

Hindustani Traces in Malay Ghazal

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‘A song, so old
and yet still famous’

By

Chinthaka Prageeth Meddegoda
and Gisa Jähnichen

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**To all musicians whom we met personally
and by means of the virtual world.**

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PREFACE

‘A song, so old and yet still famous’ is a Malay expression of admiration for an exotic singing style, a musical contemplation on the beauty of nature, God, and love. The ghazal exists in manifold cultures all over Asia, Africa, and Southern Europe, and is intimately connected to Islam and its periphery. In each region, ghazals have been shaped into other expressions using imported features and transforming them into ‘local art’. In the Malay world, ghazals come in various shapes and with different meanings.

‘The song, so old’ is the song that came before the proliferation of mass media. The first ghazals that were heard in the Malay world might have been those ghazals performed by Hindustani musicians traveling in Southeast Asia. However, later on, the ghazal’s development was additionally triggered by mass media, with technological progress enhancing change in urban entertainment and introducing new sources of further adaptations. In this context, the second half line of the lyrics mentioned, ‘and yet still famous’, means that despite being old, the song is highly regarded as an art in itself. Malay ghazals are still attractive and musically demanding. They were traditionally not performed for mass appeal, but, rather, for a small knowledgeable audience that valued musical refinement and taste.

This book aims to combine studies on musical traces of Hindustani culture in the Malay ghazal and partly the paralleling adaptation of elements attached to music practiced in the Middle East. Both sources are somewhat related to Islamic cultures and carry symbolic meanings through timbre and melodic structures as well as through performance practice. This seems to be one reason for the choice of ghazal as an art to be taken up by Malay musicians among many other poetic and musical art forms primarily deriving from South Asia. Positioning the Malay ghazal in the context of current Malaysian society, the process of choosing from the abundance of arriving performing arts fits an observed ‘selective tolerance’ towards South Asian cultural features. This perspective and a number of other provocative discussions led to the chapters presented in this book. Work on this book made a humble start in 2012 partly as a PhD research project at Universiti Putra Malaysia and partly as independent

research, which has continuously developed over the years. Hence, the study outcome, incorporating both historical and current insights into the Malay ghazal practice in the Malay world, will hopefully enhance future surveys referring to this and related subject matters. It will surely need a rapid extension on ghazal in other cultures in order to better understand complex dynamics of cultural migration.

The authors, Colombo & Berlin, August 2016

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Chinthaka Prageeth Meddegoda is lecturer of North Indian music at the University of Visual and Performing Arts in Colombo. Born in 1978 in Ratnapura, Sri Lanka, he comes from a family of musicians. He first studied Hindustani music with his father then at the Royal College in Panadura, and Sripali College in Horana, as well one-to-one with Premadasa Mudunkotuwa. Following this, he continued with studies of Hindustani vocal music at Bhathkhande Music College and Banaras Hindu University in India which allowed him to gain knowledge of North Indian music from a number of great gurus that resided in Lucknow and Banaras.

His interests include popular and traditional music from various Asian cultures as well as general issues of human society, philosophy, and cultural studies. Chinthaka Prageeth Meddegoda has been a member of ICTM since 2013, an editorial board member of SIMP, and for three issues of the UPM book series on music research. He studied at the UPM Graduate School in the Music department under Prof Dr Gisa Jähnichen between 2012 and 2015. He has published several research papers within his field as well as presenting research outcomes at international conferences in Japan, Indonesia, Laos, Germany, Malaysia, France, and Thailand.

Gisa Jähnichen has been conducting research on music for more than 25 years in Southeast Asia. Born in Halle (Saale), Germany, she obtained her PhD in Musicology and Ethnomusicology from the Humboldt University Berlin, Germany, and her professorial thesis (Habilitation) in Comparative Musicology from the University Vienna, Austria. Extensive field research led her to Southeast Asia, East Africa, Southwest and Southeast Europe. Together with Laotian colleagues, she built up the Media Section of the National Library in Laos. In 2015, she was awarded a Distinguished Professorship at the Institute for Minority Arts Research of Guangxi Arts University, China. Since 2016, she is a professor in music research at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. She is also chairperson of a Study Group within the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) and Secretary of the Training and Education Committee in the International Association for Sound and Audiovisual Archiving (IASA). She edited numerous academic volumes and wrote more than hundred papers on a wide range of music research topics.

