ayam Hitam* (Black Chicken). The use of strange names for the bands has been a fashion since the 1970s.

These unusual names are favoured among punk rock bands in Pahang as it helps them to stand out from the crowd; the names also act as a label to indicate their opposition to authority, building on the common 'protest' image (Xavier, personal communication, 30 March, 2019). Some bands also use strangely concocted names that sound as if they have an English origin, such as Brontox, Tracenta and Pulling-T, which local people find difficult to articulate. The use of unusual English naming patterns is linked to improving life

conditions. Punk rock bands in Pahang tend to prefer uniqueness to conformity. Another characteristic of punk rock bands in Pahang is that, in most cases, they use English as the preferred language for promoting their music events.

To conclude, although it is still marginal in terms of attracting public attention, the punk rock scene in Pahang has developed its own infrastructure consisting of bands, independent labels, fanzines and gigs. Hibiscus, as a band, engages in the independent punk rock music scene connected to DIY (Do It Yourself) values. The band is often involved in performing at music events organized by close friends and acquaintances. The Orchid Studio is an important music venue for Hibiscus both as a performance space and as somewhere to congregate with like-minded punk musicians and followers. Giving live performances at Orchid Studio provides a sense of place and unity for punk rockers, who often feel as if they are outsiders in society.

In the following section, I shall discuss the formation of community around this music genre.

4.3.1.3 Islam in the lives of Malay punk rockers in Pahang

In the late 1970s, British punk bands toured in areas with large Muslim populations, leading to the formation of Muslim punk bands (Fiscella, 2012). In Malaysia, the earliest Muslim (Malay) punk bands were cropping up by the late 1980s. Through his work, Pickles (2001) identified that those involved with punk activities in Muslim countries in South-East Asia form ‘decentralized, participatory collectives, which are egalitarian, self-managed and non-hierarchical’ (Pickles, 2001: 61).

A well-known example of a Muslim punk band is Marjinal Akustika which has toured and stayed in many places in South-East Asia. During their stay in Pahang, Marjinal Akustika gained many followers. The band started a trend called street punk by coaching children to busk for money with ukuleles (small four-stringed guitars). For Marjinal Akustika and many other punk rock bands, ‘punk is addressing the things that are rotten in society. It tells us that we have the ability to be independent and take care of each other’ (Fiscella, 2012: 265). Marjinal Akustika’s street songs claim to stand for independence, social change and mutual aid.

In many ways, Malaysian (Malay) punk rockers are comfortable with moderate Islam and being a punk is not seen as a contradiction to this (Fiscella, 2012). One way in which punk followers avoid offending people, especially

parents, is by attending the mosque every Friday to perform Friday prayers. Similarly, they ensure that ‘thank you Allah’ is included in the notes that accompany their albums.

Hibiscus has been involved in gigs with Islamic-related themes. For example, the band was among several Malay punk rock bands to perform at a 2016 gig with the theme *Suara Di Hari Raya* (Voices in Eid), held in conjunction with the celebration of Eid-Ul Fitr (Figure 4.7).



Figure 4.7: Poster advertising Eid gig

Eid is an Arabic word meaning ‘festivity’, while Fitr means ‘to break the fast’. This Muslim festival marks the end of the fasting period of Ramadan. Pokcix Sham explained that playing music to celebrate Eid-Ul Fitr every year has become a ritual for his band as well as other Malay punk rock bands in Pahang. At this particular gig, they cover popular Eid songs (but with a punk rock sound) in addition to performing some opening songs (Pokcix Sham, personal communication, 3 May 2020). Open to visitors of all ages, the Eid gig is mainly held during the first week of Eid when most of the band’s members are on holiday. In this way the punk rock music community is able to join in with and follow the tradition of gathering during Eid that is practised by other Malays in Pahang and elsewhere in Malaysia. Furthermore, posters promoting

the gig are written in both English and Malay, giving both a sense of locality and of the engagement of the punk scene with the Islamic/Malay celebration.

Being a punk rocker does not prevent Pokcix Sham from following his religious path. In my recent conversation with him, Pokcix Sham shared the happy occasion of his wedding reception (Figure 4.8). Islam honours marriage as an important and sacred union between two persons that fulfils half of one's religious obligations. Marriage is viewed as an act of worship of Allah (Amin, 2014). Pokcix Sham married a local young woman in 2017, a year after our first meeting at a gig at Orchid Studio in Temerloh, Pahang.



Figure 4.8: Pokcix Sham and his wife at their wedding reception (courtesy: Pokcix Sham)

Before the wedding, they had gone through several common pre-wedding customs, such as the marriage preparation course, which is a two-day course administered by Islamic institutions. Islamic teachers from the District Islamic Department mediate the class. The couple will be briefed on the essentials of life as a husband and wife based on Islam. During the solemnization ceremony (before the wedding reception), the bride will be asked by the *kadi* (marriage official) to recite several lines from the Qur'an before he delivers a short sermon on marriage in Islam.

The wedding of a Malay punk rocker is no different to any other Malay wedding. This indicates that the Malay punk community maintains an appreciation for its cultural heritage. A religious officer officiates at the solemnization ceremony, which is held at the bride's home. The solemnization

is ‘the only Islamic component in a Malay wedding, though Islam encourages a small, modest wedding feast to celebrate the marriage’ (Amin, 2014: 97).

During the solemnization ceremony, Pokcix Sham included the presence of a DJ specifically to play Islamic-themed songs to create an atmosphere of religiousness (Muslimness) to emphasize the values of Islamic religious belief and morals. During his wedding reception, Pokcix Sham had his band members perform a selection of songs, excluding punk rock. He noted that at this special event, attended by people from all backgrounds, punk rock music would, without a doubt, not have been appropriate. Instead, his band members collaborated with non-punk musicians to perform a variety of Malay songs from different eras. This reminds me of the *kugiran* music that is generally performed at wedding receptions.

Malay punk rockers have also shown their awareness in relation to the Islamic community in Pahang. Through a social media post on their Facebook page on 14 September 2017, Hibiscus asked for the community to recite *al-Fatihah* (the first chapter/Surā in the holy book of the Qur’an), which has seven verses containing a prayer for the guidance and mercy of Allah (Appendix V), for pupils from a private Islamic school. The students had been killed in a blaze at the Darul Koran Ittifaqiyah School. A witness to the tragedy explained that the pupils had been locked in, could not escape and were killed in the fire (Amanda Erickson, *The Washington Post*, 14 September 2017). The story became headline news across the media, attracting the country’s attention. Hibiscus’s post on Facebook received reactions from many who lamented what had happened to the pupils; they shared their prayers and uplifting words with the victims’ families.

To summarize, all Malay punk rockers are raised as Muslims. Being Malay punk rockers, however, does not prevent them from being involved with Islamic affairs. They share a love of punk rock and want to practise Islam in the usual ways. This is in line with what Hsu (2011) described: ‘the Southeast Asian punk [...] seems to be very religious. They pray five times a day and maintain observance of Ramadan’ (Hsu, 2011: 168). Indeed, Pokcix Sham believes that Muslim punks experience punk rock in a myriad of Islamic ways (Pokcix Sham, personal communication, 3 May 2020).

4.3.2 Community formation around punk rock

Punk rock in Pahang is one of the many examples of the performance of Western music styles in non-Western contexts. The Malay punk rock scene

has evolved, developing many of its practices and social forms, and demonstrating that there are many ways that punk rock music brings together a community. In this section, I will further discuss two particular aspects: skinhead culture, and the punk forum.

4.3.2.1 Skinhead culture

Punk rockers in Pahang are connected with a skinhead identity. Skinheads from all regions in the world share a similar main ideology, one of pride, being working class, and being part of the brotherhood. The skinhead's style is that of being smart and clean. It is an apposite uniform that proclaims identity. Their clothes – bomber jackets, army greens, jeans (Levi and Wranglers brands), narrow punk braces and red socks – identify them in a crowd. Their shirts are mainly of Fred Perry brand and they wear Doctor Marten boots. The hairstyle, too, is naturally an important feature for skinheads.

Skinheads mostly have short, cropped hair. Moustaches and beards are rarely seen on skinheads. Knight (2011) notes that skinheads in the UK copied the cropped hairstyle from West Indians who wore their hair in that way. The style was then followed by skinheads from other regions, including Malaysia. Through this specific 'uniform', skinheads appear visually very different to other people. When they hang out together other local, non-skinhead gangs will try to find them, looking for trouble with them. However, while skinheads do not consider themselves to be troublemakers, local gangs will still try to pick a fight with them.

The introduction of skinhead culture first started in Malaysia as a result of the socio-political situation of the country. Every state in Malaysia has skinheads and these can be of different races: Malays, Chinese, Indians, and ethnic groups from Sabah and Sarawak (the last two are from East Malaysia). They share several main interests – from music to lifestyle. However, there are a few things in skinhead culture that are not suited to all members.

Based on my conversation with Pokcix Sham, Muslim skinheads have a somewhat different perspective. As Muslim skinheads, they choose to follow Islamic values. For instance, they perform Friday prayers and fast for the holy month of Ramadan, and ignore aspects of skinhead culture that contradict the teachings of Islam. For example, they shun bad influences such as carving tattoos on the body, and consuming alcohol and drugs.

Pahang skinheads are neither political nor racist. Pokcix Sham underscores that they are not involved in pro-government activities, nor are they against them. For them, it is about music, skateboarding and brotherhood. The difference between skinheads in Malaysia and other countries, according to Pokcix Sham, is that skinheads in Malaysia tend to compromise more towards their culture, and will never be racist. Living as a skinhead means that someone will work hard and will not give in easily. He will sacrifice his own good for that of his family, wife and band.

Pokcix Sham admits that skinhead culture may be difficult to understand, but claims that despite the skinheads' uniform being 'brutal', their souls are not. 'There is a big difference between those who work hard, but are not skinheads, and those who work hard and are skinheads. Skinheads tend to show more strength of spirit' (Pokcix Sham, personal communication, 3 May 2020). One way in which they display their strengths is through their yearly celebration gig which is arranged by the Pahang United Skinhead Organization, the well-known skinhead organization in Pahang. The daylong gig features around fifteen punk and old-school hard-core bands, each playing two to three songs.

It seems that the physical image of skinhead is not applicable at all times (Figure 4.9). According to Pokcix Sham, he would wear appropriate attire in common with others on specific or public occasions, for instance, to a Malay wedding. Wearing skinhead attire to such events would be unacceptable and subject to disapproval from the public. In this sense, punk rock followers recognize and will conform to standard behaviour which is acceptable to non-skinheads, when necessary. They are not bound by their skinhead identity.

With regard to the parents of punk rockers, it is likely that they may have some misgivings about their offspring becoming a skinhead. Initially they may not like it or may be afraid of it. It might appear to be something that their child is copying from foreigners: for example, the way they behave, or how they style their hair and what they wear. They may also have fears that following a punk rock lifestyle could result in their child neglecting their prayers. However, after a while, the parents usually come to realize that punks and skinheads can vary from those who are very extreme to those who are not. As a result it is seen as acceptable to be a skinhead, as long as their child is not extremist, anti-social or endorsing violence. Parents might allow their child to be a skinhead, but the child also needs to follow the teachings of Islam and be a good Muslim.



Figure 4.9: Skinhead fashions

This section has demonstrated that Malay skinheads in Pahang have rejected several elements of the archetypal skinhead culture. Pahang skinheads have clearly adopted two components from their namesakes's culture: musical style (punk rock and oi!) and clothing. However, they have discarded many of the elements that were originally part of skinhead culture, especially its ideological dimension. This includes an aggressive form of behaviour which contradicts Islamic values. Some of the framework of the original years has disappeared. Skinheads in Pahang have moulded new behaviours and attitudes that do not follow those of their original skinhead counterparts. Pokcix Sham regrets the reality, however, that the punk scene is not accepted locally and that no effort is made by the general public to understand its values and form of expression. This corresponds with the views of Manaan, who is not a follower of punk rock music, that most people perceive the appearance of punk rock followers and their ritualistic behaviour as symbols of aggression and disturbance (Manaan, personal communication, 16 April 2016).

4.3.2.2 Punk rockers' forum

On 24 April 2016, again accompanied by Ahmad Kamil and Naem, I attended a punk gathering held at the Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall in Kuala Lumpur. The punk forum drew attention to the subject matter of *Kebebasan Bersuara Dari Sudut Pandang Punk Rockers* (Freedom of speech from the perspective of punk rockers). The poster advertising the forum can be seen in Figure 4.10. The forum was organized by a non-governmental

organization, the *The Gerakan Hapus Akta Hasutan* (The Movement to Remove the Sedition Act), as part of its campaign to end the ever-present threat of the Sedition Act. About two hundred punk fans, ranging in the age from their twenties to their forties, attended the forum. As well as fans from Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, fans came from as far as Penang in the north, Pahang in the east, and Melaka and Johor in the south. All were united in this prestigious historical building that was erected in 1923. Several information stands were set up around the edge of the hall providing merchandise, fanzines, posters, novels, CDs and band stickers.



Figure 4.10: Poster advertising a punk rockers' forum in Kuala Lumpur

I observed the forum from the beginning. Rozaimin, an anti-fascist skinhead and guitarist with the band Gang Buster delivered an introductory speech. Five panellists were invited from a variety of backgrounds: a punk rocker, a punk writer, a punk designer and a skinhead anti-fascist, all of whom had been part of the punk scene for more than ten years. The panel discussion focused on the freedom of speech enjoyed by punk rockers. Seated at the back of the assembly hall, I enjoyed the warm atmosphere where camaraderie and friendly humour reigned throughout the two-hour forum.

One panellist, Fahmi Reza, shared his experience as a punk activist and political cartoonist. In 2016, Fahmi Reza was convicted of disobeying multimedia laws with his renowned caricature of Najib Razak, the previous prime minister of Malaysia, who governed the country from 2009 to 2018, depicting him as an evil-looking clown. The image became a viral phenomenon, spurring a wider protest-through-image movement (*The Straits Times*, 28 March 2016). Fahmi Reza, who referred to his artwork as his weapon, pointed out that Islamic-majority Malaysia is being governed by fools and crooks. Because he portrayed Najib in powder-white clown make-up with evilly arched eyebrows and a garish blood-red mouth, Fahmi Reza, who was educated in the United States as an electrical engineer, was jailed for a few days and forced to stop posting the clown image of Razak. In his talk, he also referred to the fact that punk rock music provides a soundtrack while he is working.

The punk scene in Malaysia is negatively perceived, and viewed as being a form of moral deviation. However another panellist, Sharifah, representing the women's voice in the forum, linked punk to positive socio-political campaigns, not to morally subversive activities. Sharifah provided the example of *Rumah Api* (Lighthouse), which is the main base for the punk community. *Rumah Api*, explained Sharifah, is believed to be an expression of opposition to authority and a symbol of counterculture, as punk is influenced by the principle of DIY and freedom. One of the forum attendees, a punk musician, raised the issue of dishonesty in politics and corruption in the ruling Malaysian government during the question and answer session after the panel discussion. He shared his perspective on the position of punk music relative to the community. He assured the audience that punk music allows or encourages people to be critical of society and the media, and urged punk musicians to be more aware in order to keep alive a strong music tradition that supports constructive social values.

In summary, the punk forum revealed the extent to which the voice of the punk community makes a moral contribution both within their community and outside of it. Despite being accused of being useless and without purpose, the punk community highlights and acknowledges the conflicted values, uprisings and movements of resistance that are ignored by standard, regular procedures. The forum provided an opportunity for discussion about the punk scene throughout Malaysia, from the serious side of the punk community's involvement in politics to the more light-hearted side, punk music. Without a doubt this punk forum provided the opportunity for a fascinating exploration of cultural resistance in Malaysia.

4.4 Concluding thoughts

This chapter has explored two global music forms – *kugiran* and punk rock – putting them into context socially and indicating their role in the formation of a community. They are examples of the manifestation of global sounds within Malay communities in Pahang villages. These music genres have come to be naturalized, to quote from Mora (2019), as ‘ethno-national forms’ through the incorporation of local musical and lyrical elements in their production (Mora, 2019: 304).

The appearance of *kugiran* bands in villages is attributed to popular music culture, *pop yeh yeh* in the 1960s and other music styles from the 1970s and 1980s. *Kugiran* music is seen as musical entertainment for middle-aged people, and is performed primarily at weddings. For this age group, *kugiran* music may well evoke good memories of the 1970s when they were still young. In terms of the emergence of punk rock in Pahang, this is very much the result of youths who feel marginalized being exposed extensively to punk. The best known single characteristic of punk rock players in Pahang villages is their interest in being able to express their own views and personality through music-making. Punk rock has much in common with the sentiments of the punk movement and its responses to socio-political campaigns. The punk scene has also been seen as the light of freedom for its community. There seems to be a common perception in villages, by people outside of the punk rock scene, that punk rock is the protest music of the oppressed, and one which is essentially detached from the mass media.

In different ways and through the performances and social events attended by each scene, members of both *kugiran* and punk rock music scenes could be regarded as sections of society. However, the punk rock community has differentiated itself from other communities through distinct behaviours, including adopting skinhead characteristics and the DIY ethos.

Overall, there has been an expansion and diversification of musical cultures among the Malay population in Pahang villages and the surrounding areas. The four music genres I have analysed – traditional, regional pop, *kugiran* and punk rock – are all associated with professional and semi-professional musicians. In the following chapter, I will reflect on non-professional musicians and their involvement with two specific vocal song types, *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana*, which are regarded as song types performed by amateurs.

CHAPTER 5

AMATEUR MUSIC GROUPS (*NAZAM BERENDOI* AND *DIKIR REBANA*), AND YOUNG WOMEN AND MUSIC

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on musical genres performed by amateurs. In the first part of this chapter, I will discuss two Islamic-oriented songs: *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana*, their social contexts and how community is created through the songs. The Malays in Pahang villages have sung *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana* for a long time. They take Islamic-oriented songs seriously as these songs are seen to fall into the category of respectable music genres (Beeman, 2011; Jähnichen, 2012). In the second part of this chapter the participation of young women in music is reviewed. It considers with how young women derive meaning from the music that they practise and/or listen to in everyday life, and how they appreciate local musical cultural forms as leisure.

Nazam berendoi and *dikir rebana* are culturally significant in the musical repertoire of the Malays in Pahang villages. They consist of vocal music in which texts taken from the Islamic book of the *Kitab Barzanji* (*mawlid*) and from vernacular sources, such as *nazam* and *pantun* poetry, are sung. Reading from the *Kitab Barzanji* has been practised for more than two hundred years. From the nineteenth century onwards, along with other Islamic works, it formed part of the preaching activity of religious leaders following the growth of Islamic schools (*sekolah pondok*) in Pahang.

In the context of the historical music practices described in Chapter 2, reading from the *Kitab Barzanji* took place alongside *zikir* to celebrate the Prophet's birthday (Misa 94: 33). Although *nazam*, *pantun* and other vernacular texts featured at a variety of celebrations and ceremonies, none of the Malay literary works indicated that vernacular texts were read alongside the *Kitab Barzanji*. In this sense, in contemporary Pahang, reading the *Kitab Barzanji* has been transformed by incorporating vernacular texts and, as a result, has led to the emergence of a new genre.

