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**Malay Popular Songs of Deli, Minang and Minahasa:  
The Dynamism of Song Characteristics, the Identities  
of Linguistic, and Musical Expression**

One of the varieties of popular music of Indonesia is the so-called Nyanyian Populer Daerah (regional pop songs) which usually employs areal dialect, as well as characteristic melodic styles and expression. The number of these genres in Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula is countless, since there exist so many local dialects, and musical expression can be found in all of these regions. This research focuses only on three areal pop songs, two found on the Sumatra Islands and one found in North Sulawesi. The two genres found on the Sumatra islands (Deli and Minang) are exceptional as being the chief genres which received its influences from the characteristics of the original Malay songs, while the other one comes from Minahasa, the music of which has possesses its own peculiar different melodic styles, but provides the same type of expression in singing. This research employed fieldwork, as well as study of the selected recordings available on various types of social media, including Youtube, etc. During the fieldwork, informal interviews were taken from a number of selected local musicians and singers. The collected data from the fieldwork then was interpreted and analysed (in the form of object analysis) by means of musical theory perspectives and aesthetical criticism. As it is presented here, this research is not in the least comparative, but allows the readers to enjoy the similarities and the differences of the genres. It was discovered that all the genres shared similar Malay musical idioms in traditional narratives, as well as oral cultures which demonstrate the dynamism of changes and sustainability of the local dialects as linguistic expression. Suggestions for further research is quite vital, since there are still many musical and aesthetical values waiting their turn to undergo research for future documentation and enhancement of shared values.

**Keywords:** Malay pop songs, musical idioms, shared values, song characteristics and musical expression.

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### **Малайские народные песни регионов Дели, Минан и Минахаса: характерные особенности, идентичность лингвистического и музыкального выражения**

Одной из разновидностей индонезийской народной музыки являются так называемые «Nyanyian Populer Daerah» (региональные народные песни), обычно использующие локальные диалекты, а также своеобразные мелодические стили и приёмы выразительности. Эти жанры на Суматре и на Малайском полуострове бесчисленны по количеству, поскольку существует множество региональных диалектов, и в каждом регионе можно обнаружить свою форму выразительности. В данном исследовании рассматриваются только три региональные народные песни, две из которых звучат на островах Суматры, а одна типична для Северной Сулавеси. Два образца, представляющие острова Суматры (Дели и Минан), обнаруживают общее влияние малайских песен, в то время как местом происхождения третьего примера является Минахаса, где имеется свой специфический мелодический стиль, но при этом проявляется выразительность пения, схожая со стилями двух других местностей. Рассмотрение образцов включало в себя фольклорные экспедиции, а также изучение некоторых записей народных песен, доступных в социальных сетях, таких как YouTube и т. п. Во время фольклорных экспедиций авторы брали неформальные интервью у некоторых из местных музыкантов и певцов. Собранная информация подвергалась интерпретации и анализу (объективному анализу) с использованием музыкально-теоретического и эстетического подходов. Представленное исследование отнюдь не сравнительное, оно скорее позволяет читателям, испытывая удовольствие, самим оценивать сходства и различия песенных жанров. Было установлено, что все жанры опираются на общие малайские музыкальные идиомы, характерные для традиционных устных культур, в которых демонстрируется динамика изменений и устойчивость региональных диалектов как лингвистическое явление. Весьма важно отметить необходимость дальнейшего исследования в этой области, так как остаётся множество музыкальных и эстетических черт, доступных для изучения с целью будущего документирования общечеловеческих ценностей.

Ключевые слова: малайские народные песни, музыкальные идиомы, общечеловеческие ценности, характерные особенности песенной выразительности.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The current situation of utilization of music in society, otherwise known as the social function of music, consists of two sides which in some cases it is not possible to separate from each other. One of them presents an indication of commercial factors

which could be found in the music industry, while the second manifests somewhat less significant cultural impacts which must be taken into account. While it might not be possible to avoid the commercial factors, which may become a stimulant for music development in society, in its cultural aspects popular music becomes an essential

aspect, not only for social identity but also as an important element for the daily life of human society itself. First of all, on the basis of this statement, it is necessary to discover a general description of the function of popular music.

Culturally, all popular music consists of a hybrid of musical traditions, styles, and influences [20]. However, in this article Malay pop songs are known as a genre of areal popular music; in North Sumatra they are known as *Gambus*, in West Sumatra they are popularly labelled as *Dendang*, while in Minahasa or Manado they are generally known as Pop Melayu. All of these genres are more commonly labelled as typical hybrid music, due to the common features they share, such as, for instance, the particular areal style of singing to poetry bearing the traditional form of the *pantun*, which is a local structure of a strophic poem, accompanied by a particular assortment of musical instruments played in their specific techniques. Moreover, they bear particular social implications, such as a sense of high morality transmitted down from generation to generation by means of the regional musical culture.

This results in a hybrid musical style, which regularly emerges from the remarkable mixture of musical cultures from other neighbouring countries and the local elements that may already have existed in the areal cultures of particular peoples long before they merged together to form a new genre, which in this article has been labelled as the Malay pop songs.

