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Instrumental Ghazal Melayu: A Functional Analysis

Introduction

The ghazal is seen as a poetic genre which has spread into South Asia in the 12th century. Education typically available only to the upper classes was required to decode the complex lyrics of ghazals, mostly defining cultural behavior and the ideology of musicians and admirers in the respective society. Today ghazal lyrics are found in the poetry of many languages of the Indian sub-continent. It is commonplace that ghazal poetry is presented through singing accompanied by musical instruments since its main purpose is to convey the lyrical meaning. Ghazal Melayu is one of many ghazal genres which evolved in the Malay world by merging poetical and musical ideas coming from Middle East and India. Nevertheless, sung melodies of ghazal Melayu are also presented through musical instruments implying that ghazal Melayu is not merely a poetry based music genre but also understood as an instrumental music form which is called 'Instrumental Ghazal Melayu'.

As a general interpretation about music, Sunni Islam beliefs do not encourage instrumental music in Malaysia. As already emphasized by Al Ghazali (1058-1111 AD), and later on disseminated in many versions, instrumental music is not deemed as being generally permissible. This paper discusses how Malays justify the idea that Instrumental Ghazal Melayu should be tolerated in Malaysian Islam although other forms of instrumental music are seen as rather questionable. In conclusion, this study provides insights into the discussion regarding the dichotomy between secular and religious music as expressed in instrumental music practice and the relationship of musical ideas thought vocally and instrumentally.

Ghazal as a Poetic Genre

Some Malay musicians and scholars find that Malay ghazal originates from Hindustani ghazal practices that took place in various places in Malaya during the British colonial period¹ while some scholars claim that Malay ghazal is a legacy from Arab or Persia that has come to Malaya with Islam and developed in Malaya. However, in this paper, ghazal poetry of Hindustan will be closely

¹ Norihan Saif and Chinthaka Prageeth Meddegoda (2012–2014). Personal communication. ASWARA Kuala Lumpur; Haji Jafar and Chinthaka Prageeth Meddegoda (2013). Personal communication. Yayasan Warisan Johor.

looked at and compared with Malay ghazal since most of the scholars and musicians believe that Hindustani ghazal practices are closely related to the Malay ghazal practices at present.

The history of ghazal underpins Islamic practices. Ghazal was initially a literary genre which is strongly related to languages such as Arabic, Persian and more prominently Urdu (Indo-Persian synthesis). The significance of ghazal poetry practiced in cultures in Arabia, Persia and India are mentioned in various literature. Meisami² defines Arabic ghazal as “poetry about love, whether incorporated into the qasida or in an independent, brief poem”. According to Bausani Persian ghazal may have a content regarding love, spring, wine, or God but the formal structure needs to be maintained such as a certain length, a certain rhyme scheme and takhallus (poet’s pen name) in the final line³. Regula Qureshi⁴ (1990: 458) describes Urdu ghazal “highly formalized, stylized, and rich in metaphor, the [Urdu] ghazal serves the expression of emotion and cognition in a rarefied, universalized, yet intimate way through its main subject: love, both human and spiritual.” Originally the concept of the ghazal was “love”, initiated in Arabian cultures and later travelling to Persia⁵.

The ghazal practiced in North India was not connected with any Sanskrit drama or any other Hindu or Buddhist religious literature before its advent from North West. Many agree that Ghazal has come to India along with Persians and has been developed in Urdu, a language nurtured through Indo-Persian cultural interaction⁶. Ghazal verses were understood as a graceful linguistic expressive art which was highly popular among nobles and aristocrats in Mughal India. The practice of conversing with shers (ghazal verses) has been an aspect of showing one’s intellectual and social background during casual gatherings of high-class Muslim society in India. Therefore,

² Meisami, Julie Scott 1998. Ghazal. Meisami, Julie Scott and Starkey, P. (eds), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, 1, 249.

³ Bausani, Alessandro (1965). Ghazal ii – in Persian Literature. *The Encyclopedia of Islam, New Edition* 2:1033–1036. Leiden: E. J. Brill: 1033b

⁴ Qureshi, Regula Burckhardt (1990). Musical Gesture and Extra-Musical Meaning: Words and Music in the Urdu Ghazal. *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 43 (3):457–497.