In the past, it was men who dominated these traditional Islamic-associated musical genres and in this way they passed on these songs to their

female contemporaries. Until the 1970s, men-only and women-only singing groups were still actively performing *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana* in each village (Awang Samah, personal communication, 22 January 2019). However, during the course of my research in 2016, only women's singing groups were performing and dominating the traditions of *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana*. I was told that all-male singing groups were no longer present in the village and that the situation was similar in other villages. This raises the question – why are men rarely seen performing songs as amateurs in the present day?

There may be a number of reasons for the lack of men's participation in both of these amateur singing traditions. Forty to fifty years ago, the men involved in performing the songs were mainly village workers who inherited their work from their parents. As they spent most of their time in the villages they could learn these lay performances, including *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana*, from the older generation, and had time to rehearse them. The decline in the number of male singing groups started in the 1990s as the result of men moving to occupations in the industrial and construction sectors which promised them a more lucrative income than local work. Consequently men no longer practise *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana* as their jobs require them to be away from their villages, and their spare time is restricted.

Another reason may be due to the early death of the men who performed these songs. In the village of Jeram Landak, for instance, male practitioners of *dikir rebana* are no longer found, although the song continues to be performed by an elderly women's singing group (Wan Saodah, personal communication, 7 March 2018). In the past early deaths among men were primarily due to breathing difficulties, with respiratory ill-health being more common among men than women (Aripin Said, personal communication, 2 June 2018).

Nevertheless, the increase in amateur singing groups made up of young men who are educated at religious schools (*madrasah*) has, to some extent, helped to perpetuate male singing groups in Pahang. This, however, is not explored further here as it is beyond the scope of this study. Women in the villages continue the traditions of *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana*. In both vocal musical performances, amateur women singers use content from the Islamic book, the *Kitab Barzanji*, as sung texts. The *Kitab Barzanji* contains stories of the Prophet Muhammad's birth and praises his life and teachings. The following section provides a brief introduction to the *Kitab Barzanji*.

5.2 The Islamic book, the *Kitab Barzanji*

Malay cultural practices are an important aspect of life events, such as birth ceremonies, tonsure rituals, male circumcisions and weddings. In Malay society, a recitation from the Islamic book the *Kitab Barzanji* (Figure 5.1) is typically included as part of these rituals to ensure that it can help ‘in fulfillment of vows or to ward off danger’ (Bruinessen, 1990: 261). Sufism, the spiritual and mystical tradition of Islam, looks to praise and celebrate the Prophet Muhammad. In this, the *Kitab Barzanji* plays an important role by contributing poems and songs to these celebrations (Knappert, 1985). In West Malaysia, recitations from the *Kitab Barzanji* is known as *marhaban* (songs of praise for the Prophet) and takes place on the anniversary of the Prophet’s birthday (12 *Rabī al-awwal*), when celebrating Eid-UI Fitr, or even as a weekly devotion. Prose and poetry in local dialects are also expressed during *mawlid* (Frishkopf, 2008).

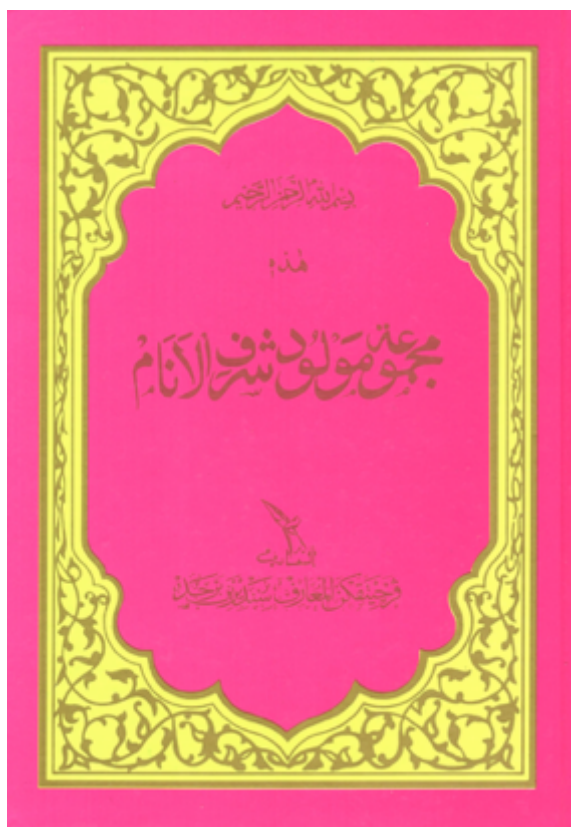


Figure 5.1: The cover of the Islamic book, the *Kitab Barzanji*

The *Kitab Barzanji* was named after its author, Syekh Ja'far al-Barzanji Ibn Hasan Ibn Abdul Karim (Federspiel, 1995), who was born in Medina in 1690 and died in 1766. Syed Ja'far was Muslim and an Islamic

scholar (Fuad, 2009). Written in Arabic, the book contains prayers, praise and historical narratives of the Prophet Muhammad (his genealogy, childhood, adolescence and young life until he was appointed to be the Messenger of Allah). While it is well known that copies of the *Kitab Barzanji* are now produced in Pulau Pinang, Malaysia, the exact date of the original manuscript is unknown (Said, 2011). The Malays often refer to the *Kitab Barzanji*, as it is the most revered book after the Qur'an.

The book was not written exclusively by Syeikh Ja'far al-Barzanji. His great grandson, Sayyid Zain al-Abidin Ibn Sayyid Muhammad al-Hadi was also a contributor to the text. The *Kitab Barzanji* is designated as one of Islam's literary creations (Raharjo, 2012). This Islamic book not only contains *mawlid* readings (referring to the time or place of birth), but also contains *qasida*, prayers and *ratib*. *Qasida* is the name given in Arabic to poems of a certain length, the content of which contain moral and religious lessons. It is also an Islamic musical genre in which chanting is accompanied by someone playing a *rebana*. It has become commonly practised in the Malay world due both to the growth of overseas travel and the subsequent increasing flows of people, and to the use of modern mass media (Rasmussen, 2010). Interestingly, in Indonesia the genre *qasida modéren* is a rock- and *dangdut*-influenced version of traditional *qasida rebana* (Arps, 1996). *Ratib* is the constant repetition of the name of Allah, creating a sort of ecstatic trance, and is chanted to the accompaniment of a *rapa'i* and a *tambu* (Hurgronje, 1906). Even though *ratib* has religious significance, its performance provides simple pleasure in the Islamic community. These various genres of sung invocation are closely associated with Qur'anic cantillation.

For Muslims, the *Kitab Barzanji* is read or recited in remembrance of the Prophet Muhammad's life and with the hope of receiving blessings from Allah the Almighty. 'It has an important role in Islamic education in the Archipelago down to the present day' (Braginsky, 1996: 376). The tradition of reading the *Kitab Barzanji* is a noble one (Sholikhin, 2011). Commemorating the Prophet is a commendable act in addition to performing the other activities of worship in Islam. Muslims believe that singing in this context will ensure that they receive the help of the Prophet in the hereafter. The *Kitab Barzanji* contains six chapter headings, each of which has a number of sections (Table 4). Two chapters which are popular with Malays are the half-prose, half-verse *Maulud Sharaf al-Annam*, a work of an introductory nature praising the Prophet Muhammad and narrating his birth, and *Maulud al-Barzanji Nathar*, the prose version of the *al-Barzanji mawlid*. From these two chapters, a reader may select a few standard sections to recite.

Having witnessed a number of women's groups in Malaysia reciting from the *Kitab Barzanji*, some sections are frequently chosen, including *aljannatu wa na'imuhâ* and *walamma tammamin*. These two sections are among the nineteen sections that come under the heading of *Maulud al-Barzanji Nathar*. According to Rasmussen (2005), the sound of Qur'anic recitation generally occurs in several genres of Islamic vocal arts including recitations from the *Kitab Barzanji*.

Table 4: List of chapter headings in the *Kitab Barzanji*

Chapters in the <i>Kitab Barzanji</i>	Number of sections
1. <i>Maulud Sharaf al-Annam</i>	21
2. <i>Maulud al-Barzanji Nathar</i>	19
3. <i>Maulud al-Barzanji Nazam</i>	18
4. <i>Qasida al-Burdah</i>	10
5. <i>Doa Khatam</i>	13
6. <i>Hazihi Aqidah al-Awwam</i>	1

According to Kaptein (1993: 130), the section *Maulud Sharaf al-Annam* includes the famous song of praises to the Prophet Muhammad and a fresh series of eulogies to him beginning with 'ya nabi salam'alaika'/ 'O, Prophet, peace be upon thee' (...) 'ashraqa al-badru 'alayna'/ 'The full moon rose over us' (...). Kaptein also states that, although it is a very well-known text, the author of this section is unknown. The end of the recitation of each section is followed by invoking *salawat* (prayers, grace and blessings) on the Prophet Muhammad, in the form known as *Salawat Qiyam*. Based on my experience of attending women's ceremonial recitations of the *Kitab Barzanji* in several states in Malaysia, women practise the *salawat* invocation standing up.

Reference to this specific practice of standing during *salawat* was made by Kaptein (1993), whose work established that this is something which has been debated over a long period by both traditionalists and reformists in Indonesia. Whether or not standing is permitted during *salawat* is a major topic of debate among Indonesian Muslims. While it is not something I intend to discuss further here, I would mention briefly that standing during *salawat* has been practised at several national *salawat* events including the 2015 *Salawat*

Perdana Malam Cinta Rasul (National Prayer for the Prophet) held in Putra Mosque Square in Putrajaya (Astro Gempak, YouTube, 21 March 2014).

Reading the *Kitab Barzanji* is seen as a very appropriate way for (traditional) Malays to celebrate life. It is regarded as a way of expressing joyful feelings over the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, the bearer of grace to the world (Fuad, 2009). However, for women in Pahang's villages, recitations from the *Kitab Barzanji* are used in a different way. Here, the recitations are incorporated into the performance of *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana*. In the following section, I shall first discuss the lay song, *nazam berendoi*.

5.3 *Nazam berendoi*

Nazam comes from an Arabic term meaning composition. Mat Piah (1989) remarks that *nazam* includes poems written about the life and miracles of the Prophet; poems about *tauhid*, the twenty attributes of Allah (*sifat dua puluh*) and the qualities of the Prophet; and treatises on the pillars of Islam. *Nazam* is an Islamic art connected with the Islamic preachers who are responsible for disseminating the teachings of Islam at religious institutions in Malaysia. At these institutions *nazam* is sung by the students during break-times between lessons. *Berendoi* comes from the Malay word for lullaby, *dodoi*. The history of *nazam berendoi* is unclear. However, according to local people, the song could possibly be related to the traditional celebrations held for new-born babies in the nineteenth century. A religious singing group monopolized by men from a religious institution would sing a number of songs at such celebrations. Women eventually learnt the song from their men at home, as there were no religious institutions for women at that time.

The performance of *nazam berendoi* in Pahang villages draws on two sources: the *Kitab Barzanji* and vernacular texts comprising eleven stanzas. The first section in *Maulud al-Barzanji Nathar, aljannatu wa na'imuhâ* is the common factor in the performance of *nazam berendoi* (for the complete section please refer to Appendix IV). Briefly, this section is full of praises to Allah the Almighty and to the Prophet Muhammad and his family. The vernacular texts take a moralistic approach, with education and instructions for the newly born baby to be a good servant of Allah, to follow the teachings of His Messenger, to be a good person to his or her parents, and to have a blessed life. It can be used as teaching material for the formation of character. *Nazam berendoi* is performed in a ritual that celebrates the arrival of the new-born baby. It is vocalized without the accompaniment of musical instruments. The above

description of *nazam berendoi* is based on my participant-observation of a tonsure ritual at which it was performed by a women-only singing group. About eighty guests including family members and relatives were invited to this event. In the following section, I shall first describe the background of the women's singing group.

5.3.1 The women's singing group and its background

The group consists of twenty-five members aged between thirty and sixty. Makcik Ani is the group's leader. Makcik Ani and Makcik Noor (see Figure 5.2) provided the information about the group of *nazam berendoi* singers in this book. Most of the women are housewives with children (of varying ages). They live in a police neighbourhood as their husbands are policemen. The women's singing group was formed through the *Persatuan Keluarga Polis* or PERKEP (the Police Family Association) in the early 1990s. The group's objective is to fulfil invitations to religious events (mainly on Friday nights), including the celebration of Eid-Ul Fitr, tonsure rituals, male circumcisions and *maulud*. Members of the group are volunteers and unpaid.



Figure 5.2: Makcik Ani (right) and Makcik Noor demonstrating *nazam berendoi* to the author

Nazam berendoi is one of the songs in the group's repertoire and is one that is specifically performed at the tonsure ritual, which is held between the seventh and fortieth day after the baby is born. When I asked how the women became familiar with *nazam berendoi*, Makcik Ani replied that she learnt the tune from her grandparents. When she was growing up she lived with

her grandparents in Temerloh. When she was in her early teens, Makcik Ani, with her peers, used to follow and watch her grandmother and her women-only singing group performing *nazam berendoi* on many occasions at tonsure rituals. Based on this, I sense that, decades ago, women and young girls attended *nazam berendoi* performances in large numbers. A few years after her marriage in 1980, Makcik Ani moved with her husband, who works as a policeman, to Kuantan. She brought with her the song of *nazam berendoi* that she had learnt from her grandmother.

In Kuantan, Makcik Ani was responsible for teaching *nazam berendoi* to her group members. Since she could not remember the original sung text, she wrote a new composition that fitted the tune she had learnt from her grandmother. From this account, it appears that the tune of *nazam berendoi* is passed on to other women's singing groups through oral transmission. Makcik Ani and her singing group practise their singing (including *nazam berendoi*) after reciting *Surah Yaseen* (one of the chapters of the Qur'an) in a local community hall, mainly on Thursday evenings.

Besides the *Kitab Barzanji*, the women also bring along copies of vernacular sung texts to their singing practice. The women do not expect monetary reward from their singing activities. Despite this, they are serious about their participation in the group and are prepared to invest their time in training. For the women, the intrinsic reward from the activity itself is greater than any financial gain. This complies with Stebbins's (1982) view that activities which require commitment and for which there are extrinsic reasons to participate can be termed 'serious leisure'.

In summary then, the amateur women's singing group perform *nazam berendoi*, which the group learnt orally from a member who had previously learnt the song from her grandmother. In the following section, I describe and reflect on the performance of *nazam berendoi* at a tonsure ritual in November 2014.

5.3.2 The performance of *nazam berendoi*

The celebration took place in a community hall in Kuantan, Pahang, with the ritual beginning at 8 pm after the fourth prayer on a Thursday night. As can be seen in Figure 5.3, the women's singing group took their place on the carpeted floor, just in front of the decorated crib on the dais. All of them wore matching clothing and head coverings. Family members and relatives took their seats around the edge of the hall, after which the women began by

singing *Asma'ul Husna*, the ninety-nine names of Allah, followed by a recitation of *al-Fatihah*. *Al-Fatihah* (Appendix V) is the first chapter (Sūra) of the Qur'an. It has seven verses which together form a prayer asking for the guidance and mercy of Allah.

The reading of the *Kitab Barzanji* then took place. Several members of the singing group recited two sections from the *Kitab Barzanji* very clearly and with the aid of a microphone so that their voices could be heard in every corner of the hall. After this recitation, the ritual was held to bless the baby. *Salawat* subsequently took place. All those present in the hall stood up. During the recitation of *salawat*, the mother took her child out of the crib and cradled the new-born baby ready for the hair-shaving ritual.



Figure 5.3: The singing group in a circle singing *nazam berendoi*

The baby was then brought into the circle of women singers accompanied by a person holding a tray containing the essential equipment needed, according to Malay custom, for the baby's hair-cutting ceremony. The essential equipment includes holy water (*air zam-zam*), sweets and fresh flower potpourri (*bunga rampai*), with some ingredients having a strong pre-Islamic influence. One member of the women's singing group shaved a small part of the baby's hair while she reciting *salawat*. Then a second member took her place and did the same, and this carried on through all the members of the singing group. After the last member of the group had completed shaving the baby's hair, the baby was then returned to the cradle on the dais. With that, the *salawat* recitation ended.

Following a break of a few seconds, the performance of *nazam berendoi* then took place. The singing group took out printed pamphlets containing the eleven-stanza-long sung text and started to sing *nazam berendoi*. The first four lines, with translation, are as follows:

*Nazam dimulakan dengan Bismillah,
disudahi pula Alhamdulillah,
janganlah anak berhati gundah,
dikau diayun nazam ditambah.*

This song begins with the name of Allah,
will end with gratitude to Allah,
please don't, my dear, feel lonely,
you're in a swing, the song continues.

The group then continued with the second stanza and so on (for the full text please refer to Appendix VI). Each stanza was followed by the Arabic invocation: *Lailahailallah Muhammad Rasulullah* (There is no God but God, Muhammad is the messenger to Allah). The vernacular sung text was sung in a repeated melody in a soft and gentle voice, with slight nasal resonance. The singing ended with the eleventh stanza as follows:

*Tamatlah sudah anak diayunkan,
beramai-ramai kawan dendangkan,
salah dan silap harap dimaafkan,
makan dan minum minta halalkan.*

That is the end for this event,
we sing in the crowd,
please forgive us if we make mistakes,
thank you for the dishes and drinks.

Voices were pitched higher during the invocation and the melody. The group's vocal element included Malay vocal ornaments that are common in traditional Malay music. Not all the women had a high vocal range, while those who were able led the group using vibrato and improvisational techniques. As with *pantun* verses, the singing style is mainly syllabic (Matusky & Tan, 2017). The sung text is the same as the group has used previously at tonsure rituals; it is not published commercially nor is it available in any Islamic book. Even though, according to Makcik Ani, the new-born child cannot understand the content of the song, it is hoped that the song will prompt the adults present to follow the guidance from the sung text.

This section has illustrated how the women singers associate *nazam berendoi* with Islam. This can be drawn from their appearance, in wearing headscarves for example, and in their recitations from the *Kitab Barzanji*, which is very highly regarded in many Malay Muslim communities. *Nazam berendoi* is mainly performed at tonsure rituals to celebrate a new-born child. At such rituals, a women's singing group is invited to recite several sections of the *Kitab Barzanji*, followed by recitation of *salawat* and finishing with the song *nazam berendoi*. Family members and relatives of all ages usually make up the audience for the celebration. The tradition possesses some Islamic characteristics in that they perform the song for religious purposes. Traditionally, *nazam berendoi* is not accompanied by instruments. It can be presumed that at the time that performance of *nazam berendoi* became common at such rituals, instruments were unlikely to have been used within the Islamic environment, a situation that remains the same today.

5.3.3 The creation of community through *nazam berendoi*

The Malays in the villages of Pahang have long performed the religiously inspired song of *nazam berendoi*. In Pahang, one does not have to be a professional musician to perform *nazam berendoi*. However, despite the existence of middle-aged and elderly women's singing groups, the performance of this song is experiencing a general decline. The singing groups have not led to an expansion of general interest among young people.