CHAPTER ONE

IN SEARCH FOR THE MALAY GHAZAL

A text line of a Malay ghazal, ‘A song, so old and yet still famous’, properly describes the connotation of the Malay ghazal to the musical culture of the Malays in Southeast Asia. Though emerging in the early 20th century in the Malay world, it carries the reputation of historical links and traces of great musicianship which make it appear as an old and famous vocal genre. This book attempts to explore the what, why, and how of the Malay ghazal history and its sound.

The Malay ghazal is commonly known to the academic world in Malaysia, Singapore and in parts of Indonesia. Having stated this, the end of certainty is already reached. The way of how and why the Malay ghazal came into being is still under discussion. Ghazal, having its roots in Persia and the Arab world, may be connected to performing arts that are distributed through religious movements of people and objects. However, little is known about the musical principles transmitted along this path throughout the centuries. A clear expression might be found in the use of the gambus, a lute resembling the Arabian ud and the Yemeni khobuz (qanbus) displaying different shapes which gained access to Malaysia for various reasons. Another important cultural feature is the obvious impact of Hindustani music as traces of Hindustani culture are found to be significant for the Malay ghazal as a genre, which this book is primarily dedicated to exploring.

1.1 Background

It is evident that the Indian culture and its people have been widely dispersed throughout Asia due to geographical factors, religious missions, trade, invasions, and tourism. North Indian music plays an important role in shaping the region culturally within the long-term process of exchange and migrations from India. In the last 150 years, the music based on Hindustani raga, meter (tala), words (pada) and instruments have been syncretized in Malay music cultures as a result of cultural adaptations and

supported by early Bollywood films since the 1930s that were followed by Malay film productions. Malaya, later Malaysia, is one of the countries that adopted many Indian cultural features in the course of this development. Prior to the arrival of Bollywood in Malaysia, Hindustani music was practiced on Riau Lingga, then in Singapore, in some other parts of Indonesia, Johor, Malacca, Kuala Lumpur, and Penang, as illustrated by many scholars and musicians. One remarkable feature is the development of the Malay ghazal. It is apparent that ghazal practices in Malaysia have been dominantly perpetuating Hindustani musical instruments, i.e. the tabla and harmonium. Both musical instruments are, among others, prominent in the Malay ghazal. They are believed to have been brought by Indian musicians who came to Malaysia for various purposes.

However, though Indian sources are undoubtedly mentioned, the degree of integrating Hindustani musical elements into ghazal music practice, including social and ethnic implications, has yet to be comprehended. As a result, insights into processes of cultural adaptations and appropriations, mainly in Malay communities, could be contributed. Qualitative musical analyses and historical methods have great potential to explore traces of Hindustani music in the Malaysian ghazal. These methods have to be complemented by grounded theory, narrative, and discourse analyses in order to obtain a wider picture that can provide answers to questions raised in relation to cultural dynamics observed in Southeast Asia.

In the first overview of the topic, it was discovered that there are at least two different types of practices connected to the term 'ghazal' in Malaysia that were widely confused in the literature (Amin, 1979, Chopyak, 1986). The two types are ghazal Melayu Johor, further called the Malay ghazal; and ghazal parti Utara, also designated as ghazal parti. In order to trace musical elements of Hindustani culture, the first type can be investigated since the other has a different history and has little to do with Hindustani music practices. This insight is an outcome of intensive observations and the literature review is conducted in the context of this background study. However, an overview will include ghazal parti elements and the use of the gambus, which is connected to another type of adaptation and acculturation. This investigation may help to discuss possible cross-references of gambus playing to musical traces of Hindustani culture in the context of Malay ghazal.