Accordingly, hybrid formations in popular music are in their nature physically transparent, since they are accessible, and the instruments used for the musical medium are also available for performance. Meanwhile, their non-physical elements can only be fathomed during the direct process of listening to the music, so we may identify them as the musical idiom [7].

As it might be supposed, “hybrid” is a term adopted from botanical science to describe an assimilation of culture considered as a natural phenomenon. From this point of view, it is suggested that the concept of “hybridism” may provide a further possibility for a cultural transformation resulting in a discourse which is perhaps unlikely to be understood as an unexpected artistic consequence [Ibid].

In its small-scale perspective, hybridism must be recognized as a process of division into three phases or three-momentum. The first momentum results from cultural convergences through people and their diverse manifestations, or through books and other cultural artefacts, such as paintings. The second momentum occasionally occurs during the occasion when another cultural event takes place. The third momentum happens out of an integrated event initiate as the result of a convergence perceptible in the fields of literature and the fine arts. This cultural transformation occurs as part of the third momentum in the form of adaptation, or cultural acceptance, which becomes perceived as a new type of genre [Ibid].

In opposition to hybridism, there exists another phenomenon known as syncretism, which defines the occurring process of contact between different musical cultures, thereby, creating a new musical idiom. There is a new category of the so-called *diasporic* music which has become a new trend of research extended from ethnomusicological studies of the field known as traditional music. *Diasporic* music is also known as a hybrid form of urban popular music. According to Mark Slobin, as cited by Born and Hesmondhalgh, there exist three cultural levels related to national musical culture. They are: the super-culture, the inter-culture and the sub-culture. These three terms are included in cultural studies, and they examine hybrid culture in the

context of ethnomusicology and popular music studies. Malay pop songs are defined as a category of transnational popular music with a hybrid element as an added concept. According to Simon Frith, popular music experts have changed the meaning of the term “hybrid” to that of a new type of authenticity [5].

For example, in general *popular* Malay music, it is found that the hybrid element in the singing style derives from the influence of Quranic recitation. Meanwhile from the utilization of its musical instruments such as the violin, flute, accordion, *gambus*, and others, Malay pop songs can certainly be classified as “hybrid music.” Finally, the dynamism of the characteristic features of songs, as well as the identities of linguistic and musical expression will be elaborated here for the sake of enhancing further understanding of the areal contexts as well as of cultural identity, social expression, individual music preference, and other concepts.

### 1.1. Identified issues

In comprehension of this topic, we have been compelled to think seriously of musical interpretation, not only in terms of its musical function or its cultural context, but also its social relation which also provides a different contextual meaning. Moreover, it is possible that the differences of shared values are likely in simultaneous existence within one context, even though there exist potentials of musical preferences varying between different individual musicians.

For further elaboration of the examined genres, it becomes necessary for us to answer the questions stated below:

1. What are the most visible characteristic features of Malay pop songs?
2. What are the most significant means of musical expression in Malay pop songs?
3. How can we best describe the linguistic

characteristic features and points of identity of Malay pop songs?

## 2. STUDIES OF THE LITERATURE

In this study several sources of reference are cited in order to elaborate our discussion of the musical styles and the sound features of Malay pop songs and their heterogeneous sources found in the pre-existing areal musical styles of Deli, Minangkabau and Minahasa. It becomes certain that the specific identity of the music expresses itself in the form of the musical styles found in various different regions of the examined geographical area. The Malay pop songs of Deli known as *gambus* are familiar in Minang as *gamat*, while in Minahasa they manifest themselves in the manner of call and response known as *apotaria*, which may be used as a comparison with the other discussed styles of singing, with a few exceptions. In all likelihood, the pop song style from Minahasa may have possibly lost its existent Malay elements, such as the *pantun* and its melodic *cengkok* (vocal inflection). Overall, however, the result of the present object analysis demonstrates that the most visible stylistic differences can be found mostly in the particular individual singing styles which manifest the differences in the resultant musical sonority and timbre or the vocal quality of the singers.

Ian Cross [10] explains music and its place within the areal culture, which affects its local musical characteristic in itself. The issue arising hence is how to describe the music in its local cultural context. Naturally, it becomes necessary to overview the genre from the perspectives of history, the inherent value system, the conventions, institutions and technologies, all of which enable us to see the music in its proper cultural context [Ibid.]. Some of the readers may be confused with the plural form of “musics” used

instead of the singular form of “music”. Recently, in discussion of areal music we have discovered that it was categorized as *world musics* (with the plural ‘s’), rather than simply *music*. It must be emphasized that the term “musics” is applied, because it is referred to in the context of musical diversity. Ian Cross explains, moreover, that music, in the beginning, is regarded as a singular phenomenon, which has a relationship to human biology, the human mind and behaviour. However, upon second thoughts, music becomes *musics*, a diverse, multiple, and unfathomable form within a single unitary framework [Ibid.].

It is certain then that this sub-genre of music possesses various characteristic features of different areal attributes in each local region. It also carries out a number of different social functions, providing musical material for rituals, ceremonies and festivities. Henceforth, in order to understand its characteristics, it will often not be separated from its cultural contexts.