⁵ Bausani, Alessandro (1960). Ghazal ii – in Persian Literature. *The Encyclopedia of Islam, New Edition* 1, Leiden: E. J. Brill: 102.

⁶ Manuel, Peter (1989). A Historical Survey of the Urdu Ghazal-Song in India. *Asian Music*, 20 (1), 93–113; Qureshi, Regula Burckhardt (1990). Musical Gesture and Extra-Musical Meaning: Words and Music in the Urdu Ghazal. *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 43 (3):457–497.

studying ghazal poetry was an important component of education among nobles and aristocrats of Muslim India.

The poetic symposium called *mushaira* is a competitive platform where shayars (poets) presented ghazal to an audience filled with nobles and aristocrats. These shayars were mostly nobles and aristocrats as well. In *mushairas*, ghazals were presented by male shayars in the style of rhythmic speech (*takht ul lafz*) and also in chanting style (*tarannum*). The ghazal verses written in the form of mystic inspiration were adapted into *qawwali* singing which was performed in front of Sufi shrines at mosques. The ghazals written on various themes subjected to the romance were sung by courtesans (*tawaif*) entertaining the nobles and aristocrats gathered in the private mansions called *havelis* (in India and Pakistan), and in the salons (*mehfil/mujra*). After significant British suppression (1857) on deep-rooted Muslim aristocracy throughout upper Gangetic plain and central India, the ghazal was been adapted by the middle class society in those areas and subsequently preferred by the general public throughout the region.

Merging Poetical and Musical Ideas from India and the Middle East?

There are no first hand evidences saying that Urdu ghazal has travelled also to Southeast Asia as an accompanying component of Sufi mysticism. Nevertheless, Sufi religious practices widely connected to Hindustani music and mutually benefited through interaction thus they were flourishing during and after the period of the Mughal Empire on the Indian subcontinent. Hence, the historiography indirectly suggests that there could have been a possibility for the coming of Urdu ghazal with Sufis who were engaged in spreading Islam in the Malay world. However, Ghazal Melayu is different from Urdu ghazal in terms of many aspects. The formal structure of Urdu ghazal found in some literature shows some similarities with the traditional Malay Syair and Malay pantun. The most obvious difference between Malay Syair and pantun is that Malay Syairs carry a story in a series of verses while pantuns consist of individual meanings and do not carry a story. They rather symbolize known stories. Most of Malay ghazal lyrics are formulated with traditional pantuns and some of them are recently composed. For this study, it is important to examine poetic elements of Urdu ghazal and its relationship to Malay pantuns which have been adapted in Malay ghazal. Some poetic elements and their terms that were used in Hindustani ghazal and Malay pantun are indicated in Figure 1.

Poetry elements used in Urdu ghazal	Term in Urdu	Term used in Malay pantun / in Ghazal Melayu
Rhymed verses (couplet): A sher is a couplet - a poem of two lines. Each couplet embodies a single thought and is complete in itself. The plural of sher is ashaar. A sher is also called a 'bait' (bay-t). ⁷	sher	pantun dua kerat
Another term for sher	bait	Rangkap/untai
The best sher in a ghazal. 'bait-ul-ghazal' also known as husn-e-ghazal. ⁸	bait-ul-ghazal	-
A line of a couplet or verse is called a misra. ⁹	misra	kerat
The first line of a sher.	misra-e-oolaa	-
The second line of a sher.	misra-e-saanii	-
Metre: Both lines of a sher must be in the same metre. All ashaar (plural of sher) in a ghazal must be in the same metre (bahr). ¹⁰	bahr/beher	-
Dummy meaningless words that defines the length of a sher (poetry). The basic purpose of which is to specify the places of long and short syllables in an actual word ¹¹ .	arkaans	-
Rhyme proper: The rhyming pattern of the word(s) just before the radiif at the end of the line in a sher. This is a necessary requirment, followed even in the absence of other rules ¹²	qafiya	-
End-rhyme: Word or phrase that is repeated at the end of the second line in every sher. The same word(s) are repeated. The matlaa has both lines ending in the radiif ¹³ .	radif	-
Opening verse (first couplet): this is the first sher	matla	Pembayang

⁷ This information is accessible via <http://www.urdupoetry.com/novicenook/ghazalelements.html>. This page is maintained by Nita Awatramani and last updated on 12 Sep 2004.

