

RESEARCH NOTE

MALAYSIAN POPULAR MUSIC AND SOCIAL COHESION: A FOCUS GROUP STUDY CONDUCTED IN KUCHING, KOTA KINABALU AND KLANG VALLEY

Adil Johan* and Shazlin Amir Hamzah

Institute of Ethnic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor, MALAYSIA

*Corresponding author: adiljo@ukm.edu.my

Published online: 20 November 2019

To cite this article: Adil Johan and Shazlin Amir Hamzah. 2019. Malaysian popular music and social cohesion: A focus group study conducted in Kuching, Kota Kinabalu and Klang Valley. *Kajian Malaysia* 37(2): 173–195. <https://doi.org/10.21315/km2019.37.2.8>

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.21315/km2019.37.2.8>

ABSTRACT

In March and April 2019, a total of 12 focus groups were conducted in Kota Kinabalu, Kuching and Klang Valley. The study interviewed informants about their everyday experiences and preferences in consuming popular music. It also sought to determine specific popular and patriotic songs, made and circulated within Malaysia from the 1960s to 2000s, that garnered a wide appeal and fostered a sense of collective Malaysian identity amongst the informants. The informants were divided into four demographic groups in each location: (1) youths (aged 19 to 39), (2) business owners or entrepreneurs (any age), (3) professionals (any age), and (4) arts practitioners and musicians. This research note provides a brief review of the existing studies on Malaysian popular music that inform the study. However, despite the significant amount of research on Malaysian popular music from the 1980s until the present day, there has yet to be a study that considers the responses and attitudes of Malaysian citizens – as music listeners and consumers – toward Malaysian popular music. More so, the study hopes to move beyond critical approaches that only focus on contestations between music producers and performers with the authority-defined structures and policies of the nation-state. We propose an epistemological shift to focus on the musical preferences and everyday experiences of Malaysians as well as music producers and performers to determine if consuming popular music provides an unofficial and everyday-

experienced space for social cohesion, integration and collective flourishing amidst a diverse multicultural nation.

Keywords: Malaysia, popular music, nationalism, integration, social cohesion, flourishing

INTRODUCTION

Popular music is a cultural expression that reflects the everyday experiences and interactions of a society. The nation-state is particularly important in how popular music is produced, consumed, regulated/controlled and supported/neglected (Cloonan 1999). However, Malaysia is a particularly unique case where local popular music in its production and consumption has the ability to express a sense of collective identity amongst the citizens of a multi-ethnic nation. The narratives of popular songs, for example, connect the culturally intimate sentiments of love, tragedy, and the challenges of everyday life that are collectively experienced by the citizens of a particular nation (Stokes 2010; Stirr 2017; Adil 2018). For example, P. Ramlee, the Malaysian popular culture icon and his musical compositions idealise a postcolonial national identity that is uniquely multicultural and cosmopolitan (Adil 2018; Chan 2012). Other artistes such as Sudirman, Francesca Peters, DJ Dave, the Alleycats, Sheila Majid and Zainal Abidin also reflect this multicultural diversity that is inherent in the daily interactions of Malaysian society (Lockard 1998; Tan 2002). However, despite the significant amount of research on Malaysian popular music from the 1980s until present day, there has yet to be a study that considers the responses and attitudes of Malaysian citizens toward Malaysian popular music and how such music provides a possible platform for social cohesion and integration amidst a diverse multicultural nation.

How do Malaysians consume popular music? What genres of popular music interest them? What devices or platforms are used to listen to popular music? Are there songs or artistes that appeal to a wide segment of Malaysians? Could these songs reflect a shared sonic and narrative space for national cohesion amidst cultural and geographical differences? What is the current impact of patriotic pop songs disseminated by the Malaysian government media since the 1970s? Are commercially-produced popular songs more or less effective than such patriotic songs in fostering a sense of national affinity?

To answer these questions, the project researchers conducted focus group discussions (FGD) on popular music in three urban geographical locations in Malaysia to garner a wide representation of responses: Kuching, Kota Kinabalu, and Klang Valley. The limitations in only representing urban areas and select locations are acknowledged. However, it is hoped that this preliminary study may

be expanded to be more inclusive of other locations with further funding. The research approach here may also be developed further by other interested students, scholars and institutions to develop deeper insights on Malaysians and popular music. Ultimately, we invite collaborative links to further advance the scope of this study.

EXISTING STUDIES

Musical scholarship on Malaysia is built on a corpus of ethnomusicological studies that focus on both traditional and popular music and other performing arts that intersect with music (Matusky 1985; 1997; Chopyak 1986; 1987; Mohd Anis 1993; Tan 1993a; 1996; 2005; 2013; Sarkissian 2000; 2002; 2005; Mohamed Ghouse 2003; Matusky and Tan 2004). These studies provide a solid ontological and epistemological foundation to understand how traditional music interacts with and adapts to the nation state. However, our study hopes to turn specifically to popular music produced, distributed and consumed within Malaysia, as there remains a lacuna in understanding how Malaysian popular music, specifically from the stage of maturing nationhood of the 1970s to 2000s provides a platform for intercultural cohesion among its citizens who intersect across various ethnicities, religions and social class.

Most relevant to this project are Lockard's historical and political studies of popular music in Malaysia (1991; 1995; 1996; 1998) that discuss the political impact of a wide range of Malaysian artistes and music groups. However, the scope of Lockard's work is long outdated and requires expansion and more depth in terms of the scope and period of music covered. As Tan (1993b) points out of Lockard's (1991) earlier publication, the latter's studies do not include musicological analysis of popular songs; how stylistic and formal aspects of such music interact with the lyrics of such songs to reflect aspects of social change in Malaysia. Further, while Lockard's publications explain the political contexts of Malaysian popular music with an analytical focus on song lyrics, they do not delve deeply into the emotional and cultural aspects of such songs. Thus, it is timely for the emergence of an updated and more detailed study on Malaysian popular music that may expand significantly on the gaps left by Lockard's scholarship. In particular, there is a need to bring to focus the listeners or consumers of such music and to investigate the retrospective impact of such music that circulated from the 1970s until the 1990s – a period of maturing nationhood – on present day listeners. Thus, popular songs that were selected for the listening section of this study predominantly include artistes and groups that were active during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

Recent scholarship on Malaysian popular music is expanding with promise (Boyle 2013; Barendregt 2014; Adil 2014; 2018; 2019; Lochhead and Augustin 2015; Zawawi 2016; Weintraub and Barendregt 2017; Barendregt, Keppy and Nordholt 2017; Saidah 2017; Shazlin 2016a; 2016b; 2018; 2019). However, there is a need for more studies that highlight the contributions of minority communities to Malaysian popular music. Mandal (2007) draws attention to the complexity and distinctiveness of Malaysian-Indian identity as observed through the community's artistic output in Malaysian Tamil radio stations as well as in the local and international popular music industry. Pillai (2013) examines popular music in languages aside from the Malay language (English, Cantonese, Tamil) produced by local hip-hop artistes and argues that such music represents "syncretic multivocality" that is reflective of Malaysia's complex diversity. Tan's (2016) historical study of the music consumed and performed by the Straits Chinese communities in pre-World War Two Malaya, reveals a "vernacular cosmopolitan" disposition that was inclusive and adaptive to the local musical styles that were indigenous to the region. Importantly, Tan (2014) also examines the modernisation (and popularisation) of *orang asli* and Sarawakian indigenous music through the recordings of Temuan ceremonial singer Mak Minah and local indigenous music groups performing in the Sarawak Rainforest World Music Festival. Therefore, along the lines of this scholarship, the study presented here hopes to provide greater insights into how Malaysian popular music is produced and consumed in everyday life. We hypothesise that such music contributes positively to a collective identity that is diverse and inclusive.