Local popular music consists of various strata of repertoires of songs created by areal composers, involving local instrumental musicians and singers in order to fulfil the musical taste of the social *milieu*. In general, this subgenre of music contains some typical musical characteristic features, and in its development, it becomes a distinctive areal style of popular music. The Malay pop songs from Deli are better known as *gambus*, although they possess the same application of lyrical poems and rhymes as those of other areal Malay pop songs. However, in varying degrees, there are always differences of musical elements present, for example, the differences of the playing style techniques of certain instruments.

In a recent discussion of the social functions of Malay pop songs the conclusion has been reached that this genre had lost its popularity, and it was certain that only

some elements had been left in its very last remaining function of music for festivals (highlighting its entertainment function). However, at a certain time in the 1950s, the ritual function of the “Manumbai” song was closely related to the ritual of the gathering of nectar by honeybees and the ritual of traditional healing of illnesses called “*Buang Ancak*”. The traditional song from the Indonesian province Riau titled “*Makan Sirih*,” composed in 1957 by Nizami Jamil and Tengku Syamsuddin, can be identified as a ceremonial song performed while greeting the arrival of influential guests. A similar function was carried out by the song “*Mak Inang*,” which was used as entertainment for the nobility and, in particular, princesses, as well as the song “*Joget*,” which functioned for entertaining all the guests in a social party.

One prominent musician from Minang who performed the *Gamat* stated in his PhD dissertation that the well-known song titled *Kaparinyo* possessed the characteristic features of the 17th century Portuguese song, the *Cafrinho*, which was introduced to Padang, West Sumatra, by the people of Bengali and those of Indian Tamil [15].

Numerous questions emerged regarding how to help us understand the social function of music in a society. Alan P. Merriam once made a statement which elucidated for us his explanation of how he once said that music is essentially universal behaviour [16]. While John Blacking explained the function of traditional music in the culture of society more clearly through his comment, when he said that every known example of human society possesses that which professional musicologists would recognize to be ‘music’ [4].

The other definition of the function of music in society is clearly described by Ian Cross – that music can only make sense as music if it can resonate with the history, ethical values, conventions, institutions,

and technologies which are present by the society to which it pertains and it may only be approached by means of the culturally situated act of interpretation [10].

A lecturer of Malay original chants (*Nyanyian Melayu Asli*), Tengku Ritawati [19] has studied to a great extent the singing style of Malay pop songs known as the *cengkok* (meaning “vocal inflections”), which, according to her studies, possess techniques correlated to a number of specific notes and their ornamentations. Her dissertation, titled “The Development of the Curriculum for Learning and Teaching of Malay Original Chants in Formal Institutions of Education” [19], is very impressive in its scope and collected data, and familiarization with it by the authors of the present article has also helped them improve their current research.

Vocal inflections, being a constituent part of a quality of singing, can only be obtained by individual singers by means of an immense amount of elaboration of singing styles and techniques, as well as by understanding, participating in and gathering extensive experience from musical practices. The specific skills of understanding and the creation of *pantun* texts is required for showing the composer’s genuine expression in compliance with the typical vocal sonority and of the expressive individual style of singing. It must be noted by the students who study Malay pop songs that a particular sonority and individual singing style may be achieved by constant practicing and listening to earlier songs performed by legendary singers. For this reason, it is suggested for them to listen as much as possible to elder famous singers, making note of their singing styles.

Moreover, it must be emphasized here, in contrary to what was written above, that learning the singing style of the Malay pop songs must be done with a great amount of

consistency, by listening in a comprehensive manner to the best legendary singers of the past, in order to build one’s own individual vocal sonority, individual style and the best quality individual vocal articulation. Not all of the past legendary singers possessed an inherent type of vocal sonority, and this presupposes that the possession of clear voices and the acquisition of additional musical abilities may obviously result in the formation of famous singers in the future. A greater amount of these singers achieved their popularity because of their persistent practice of voice training.

We must also mention here the presumption of a possible correlation between vocal inflection in Malay pop songs with that of vocal inflection in Quranic recitation. This relationship may be traced back to the time of the Arabic influence which emerged in the 7th century AD first in the Indonesian province of Aceh, and then spread onwards throughout most of the Malay Peninsula. This was followed by the emergence of the *pantun*, *gurindam*, and *syair* which certainly derived from Arabic literature and cultural influences.

Lili Lehman, a vocal teacher at the Prague Conservatory made the comment that it is essential for all who wish to become artists to begin their work not only in singing but also in the tone production appropriate for singing Malay pop songs, for example, to practice *Quranic* recitation [14].

In addition, W.E Haslam pointed out that the voice which is trained incorrectly or produces fallible vocal results becomes speedily worn out fast easily fatigued. By applying an additional exertion of physical force, the singer generally attempts to conceal his or her loss of sonority and vocal stability [12].

*Melismatic* singing in Malay pop songs, normally appears in the form of syllables in musical texts sung *legato*, with or without

accentuations, under one breath in some notes or even some measures. In medieval chants it is known as *musica ficta*, referring to any notes or measures with accidentals written before the following notes [3].

