

Malay Traditional Folk Songs In Ulu Tembeling: Its Potential For A Comprehensive Study

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Keywords: Ulu Tembeling, Malay song, musical character, music, Indung

ABSTRAK

Tujuan penyelidikan ini adalah untuk meneroka potensi muzik di Ulu Tembeling untuk dikaji secara menyeluruh, dan juga untuk menambahkan lagi repertoire lagu Melayu untuk digunakan dalam pendidikan muzik. Penyelidikan telah dijalankan di lima buah kampung utama di Ulu Tembeling, dimana lagu-lagu penduduk telah dirakam sebanyak yang mungkin. Rakaman diterjemahkan ke bentuk notasi dan dianalisis. Lebih kurang sepuluh jenis lagu telah ditemui, di antaranya adalah Indung; Saba; lagu dodoi; lagu bercerita; lagu permainan; lagu untuk Tarian Lukah, Tarian Limbung dan Tarian Mayang; dan juga Dikir Rebana. Keputusan analisis menunjukkan bahawa muzik Ulu Tembeling kaya dengan melodi dan mempunyai sifat-sifat muzik yang tersendiri. Penyelidikan ini telah menunjukkan bahawa terdapat banyak lagi melodi lagu Melayu tidak diketahui dan adanya kemungkinan besar lagu Melayu pada semulajadinya mempunyai sifat-sifat muzik yang berlainan dengan muzik Melayu yang biasa dikenali di bandar. Kesimpulan penyelidikan ini adalah muzik di Ulu Tembeling perlu didokumentasikan dan dikaji secara menyeluruh.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to discover the potential of music in Ulu Tembeling for a comprehensive study, as well as to increase the repertoire of Malay songs for music education purposes. A fieldwork had been carried out in the five main villages in Ulu Tembeling where the songs of the villagers were recorded as many as possible. The sound data had been transcribed to notation and analyzed. Around ten types of songs were found in Ulu Tembeling. Among them are: Indung; Saba; Lagu Dodoi; Lagu Bercerita; Lagu Permainan; songs for Tarian Lukah, Tarian Mayang, Tarian Limbung; and Dikir Rebana. The analysis showed the variety of tunes and they have specific characteristics, such as asymmetrical time, the flexibility between down beat and up beat, etc. The result demonstrated that there were more repertoires of Malay melodies, and the original musical characteristics of Malay music may be different from those well known in the urban society. The conclusion of the research is that there is a need to document and study the traditional folk songs of Ulu Tembeling comprehensively.

INTRODUCTION

The musical value of music can be approached by its natural relation with the language applied together with it, and by viewing music as a record of human expression or response towards a particular environment and the lifestyle in the history. These two views on music should be the main consideration when we talk about the

setting of materials for a music curriculum in one country, and they should also be the basis for art music composition and performance activities to build up the musical identity of one country. According to Hoffer (1992), the idea of the importance of the cultural basis of art and music was supported by the sociological view of life with the realization of the wide differences

among the types of music found around the world.

For the purpose of setting the cultural basis for music education, there is a need to examine the representative styles of music that has a close relationship with the local culture, which also includes the relationship between music and the language used. Meanwhile there is also a need to increase the repertoire of the Malay songs for music education purposes, especially the repertoire of children songs. Many studies that had been carried out on Malay music, for example the research by Matusky(1994); Mohd. Anis(1993); Ku Zam Zam (1994); Malm(1974); were focused on performing art and did hardly provide music material for Malay folk songs casually sung in the household such as children songs, lullabies, working songs and so on.

The hypothesis of this research is that some of the musical characters of the Malay songs had been transformed along the process of urbanization, which had become more similar to the present western popular music. Many of the Malay songs were sung and were notated in consistent meter notation; applying the major and minor scales in western music.

The main aim of the research is to clarify the musical styles of Malay songs before the music was influenced by urbanization process; as well as to increase the repertoire of Malay song for education purpose. The study will naturally focus on the symbolic connections between the music and the culture, and to examine the relationship between them. This paper will only present findings in the early stage, focusing on a potential region that had not been studied intensively in the context of musicology.