Music in the form of national anthems and patriotic songs are mobilised by the nation-state to foster a sense of national cohesion and collective identity. In line with this, this study draws on Shazlin's (2016a; 2018) study on how sonic symbols were invented during the dawn of Malaysia's independence. These sonic symbols are manifested in Malaysia's national anthem, *Negaraku*, which continues to be accepted by all facets of this multi-ethnic nation state whether by imposition through authority-defined protocols (e.g. official events, school assemblies) or through everyday-experienced affinities with being proud Malaysian citizens (e.g. sporting events, political rallies, public demonstrations). Studying patriotic songs such as *Tanah Pusaka* (composed by Ahmad Merican with lyrics by Wan Ahmad Kamal in 1964) further reveal how songs function as useful tools to understand the culture, tastes and specific societal behaviours expressed within imagined national boundaries (Shazlin 2019). *Tanah Pusaka* is a patriotic song that was disseminated through Radio Malaya that used lyrical content drawn from local Malay or *nusantara* symbols and meanings to create a collective and shared identity for Malaysians. In filling the lacuna of this emerging field of research on patriotic songs, this study also intends to test and compare the social impact of such patriotic songs with non-patriotic Malaysian pop songs. Do songs need

to have a nationalist message in order to be considered relevant in defining and representing the nation? We hypothesise that popular songs – due to their wider commercial networks of production and distribution – will be more well-known and have greater mass appeal than patriotic songs.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

What is of importance in this study is to call for a shift from two predominant views found in existing socio-cultural studies on Malaysian music. The first is to look beyond how music is controlled by the state and how it might be contested by its actual cultural history, heritage and performance. Malaysian scholarship from the ethnomusicological disciplines such as Tan's (1993a), Mohd Anis's (1993) and Sarkissian's (1998) focus on how the Malaysian state via the National Culture Policy (NCP) (Kementerian Kebudayaan Belia dan Sukan 1973) exerts authority and control over the performance and representation of Malaysian identity in the performing arts – specifically, top-down, bureaucratic and institutional structures emphasised Malay-centric versions of certain art forms and thereby actively ignored or erased the diverse content of other local cultures inherent in such art forms. Such scholarship, including Lockard's studies mentioned above, viewed music in terms of the politics of socio-cultural change that occurred immediately after the ethnic riots of 1969, that in turn resulted in more bumiputera-centric national policies such as the New Economic Policy (NEP) and the NCP. The period after the 1970s towards the 1990s is marked by a rise in “authority-defined” Malay-bumiputera national identity due to the proliferation of many “nation(s)-of-intent” amidst an ethnically and politically diverse nation (Shamsul 1996; 2001). However, Shamsul (2001) also highlights the existence of “everyday-defined” realities shaped by the daily experiences and interactions of Malaysians that often times challenge the official discourse of the state. Thus, this study calls for a turn away from featuring the social changes as defined and imposed by the authoritative mechanisms of the nation-state to focus on how music is created and consumed from the “bottom-up”, in everyday-defined and experiential terms. How is popular music, produced within the borders of the nation-state's diverse social groups and mass-media market, collectively consumed and experienced by the nation's citizens?

The second is a turn toward listeners and consumers of music as important informants about the social impact of music created and circulated within Malaysia. Unlike performing arts practitioners that are subject to authority-defined (and economic) limitations on how they may practice and sustain their art; non-practitioners experience music in a variety of daily social contexts; sometimes mundane (e.g. while driving to work), sometimes as an important occasion (e.g. attending a concert or a wedding) and sometimes as a deeply personal or intimate

activity (e.g. dealing with emotional distress, serenading a lover). While the study is framed in the context of music within a nation-state, the qualitative and informal nature of the FGD allow for informants' personal and intimate experiences with music (and the nation) to be revealed. However, arts practitioners, performers and producers of music are also interviewed as focus groups, thereby providing possibilities for comparative analysis between different demographic groups in the study.

Finally, the study hopes to draw attention to the intimate sentiments and interactions that occur amongst Malaysians in their daily experiences and associations with popular music. The study expands on the researcher's conceptual work on cosmopolitan intimacy in the process of nation-making through popular (film) music (Adil 2018), building on the growing body of studies on popular music that employ Herzfeld's (2016) theory about cultural intimacy to explain the unique ethnographical aspects of a particular community or national space (Stokes 2010; Stirr 2017). If Stirr's (2017) recent book *Singing Across Divides* can locate the importance of intimacy in bringing together disparate communities in Nepal through music, what are the implications for musical intimacies that can bridge ethnic, religious and social "divides" in Malaysia? It is also evident that cultural intimacies in popular music also contribute greatly to the emotional wellbeing or "social flourishing" of select communities and societies (Hesmondhalgh 2013). While there is a significant number of studies on Malaysian popular music from the 1960s to 2000s listed above, none directly explain how such music provides a means for intercultural cohesion amongst Malaysians, nor do they provide clear solutions on how apparent divisions in Malaysian society or the challenges faced in the local music industry can be addressed. Further analysis of informants' responses collected in this study may assist in the development of effective national policies that are sensitive to the complex social interactions and lived realities of practitioners, producers and consumers of popular music in Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

Between the months of March and April 2019, a total of 12 FGD were carried out in Kuching, Kota Kinabalu and Klang Valley collectively. The study interviewed informants about their everyday experiences and preferences in consuming popular music. It also sought to determine whether specific popular and patriotic songs, made and circulated within Malaysia from the 1960s to 2000s, could solicit a wide appeal and foster a sense of collective Malaysian identity amongst the informants. The informants were divided into four demographic groups in each location: (1) youths (ages 19 to 39); (2) business owners or entrepreneurs (any age); (3) professionals (any age); and (4) arts practitioners and musicians (see Table 1).

Each group were as small as four members to ten members in size. Where group sizes were below six members, unavoidable circumstances such as last-minute cancellations or no-shows were the cause. Such are the challenges in organising such groups from another state and being dependent on third parties to gather focus group members. As evident in the Table 1, organising for focus groups in Klang Valley was more effective as the Klang Valley-based research team was more involved in gathering informants.

