



UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**THE ELEMENTS OF WORLD MUSIC IN MALAYSIAN MALAY
POP SONGS**

CASE STUDY: *JENTAYU & KURNIAAN DALAM SAMARAN*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of study

World Music is defined as music from cultures other than those of Europe and English-speaking North America, especially popular music from Latin America, Africa, and Asia (Webster's, 2005). In an elaborate manner, *Dolmetsch.com* an online dictionary defines World Music as:

Music where are influences from more that one cultural tradition intermingle, first made popular in the 1980s. Originally, the term 'world music' was applied to one of varieties of African light music, which combined elements from the indigenous culture with non-traditional types of instrumentation, melodic forms and rhythms. Later on, the notion of world music was extended to music from any non-Western culture that possessed strong ethnic elements.

Both definitions categorized Malaysian ethnic music as one of the World Music. Malaysia's multi-cultural and multi-racial heritage is most prominently exhibited in its diverse music and dance (www.tourism.gov.my, 2010). Multi-racial society such as Malay, Chinese, Indian, Iban, Kadazan and many other ethnic groups in Sabah and Sarawak have lived together in Malaysia for generations with their own music, dance and culture traditions.

In general, music in Malaysian society may be categorized as classical, folk, syncretic, popular and contemporary art music (Matusky & S.B Tan, 2004). All of the society cultures in Malaysia have assimilated and influenced each other, creating a unique Malaysian culture. Various aspects of the creative arts have been introduced and developed through time. In Malaysia, some popular music was fused with other elements

of World Music to diversify the music genres. Some composers obtain the idea to write new songs by adding World Music elements to provide difference from the existing works. There are many elements in World Music that are interesting to be fused with other elements and create a better musical product.

Popular music (Pop Music) for example, Sting in the song *Desert Rose*, is noted for Sting's duet performance with Algerian rai (modern popular music developed in Algeria with roots in *Bedoui* music that usually sung either unaccompanied or with *rebab* and various woodwinds) singer Cheb Mami, created a distinct World Music feel to the song. Steve Vai, a rock guitarist also blends his music with many elements of World Music such as Hungarian scale and sitar (Classical Indian instrument) in his composition *Freak Show Excess*. Guitarist, Paul Gilbert with his *Koto Girl* song from his Alligator Farm album, used a World Music instrument, *Koto* from the country of the rising sun, Japan. The new elements that have been used in each of these compositions created new identity in popular music.

1.2 Problem Statement

For most of human history, the world's music lived in relative isolation from each other. True, Christianity and Islam spread Western and Middle Eastern musical sounds throughout the world, African musical sounds were spread through the Americas as a result of the slavery system, and in the twentieth century, composers of art and popular music made increasing use of inspiration from the world's music (Nettl, 2008).

Blending the outside elements of world music into pop composition can create an interesting outcome. There are two main elements of world music that can outline the definition of world music. The elements are the melody, and the arrangement of the song. Constructing a melodic structure utilizing the elements of world music and blending it with conventional pop style of composition is a common practice in Malaysia but not popular among Malaysian. There are many Malay pop songs used the elements of World Music from other countries, but there were only a few songs that used the World Music elements from Malaysia.