The Ulu Tembeling region is located in the heartland of Peninsular Malaysia, in the State of Pahang. As reported in Wan Sabri's report (1991), the estimated number of households of this area in the year 1991 is at about 879. The main economic activities are paddy growing and rubber tapping, while the part time economic activities include harvest of forest produce. Although mountain path is made available for vehicles recently, the most convenient way to reach Ulu Tembeling from the nearest town Jerantut is still by boat, lasting between five to seven hours for the entire journey. In Wan Sabri's report(1991), Ulu Tembeling region is considered a 'fringe society' or a population that is divorced from the process of development.

One of the characteristics of this area is the Taman Negara, or the National Park, however the development of Taman Negara did not bring much change to the lifestyle of the local population. The five main villages in Ulu Tembeling which were selected for field survey and recording are Kampung Bantal, Kampung Mat Daling, Kampung Gusal, Kampung Kuala Sat and Kampung Pagi. The isolated location and the difficulty of transportation to the Ulu Tembeling area could be considered as an implication whereby the type of music which has not been influenced by the present urban culture in Malaysia may still exist in Ulu Tembeling. However it was discovered by the researcher later that inspite of difficulty in physical accessibility of this place, the population of Ulu Tembeling had been in the past decade being exposed to the urban music culture through radio and television, while the authentic folk music was still in practice in Ulu Tembeling.

OBJECTIVE

The main objective is to explore the musical culture in Ulu Tembeling, and to determine whether one should carry a comprehensive musical study on Ulu Tembeling in future. The specific objectives are as below:

- to discover the number of types of music
- to examine the characters of music
- to clarify the practice of music in the past and present

METHODOLOGY

Interviewing the villagers and recording of their singing were the main activities in the fieldwork. A fieldwork for seven days had been carried out in Ulu Tembeling. The researcher had visited all the five villages. The respondents were the villagers, mainly the senior villagers who could sing traditional folk songs. Researcher had also visited all the five primary schools, each from every village, to record the children's singing. The size of samples had not been determined in the planning stage, as this was the exploratory survey to the area. However about 30 songs were recorded during the fieldwork. Songs that had been recorded during the fieldwork was then transcribed into musical notation. A brief musical analysis was carried out upon the sound data and the transcription. This method of analysis is considered sufficient for this early stage, with

the understanding that the western traditional music notation system is not the best approach for analysis (Lomax,1980).

RESULTS

Types of Music in Ulu Tembeling.

The following types of songs which had been found existing in Ulu Tembeling are : Lagu Indung; Tarian Saba; Lagu Dodoi [lullabies]; Lagu Bercerita [story telling song]; Lagu Permainan [children game songs]; Tarian Mayang; Tarian Lukah; Tarian Limbung; and Dikir Rebana.

Indung is a set of 36 songs sang by women while working in the paddy field, especially during grass cutting. Indung was commonly practiced in Kampung Bantal, Kampung Mat Daling and Kampung Gusal. Each song was attached with a specific poem [pantun]. It is a group singing, in unison, where the form is an alternation between a solo singer and the whole group. There were no musical instruments involved in Indung singing. Within the Indung songs, there are many lullabies. On the other hand, there are also a few songs that are sung with dance movements. The singing of Indung begin with the song Anak Indung, and ends with the song Pulang Indung, in which both songs share the same melody but different in their song text.

The text of a particular song in Indung is shown as below. This song is normally sung in the order of number 18, entitled Puteri Bongsu. This text is obtained directly from the lead singer Makcik Hamiah Haji Ahmad.

