

**CURRENT EFFORTS IN SUSTAINING
PERANAKAN CHINESE MUSIC IN MELAKA**

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**CULTURAL CENTRE
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KUALA LUMPUR**

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CHINESE MUSIC IN MELAKA**

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CURRENT EFFORTS IN SUSTAINING PERANAKAN CHINESE MUSIC IN MELAKA

ABSTRACT

Peranakan Chinese (Straits-born Chinese) music such as *dondang sayang* may not be a familiar folk music to the modernized Malaysian community, however, there are associations and organisations that thrived on to sustain the musical culture in Melaka. In the advanced influence of popular culture and modernity, efforts of sustaining local culture and Peranakan Chinese music becomes more challenging. Thus, this study aims to investigate the various efforts put on in sustaining the musical culture and its consequences in terms of authenticity in present Melaka. The past literatures reveal scholarship on Peranakan Chinese music in Malaysia came to a halt in the past two decades. Methodology in this study were observation, video recording and semi-structured interview that focused on three active associations in Melaka and documentation of some less-active ones that takes the form of a qualitative enquiry. The outcomes of this study reveal how the associations and community revive interest and sustain the cultural form in new and innovative approaches that adapt to modernity and where sight of glocalization was witnessed. Furthermore, issues of authenticity were discussed.

Keywords: Music, Peranakan, Chinese, Melaka, Associations.

PENGUSAHAAN SEMASA DALAM MEMPERTAHANKAN MUZIK

PERANAKAN CINA DI MELAKA

ABSTRAK

Walaupun muzik Peranakan Cina seperti Dondang Sayang tidak dikenali sebagai muzik rakyat dalam kalangan masyarakat moden tetapi sesetengah persatuan dan organisasi di Melaka masih mengekalkan budaya tersebut kepada generasi baru dalam masyarakat ini. Usaha untuk mengekalkan budaya tempatan ini menjadi cabaran disebabkan oleh pengaruh budaya pop dan kemodenan. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pelbagai usaha yang dilakukan untuk mengekalkan budaya muzik dan akibatnya dari segi kesahihan di Melaka pada masa kini. Literasi lepas mendedahkan bahawa sumber kajian muzik Peranakan Cina telah lenyap sejak dua dekad yang lalu. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti bagaimana komuniti di Malaka, Malaysia berusaha untuk mengekalkan muzik Peranakan Cina dalam situasi semasa. Kajian ini melibatkan rakaman video, pemerhatian dan temuduga. Ia dijalankan bersama tiga persatuan utama yang telah dikenalpasti di Melaka melalui kaedah kualitatif. Kaedah lain termasuk temuduga separuh berstruktur, rakaman video dan transkripsi juga digunakan untuk menggabungkan data bagi tujuan analisis. Dapatan kajian ini mendedahkan bagaimana persatuan dan komuniti dapat membangkit semula minat dan mengekalkan bentuk kebudayaan dalam pendekatan baru dan inovatif yang bersesuaian dengan kemodenan di mana pandangan glokalisasi dapat disaksikan. Tambahan pula, isu-isu kesahihan telah dibincangkan.

Kata Kunci: Muzik, Peranakan, Cina, Melaka, Persatuan.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction of Research

This research focused on the current efforts in sustaining Peranakan Chinese Music in Melaka. In this chapter, the term Peranakan Chinese and its musical practice are introduced, followed by the problem statement found in this study, research objectives, research questions, conceptual framework, outline of the methodology for this research and the timeline of the research.

1.2 Background to the Study

The Peranakan Chinese is of mixed Chinese and Malay races. The history traced back to the Chinese migrants in the 15th century, who were traders, came to Melaka and then married local Malay women that led to the Peranakan Chinese generations. Lee (2008) explained that there are three nomenclatures the Peranakan Chinese, the Straits Chinese, and the *Babas* and *Nyonyas* commonly applied to the label Peranakan Chinese. The word *Peranakan* is a Malay term. In Malay, the word “anak” means a “child”. Lee mentioned that “the term refers to the local born as well as the offspring of foreigner-native union” (p.162).