1.2 Are there any Traces of Hindustani Culture in Malay Ghazal?

Malaysia is a socially, ethnically, and religiously multi-layered country. Therefore, the opinions and knowledge of music vary among musicians and listeners in Malaysia. Most of the musicians who are connected with popular music may not have a detailed perception of Hindustani music even though they listen, practice, and have named it as Hindustani in early Malaysian popular music. Due to a lack of exposure to Hindustani culture and society that forms the background of its musical features, most of the music listeners in Malaysia cannot know much about the essentials of Hindustani music, even if they appreciate and enjoy them in their own way. Popular music in Malaysia is understood as a music culture that has been evolving through the integration of imported music cultures within existing Malaysian music practices. History reveals that Hindustani music is ingrained in Malaysian music practices and today most of its content remains academically non-documented and is blurred because of the absence of historical research. Musical aspects of Hindustani culture have been modified in the Malaysian multicultural context and used for extra-musical purposes including political, religious, and economical goals.¹ Malay ghazal is emblematic in this regard.

Therefore, it is crucial to look at the ways and the extent as to which Hindustani culture can be musically traced in the Malay ghazal, a method that can contribute much to acquiring a panoramic overview. Hence, the main questions are as follows:

- What do Malaysian scholars and musicians know about the field of Hindustani music culture in the Malay world and what is known about the Hindustani ghazal?
- Are musical traces of Hindustani culture in the Malay ghazal evident through transcriptions and participant observation? To what extent are Hindustani musical elements used in the Malay ghazal?

To a certain degree, these research questions include investigations in a broader context of cross-cultural approaches. Sub-questions on different degrees of adapting musical elements and tools in the Malay ghazal, as well as questions on diverse historical developments, unavoidably arise in the course of the research. However, they play a subordinated role and are

¹ For example, in tourism programmes that emphasize cultural unity among a diverse population, Hindustani elements constitute a cultural component.

only taken into consideration in support of the main focus of understanding musical traces of Hindustani culture in the Malay ghazal.

This study aims to analyse how Hindustani musical elements are used in Malay ghazal performances in Malaysia. In doing so, actual music practices are considered for the purpose of analysis, with references to sound and audio-visual materials available in Malaysia, Singapore, and partly in Indonesia. Some aspects found through investigating makam-related features will complement the analysis. This research mainly focuses on musical questions referring to Hindustani music elements in Malaysian ghazal compositions rather than on its popularity on the music market. Consequently, its outcome will deliver essential insights into musical processes connected to the incorporation of cross-cultural elements, which will support future research.

1.3 What Does Malay Ghazal Indicate?

The main purposes of carrying out this study are derived from the questions raised below.

Firstly, investigating the extent of understanding of various Indian musical elements by Malaysian musicians and scholars; and secondly, examining the adaptation/appropriation and application of Indian musical elements in Malaysian local music practices by taking the Malay ghazal as an example. This approach is of a practical nature and aims at analysing how Hindustani musical elements are used in ghazal performances in Malaysia and the effect they have within a Malay ghazal ensemble.

The study has to entail a broader view on the cultural context in Malaysia, on historical developments, migrating patterns of cultures and their changes. Therefore, this study will include a wider domain analysis and methods of analytic induction intending to focus on the conditions provided. Some of the extracted suggestions draw on viewpoints of musicians, and informants, including the personal observations of the authors that are based on direct interactions. In this context, discourse analysis will be conducted.

There are many studies about music in Malaysia that encompass outlines or parts of the musical content, its actual value, its importance to the community, and as well as how this music is used for various occasions. Few studies discuss foreign musical elements that can be traced in the traditional and modern music of Malaysia.

This study is set to trace Indian, especially Hindustani, musical elements that have been practiced in Malay music throughout history. This research implies an explicit investigation into Indian musical elements and their application within Malaysian popular music, with ghazal being the primary example. In so doing, the gap in investigations referring to the musical content in cross-cultural adaptation processes can be filled.

This examination will help to develop a clear picture of the musical content with regard to tracing Hindustani musical elements that have been practiced in Malay music throughout history. In doing so, the authors contribute to a ground-breaking study by attempting to identify the degree of cross-cultural exchanges between Malay/Malaysia and South Asia. At the same time, the examination and its outcome will contribute to preserving the diversity of Malay ghazal practices. From an anthropological point of view, this fact is important to Malaysians as well as to Indians who will find a better understanding of cultural connections and exchange potentials. Moreover, the survey can enhance the understanding of cultural appropriations within Malaysian popular music at the present time and deliver a broader understanding of the migration of ghazal around the world. Beyond the main tasks, this investigation can stimulate discussion of a differentiated view of the history of Malaysian popular music over the past decades and on migrating patterns of musical cultures in general.

