



The Singing Ornamentation of Lagu Melayu Asli

Dayang Siti Hazar Awang Hassim ✉¹

Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), Tanjung Malim, Perak, Malaysia

Kamarulzaman Mohamed Karim ✉²

Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), Tanjung Malim, Perak, Malaysia

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Abstract

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Ornamentation is a source of beauty and uniqueness for each Lagu Melayu Asli singer. The ornamentation in Lagu Melayu Asli is better known as lengkok, bunga lagu, air lagu (Suflan, 2015; Rosny, 2018), cengkok, grenek, or gerenek (Silitonga, 2011; Zulaikha, 2008; Suflan, 2015; Rosny, 2018), and some researchers are more comfortable naming it melismatic (Ritawati, 2017). Although Lagu Melayu Asli music in the Malay world is rich in the beauty of ornamentation, guidelines on ornamentation are not specifically stated but rather are to be played or sung by heart and by improvising on the basis of knowledge learned verbally from their idols or teachers (Rosny, 2018; Suflan, 2015; Rizaldi, 2010; Zulaikha, 2008). The systematic distillation in this writing uses a qualitative literature study methodology derived from the articles and interviews of Lagu Melayu Asli. In general, a literature review can be thought of as a more or less methodical method of compiling and analyzing earlier studies (Baumeister & Leary, 1997; Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003). This study provides literature reviews and concludes guidelines for singers by placing specific categories of ornamentation in Lagu Melayu Asli..

INTRODUCTION

The Malay world is generally associated with the nation states in the Southeast Asian region that practice Malay culture, and among them are Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, southern Thailand, the southern Philippines, and ethnic Malays in Cambodia and Vietnam (Ensiklopedia Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Melayu, 1994; Salazar, 1989). In relation to that, Lagu Melayu Asli music is also one of the main identities among the community in the Malay region, in line with the Malay cultural practices in their respective countries. Although there was no discovery of a written composition on Lagu Melayu Asli, this genre has a long history that existed in tandem with the emergence of Malay History such as Hang Tuah History, the History of Malim Demam, The History of Malim Dewa, etc., around the sixteenth year before AD (Hamzah, 1961). Lagu Melayu Asli music has existed alongside old popular genre songs around the world, even five years older than others (Ritawati, 2017). Lagu Melayu Asli music in Malaysia is the result of a combination of Malay music and the influence of foreign cultural arts such as Indian, Arabic, Western, and Middle Eastern, known as syncretic music (Matusky & Beng, 2012). This genre is only found in Malay language cultures around the world, which makes it novel and unique (Ritawati, 2017). Malay lyrics are the main chain in the Middle Eastern poem, where Malay lyrics resemble the famous Persian poem ruba'i (ruba'iyat) (Idawati, 2013).

Ornamentation in the Lagu Melayu Asli genre is a source of beauty and uniqueness for each Melayu Asli singer. Ornamentation in Lagu Melayu

Asli is better known as lenggok, cengkok, grenek/gerenek, bunga lagu, and air lagu (Sulfan, 2015; Rosny, 2018), and some researchers are more comfortable naming it melismatic (Ritawati, 2017). However, there are three terms used in Medan Indonesia with more thorough theoretical details, which are cengkok, gerenek, and patah lagu (Ritawati, 2017; Silitonga, 2011; Zulaikha, 2008). Although Lagu Melayu Asli music in the Malay region is rich in the beauty of ornamentation, it was arguably not born through formal music educational institutions, but was born and formed from 'teacher to teacher' orally. Guidelines on ornamentation are also not specifically stated but rather are to be played or sung by heart and by improvising on the basis of knowledge learned verbally from their idols or teachers verbally (Rosny, 2018; Suflan, 2015; Rizaldi, 2010; Zulaikha, 2008).

METHOD

The systematic distillation in this writing uses a qualitative literature study methodology derived from the articles and discography of Lagu Melayu Asli. In general, a literature review can be thought of as a more or less methodical method of compiling and analyzing earlier studies (Baumeister & Leary, 1997; Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003). As a research methodology, an efficient and well-executed review establishes a solid foundation for knowledge expansion and the facilitation of theory formation (Webster & Watson, 2002). A literature review can address research topics with a strength that no one study has by incorporating the conclusions and points of view from numerous empirical findings.