I noticed that there is less interest among young people in participating in *nazam berendoi* performances. A general perception from the older performers is that young people are not interested in *nazam berendoi* because of the availability and influence of other, more appealing, forms of entertainment. They are particularly aware of how young people's lives are constantly changing. Although it may still be valued as a form of cultural heritage, the decline of the performance of *nazam berendoi* is related to how young people perceive it.

From my brief conversation with Yana, a young mother of one, *nazam berendoi* is seen as less important. Moreover, she did not include the performance of *nazam berendoi* in her daughter's tonsure ritual (Yana, personal communication, 28 September 2019). As a result, it is interesting to speculate on whether or not *nazam berendoi* will be valued less as a cultural asset. Its credentials as a music practice may be undermined over time.

There are fewer young women in the villages these days as a result of them moving away for work and, with greater numbers migrating to more urban areas, there is a question mark over the long-term viability of the song. However, in evaluating *nazam berendoi's* longevity it is important to differentiate between the factors that may account for people's lack of opportunity to learn and perform in *nazam berendoi*, and those that may account for people's lack of interest in learning and performing it. Of course, the two are interrelated.

There is no sign of a commercial market for *nazam berendoi* in Pahang – for example, in the form of its publication on CD. I visited several music shops selling CDs, but could not find any item related to *nazam berendoi*. However, on the video-sharing platform, YouTube, I found several videos uploaded by individuals of performances of *nazam berendoi* by women's singing groups in the neighbouring state of Perak. I discovered that the women in Perak used a rather similar sung text to that of the women's singing groups in Pahang villages, but with a different tune. In one video (Mohdazmi10, Youtube, 21 March 2017), I noted that the setting of the *nazam berendoi* performance in Perak was similar to that of the *nazam berendoi* performance in Pahang. The women were seated in a circle on a carpeted floor in the middle of a house. Each of them referred to a white book while performing the song. There was no indication on YouTube, however, of a community becoming involved in dialogue or leaving comments below the video.

There is, however, one commercial recording of *nazam berendoi* by Aishah, a solo female singer who is very well-known in Malaysia and Indonesia (Aishah-Topic, YouTube, 2 September 2016). The song was produced for a music album by NC Records and released in 2010. Like the women in Pahang, Aishah sang *nazam berendoi* without any musical accompaniment. The content of the song is similar to that of the *nazam berendoi* performed by the women's singing group in Pahang.

The government's cultural agency, *Jabatan Kebudayaan dan Kesenian Negara* (the National Department for Culture and the Arts) has shared an informative video on YouTube to introduce the Islamic art of *nazam* in Melaka (Bahagian RnD JKKN, YouTube, 4 December 2013). In the video, a women's singing group from Melaka demonstrated two different ways of performing *nazam*: *serkam* and *tanjung*. However, neither of these is associated with *nazam berendoi* in Pahang.

To summarize, there is less participation by young people in the performance of *nazam berendoi* for several reasons, including the fact that young women are migrating to urban areas for work. They have no inclination to perform *nazam berendoi*. The way young people think about the Islamic art of *nazam berendoi* may contribute to the demise of the song in Pahang. Its survival in Pahang is seriously in doubt. Meanwhile, modern technology and a small number of commercial recordings have raised the profile of the song, as well as leading to the creation of *nazam berendoi* as a media-bound genre. This echoes the case of Minangkabau, a children's folk-music genre that has 'become extinct in contemporary Indonesian local culture, having been replaced by new mediated counterparts' (Suryadi, 2014: 192).

5.4 *Dikir rebana*

The word *dikir* in the Pahang dialect comes from the word *zikir*, while *rebana* comes from Arabic word, *rabbana*, which means Allah. According to Matusky and Tan (2017) the Islamic religion encourages and teaches the practice of *zikir* with the intention of obtaining peace, tranquillity and happiness. 'As recorded in the Qur'an and Hadith (sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad), the practice of *zikir* embodies focusing the mind in order to overcome problems of spiritual stress, to obtain peace, happiness and gifts from Allah' (Matusky & Tan, 2017: 237). The main musical instrument played during the performance of *dikir* is the *rebana Pahang* (the Pahang frame drum) as seen in Figure 5.4. Pahang frame drums vary in size, but are relatively large (approximately 50-54 cm in diameter, 12 to 15 cm deep). The head of the drum, made of goatskin, is pinned to a hardwood frame.

The other name of *dikir rebana* is *dikir burdah* or *dikir mawlid*. The main sung text is taken primarily from the *Kitab Barzanji*. The tradition of *dikir rebana* in Pahang may have had some historical interface with the performing arts from Minangkabau, one of the major sources of Malay culture. In the context of the Minangkabau practice, Kartomi (2012) points out that the vocalists recite the texts from *Kitab Barzanji* to their own percussive brass-tray accompaniment. Similar names for the activity also occur in the inland areas of all the provinces along the Sumatran coast. 'People living in the coastal areas including along the banks of the long eastbound rivers and in the former kingdoms share many similar rituals, songs [...] and instrumental ensembles' (Kartomi, 2012: 16).



Figure 5.4: A Pahang frame drum being played in a *dikir rebana* performance in 1963 (source: The Malaysian Institute of Language and Literature, Kuala Lumpur)

Dikir rebana is based on Sufism practices (the inner dimension of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad). When singing *dikir rebana*, voices are high-pitched and strident, and it is important to have good control of the breath. In *dikir rebana*, the reciters sit down with their legs crossed while singing one of the sections from the *Kitab Barzanji*. They beat a frame drum to accompany their own vocal expressions. The reciter beats the edge or in the middle of the head of the drum.

The following is based on a group discussion about *dikir rebana* that I organized on 25 September 2016 (Figure 5.5). For comparative purposes, I have also referred to two other resources. The first is a 2005 video recording of an interview session between researchers from the Malaysian Institute of Language and Literature, Kuala Lumpur and an elderly man performing *dikir rebana* music. This resource provides a historical account of *dikir rebana* music in Pahang. The second resource is a video of a performance by the women's singing group from Jeram Landak in 2015. The video supports my description of *dikir rebana* and is owned by Muhammad Yunus, a member of the Cakna Anak Pahang Association from Jerantut, Pahang.



Figure 5.5: The author conducting a group discussion with members of a *dikir rebana* group in the village of Jeram Landak

5.4.1 The women's singing group and its background

A women-only singing group was formed in the 1980s in the village of Jeram Landak. In the 1990s, the group had more than ten members. Nowadays, only five members remain and most of them are elderly. It is the only women's singing group performing *dikir rebana* in Pahang. Each of them is experienced in Qur'anic recitation. Wan Fatimah, aged eighty-nine, leads the singing group. To make ends meet, the women support their families by taking on a variety of paid work locally. They go rubber-tapping early in the morning and take farm laboring jobs whenever possible.

Some of the group's members are widows and remain alone; others need to take care of their husbands. For Wan Saodah, who is sixty-eight, besides taking care of her husband, she also looks after her three grandchildren of primary-school age. Early every morning, the children are sent by their parents to her home for day care. The children are only collected in the evening, after the parents return from work. Sometimes, the children will stay over for the whole night (Wan Saodah, personal communication, 25 September, 2016).

Wan Fatimah and Wan Saodah responded to my enquiries as to how they became involved in *dikir rebana* performances. I have included quotations instead of paraphrasing or summarizing in order to present their views in their

own voices. Wan Fatimah responded: 'It was a long time ago. I learnt *dikir rebana* from my grandfather. He was my music teacher. From him, I learnt how to play the frame drum.' Her late grandfather was the influence on her to learn the song. As a result, she was asked to learn to perform readings of the Qur'an before she went on to learn the *Kitab Barzanji*.

As she indicated, she had learnt to play frame drum and when I asked her how much time would be needed to learn *dikir rebana*, her response was that five years would be ideal for someone to become proficient at playing *dikir rebana* music. She does not have any specific way to train her voice. When she first learnt to sing *dikir rebana*, there was no electricity in the village, and no microphone. She had to sing loudly to make sure that people would hear the song. In the singing demonstration, I could hear Wan Fatimah singing with a clear voice, although it was not that loud because of a health condition. People in the village consider Wan Fatimah to be the oldest *dikir rebana* practitioner. She is now the key person who teaches *dikir rebana* music to others.

Meanwhile, Wan Saodah stated: 'I learnt the music from my female friends. I joined them indirectly, and we formed a *dikir rebana* group. I followed their music training held in the evenings.' Wan Saodah's musical education – through a relationship with female peers – reflects a similar musical education situation to that found among the women of Sambas in Indonesia. Mee (2012) in her work on *zikir maulid* amongst Sambas Malays found that Sambas women practise and learn the text of *zikir maulid* in the evenings, during meetings with women from other villages. Wan Saodah had learnt *dikir rebana* by involving herself in her peers' musical training and imitating the way they read the *Kitab Barzanji* and played the frame drum.

Dikir rebana is performed as entertainment at weddings, child-naming parties, tonsure rituals and male circumcisions and to celebrate those who have completed reading the Qur'an (mainly on Friday nights). If an event occurs away from their village, the women will ask the men in their family for their help. The men will then accompany them, acting as guardians of the group and supporting their needs. However, in recent years, the women have been unable to fulfil invitations, especially outside the village, due to ill health.

To summarize, the women-only singing group from Jeram Landak is the only singing group performing *dikir rebana* in Pahang. They participate in *dikir rebana* for personal, religious and social reasons, but recently the women have been less active due to health problems. The song is considered an endangered song genre in Pahang. In the following part, I shall analyse the

performance of *dikir rebana* based on a group discussion with the performers, and supported by a recording of their performance made in 2015.

5.4.2 The performance of *dikir rebana*

The performance of *dikir rebana* has attracted the attention many people, in particular that of the late Pahang Empress, the late Tengku Afzan Tengku Panglima Perang Muhammad (r. 1974-1988). During her lifetime, Tengku Afzan showed her enthusiasm for *dikir rebana* music. A well-established *dikir rebana* group at that time came from Jeram Landak in Kuala Lipis, Pahang. In the 1980s, this group gained local fame as it was often called upon to perform *dikir rebana* music for Tengku Afzan and her guests. Tengku Afzan also initiated the renaming of *dikir rebana* as *dikir Pahang* due to the ability of the performers to produce impromptu quatrains of *pantun* in Pahang dialect (Wan Saodah, personal communication, 25 September 2016).

Performers are generally seated cross-legged in a semi-circle for performances of *dikir rebana* music, as illustrated in Figure 5.6. This photograph portrays a group of five elderly women seated on the floor while performing. Each of them plays a frame drum. However, according to Wan Saodah, the current frame drums being used for *dikir rebana* are from music ensembles of the *dikir barat* music genre, originally from the state of Kelantan. This is because the Pahang frame drum is no longer available. The performance of *dikir rebana* begins with the invocation of *salawat marhaban* (songs to praise the Prophet Muhammad) and *zikir*. The well-known sung text is from the section *Qasida al-Bariah* under the chapter *Qasida al-Burdah* in the *Kitab Barzanji*.



Figure 5.6: A screenshot from a video recording of a *dikir rebana* performance by elderly women from Jeram Landak in 2015 (source: Muhamad Yunus)

The women's singing group knows the section *Qasida al-Bariah* simply as *amin tazaki*, which is the first verse of the section (see Figure 5.7). The song consists of two to four stanzas which have been developed from two to four lines of this section of the text. The lyrics are sometimes pronounced incorrectly, and are sometimes changed to something totally different from the original. Besides *amin tazaki*, several other sections are also used, including *bisyahrin*, *walamma*, *walidanhabi*, *badat*, *alha*, *yamawlidan*, and *yahabibun*. Each section is performed to a specific tune. The well-respected lyrics from the *Kitab Barzanji* are in Arabic and, as there is no translation into Malay available to the women in the singing group, they do not understand the lyrics they are singing. I feel sure that they do not understand the meaning of the book; they only know that it is a biography and a book of praise of the Prophet.

Even though the sung texts are in Arabic, the women's group does not appear to follow an Arabic style of singing, nor is there an Islamic influence in terms of the sounds of Qur'anic cantillation. Despite using the Islamic book of *Kitab Barzanji*, their music has a more traditional Malay musical style. Their singing pace is slow and drawn out. Vocally, *dikir rebana* music highlights Malay elements such as language and vocal ornamentations, and the vocal singing pitches are different to Western ones. Specific moods are associated with the singing style of *dikir rebana*, including sadness and misery.



Figure 5.7: An excerpt of *amin tazaki* in the *Kitab Barzanji*

I was unable to witness a live performance of *dikir rebana* during the course of my fieldwork. However, I felt honoured to witness a singing demonstration by these elderly women during the group discussion on 24 September 2016. I observed that *dikir rebana* has special singing characteristics. The first singer chanted two lines from the *Kitab Barzanji* to the accompaniment of frame drums played by other singers. She then followed this with the recitation of an impromptu quatrain of *pantun* in Pahang dialect. The second singer took over and repeated this singing pattern with a different text and *pantun*, and so it continued until they had all taken part. They chanted the texts of the *Kitab Barzanji* by heart even though a copy of the book was in front of them. While the singer was chanting and reciting the rest of the group would concentrate on playing their frame drums in a basic rhythm, over and over again. As this was only a singing demonstration, these elderly women only chanted the first part of the *Qasida al-Bariah* from the *Kitab Barzanji* and recited four quatrains of *pantun* spontaneously in their local Pahang dialect.

The quatrains of *pantun* (in Appendix VII) are an important feature of the performance, raising the audience's spirits and injecting a sense of fun. There is no specific theme to the *pantun*. In the *pantun*, the women indirectly

state their aspirations and desires. For instance, in this demonstration, Wan Saodah recited a *pantun* verse to request drinking water to ease a sore throat:

*Betik diperam di waktu pagi,
kain langsir di atas para,
wahai encik yang baik hati,
mintalah air pengubat suara.*

A papaya is fermented in the morning,
(there is) a curtain on the shelf,
dear Sir with a kind heart,
I need water to ease a sore throat.

Several important musical characteristics should be highlighted. The way in which Wan Saodah recited the first quatrain of *pantun* sounded very similar to *sprechgesang* or spoken singing. The lines are delivered in a syllabic singing style and with a narrow melodic range. The voices reciting *pantun* and the sound of the frame drum are said to add to the clamour of voices outside and to fill the air with unexpected cheer. The women ended their *dikir rebana* performance by chanting the following in an amusing way:

*Mike mengantuk amboi mata dipejam,
tabik tuan dan puan amboi,
saya nak cabut selamat reban.*

I feel sleepy and I need to close my eyes,
salute to you,
I want to dismiss and good night.

To conclude, in performing *dikir rebana*, the singers draw on several sections from the *Kitab Barzanji* as sung texts. Despite using Arabic text, the singing melody is similar to traditional Malay songs and the tempo is slow and laboured. However, the women who provided me with a demonstration of *dikir rebana* were also able to produce impromptu, unwritten quatrains of *pantun*, normally used to amuse an audience. This reflects an oral tradition. While singing, the women beat frame drums simultaneously in a rhythmical pattern (*pukulan bertingkah*) and this accompaniment added to the characteristics of *dikir rebana* music. However, in the present day, Pahang frame drums are no longer used and they have now been replaced by a smaller frame drum, one that is normally used in *dikir barat* music from the neighbouring state of Kelantan.

During my field research, I realized that there is a lack of participation by young women in these amateur singing groups. This made me wonder what

musical activities young women in Pahang villages do become involved in? Thus, in the second part of this chapter, I will explore young women's participation in singing activities and reflect on the impact that these have on them.

5.4.3 The creation of community through *dikir rebana*

The musical art of *dikir rebana* stands out because of the existence of a singing group comprising middle-aged and elderly women who perform it. Despite the existence of this group, *dikir rebana* is experiencing a general decline. As with their counterparts in *nazam berendoi*, the women's group singing *dikir rebana* in Pahang has not led to an expansion of interest among young people. One of the singers identified the problem as being that modern music has a negative impact on local perceptions of *dikir rebana*. She also maintained that those who had received a formal education were more likely to regard *dikir rebana* as being a waste of time. However, in the digital environment, there is different story to be told about community and *dikir rebana*.

In the virtual world there are community groups posting videos of the performance of the Islamic art of *dikir rebana* on popular social media, such as Facebook. Rozmal on his Facebook page, has shared a video of a performance of *dikir rebana* by a men's singing group in the neighbouring state of Negri Sembilan. The performance was held as part of the celebrations for a young married couple. Unlike the women's singing group in Pahang who were seated, the men's singing group in Negri Sembilan stood while performing the song with the accompaniment of frame drums. *Dikir rebana* was performed to highlight the procession of the bride and groom to the reception party. Following Rozmal's post, Siti Hawa shared her view of the practice of *dikir rebana* in her village. According to her, the song was well-known in the 1960s and the 1970s. However, from the late 1990s, the popularity of this Islamic art decreased due to the presence of modern social media such as Facebook. On the other hand, Bahari Bujal had reposted Rozmal's video of the *dikir rebana* performance on his Facebook page, and went on to receive feedback from his virtual community.

Similarly, Noorsam uploaded a video of a *dikir rebana* performance by a men's singing group named *Kumpulan Rebana Batang Nyamor* from Negri Sembilan. The group performed the song on the night before a wedding. Most of the performers were elderly men; only a few children were involved as

the group's loyal audience. Noorsam's video received unexpected responses from his virtual community. After watching the video, Ali questioned whether *dikir rebana* was a tradition of indigenous people (*tradisi Orang Asli*) as he was unfamiliar with it. Rosni responded to this, confirming that *dikir rebana* is an Islamic art which is facing decline among the Malay population. Maimunah added that she was a big fan of *dikir rebana* even though she did not understand the sung text. Of all of the responses, I was most drawn to one from Aziz, who shed light on the Islamic art of *dikir rebana*. In his view, *dikir rebana* has long been a tradition of the Malays. He urged others to reinvent this tradition in an appropriate way for young people. Most of all, those posting and responding on social media indicated what they might have seen, heard or felt, even very briefly, with regard to the Islamic art of *dikir rebana*.

My investigations on YouTube have revealed some interesting insights. *Dikir rebana* is also performed in the neighbouring state of Kelantan, which is well-known for the tradition of *dikir barat*. At first glance, the characteristics of *dikir rebana* and *dikir barat* appear similar; however this is a fallacy. I have found some videos of *dikir rebana* performances in Kelantan (Nurin Khann, YouTube, 14 November 2018) and, in one, an all-male group of around ten to fifteen performers is seated in a straight line demonstrating *dikir rebana* involving body movements, alongside playing the drums. Unlike *dikir rebana* in Pahang, the performance of *dikir rebana* in Kelantan is enhanced by various motions of the arms, the swaying of the body, clapping and other dance-like gestures by the chorus members. These actions are common to most *dikir barat* groups in Kelantan, even though the movements differ slightly from one group to another. The *dikir rebana* groups in Kelantan sing verses of popular and non-religious texts in a responsorial style (Nurin Khann, YouTube, 14 November 2018). A *rebana kercing* (the rattling of a tambourine) and a gong are used to accompany the performance of *dikir rebana* in Kelantan.