Table 1: Breakdown of FGD informants by demographic groups

Focus groups	Kuching	Kota Kinabalu	Klang Valley	Total
Youths	6	7	8	21
Business/Entrepreneurs	4	7	8	19
Professionals	6	5	10	21
Arts and Music	6	5	9	20
Total				81

The first round of interviews were conducted on 18 and 19 March 2019 at the City Plus FM Radio Station, Menara MAA, Jalan Central Timur, Kuching, Sarawak. The second round of interviews were conducted on 21 March 2019 in Kinabalu Yacht Club, Jalan Aru and on 22 March in Dock In Café, Jalan Setesen, Kota Kinabalu. These Kota Kinabalu focus groups were located in the Tanjung Aru area in Kota Kinabalu and informants were gathered and organised by KUPI KUPI FM, a local radio station. The third round of interviews and informants in the Klang Valley were organised by the Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia research team in collaboration with CENSE Media Sdn. Bhd. Focus groups were conducted on 15 and 16 April in City Plus FM and CENSE Media offices in Jaya One, Jalan Universiti, Petaling Jaya. All FGD sessions would start at 6:00 pm, with dinner provided for the informants before starting the FGD interviews at 7:00 pm which lasted until about 10:00 pm.

All FGD documentation was done with digital audio recorders and handwritten notes by researchers. The research team would consist of two co-researchers and two research assistants. Two focus groups would be conducted in parallel, with each group led by one co-researcher and one research assistant. Digital audio recordings were formatted as .mp3 files, labelled according to group, location and date, and immediately uploaded to a dedicated Google Drive folder for the project. With more project funding, it would be ideal to also use digital video recorders for the FGD conducted, and that would also require at least two more research assistants to aid in the technical aspects of FGD audio and visual data collection.

Voice recordings from the FGD were listened to and transcribed into several tables with individual labels respectively. Selected responses are given in

Tables 3 and 4. Answers given to questions were transcribed verbatim and recorded into tables. Each group was labelled specifically but the names of respondents whose responses are provided here are kept anonymous.

The focus group interviews were divided into three main sections and they were: (1) Popular Music and National Identity; (2) Accessing and Consuming Popular Music; and (3) Listening Session. The first section on Popular Music and National Identity solicited responses from the FGD members on the following topics:

1. Attending music-related events (ticketed concerts, public performances, live gigs)
2. Local (city, state, region, Malaysia) artistes and bands of interest
3. Language preferences of popular music songs
4. Preference for popular music in languages other than their own mother-tongue
5. Preferences of music genres (or any other types or categories)
6. Suggestions of popular songs (aside from national anthem) that would symbolise and represent Malaysia

The second section sought to determine how informants access and consume music. It asked the following regarding the use of “traditional” physical forms (e.g. CD, cassettes, vinyl records) compared to digital means of accessing and listening to music (e.g. mp3 players, streaming websites such as YouTube, Spotify, Joox). FGD members were also asked about how they accessed and consumed local, Malaysian music. Finally, FGD informants were asked to name their favourite radio stations (if they listened to radio).

Finally, the Listening Session polled informants on their recognition and preference of songs from a selected playlist of songs. Notes were taken and later inputted into an excel sheet for analysis. There were 16 song samples played in this section, and each song was edited to short 30-second samples that featured key moments of a particular song, such as a chorus, refrain or opening verse. The song samples obtained from the researchers’ personal collections and online sources were edited on the open-source Audacity audio editing software. These samples were played to informants with a laptop and attached portable USB speakers for clarity. The playlist included ten Malaysian pop songs that were produced and released as early as the 1960s (*Getaran Jiwa* by P. Ramlee) and as recent as 2010 (*Anak Kampung* by Jimmy Palikat). The next six songs were patriotic popular songs that were broadcast on government radio as early as 1960 (*Perajurit*

Tanahair composed by Saiful Bahri) and as recent as 1998 (*Standing in the Eyes of the World* performed by Ella).

Table 2 lists the song samples played for the Listening Session. A short sample (highlighting an important moment of the song, such as a chorus, refrain or opening verse) was played and all participants would have to indicate whether (1) they recognised the song; and (2) they like the song. Then, the FGD members would mention keywords or explain any personal associations and experiences they might have with a particular song. Once all 16 samples were played and responses were collected, the FGD would end.

Table 2: Song list for listening session

No.	Song	Composer/ Songwriter	Performer(s)	Lyrics	Year
Malaysian Popular Songs (1960s–2000s)					
A1	<i>Getaran Jiwa</i>	P. Ramlee	P. Ramlee	S. Sudarmadji	1960
A2	<i>Balik Kampung</i>	Sudirman Hj. Arshad	Sudirman Hj. Arshad	Sudirman Hj. Arshad	1984
A3	<i>Isabella</i>	Search	Search	Bob Lokman	1989
A4	<i>Sinaran</i>	Azlan Abu Hassan, Johan Nawawi	Sheila Majid	Johan Nawawi	1990
A5	<i>Andainya Aku Pergi Dulu</i>	Eric Yeo, M. Nasir	Alleycats	M. Nasir	1981
A6	<i>Anak Kampung (Malay version)</i>	Jimmy Palikat	Jimmy Palikat	Jimmy Palikat, DJ Rumput	2011
A7	<i>Hijau</i>	Amir Yussof, Mukhlis Nor	Zainal Abidin	Mukhlis Nor	1991
A8	<i>Kau Ilhamku</i>	Asmin Mudin	Abdul Rahman b. Osman (Man Bai)	Asmin Mudin	1995
A9	<i>60s TV</i>	OAG	OAG	OAG	1994
A10	<i>Cindai</i>	Pak Ngah	Siti Nurhaliza	Hairul Anuar Harun	1997
Malaysian Patriotic Songs (1960s to 1990s)					
B1	<i>Tanah Pusaka</i>	Ahmad Merican	Bing Slamet	Wan Ahmad Kamal	1964
B2	<i>31 Ogos</i>	Ahmad C.B.	Sudirman Hj. Arshad	Ahmad C.B.	1957

(continued on next page)

Table 2: (continued)

No.	Song	Composer/ Songwriter	Performer(s)	Lyrics	Year
B3	<i>Sejahtera Malaysia</i>	Mohamed Rahmat	Fauziah Ahmad Daud, Rohana Jalil, Elaine Kang, Azlina Aziz	Mohamed Rahmat	1990
B4	<i>Setia</i>	Ahmad Dassilah Mohd Yusoff	RTM Choir	Mohamed Rahmat	1987
B5	<i>Standing in the Eyes of the World</i>	David Gates, Wah Idris	Nor Zila Aminuddin (Ella)	Habsah Hassan	1998
B6	<i>Perajurit Tanahair</i>	Saiful Bahri	Jamaluddin Alias	Saiful Bahri	1960

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

For this research note, we present preliminary data collected regarding the song samples played and group members' responses to the songs in terms of recognition and likeability (Figure 1). In short, we reveal here preliminary data on whether members recognised the songs played at the listening session. Further, we show how many members "liked" such songs, drawing comparisons between the reception of Malaysian pop songs (labelled "A") and Malaysian patriotic songs (labelled "B").