It has been suggested therefore of the importance of vocal practice for stabilizing the quality of the voice. In practice, normally students possess their own method of producing high vocal quality. It might be expected that singers, in general, also share the same experience when applying the imitation method practice from the elder Malay pop songs singers. Overall, the best sonority and vocal uniqueness form one of the natural gifts and individual characteristic features which need to be developed by the singer.

### 3. OBJECT ANALYSIS AS A METHOD

It must be understood that the aim of applying object analysis in this research work is to elaborate on the musical elements found in Malay pop songs in the styles of Deli, Minangkabau and Minahasa. The object analysis carried out here is based on transcriptions of the sound recordings made of performances of the songs and on their interpretation of the five chief musical elements, namely: background, sonority, *musica ficta*, articulation, and expression.

1) In coincidence with that the writers had elaborated specific knowledge, skills, and expertise not only with the help from the experts in the field, but also from the literature reviews related the scientific data that support theoretical study of Malay pop songs. All of these then were endowed with triangular features by such means as interviews. Although the newest books and journals devoted to this topic are hard to find, some of the older books related to this topic and compatible with it became important to this study.

2) This article thereby provides us with results of object analysis in the form of description of its accounts of discographic studies. Discographic research is essentially the study of catalogues of recordings in the form of audio and audio-visual recordings. In ethnographic study it is appropriate to provide the description of musical recordings, especially those of certain artists and composers. Although not all performers of Malay pop songs have any recorded documents because many of them were more active as stage artists, rather than recording artists. However, some of them were active both as performing and recording artists. Thus, the discourse can be elaborated as follows.

Any text or material outside the aforementioned margins would not be printed.

#### 3.1. Object analysis of the Pantun

Dissemination of the Malay language throughout the entire nation is believed to have begun since the time the influence of the Sriwijaya Kingdom was spread out throughout the entire nation. Located in Palembang the kingdom formed the centre of commerce, and Malay language was widely used there for trade communication throughout the archipelago. By the seventh century, accordingly, the Malay language had become a kind of *lingua franca*.

The pantun can be described as a series of rhyming stanzas, generally utilized as figurative expressions. Below is an example of a *pantun* found in Malay pop song entitled “Si Hitam Manis”:

*'Si Hitam Manis'*

*Kiri jalan kanan pun jalan*

*(Left side and the right side were streets)*

*Ditengah-tengah pohon kenari*

*(right in the middle was walnut tree)*

*Kirim jangan pesan pun jangan*

*(do not sending or even messaging)*

*Kalaulah rindu datang sendiri*  
(when missing he must come by himself)

It cannot be denied that this *pantun* is familiar to teenagers and young people who experience the feeling of falling in love. One general element to learn from this *pantun* is that the first two lines of every verse are called *sampiran*, while the third and fourth verses provide the main content [*isi*] of this form of poetry. This kind of structure can be categorized as the basic structure of the *pantun*, which is a simple form of rhyme.

Most popular music, such as country, western pop, rock, punk, soul, and hip-hop, contain rhymes. Rhymes bring a sense of fulfilment to our lives, which are commonly filled with idiosyncratic echoes and relationships, both intimate and general, as can be seen in rhymes spotted anywhere – in playgrounds, in bed, or the internet. The popular era of rhyme has already passed for those who only half-listen. Caplan's book calls us to open our ears and discover this amazing rhyme culture, once again. From here, it may be comprehended how rhymes, including those found in the *pantun*, function inside and outside of specific literature and music genres, not only in individual works but also in the culture itself [8].

However, the definitive meaning of rhyme in hip-hop and the classical form of *pantun* is very different. Contemporary hip-hop often makes use of rhythmic gestures and rarely employs the same rhyme forms consistently all the way through. In contrast to this, rhymes in the *pantun* make use of the rhythmic consistency of every last syllable between the *sampiran* (the first two lines that seemingly form an unconnected statement) and the *isi* sections (the latter usually contains a message or a lesson). It indicates that rhyme in hip-hop is not restrained by rules, manifesting itself freely,

and that therefore it is seemingly more suitable to the American literary culture. However, the art of the *pantun* was more suitable for the early development of oral literary culture in Indonesia long before the establishment of modern poetry. T.S. Eliot in his poem titled "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" states that modernism does not disregard rhyme but rebuilds its technique [Ibid.].

Moreover, among the similarities between the *pantun* and rhymes in hip-hop, both of them express the emergence of a particular condition. One of the examples can be found in "Kadendate" (the traditional call-and-response brand of singing of Palu, South Sulawesi), in which the singers show themselves as being capable of creating spontaneous rhymes of what they have seen instantly. The same phenomena can be found in the contemporary rhyme culture of hip hop.

What can be reflected from the above object analysis of the *pantun* is that there might be possibilities that the *pantun* culture can still be revitalized and developed like that of rhymes found in hip hop, but it needs to improve its system of new types of verses, new challenges, and new connections. Once these ideas are materialized, the art of the *pantun* would be developed and composers might employ the opportunity to experiment with the art of the *pantun* based on three points mentioned above.