However, this study will not provide a description about the popularity of Hindustani music in Malaysia in the sense of its commercial value, or political and religious issues, as far as these issues are not directly relevant to answering the main research questions. Only significantly distinct musical elements of Hindustani music are considered in the analysis of the collected materials. Literature on the main study topics is comparatively rare and is not entirely considered as a primary source of knowledge. Further information has been put together from interviews with a number of knowledgeable and experienced musicians and scholars. Since the entire number of scholars, musicians and listeners is unknown, a percentage of saturation within the involved people's group cannot be stated. Therefore, only those Malay musicians who took part in this study were interviewed, thus operating with primary sources that are processed in the course of the discussion. The interview process cannot be comprehensive since the information to be obtained is general experiences in the field of Malay music that is inherited by most of the active musicians. In this study, musical recordings, including sound and audio-visual productions available since 1930 in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, are taken as references to actual music practices, though the

clarity of those very early recordings did not allow detailed transcriptions. However, the auditory impression is helpful in order to note similarities in the framework of compositions. In some cases, music recorded in India, which provides elements to be compared to Malaysian music, is examined to determine the relation between respective musical details. Further repertoires of ensembles that play music labelled as Malay ghazal, such as popular songs or joget, are not considered in the analysis.

Essentially the last two centuries have been taken as a time frame to study the origins, historical context and evolution of ghazal practices in Malaysia. For early recordings, the descriptions given in the literature have to be considered as a primary source. The recordings available since the 1930s are not audible enough or they are no longer available as primary sound sources.²

1.4 Some Literature on Methodology

There are only a few research outcomes which directly focus on the popular music sphere of Malaysia, whereas numerous studies concentrate on other interrelated music and cultural phenomena that are indirectly connected with Malaysian popular music. Nevertheless, these writings incorporate various methods that are compatible with and applicable to some parts of the present investigation.

Mandal (2007) employed qualitative research methods, mainly discourse analysis and quasi-statistics, to show the position and diffusion of Indian and Indian culture in Malaysia by inferring literature and statistics he collected from various sources of mass media. His article 'Indianness in Malaysia: Between Racialized Representations and the Cultural Politics of Popular Music' may be of interest as it helps to understand the deeper differentiations among Indians living in Malaysia.

According to Chopyak (1986), whose written accounts are essential for the study of Malay music traditions, there are no fixed criteria that define Malay traditional music. Chopyak mainly made observations and

² Certain terms often used in this study have references to explanations that are clarified in detail and in the context of their appearance. Also, terms taken from languages such as Sanskrit, Urdu or Arabic are transcribed in the most common and easily accessible way without diacritics. This is to enable readers searching for terms in digital media as well as within the study itself provided that this study is available in digital format. In cases, where diacritics have to be used for precision, footnotes provide additional explanations.

interviews in order to document the contour of Malay traditional music genres descriptively and chronologically. His study (Chopyak, 1987) on the role of music in mass media was conducted through discourse analysis and observations to process complex information.

Jerry Farrell (1999) endeavoured to bring a chronological coherence to material found in mass media in his study “Indian music and the West” by applying mainly discourse analysis. Keller (2005) proclaims that:

I suggest a different strategy for discourse research in order to bring the latter ‘down to earth’ in empirical sociology: Rather than focusing on the analysis of ‘language in use’, it is preferable and possible to translate some Foucaultian insights on discourse into sociological theory building. Following this idea, this study as well undergoes the principles of the Foucaultian discourse analysis method rather than being restricted to the meaning of the language and other restrictive factors to understand the various statements found in relevant discourses.

Grounded theory looks at a particular situation and tries to understand what is going on (Kervin, Vialle, Herrington, & Okely 2006). What distinguishes grounded theory from other methodologies is that it is explicitly emergent, i.e. it does not set out to test a hypothesis (Dick, 2002). Similarly, the current study is also ambivalent about assuming a hypothesis, despite taking up a central concept of an aesthetic principle. This central concept is rather the outcome of the research and not the definite point of departure. By restricting the literature, there is a reduced likelihood that the data is manipulated to support the existing theory and findings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In contrast, Schreiber and Stern (2001, 58) suggested that “plunging into the field research without delving into the relevant literature would be folly”. The latter statement contrasts with the current study given that there is a lack of literature in the proposed realm. Therefore, grounded theory is set as the core method of this study. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967, 67) “theoretical saturation” is the criterion used to judge as to when to stop collecting data. Here, every kind of data that is somehow pertinent to the main questions is collected by employing various qualitative methods.