The songs selected for the listening session registered a high level of recognition and likeability across all focus groups conducted. The most recognised songs from the playlist are two recordings by Sudirman, *Balik Kampung* (A2) and *31 Ogos* (B2) both registering at 100% recognition across all focus groups. These are the only songs that received 100% recognition, followed by *Perajurit Tanahair* (B6) at 99%. The least recognised song was *60s TV* (A9) at 70%, followed by *Tanah Pusaka* (B1) at 72% and *Anak Kampung* (A6) at 76%.

Likeability does not necessarily correspond with recognisability, as some members indicated being familiar with a song but completely disliking it. This is common, as popular songs circulate widely in public spaces and mass media, and some individuals have different tastes in music. Therefore, the term "overplayed" appeared often with regard to certain songs. The two most "liked" songs across all focus groups are *Getaran Jiwa* (A1) and *Balik Kampung* (A2). While the least liked

song was *Cindai* (A10) by Siti Nurhaliza at 55%, with two more songs remaining under 60%: *Tanah Pusaka* (B1) at 56% and *Anak Kampung* (A6) at 58%.

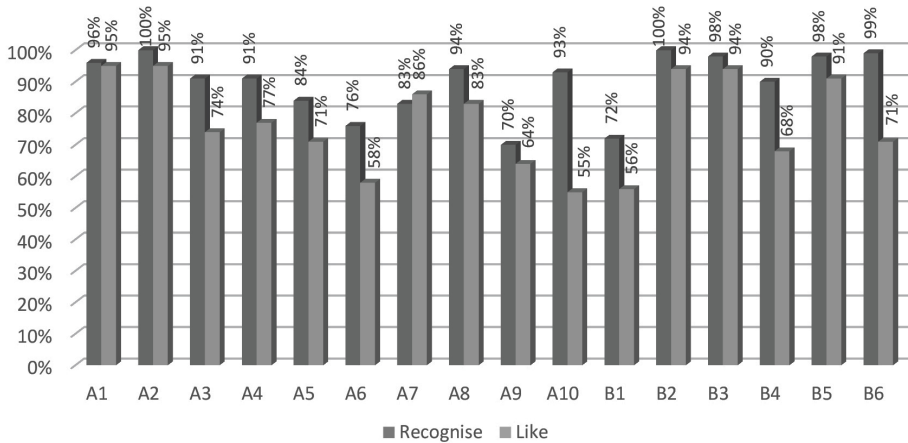


Figure 1: Song recognition and preferences.

In comparing popular songs with patriotic songs as separate playlists, we observe that 93% of patriotic songs were recognised in comparison to 88% of popular songs. Further, 79% of patriotic songs were liked in comparison to 76% of popular songs. Such numbers suggest that patriotic songs are, ironically, more “popular” than Malaysian pop songs, both in recognisability and likeability, and this finding challenges the hypothesis made at the outset of this study. However, there are factors that may obscure this finding as there are markedly fewer patriotic songs than popular songs in the listening session due to time constraints for conducting the focus group. It would be useful to conduct a follow-up study where an equal number of patriotic and popular songs are compared.

Another factor to note is that the most recognised and liked patriotic song is *31 Ogos* (B2) and the third most recognised and liked patriotic song is *Standing in the Eyes of the World* (B5). These songs are actually commercially-produced popular songs that carry a patriotic message or theme. Thus, they may be considered “hybrid” patriotic-commercial songs. This is in comparison to the second most popular patriotic song, *Sejahtera Malaysia* (B3) that was composed by then Minister of Information, Mohamed Rahmat and produced for nationwide-broadcast by Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM). Similar to this song are *Setia* (B4), *Tanah Pusaka* (B1) and *Perajurit Tanah Air* (B6), which were written and commissioned as nationalistic propaganda songs, produced and broadcast by RTM. However, while most of these government-sanctioned songs are well-recognised, not all are equally liked. For example, *Setia* (B4), while well-recognised (90%) was not as well-liked (68%). This can be compared to a very similar style of song,

Sejahtera Malaysia (B3) that was easily recognised (98%) and almost equally appreciated (94%) by focus group members. Upon overviewing the FGDs, we observe that most members find that the lyrical content of *Sejahtera Malaysia* (B3) intimates an inclusivist message of multi-ethnic diversity, while *Setia* (B4) emphasised the expression of loyalty to figures and institutions of authority in the nation state. Similarly, *Perajurit Tanahair* (B6) with its militaristic motifs was the second most recognised patriotic song (99%) but was not proportionately well-liked (71%). More men were vocal about their preference for this song, citing national pride and positive associations with the Malaysian military. Conversely, fewer women were drawn to this aesthetic and message of the song.

The most prominent finding from the listening session polls can be seen in the 100% recognition by focus group members of two songs performed and recorded by Sudirman Arshad. *31 Ogos* (B2) was well-recognised and well-liked perhaps due to its repeated circulation on the airwaves in conjunction with Malaysia's Independence (*Merdeka*) Day. The song, originally composed and performed by Ahmad C.B. in 1957, was popularised by Sudirman's version released in his 1982 album, *Abadi*. It has since been the main theme song for *Merdeka* celebrations, broadcast on Malaysian mass media and sung in public schools across the country. *Balik Kampung* (A2) on the other hand is a seasonal pop song widely broadcast and performed during Hari Raya (Eid-ul Fitr) celebrations in Malaysia. The song is mainly associated with the Muslim celebration and mass exodus of urbanites to their hometowns or villages away from the city – its title means “returning to my village/home” – however, its lyrical content is not specific in referencing any religious celebration, ethnicity or culture. In fact, the act of “*balik kampung*” is equally applicable to any religious or public holiday experienced by Malaysians of all backgrounds. Perhaps, this inclusivity but uniquely Malaysian sentiment of the song – of exodus from the city and longing for one's home – is what affords it its wide-ranging mass appeal among the focus group members.

Summary of FGD Findings

Overall findings from the FGD indicate that music is something liked by all focus group members irrespective of their age, class, education level, ethnic background, or religious affinities. There are many ways in which music is consumed by Malaysians, but the predominant trend is an increased use of digital music platforms. Also, fewer members pay for music services and opt for free streaming services or platforms such as YouTube or Joox. Respondents from the FGD claim to attend gigs, musical performances and concerts based on their interest in the particular music genre, the performing artist, language of the songs performed, location of concert and price of the tickets. For this reason, they attend the concerts with a mixed base of friends and family rather than those from the same ethnic

background alone. Listening to music and enjoying a musical performance does not depend on ethnic affinities but more so on preferences as well as the economic ability to attend one. In more private surroundings, members prefer to enjoy music through the internet on platforms such as YouTube, Spotify and Joox. YouTube was the most preferred platform because it contains both visual and audio content. In terms of visual content, YouTube offers song lyrics as for when the members wish to view them for their own leisurely activities such as singing-a-long. However, most of the respondents admit to their unwillingness to pay for these services despite various offers by the providers for free trials. Some members, though, are prepared to pay for physical music products like Compact Discs (CDs) and Vinyl records only if they really love the artist. Some of these respondents purchase musical products and merchandise to support their musician friends. It was interesting to note that some of the respondents still collected CDs and expressed their disappointment with newer cars today that are equipped with radios but without CD players. But overall, the major saturation point discerned is that most focus groups tended to prefer digital online and free streaming platforms for accessing and listening to music.