In English, Peranakan Chinese is called Straits Chinese. A majority of Peranakan Chinese were born during the British colonial days in Melaka, Penang and Singapore, at the Straits Settlements controlled by the British. In terms of gender differences, the word *baba* refers to male Straits Chinese while the female is known as *nyonya*. Peranakan Chinese’s ancestors were the Chinese migrants who came from mostly from Southern China to the Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore between the 15th

and 17th centuries. The population of the Peranakan Chinese increased when the local Malay women intermarried with the early Chinese traders from Guangdong, China. Peranakan Chinese created a cultural integration between that of the Malay and Chinese, including Western styles of living due to colonialism, thus, the culture of the Peranakans is considered a unique heritage in Southeast Asia (Ee, 2001). Most of the womenfolk did not follow the traders to the Malay Peninsula, and the majority of the traders intermarried with local women. Lee (2008) explained that the Peranakan Chinese are found mostly in Melaka, Singapore and Penang, and as intermarriages decreased, the continuity of the *baba* and *nyonya* lineage had gone down too. It is shown that the population of Peranakan Chinese nowadays is small. In the past, the Peranakan Chinese practiced endogamy. When the *Babas* married, they selected their bride based on their ethnicity and the practice was deemed as an elite class. According to Dharshayini (2014), the music of the Peranakan Chinese reveals a mixture of English and Malay tunes, as the community speaks English and Malay as their main medium of communication. New music was also composed, such as *Bunga Sayang* from the musical theatre *Kampung Amber*, by the composer Dick Lee.

Dondang sayang and *keroncong* are well known Peranakan Chinese traditional musical performances by a pair of *baba* and *nyonya* singers, and are accompanied by a band or a group of ensemble. *Dondang sayang* is considered a traditional poet practiced by the Peranakan community in Singapore and also Malaysia. The Malay word *dondang* is translated as “to sing,” while “saying” means “love” (The National Library Board of Singapore, 2013). Due to popular culture, the practice of *dondang sayang* and its popularity has decreased since the middle of 20th century, although it is still loved and performed by many. In addition, the musical culture of the Peranakan community, like that of the *keroncong* accompanied the singing and also plays the role of instrumental music. Its history dated back to the 16th century when the Dutch and Portuguese landed

in the Malay Archipelago. Many of the musical influence from the Portuguese were brought into Malaya by the sailors, and the ethnomusicologist Tan (2009) gave examples of new music composed such as *Buka Pinto*, *Nina Bobo Opapaja*, and *Sarinande*.

Most Peranakan Chinese music consists of singing and dancing performances, which involve some musical instruments such as the violin, *Malay rebana* (drums) and *tetawak* (gong). Some of the performances include other instruments like accordions and flutes as supplemented instruments according to the music or song played by the musicians and sung by the singers. The Peranakan music is mostly performed during weddings, parties, festivals, etc.

1.3 Problem Statement

Modernization, globalization and media may be the main reasons for the global cultural change that affects the young generation of Peranakan Chinese where the cultural of Peranakan Chinese music is in decline in Malaysia. Therefore, a lot of the cultural knowledge of Peranakan Chinese is slowly dwindling. Lee (2008) pointed out that the reasons for the Peranakan Chinese culture slowly decline is because of the gradual geographical dispersion among them with the issues of modernization and socialization with other groups.

The future of the Peranakan Chinese music is considered uncertain because most of the young Peranakan Chinese are not interested in carrying out their own cultural practices in the society, even though some of them are able to converse in the language of Peranakan. Apart from this, most of the young Peranakan Chinese also unable to write and to speak the patois.

These are the problems which will gradually subside the cultural of the Peranakan Chinese, possibly causing it to disappear in the world altogether. In

Malaysia, there are efforts being made by various communities of Peranakan Chinese in reviving and sustaining their cultural music. However, there is a lack of study looking into the current efforts in sustaining the Peranakan Chinese music in Malaysia. Thus, this research aims to look into how many organisations and associations of the Peranakan Chinese are in the effort of sustaining Peranakan Chinese music currently and in what way they introduce and promote the Peranakan Chinese music to the public in sustaining their cultural music.

1.4 Research Objectives

This study comes with three main research objectives:

- a) To identify the current problems faced in the decline of Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka.
- b) To investigate the efforts in sustaining Peranakan Chinese music among the selected organisations and associations in Melaka.
- c) To discuss the changes in present Peranakan Chinese music led by the selected organisations and associations in terms of authenticity.

1.5 Research Questions

This study has three main research questions:

- 1) What are the problems faced in the extinction of Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka?
- 2) In what ways are the associations reviving the Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka?

3) What are the changes made to the authentic Peranakan Chinese music for its survival?