### 3.2. Object Analysis of Vocal Inflections

The most basic components in music are pitch, duration, and volume, whilst the most important quality in music is timbre or tone quality. These qualities can be found in extraordinary ways in Malay pop songs both in their instrumentation and in their singing style which uses vocal inflections as attributes of the singers' musicianship.



Below are some examples of major vocal inflections found in the history of music.

Grace notes are known as one of decorative vocal inflections, which are played fast before the main tones and are utilized to make the main note sounds more expressive and colourful.

Figure 1. The example of Grace Notes



### 3.2.1. The Passing Tone

The passing tone is one of the earliest non-harmonic tones in music history. By its definition, a passing tone is a non-harmonic pitch that is approached by step (conjunct motion) from a chordal tone and resolves by step to another chordal tone without any change in direction.

Figure 2. An example of passing tones



The neighbouring tone is included as one of the earliest ornamentation tones that are presented only in stepwise motion. Meanwhile, suspension tones belong to a type of neighbouring tones that always appears in the strong beat and is always introduced as a dissonant tone.

Figure 3. An example of neighbouring tones



### 3.2.2. Pitch Inflections

In the early history of music, the application of sharp and flat tones on the keyboard was not written in the scores, while usually the singers recognized them when to do the pitch inflections of the composition.

Figure 4. Example of poetic lines



In this Bach Chorale the notes with *fermatas* above provide explanation of the end of the poetic lines, which indicates the end of a verse in the song. In Malay pop songs, however, these fermatas, if any are present, must be inflected in a such away to perform the flexibility of vocal technique of the singer.

### 3.3. Object Analysis of Song Form

The *pantun* in Malay pop songs naturally consists of four verses, AABA. The first line is called the antecedent (the question) or the calling sentence, while the second verse is labelled the consequent (the response). The second line is similar to that of the first line, but ends on a tonic, which indicates the responding sentence. While the third verse does not form a repetition from the first melody, it might present a new sentence contrasting with the new melody. The third verse ends with a supertonic or dominant, similar to the first verse. Sometimes, the third verse forms a contrast to the first and second verse. Otherwise, it merely provides a repetition of the first verse. The fourth verse is usually identical with the second and ends with tonic pitch C.

Generally speaking, the second verse is a repetition of the first with little or no alteration. Verse B presents a contrasting theme, which is usually mentioned as the “chorus.” There are opportunities provided for the verses in B to change, despite the similarities to the previous verse, and, likewise, it is not always required to end on a tonic. In the AABA song form, the melodic verse can form the ‘call and response’ sentences. If there is any melodic verse that represents the thesis sentence, it is

usually followed by a responding sentence, and this is usually labelled as an antecedent-consequent melody. As it is mentioned above, the melodic pattern can either be similar or different, and it can be an exact repetition. The song verse always ends with a *cadenza* (*cadence*) and a fermata.

### 3.3.1. Object Analysis of Musical Textures

In musical terminology, “texture” means the entire effect of interaction between melody, rhythm, timbre, and harmony. Texture that is known in music is comprised of monophony, homophony, polyphony, and heterophony. There are two categories in homophonic music, which provide rhythmic unison, usually labelled as homorhythmic, or melody with accompaniment. In the sphere of rhythmic unison, melody and its accompaniment are processed simultaneously, even though at times there are melodic fillers which are played by the violin, flute, and accordion. In Malay pop songs, the generic format is that of a vocal melody with accompaniment. In this musical texture, the vocal melody predominates over the accompaniment.

Figure 5. The antecedent phrase of the Hitam Manis song



For the most part, in this sense, the predominance of the vocal line as the main melody is extreme. This domination provides the main focus, defining not only the musical character, but also the musical aesthetics as a whole. Generally, this forceful musical characteristic feature enables people to recognize Malay pop songs very easily, although it is difficult to differentiate the musical characteristic features between the existing genres.

### 3.3.2. Object Analysis of the *Cengkok*

In Gregorian chant there exists the musical term of *musica ficta*, which is somewhat similar to the *cengkok* in Malay pop songs. The *cengkok* is normally utilized as personal improvisation on a melodic line, so it is certain that the capabilities of each Malay pop singer are different, due to its personal traits. In contrast with it, in *musica ficta*, generally found in Medieval music and Gregorian chants, there is no individual characteristic feature of improvisation, because, as a rule, the composers wrote down the necessary inflections into their scores.

This study does not mean to equate the *cengkok* (vocal inflection) with the *musica ficta* because the *cengkok* in Malay pop songs is entirely unrestrained by musical rules (presenting free inflections) and is usually interpreted as individual performer accidentals, while in medieval music, specifically in solo vocal lines, *musica ficta* is mostly notated as editorial accidentals [written as *melismas*].

According to the singers and instrumentalists who perform Malay pop songs, the *cengkok* can be termed as the flowers of the melodies [i.e., melodic inflections]. However, there is a technical difference in the production of the *cengkok* and the *musica ficta*, even though they both, obviously, have the same foundational function, i.e. to adorn the melody. It should be realized that in Malay pop songs singing without any *cengkok* is decidedly uncanny [however, such cases are not found in popular music of Minahasa], the reason for this being that the quality of singers of Malay pop songs is measured by its individual *cengkok* singing skills.