[Text for answering phrase sung in group, in unison, which is usually called as jawab]

*Adik puteri bongsu,
tidurkah jaga adiklah tubuh mu adik.*

[Text for solo singer, which is usually called as pantun]

*Tuan Puteri Mayang mengurai,
Pelangi menyala di daun pandan;
Hajat hati malas bercerai,
Selagi ada nyawa di badan.*

In Indung songs, one answering phrase is repeated many times, using the same melody and text. The solo singer normally sings two stanzas of *pantun* in a song, but she could add

on different *pantun*(s) if she likes to. All the different stanzas of *pantun* sung by the lead singer in a song share the same melody. Although there is diversity in the characters of the song texts of the Indung songs collection, many song texts appeared to be love poems. According to Makcik Hamiah, the spirit of the Puteri Gunung Bertujuh taught the songs to her ancestors through dreams. Gunung Bertujuh refers to the seven hills in Kampung Bantal. As far as Indung is concerned, the performance of Kampung Bantal's Indung group had been documented and studied by Norazit Selat (1999), mainly from social-cultural point of view. A musicological approach on Indung song is yet to be carried out.

Tarian Saba is a set of healing songs with dancing in Kampung Bantal and probably in the areas nearby. It was performed to celebrate the recovery of a patient. When a patient is recovered, the family would hold an open house dinner, and the villagers would dance the Tarian Saba in that house. The length of the dance was decided according to the seriousness of the illness that the patient had. The more serious the illness was, the longer the dance would be. The senior villagers in Kampung Bantal informed that in the past, Tarian Saba had been carried out until the cock crowed in the next morning. The *bomoh*, or the Malay shaman would lead the ceremony and dance. A *gending*, or the special accompanist of the shaman would accompany the dance with his singing while playing the rebana. Other villagers would participate, dancing in a circle surrounding a tree-like decoration made out of young coconut's leaves. Saba is in fact the name given to this tree-like decoration. As Saba is a part of the traditional curing, the text has many special terms used in shamanistic charms. No documentation had been done for Tarian Saba in Ulu Tembeling, although Mohd Yusof Abdullah described the Tarian Saba performed in place other than Ulu Tembeling. (Mohd Yusof, 1983)

Lagu Dodoi and Lagu Bercerita are songs sung by parents to their children at home. Many villagers in their fifties or so admitted that their parents used to sing lullabies and tell stories to them during their childhood. A few of these villagers sang some Lagu Dodoi for the researcher. Among them was Makcik Sum Imam Massah from Kampung Mat Daling who sang the song shown in *Fig. 6*. Some senior villagers sang Lagu Bercerita for the researcher and the

duration of each of these Lagu Bercerita was at least 40 minutes. Among the story texts are Cerita Raja Terkukur, Cerita Musang Berjanggut Pandai Membaca Kitab, and Tudung Periuk. Lagu Dodoi and Lagu Bercerita are essentially the types of songs sung within households. 80 years old Makcik Sum Imam Massah from Kampung Mat Daling recalled that when she was small, each household had its own songs of Lagu Dodoi and Lagu Bercerita. One family would not know the Lagu Dodoi and Lagu Bercerita of other family. This is not surprising if we understand the variety and individuality of these songs due to the creativity and preference of stories by different family members who sang the songs at that time.

Lagu Permainan [children game songs] includes the old game songs that were shared by the senior villagers in their childhood days, and the present game songs that are taught in the primary school. Primary school children are found to be able to sing both the old game songs of their grandparents and some other new game songs including the game songs that use English song text. Tarian Limbung, Tarian Lukah and Tarian Mayang were songs with dance practiced during celebration events like wedding, as entertainment. Dikir rebana, the songs applying Islamic texts, did not particularly belong to the Ulu Tembeling people, and could be found in other places in the State of Pahang.

Musical Characters of Songs

Most of the songs in Indung are in simple structure: binary form, repetition of two phrases. The single melody was ornamented frequently. The texture is heterophony when it was sung in a group, due to slightly different ornamentation by each singer.

Most of the songs in Indung songs collection have a consistent pulse but not necessary consistent meter. For example, the opening phrase of Anak Indung (Fig. 1), has a consistent pulse, though it is difficult to distinguish a sense of meter here. Another example, Buai Adik Dendang Sayang (Fig. 2), has a melody which is natural with the intonation of the song text. It gives the impression of being in a free tempo, even though it is actually consistent in pulse.