⁸ This information is accessible via <http://www.urdupoetry.com/glossary.html>. This page is maintained by Nita Awatramani and last updated on 31 March 2001.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ This information is accessible via <http://www.urdupoetry.com/novicenook/ghazalelements.html>. This page is maintained by Nita Awatramani and last updated on 12 Sep 2004.

¹¹ This information has given by Irfan 'Abid' (2001) in an online article. Accessible via <http://www.urdupoetry.com/articles/art5.html>.

¹² This information is accessible via <http://www.urdupoetry.com/novicenook/ghazalelements.html>. This website is maintained by Nita Awatramani and last updated on 12 Sep 2004.

¹³ Ibid.

of a ghazal, and both lines of the sher must end in the radiif. Usually a ghazal has only one matla. ¹⁴		Maksud (this term is used to identify the first half of any pantun)
If a ghazal has more than one matla, then the second one is called 'matlaa-e-saanii'. ¹⁵	matlaa-e-saanii/ husn-e-matla	-
Final verse (second couplet): The sher in which the takhallus is included is called the maqta. It is the last sher of the ghazal ¹⁶ .	maqta	Maksud (this term is used to identify the second half of any pantun)
poet's pen-name: A shayar (poet) usually had a pen-name under which he wrote. The pen-name is called 'takhallus' (takh-ul-lus) ¹⁷ .	takhallus	-
registers of frequent use for example e 'of' and -o 'and',	izafats	-
rhythmic speech	tah tul lafz	beralun
chanting style	tarannum	tarannum (Malays use this term only for reciting the content of Al-Quran)
competitive poetic symposium	mushaira	syembara
collected works of a poet ¹⁸	diwan	-
composer of the poem	shayar	penyair
poems	Sajak	syair or pantun

Figure 1: Poetry elements used in Urdu ghazal and in Malay pantun / Ghazal Melayu.

Some aspects of Urdu ghazal and pantun have to briefly be noted before getting into the discussion. The minimum number of verses in a Hindustani ghazal needs to be 5 and the normal maximum need to be 12 verses. Each sher has got complete meaning and does not necessarily depend on the other shers

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Encyclopædia Iranica. Accessible via <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/search/keywords:Divan>.

(couplets) of an Urdu ghazal like Malay pantun. However, the series of shers in an Urdu ghazal accumulatively carries an overall relevance though it does not have to be bound to a single theme. A Malay pantun needs to consist of at least two lines known as “*pantun dua kerat*” and a maximum 16 lines known as “*pantun enam belas kerat*” and most popular type is four-line variety “*pantun empat kerat*”. According to Thomas (1979:51), a pantun can be divided into two halves that “the first half (*pembayang maksud*) having specific, concrete images to describe nature of the human world” and the second half (*maksud*) consists of “abstract words to state an observation or maxim”. However, the meanings of two halves do not metaphorically correspond and yet the rhyme is maintained as abab type. The first couplet is like flowers waved by a magician right before the surprise is made appear.

An example for Urdu ghazal shows an important pattern of verse structure, the rhyme position, throughout the poem:

Urdu (composed by Asadullah Khan Ghalib)	Translation into English (by Kanda, 2013: 153)
<p>Koi Umeed bar nahin aati, Koi surat nazr nahin aati. Maut ka ek din maayen hai, Neend kyon raat bhar nahin aati. Aage aati thi haal-e-dil pe hansi, Ab kisi baat par nahin aati. Jaanta hun sawaab-e-taait-o-zuhd, Par tabiat idhar nahin aati. Hai kuch aisi hi baat fo chup hun, Warna kya baat kar nahin aati. Daagh-e-dil gar nazr nahin aata, Bu bhi ai chaaragar nahin aati. Ham wahaan hain jahaan se ham ko bhi, Kuchh hamaari khabar nahin aati.</p>	<p>All my hopes stand belied, No prospect is in sight! Dearth will come when it will come, Why comes not sleep at night? I once could laugh at the state of my heart, But nothing can make me laugh today. To pray and penance is good, I know, But my mind is not disposed this way. There must be something that holds my tongue, Not that I know not how to speak. If you can't see my scalded heart, Can't you, O healer, smell the burn? I am in that obvious state, A stranger to myself where I am.</p>

Figure 2: An example for the Urdu ghazal shows an important pattern of verse structure (*mujtas*), the rhyme position, throughout the poem of Asadullah Khan Ghalib noted and translated in Kanda (1992: 153).