Thus, the reader can easily recognize the singers' capability by observing the

soft, sensitive, and melancholy type of the *cengkok* sung by them, different to that of the singers with the brilliant and sharp *cengkok* type. This is usually related with the singer's personality and the listener's musical taste to judge the aesthetic values of a performance.

However, what can be described here is that it is definitely true that in Malay pop songs many of the song characteristic features and genres require different type of *cengkok* elaboration. Sometimes certain situations occur in which particular songs require specific types of *cengkok* with softer, nuances, more enticing or varied with vibrato, and does not require any accentuating or *stacatto* types of singing. It may be said to some extent that the eloquence of *melismatic* melodicism in this sense is provided by extremely elaborating the melody with ornamental stretches of syllables in the verses as beautifully as possible, in order to provide more enticing impressions for the listeners.

There is another point to confirm that in Malay pop songs the *cengkok* is one of the most significant elements of musical expression and certainly the most significant characteristic feature which signifies its genuine qualities. The *cengkok*, thus, provides the most unique trait which differentiates this genre from other types of areal popular music found in Indonesia. It also defines the quality of the singers if the latter could exhibit the balance between sonority and skills in the quality of their singing Malay pop songs.

Every Malay pop singer must apply his or her own specific and unique traits of the *cengkok*. This unique form of expression has affected in so many senses the singers' style in creating their own type of *cengkok*. The particular formula about 'how to produce and beautify the *cengkok*,' however, cannot be specifically explained here. Nevertheless,

it must be emphasized that the spirit of understanding and expressing the high sense of song text is expressed by its key.

The *cengkok* is an individual style, which means that every singer has his or her own style, depending on his or her ability to create melodic ornamentation to the existent melodic lines. Moreover, it has been pointed out that it is highly recommended to develop the skills for interpretation of the *pantun* text.

As it was mentioned above, in Western music theory the synonym of *cengkok* is *musica ficta*, i.e. an ornamental melodic line sung in a *melismatic* manner. John Stainer and William Barret categorized *musica ficta* as one of the necessarily most elaborative and complex singing techniques. Normally elements of *musica ficta* are written out in chants or other types of melody in the form of some notes which embellished syllables without certain notes [extended syllables] being factually present [21].

Further explanation of *melismas* can be made, as follows: a syllable can be sung on more than one note [syllable extension or *melisma*], and also two consecutive syllables of different words can be connected together on one and the same note. The punctuation of the lyrics must be tied to the word prior to the graphic extension or *melisma* [11].

At the same time, the Oxford Dictionary of Music [13] explained that a *melisma* is a cluster of notes to be sung to a syllable. It is a bit difficult to write the exact notes for the *cengkok*, due to the inherent difference of the types, interpretation, and skills of the *cengkok* which is individually sung by the singers.

After listening, observing, and analysing some examples of the repertoire from Malay pop songs and existing discographic object analysis of studies of such musical elements as the *gambus*, *gamat*, and *joget*, it may be commented out that certain Malay pop



songs possess various forms of the *cengkok* ornamentations as follows:

- The *acciaccatura*: a type of grace note written in the form of one or several notes which anticipate the existent notes from the song syllable. It is normally combined with another vocal technique, called the double or triple *appoggiatura*.

- The *appoggiatura*: this is also classified as one of the grace notes placed before or after the existing note. The *appoggiatura* is one of the essential notes found in almost Malay pop songs. Hence, it is necessary that every Malay pop singer is required to master this technique. According to Baird, the definition of an *appoggiatura* is: “Of all the ornaments of singing, none is easier for the master to teach or for the student to learn than the *appoggiatura*. In addition to its pleasing quality, it alone in the art enjoys the privilege of being heard frequently without becoming tiresome to the listener, so long as it does not exceed the limits of good taste as prescribed by those who understand music” [1, p. 88].

It must be noted here, however, that in Malay pop songs, the *appoggiatura* is generally seldom written, but is sung when a singer expresses a *cengkok* as an individual singing style. In the Malay pop songs, the function of the *appoggiatura* is as follows:

- A slight connector between tones to make the latter more sonorous and also to show the sole identity of Malay pop songs. This kind of expression creates the sense of the *melismatic* characteristic features of the Malay pop songs through the use of legato and staccato.

- Tiny melodic fillers, put in to enrich the flexibility of the melodic lines so that the latter do not feel as empty at all.

- Enrichment of harmonic variation by means of elaboration of passing tones horizontally towards the direction of the vertical harmonic notes.

- Creation of livelier and more brilliant melodies in Malay pop songs.

In addition to *appoggiaturas*, there also exist trills in *melismatic* or syllabic elaborations, included as a prominent characteristic features of Malay pop songs. As the result of object analysis of certain Malay pop song repertoires, it has been discovered that the method of inserting a ‘trill’ in Malay pop song is presented as follows:

- An *appoggiatura* usually elongates the first note of the melody and is sung louder than the following melody.

- Presenting an *appoggiatura* as a longer variation, which is normally started with a softer voice, followed by a *crescendo* and then a *decrescendo* during the course of the entire melody.