While the pastime of consuming music is shared amongst all focus groups, there are prominent language barriers, cultural differences and geographical divides that prevent certain ethnic groups from favouring or being inclined towards local Malaysian popular songs. Focus group members who identified as Chinese for example, displayed less familiarity with Malaysian popular songs that were predominantly in the Malay language. Other group members, especially those who identified as Malay, were surprised to encounter such responses from their Chinese group members, as it was assumed that Malay songs are the most repeated genre broadcast on local radio and other local mass media. For this reason, a portion of the Chinese group members felt pressured or embarrassed when admitting that they did not know certain Malay songs especially the more popular ones such as *Isabella* (A3). However, the Malay songs that are considered “karaoke songs” such as *Kau Ilhamku* (A8) were a common genre that effectively bridges this gap. They were known more than the other Malay pop songs.

There is also a divide between the music tastes of East Malaysians and West Malaysians. The study found that while East Malaysians are very much in tune with music from West Malaysia, the opposite is not as apparent. The song *Anak Kampung* (A6) a very popular Sabahan song was included in the playlist to test if West Malaysians were familiar with such songs. Both Sarawak- and Sabah-based focus groups recorded high recognisability with the song, but this did not register as highly in the Klang Valley. East Malaysian focus groups in some cases displayed more familiarity with local Malaysian popular songs than some groups in the Klang Valley. For example, a group of predominantly English-speaking professionals in the Klang Valley displayed less familiarity with patriotic songs

than their counterparts in Kota Kinabalu. And, discussions about music taste in some Klang Valley groups, especially the musicians and professionals, revealed very Anglo-American oriented tastes in music. One member in a Klang Valley group of professionals, for example, revealed that he is inclined toward “British music more than American music”. Another member in the same group stated that he had “lost faith in (Malaysian) radio” altogether and only listened to Spotify. Likewise, many members in the Klang Valley exclusively listen and subscribe to Spotify, but this was not the case in Kuching and Kota Kinabalu. The groups in East Malaysia by comparison when asked about their general taste in music tended to be more oriented towards music in Malaysia and the surrounding Nusantara region. There was greater inclination towards Malay-language music in comparison with the certain groups in the Klang Valley. And, Sabah and Sarawak groups also expressed greater awareness of local Malaysian popular music and music from the East Malaysian region. There was less use of Spotify in East Malaysia and greater use of Joox, as Joox contains more local music content from Malaysia and the region. Markedly, many groups in East Malaysia found local radio to be very relevant in their daily lives and this could be because of members’ affinities to specific dialects and languages broadcast on the airwaves.

Thus, overall, the attitudes and taste that Malaysians display in their consumption of popular music can serve to highlight inherent cultural and geographical differences amongst the nation’s diverse citizens. Underlying these are other embedded social differences that are not overtly apparent such as class and educational backgrounds. Naturally, Malaysians who are English-educated display an inclination to turn away from local Malay-language popular music; more so, they may not identify with such music culturally or as individuals. Perhaps, here the nation-space is not as relevant to them because of the cosmopolitan and global lives that they experience in the Klang Valley. However, for East Malaysians, the starkness of their regional identity and perceived and experienced precarity with West Malaysia urges them to define and embody their regional and national identity more clearly through their consumption of popular media and music. There is also a clearer regional (rather than global) orientation beyond the borders of Malaysia that is displayed in the music tastes of East Malaysian focus group members.

As mentioned in the previous section, patriotic songs received relatively higher recognition across focus groups and this could be the result of constant exposure in schools and mainstream media channels since the 1970s. For example, a group of 19 year-old college students interviewed in Kuching, Sarawak, demonstrated a high level of familiarity with the patriotic songs played during the listening session. They associated the song *Perajurit Tanahair* (B6) with memorable events such as sports day, in which the song was performed to motivate their respective teams in sporting competitions. Likewise, older group members in their twenties to thirties could relate such songs to school events. Some members

for example, had positive memories of songs such as *Sejahtera Malaysia* (B3), of which they had sung and won in secondary school choir competitions. The wide recognisability and appeal of these songs is apparent among members in their thirties to forties who grew up watching local terrestrial television (prior to satellite television), on which patriotic songs like the ones in the playlist were broadcast in between popular programmes. One member based in the Klang Valley even mentioned the *dikir barat*-styled AIDS-AEDES awareness song by RTM in the 1990s as an iconic Malaysian song. And, of course some of the most recognised and enjoyed patriotic songs such as *31 Ogos* (B2) and *Standing in the Eyes of the World* (B5) are produced and consumed in the manner of commercial pop songs. While *Standing in the Eyes* was commissioned by the Malaysian government as a theme song for the 1998 Commonwealth Games held in Kuala Lumpur it was actually composed in collaboration with American singer-songwriter David Gates, who had a version of the song in English. It was then re-composed by Wah Idris with lyrics by Habsah Hassan and performed by Malaysia's rock queen, Ella (Nor Zila Binti Haji Aminuddin), but prior to and during the games it was broadcast across the airwaves on government and commercial radio and television. Thus, focus group members expressed their memories of hearing the song and further associated it with the momentous occasion of Malaysia hosting the 1998 Commonwealth Games.

Despite the social differences apparent in responses to popular music, all focus groups demonstrated a mutual recognition and affinity across differences, such as in response to hearing P. Ramlee's *Getaran Jiwa* (A1) and Sudirman's *Balik Kampung* (A2). Almost all focus group members recognised these songs when heard. Importantly, all focus groups acknowledged these artistes as prominent national icons, and more so, their acceptance across groups is fuelled by the quality and relatability of their music. Also, *Sejahtera Malaysia* (A3) has many positive associations amongst focus groups as a song that promotes inclusivity and national unity. *Standing in the Eyes* (B5) represents Malaysia's visibility on the world stage, thereby eliciting a sentiment of national pride amongst most members. Generally, we observe that group members react positively to national music icons that have a reputation in promoting national unity via cultural inclusivity in their music. At the least, these icons symbolise such inclusivity and are widely recognised on the national stage; Sudirman and P. Ramlee represent both an authority-defined Malaysian cultural heritage and everyday-defined acceptance of their musical contributions by all citizens. Further, Malaysians across ethnicities, regions and religions appreciate patriotic music that has inclusivist ideals associated with Malaysian identity. Finally, social cohesion can be found in sharing the nation's visibility and achievement in a global context. Internal differences may be collectively resolved, poetically, when standing together to organise and support a massive world-class event; to face the "eyes" of the rest of the world.

Select Responses from Focus Groups to the Question: “Name One Song Other Than *Negaraku* That Represents Malaysia?”