Dikir rebana was also shown, again on YouTube, to be a cultural element at a Malay wedding in a community in Bukit China, Melaka. In the recording it was performed by an all-male group of singers during the procession of the bride and groom to the reception party (Utzet Ros, YouTube, 14 December 2015). Two musical instruments were used to accompany the singing in the procession: a frame drum and a gong. The group recited *salawat marhaban* throughout their entire performance. However, unlike the community on Facebook, no conversation took place in the comments' section under either of the videos on YouTube. It seems that the community is far more inclined to comment and respond than the community on YouTube, which seems to be a silent observer community.

To sum up, like specific extinct music cultures in other parts of the world, *dikir rebana* in Pahang is facing a decline among the Malays. Young people are no longer interested in becoming involved in performing *dikir rebana*. However, to some extent, performances of *dikir rebana* posted on social media, such as Facebook and YouTube, contribute to a participatory culture among young people. There they are able to view, comment on and vote for videos of *dikir rebana* performances. The commentary space allows them to address different issues and judgements concerning the Islamic art of *dikir rebana*. *Dikir rebana* on such new media not only stimulates young people to talk about their experiences using a rich vocabulary, but also reflects young people's cultural values, behaviours and beliefs.

5.5 Young women and music

My research on music at an amateur level also focuses on young women's participation in music. Through this under-documented aspect of young women's lives I explore the meanings they impart to the music they practise and/or listen to and to how they relate to different music forms as leisure. Much of young people's music is inevitably linked with escapism. Historical events, religious beliefs and tradition, together with modern day practices, influence young people to communicate meaning through the music they practise. Recent advances in new media and technology have changed how young women currently participate in music and what it means to them. Global forces have gradually influenced young women as technological advances have lessened geographical limitations. Music from all over the world is readily accessible, making it easy for young women to access it whenever they wish. The media are inevitably a powerful influence in young women's lives. Media consumption, 'gives adolescents a sense of being connected to a larger peer network' (Arnett, 1995: 524).

In the context of Malaysia, the new generation of young Malaysians (all of whom have grown up with computers at home) are active users of digital music technology. New media technologies, with a specific emphasis on the Internet and portable digital music devices, form an important part of young people's lives (Baboo et al., 2013). These young people have developed a contemporary culture through new media and give meaning to it. Their modern culture contributes a lot to their lifestyle, for instance, they are able to share music files over the Internet and can create personal collections of playlists.

The MP3 file format allows young people to freely download their favourite singers' songs in seconds, and can be shared with their friends. Collecting downloadable music files on digital devices has replaced physical record collecting. Downloading music from the Internet 'is the modern-day equivalent of taping a mate's album onto a cassette' (Mewton, 2001: 33), albeit just as illegal under copyright laws. There are numerous music websites which offer free downloads of music by both unknown and celebrated singers; some authorized and therefore legitimate, and some not.

A celebrated Malaysian pop singer, Siti Nurhaliza, provides an avenue of cultural expression and identity to young people locally. From a village background, Siti Nurhaliza who was born and raised in Pahang, has set a good example to her fans, especially her younger fans, in terms of having maintained a scandal-free image since entering the music industry. Siti Nurhaliza is credited with having popularized *irama Malaysia* (Malaysian rhythms), a modern pop music genre. This genre has been developed via a process of renouncing some of the purity of traditional Malay sounds to reflect a more modern sound that is attractive to young people.

Although *irama Malaysia* has evolved from traditional culture, it is not detached from it. It is 'a form of music movement wherein the musicians [seek] to revive traditional Malay music through pop music while projecting the authenticity in their songs' (Seneviratne, 2012: 137). *Irama Malaysia* exemplifies a particular kind of musical exotica. 'Young Malaysians who have no knowledge of Malay music have found the lively rhythms and scales, among other elements, exotic' (Tan, 2003: 101). Siti Nurhaliza has the ability to persuade a large number of youngsters to listen to, and to appreciate, *irama Malaysia*. She presents the music via a network of television shows and video clips. Siti Nurhaliza is regarded as 'the closest thing to a Malaysian identity when it comes to music' (Else in Seneviratne, 2012: 216).

To some, Siti Nurhaliza's songs are seen as pop music with a strong, traditional Malay music content. Young people need music to have this modern kind of sound in order for them to find it acceptable. With a modern rhythm to the music, young people listen to it, even though it has elements of traditional music within it. According to Pak Ngah, 'This is how youngster can easily take the music to be part of their popular genre' (Pak Ngah in Seneviratne, 2012: 219). Furthermore, young people are now coming to appreciate *irama Malaysia* especially because it has traditional elements in it. The use of indigenous instruments along with musical elements and the rhythmical pattern of Malay dance provide the pieces with the flavour of regional music (S. Atan, personal communication, 22 July 2018).

The spread of contemporary global culture via media technology has influenced young women in Pahang to become involved in traditional music as well as modern international music in different ways. For the purposes of this research, I had the opportunity to speak to four young women, aged between seventeen and twenty-three, about their interactions with music. In the following section I describe the backgrounds of these four young women from Temerloh, Pahang.

5.5.1 A brief summary of the participants' backgrounds

I first met Ida and Zira in April 2016 at their place of work, a clothes boutique. They had been working as sales assistants for less than two years. Ida and Zira are both fans of certain music genres and never miss cultural events, including concerts and music festivals. They had come from different school backgrounds: Ida had graduated from an Islamic secondary school while Zira had attended a national secondary school. After graduating from school in 2010, Ida had worked in the town helping her parents. Zira, on the other hand, had just graduated from school in 2016 and was waiting for an opportunity to continue her tertiary education at one of the government-funded universities in Shah Alam, Selangor. At the time that this research was being conducted both of them were living with their parents. Ida's parent is a domestic worker while Zira's parents work in the government sector.

A month later, I met the third participant, Ain, who was a student at Temerloh Secondary School. We met at a state-level *syair* singing competition, in which she was representing the district of Temerloh. At the competition, Ain won first prize and went on to represent Pahang at the national level in the *syair* competition held in Kuala Lumpur in August 2016. According to Ain's schoolteacher, who accompanied her to the competition, Ain was an icon among the students at her school. As a singer she was active in performing in school-based cultural and musical events.

Through Ain, I met the fourth participant, Arina, who was Ain's school friend. Like Ain, Arina also participated in musical events at school. Even though Arina seldom entered any singing competitions, she did take part in karaoke. Arina shared with me how she had become involved in music. Her primary school teacher was responsible for discovering her singing talent and, from a young age, Arina participated in musical activities at school. Traditional songs were among the music genres she would always sing. She credits her schoolteacher with being the major influence on her musical activities.

At the time of my fieldwork, Ain and Arina were in Form Five and were soon going to be sitting an important exam, the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (Malaysian Certificate of Education). The girls had come from different family backgrounds. Arina had come from a village located quite a distance from the school and, with a lack of public transport to the school. She had chosen to stay in the school dormitory. Staying in the dormitory made it easier for her to go to school every day. Meanwhile, Ain had chosen to stay at home with her parent, and would occasionally stay in the school dormitory when she needed to commit to extra music rehearsals at school.

Even though the four participants had come from different social family backgrounds, they shared a similar exposure to music through their parents: their mothers were all members of *marhaban* (songs of praise for the Prophet) groups in the village. When they were young, their mothers had taken them to *marhaban* events held in neighbouring houses. As they became teenagers, they no longer followed their mothers' singing pursuits and became more interested in other entertainment activities. In the following section, I discuss their musical preferences and the significance of music in their lives.

5.5.2 Participants' music consumption

Ida considered listening to music to be part of her leisure activities. She listened to songs to pass the time before going to bed. Ida's bedroom was considered her private space in which she could do her favourite things. As for Ain and Arina, they listened to music while studying. They found it helps to increase their level of concentration and self-confidence and thus helped them to finish their schoolwork. Zira preferred listening to ballads that she characterised as *lagu jiwang* (soul music). She stored several *lagu jiwang* tracks on her mobile phone and listened to them often.

Ida stated that one of the songs that can be described as *lagu jiwang* is 'Andai Aku Bersuara' (If Ever I Had Spoken) by Chomel, a singer/songwriter from Singapore. Even though Ida was a fan of *lagu jiwang*, she also enjoyed Pahang regional pop music, for instance, 'Ngape Bior Semok' (Why Let the Bush Grow) by Anok Semantan (discussed in Chapter 3), and the inspirational song, 'Semangat Tok Gajah' (The Spirit of Tok Gajah). Both songs are sung in the Pahang dialect.

Ida's thoughts on *lagu jiwang* matched those of Zira. For Zira, listening to *lagu jiwang* helped her to fully concentrate on creative writing. Besides helping her to concentrate, *lagu jiwang* also helped her to generate

ideas while writing. Among the songs that Zira listened to were ‘Memori Berkasih’ (Love Memory), ‘Permaisuri’ (Queen) and ‘Hajat’ (Wish) from the 1990s. Similarly Ain and Arina also found *lagu jiwang* pleasant-sounding and enjoyable.

All of the participants appreciated songs in the category of *irama Malaysia*. The development of the *irama Malaysia* genre began in the late 1990s. Ain, who wished to study music at university after she finished school, revealed that singing *irama Malaysia* songs was a useful way to train her singing voice. Ain was a big fan of the *irama Malaysia* singer Siti Nurhaliza and had memorized all her songs. Instead of listening to traditional songs, all four participants turned to *irama Malaysia* because of its modern sound. This is in accord with Malaysian composer Pak Ngah’s view that young people do not prefer traditional style songs; they prefer to hear modern sounds. Pak Ngah claims that young people listen to *irama Malaysia* which has an element of traditional music within it (Pak Ngah, personal communication, 8 December 2017).

All the participants had embraced mobile technology. Attractive and affordable Internet packages are available, which make virtual spaces increasingly accessible to them. With the Internet available on affordable devices that have downloading features, it is possible for these young women to save large amounts of music onto their devices. In the culture of the download era, the participants no longer need to buy music. Ida downloaded her favourite songs from unofficial websites and kept the songs in MP3 format on her mobile phone. She played songs while working and wore earphones to listen to them from her phone.

Streaming from premium music services such as YouTube and Spotify was also a common activity for the participants as it is easily accessible on a mobile phone. Zira and her friends distributed current popular songs among themselves and shared music files. This took place when they meet at their favourite food stall once a week. For this reason, buying new music in CD format at the market was considered unusual and expensive for the participants. Despite their focus on downloading and streaming music, these young women did not mind listening to music on the radio either.

All participants identified broadcast radio as one of their preferred ways to discover new music. Ida listened to her parents’ favourite radio programmes when she was at home and it was through her parents that Ida learnt old or traditional songs. Arina listened to the radio every Sunday

morning when she had *gotong-royong* (the spirit of working together) which involves the students clearing rubbish from the school dormitory area.

To conclude, what these young women listened to, what music they had easy access to and what was being projected by the media all affected their choice of music to some extent. All of the participants liked *lagu jiwang* and *irama Malaysia*. They frequently listened to their favourite tunes on several websites including YouTube and Spotify. In their era, downloading songs from websites is a common and more economical way of creating a collection of their favourite songs. In the following section, I review their musical activities at school.

5.5.3 Musical activities at school

All four young women provided accounts of their involvement with music when they were at school. Ida had an educational background in religious studies, and her description of musical activity at school was interesting. When I asked about her musical experiences when she attended religious school, Ida explained that her school had not offered music education, nor did it have a music teacher. Ida described her musical activity as only occurring when she spent time together with friends after school. On the other hand, Ain and Arina were actively involved in singing performances at their school to celebrate events including the Teacher's Day celebration on 16 May and the celebration of Eid-UI Fitr. Their repertoires were not limited to contemporary and popular songs, but also included traditional ones and they were part of a *nasyid* group at school. It is notable that Ain pointed out that singing at school had given her the opportunity to broaden her musical talents.

Although schools do not provide pupils with music as a subject, students are still able to learn music and organize musical activities after school. The School Department of the Malay Language initiated singing sessions every week at which school singers (boys and girls) can learn to sing the traditional poetry songs of *syair* and *nazam* as an extracurricular activity. Some schools also organize singing workshops a few times per year. During the course of my field study I attended a number of workshops, held at various schools in Pahang, that had the objective of promoting traditional poetry songs. One of them was held at Temerloh National Secondary School and was attended by about sixty teachers and students who benefited from the singing workshop. Furthermore, this kind of workshop is able to provide training for teachers and students before they represent their schools in *syair* singing

competitions. The singing workshops usually end with a concert held in the school hall at which professional musicians are invited to perform alongside the amateur musicians. The state government subsidizes these events to support the professional performers appearing at school concerts.

The school's music studio is the centre for organized musical activities – musical resources are stored here, musicians can gather and rehearse together, musical skills can be passed on and musical events are rehearsed for. For instance, the music studio at Abu Bakar Secondary School is where pupils and schoolteachers practise their instruments. Some musical instruments including a drum set, a conga, electric guitars and a keyboard are available to use for musically active pupils, who are predominantly male. Also available in the music studio is a karaoke set which is used as an educational tool for singing practice (Figure 5.8). The pupils can use all the equipment, but only under teacher supervision. Pupils who play musical instruments without the school administrator's permission are punished. In certain circumstances, the music studio is only permitted to be used by representatives of the school who are in need of intensive music or singing practice before attending a musical or singing competition. To maintain the condition of the music studio, it is locked most of the time and is only opened upon request.



Figure 5.8: Two pupils in their school attire practising karaoke singing in the music studio with their schoolteacher's supervision

During my visit to the school, I observed two students during a casual karaoke singing session in the music studio. They were practising traditional songs on karaoke VCDs played on DVD players and were singing through two

microphones plugged into a sound system. Near them was a box full of karaoke CDs mainly of Malay music, but also some of Indonesian music. Both students tried to imitate the original singers of the songs. The lyrics to the song floated across the bottom of the screen and changed colour as they were sung. Also in the music studio, there was a teacher seated behind a keyboard watching the activity. However, there was no direction or guidance from the teacher with regard to how the song, which had been selected by the students, should have been sung. They simply practised karaoke singing by imitating the sound and expression of the original singers.

To summarize, school musical activity is a display of musical expression and a performance in its own right. Young women participate in school-based musical activities and their performances are as valid as those performed by adults. I would argue that school involvement in music is one of the few paths to musical participation in the future. Of all the musical equipment provided in schools, the karaoke machine is the most popular. Through karaoke, young women can learn to sing traditional songs. Karaoke singing is not limited to performance in school, it is also available outside of school situations.

In the following section, I shall discuss young women's participation in karaoke singing activities in public spaces, including open-air restaurants.

5.5.4 Karaoke singing after school

Karaoke was one of the most popular leisure activities among the four young women. They considered themselves to be karaoke fans. They would go to a karaoke kiosk in a shopping complex or to open-air restaurants to enjoy karaoke singing after school or work. They had been attracted to karaoke singing because of the musical accompaniment which encouraged them to sing well and to experience the joy of singing. The following is a description of karaoke singing in a restaurant.

Karaoke takes place in restaurants usually from 8 pm until 12 am, except on Thursday nights in order to respect the ritual of the Qur'an reading held at the local mosque. Karaoke performances are generally located at the edge of a restaurant so that they can be observed by the audience, who are customers of the restaurant, but also by an audience from outside the restaurant, where the sound of the karaoke music can also be heard. Karaoke performances usually take place in the corner of the restaurant on a small stage

about twenty-five to thirty centimetres high with colourful neon/LED lights decorating the singing space.

There is a karaoke public address system set up for the customers who wish to sing. More than a thousand songs are listed and are mostly romantic in content. Young women mainly sing karaoke after dinner. After selecting a song, karaoke customers pay RM2 (GBP0.40) per song to the karaoke jockey before going to the stage. All the young women in this study sang karaoke once a week. I would argue that singing karaoke more than once per month is significantly related to listening to music they have downloaded from the Internet. They practised singing at home ready to perform for their friends at the restaurant.

From Ida's point of view, karaoke singing in a restaurant has several positive features when compared to the karaoke kiosk environment. Karaoke singing in a restaurant does not require a lot of money. Karaoke in a restaurant is livelier with a varied audience and people listening to other people's singing. Furthermore, karaoke singing in a restaurant is a good place to show off one's singing talents, and restaurant customers join in with singing during popular songs and well-known choruses. The audience of restaurant customers judges the quality of the singing and shows its approval through loud applause or cheering.

These young women went to restaurants accompanied by friends. Karaoke singing encourages young women's singing behaviour. For Ain, her favourite songs in karaoke were those of the *irama Malaysia* type, originally sung by popular female singers. She often chooses *irama Malaysia* songs, particularly because of their modern sound alongside the traditional. 'Cindai' (Silk Cloth), 'Ya Maulai' (Dear Lord) and 'Nazam Berkasih' (Quatrains of Love) were the songs that Ain sang every time she went to a restaurant. These songs have traditional music elements and strong links to the feelings associated with traditional music.

Arina did not limit herself to songs originally sung by female singers. She enjoyed singing songs which were initially sung by male singers and which suited her vocal range. Young women usually sing solo, but once in a while they will sing a duet with a good friend. Singing karaoke songs of the *irama Malaysia* genre offered these young women satisfaction as their singing was improved by having the original backing tracks as an accompaniment. In delivering *irama Malaysia* songs, ornamentation is frequently used and vibrato is required for every long note. However, a modern style is found in the dynamics of the singing and *irama Malaysia* songs require singing expression

techniques. The young women also stated that karaoke is useful for vocal training. Another essential point is that karaoke singing in restaurants helps young women to gain the self-confidence needed to participate in amateur singing contests.

In conclusion, karaoke singing is an amateur performance and has a big influence on the behaviours of non-professional singers, in this instance, young women. They happily imitate their favourite singers, who did not foresee the emergence of karaoke versions of their songs. Karaoke has a positive effect on young women's singing; it invites them to participate in the production of cultural expression and music.

5.6 Concluding thoughts

This chapter has highlighted the amateur women's singing groups that are associated with two Islamic songs, *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana*, which take both oral and written forms and are linked to the creation of community through the music. From an Islamic perspective both songs have been adopted and respected. Women's singing groups have inherited their singing skills from the preceding generations. Participation in *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana* is, for these women, principally a form of entertainment, and a way to fulfil personal, spiritual and community needs. The elderly women act as guardians of the songs. They are responsible for carrying the songs into the future and they continue to practise them as a way of preserving their cultural music. The visibility of the middle-aged and elderly women performing *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana* is seen as an essential contribution to the cultural wealth of the Pahang Malays. Both songs remain privileged media of expression and provide an aesthetic culture dominated by middle-aged and elderly women. Musically speaking, *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana* build the older community. It is through *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana* that middle-aged and elderly women are allowed to comment on what is occurring in their local communities.

The Islamic forms of *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana* in Pahang villages are facing a decline in interest among younger people, even though they have been exposed to the songs from childhood through the rituals and ceremonies of religious life. This is due to multiple contemporary reasons. Young people may not really appreciate the songs as entertaining and would not include listening to or practising them in their leisure-time activities. Another aspect is that these songs may carry special metaphors and hidden

meanings in the original Arabic texts. This, therefore, demands a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical facts, something which is seen as an additional burden to young people.