: Bulan mengambang pak ngah balik	With the full moon Pak Nhah returns
Bulan mengambang di tengah malam :	The full moon occurs in the middle of the night
Nampak bercahaya dengan serinya	We see the light with serenity
Nampak bercahaya dengan serinya	We see the light with serenity
: Janganlah adik pak ngah balik berhati bimbang	Child, don't worry about Pak Ngah's return
Janganlah adik berhati bimbang:	Child, don't worry
Abang pergi tidaklah lama	I would not be gone for long
Abang pergi tidaklah lama	I would not be gone for long

Figure 3: The example Pak Ngah Balik for the Malay ghazal shows an important pattern of verse structure, the rhyme position, throughout the pantun.

As figure 1 indicates, the concept of ghazal poetry has changed in Malaysia with some inclusions and exclusions. Urdu lyrics were the very first exclusion in ghazal. Urdu was not well understood by the aristocratic society in Malaya though they might have admired Urdu language including its associated culture. Rohaya Ahmad (2007) mentions two remarkable teachers who came from India and taught ghazal in Malaya namely Sheikh Abdullah and Ustad Alfah. However, there is lacking of information regarding survival of ghazal poetry in Malaysia. Upper class Malays might have appreciated ghazal poetry for its Islamic origin and subjects associated with Islamic mysticism and love stories such as Laila Majnun. Many drama scripts and classical literary works in Malaysia are adaptations, transformation and translations of North Indian Urdu works which can also be identified as indigenized, reshaped or localized versions of Indo-Persian Urdu works through which many Urdu words and cultural elements that were added to the Malay culture.¹⁹ Braginsky and Suvorova²⁰ mention the condition of Malay translations from Urdu dastan (story) that “Not only each micro-episode, but also the majority of sentences of the Urdu narrative passages find their counterparts in the Malay text, even if

¹⁹ Braginsky and Suvorova, (2008:123) mentions “All the more so, as, in their plots and rhetoric, these Urdu originals are close to earlier Indo-Persian works which served as the source of and the model for the creation of the synthetic genre of Malay fantastic adventure hikayat” [Malay term for written stories].

²⁰ Braginsky, Vladimir, and Anna Suvorova (2008). “A new wave of Indian Inspiration: Translations from Urdu in Malay traditional literature and theatre.” *Indonesian and the Malay World* 36(104):115–153.

frequently with slight changes, permutations and, naturally, in the garb of traditional Malay formulas intended to arrange the flow of narration. However, the Malay text reveals remarkable differences in the conveying of stylistic embellishments of its original". As such, many literary works that appear as Malay *syair*²¹ and *hikayat* are adaptations of Urdu and early Indo-Persian literary works which were widely influenced by Sufism and Islamism in general. In *Ghazal Melayu*, the essential feature in itself is appropriation of Malay traditional *pantun* verses which are detached from the Urdu literary adaptations. However, Malay *pantuns* can be closer to *Qasida*²² than Urdu *ghazal* in few perspectives.

	Urdu ghazal	Malay pantun
Origin	12 th century	Unknown. Sources are available since 15 century.
Class	Used in upper class before 1857. Later middle class	Started among folks
Structure	Basic structure is known as <i>Mujtas</i> and there are large number of structures	abab, abcabc, abcdabcd and so on
Forms	Qawwali, ghazal art song formats, tarannum singing in <i>musha'ira</i> , singing in Shia <i>Majlis</i> functions	Ghazal Melayu, Malay pop song, <i>zapin</i> , <i>dongdang sayang</i> , <i>joget</i> , <i>asli</i> , theatre songs (<i>Bangsawan</i> , <i>Jikey</i> , other local theatre)

Figure 4: Various elements of different cultures in Ghazal Melayu.

Cultural Conditions in Malaya

An overview of Indian minority groups and cultures in Malaya and later Malaysia shows various ethnic, religious, and hierarchical features, which may influence aesthetic preferences and the perception of Hindustani music from the time of British Malaya to present. The most pervasive Hindustani

²¹ Malay term for poem or poetry.