1.5 How to Search for the Malay Ghazal and its Historical Background?

Methodologically, the purpose of this study requires continuous music practice over a time of at least two years and direct interaction with musicians, scholars, and listeners in the context of live performances. The

exact number of ghazal musicians or ghazal listeners in Malaysia is unknown. However, it is obvious that most of the ghazal musicians are to be found in Johor or have strong personal connections to Johor through visitations, private relationships, competitions, and other cultural events. As with the first question, the second question depends on participant observation and direct interactions with musicians and listeners. Furthermore, a great part of the entire process is micro-analytical work through detailed musical transcriptions. Their interpretations are conducted with the aim of clarifying statements.

The entire undertaking requires a strong emphasis on grounded theory because of the scarcity of literature in the area of study and the importance of participant observation. Eventually, this approach leads to a central concept that musical traces of Hindustani culture in the Malay ghazal are based on an aesthetic principle of 'selective tolerance', a term that has to be introduced in this context.

Some methods are used in a wider framework related to the key terms 'adaptation' and 'appropriation' as can be seen in some literature dedicated to the tradition of post-structuralism. For example, the chapter on 'Adaptation in Theory' can be found in explanations about Derrida's theories of deconstruction written by Emig (2012), as well as recent writings by Huck and Bauernschmidt on trans-cultural appropriation (2012). These rather philosophical views are supported by ethnomusicological studies and a number of authors investigating cross-cultural adaptation, e.g. R. K. Wolf in 'Theorizing the Local: Music, Practice, and Experience in South Asia and Beyond' (2009) or in the collection of essays edited by Chun, Rossiter and Shoesmith on 'Refashioning Pop Music in Asia' (2004).

Most importantly, these writings underline that:

Adaptation never happens inside an aesthetic vacuum, but inside ideologies and power structures that determine not merely the cultural value attributed to adaptation, but in many cases whether adaptations are possible at all (Emig, 2012: 16).

These thoughts lead then to a concept found through the grounded theory applied in this study that can be summarized as 'selective tolerance'.

In this study, domain analysis has been applied to examine a part of popular music culture in Malaysia and to basically understand current knowledge in the indicated research area. Therefore, the domain of this research encompasses popular music practices, literature on popular

music, and sound and audio-visual materials of popular music in Malaysia, mainly from the past 80 years as far as they can be accessed.

The term ‘Hindustani music element’ denotes idiosyncratic musical features that are distinctive amongst other existing musical systems. As a result, this study narrows the scope, focusing on early urban popular music and further still, on a rather elitist entertainment practice.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1 → OBJECTIVE 1

What do **Malaysian scholars and musicians** know about the field of **Hindustani music culture** in the Malay world and what is known about Hindustani ghazal?

RESEARCH QUESTION 2 → OBJECTIVE 2

Are musical traces of Hindustani culture in Malay ghazal evident through transcriptions and participant observation?
To what extent are **Hindustani musical elements** used in **Malay Ghazal**?