At the end of the first section on Popular Music and National Identity, respondents were asked to suggest popular songs, aside from the national anthem *Negaraku*, that would symbolise and represent Malaysia. Some of the answers, which can be seen in Table 3, indicated opinions or rather preferences from the grassroots for popular songs that were not government-commissioned. Sudirman’s version of *31 Ogos*, which was originally written and composed by Ahmad C.B. in 1957 came up as the most frequently suggested popular song that represents Malaysia. Other iconic pop songs included Sudirman’s *Balik Kampung*, Ella’s *Standing in the Eyes of the World* and the more recent *Gemuruh* by Faizal Tahir. We present in Tables 3 and 4 some select responses from the focus groups to this question. The demographic details of the members or “respondents” were drawn from personal introductions made during the focus groups and provided verbatim (hence some of the details are listed in first-person syntax).

Table 3: Select responses from FGD conducted in Kuching

Location	Group	Respondent	Response
Kuching	Entrepreneurs (Code: KER – Kuching entrepreneurs respondents)	KER1 Male, 35 years old. Muslim Malay. Owns a small business. From Kuching.	<i>Lagu ni la, yang merdeka tu. Apa nama? “Tiga satu bulan lapan ...” Ah Sudirman! (31 Ogos).</i> That song, the independence day one. What is it called “Tiga satu bulan lapan ...” Ah Sudirman! Tanggal 31 (31 Ogos).
Kuching	Entrepreneurs (Code: KER – Kuching entrepreneurs respondents)	KER4 Female, 52 years old. Malay Muslim. Born in Taiping, Perak but have been living in Sarawak for a long time. Owns a small business. Was married to a Chinese. Iban mother and Indian Muslim father.	<i>Ada lagu, kalau saya bukak radio saya pun nyanyi ... “Demi negara ... yang tercinta ...” ah lagu tu lah!</i> There is this song, often when it is played over the radio, I would sing along ... “Demi negara ... yang tercinta ...”, yes that song! (Respondent was talking about the song <i>Sejahtera Malaysia</i> , written and composed by Mohamet Rahmat in 1990 for the then government’s national level campaign)

(continued on next page)

Table 3: (continued)

Location	Group	Respondent	Response
Kuching	Professionals (Code: KER – Kuching professionals respondents)	KPR1 Female, 48 years old. Muslim Malay. Civil servant. From Kuching.	<i>Lagu Sudirman, Balik Kampung. All Sudirman song you memang tahu it's from Malaysia.</i> That Sudirman song <i>Balik Kampung</i> . In fact all Sudirman songs, when you listen to them, you know it's from Malaysia.
		KPR3 Male, 33 years old. Muslim Malay. Melanau lineage. Owns a business.	<i>Kalau saya Ella, Standing in the Eyes. Lagu Commonwealth (Games)</i> For me it's Ella's <i>Standing in the Eyes</i> , the Commonwealth Game song.

Table 4: Select responses from FGD conducted in Klang Valley

Location	Group	Respondent	Response
Klang Valley (Petaling Jaya)	Youth (Code: KVYR – Klang Valley youth respondents)	KVYR2 Female, 24 years old. Malay Muslim. Studying Media Communication at UKM (student). Currently doing an internship at UKM Global.	I keep on thinking about lagu <i>Assalammualaikum</i> Faizal Tahir because I met many people during my internship and they say Malaysian people always smile. Most of them know that song. <i>Rasa Sayang</i> . This song is always played officially. I am always part of the ceremony in Korean embassy and <i>Rasa Sayang</i> is often played. Even to introduce to the K-pop idol, it's <i>Rasa Sayang</i> . At UKM Global, if international students <i>datang</i> , that is the one ...
		KVYR5 Female, 22 yrs old. Chinese. Student studying Economics at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman. Mother tongue is Chinese but I can speak in English.	I don't know if you have heard of <i>Ali, Ah Kau dan Muthu</i> . It's quite grassroot lah that song. I think it symbolises Malaysia. But another song that I would suggest is <i>Arena Cahaya</i> . The song by Zee Avi. It's the song from Ola Bola! I have another answer. <i>Gemuruh Jiwa</i> , Faizal Tahir. It's a patriotic song that brings people together. But it's not a patriotic song but whenever you listen to that song you have that Malaysian vibes.

(continued on next page)

Table 3: (continued)

Location	Group	Respondent	Response
Klang Valley (Petaling Jaya)	Youth (Code: KVYR – Klang Valley youth respondents)	KVYR6 Male, 23 years old. Malay Muslim who grew up in a Malay culture. Mother tongue is Malay but always thinks in English. Able to speak in both Malay and English.	For me it's a Chinese song, he is Aniu. He sings in English and he uses the slang of Malaysia like 'teh tarik kaw kaw'. (The song is called) <i>Kita Punya</i> , if you've ever heard. He sings about teh tarik, roti canai ... Malaysians have all that... like it represents Malaysia. That is <i>Kita Punya</i> , Malaysia punya.

CONCLUSION

It is hoped that this brief Research Note will highlight the pioneering nature of this study and its methods to better understand how popular music is consumed in Malaysia. The study seeks to determine if the consumption of Malaysian popular music serves as an everyday-experienced platform for social cohesion across the nation's diverse ethnic groups and regions. Conceptually, it calls for a turn away from only examining social changes related to Malaysian music as defined and imposed by the authority of the nation state to consider, instead, how music is created and consumed from the “bottom-up”, in everyday-defined and experiential terms. Further, the study marks a shift from existing studies that focus on musical genres, works and producers by placing a spotlight on listeners and consumers of music as important informants about the social impact of music created and circulated within Malaysia. Finally, through a method that conducts in-depth focus groups across the nation it draws, from a large body of data, the intimate sentiments and interactions that occur amongst Malaysians in their daily experiences and associations with popular music.

We have presented some preliminary findings from the study that include results from a poll on the recognisability and likeability of popular songs and patriotic songs from Malaysia, in which a list of 16 song samples were played for focus groups conducted in Kuching, Kota Kinabalu and the Klang Valley. We discuss and analyse the results briefly with a summary of findings and present select responses from the focus groups conducted. With the data and findings presented, we have observed that there are differences in the consumption of popular music between different ethnicities in Malaysia and more so between consumers in East Malaysia and the Klang Valley. However, we also observed that patriotic songs are, across Malaysia, more “popular” than commercially-