Along with these, there are eleven sub-questions that form the fieldwork observation and interview criteria:

- a) What are the problems faced in the transmission of Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka?
- b) What are the problems faced in the sustainability of Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka?
- c) How many organisations and associations of Peranakan Chinese in Melaka are in the effort of sustaining Peranakan Chinese music currently?
- d) In what way do these organisations and associations sustain their musical culture in the contemporary Malaysian society?
- e) In what way do the organisations and associations introduce and promote Peranakan Chinese music to the public?
- f) Are there any differences in developing the musical culture in different state of Malaysia?
- g) Have there been any changes to Peranakan Chinese music when compared with its authentic form?
- h) Is there any special identity of Peranakan Chinese music that remains and what has been changed?
- i) What are the famous and popular songs of Peranakan Chinese music and are they transmitted to the younger generation?
- j) Does authentic instrumentation remain or change in Peranakan Chinese music performance?

- k) If changes occur, in what way the Peranakan music was changed and what are the reasons that affect its authenticity?

1.6 Conceptual Framework

According to the conceptual framework, this research studied about the problems faced in the decline of, changes to the music, musical practice and performance, history and transmission of music by few organisations and associations of Peranakan Chinese which are in the effort of sustaining Peranakan Chinese music currently in Melaka. The organisations and associations which were involved in this study include *Baba and Nyonya Heritage Museum Melaka*, *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka* (PPCM), *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Malaysia* (PPCM), *Badan Kesenian Babah Nyonyah Melaka* (Bukit Rambai), The National Department for Culture and Arts of Melaka and few non-association of Peranakan Chinese in Melaka: Melaka *Nyonya* Village, Casababa Gallery, Encore Melaka and *Baba and Nyonya Heritage Museum Melaka*.