²² According to the encyclopedia Britannica, *Qasida* is described as laudatory, elegiac, or satiric poem. Accessible via <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/485544/qasidah>. *Qasida* chanting became a common practice latest since oversea travelling was increasing and easier, as well as with the use of modern media (Rasmussen, 2010). It can be said that *qasida* chanting and *ghazal* practice came up in the same time period and could have influenced each other in terms of special singing styles that are cultivated through the input of other cultures, their languages and their poetic articulations, coming from different directions.

performing genre during the time of British Malaya has been Parsi theatre from which many existing local performing art forms were derived and modified such as Bangsawan and also Ghazal Melayu. The coming of Hindustani ghazal into the Malay world was discussed suggesting many possible historical lines in connection to the Hindustani culture.

Figure 4 shows the summary of musical and poetic elements which were integrated into Ghazal Melayu.

	Hindustani elements	Arabic/Persian elements	elements from other places (mainly Western)	Southeast Asian elements	Local Malay elements
Musical instruments	harmonium, tabla	ud, marwas	tambourine, maracas, guitar, violin		[gambus]
Melody	some melodic shapes such as murkhi, khatka, and kan	maqam aspects	switching to different key tones or scales		
musical authority			different melodic lines are maintained similar to western polyphony	applying polyphony without considering harmony in the sense of western harmony	Harmonium leads the melody
performing stances	sitting on the floor	sitting in the floor			
lyrics	scanty similarities with rhyming patterns	Some basic rhyming principles		adaptation of traditional Malay pantun	
song structure in performance					Local Malay structures

Figure 5: Comparison of selected elements according to their cultural nature.

Another important point is the religious understanding of music in Malay society. Beeman²³ (2011) explains that there are only three verses in Quran that could ambiguously be related to production and consumption of music. He mentions “Prohibitions against music and music consumption and the exceptions to those prohibitions, since they are not based in the Quran are derived primarily from the Hadith (codified reports of the sayings and behavior of the Prophet Mohammad)”. According to Hadith, all musical instruments are questionable except Daf (cylindrical drum) which is exempted. However, singing is allowed with few conditions²⁴. The Muslim philosopher Al-Ghazali, describes in his writings on music and singing and their effect on the body. This is analysed by Jähnichen²⁵ who shows how these writings were adapted and followed by some Malaysian Muslims in Malaysia. She describes the interpretation of Al-Ghazali’s thoughts among Malays through key concepts such as ecstasy, sin, control, fear, sorrow, and joy. In the context of Malay’s instrumental music practices, it is important to note what Jähnichen²⁶ says that “Music, especially singing, is strictly evaluated as a carrier of text only. Musical instruments, regardless of the music played, are seen in a similar way as being sinful of different degrees in certain context. It is as if music itself would not have any content or as if this content is out of question”. At present, Malay musicians use to play various instrumental pieces of Western art music, Jazz, and blues. Mostly, they are not aware that many instrumental pieces are religiously and historically questionable in Islamic traditions while Malays are supposed to ignore non-Islamic religious practices.

Non-vocal Ghazal Melayu

Under specific conditions, non-vocal Ghazal Melayu exists in order to introduce an entertaining event, to create an atmosphere among arriving guests and to support speeches as background music. This also applies on other music genres such as *dondang sayang*, *asli* and *joget*. However, the case

²³ Beeman, William O. (2011). Production, Hearing and Listening: Intentional Participation in Musical Culture in the Islamic World. *Anthropology News*, p11; Jähnichen, Gisa (2012). Al-Ghazali’s Thoughts on the Effects of Music and Singing upon the Heart and the Body and their Impact on Present-Day Malaysian Society. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 2, No. 9: 115–123.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Jähnichen, Gisa (2012). Al-Ghazali’s Thoughts on the Effects of Music and Singing upon the Heart and the Body and their Impact on Present-Day Malaysian Society. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 2, No. 9: 115–123.

²⁶ Ibid: 119.

of an instrumental ghazal is interesting from the viewpoint of melodic development in absence of a singer.