Triangulation methods are used to increase the validity of data found from diverse sources (Creswell, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The triangulation method was carried out with an expert interview process, aimed at verifying the findings on the characteristics of Lagu Melayu Asli found in the articles and discography of Lagu Melayu Asli. The analysis of the content in this writing focuses on the characteristics found in the ornamentation of Lagu Melayu Asli. Articles focused on the ornamentation of Lagu Melayu Asli are accessed online through the Google and Google Scholar databases. In the modern world, finding materials online is not only convenient but also presents thousands of journals, conference papers, and other resources from various fields of study are presented (Creswell, 2013). Orduña-Maleaetal (2014), also agreed and stated that the Google Scholar database is a web service revolution that is not limited to library data or bibliographies only.

Melismatics are melodic flourishes in the Lagu Melayu Asli music genre (Ritawati, 2017). Without melismatic, the music of Lagu Melayu Asli will be awkward, as the quality or creativity of the singer is measured by their ability to perform melismatic. Producing a distinctive melody depends on the individuality of the singer. Experience, interests, and external influences play an important role in the formation of a singer's individuality. The specific melismatic style of a teacher or role model then influenced one singer to create their own melismatic style. In addition, singers often learn to sing songs from the best singers (Ritawati, 2017). Melismatics is the result of the expression of the soul. Melismatic is an individual style. Each singer has his own style, relying on his creativity to produce ornamentations for the existing melody of the song.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

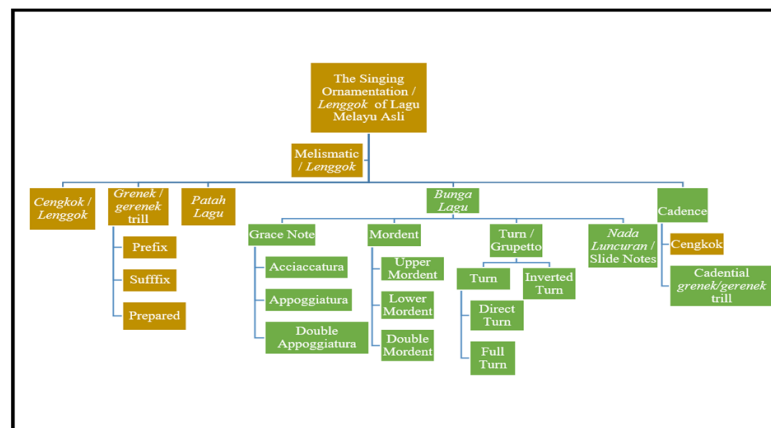


Figure 1. The singing ornamentation/lenggok of Lagu Melayu Asli

The term melismatic is a western musical term derived from German that gives the meaning of the art of flourished vocalization (Stainer

& Barret, 2009). Stainer & Barret (2009) classify melismatic as a singing technique that includes 1) a song or melody and 2) notation or notation partially decorated with ornaments on just one syllable. In the terms of western music theory, it is called 'grace notes', while in Italian it is called 'fioritura'. One syllable can be sung on more than one note, and two syllables in a row with different words can be connected with the same note. The punctuation of the lyrics should be applied to the word before the graphic symbol of expansion or melisma (George, et.al. 2005). However, it was found that melismatic is a common character and generally has various types of ornamentation in melodies (Ritawati, 2017).

Lenggok

The Malaysian community uses the term 'lenggok' to describe melismatics in singing or instrumental performances. The sources of reference to the term lenggok are very few. According to the dictionary of Kamus Dewan Edisi Keempat (2017), there are two definitions of lenggok in general. 1) "Body movements (when walking, dancing, etc.), head flexion while dancing: in each dance", 2) "way or style: many words differ in pronunciation according to the lenggok (arc) of pronunciation of a race." One example of the verse given is "the dancer walks with his body movement (lenggok) in the rhythm of the music that accompanies his dance". Lenggok that follows the rhythm of the music is generally a reference to the melismatic in the music if it is associated with singing. However, since the term melismatic is reserved only for singing, the term lenggok is more of a general use of both singing and instrumental.