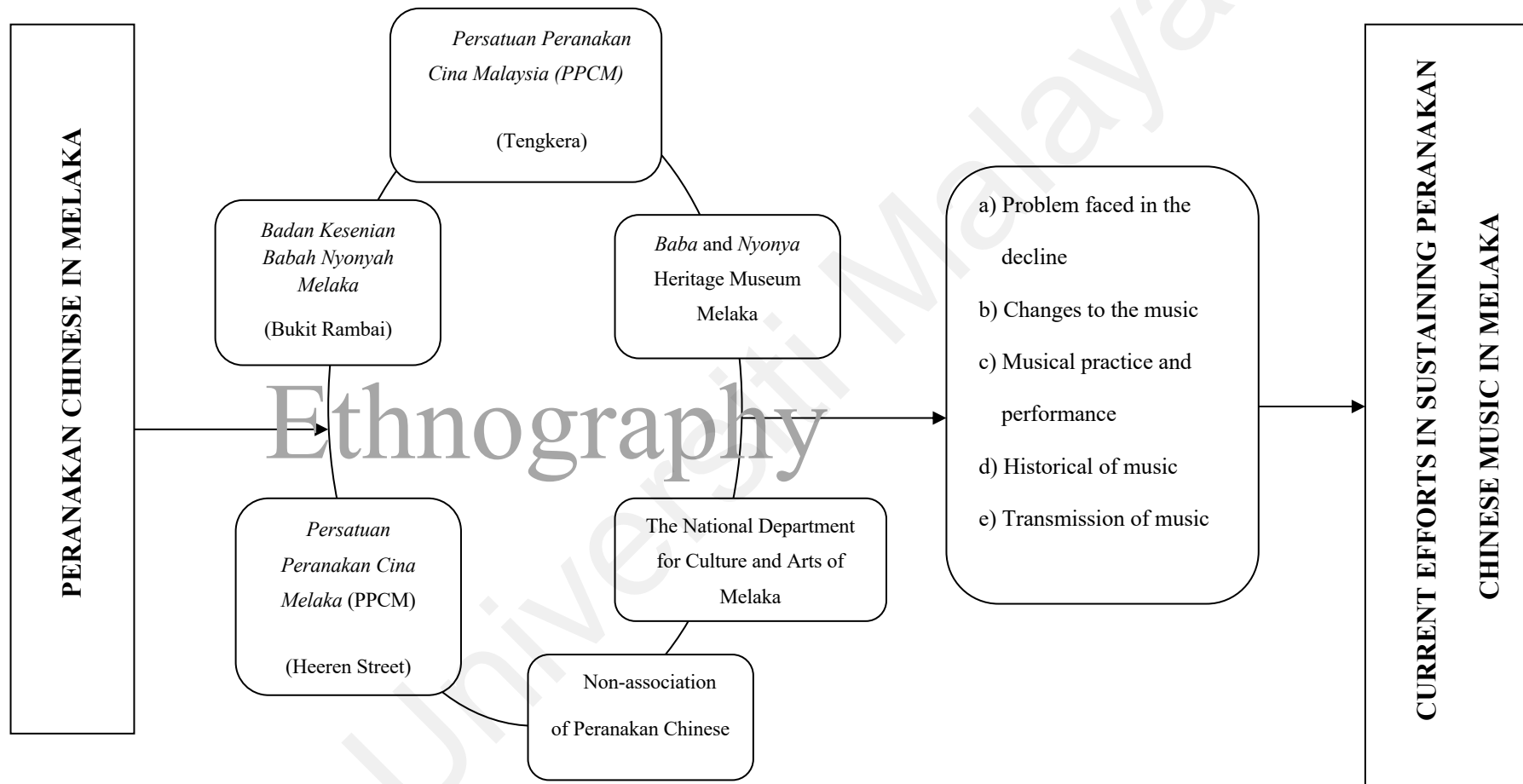


Figure 1.1: The conceptual framework of the study on the current efforts in sustaining Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka.

1.7 Significance of Research

Peranakan Chinese culture marked an important identity in the music of Malaysia. Due to the lack of documentation, research, and hardships in sustainability due to modernity, this research attempts to carry out an ethnographic documentation in gathering data relating to effort of sustaining the musical culture of Peranakan Chinese in Melaka. Documenting an intangible musical heritage in the form of a tangible research report is one of the main goals in the study of ethnomusicology. Thus, this research is significant in documenting the current effort in Peranakan Chinese music sustainability, and a discussion on musical authenticity from an urban ethnomusicological perspective:

1.7.1 A Review on the Peranakan Chinese Music Based in Melaka

The culture of music is a social which is not the individual phenomena. It is a product of interaction between societies and originates about the culture identity. From the part of musical performance of Peranakan Chinese, something is differentiable to us through comparison between the efforts given by different organisations and associations of Peranakan Chinese in Melaka. In Chapter two, a literature review provide a discussion on the past and most recent publication and documentations regarding Peranakan Chinese music based in Malaysia, such as the aspects of the changes to develop Peranakan Chinese music, the current problems faced in the decline of Peranakan Chinese and a review about the efforts in sustaining the Peranakan Chinese music among the organisations and associations in Malaysia.

1.7.2 The Current Transmission of Peranakan Chinese Music

From the perspective of urban ethnomusicology, transmission of Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka may no longer be the same as in the past. This research

illustrated how efforts were brought in to sustain this traditional musical form, and how a dated tradition may be revived to attract younger Peranakan Chinese to learn their own musical culture. Unlike the norms in press articles, this research provides data from multiple observations and interview sessions with a few associations or organisations of Peranakan Chinese in Melaka. Data collected were triangulated for validity and reliability, where the research outcomes reveal the changes and comparison among current efforts in sustaining the musical practice of Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka. Documentation of the data and analysis provides an up to date reference on the music and culture among the community of Peranakan Chinese in Melaka since ethnomusicologist Sarkissian's journal article (2012).

1.7.3 Sustaining the Peranakan Chinese Music Practice and Documenting Its Changes

This study provides a discussion of how associations and organisations of Peranakan Chinese brought in efforts to sustain their musical culture in Melaka during the period of ethnographic record of this study from 2016 to 2018. As the nature of the music transmission is still oral, documenting the musical and cultural situation gave a tangible account. This study also revealed that the culture of music is always transferred by each other and thus, changes and development in the effort of sustaining Peranakan Chinese music were recorded via observation and interview.

1.7.4 A Reference to Scholars, Ethnomusicologist and Local Community

The data, analysis and discussion documented in this research may serve a reference to scholars, ethnomusicologist and local community who are interested in the area of Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka. The research report also highlights information about the problems faced in the decline of Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka and the changes made to the Peranakan music among the selected associations

and organisations in Melaka. To sustain the Peranakan Chinese music is a continuous process on it and this research formed a synchronic study along the research timeline during present years. The musical culture is a result of past and present effort where efforts made now become a provision for the future. Thus, the results from this research reveal the continuous efforts and the human agency whom continue to maintain and enhance their musical culture in the society among the Peranakan Chinese community in Malaysia.