produced popular songs. To be more specific, patriotic songs that are produced in a commercial style for mass consumption are the most well-recognised and well-received songs. And, these songs also foster a sense of collective identity amongst Malaysians across their individual differences. Aside from associating with lyrical content, Malaysians also relate certain songs to personal experiences and memorable events. As this is a preliminary publication of methods and results, the data gathered for this study will require further analysis and it is hoped that more unique findings about Malaysians and their consumption of popular music in everyday-life may be revealed. More so, we intend to further test the hypothesis that popular music provides a means for social cohesion in Malaysia's diverse society. Of course, as already revealed in the preliminary findings, it is anticipated that a more complex narrative of differences and affinities across Malaysia's social divisions will be unravelled, as such social cohesion may be seen as a continuous interplay of tensions (conflict, differences) and resolutions (conciliation, affinity) in a national space of individual and collective expressions and lived experiences. Nonetheless, it is crucial to recognise the role of popular music in articulating these complexities of collective identity in Malaysian society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research conducted for this study was funded by three grants from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia awarded to the Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA) and the authors: (1) Geran Universiti Penyelidikan: Geran Arus Perdana (AP-2017-001/1); (2) Geran Galakan Penyelidik Muda (GGPM-2017-079); and (3) Geran Galakan Penyelidik Muda (GGPM-2017-080). Focus groups conducted in Kuching, Kota Kinabalu and Klang Valley were generously supported by CENSE Media Sdn. Bhd. and were hosted by City Plus FM in Kuching, Kupu-Kupu FM in Kota Kinabalu and City Plus FM in Petaling Jaya. We also acknowledge with gratitude our research assistants, Phoon Li Juan @ Roovasini from KITA and Wing Hoong Nyee from CENSE Media Sdn. Bhd. who helped in organising the logistics and data collection for the focus groups involved. We would also like to thank Connie Lim Keh Nie from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Kuching, Sarawak for assisting with focus groups conducted in Kuching.

REFERENCES

- Adil Johan. 2014. Disquieting degeneracy: Policing Malaysian and Singaporean popular music culture from the mid-1960s to early-1970s. In *Sonic modernities in the Malay world: A history of popular music, social distinction and novel lifestyles (1930s–2000s)*, ed. B. Barendregt, 136–161. Leiden: Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004261778_005
- _____. 2018. *Cosmopolitan intimacies: Malay film music from the independence era*. Singapore: NUS Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv7h0tcd>
- _____. 2019. Cosmopolitan sounds and intimate narratives in P. Ramlee’s film music. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 40(4): 474–490. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2019.1628723>
- Ahmad C.B. 1957. Tanggal 31. *Dahulu dan sekarang*. Parlophone Records, The Gramophone Company Ltd, LP vinyl record.
- Alleycats. 1981. Andainya aku pergi dulu. Eric Yeo, composer; M. Nasir, songwriter, lyricist; Eddie Marzuki, arranger. Track 2 on *Kuching*. Philips 6345 146, LP vinyl record.
- Barendregt, B. 2014. *Sonic modernities in the Malay world: A history of popular music, social distinction and novel lifestyles (1930s–2000s)*. Leiden: Brill. <https://doi.org/10.1353/amu.2019.0008>
- Barendregt, B., P. Keppy and H.S. Nordholt. 2017. *Popular music in Southeast Asia: Banal beats, muted histories*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1zkjzjw>
- Boyle, J. 2013. *Putera puteri: The music and legacy of Jimmy Boyle*. Kuala Lumpur: ASWARA.
- Chan, C.S.C. 2012. P. Ramlee’s music: An expression of local identity in Malaya during the mid-twentieth century. *Malaysian Music Journal* 1(1): 16–32.
- Chopyak, J.D. 1986. Music in modern Malaysia: A survey of the musics affecting the development of popular music. *Asian Music* 18(1): 111–138. <https://doi.org/10.2307/834161>
- _____. 1987. The role of music in mass media, public education and the formation of a Malaysian national culture. *Ethnomusicology* 31(3): 431–454. <https://doi.org/10.2307/851665>
- Chua, D. 2014. Patriotic tunes. *New Straits Times*. 29 August. <https://www.nst.com.my/news/2015/09/patriotic-tunes> (accessed 12 August 2019).
- Cloonan, M. 1999. Pop and the nation-state: Towards a theorisation. *Popular Music* 18(2): 193–207. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0261143000009041>
- Ella. 1998. Standing in the eyes of the world. David Gates and Wah Idris, songwriters; Habsah Hassan, lyricist. Track 1 on *Ella mempersembahkan David Gates*. Prima Muzik CD PM001, compact disc.
- Herzfeld, M. 2016. *Cultural intimacy: Social poetics and the real life of states, societies, and institutions*. 3rd ed. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Hesmondhalgh, D. 2013. *Why music matters*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Kementerian Kebudayaan Belia dan Sukan Malaysia. 1973. *Asas kebudayaan kebangsaan*. Kuala Lumpur: Kementerian Kebudayaan Belia dan Sukan Malaysia.

- Lochhead, J. and P. Augustin. 2015. *Just for the love of it, popular music in Penang (1930s– 1960s)*. Petaling Jaya: SIRD.
- Lockard, C.A. 1991. Reflections of change: Socio-political commentary and criticism in Malaysian popular music since 1950. *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 6(1): 1–111. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022463400001739>
- _____. 1995. “Hey we equatorial people”: Popular music and contemporary society in Malaysia. In *Asian Popular Culture*, ed. J.A. Lent, 11–28. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
- _____. 1996. From folk to computer songs: The evolution of Malaysian popular music, 1930–1990. *Journal of Popular Culture* 30(3): 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3840.1996.00001.x>
- _____. 1998. *Dance of life: Popular music and politics in Southeast Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press.
- Man Bai. 1995. Kau ilhamku. Asmin Mudin, songwriter. Track 10 in *Man Bai*. WEA, 0630-11856-2, compact disc.
- Mandal, S.K. 2007. Indianness in Malaysia: Between racialized representations and the cultural politics of popular music. *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies* 22(2): 46–67.
- Matusky, P. 1985. An introduction to the major instruments and forms of traditional Malay music. *Asian Music* 16(2): 121–182. <https://doi.org/10.2307/833774>
- _____. 1997. *Malaysian shadow play and music: Continuity of an oral tradition*. 2nd ed. Penang: The Asian Centre.
- Matusky, P. and S.B. Tan. 2004. *The music of Malaysia: The classical, folk and syncretic traditions*. Aldershot: Ashgate. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315223025>
- Mohamed Ghouse Nasaruddin. 2003. *Muzik tradisional Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Mohamed Rahmat. 1987. *Setia*. YouTube. RTM Choir, performers. Ahmad Dassilah, Mohd Yusoff, composers. Posted by avapumpkinsadore, 4 December 2011. <https://youtu.be/smMIEYUdweI> (accessed 3 September 2019).
- _____. 1990. *Sejahtera Malaysia*. YouTube. Fauziah Ahmad Daud, Rohana Jalil, Elaine Kang and Azlina Aziz, vocalists. Posted by leekimchuan, 19 August 2016. <https://youtu.be/HOtZKnhOSqg> (accessed 3 September 2019).
- Mohd Anis Md Nor. 1993. *Zapin: Folk dance of the Malay world*. Singapore: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0041977x00012659>
- OAG (Old Automatic Garbage). 1994. 60’s TV. Positive Tone, PT-MM 3002 CD, compact disc. Track 1 on *Old Automatic Garbage*.
- P. Ramlee. 1991 [orig. released 1960]. Getaran Jiwa. P. Ramlee, composer; S. Sudarmaji, lyrics. Track 1 on *Kenangan Abadi Vol 1*. EMI, CD FH 30090, compact disc.
- Palikat, J. 2011. Anak kampung. YouTube. Jimmy Palikat, songwriter, lyricist; DJ Rumpit, lyricist (Malay version). Posted by lagu2sabab, 30 April 2011. <https://youtu.be/7rvYOXNnHGA> (accessed 3 September 2019).
- Pillai, S. 2013. Syncretic cultural multivocality and the Malaysian popular musical imagination. *Kajian Malaysia* 31(1): 1–18.
- Saidah Rastam. 2017. *Rosalie and other love songs*. Petaling Jaya: SIRD.