However, the songs and their performance contribute to the creation of virtual communities on several media platforms. This is the best example of the movement of musical traditions from villages into cyberspace. Through new technology, the community can play an active role in recreating meanings and maintaining community through the songs. In other ways, technology and new media have made it possible for young women to engage in singing activities. They provide the tools for young women to practise and to experience singing activities. Karaoke is used in several contexts. The most well-known public place where young women can sing karaoke is in a restaurant. By singing karaoke, young women are able to experience singing to their ideal music, that is to say, *irama Malaysia*, which has a combination of traditional and modern elements. Through karaoke, the young women are motivated to give their best performances and also to improve their singing skills.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

The premise of this book was led by the author's curiosity about the cultural meanings (including historical resonances) of songs and music practices among Malays in Pahang villages. Following major changes over many decades, Pahang's villages have become increasingly multifaceted socio-cultural landscapes that embrace musical practices as diverse as traditional music (including *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana*), regional pop, *kugiran*, punk rock and modern *irama Malaysia* pop music on karaoke systems. The musicians in Pahang villages support both aesthetic cosmopolitanism and a musical inheritance understood as distinctively Malay.

Throughout my musical journey in Pahang villages, the hybridizing of different musical styles and instruments resulting from social and cultural changes has been noted. The notion of musical hybridization here encompasses musical practices that utilize local and global musical instruments, repertoires and performance styles. The global sounds that are found in *kugiran* and *punk rock*, previously considered as signs of cultural imperialism, have been recovered as local forms of musical expression involving the assertion of local themes. The blending of exogenous musical ideas with Malay musical forms illustrates universalizing goals and a desire to bring Malay musical elements into the domain of contemporary popular music, as well as giving them a wider appeal.

In many ways, the changes have enhanced the discourse on cultural identity and difference. I argue that the combination of global ideas with Malay musical elements is related to anxieties about the survival of Malay culture and identity. In this sense, it is related with what has been described as 'the unsettling of Malayness' (Long, 2013: 246).

Benjamin (2019a and 2019b) was concerned with the different types of Malay music performed by Malay groups (including tribal Malays) on Riau Island, in several parts of Sumatra, in Peninsula Malaysia and in south-eastern Thailand and how they encode a cline of Malayness. I wish to conclude my present work by reflecting on Benjamin's work in light of my research

findings. But, before I discuss the notion of Malayness in Malay music, I will discuss the four topics that are crucial to answering the main research question. There are the social status of musicians, continuity and discontinuity in genres, gender-related songs and community formation.

6.2 Social status of musicians

The social status of musicians deserves attention in this study. Before discussing the social status of musicians in Pahang villages, let me begin by describing the position of musicians in the social spheres of the past. Historically, a musician's activities encompassed a wide range of social spheres. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, festivals, palace celebrations and gaming events incorporated a variety of musical performances. In the fourteenth century, audiences ranged from individuals, such as the music-loving lady mentioned in the *Hikayat Bayan Budiman* (Bayan 73: 22) and *sultans/kings*, as noted in the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* (Pasai 125: 10), to professional groups (warriors), as mentioned in the *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* (AHmz 671: 9).

The musician's tasks were varied: suspending reality, moving the audience into another realm, arousing feelings of sensual pleasure, ensuring emotional relaxation, rousing communal feelings, elevating spirits during banquets and feasts, and heightening religious fervour. Musicians occupied a respected position in the social structure, as illustrated in the fifteenth-century *Hikayat Indraputra* (Ind 186: 17). However, there was also an indication that the musician was a 'servant', as mentioned in the early-sixteenth-century *Hikayat Pandawa Lima* (PandL 27: 4). No matter their station, musicians were required to satisfy certain social needs.

Today, there is an internal, community-generated hierarchy or stratification of musicians in Pahang villages: professionals, semi-professionals and amateurs. Various factors are operative in this stratification. Professional musicians in Pahang villages are associated with traditional music and regional pop music (Chapter 3). The label 'professional' suggests a social status rather than just a financial evaluation, as it connotes a serious performance over amateur playing. Professionals make their living from music and regard music-related activities as their only real employment. They commute to music venues and perform with other professionals from outside the area. Professionals are regarded as locally based but prepared to travel through the region or beyond to perform for a fee.

Kugiran and punk rock (in Chapter 4) musicians are semi-professionals. The semi-professional musicians' source of income, however, lies elsewhere. They earn only small fees from their music but perform in the hope of more and better bookings. Semi-professionals value music as enjoyable but serious recreational work, as well as considering it a part-time occupation that garners them a small additional income. Meanwhile, groups of women singers performing the Islamic art songs of *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana* (Chapter 5) are considered amateur musicians. The women's motivations are their love of music, enjoyment of singing and the music's role as voluntary work in their community.

In certain circumstances, amateur and professional/semi-professional musicians have interconnections. For instance, a *kugiran* band may include some amateur performers who want to have fun playing music. The involvement of an amateur musician, however, will not have much influence over the overall *kugiran* performance. Also, amateur players may accompany professional musical performances and receive a fee.

The musicians' status, among other factors, is related to the quality of the performance. The traditional music group Anak Kayan and the *kugiran* band Kugiran Muzik Asli are professionals and semi-professionals, respectively. Both groups would describe themselves as amateurs when they have to play songs they have never played or rehearsed before. It is apparent that being professional, semi-professional or amateur may enter into the perceptions and actions of those involved in music. There are observable interactions between audience members (amateurs) and professional/semi-professional musicians. This can be seen during the song-request segment at wedding receptions, during which audience members are encouraged to sing to the accompaniment of the *kugiran* band.

Interaction between amateurs and professionals also occurs at traditional music lectures/workshops, where amateurs showcase their talents in front of, or if lucky sing with, the professionals. Amateurs and their musical activities make an essential contribution to the continuance of traditional music, which is mainly performed by professionals.

Furthermore, a professional musician can only get started in his or her career through non-professional opportunities offered by peers, parents and schools. I could see this path being taken by a young, female amateur musician (Chapter 5), who had performed music at school events before going off to university to study music. I consider this apprenticeship to be necessary preparation for a would-be full-time musician.

Despite a clear divide between professional, semi-professional and amateur designations, individuals and groups in some circumstances could be described simply as ‘musicians’. The status of ‘musician’ grants them popularity.

6.3 Continuity and discontinuity in genres

Through my study of songs and musical practices in Pahang villages, I have identified the presence of a considerable number of historical vocal forms in present-day music genres. Some of the functions and meanings of the historical vocal forms/songs have continued to be present in today’s music genres, while others, based on my findings, have undergone changes so as to adapt the music for today’s performance outlets. The poetic forms of *pantun*, *syair*, *nazam*, *gurindam* and *seloka* in traditional music offer structures through which a person’s passion can be expressed. This concept can be traced back to a quotation in the *Hikayat Bayan Budiman* (Bayan 149: 15). *Pantun* has been popular for centuries among old people (quoted in the *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* (AHmz 127: 26)) and young people (quoted in the fifteenth-century *Hikayat Indraputra* (186: 18)) alike.

The traditional poetry song of *syair* is associated with competitions. *Syair* singing in competition is not a recent practice as people in Pahang today might think it would be. Singing *syair* (as well as *gurindam* and *nazam*) in competitions has long been a tradition, as noted in *Hikayat Indraputra* (Ind 97: 20) and in the early-seventeenth-century *Sejarah Melayu* (SM 144: 18). *Syair* has been for many centuries and continues today to be popular among young people, as mentioned in *Hikayat Indraputra* (Ind 186: 18). This can be seen in today’s *syair* singing competitions, which are largely contested by young people. There is also an indication that *syair* was historically performed to entertain royalty, as quoted in the late-eighteenth-century *Misa Melayu* (Misa 116: 26). Malays have long forgotten this tradition. However, in recent years (2017 and 2018) *syair* singing has begun to take place at several official events attended by *sultans*. I am lucky enough to have witnessed this long-forgotten tradition being practised once again by the Malays.

In regional pop music, I was able to identify *pantun*, *seloka*, *madah* and *bait* song forms in the sung lyrics. These poetic forms have long been acclaimed as the media used to tease people, as quoted in two works: *Hikayat Bayan Budiman* (Bayan 73: 22) and *Hikayat Indraputra* (Ind 60: 9). Some of these poetic forms feature witty lyrics. *Bait*, as quoted in *Hikayat Amir*

Hamzah (AHmz 671: 9), is regarded as a poem with two lines. This song form continues to be used in regional pop music, with several *bait* phrases being present (for instance, *sikit-sikit, lama-lama jadi bukit* (little by little, at the end it becomes a hill)). I argue that there are many traditional Malay proverbs in songs but they are not viewed as *bait* in contemporary practice. There is an element of *bait* quoted in *Sejarah Melayu* (SM 144: 18) that relates to a specific game competition. However, use of this particular phrase does not appear in present-day lyrics. *Madah* forms are regarded as polite sayings, as quoted in *Bayan Budiman* (Bayan 6: 29). This use of *madah* continues in regional pop songs that contain life advice and instructions (for instance, being a hardworking person, as mentioned in the song ‘Ngape Bio Semok’).

In *kugiran*, the poetic forms of *pantun*, *madah* and *bait* can be identified. Most *kugiran* songs centre on the topics of women and love. The use of *pantun* in *kugiran* music has prolonged its function as a way to praise the beauty and attractiveness of a woman. This function for *pantun* can be traced to a quotation in the early-sixteenth-century *Hikayat Pandawa Lima* (PandL 27: 4). *Madah* forms in *kugiran* music can be viewed as poetic sayings that are intended to relax the listeners. This use can be traced from a quotation in *Hikayat Indraputra* (Ind 79: 22). In a similar way, the function of *bait* continues until the present as a way to coax/seduce a woman, as noted in *Hikayat Bayan Budiman* (Bayan 73: 22). Another function of *bait* has been prolonged in *kugiran* music, where it functions as a way to entertain people during a meal. This use can be traced back to a quotation revealed in *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* (AHmz 671:9). This supports the present-day practice of *kugiran* music being performed at wedding receptions.

In punk rock, there is an indication that the lyrics in Malay are written in verse forms (stanzas) that are similar to the stylistic features of *syair*. Each stanza consists of four or five words per line, employing the rhyming scheme a-a-a-a. However, the *syair*-like lyrics in punk rock do not deal with past events. Yet, despite this, I argue that the adoption of the structural element of *syair* is the basic component of the lyrics of punk rock songs in the Malay language. Furthermore, the *syair*-like lyrics created in punk rock inevitably come from the musicians’ knowledge of Malay music history.

Zikir contains *lagham* (chains of words), as mentioned in the late-nineteenth-century *Syair Seratus Siti* (SSiti 83:1c), which are uttered with a melodious voice. In the past, *zikir* was recited by men from different classes and backgrounds, as mentioned in *Misa Melayu* (Misa 95: 6). This has now changed as, in the present, *zikir* is also chanted by women too. *Zikir* is constituted of the Islamic art songs of *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana*. The

women's singing groups prefer to perform *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana* at rituals and religious occasions mainly on Friday nights. It seems that this is a centuries-long tradition, which was noted in the seventeenth-century *Hikayat Aceh* (Aceh 74: 8).

The execution of *zikir* alongside the reading from *Kitab Barzanji* to celebrate the Prophet's birthday was noted in a quotation in *Misa Melayu* (Misa 94: 33), which shows that the Malays in Pahang villages established the tradition of celebrating the Prophet's birthday as early as the late eighteenth century. Also noted in a quotation in *Misa Melayu* (Misa 58: 33), *zikir* was chanted during the recitation of the Qur'an from its beginning to its end (*Khatm al-Qur'an*). The women's singing groups continue this tradition. They recite *zikir* (by singing/uttering *Asma'ul Husna*, the ninety-nine names of Allah) before the reading of the *Kitab Barzanji*. In the eighteenth-century *Hikayat Hang Tuah* (Tuah 491: 10), there is an indication that the reciters performed *zikir* with body movements. This is not true in the case of the women in Pahang villages, who usually perform *zikir* sitting cross-legged in a semi-circle.

Performing *zikir* was intended to show thankfulness to Allah for His blessings (as indicated in *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* (AHmz 608: 16)) as well as to increase one's strength (as indicated in the seventeenth-century *Bustan as-Salatin* (Bs.S 20)). These continue to be the reasons for the performance of *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana*, but fewer people participate today. This differs from the situation in the past, when the performance of *zikir* was carried out as a festive event attended by plenty of people (SSiti 234:10). In relation to *zikir*, *dana* is mentioned in *Syair Seratus Siti* (SSiti 243: 10a) and is regarded as a spiritual composition. In the present context, *dana* signifies the singing of Arabic compositions from the *Kitab Barzanji*. In this way *dana* penetrates the performance of *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana*. *Nazam* was mentioned alongside *dana* in the same work.

Less information about *nazam* can be found in Malay literary works except in the *Syair Seratus Siti*. As noted in a quotation in *Syair Seratus Siti*, *nazam* was performed on religious occasions (SSiti 234: 10d). This tradition continues in present practice; *nazam* is rooted in the song *nazam berendoi*, which uses a vernacular text and is performed at tonsure rituals alongside the reading of the *Kitab Barzanji*.

Pantun is an important element in *dikir rebana*. In contrast to being sung by a group of women (as described in *Hikayat Indraputra* (Ind 71: 13)), *pantun* in *dikir rebana* is used to signal the singer's ideas indirectly. This

element from the past, as mentioned in *Hikayat Hang Tuah* (Tuah 210: 4), continues to be used in the same way in the present. Also, in the same work it is noted that the *pantun* reciter is the equivalent of those who recite the Qur'an (Tuah 210: 10). This is in line with the status of the women performing *dikir rebana*, who have backgrounds as Qur'an reciters.

During my field research in Pahang villages, I did not witness the performance of *nasyid*, a popular musical style across Muslim South-East Asia. *Nasyid* is 'produced and consumed in cities and towns with a large student population and a strong Muslim activist tradition' (Barendregt, 2012: 315). Three other poetic forms: *kidung*, *kakawin* and *mandora* are also apparently absent from music practices in Pahang villages today.

6.4 Gender-specific songs

The performance of traditional music and regional pop in Chapter 3, and *kugiran* and punk rock in Chapter 4 is heavily weighted towards men. However, an increasing number of female singers are performing traditional music due to the existence of *syair* singing competitions. In regional pop, the participation of men and women is equal. No women are involved in *kugiran* or punk rock music. From my perspective, it is partly due to gender stereotypes that *kugiran* and punk rock are the domains of men. Women in bands are seen as unusual. They are not supposed to master modern/Western musical instruments, for instance, electric guitar, bass guitars or drums, which are associated with men. Furthermore, women in general are linked to the ideal of womanhood and behaviours that are not perceived as provocative.

There has been a significant change in the musical practice of *dikir rebana* and *nazam berendoi* in Pahang villages. Prior to the 1970s, there were male and female singing groups still practising the traditions. However, this situation had changed by the beginning of the twenty-first century, and *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana* have now become performance genres for women only. The bold appearance of women in *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana* performances is, in my view, driven by the fact that there are more *qari'ah* (female Qur'an reciters) in Pahang villages. *Qari'ah* have not only shed their domestic role, but also offer an alternative form of piety in the male-dominated society. In many conversations with me, older performers mentioned the importance of the songs and the fact that these Islamic art songs have been performed for generations. The audience endorses women's singing

groups as women are taking on more roles in public spaces and are now the transmitters of these musical traditions.

The performances of *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana* by women's singing groups that I witnessed piqued my curiosity regarding the power of songs for these women. Women have been composing and singing *nazam berendoi* (Appendix VII) for a long time. There are gendered dialogues in *nazam berendoi* that reflect and shape the women's status. The significance of a child appears in the song, for instance, 'the mother was nine months pregnant, she cannot taste what she eats, gives birth to a baby with pain, as life is forced from the body' (stanza 4). One can also learn about the women's hopes for the new-born baby, as in the lyric 'dear Allah (God), please give this child sustenance, a higher rank, a noble character in the world and the hereafter' (stanza 9). *Nazam berendoi* also allows the women to express their concerns about the difficult aspects of life, as in 'dear Allah, please accept our request, day and night for all time, keep us from slander and crime' (stanza 10). Above all, *nazam berendoi* offers a valued medium for women's collective expression in a society in which men dominate the musical space. In the songs, they not only express their concerns but the virtues of women too. Through the music, women create models for future generations.

The *pantun* verses are a complement to the sung texts from the *Kitab Barzanji*. The musical practice of *dikir rebana* is a source of women's spontaneous expression or expectation in the public setting of a community event. This can be seen when the women form the lyrics to four quatrains of *pantun* (Appendix VII) spontaneously as a way to change their song. This is remarkable not simply because of the spontaneous character of the performance, but because of the way the women choose their subjects in *pantun*.

In the first stanza, the singer asked the audience to provide drinking water to heal her sore throat. This is followed by the second stanza, in which the singer stressed their empty stomachs, and the feelings of being dizzy and drowsy. The third stanza expressed the same topics as the second. In the fourth, the singer mentioned traditional dishes and warm rice as a sign of her desire to eat. These four quatrains of *pantun* are regarded as women's oral literature. Unlike their counterparts performing *nazam berendoi*, who use the same sung text for every performance, the women performing *dikir rebana* are more flexible in producing unique quatrains of *pantun* on different topics at every performance.

Female performers, however, have not gained the same popularity and attention in everyday discourse on music as their male counterparts. They appear to be only partly visible and less favoured in popular discourse. Even though men dominate the musical practices in Pahang villages, it is important to mention here that women play a social role as specialized singers in ‘traditional’ set-ups, such as at child naming parties and tonsure rituals.

My impression is that the Islamic genres of *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana* are ‘safer’ female genres. The presence of female performers in musical contexts has created the promise of a receptive climate for female musical arts within the villages.

6.5 Community formation in genres

My research on songs and music practices among Malays in Pahang villages has made it possible for me to address the topic of community and how it is formed. I have made observations on the ways in which a community is formed through each genre. I suggest that there are two kinds of community formed through music: short term and long term. A short-term community is formed during a performance event, over a short period of time. Meanwhile, a long-term community is the result of a longer involvement by its members, beyond the performance event.

In the domain of *kugiran* (in Chapter 4), a short-term community is shaped before and during a wedding event. Before the wedding, the host has to consider whether to hire a *kugiran* band or a DJ to entertain the guests. This involves a selection and communication process between the host and the prospective musicians. This process might take place several weeks before the actual wedding. A short-term community in *kugiran* is developed during the reception, which usually has a segment for song requests. The guests come to the musicians, requesting that their favourite songs are played. In this segment, it is possible for the guests to sing their chosen songs to the accompaniment of the *kugiran* band. The situation that occurs at weddings provides an interesting lens through which to view how this short-term community, formed for the duration of the song-request segment of a wedding, plays an important role in ensuring a lively occasion.