Other than those songs with dancing, the songs in Indung were in a rather slow tempo. The sense of strong beat and weak beat (down beat and up beat) in Western Classical Art Music does not seem to apply here. A song for dancing, Burung Berlatuk (Fig. 3) has seven basic pulses in a phrase. The beat that falls on the left foot during dancing will eventually fall on the right foot when it is repeated.

Every Indung song has its own melody. Although some of the songs have the pitch range of an octave, most songs do not have wide range of pitch. In most cases, the average pitch range is only a perfect 5th. Most of the songs

Anak Indung (ambil)

$\text{♩} = 100$

the vowel 'n'

oh a - nak - In - - - dung

e. ta-bikada hu a wek ta-bik - - a dik - te - - e - ngah

Fig. 1. Anak Indung

Indung Buai Adik Dindang Sayang

$\text{♩} = 62$

bu ai laha dik a laha dik - ber

bu - ai a wek bu ai laha

dik ai dindang dang sa - yang a dik ber bu ai

Fig. 2. Buai Adik Dindang Sayang

15/7. Kg. Bantal Terbang Burung Belatuk

Kumpulan Indung
Makcik Hamiah

starting tempo $\text{♩} = 46$ increase up to $\text{♩} = 52$

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

ter e bangwekha bu - rung a be-la- tuk a

ter e bangwekha si- ku a kelu- ang a ting-

gi a tinggi dah ma - nis nya a nak ge li a ren-

dah a ren-dahah men- ca - ri lah weka ma kan

Fig. 3. Burung Belatuk

apply scales is that are very close to the western major and minor scales. The last note of a song is always Tonic, or the first degree of the scale. Other than Tonic, the 3rd degree of the scale was frequently used; as observed in Buai Adik Dendang Sayang (Fig.2) [The usage of the note C# in the key A]. The 3rd degree was used at the ending of one phrase in songs like Timang Landak (Fig.4) [The usage of the note A in the key F], Buai Limau Manis (Fig.5) [The usage of the note C in the key A]. The usage of subdominant or the 4th degree of Western music with a strong implication of the dominant chord is not shown in these songs.

The characters of Tarian Saba, Tarian Mayang and other dances were yet to be clarified, due to the limited number of villagers who can sing a substantial length of samples for

investigation during the time when the fieldwork was carried out. The analysis on the one song and phrase from Saba that were recorded showed a quicker tempo and more rhythmic character compared to Indung. The Lagu Dodoi [lullaby] sung by a senior villager that starts with the words *gerum geram* (Fig.6), has a charming melody, with rhythmic diversity [the triplet] and a wide range or pitch [an octave]. The musical richness of this melody is competent to those of art music composition.

Lagu Ber cerita [story telling songs] tells the story by repeating the singing of the same melody for numerous times, but each time with different words. The melodies used are short and usually consist of two phrases, musically speaking, in a calling and answering structure. Every story has a specific melody. Improvisation may play a role here

Indung Timang Landak

$\text{♩} = 50 / \text{♩} = 100$

Solo

ka lau hen-dak a sa ma lah nya hen-dak ga jah lah

ber ran tan a-dika nan-dung a bo-leh la di-a le - pas

Group

wa ti mang a ti mang alan-duk sing (guh) la

me - nyun ting a-dika nan-dung bu-nga lah de-li-me

Fig. 4. Timang Landak

Buai Limau Manis

$\downarrow = 50$

buai a dik e a dik ber - bu - ai
 bu-ai weh a dik tanjung li-mau ma ris

Fig. 5. Buai Limau Manis

Mok. Sum
 Kg Bukit Mat Daling

Geru Geram...

9-12-97

$\downarrow = 50$

ge ru ge ram lah ber bu - nyi nga ri lah oi bang
 oi a-ir lah li-pis se-tumpah kan a ju-
 -lai nga a dik a weh rin dulah de-nang me-ra-sa
 nya ha - ti lah oi bang oi tanda-teka
 sih anak am - boi ce rai a dik a wek

Fig. 6. Lagu Dodoi starts with the words 'Geru geram'

as the singer may not sing exactly the same words or he may slightly modify the text every time he sings.