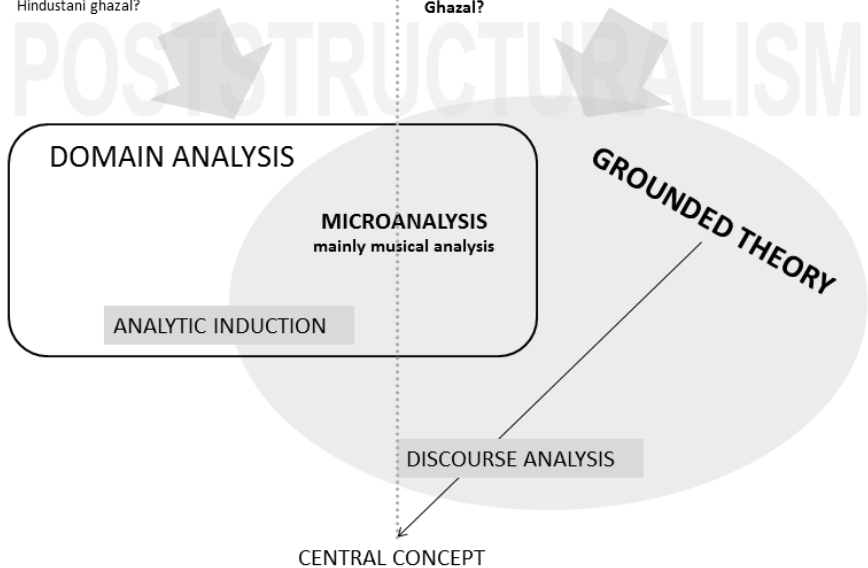


Figure 1: Overview on applied qualitative methods.

Micro-analysis is utilized to identify ingrained and modified Hindustani musical elements from renditions of Malaysian popular music. Micro-analysis is essential since this study primarily focusses on musical content. Looking at the discourses related to this study is crucial in order to analyse current findings, views, arguments, and other essential information that are pertinent to the current study. Most popular music practices remain ambiguous in understanding their connection to other musical practices given that they have been synthesizing various cultural influences within their respective cultural environments. Analysing the diverse discourses of

other researchers provides information that helps to answer some important questions in this study. The analytical induction method is applied to understand particular matters that can be assumed only by logical thinking. Apparently, there is a lack of hypotheses and comparative studies.

All these methods appear mixed and intentionally overlap to maximise the outcome from multiple perspectives. They are applied in order to trace Hindustani musical elements in Malaysian music and to determine to what extent Hindustani music is used without being obscured by imposed social or cultural hierarchies or derived taxonomies.

Since Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country, its music is shaped and affected by many music cultures such as Indian, European, Persian, Arabian and Malay music in the wider Malay world. Generally, each ethnic group in Malaysia prefers its own music, whereas there is also a certain interest in others' music. As a matter of fact, the language of a particular music genre often affects musical preferences. The musical content is often not regarded as an independent value (Fornäs, 1997). Various interviews with musicians and other informants are important in observing the place of Indian music in Malaysia.

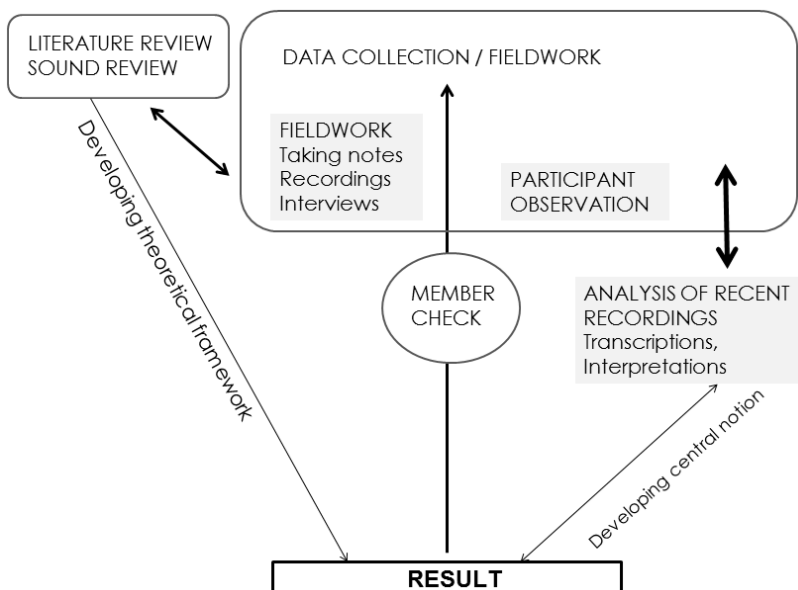


Figure 2: Work flow.

The authors' experience with Indian listeners in North India helps to raise questions and interpret findings on similarities and differences when looking at musical traces of Hindustani culture in the Malay ghazal. Apparently, some Malay music traditions, including the ghazal, are partly based on Indian musical elements but most of the Malaysian musicians and other informants are unable to define the Indian musical elements used in their music compositions except for identifying musical instruments. Many Indian musical elements appear blurred during the process of adaptation.