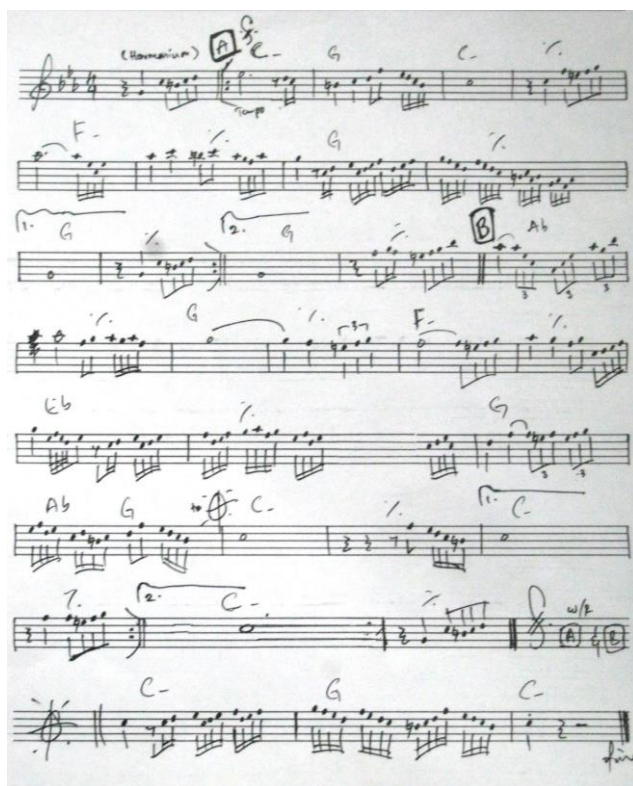


Figure 6: Score of Tambak Johor used as teaching material in the ghazal class of ASWARA 2012-2013, ARCPA1260G.

At the ghazal class in ASWARA, the ghazal ‘Tambak Johor’ was taught as an example for the instrumental ghazals. The harmonium has executed the missing vocal melody by constructing a new melody into the vocal sections. However, the typical way of playing the entering melodic phrase and concluding long tones are still maintained throughout the ghazal as marked in the transcription of one of sung ghazals. With reference to the sung version of Tambak Johor, it is obvious that the harmonium of the instrumental version does not play the singing melody that can be traced from recordings²⁷ with singer.

Tambak Johor is looked at for further analysis as following. In the teaching situation, a score draft was handed over to the students that consisted of some

²⁷ Accessible at Audiovisual Research Collection of Performing Arts (ARCPA2678) in Universiti Putra Malaysia.

phrases and important information allowing mainly the harmonium players to reproduce the ghazal (Figure 6).

The score indicates the beginnings, endings and transitions especially for those parts of the melody that are usually not played with the singer. The melody of the singer is replaced by improvisatory fragments of these parts thus the entire harmonium melody changes to a more regularly structured type (Figure 7):



Figure 7: The harmonium melody played taking the score (Figure 5) as basic guide. The different elements are marked with different types of brackets.

Comparing advice given through the score and real playing, the range of individual interpretation becomes visible. This applies not only on the melodic lines but also on the rhythmic distribution of tones within a given time frame that indicates a good feeling for meter though the harmonium player cannot fully adapt to the tabla player due to the absence of a cyclic rhythmic pattern in tabla playing.

Interestingly, the instrumental version seems to be compatible with the sung version with regard to the meter and the rhythmic structure. However, the melodic shapes of the harmonium part differ from the sung melody. For example, the beginning of the first stanza is sung as following (Figure 7):



Figure 8: Transcription excerpt from ARCPA2678, the beginning of the first stanza of Tambak Johor, vocal part.

This melodic shape is not played by the harmonium as well as other melodic sequences with rather narrow range. The harmonium seems to be better used when playing wider ranges in broken chords (see bar 13 of the harmonium transcription) and while inserting additional 'bunga' (embellishments in Malay musical context).

Some Points to Discuss

The history of **ghazal in India**, Persia and Arabian countries has seen ghazal emerging as a poetry genre which was presented to an audience by chanting and singing. In result, ghazal has been developed in its manifold shapes as singing genre in many local cultures. Later, ghazal was available to a larger audience through records, cassettes, and CDs and also through radio, television and internet. The listeners enjoyed not only the text meaning but also its musical contents. Thus ghazal instrumentals also became popular since most of the melodies were familiar and interesting to the listeners even without its textual meaning and in many cases, the ghazal lyrics were reminded to the listeners through respective instrumental versions. Today, there are many instrumental ghazal melodies available and practiced in various private and public functions in the background while the participants talking to each other or waiting until the main event starts. Sometimes, instrumental ghazal is used as muzak²⁸ in elevators, waiting lobbies, and some high class restaurants in India. These instrumental ghazals, however, are not played only with Hindustani music instruments but also Western harmonic progressions and musical sounds are included through electronic music instruments generated by computer softwares.