A short-term digital community is forged around the Islamic art songs of *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana* (in Chapter 5). Practically speaking performance of both songs is participated in less by young people. However, young people do participate in the community via their observation and

contributions to online recordings of the songs. Individuals have uploaded videos of *nazam berendoi* and *dikir rebana* performances to YouTube and Facebook.

The availability of these songs online provides an official public space in which young people can hold debates and participate in some kind of commenting-activism. Online users add their points of view to the published performances. I focused on the users' points of view to gain an insight into the role of these Islamic art songs within the media landscape. The online users exchange ideas and information, and establish opinions in common. Based on my research, I divided the reasons for commenting on the videos into three categories: gratitude for the rare attention paid to this sort of music, regret that the traditions are facing a decline and comments about similar traditions surrounding indigenous (*orang asli*) songs. This virtual community almost certainly appeared within a short space of time.

Long-term communities have formed around the genres of traditional, regional pop and punk rock music. In certain circumstances, a long-term community can be part of the global community. The foundation of the *Syair* Academy (in Chapter 3) has brought about the formation of a community of *syair* fans. The weekly programmes (singing workshops and lectures) organized by the foundation have attracted young people to participate in this community. The state government has set up a *syair* singing competition, which is fiercely contested by young people. Their ability to sing *syair* is evaluated at three levels: district, state and national. The community grows through the holding of a yearly *syair* concert, which is attended by both citizens and people from neighbouring countries. The concert takes place in a formal setting (an auditorium) owned by the government. At this event, the audience members share the same emotions and perspectives of the performance.

The growing community around *syair* also exchanges information across online spaces. I engaged in online research on Facebook where communications took place among the *syair* concertgoers. Videos of *syair* performances as well as photos from the concert were shared. These elements have created space for *syair* singing to achieve its potential in terms of audience. Through this online site, the virtual community has a space in which to reminisce over the events. The lively Facebook commenting system provides a platform for personal opinions. Based on my analysis, I could discern four topics expressed/debated by *syair* fans within the online media landscape: inspiration to sing *syair*, the grandeur of *syair*'s tunes and themes,

improvements to an individual's music practice, and how it enriches understanding of the traditional poetry taught in schools and universities.

Regional pop (in Chapter 3) fans have formed a community through state-sponsored music concerts and digital environments. The regional pop group, Anok Semantan featured at a concert along with other popular singers. Because this concert was held at an informal open venue in Kuantan, Pahang, it enabled several forms of public display by fans of regional pop music. They responded to the songs with gestures (for instance, raised hands and dancing), and by singing along with the performance. The fans' response created a joyous and friendly atmosphere. They felt that they were part of the performance. My impression is that the inclusion of regional pop music in the concert provided a supportive environment for the fan community.

Regional pop music sustains its community through digital environments that emphasize user-generated content, contributions and self-presentation. On YouTube, individuals upload videos of regional pop songs to show their enthusiasm for the genre. Fans can easily access the videos on their devices. In the commenting system on YouTube, they get involved by exchanging ideas and information concerning the Pahang dialect in the songs and offering emotional responses about their homeland. Their interest in regional pop music is high and this is indicated by the numbers of views of the videos being in the thousands to hundreds of thousands.

Punk rock music (in Chapter 4) is a musical genre that has links to the Pahang skinhead community. The DIY ethos influences their musical activities and they do not receive assistance from larger organizations or the government. Like their international counterparts, the punk rock community in Pahang is strengthened through its Pahang skinhead orientation. In contrast to the original skinheads, those in Pahang have moulded new behaviours and attitudes. They wear specific fashions when attending musical events (gigs). They also show similar physical responses to the music.

However, their skinhead identity established through fashion is not permanent, as they will adjust their appearance to fit in with the wider public. The punk rock community is concerned with the current issues pertaining to political and social circumstances. Through a punk forum, they hold debates and exchange ideas with the panellists, who are well educated and have long experience of the punk subculture. My impression is that regardless of their 'noisy' music, the punk community plays an inclusive role in the wider community, whether punk or not. The social awareness of the punk community

is stimulating but has been less noticed by many. This is due to the public's principal perception of punk musical activity as being the music of the devil.

6.6 Final remarks

In the final part of this book, I want to reflect on my research findings in terms of the concept of Malayness expounded in Benjamin's two works (2019a and 2019b). In his studies, Benjamin is concerned with the different varieties of Malay music performed by Malay groups (including tribal Malays), mainly in Riau Island and Sumatra, and how they encode a cline of Malayness. He also compares these with a limited number of songs from the southern part of Peninsula Malaysia and southern Thailand. Benjamin chose a selection of Malay songs that took the forms of *joget*, *dangdut*-style, *dondang sayang*, *ghazal* and *gurindam*, all of which were written between the 1960s and the 1990s.

In the first example, he measures the Malayness of the *joget*-beat song 'Serampang Laut' in terms of the differing deliveries from tribal Malay, 'proper' Malay and professional/modern urban Malay groups. In his view, the tribal Malay group performed the song with a lack of any elaboration of the transition between the notes. Meanwhile, the 'proper' Malay group displayed a moderate but noticeable degree of melismatic elaboration. Benjamin then compared these with the performance of a professional singer who exhibited obvious melismatic elaboration in the same song but used a *dangdut*-style rhythm and different words. In his second example, Benjamin compared professional performances of two more song types: *dondang sayang* and *ghazal*. The performance of the latter (historically linked with aristocrats) was much more serious and included a high degree of melismatic elaboration compared to the former. In the third example, he measured Malayness in the *joget* song 'Tanjung Katung', which was performed separately by tribal Malays in Riau Island and a Malay singer in north Sumatra. The result was comparable with the one mentioned in the first example.

These were then compared with a performance of *gurindam* by a singer from the *Gurindam* City of urban Tanjungpinang, which offered the most highly elaborate example of melismatic style. This is not surprising, as in Tanjungpinang, many professionals of innovative *kreasi* music can be found, as discussed in another work by Benjamin (2019b). Malayness is also reflected in some other features of music. 'Malay music intentionally takes in elements from all over the world, especially in its instrumentation' (Benjamin, 2019b:

284). Modern urban Malays are keen to incorporate elements from a wide range of sources, merging them into a style that remains distinctively Malay.

Benjamin also discussed, without concrete evidence, the two reasons for the failure of Malayness in songs. First, from the closely scored electronic instrumentation he judged that the performers aimed to be ‘modern’. This pre-arranged scoring, along with choral interjection, limited room for improvisation. Second, the performers (in this case, from north Sumatra) were not ‘proper’ Malays compared to the performers in *ghazal* from Tanjungpinang, even though the Malays in the city are now a minority. ‘The vitality and creativeness of their activities serve to remind the population that Tanjungpinang is historically a Malay place’ (Benjamin, 2019b: 281). Benjamin concluded, ‘a heightened degree of melismatic elaboration corresponds to a higher degree of cultural Malayness’ (Benjamin, 2019a: 103). At the modern urban and royal ends of the cline, the orientation is outwards and hierarchical. This is in contrast to the tribal end of the cline, where the orientation is inwards, away from the outer world.

Creating a sense of Malayness as discussed in Benjamin’s work (2019a), I argue, is an achievement. In the late twentieth century, Malay culture, especially in Riau (the land of Malays), was a site of protest (Long, 2019). Benjamin’s attempt to evaluate Malayness in songs relies on several generalizations. Let me now relate this evaluation to the music genres in Pahang. Traditional music, among other music genres, exhibits the highest degree of embellishment of the melodic line. It is true that some Malay performers acknowledge that a higher degree of melodic ornamentation corresponds to increased Malayness. Chanting verses is understood to be a graceful and noble expressive art. However, this association between ornamentation and Malayness is insufficient without adjusting for the performer’s competence (singing technique). It would be narrow-minded to presume that an unadorned performance that lacks any elaboration of the transitions corresponds to a lesser degree of Malayness. I contend that singing technique does not influence the degree of Malayness.

The distinctive sounds of Western music are combined with traditional songs and some other genres to produce modern-sounding music. In traditional songs, keyboard effects are added. Pahang musicians employ a combination of modern and traditional elements. The songs are still recognizable as ‘Malay’ in their rhythms, melodic style and ornamentation, but are more modern in their approach. This fusion is a general feature of Malay culture that has been noted by European commentators for at least two centuries (Irving, 2014). The implementation of exogenous ideas in Malay

music, I argue, does not bring weakness to Malay culture, but instead revitalizes its Malayness. Malay music can be fused with exogenous musical sounds. Malay songs have porous boundaries which are applied broadly across geographical distances that remain open and assimilatory.

Last but not least, I reflect on Benjamin's judgement of musicians' names to measure the degree of Malayness in their music practices. To judge a performer to be a 'proper' Malay or not by simply considering his/her name is, I argue, irrelevant in the Malay music discourse. Malay identity in the plurality of musical styles is codified through transcription and melodies. The performers' names, thus, do not define their musicality.

Glossary

<i>asli</i>	‘original’ Malay song-dance genre in a slow tempo, usually accompanied by a biola, rebana and a gong that is struck on every eighth beat
<i>bait</i>	Malay couplet, in contrast to a quatrain or long poem
<i>baju Melayu</i>	traditional Malay costume for men, worn over trousers and usually complemented with a short sarong wrapped around the hips
<i>baju kurung</i>	long blouse worn by women
<i>bangsawan</i>	nobility, a type of Malay popular theatre or opera
<i>bangsi</i>	bamboo flute
<i>barzanji</i>	Islamic religious text performed vocally, sometimes with frame drumming
<i>berendoi</i>	Malay lullaby
<i>celempung</i>	zither-like <i>gamelan</i> instrument
<i>ceracap</i>	Malay castanet
<i>dana</i>	Arabic term that signifies singing
<i>dandi</i>	small Indian kettledrum
<i>dangdut</i>	pop music and dance genre and style first developed in the 1970s, usually with Hindi film and Arabic and Western pop elements
<i>dap</i>	tambourine
<i>dendang</i>	solo song performed with improvised lyrics
<i>dikir barat</i>	style of call-and-response singing led by a <i>tukang karut</i> , who composes the poems as he performs them
<i>dikir rebana</i>	type of sung poetry accompanied by a large frame drum and based upon the Islamic <i>Kitab Barzanji</i>
<i>dondang sayang</i>	musical genre which features vocal performances (sung poetry) to the accompaniment of an ensemble of instruments
<i>gambang</i>	small Indian kettledrum
<i>gambus</i>	six-stringed Arab musical instrument
<i>gamelan</i>	set of musical instruments making up a Javanese band
<i>gedombak</i>	single-membrane drum
<i>gelinang</i>	Javanese set of three gongs
<i>gendang</i>	generic term for a double-headed drum of any type or size
<i>gendang silat</i>	two-faced martial frame drum
<i>genderang</i>	big drum
<i>gendir</i>	Javanese instrument consisting of strips of metal resting on strings

<i>ghazal</i>	noble linguistic expressive art, performed by aristocrats who came to the Malay world from both Mughal India and Arabia and Persia between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries
<i>gong/gung</i>	small to medium-sized bossed gong
<i>gurindam</i>	Malay poetry form that comprises a combination of two clauses: the relative clause forms one line and is linked to the second line or the main clause
<i>hikayat</i>	orally performed or written epic or literary work, often with a legendary, religious or moral character
<i>inang</i>	Malay song-dance genre in quick tempo that portrays the movements of ladies-in-waiting
<i>irama Malaysia</i>	modern pop music genre developed through the process of renouncing some of the purity of traditional Malay sounds to reflect a more modern sound
<i>jiwang</i>	melancholic song
<i>joget</i>	quick-tempo Malay song-dance, traditionally accompanied by a violin and a drum (and other optional instruments), with a professional female singer-dancer accepting paying male partners with whom she exchanges <i>pantun</i> verses and dances in a couple without touching
<i>kakawin</i>	old Javanese poetic story
<i>kampung</i>	village
<i>kecapi</i>	zither
<i>keris</i>	Malay dagger, symbolizing Malay royalty and dignitaries
<i>kidung</i>	vocal genre, often sung during Hindu rituals
<i>kompang</i>	single-headed hand-beaten drum with a shallow round frame
<i>kopok</i>	sounding-block beaten with a drumstick
<i>kroncong</i>	popular musical style with probable Portuguese or Malay roots, performed by a vocalist
<i>kugiran</i>	abbreviation for <i>kumpulan gitar rancak</i> (lively guitar band); the band consists of three guitarists and a drummer
<i>lagham/lagam</i>	exceptional chains of song
<i>lagu gendang nobat</i>	mark of the ruler's sovereignty. A <i>nobat</i> is an essential part of his official regalia
<i>lancang</i>	yacht
<i>madah</i>	polite saying
<i>makyong</i>	operatic play
<i>mandora</i>	Siamese traditional dance

<i>mathnawī</i>	spiritual couplets
<i>masri</i>	music associated with the dance of the same name
<i>mawlid/maulud</i>	celebration of the Prophet's birthday in third month of the Muslim year
<i>Melayu</i>	a major ethnic and musico-lingual group living in Malaysia, all provinces of Sumatra and other parts of Indonesia, and comprising of many subgroups; a person of Malay descent
<i>mulamma</i>	typical form of poetic composition
<i>muri</i>	completed metal flute
<i>nafiri</i>	long silver-coloured trumpet
<i>nagara</i>	metal kettledrum
<i>nasab</i>	ancestry
<i>nasyid</i>	Islamic devotional song, from the Arabic which means song, hymn or anthem
<i>nazam</i>	poetry song
<i>pantun</i>	Malay poetic quatrain comprising an a-b-a-b rhyming couplet structure, normally with a poetic allusion in the first couplet and the poet's main message or intent in the second. It is a verse form that is sung
<i>pilang</i>	ancient ship
<i>pop yeh yeh</i>	style of music whose name is derived from the lyrics of song 'She Loves You, Yeah Yeah Yeah' by the British group The Beatles; Malaysian rock and roll music
<i>rapa'i</i>	frame drum
<i>ratib</i>	the constant repetition of the name of Allah
<i>rebab/herbab</i>	bowed string instrument with a half-coconut-shell body
<i>rebana</i>	typical form of Islamic frame drum found in South-East Asia
<i>rebana besar</i>	big frame drum
<i>redap</i>	small hand-drum
<i>rong ngeng</i>	term dating to fourteenth-century Java for a type of music ensemble featuring a female singer-dancer
<i>ruba'i</i>	<i>syair</i> with religious theme
<i>salawat</i>	vocal genre that uses religious and secular texts accompanied by frame drums
<i>seloka</i>	satirical poetry
<i>serunai</i>	a wooden clarinet with a fluted bell
<i>serdam</i>	end-blown bamboo ring flute
<i>silat</i>	martial art/art of self-defence, usually including a display of skill and a fight between two performers
<i>sirih</i>	betel leaf and nut

<i>suling</i>	flute
<i>syair</i>	a stanza with a-a-a-a rhyming scheme and is adapted from Urdu and early Indo-Persian literary works
<i>tambu</i>	cylindrical drum
<i>tandak</i>	Malay dance
<i>tasydid</i>	the smallest letter, <i>sin</i> , as an indicator of the emphasis in certain words in the Qur'an
<i>topeng</i>	mask
<i>qasida</i>	laudatory, elegiacal or satirical poem
<i>qit'ah</i>	short rhythmic song used in the recitation of the Qur'an
<i>wayang</i>	shadow play
<i>zapin</i>	traditional dance of Arabic origin, but without religious significance. It demands a practised accuracy of step and dignified movements to a fairly quick tempo
<i>zikir/dikir</i>	'remembrance' (of Allah), religious chants often performed at commemorative feasts, such as on the Prophet's birthday

Appendix I

(Aripin Said)

(A) Title of album: *Nyanyian Rakyat Aripin Said*; Year: 2002; Producer: Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism Malaysia

List of songs:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Angin</i> | 6. <i>Indung-Indung</i> |
| 2. <i>Burung Kenek-kenek</i> | 7. <i>Tembang Tebu</i> |
| 3. <i>Ya Habibun</i> | 8. <i>Galah Mudik</i> |
| 4. <i>Tu Bulan Tu Bintang</i> | 9. <i>Anak Kambing Cantik-Cantik</i> |
| 5. <i>Nazam Ya Tuan</i> | 10. <i>Alamat Hari Nak Siang</i> |

Title of album: *Nyanyian Rakyat (I): Untung-Untungan Aripin Said*; Year: 2008; Producer: Pahang Public Library Corporation (*Perbadanan Perpustakaan Awam Pahang*)

List of songs:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Untung-untungan</i> | 6. <i>Tarian Gajah</i> |
| 2. <i>Bangau Oh Bangau</i> | 7. <i>Awang Pantas Negeri</i> |
| 3. <i>Ayam Denak Dani</i> | 8. <i>Nazam Nasihat</i> |
| 4. <i>Seloka Negeri</i> | 9. <i>Si Pemikat</i> |
| 5. <i>Alamat Hari Nak Siang</i> | 10. <i>Sorong Papan Tarik Papan</i> |

Title of album: *Nyanyian Rakyat (II): Puteri Kayang Aripin Said*; Year: 2008; Producer: Pahang Public Library Corporation (*Perbadanan Perpustakaan Awam Pahang*)

List of songs:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. <i>Anak Ayam Turun Sepuluh</i> | 6. <i>Jang Jang Jala</i> |
| 2. <i>Puteri Kayang</i> | 7. <i>Tampian Nyiru</i> |
| 3. <i>Racik Raja Putera</i> | 8. <i>Pak Sang Bagak</i> |
| 4. <i>Tidurlah Mata</i> | 9. <i>Gong Gong Nai</i> |
| 5. <i>Ayun Buai</i> | 10. <i>Amboi-amboi</i> |

Title of album: *Taptibau: Lagu-lagu Rakyat Negeri Pahang Aripin Said*;
Year: 2012; Producer: Pahang Public Library Corporation (*Perbadanan Perpustakaan Awam Pahang*)

List of songs:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Taptibau</i> | 7. <i>Menjunjung Duli</i> |
| 2. <i>Perantau</i> | 8. <i>Budi</i> |
| 3. <i>Tak Terlupakan</i> | 9. <i>Pedoman Hidup</i> |
| 4. <i>Peredaran Zaman</i> | 10. <i>Buaian Tunggal</i> |
| 5. <i>Unggak-unggik</i> | 11. <i>Syair Rakesy Dua Belas</i> |
| 6. <i>Pelabuhan Dagang</i> | 12. <i>Puteri Kayang*</i> |

**Puteri Kayang* was rerecorded in 2012; its first appearance for listeners was on the second album published in 2008.

(B) A list of musical events attended by Aripin Said to disseminate Pahang traditional folk music:

- a) 10 October 2013: a night of traditional sung poetry held in the hall of *Sekolah Menengah Abu Bakar* (Abu Bakar Secondary School), Temerloh, Pahang;
- b) 23 October 2013: a night of *Semantan Berbunga II*, held at the Patin Hall, Temerloh, Pahang;
- c) 26-28 November 2014: an incubator workshop for writing of *gurindam* and *syair*, held at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur;
- d) 29 November 2014: singing performance at a Malay wedding in Cheras, Selangor;
- e) 30 May 2016: a discussion of the Malay cultures of Pahang, held at the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (Institute of Language and Literature) in Kuala Lumpur.