Lagu Permainan [children game songs] also applies simple melodies. The children proceed the game by repeating the singing of the melody in unison. As far as the traditional children games are concerned, similar melody is applied to different games. The melody applies a flattened leading note, creating a mode different from the normal scale, which is uncommon to the other types of songs in Ulu Tembeling. For example, the melody of Selebu Seleba in Fig. 7 consists of , in a relative notation, musical notes of A, C, D and F, with D as the tonic of the scale. The conclusion could possibly be made for the musical characteristics of the folk songs in Ulu Tembeling at this early stage of research, is that each type of

music evidently has a particular characteristic and there is a rich diversity in the music of this region.

The Practice of Music

Indung is originally songs for women when they cut the grass in the paddy field. It was meant to help and facilitate the worker to work in a pleasing manner, through singing and dancing. With the introduction of machine and use of fertilizer in the Ulu Tembeling's paddy work, the work of cutting grass by hand in a large group is no more necessary. Presently Indung is not functioning as paddy work songs. Makkik Hamiah who is in the age of 70, claimed that the last time she played Indung in the paddy field was when she was still a young mother. The

CHILDREN GAME SONGS

♩ = 57 Selebu Seleba

Chuk-chuk Inai

Yak Yak Tai

Keh Keh Puyoh

Peram Pisang

Fig. 7. Samples of Lagu Permainan

present active singers are the group that sings as performance upon requests such as to the audience of the Sultan of the State of Pahang, or for Pesta Minggu Seni Pahang in University Malaya in 1993. The estimated average age of these singers is around 50 years; the other villagers who can sing Indung were at around the age of 80. There were nearly no younger people who can sing Indung with the proper tune and text. None have tried to sing these old songs. Four young girls were once trained to sing Indung for a request of a performance in 1996. However, the efforts in training them had been halted as the girls moved to town to work as factory workers.

According to the villagers, Saba had not been sung for 20-30 years in Kampung Bantal and recently the leader of the singer group who had shifted to other village is not practicing the music. The Lagu Dodoi [lullabies] and Lagu Bercerita [story telling songs] collected were sung by 3 villagers, both were at the age of 80. Story telling is no more an active entertainment at home in Ulu Tembeling. The common entertainment style of the villagers presently are watching movies through video, by sharing the video tapes that some villagers brought back from town. Makcik Sum Imam Massah in Kampung Mat Daling, recalled that when she was small each family had its own lullabies and story songs. Singing of these songs was a common practice at home then. She used to play Indung with her peer group. She also mentioned that the younger generation nowadays is not interested to learn singing from their parents, resulting that none could sing any of the songs that she used to sing in the past. It is observed that the youth in Ulu Tembeling are now

listening to popular songs through radio and cassette players.

The only tradition that remains active in Ulu Tembeling is Lagu Permainan [children game songs]. Out of five primary schools that had been visited by the researcher, half, but not all of the children, could sing and play the traditional children games, although every song varied slightly from those recorded from the senior villagers. One or two children can even sing some phrases from Indung. They said that they learned it from their grandmother. This may tell the difference between young children and the youth in terms of their relationship with their parents and grandparents.

CONCLUSION

One would be amazed by the number of types of Malay traditional folk songs that exist within a small population like Ulu Tembeling, which has less than 1,000 households. Music functioned differently in many of the activities of the Ulu Tembeling people, like the paddy works, healing, entertainment and children games. However such rich tradition of folk songs are no longer playing any significant role in the Ulu Tembeling society today. Only a small group of the senior villagers who can sing these folk songs and these songs seemed to be an unknown culture to the Ulu Tembeling youth. The changes of lifestyle in the community, with the introduction of the usage of machinery, fertilizer for crops, western medicine and drugs used, radio and television have caused the traditional folk songs disappear from the people's life.