Cengkok

Cengkok is an improvisation or ornamentation technique with variations of tones (Rosny, 2018; Silitonga, 2011; Zulaikha, 2008) that has disjunct intervals (Rosny, 2018; Zulaikha, 2008) such as major second or minor second, major third or minor third, perfect fourth or perfect fifth (Rosny, 2018) in long rhythmic durations such as dotted crotchet, minim, double dotted minim, and dotted minim (Rosny, 2018; Rizaldi, 2010) in the notes form of quadruplet (4 notes in one count), quintuplet (5 notes in one count), sextuplet (6 notes in one count), septuplet (7 notes in one count), and octuple (9 notes in one count) (Simanjuntak, 2015; Rizaldi, 2010). In singing, the cengkok melody is conveyed in a melismatic form where a syllable is sung with a variation of tone in one breath (Simanjuntak, 2015). The term of cengkok is extremely rare within the Malaysian community. The use of this term is more popular among the Javanese ethnic community. Singers and musicians in Malaysia are more comfortable using the term lenggok as a general term to describe Lagu Melayu Asli embellishment. However, the term of cengkok should be retained in this research as the characteristics of cengkok ornamentation can be explained more thoroughly than the term lenggok, which can only be described in general.

Grenek/Gerenek Trill

Grenek/gerenek trill is an ornamentation technique to decorate the melodic line of a song, whether singing or instrumental. However, the term grenek is rarely used in Malaysia and is only popular among Indonesians, especially in the state of

Medan (Rosny, 2017; Rizaldi, 2010; Suflan, 2015). Nevertheless, there is a similar term in the Malaysian dictionary that carries the same definition, which is *gerenek*. *Gerenek* can be defined as "1) Small and beautiful/attractive; 2) low trilling (voice, etc.)" (Kamus Dewan Edisi Keempat, 2017). In addition to almost identical pronunciation, the characteristic of definition also refers to the same traits. However, this term has never been used in any studies. Rosny (2017) used the term "trill berirama" (rhythmic trill), while Ritawati (2017) used the term of trill in her studies, which has the same definition as the terms *gerenek* and *gerenek*. This research will continue using the term *gerenek/gerenek* trill to describe the difference between the term trill in western music theory and the use of trill intended in the singing of Lagu Melayu Asli.

The use of *gerenek/gerenek* trill for singing and instrumental is different because they both have different flexibility (Rizaldi, 2010). The *gerenek/gerenek* trill in the singing technique is to shake the sound in a close tone like a vibrato in Western music, while the technique for performing a *gerenek/gerenek* trill on a string instrument is to play it almost the same as the trill technique of shaking fingers at speed in two different tones in one tap or more (Rizaldi, 2010). While other opinions state that *gerenek/gerenek* trill is an improvised technique by performing tone variations that have a small and close fraction of rhythm value (tremolo) (Silitonga, 201; Zulaikha, 2008), with the movement of conjunct (Zulaikha, 2008). The note interval is either a minor second or a major second, depending on the harmony of each song. The duration of the note is either 1/32 or 1/64. There are two

types of *gerenek/gerenek* trills, which are "gerenek sekon" and "gerenek sekon bawah" (Rizaldi, 2010). Rosny (2017) defines the *gerenek/gerenek* trill, which she called trill berirama, as a decorative tone in which the interval of the selection note is close to the main note (conjunct), with the interval distance either a minor second or a major second depending on the harmony of the song.

According to Ritawati's (2017) studies, the singers of Lagu Melayu Asli managed to produce a graceful and supple *gerenek/gerenek* trill sound. In other words, it is not so excessive that it explains the softness of the swing. The first stage for a new singer in the Lagu Melayu Asli genre should be being able to make a *gerenek/gerenek* trill on a certain syllable, thus producing melismatic beauty. But it is worth noting that if there is an appoggiatura in front of the *gerenek/gerenek* trill notes, then the appoggiatura note should be the first, not on the *gerenek/gerenek* trill (Ritawati, 2017). Figure 2 is an example of a *gerenek/gerenek* trill in Lagu Melayu Asli, Mak Inang Pulau Kampit (Ritawati, 2017).



Figure 2. An example of a trill in Mak Inang Pulau Kampai. (Ritawati, 2017).

Grenek/gerenek trill can be paired with a prefix, suffix, or even both, depending on the suitability and abilities of the singer. The prefix and suffix forms resemble those of the

ornament turn, but they are placed at the beginning and end of the trill. Besides, the appoggiatura is always paired with the ornamental grenek/gerenek trill, which can be described as a prepared grenek/gerenek trill. A prepared grenek/gerenek trill begins with a long appoggiatura. By adding additional notes from above, the harmonic structure of the beat and its movement towards the original note give the effect of resolution.