Despite detecting musical traces of Hindustani culture in the Malay ghazal, more general aspects have to come into view. The central concept of a selective tolerance in cross-culturally adapting or appropriating parts of a migrating culture through acknowledging visually represented musical instruments is to be discussed as an outcome of the methodological application of grounded theory. In sociological studies (Hage, 1998; Calcutt et al., 2009), the term 'selective tolerance' is used to denote openness to the free flow of some products and ideas between different cultures, while the direct confrontation with another culture as a complex entity that includes all its historical and social features, causes discomfort. The harmonium, as it will be shown, is rather adapted in the way as described by Emig (2012) and Wolf (2009), whereas the tabla is appropriated along with the scattered traces of raga based melodic renditions in vocal lines that will be analysed in Chapter 4. Seen in the context of multicultural Malaysia, the ethnic labelling of the harmonium and tabla is possibly part of a strategy following a selective tolerance towards a rather undifferentiated Indian culture, in addition to the labelling of the gambus as belonging to the Arabic culture. This central concept will be confirmed or refuted throughout this study.

1.6 Places and People

Selected interviewees reside in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia although mainly practicing musicians living in Kuala Lumpur, Johor, Singapore, and Penang are considered as well. In particular, popular music practitioners with a strong musical background and a local history as musicians have been interviewed to define the history through narratives. Their singing and playing sessions have been video recorded and analysed as proposed. In this study, musicians that learned music in a traditional way are of particular interest, since it is believed that they might possess musical legacies that may have still been maintained in a somewhat unmodified manner such as, for instance, keeping a certain type of musical

understanding that is inherited within the family. Reference is made to sound and audio-visual sources of social events featuring music played by ghazal ensembles in Kuala Lumpur, Johor, Malacca and other localities that were recorded by other researchers, professionals, and scholars. This material is either obtained from archives, personal collections, or purchased.

Additional information is collected from scholars in the proposed research areas such as musicology, ethnomusicology, and anthropology by interviewing and conducting informal discussions. These scholars were met at their respective places of work or universities and data collected by recording their opinions on the core questions and any issues arising.

The main interviewees are active musicians of ghazal and related genres, such as Norihan Saif and his ghazal musicians Ridhuan, Syahir, Hazwan, Lukman, Sunya, and Radei; a family of ghazal musicians with Sabihah Abdul Wahid, Abdullah Omar Abdul Wahid, Muhammad Radzi Abdul Wahid, Muhammad Sofie Abdul Wahid, and Muhammad Saffian Abdul Wahid; musicians and singers of the traditional show band Malaysia Rojer and Jamilah; the probably highly qualified musicians: Yayasan Warisan Johor Abdul Rahman, Mohamad Syafiq, Zainal Bin Talib, Sheikh Malek Fuizal, Kamaruz Zamad; musicians of the Ghazal Muar Group led by Johari Arshad that are Hasnah Ismail, Zainab Binti Mohamad, Razali Noor, Paiman Haji Ahmad, Yusof Bajur, and Abdul Rashid. Interesting partners were also the representative Malay musician in the Sarawak Cultural Village Haji Mohd Nor bin Arbi, who confirmed the absence of local ghazal practices in East Malaysia; the gambus musician, singer and cultural activist Zubir Abdullah in Singapore, musicians of the Malay Heritage Centre in Singapore Firdaus, Ridhwan, Hazlan, Afi, and Fadil, the Bangsawan performer and collector Rahman Abu Bakar (Rahman B.), local musicians in Pariaman and Padang (Sumatra) Ribut Anton Sujarwo, Ajia Umas Gandhi, Hasnawi, Lismawati, Yuli Dar, and Pirin.

All these musicians made significant contributions to the research by providing us access to active participation and observation in the context of their own music practice, and through their responses to the research questions. Furthermore, the musicians involved are significant observers because of their experiences with musicians from former generations and their grounded knowledge and understanding of the Malay ghazal and related genres.

Additionally, scholars in the field of Asian performing arts were informally interviewed. These are, among others: Mohd Anis Mohd Nor,