This paper has only discussed a few of the folk songs of Ulu Tembeling. It is obvious that there are many more folk songs in Ulu

TABLE 1
Types of music in Ulu Tembeling, its functions and present practice

Type of music	Function	Present Practice
Indung	Working	When requested
Saba	Curing	None
Mayang	Celebration/Entertainment	None
Limbung	Celebration/Entertainment	None
Lukah	Celebration/Entertainment	None
Lullabies	Family	by elder villagers
Songs in story telling	Family	by elder villagers
Children game songs	Playing	by elder villagers & children
Dikir rebana	Celebration/Entertainment	In occasions

Tembeling left unstudied. A documentation of all the folk songs in Ulu Tembeling could provide valuable musical resources; these resources could be applied for historical study; cultural study; musical study; music composition and music education. Although the traditional folk songs in Ulu Tembeling are no longer actively practiced as in the past, there are villagers who can still sing these songs.

Every type of traditional folk songs in Ulu Tembeling has its own musical characteristic. Music educators could consider applying Ulu Tembeling's folk song as the cultural basis for music education, as the musical characters of the songs are closely related to the intonation and rhythm of the language text. Indung, Saba and Lagu Dodoi are treasury of short melodies, which are suitable for elementary music education. The Lagu Permainan [children game songs] are of great value for early childhood education.

In applying these traditional folk songs in music education, however, there are problems related to the song texts that need further consideration. This is mainly due to the song texts of Tarian Saba and Mayang, in which the content is based on animism believing. This content is no longer reflective of the present lifestyles in Malaysia and would not be of any educational value, especially as a text to be sung and practiced. As a way to solve this problem, one may consider composing other text that is more suitable to our present lifestyles upon the Tarian Saba's melodies. On the other hand, this may break the natural relationship of the music and the language. The musical value will decrease when it loses its original context.

From anthropological point of view, one of the potentials for research on music of Ulu Tembeling is the study on the relationship between musical characteristics and lifestyles. A specific rhythmic character may link with a particular action in working and so on. For example, the fact that many of the songs in Indung are slow in tempo and not consistent in meter, may relate to the body movement of grass cutting in the paddy field. The movement of grass cutting using knives with the bended body, if one has ever experienced it, would definitely disturb the consistent meter of the music. Unless it is done by purpose as in the western classical opera, it is difficult and unnatural to sing a rhythmic and up tempo song

with this movement. Studying the relationship between musical characteristics and lifestyles will also help to bring closer understanding upon the lives of a peasant society before urbanization. For example, one could study the villagers' believing system in the past through the study of the collection of healing songs in Tarian Saba.

As for the villagers themselves, the Ulu Tembeling community is experiencing a process of change in their music culture. The authentic music is disappearing and the imported popular music through mass media is becoming more dominant in the villagers' life. Music, which has played various functions in the past has now become solely as a means of entertainment.

The traditional folk songs have no longer been supporting their life in the way they did in the past, but recently have found a new context to survive. The traditional performing art is now a subject for tourism. The cases of Indung being requested to be performed as a cultural performance in the past few years are examples where the traditional folk songs have become a stage performance. If the performance of traditional folk songs can bring income to the village, the youth would want to learn and perform the traditional folk songs. In this way, the traditional folk songs may be revitalized. As for the researcher, it is worth studying and observing this whole process of change of musical culture in Ulu Tembeling, not only from the view of cultural preservation, but also from the views of tourism and cultural revitalization. In almost every other place in Asia, changes in their musical culture are happening as in Ulu Tembeling. The case study on Ulu Tembeling could help us to determine the appropriate directions in evaluation, conceptualization and application of traditional performing arts in any Asian society in the future.

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GLOSSARY

<i>Ulu</i>	Upper , inner
<i>Lagu</i>	Song; instrumental music
<i>Permainan</i>	Games; performance. Example: permainan Saba; permainan Indung
<i>Dodoi</i>	Lullaby
<i>Bercerita</i>	Story telling
<i>Tarian</i>	Dance
<i>Puteri</i>	Princess
<i>Saba</i>	The tree-like decoration used in the Tarian Saba
<i>Gending</i>	The accompanist for the shaman in Saba performance. Gending sings and plays the rebana.

(Received 13 January 1998)