To find out the difference between cengkok and grenek/gerenek trill, the main principle is to look at the pattern of interval between notations (Rizaldi, 2010). Figure 3 shows the difference between cengkok and grenek/gerenek trill in musical notation. Melodic variations can occur with 7 or 8 notations in one rhythm, but the interval between melodies differs between seconds, thirds, fourths, fifths, and so on. However, in the melody of the grenek/gerenek trill, the interval is played only in the form of an upward second, which means that two notes are played repeatedly with a notation of 1/32 or 1/64.

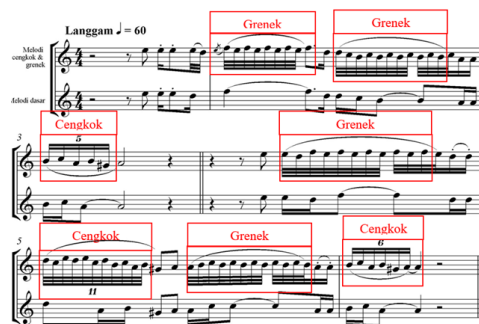


Figure 3. The ornamentation of *cengkok* and *grenek/gerenek* trill in the song of Gamat (Minangkabau) Buruang Putih (Rizaldi, 2010).

Patah Lagu

According to Kamus Dewan Edisi Keempat (2017), the term of patah lagu is defined as “gentar (trill) or putus-putus suara (staccato) when singing”. Nonetheless, from the previous literature, there are three opinions on the definition of the term patah lagu in Lagu Melayu Asli. The first opinion says that patah lagu is an accented or staccato tone (Simanjuntak, 2015; Silitonga, 2011; Zulaikha, 2008; Takari, 2008), with a variation of conjunctive tones (Zulaikha, 2008). While the second opinion states that patah lagu is a phrasing in the song where in the phrase there is a beauty of the melody with the addition of ornamentation (Rosny, 2018; Razali, 201; Suflan, 2015). The third opinion is a general definition of ornamentation, where patah lagu is improvisation or decoration in the middle of the song (or the rhythm of the corresponding length) and at the end of the rhythm with different flourishes and cadenzas (Matsusky & Tan, 2017, & Silahudin, 2011). The third definition was found not to be described in detail about the characteristics of patah lagu. Patah lagu were described as ornamentation in general.

Interestingly, in an interview with the well-known Lagu Melayu Asli singer, Norhasmidar Ahmad (2019), she gave an example of patah lagu, which supports to some extent all the above opinion variations. According to Norhasmidar (2019), patah lagu is the singer's ability to break (sing) the conjunctive tones with a slur and accent that are in the middle of a phrase in the pantun (poem). Figure 4 shows an example of patah lagu in Bukit Siantan where the break happens in the middle of the pantun phrase. Through this description, it can be ensured that the definition involves a phrase that is related to the

way of singing, which refers to the declension of the pantun phrase. While the beauty of the melody with the addition of ornamentation refers to the singer's ability to break (sing) the tone in conjunction with slurs and accents.

In addition, as can be seen in Figure 4, patah lagu is often at the end of the grenek/gerenek trill, which is sung on a single phrase that has a long rhythm. Yet not all grenek/gerenek trill end with patah lagu. Although there is a definition that involves the use of staccato, it is undoubtedly decorous because the use of staccato is not compatible with gracefulness in the ornamentation of Lagu Melayu Asli singing. It is enough just to use an accent, but it should be noted that the accent used in the song fracture is not too hard and still retains the grace and suppleness of the voice. This research concludes that the context of patah lagu involves 1) the singer's ability to break (sing) the tone in step (conjunct) with slurs and accents, and 2) patah lagu should be in the middle of the pantun phrase.



Figure 4. Norhasmidar Ahmad's (2019) example of Patah lagu at the end of the grenek/gerenek trill in the song of Bukit Siantan. Transcription by Dayang Siti Hazar.