Appendix II

(Roslan Madun)

Research work on *syair* in the Malay Archipelago

- a) 9-14 September 2014: *Kembara syair: menjejaki syair Melayu Nusantara* in Pekanbaru, Indonesia;
- b) 2013 to present: Roslan has travelled to several regions in Sumatran Indonesia (Riau, Jambi, Palembang, Medan, Aceh and Penyengat Island)

Singing workshop/competition/festival/theatre performances

- a) 10 October 2013: a lecture on traditional sung poetry held at *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Temerloh* (Temerloh Secondary School), Temerloh, Pahang;
- b) 2-3 November 2013: a lecture on traditional sung poetry held at *Sekolah Berasrama Penuh Integrasi Kuantan* (the Kuantan Integration School), Kuantan, Pahang;
- c) 26 June 2014: a festival of *pantun* and *gurindam* held at the Institute of Teacher Training, Kuala Lumpur;
- d) 17 August 2014: a workshop on traditional sung poetry held at *Sekolah Kebangsaan Paya Tawar* (Paya Tawar Primary School), Temerloh, Pahang;
- e) 21 November 2014: ‘*Sembang Santai*’ session held in the conference hall of *Pusat Pengajian Ilmu Kemanusiaan* at Malaysia Science University, Penang;
- f) 15-16 December 2014: theatre performance of *Menjejak Bahaman* at Mara Technology University in Jengka, Pahang;
- g) 26 April 2016: Maran district-level *syair* competition, held at *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Jengka 12* (Jengka 12 Secondary School) in Jengka, Pahang;
- h) 25 May 2016: an edutainment (*didik hiburan*) workshop for schoolteachers held at *Sekolah Kebangsaan Lanchang* (Lanchang Primary School), Lanchang, Pahang;
- i) 23 September 2016: a Nusantara *syair* concert held in the auditorium of the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (Institute of Language and Literature) in Kuala Lumpur.

Singing events

- a) 23 October 2013: *Malam Semantan Berbunga II*, which was held at *Dataran Patin Temerloh* (Patin Square in Temerloh), Temerloh, Pahang;
- b) 31 October 2013: Singing performance (*syair, nazam, gurindam* and *seloka*) at the Darul Ta'zim Literary Presentation Awards Night in Johor;
- c) 15 August 2014: Poetry reading held at Pena House in Kuala Lumpur;
- d) 21 November 2014: A Night of Appreciation held in the *Dewan Budaya* Hall, Malaysia Science University.

Appendix III

(Anok Semantan)

Title of VCD: **Karaoke Anok Semantan Lagu-lagu Loghat Pahang**; Year: 2009; Producer: Afzainizam Ismail

No.	Song Title	Main vocalist
1.	<i>Makwe Koi</i>	Putra
2.	<i>Meling-meling</i>	Putra and Pyan
3.	<i>Baju Kurung Pahang</i>	Fadlina
4.	<i>Ngape Bio Semok</i>	Hariz and Pyan
5.	<i>Inang Pantun Rindu</i>	Putra and Zarin
6.	<i>Gone Gamoknye</i>	Hariz and Fadlina
7.	<i>Ayam Denok Deni</i>	Zurin
8.	<i>Moh La Weh</i>	Zurin and Fadlina
9.	<i>Kole Semantan</i>	Hariz and Pyan
10.	<i>Anok Ayam Didik</i>	Putra
11.	<i>Mudik Meminang</i>	Zurin
12.	<i>Sri Peterane</i>	Fadlina

Appendix IV

The section *Aljannatu wa nai'muhâ* in the *Kitab Barzanji*

Source: Thobiby Qolby (<https://pecintahabibana.wordpress.com/2014/02/21/al-jannatu-wa-naimuha-sadun-یالبرزنج-مولد-دیف/>)

Verse 1: *Aljannatu wa na'imuhâ sa'dun liman yushollî wa yusallim wa yubârik 'alaih* (Heaven and all the pleasures in it are happiness for those who pray for greetings and beg for blessings to the Prophet Muhammad)

Verse 2: *Bismillâhir-rahmânir-rahîm* (In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, Most Merciful)

Verse 3: *Abtadi-ul imlâ-a bismidz-dzâtil 'aliyyati mustadirron faidlol barokâti 'alâ mâ anâ lahû wa awlâhu* (I begin to read in the name of the Most High, by pleading an overflow of blessings on what Allah has granted to the Prophet Muhammad)

Verse 4: *Wa utsannî bihamdin mawâriduhû sâ-ighotun haniyyatun* (I praise that the source will always make me happy)

Verse 5: *Mumtathiyân minasy-syukril jamîli mathôyâhu* (With wonderful gratitude)

Verse 6: *Wa ushollî wa usallim 'alân-nûril mawshûfi bittaqqoddumi wal awwaliyyati* (I pray for blessings upon the light that is dissolved by the foremost (of their beings) and forbid (for all beings))

Verse 7: *Almuntaqili fîl ghuroril karîmati wal jibâhi* (Moving on noble people)

Verse 8: *Wastammihullâha ta'âlâ ridlwânan yakhushshul 'itrotath-thôhirotan-nabawiyyah* (I pray to Allah for special gift for the Prophet Muhammad's holy family)

Verse 9: *Wa ya'ummush-shohâbata wal atbâ'a wa man wâlâhu* (And generally for the Prophet's friends, followers and loved ones)

Verse 10: *Wa astajdîhi hidâyatan lisulûkis-subulil wâdlihatin jaliyyati* (And I ask Allah to give me directions for a clear path)

Verse 11: *Wa hifdlon minal ghowâyati fî khithotil khotho-I wa khuthôhu* (And preserve me from losing direction)

Verse 12: *Wa ansyuru min qishshotil mawlidin-nabawiyyi burûdan hisânan 'abqoriyyatan* (I spread good and beautiful cloth on the story of the birth of the Prophet)

Verse 13: *Nâdhiman minan-nasabisy-syarîfi 'iqdan tuhallâl masâmi'u bihulâhu* (By assembling a poem about noble descent as a necklace that decorates the ear)

Verse 14: *Wa asta'înu bi hawlillâhi ta'âlâ wa quwwatihil qowiyyati* (And I ask for help from Allah The Almighty)

Verse 15: *Fa innahû Lâ hawla wa lâ quwwata illâ billâhi* (Indeed, because there is no strength except with the help of Allah)

Verse 16: *'Aththirillâhumma qobrohul karîmi bi'arfin syadziyyin min sholâtin wa taslîm* (O Allah, purify the grave of the noble Prophet with blessings and peace)

Verse 17: *Wa ba'du fa aqûlu huwa sayyidunâ Muhammadu-bnu 'Abdillâhi-bni 'Abdil Muththolib wasmuhû syaibatul hamdi humidat khishôluhûs-saniyyah* (After that I said, He is our Prophet Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Abdil Muthalib. His name [Muthalib's name] is Syaibatul Hamdi and his noble behaviours are commendable)

Verse 18: *Ibni Hâsyimin wasmuhû 'Amrû-bnu 'Abdi Manâfin wasmuhul Mughîrotulladzî yuntamâl irtiqô-u li'ulyâh* (He was the son of Hashim, whose real name was Amr, son of Abdi Manaf, whose real name was Mughiral, whose nobility was shown to him because of his greatness)

Verse 19: *Ibni Qushoyyin wasmuhû Mujammi'un summiya biQushoyyin litaqôshîhi fî bilâdi qudlô'atal qoshiyyati* (He is the son of Qushay, whose real name Mujammi'. He was called Qushay because he went to the remote state of Qudha'ah)

Verse 20: *Ilâ an a'âdahullâhu ta'âlâ ilâl haromil muhtaromi fahamâ himâhu* (Until Allah returns it to a sacred and honourable land, He maintains it with preservation)

Verse 21: *Ibni Kilâbin wasmuhû Hakîmu-bni Murrota-bni Ka'bi-bni Lu-ayyi-bni Ghôlibi-bni Fihrin wasmuhû Quroisyun wa ilaihi tunsabul buthûnul qurosiyyatu* (He is the son of Kilab, the real name of Judge, the son of Murrah, the son of Ka'ab, the son of Luayy, the son of Gholib, the son of Fihri, whose real name is Quraish. And to him all the tribe of Quraish were reckoned)

Verse 22: *Wa mâ fawqohû Kinâniyyun kamâ janaha ilaihil katsîru wartadlôhu* (The person on it is from Kabain Kinanah, as many people would think)

Verse 23: *Ibni Mâliki-bnin-Nadlri-bni Kinânata-bni Khuzaymata-bni Mudrikata-bni Ilyâsa wa huwa awwalu man ahdâl budna ilâr-rihâbil haromiyiyati* (He [Fihri] was the son of Malik, the son of Nadhr, the son of Kinanah, the son of Khuzaimah, the son of Mudrikah, the son of Ilyas. And Ilyas was the first to sacrifice a camel to Baitul Haram)

Verse 24: *Wa sumi'a fî shulbihin-Nabiyyu shallâllâhu 'alaihi wasallama dzakarollâha ta'âlâ walabbâhu* (And in his backbone, the Prophet heard and fulfilled the call of Allah)

Verse 25: *Ibni Mudloro-bni Nizâri-bni Ma'addi-bni 'Adnâna wa hâdzâ silkun nadhdhomat farô-idahû banânus-sunnatis-saniyyah* (He [Ilyas] was the son of Mudhar bin Nizar bin Ma'ad bin Adnan. Here is a necklace whose pearls are covered by a high Sunnah)

Verse 26: *Wa rof'ahû ilâl kholîli Ibrôhîma amsaka 'anhusy-syâri'u wa abâhu* (To mention the people on it (above Adnan) to al-Khalil, Prophet Ibrahim, Shari'ah (the Prophet) restrained and refused to mention it)

Verse 27: *Wa 'Adnânu bilâ roybin 'inda dzawîl 'ulûmin-nasabiyiyati ilâdz-dzabîhi Ismâ'îla nisbatuhu wa muntamâhu* (And no doubt, according to those who have knowledge of *nasab* (ancestry), *nasab* of Adnan to Dzabih (the person to be slaughtered), namely Ismail)

Verse 28: *Fa a'dhim bihî min 'iqdin ta-allaqot kawâkibuhud-durriyyatu* (It is great that the *nasab* is from the jewel of the star that is glittering)

Verse 29: *Wa kaifa lâ wassayyidul akromu shallâllâhu 'alaihi wasallama wâsithotuhul muntaqôhu* (Why not, while the most noble Prophet Muhammad is his chosen centre)

Verse 30: *Nasabun tahsibul 'ulâ bihulâhu* (That is the *nasab* which is believed to be high because of its cleanliness)

Verse 31: *Qolladat-hâ nujûmahâl jawzâ-u* (The star of Jauza' (Aries) has assembled its stars)

Verse 32: *Habbadzâ 'iqdu sûdadin wa fakhôrin anta fihil yatîmatul 'ashmâ-u* (How beautiful are the strands of perfections and splendour, where you are to him a gem that is preserved)

Verse 33: *Wa akrim bihî min nasabin thohharohullâhu ta'âlâ min sifâhil jâhiliyyah* (What a glorious race to be purified by Allah from the Jahiliyyah)

Verse 34: *Awrodaz-Zainul 'Irôqiyyu wâridahû fî mawridihîl haniyyi warowâhu* (Zain al-Iraqi said and narrated it in his good essay)

Verse 35: *Hafidhol ilâhu karômatan li Muhammadin âbâ-ahul amjâda shownân lismihî* (Allah nourished his noble ancestors for honouring the Prophet Muhammad that is to keep his name)

Verse 36: *Tarokûs-sifâha falam yushibhum 'âruhû min Âdamin wa ilâ abihi wa ummihî* (They abandoned the adultery, so disability did not overtake them, from Adam to his fathers)

Verse 37: *Sarôtun sarô nûrun-nubuwwati fî asârîri ghurorihimul bahiyyah* (They are leaders of the prophetic light walking on their brilliant brow lines)

Verse 38: *Wa badaro badruhû fî jabîni jaddihî 'Abdil Muththolibi wabnihî 'Abdillâh* (And it is clear that the light [Prophet Muhammad] on the forehead of his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib and his son, Abdullah)

Appendix V

Al-Fatihah (the opening chapter of the Qur'an)

Source: <https://quran.com/1>

Verse 1: *Bismillâhir-rahmânir-rahîm* (In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful)

Verse 2: *Al-hamdu lillâhi rabbil-âlamîn* (All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds)

Verse 3: *Ar-rahmânir-rahîm* (The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful)

Verse 4: *Mâliki yawmid-dîn* (Sovereign of the Day of Recompense)

Verse 5: *Iyyâka na'budu wa 'iyyâka nasta'in* (It is You we worship and You we ask for help)

Verse 6: *Ihdinas-sirâtal-mustaqîm* (Guide us to the straight path)

Verse 7: *Sirâtallazîna an'amta 'alayhim ghayril-maghdhûbi 'alayhim waladh-dhâlliîn* (The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray)

Appendix VI

Nazam berendoi with translation

Source: Makkik Ani from Kuantan, Pahang

*(1) Nazam dimulakan dengan Bismillah,
disudahi pula Alhamdulillah,
janganlah anak berhati gundah,
dikau diayun nazam ditambah,
Lailahaillah Muhammad Rasulullah.*

This song begins with the name of Allah,
will end with gratitude to Allah
please don't, my dear, feel lonely,
you're in a swing, the song continues,
There is no God but God (Allah), Muhammad is the messenger to Allah

*(2) Kuat semangat putera/puterimu tuan,
jangan terkejut dalam buaian,
dijemput kami hadir sekalian,
ibubapamu minta endoikan,
Lailahaillah Muhammad Rasulullah.*

Your daughter/son is full of courage,
don't be surprised in a swing
of our attendance,
your parents have asked us to lullaby,
There is no God but God (Allah), Muhammad is the messenger to Allah

*(3) Selamat datang tuan dan puan,
ibubapa adik kakak sekalian,
sama-sama kita semua meraikan,
majlis buaian serta dodoikan,
Lailahaillah Muhammad Rasulullah.*

Welcome sir and madam,
parents, brothers, sisters,
together we celebrate,
this event of a swinging cradle and a lullaby,
There is no God but God (Allah), Muhammad is the messenger to Allah

*(4) Dikandung ibu sembilan bulan,
air dan nasi tiada tertelan,
melahirkan dikau betapa kesakitan,
serasa bercerai nyawa di badan,
Lailahaillah Muhammad Rasulullah.*

The mother was nine months pregnant,
she cannot taste what she eats,
gives birth to a baby with pain,
as life is forced from the body,
There is no God but God (Allah), Muhammad is the messenger to Allah.

*(5) Sebelum dikau jatuh ke lantai,
dengan segera bidan mencapai,
sudah dimandikan baju dipakai,
tinggallah ibu lemah dan longlai,
Lailahaillah Muhammad Rasulullah.*

Before the baby (you) touches the floor,
the midwife immediately takes you,
the baby (you) is bathed and dressed,
mother is relaxed because of the effort of giving birth to you,
There is no God but God (Allah), Muhammad is the messenger to Allah.

*(6) Sesudah itu lalu di qamat,
minta doa supaya selamat,
ingatlah pesan Nabi Muhammad,
atas mengerjakan amal syariat,
Lailahaillah Muhammad Rasulullah.*

Then, sacred words are recited,
ask for the baby to be safe,
remember the message from the Prophet Muhammad,
to do good deeds,
there is no God but God (Allah), Muhammad is the messenger to Allah.

*(7) Bilalah anak meningkat dewasa,
ajarliah ilmu agama kita,
jikalau kita tiada masa,
serahkan pada alim ulama,
Lailahaillah Muhammad Rasulullah.*

When this child grows up,
teach him religious knowledge,
if we do not have time,
Hand over the role to a pious person,
There is no God but God (Allah), Muhammad is the messenger to Allah

*(8) Jikalau anak sudahlah baligh,
lima perkara sudahlah wajib,
dirikan sembahyang mengangkat takbir,
sehari semalam jangan dimungkir,*

Lailahaillah Muhammad Rasulullah.

When this child is *baligh* (has reached maturity),
he is bound to five Islamic pillars,
perform prayer,
five times a day,
There is no God but God (Allah), Muhammad is the messenger to Allah.

*(9) Ya Allah Malikul Izzati,
anak ini berilah rezeki,
Minta dikurniakan pangkat yang tinggi
dunia akhirat biar terpuji,
Lailahaillah Muhammad Rasulullah.*

Dear Allah,
please give this child sustenance,
a higher rank,
a noble character in the world and the hereafter,
There is no God but God (Allah), Muhammad is the messenger to Allah.

*(10) Ya Allah Malikul Manan,
doalah kami minta perkenan,
siang dan malam sepanjang zaman,
bala dan fitnah minta dijauhkan,
Lailahaillah Muhammad Rasulullah.*

Dear Allah,
please accept our request,
day and night, for all the time,
keep us from slander and crime,
There is no God but God (Allah), Muhammad is the messenger to Allah.

*(11) Tamatlah sudah anak diayunkan,
beramai-ramai kawan dendangkan,
salah dan silap harap dimaafkan,
makan dan minum minta halalkan,
Lailahaillah Muhammad Rasulullah.*

That is the end for this event,
we sing in the crowd,
please forgive us if we make mistakes,
thank you for the dishes and drinks,
There is no God but God (Allah), Muhammad is the messenger to Allah

Appendix VII

Quatrains (*pantun*) in *dikir rebana* with translation

(Source: Wan Saodah from Jerantut, Pahang)

*(1) Betik diperam di waktu pagi,
kain langsir di atas para,
wahai encik yang baik hati,
mintalah air mengubat suara.*

A papaya is fermented in the morning,
(there is) a curtain on the shelf,
dear sir with a kind heart,
I need water to heal sore throat.

*(2) Encik Junus berjual lembing,
sayang dijual kepada datuk,
perut lapar amboi kepala pening,
bertambahlah pula mata mengantuk.*

Mr Junus sells spears,
it is sold to the old man,
hungry stomach and dizzy head,
plus drowsiness.

*(3) Kacang goreng digoreng kacang,
mi goreng dalam tudung periuk,
tekaknya kering kepala pening,
bertambah pula mata mengantuk.*

Fried nuts, fried nuts,
fried noodle in the pot,
throat is dry and headaches,
plus drowsiness.

*(4) Burung serindit terbang malam,
singgah sebentar di pohon sena,
gulai paku si gulai pegaga,
nasi meruap dalam belanga.*

Lovebirds flew in the night,
dropped by on a magnificent shade-tree,
curries of fern and creeping herb,
warmed rice in the clay.

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SAMENVATTING

De Maleiers houden zich bezig met een verscheidenheid aan activiteiten met betrekking tot zang en muziek. Daarom gaat deze studie over de culturele betekenis van zang en muziek voor Maleiers, in dit geval in Pahang, Maleisië. Deze studie onderzoekt op welke manieren de nalatenschap van het verleden nog steeds gehoord kan worden in het heden en tot op welke hoogte de muzikale gebruiken in het heden gevormd zijn door ideeën, overtuigingen en gevoelens voor het verleden. Het doel van deze studie is om de fundamentele dimensies van zang en muzikale gebruiken van Maleiers in dorpen in Pahang te ontdekken en daarop te reflecteren. Begrijpen wat mensen doen en hoe zij deelnemen aan muzikale activiteiten helpt ons om bewijs te verzamelen voor de aard van de muziek en de rol die muziek speelt in de levens van de mensen.