In the case of **ghazal Melayu** performances, the lyrics are not to carry the substantial message but the musical sound including the voice is seen as the attraction to the local audience. The text in Ghazal Melayu does not directly reflect feelings of romance which are the main subject in popular ghazal poetry of ghazal genres in India and Persia. Therefore, the term ghazal is seemingly adapted to this particular ensemble due to the inclusion of harmonium and tabla which were encountered by the Malays through Hindustani ghazal practices in Malaya.

However, it could also be that the Hindustani ghazal ensembles known to Malay musicians which include Urdu ghazal repertoire and Hindustani music instruments, mainly tabla and harmonium and/or sarangi, were adapted by Malays and then subsequently Hindustani elements were replaced with Malay and Malayised elements such as Malay pantuns, gambus, or other adopted music instruments such as violin, guitar and tambourine.

The core idea of a ghazal performance has been transformed in Malaya to experience mainly the aesthetics of music rather than the aesthetics of poetry.

²⁸ Muzak as defined by Lanza, Joseph (2004). *Elevator Music: A Surreal History of Muzak, Easy-Listening, and Other Mood-song*. Expanded and revised edition. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

In the history of secular music in the Malay world, most of foreign music genres were adapted by Malays not because they could enjoy the lyrics but mostly because they enjoyed the musical idea and sometimes the combination of music with dance. Another reason could be that the Sultan and other aristocrats preferred certain performances that were attributed to the colonizers. In an interview, Haji Jafar shared some experiences in the Sultan palace of Johor that “the late Sultan Iskandar, he really loved kroncong so much and jazz music. He sometimes liked ghazal but not as much he liked kroncong and jazz. In every birthday functions, the officers arranged jazz and kroncong concerts. I am the one who proposed to the Sultan which singers will be taken. I give him a list, and then he says this one ok and this one not ok and so on”²⁹.

Seemingly, Malay aristocrats have preferred musical content rather than the text of secular music practices that were coming from abroad. Music genres carrying Islamic oriented text are taken serious by Malays. They are seen as falling under the category of appropriate music genres³⁰. Respectable lyrics that are applied on melodies may also not be completely understood due to the fact that these lyrics are mostly in Arabic language (Rasmussen, 2010: 5). This kind of music practices is mostly adopted and respected from the viewpoint of Islam, nevertheless, Malays may not really enjoy them as an entertaining event and, therefore, would not include them in private celebrations or in leisure time activities. Thus, it can be assumed that kroncong, jazz, and ghazal Melayu might have been preferred which is enjoyable without paying much attention to the sung text.

Another aspect is that some Arabic, Persian or Urdu texts may carry special metaphors and hidden meanings³¹ and therefore demand a deeper understanding of historical and cultural facts that might have been seen as an additional burden to the audience.

²⁹ Haji Jafar and Chinthaka Prageeth Meddegoda (2013). Personal communication. Yayasan Warisan Johor. Accessible via ARCPA02257 in Universiti Putra Malaysia.

³⁰ Beeman, William O. (2011). Production, Hearing and Listening: Intentional Participation in Musical Culture in the Islamic World. *Anthropology News*, p11; Jähnichen, Gisa (2012). Al-Ghazali's Thoughts on the Effects of Music and Singing upon the Heart and the Body and their Impact on Present-Day Malaysian Society. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 2, No. 9: 115–123.

³¹ Qureshi, Regula Burckhardt (1990). Musical Gesture and Extra-Musical Meaning: Words and Music in the Urdu Ghazal. *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 43 (3):457–497.

Conclusion

Ghazal Melayu, to conclude, has so far no fixed compendium of stylized and formalized repertoire of lyrics. This observation leads to the insight that in many cases the vocal part is to carry the musical meaning rather than the lyrical meaning and that first of all the quality of the voice is a deciding criterion for successful performances. In instrumental ghazal versions, the quality of the voice is represented mainly through the leading melody instrument, which is the harmonium.

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