Bunga Lagu

The term of bunga lagu is often adopted by Melayu Asli singers and

musicians. According to Kamus Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, bunga lagu is defined as "patah lagu that is usually located at the end of a song's verse so that the rhythm is more melodious". However, most literature defines the term of bunga lagu in the ornamentation of Lagu Melayu Asli as a style of singing with the addition of variations or decorative tones to beautify existing melodies while retaining the original melody as the pillar (Suflan, 2015; Rosny, 2017). Ritawati (2017) considers the seven main ornaments: 1) acciaccatura, 2) appoggiatura, 3) mordent, 4) grupetto, 5) nada penyelesaian (termination notation), 6) nada luncuran (slide notes), and 7) trill, included as melismatic in the Lagu Melayu Asli. Since the term melismatic is a general term, the use of the term of bunga lagu as one of the categories is more explicit. There were several western musical terms used in the study analysis, as there were no specific terms used by the Melayu Asli singers for the ornaments produced. Western terms like acciaccatura, appoggiatura, mordent, glissando, and double stop are used for this bunga lagu term (Rosny, 2017). However, ornaments such as glissando and double stop are found only in instrument ornament techniques, while singing is not practiced. Nevertheless, the approach to the ornamental singing technique is slightly different between the Lagu Melayu Asli and western music.

1) Acciaccatura

Similar to the ornament of western classical music, acciaccatura is one of the grace note ornamentations written smaller in front of the original note on the syllable of the song's lyrics. Acciaccatura is taken from the Italian

verb *acciaccare*, which means "to crush". The duration of the *acciaccatura* is sung very fast, which is described as "crushed", at the same beat or before the original notation. In the singing of Lagu Melayu Asli, *acciaccatura* is often combined with other ornaments such as double *appoggiatura* or triple *appoggiatura*. Figure 5 is an example of the use of *acciaccatura* in the singing of Lagu Melayu Asli.



Figure 5. *Acciaccatura* in Lagu Melayu Asli, *Anak Tiung* (Ritawati, 2017).

2) Appoggiatura

Beside *acciaccatura*, *appoggiatura* is also one of the grace note ornaments written smaller in front of the original note on the song's lyrical syllable. *Appoggiatura* takes half or more of the original note value. Although the term *appoggiatura* is used in Lagu Melayu Asli music, Ritawati (2017) explains that "it is form from the beginning, thus the result from the singer's expression follows song melismatic and the style of the individual singer." Ritawati (2017) explains more about the function of *appoggiatura* in the singing of Lagu Melayu Asli by listing a few points: 1) as a melody/song connector to make it more melodious and native, where the connecting function is to turn Lagu Melayu Asli into "melismatic" by performing legato/slur and a little staccato/separate; 2) to fill the

melody or song movement to become more ornate; 3) to enrich the harmonious variation by passing tones horizontally to harmonic tones vertically; 4) to make the melody of Lagu Melayu Asli more alive and exciting.

According to Ritawati (2017), in the context of *melisma*, or extension of the syllable of Lagu Melayu Asli, the *appoggiatura* is always paired with the ornament trill (prepared trill). The *Appoggiatura* and trill couplings are to lengthen the first notes of the trill sung louder than the next trill note. However, to make a longer variation of its value, the singing should start with a soft voice, be followed by a slightly loud voice, and then come back softly along the trill. If there is a strong beat, then the *appoggiatura* in the Lagu Melayu Asli is usually followed by an accented note. Even so, the combination between grace notes and trills in Lagu Melayu Asli music is not something to be taken for granted but rather a choice for each singer. Figure 6 is an example of the use of *appoggiatura* in the singing of the Lagu Melayu Asli music genre.

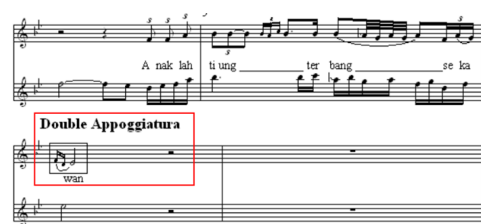


Figure 6. Double *appoggiatura* in Lagu Melayu Asli, *Anak Tiung* (Ritawati, 2017).

3) Mordent

A mordent is a musical ornament that should be played with a single rapid alternation with the note above or

below (Donington, 1982; Blood, 2018). There are three types of mordents: upper mordent, lower mordent, and double mordent. 1) Upper Mordent is played in the order of three notations, where the second notation moves up and then returns to the original notation: 2) Lower Mordent is a sequence of three notations where the notation both moves down and back to the original notation: 3) A double mordent is a double lower mordent that has five notation sequences (Donington, 1982; Blood, 2018). Mordent is also similar to trills and can be chromatically altered with a tiny flat, sharp, or natural accidental. The term entered English musical terminology at the beginning of the nineteenth century, derived from the German Mordent and its Italian etymon, Mordente, both of which were used to designate the musical figure in the 18th century. The term is derived from the Latin “mordere” (to bite). This ornament usually occurs on a strong beat; however, it can sometimes occur before a downbeat (Jakson, 2006). The main structure for mordent is “a three-note or multiple-note oscillation between a main note and its lower neighbor” (Robert, 2005). Although, in theory, mordents are not written in the notation of Lagu Melayu Asli, singers often use mordent ornaments in their performances. Figure 7 is one of the examples of transcriptions of Lagu Melayu Asli singers performing mordent ornaments in their performances.