- Saiful Bahri. 1960. *Perajurit Tanah Ayer*. Jamaluddin Alias, vocalist. Radio Televisyen Malaysia, Jabatan Penyiaran Malaysia. RTM RMEP 44, EP vinyl record.
- Sarkissian, M. 1998. Tradition, tourism and the cultural show: Malaysia's diversity on display. *Journal of Musicological Research* 17(2): 87–112. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411899808574742>
- _____. 2000. *D'Albuquerque's children: Performing tradition in Malaysia's Portuguese settlement*. London: University of Chicago Press.
- _____. 2002. Playing Portuguese: Constructing identity in Malaysia's Portuguese community. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 11(2): 215–232. <https://doi.org/10.1353/dsp.2011.0053>
- _____. 2005. "Religion never had it so good": Contemporary nasyid and the growth of Islamic popular music in Malaysia. *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 37: 124–152.
- Search. 1989. Isabella. Track 2 on *Fenomena*. BMG Pacific. PMC/MAL 1033, Audiocassette.
- Shamsul A.B. 1996. Nations-of-intent in Malaysia. In *Asian Forms of the Nation*, eds. S. Tonesson and H. Antlov, 323–347. London and New York: Routledge Curzon.
- _____. 2001. A history of an identity, an identity of a history: The idea and practice of "Malayness" in Malaysia reconsidered. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 32(3): 355–366. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022463401000194>
- Shazlin A. Hamzah. 2016a. Penjenamaan bangsa: Lagu-lagu patriotik popular dan pembentukan jenama Malaysia. PhD diss., Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia. <https://doi.org/10.7186/bgsm54200820>
- _____. 2016b. Branding the Malaysian nation: Tracing the role of popular music in the construction of an imagined community. *Southeast Asian Social Science Review* 1(1): 152–173.
- _____. 2018. *Negaraku*: The national anthem binding Malaysians in integration. *UKM Ethnic Studies Paper Series*. No. 59, December. Selangor: Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA).
- _____. 2019. A Malaysian nation brand: Its dissemination by radio Malaya via the song *Tanah Pusaka*. *Malaysian Journal of Communication* 35(1): 90–102. Selangor: UKM Press. <https://doi.org/10.17576/jkmjc-2019-3501-07>
- Sheila Majid. 1989. Sinaran. Johan Nawawi, composer, arranger, lyricist, programmer; Azlan Abu Hassan, composer; Mac Chew, arranger, programmer; Adnan Abu Hassan, Roslan Aziz, arrangers. Track 1 on *Emosi*. EMI CD FH 30005, compact disc.
- Sia, A. 2009. The truth emerges. *The Star Online*, 25 October. <https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/books/2009/10/25/the-truth-emerges#WqMrxPGVzCbJRI7k.99> (accessed 17 August 2019).
- Siti Nurhaliza. 1997. Cindai. Pak Ngah, composer, arranger, music; S. Atan, arranger; Hairul Anuar Harun, lyrics. Track 1 on *Cindai*. Suria Records, SRCD 23449, compact disc.
- Stirr, A.M. 2017. *Singing across divides: Music and intimate politics in Nepal*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Stokes, M. 2010. *The republic of love: Cultural intimacy in Turkish popular music*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226775074.001.0001>
- Sudirman Arshad. 2017 [orig. released 1984]. Balik kampung. Track 9 on *Lagu dari sebuah bilik*. EMI 5725528, compact disc.
- Sudirman Arshad and Ahmad C.B. 2016 [orig. released 1982]. 31 Ogos. Track 10 on *Abadi*. EMI 5715366, compact disc.
- Tan, S.B. 1993a. *Bangsawan: A social and stylistic history of popular Malay opera*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.
- _____. 1993b. Reflections of change: A sociopolitical commentary and criticism in Malaysian popular music since 1950 by C.A. Lockard (Review). *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 24(1): 187–188. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022463400001739>
- _____. 1996. The 78 RPM record industry in Malaya prior to World War II. *Asian Music* 28(1): 1–41. <https://doi.org/10.2307/834504>
- _____. 2002. Negotiating identities: Reconstructing the “local” in Malaysia through “world beat”. *Perfect Beat* 5(4): 3–20.
- _____. 2005. From folk to national popular music: Recreating ronggeng in Malaysia. *Journal of Musicological Research* 24(3): 287–307.
- _____. 2013. Negotiating “his master’s voice”: Gramophone music and cosmopolitan modernity in British Malaya in the 1930s and early 1940s. *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde (BKJ)* 169(4): 457–494. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-12340066>
- _____. 2014. Modernizing songs of the forest: Indigenous communities negotiate tensions of change in Malaysia. In *Sonic modernities in the Malay world: A history of popular music, social distinction and novel lifestyles (1930s–2000s)*, ed. B. Barendregt, 353–370. Leiden: Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004261778_013
- _____. 2016. Cosmopolitan identities: Evolving musical cultures of the straits-born Chinese of pre-World War II Malaya. *Ethnomusicology Forum* 25(1): 35–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17411912.2016.1151813>
- Wan Ahmad Kamal. 1964. *Tanah pusaka*. Ahmad Merican, producer. Radio Televisyen Malaysia, Jabatan Penyiaran Malaysia. RMEP 13-B 45 PSM, EP vinyl disc.
- Weintraub, A.N. and B. Barendregt, eds. 2017. *Vamping the stage: Female voices of Asian modernities*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780824874193>
- Zaidi Mohamad. 2017. Lagu Ella bakar semangat. *Berita Harian Online*. 3 September. <https://www.bharian.com.my/hiburan/celebriti/2017/09/320967/lagu-ella-bakar-semangat> (accessed 12 August 2019).
- Zainal Abidin. 1991. Hijau. Amir Yussof, composer, arranger; Zainal Abidin, arranger, concept; Mukhlis Nor, composer, arranger, concept, lyrics, songwriter; Jenny Chin, Mac Chew, Mustaffa Ramly, Zahid Ahmad, arrangers. Track 10 on *Zainal Abidin*. WEA, Roslan Aziz Productions, 9031-74404-2, compact disc.
- Zawawi Ibrahim. 2016. Disciplining rock and identity contestations: Hybridization, Islam and new musical genres in contemporary Malaysian popular music. *Situations* 9(1): 21–47.