Het eerste hoofdstuk beschrijft de achtergrond van deze studie. Pahang is de grootste staat in West-Maleisië. Het is de op twee na grootste staat van Maleisië, na Sabah en Sarawak in Oost-Maleisië. Maleiers omvatten de grootste bevolkingsgroep in Pahang en zij volgen de gebruiken van de Islam. Het Maleis is de nationale taal sinds de onafhankelijkheid van Maleisië. De bevolking in Pahang spreekt overwegend het Pahang dialect, een van de regionale dialecten van Maleisië. De Maleise bewoners van de dorpen in Pahang claimen afstammelingen te zijn van mensen die geboren zijn in Sumatra. De bevolking die woonachtig is in traditionele dorpen heeft zijn eigen actieve en voortgaande cultuur. Dit hoofdstuk richt zich ook op gepubliceerde werken over de muzikale etnografie in Maleisië. Deze werken hebben aangetoond dat de ideeën van de Maleise muziek beïnvloed zijn door de muziek van verschillende delen van de wereld, aangezien de Maleiers in een multiraciale samenleving leven.

De vroegere muzikale identiteit en de sociale omgeving van de Maleise wereld, waar Pahang deel van uitmaakt, wordt onderzocht in het tweede hoofdstuk. Het doel is om liederen uit het verleden te begrijpen en de context van de uitvoering daarvan. Ik heb verwezen naar twaalf klassieke Maleise werken (historisch of fictief) van de veertiende tot de negentiende eeuw. Deze twaalf literaire werken maken deel uit van de culturele erfenis van de Maleiers van Zuidoost-Azië. Zij tonen de vorm, verstrekken de inhoud en beschrijven de historische context van liederen en de muzikale gebruiken daarin beschreven.

Veel van deze werken zijn niet in een Maleise context geplaatst. Sommigen vormen aanpassingen van teksten uit andere talen, zoals

bijvoorbeeld het Indiaas/Sanskriet, Perzisch en Oud Javaans. Ik beargumenteer dat in veel van deze werken het verhaal tot op zekere hoogte Maleis is gemaakt. Maleise auteurs verpakken de verhalen opnieuw vanuit de originele werken met nieuwe en gunstige toevoegingen die in de smaak vallen bij mensen uit de Maleise archipel. Dit laat de houding van de Maleise auteurs ten opzichte van het concept van multiculturalisme zien en benadrukt het aspect in de Maleise traditie van tegemoet komen en van niet discrimineren. De rijkdom van andere culturen (met name de Perzisch-Arabisch en Javaanse) is esthetisch gemengd in het verleden met lokale overtuigingen in de Maleise cultuur. Muzikale verwijzingen en muzikale afbeeldingen in Maleise werken bieden een perspectief op het muzikale leven van die tijd. Een opmerkelijke reeks van genres, muzikale gebruiken en instrumenten in de klassieke Maleise literatuur is geïdentificeerd, suggererend dat Maleise muziek in het verleden divers en breed opgezet was.

Het derde hoofdstuk beschouwt twee muziekgenres – traditionele en regionale popmuziek – die als onderdeel worden beschouwd van de muzikale erfenis van Pahang. Behalve het beschouwen van de muziekgenres kijk ik ook naar de vorming van de gemeenschap. Traditionele muziek kan worden verdeeld in vijf verschillende categorieën: 1) traditionele volksliederen, 2) nieuwe volksliederen, 3) traditionele poëtische liederen, 4) dansmuziek en 5) hedendaagse poëtische liederen. Drie prominente muzikanten binnen de traditionele muziek worden verder bediscussieerd in dit hoofdstuk: Aripin Said, Roslan Madun en de groep genaamd Anak Kayan. Zij zijn allemaal professionele muzikanten. Door velen worden zij gezien als de ruggengraat van de traditionele muziek in Pahang.

Lieder die traditionele vormen aannemen komen vandaag de dag nog steeds voor, aangezien er wordt aangespoord om terug te keren naar de oude en traditionele manier van het zingen en muziek maken. De discussies die ik met de musici had, gingen over hun achtergrond, de vorm van hun optredens, muziekstijlen en repertoires en het gebruik van hun muziek en het doel ervan. Mijn discussie over gemeenschapsvorming rondom de traditionele muziek (*syair*) heeft plaats gehad in drie delen: het institutionaliseren van de wijze van het zingen van *syair* door middel van het tot stand komen van de *Syair Academy*, *syair* concerten en *syair* zangwedstrijden. De muzikale gemeenschap vindt plezier in traditionele liederen die een link met het verleden hebben. De oudere leden van de gemeenschap geloven dat het hun verplichting is om historische liederen op zo'n manier uit te voeren om de continuïteit met het verleden te garanderen. Zij zien het als hun verantwoordelijkheid om te zorgen dat de muzikale erfenis blijft bestaan en verder zal bloeien.

Regionale popmuziek is een muziekgenre waarvan de ontstaansgeschiedenis teruggaat tot de late jaren 1970. ‘Regionaal’ in deze context betekent het gebruik van de gesproken Pahang taal (Pahang dialect) in de tekst van de liederen. Om dit muziekgenre te onderzoeken, bespreek ik de muziekgroep Anok Semantan. Regionale popmuziek wordt gezien als innovatief omdat het genre verschillende elementen van moderne muziekstijlen overneemt. Het is een term die verwijst naar een mix van traditionele verbale kunsten en nationale/internationale muzikale invloed, met teksten in het Pahang dialect geschreven door lokale tekstschrijvers en gezongen door lokale zangers. Regionale popmuziek erkent de moderniteit binnen een lokale context zonder zijn lokale smaak te verliezen. De esthetische aspecten, inclusief ritme, melodie, tempo en de formele structuur zijn redelijk gelijk aan die van de traditionele muziek. Mijn discussie over de gemeenschapsvorming rondom regionale popmuziek kan worden verdeeld in twee thema’s. Het eerste thema verklaart de intrinsieke voordelen van het bekijken van regionale popmuziek die live wordt uitgevoerd door Anok Semantan tijdens een groot concert, het tweede betreft de online gemeenschapsvorming op de participatieve website YouTube.

Twee andere muziekgenres: *kugiran* (levendige gitaarband) en punkrock worden beschreven in het vierde hoofdstuk. Deze genres worden op vele manieren niet geassocieerd met de liederen uit het verleden die beschreven zijn in het tweede hoofdstuk en die een achtergrond hebben met buitenlandse invloeden. Met dit hoofdstuk laat ik zien waarom Maleiers in Pahang zich aangetrokken voelen tot deze muziekgenres en hoe zij door middel van hun opvattingen over bepaalde muzikale vormen hun identiteit kunnen uiten. Voor veel middelbare Maleisiërs tegenwoordig is *kugiran* de muziek van de nostalgie. De *kugiran* muziek is een van de meest populaire vormen van volksvermaak in Pahang. Om de context hiervan duidelijker te maken, wordt een *kugiran* band genaamd Kugiran Muzik Asli verder besproken in dit hoofdstuk. Het gebruik van het woord *asli* in de naam van de band is een verwijzing naar het gebruik van traditionele muziekinstrumenten door de band als onderdeel van hun muzikale ensemble in aanvulling op het gebruik van moderne muziekinstrumenten. Deze groep speelt een reeks van liedjes afkomstig uit de jaren 1950 tot de vroege jaren 1980, een tijd waarin het westen een groeiende invloed had op het Maleise socio-culturele leven. Deze band speelt voornamelijk op bruiloften. Door het spelen van deze muziek bij recepties van bruiloften kunnen gasten zichzelf vermaken en worden mensen samengebracht. De discussie over de gemeenschapsvorming rondom *kugiran* muziek wordt beschouwd in dit hoofdstuk door middel van twee subthema’s:

het besluit van de bruiloftsgastheer om te kiezen voor een live muziekband of een DJ en het punt betreffende verzoeknummers.

De ontwikkeling van *kugiran* muziek heeft ongetwijfeld geleid tot de opkomst van upbeat muziek inclusief rockmuziek. Zowel *kugiran* als rockmuziek zijn onlosmakelijk verweven met de opkomst van punkrock. De punkscene in Pahang ontstond al vroeg in de jaren 1970. Punkrock in Pahang is een van de vele voorbeelden van westerse muziekstijlen in niet-westerse context. The Hibiscus is een van de Maleise punkbands in Pahang. Lokale en internationale muziekgroepen hebben het artistieke werk en de optredens van de band beïnvloed. Voor de volgers van de band The Hibiscus heeft de snelle, agressieve, chaotische muziekstijl en liveoptredens gecombineerd met een DIY (*Do It Yourself*) ethiek de band in de hardcore categorie geplaatst naast andere gevestigde bands in Maleisië. Maleise punkrockers zijn vertrouwd met de gematigde Islam en het feit dat zij punker zijn, is hiermee niet in tegenspraak. Punkrockers in Pahang zijn verbonden door middel van een skinheadidentiteit. Skinheads van over de hele wereld delen een vergelijkbare ideologie, een van trots, afkomstig uit de arbeidersklasse en deelnemend aan een broederschap. Er is een aantal aspecten in de skinheadcultuur die niet geschikt zijn voor moslimskinheads. Punkrockers nemen ook deel aan een punkforum dat wordt bezocht door punkers uit andere plaatsen. Dit forum voorziet in de mogelijkheid om over de punkscene te discussiëren in heel Maleisië, van de meer serieuze kant van de betrokkenheid van de punkgemeenschap bij de politiek tot aan de meer luchtige zaken, zoals de punkmuziek zelf.

Het vijfde hoofdstuk focust op de sociale context en gemeenschapsvorming door middel van twee Islamitisch georiënteerde liederen: *nazam berendoi* en *dikir rebana*. Tegenwoordig worden zij alleen door middelbare en oudere vrouwen uitgevoerd. Deze liederen bestaan uit vocale muziek waarin teksten van het Islamitische boek van de *Kitab Barzanji* en van inheemse bronnen, zoals *nazam* en *pantun* poëzie worden gezongen. De *Kitab Barzanji* omvat verhalen van de geboorte van de Profeet Mohammed en prijst zijn leven en zijn leringen. Een voordracht van de *Kitab Barzanji* is inbegrepen als deel van de Maleise ceremoniële gebruiken, zoals geboorteceremonies, kruinscheringen en bruiloften. Het lied wordt uitgevoerd zonder de begeleiding van muziekinstrumenten. Sommige delen van de *Kitab Barzanji* worden voorgedragen, gevolgd door voordrachten van *salawat* en wordt beëindigd met het lied *nazam berendoi*. Het vocale element van de groep bevat Maleise vocale ornamenten die gemeengoed zijn in de traditionele Maleise muziek. De Maleiers in Pahang hebben dit lied sinds lange tijd gezongen. Maar de populariteit van het uitvoeren van *nazam berendoi* laat een

daling zien. Er is minder belangstelling voor dit lied bij jonge mensen. Zij zijn niet geïnteresseerd in *nazam berendoi* vanwege de beschikbaarheid en de invloed van andere, meer aansprekende, vormen van vermaak. Desondanks heeft moderne techniek en een klein aantal commerciële opnames het genre een stimulans gegeven en geleid tot de creatie van *nazam berendoi* als een medium gebonden genre.

De traditie van *dikir rebana* in Pahang kan een historische verbondenheid hebben met de uitvoerende kunsten van Minangkabau, een van de voornaamste bronnen van de Maleise cultuur. Het belangrijkste muziekinstrument dat wordt bespeeld tijdens dit optreden is de *rebana Pahang* (Pahang lijsttrommel). De leden van een zanggroep nemen deel aan het uitvoeren van *dikir rebana* vanwege persoonlijke, religieuze en sociale redenen. Zodra *dikir rebana* wordt gezongen, zijn de stemmen hoog en schel. De voordragers slaan op een lijsttrommel terwijl zij een van de stukken van de *Kitab Barzanji* zingen. Een bekend gezongen stuk tekst is van de sectie *Qasida al-Bariah* uit het hoofdstuk *Qasida al-Burdah*. *Dikir rebana* wordt uitgevoerd om te zorgen voor vermaak tijdens bruiloften, feesten waar de naam van het kind worden bepaald, kruinscheringen, mannelijke besnijdenissen en om degene te feliciteren die de Koran heeft uitgelezen. Net zoals bij *nazam berendoi* is er een gebrek aan deelname van jonge mensen bij *dikir rebana*. Er zijn groepen in de gemeenschap die video's van deze optredens van *dikir rebana* plaatsen op sociale media, zoals Facebook en YouTube. Dit draagt bij aan de participatiecultuur onder jonge mensen. De ruimte voor commentaar maakt het mogelijk voor de gemeenschap om verschillende issues en uitspraken betreffende de Islamitische kunst van *dikir rebana* te bespreken. Islamitisch georiënteerde liederen op zulke nieuwe media stimuleren jonge mensen om te praten over hun ervaringen door middel van het gebruik van een rijke vocabulaire, maar reflecteert ook de culturele waarden, gebruiken en overtuigingen van de jonge mensen.

In het tweede deel van dit hoofdstuk wordt de deelname van jonge vrouwen, in de leeftijd van zeventien tot tweeëntwintig jaar, aan muziek onderzocht. Door middel van dit onderbelichte aspect van de levens van jonge vrouwen te benaderen, onderzoek ik de betekenis die zij geven aan de muziek die zij uitoefenen en/of beluisteren en hoe verschillende muziekstijlen invloed hebben op hun ontspanning. Recente vooruitgang in nieuwe media en technologie heeft ervoor gezorgd dat de participatie van jonge vrouwen met betrekking tot muziek veranderd is. De verspreiding van de moderne mondiale cultuur door middel van media en technologie heeft jonge vrouwen in Pahang beïnvloed om betrokken te raken bij traditionele en moderne internationale

muziek op verschillende manieren. Hun moderne cultuur draagt in belangrijke mate bij tot hun levensstijl. Zij luisteren vaak naar hun favoriete muziek op verschillende websites, waaronder YouTube en Spotify. Ook zijn zij in staat om liedjes te downloaden van websites, muziekbestanden te delen over het internet en persoonlijke afspeellijsten te maken. Hun deelname aan muzikale activiteiten op school en karaoke zingen worden beschreven in dit deel. Karaoke zingen heeft een grote invloed op hun gedrag. Zij imiteren graag hun favoriete artiesten. Karaoke heeft een positief effect op het zingen voor jonge vrouwen: het nodigt hen uit om deel te nemen aan muziek en hun cultuur uit te dragen.

In het laatste hoofdstuk behandel ik vier punten die cruciaal zijn voor het beantwoorden van de hoofdvraag: sociale status van de muzikanten; continuïteit en discontinuïteit van genres; genderspecifieke liederen; en gemeenschapsvorming binnen genres. Er is een interne, door de gemeenschap gegenereerde hiërarchie of stratificatie van muzikanten in de dorpen van Pahang: professionals, semi-professionals en amateurs. Professionele muzikanten worden geassocieerd met traditionele muziek en regionale popmuziek (Hoofdstuk 3). *Kugiran* en punkrockmuzikanten (Hoofdstuk 4) zijn semi-professionals. Zangers die Islamitische liederen voordragen zoals *nazam berendoi* en *dikir rebana* (Hoofdstuk 5) worden beschouwd als amateurs. In bepaalde gevallen hebben amateur- en professionele/semi-professionele muzikanten onderlinge verbindingen.

De aanwezigheid van een aanzienlijke hoeveelheid vocale vormen uit het verleden in de hedendaagse muziekgenres is aangetoond. Sommige van de functies en betekenissen van de vocale vormen en liederen zijn nog steeds aanwezig in de moderne muziekgenres, terwijl anderen wijzigingen hebben ondergaan en aangepast zijn om de muziek geschikt te maken voor hedendaagse optredens. Het uitvoeren van traditionele muziek en regionale popmuziek (in Hoofdstuk 3) en *kugiran* en punkrock (in Hoofdstuk 4) is sterk gebonden aan mannen. Vrouwelijke bandleden zijn ongebruikelijk. Zij worden niet geacht om het bespelen van westerse en moderne muziekinstrumenten, die worden geassocieerd met mannen, onder de knie te krijgen. Bovendien worden vrouwen in het algemeen gezien als het ideaalbeeld van vrouwelijkheid en gebruiken die niet worden gezien als provocatief. Mijn onderzoek naar liederen en muzikale gebruiken in Pahang heeft het mogelijk gemaakt voor mij om de gemeenschap als thema te bestuderen en te onderzoeken hoe deze wordt gevormd. Ik stel voor dat er twee soorten gemeenschappen zijn gevormd door middel van muziek: één voor de korte termijn en één voor de lange termijn. Een gemeenschap voor de korte termijn wordt gevormd tijdens een evenement

dat plaatsvindt binnen een korte tijdsperiode. Daarentegen is een gemeenschap voor de lange termijn het resultaat van een langere betrokkenheid van de leden, die tot stand blijft nadat het evenement is afgelopen.

Ik concludeer mijn studie door mijn onderzoeksresultaten te reflecteren aan de werken van Benjamin. Benjamin (2019a en 2019b) onderzocht de verschillende vormen van de Maleise muziek die wordt gespeeld door Maleise groepen en hoe deze gekenmerkt kan worden als Maleis. Benjamin concludeerde dat een verhoogde mate van melisme leidt tot een hogere vorm van de Maleise cultuur. Het creëren van een bepaalde mate van Maleisheid binnen de muziek zoals dat wordt beschreven in de werken van Benjamin is, zoals ik beargumenteer, een prestatie. Benjamins poging om de mate van Maleisheid te evalueren steunt op verschillende generalisaties. Sommige Maleise artiesten bevestigen dat een hogere mate van versiering binnen de muziek door middel van specifieke ornamenten overeenkomt met een hogere mate van Maleis. Deze associatie tussen ornamenten en de mate van Maleisheid is echter onvoldoende zonder de bekwaamheid van de muzikant aan te passen (zangtechniek

CURRICULUM VITAE

Shafa'atussara Silahudin was born in Muar, Johor, Malaysia, in 1983. She obtained a master's degree in Malay Studies and a bachelor's degree in Science from the University of Malaya, Malaysia. She lectured at the Academy of Malay Studies, University of Malaya (2008–2013 and 2018–2019) focusing on Malay music. She also has given guest lectures and provides organized classes, workshops and performance demonstrations. She is particularly interested in Southeast Asian performing arts, the media and popular culture.

Shafa'atussara Silahudin is also a traditional artist with more than 15 years of experience. She has recorded over 200 songs and produced several albums. She performed music in Malaysia and abroad, including in Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, Vietnam, China and the Netherlands. She was a member/secretary of the Malaysian Students' Association of the Netherlands (2016–2017), the Malaysian Association of the Netherlands (2015–2017) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) of Malaysia (2011–2013).