Figure 7. Mordent in Lagu Melayu Asli, Jalak Lenteng singing Tengku Hamidah (Ritawati, 2017).

4) Turn

Turn is among the grace note ornaments, consisting of a group of basic notations added to the original melody with an upward sequence and a descending sequence played together. There are three types of turns: direct turn, full turn, or gruppetto, and inverted turn. The inverted turn starts with the lower notation of the main notation, followed by the main note, then the note above, and ends with the original note again. Figure 8 is an example of the Turn/gruppetto ornament in Lagu Melayu Asli, Sri Mersing, which was sung by Nur'Ainun in Ritawati's (2017) study.



Figure 8. Turn/gruppetto in Lagu Melayu Asli, Sri Mersing singing Nur'Ainun (Ritawati, 2017).

5) Nada luncuran (slide notes)

Ornaments of nada luncuran (slide notes) approach slur characters present in western classical music. Nada luncuran is different from appoggiatura. The appoggiatura

notation is in step, while nada luncuran moves in the interval of a major or minor third. Similarly with appoggiatura, nada luncuran can occur in multiples of two or three to the original notation in the melody (Ritawati, 2017). Figure 9 is an example of nada luncuran (slide notes) in Lagu Melayu Asli music, Mak Inang Pulau Kampit.



Figure 9. Nada luncuran (slide notes) in Lagu Melayu Asli, Mak Inang Pulau Kampit (Ritawati, 2017).

6) Cadence

In the singing of Lagu Melayu Asli, singers are required to perform ornaments at every central note (or any suitable longer notes) and end of a cadence. (Nasrudin, 1992; Silahudin, 2011; Ritawati, 2017). It is an important characteristic when performing Lagu Melayu Asli. This ornamentation in cadence is at the end of the melody of the song, but the long and short values of the notation are relative. The tone of the solution may occur in one or two original notations. Ritawati (2017) used the term of nada penyelesaian (termination notation) in her study, which has the same description as cadence. Figure 10 is an example of the ornamentation of cadence, or nada penyelesaian (termination notation), in Lagu Melayu Asli music, Makan Sireh. As can be seen in Figure 10, cengkok has been used to decorate every cadence in a phrase. Besides cengkok, the

grenek/gerenek trill can also be heard in Melayu Asli singers' performances in the cadence of a phrase. The western terms of cadential trill can be adopted into Lagu Melayu Asli ornamentation as cadential grenek/gerenek trill as an example of discussion in this area.



Figure 10. Cadence in Lagu Melayu Asli, Makan Sireh (Ritawati, 2017).

CONCLUSIONS

In the previous literature review, it can be concluded that the Lagu Melayu Asli singing is shaped by the use of one's melodic ornamentation. It is challenging to standardize Lagu Melayu Asli ornamentation because it is sung with improvised techniques and the terms used in previous studies were varied. The ornamentation doesn't have to be strictly standardized so that singers can freely express their ornamentation creativity. All that is necessary are the general characteristics of each ornamentation in Lagu Melayu Asli. Each singer has an individual style for singing the ornamentation of the melody, each with its own advantages. However, the structure of the main song remained the same, and the ornamental character also conformed to the characteristics of the Lagu Melayu Asli music genre.

Along with the history-specific influence of Melayu Asli literature, Lagu Melayu Asli has distinct musical qualities, such as lenggok, cengkok, patah lagu, and bunga lagu, which are typically produced in melismatic form. In contrast to Western music, ornament is a written form; as such, ornamental sounds that produce melisma are likewise systematically written. While Lagu Melayu Asli is an oral culture, the ornamentation, or lenggok, is never written down. Lagu Melayu Asli derives its lengthy history and ethical ideals from this oral tradition, which is preserved as Malay culture's heritage.

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