- If the *appoggiatura* is located on strong beats, it is usually followed by the accented notes.

- Usually a long melody is usually preceded by an *appoggiatura*. However, there are certain exceptions, in which not all *appoggiaturas* in Malay pop songs are followed by grace notes and trills.

- The *mordent* can also be found in Malay pop song repertoires. The *mordent* is an ornament comprised of two types, – namely, the upper mordent and the lower mordent. Moreover, it is theoretically unwritten in Malay pop songs, although is practically often sung.

- According to object analysis of examples from the repertoire and current discographic study, it is found that another existing ornamentation is formed by slide notes, i.e., notes which must be played prior to the main notes, sliding towards the latter in a semi-glissando technique. In contrast with the *appoggiatura*, these slide notes always move in stepwise motion. Similar to that of the *appoggiatura*, however, slide notes also consist of two or three notes

leading to the original notes of the melody.

- The *trill*, also known as “swirling notes,” is often not notated in the scores. Although it is theoretically unwritten in the scores, it falls into the intentions of all Malay singers to produce soft and memorable sounds, albeit, not too excessive, so that it expresses the pleasantness of the melodic lines. All new singers must learn to create *trills* on certain syllables, in order to produce the most beautiful vocal inflections. However, it should be noted here that if a ‘*trill*’ is anticipated by an *appoggiatura*, then the *appoggiatura* is required to become the first note of the ‘trill.’

This article does not elaborate the examples of such note ornamentations in any specific order, but the reader must explore its listening comprehension to the genre, in order to understand the object analysis of these kinds of embellishments.

Furthermore, such additional notes found in discographic object analysis demonstrated that some of the ornamentation notes contributed to the establishment of the *cengkok* which created its shared values in Malay pop songs.

From the study of object analysis above, it may be concluded that the *cengkok* in Malay pop songs presents a highly specific individual trait of unwritten embellishments of notes, which could be described as so-called free improvisation. The *cengkok* may occur in the elongation of syllables which are generally unwritten and sung in a melismatic manner (making use of slurs or *legatos*). The *cengkok* is similar to that of a *musica ficta* and constituted as the typical characteristic feature of Malay pop songs sung in a profoundly *melismatic* manner.

### 3.4. Object Analysis of Articulation

The technique of articulation in singing syllables in Malay pop songs is unique and different from the standard pronunciation of

formal languages. The authors’ opinions and ideas of articulation in these studies were concluded from selected ideas expressed in the informal interviews and the field notes taken by them during their studies.

To begin with, all the articulation present in Malay pop song texts plays the role of the determiner of the expression. This means that correct articulation would define the text more clearly to the audience. Although this sounds normal, in contrast, it requires specific practice on the part of a singer to be capable of performing precise articulation. It is suggested that engaging in consistent vocal practice is a necessary requirement for achieving clarity and purity of articulation. This ability does not apply naturally, but is acquired through consistent vocal training. Tone quality is applied naturally, but the clarity of articulation must be polished due to its functions in articulating corrected texts.

It is understood that Malay pop songs singers must convey the words with correct and clear articulation in each syllable, so that the words are perceived better by the audience. In other words, good articulation would provide a clear impression of the text, so that the musical expression of the song can be delivered beautifully.

To be specific, it should be emphasized here that the significance of vocal practice to acquire clarity and purity of articulation becomes a prerequisite. The indication of readiness in singing comes from a comfortable feeling which may be achieved by constant daily vocal practice in certain times. Usually the singer uses the *solfa* technique, which consists of *do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si, and do* to train his or her pronunciation of vowels [vocalization]. Within the *solfa* technique, only the vowels *a, i, e, o* are available, while the vowel ‘*u*’ is given less attention. It is not a coincidence that the vocalization of ‘*u*’ is easier to carry out, when compared with other vowels.

We must also emphasize here the significance of the consistence of vocal training, which is necessary to avoid anything which may damage the vocal cords, such as harshness of vocal stroke. There is also a curious opinion present that the ability of vocal articulation may be gained from the childhood experience of recitation of the Koran. Although no scientific explanation for this has been found yet, this opinion is reasonable in one possible way, since the *cengkok* and articulation are also trained and developed by Quranic recitation.

If it is examined at all in the theory of vocal articulation, vocal theorist Lilli Lehman explains that all vowels must keep their point of resonance uninterruptedly on the palate. All beauty in the art of song, in *cantilena* as well as in all type of technique consisting chiefly in the uninterrupted connection between the musical tone and the sung word, in the flexible connection of the soft palate with the hard, in the continually elastic adjustment of the former to the latter. This simply indicates at the elastic form which the breath must fill in every corner of resonating surface without interruption, as long as the tone lasts [14].

The ability to sing the articulation or diction well is a part of unseparated vocal technique which must be learned. The dynamic control, accent, timbre control in singing expression are also included in the aspects of vocal technique.

Harriet Brower argues regarding the definition of vocal mastery. It is considered that in order to become a master of the vocal art, a singer must develop his or her voice to be under complete control and then one can do with it whatsoever one wishes. One must be able to produce all one desires, in terms of power, pianissimo, accent, shading, delicacy and variety of colour [6].

Further explanation of the importance of articulation or diction is also defined by

Harriet Brower [6], when she states that the greatest thing about a song is the words. It is a normal phenomenon that the text inspires the music, since the former is the cause of the latter's being. One can simply imagine, when on one occasion words have been joined to music, how other words can be added to the same music, without destroying the whole idea. The words must be made plain to the audience. Every syllable should be intelligible and clearly understood by the listener. Diction is an absolutely significant element of the performance.

In addition, Harriet Brower also describes how satisfactory diction creates something deeper than the song itself. It is the outpouring of one's best thought, one's best self, which must animate the song and deliver it to the listener. It touches the heart, because it comes from one's very inmost being, a creation of mood. One cannot sing unless one feels like doing so. Brower further explains that the singer has to be inspired, in order to give an interpretation that shall be worth anything [Ibid.].

### 3.5. Objective Analysis of Expression

Flat expression in singing Malay pop songs is not recommended here, but, on the contrary, expression is another significant objective striven to be gained by Malay pop singers. This objective may be achieved by intimacy (rote memory) towards the songs and to their musical structure, from its introduction, transition, as well as towards the instrumental parts. For instance, it is recommended to consider that in certain types of Malay pop songs, the introductory section is very significant, being conceived of not only as an introduction to the song, but also as guidance for the singers to traverse through the actual melody.

It should be pointed out here that the autonomous understanding of all musical aspects in the introductory section of the

song is very important. Some mistakes might unconsciously occur if the instrumental musicians fail to cooperate with the singers. From the ideas above, it also becomes clear, how necessary it is for singers to be able to relate the unity of the *cengkok* and the song text. These two elements have close connection to the feelings, emotions, and appreciation present when the singers express the texts of the Malay pop songs.

Furthermore, to be more specific, the authors have provided the readers with further description of the relationship of the text with feelings, emotions and appreciation in order to give birth to good expressions in Malay pop songs. Suzanne J. Beicken argues how the singer must understand the text of the song. Therefore, the singers should necessarily memorize the text by rote, before starting to sing it, in order to be able to express its meaning. At this point, as indicated by Beicken, there is absolutely no excuse for ignorance or carelessness. Accordingly, musical notation cannot represent all the fine points of expression which affect the aesthetic demands: the art of declamation must make up for this deficiency [2].

It is understood then that when several notes are sung on one syllable, such performance is called *melismatic* singing. Each long or short extension of a syllable containing more than one note is called a *melisma* [Ibid.]. Due to this reason, the *melismatic* character and its relation with the text must comply with one another. When there is an extended *melisma* present, correct calculation is needed in order to intersect the syllables in each breathing. In singing, such intersection of the syllables caused by breathing out must be avoided.

There is also another fact that singing is an art that is typical with expression proceeding directly from the heart. Emotion, feeling, and expression provide the pure

human emotive elements. Furthermore, it is said that instincts play a prominent role for every singer, enabling him or her to express emotion and feeling with voice. For the function of the voice to take effect on the character of melody, as distinguished from ordinary speech, its expressions must also purely instinctive [22].

In addition, in the essence of an artistic point of view, art itself is different from reality, but the depiction of reality through profound meaning in the art that is understood by people. Therefore, reaching the emotions of the artistic substance is quite significant in its goal. Following this line of thought, D.C. Taylor states that art is not reality. But it is the ability to portray reality through the comprehension of all the emotions that any person may be forced to encounter. To acquire the ability to simulate the entire gamut of human emotions, which exceeds by far what any individual can ever expect to encounter personally, means to play successfully one's craft to its fullest artistic realization [Ibid.].

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

First of all, it must be revealed that as an artwork of literature, the *pantun* must be created, following the criterion as being one of the pinnacles of unsurpassable heritage of Malay culture. According to Mohd. Rashid Md Indris (2011): "The *pantun* is known as a historical Malay poem which not only permeated with meanings, but also permeated with aesthetic values. These aesthetic values may be understood when, the listener becomes sensitive enough to the structure and the text style in a piece of *pantun*. The form of the *pantun* is not built arbitrarily, but requires consideration and sensitivity in all of its aspects, including the lexical preference, syllables, and the limited verses."



Secondly, in Malay pop songs, the musical texture normally follows the formal structure of the *pantun*, which is A-A-B-A. The melodic line dominated by the song as the main melody has become the main focus not only in its musical character but also in its musical aesthetics as a whole. All of these musical characteristic features provide the means to recognize Malay pop songs in their general context.

In contrast with the *musica ficta*, the *cengkok* is more free, and basically included as a personal musical trait of an individual singer. Because of the inherent eloquence of the *cengkok*, sung in a *melismatic* fashion, thus, the elaboration

of melody with elaborative stretching lines of the syllables provide us with an enticing impression.

Finally, articulation in Malay pop songs should be applied in a natural manner, the tone quality should have the clarity of articulation and correct text pronunciation.

As a suggestion here then, it must be noted that the genre, in fact, may be classified as one of the oldest types of pop songs which must eventually be preserved. Moreover, in order to sustain the existence of this genre, a formal type of action in form of transmission is very significant to be taken.

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