1.8 Delimitations and Limitations

This study was carried out within a period of 24 months as a fulfillment of a mixed-mode master's degree dissertation; therefore, the delimitations were set based on the duration of the research allocated for the program. In Malaysia, Peranakan Chinese can be found in a few states such as in Melaka, Penang, Terengganu, Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Kelantan. This study focused on a few selected major associations and organisations in Melaka that are active, to examine their efforts in sustaining the Peranakan Chinese music nowadays.

After a pre-fieldwork of reviewing ongoing activities in reviving and sustaining the Peranakan Chinese music, the selected associations and organisations: *Baba and Nyonya Heritage Museum Melaka*, *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka* (PPCM), *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Malaysia* (PPCM Tengker), *Badan Kesenian & Kebudayaan Baba Nyonya* (Bukit Rambai) and few non-association of Peranakan Chinese in Melaka were found most active with yearly activities and events. In terms of the region covered in this study, these associations are situated in Melaka.

The origins of the Peranakans was recorded and traced back to past maritime trading activities between the Southern Chinese and Southeast Asian ports (Wee, 2009).

Wee explained that the word Peranakan is known as those who were ‘locally born’ and that it refers to the communities of Straits Chinese born in Southeast Asia. There are different kinds of Peranakans in Melaka which are the Peranakan Chinese, Chitty Melaka (Peranakan Indian) and Jawi Peranakans (*Ibid*).

The word Peranakan may not only refer to those who have Chinese lineage, however, is also used in referring to those who have an Indian lineage (Kim, 2016). The Indian Hindu Peranakan (Chitty), Indian Muslim Peranakans (Jawi Pekan) and Eurasian Peranakans are examples of this context. The current efforts in sustaining the musical practice for others small Peranakan communities was not be cover because the backgrounds of the culture are difference with the Peranakan Chinese and the styles of musical practice are not related among each other. So, this study only covered the issues of the current efforts made in sustaining Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka.

Besides, this research did not document all the music of Peranakan Chinese but only focus on few musical styles such as *dondang sayang* and *keroncong* music which are popularly played in this culture and are facing some changes of the performance that are more deserving of attention in this study. This research limits its focus to the music work performed and produced within 19th to 21st century for the current efforts in sustaining Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka.

Due to the limitation to timelines, this research only includes the current efforts in sustaining Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka from a synchronic perspective. This research only focused on the current effort in sustaining Peranakan Chinese musical practices from 2016-2018. As mentioned as “current,” The scope of the research will not cover a diachronic study from 1960 until present.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This study focused on the current efforts in sustaining Peranakan Chinese music in Malaysia. Literature review is a critical evaluation report of information found in scholarly journal articles, books, dissertations, conference proceedings and other resources related to the study area. In order to have a theoretical base for this research, a review of the historical background of Peranakan Chinese and its culture was carried out.

In addition, as Hart (2018) explained, a literature review was a study to identify gaps in current knowledge and to increase knowledge about the research area, and in this study, that is the musical culture of Peranakan Chinese music in Malaysia. Through the literature review, all information was evaluated and analysed which aided in the support that helped to gain sufficient knowledge about the history of Peranakan Chinese and Peranakan Chinese music in Malaysia.

2.2 History of Peranakan Chinese

In the late 19th to early 20th centuries, most of the Peranakan Chinese (Peranakans) resided in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Phuket. During the pre-independent Malaya, some of the straits-born Chinese or Straits Chinese were British citizens, in differentiation from their contemporary new Chinese immigrants (sinkeh) (Hall of the Phoenix & Peony, Singapore, 2010). Some of the Peranakan Chinese communities lived in Indonesia centuries earlier. What we now know the Peranakan material culture was derived from the Peranakan who evolved in this region from the mid-18th century (Hall of the Phoenix & Peony, Singapore, 2010).

Knapp (2013) mentioned that “Peranakan is applied as a descriptor of those who are thus locally born to distinguish them from immigrants born elsewhere” (p. 4). Peranakan Indians who are Hindu and also known as Chitty Melaka, Jawi Pekan was formed by Peranakan Indians Muslims, in addition to Eurasian Peranakans and Peranakan Chinese was found in Southeast Asia (Knapp, *Ibid.*).

Early on in the 15th century, the Peranakan Chinese were descendants of Chinese traders who settled in Melaka and coastal areas of Java and Sumatra. Due to Chinese women not legally being allowed to leave China at the time, most of the Chinese traders married into local Southeast Asian communities. Further migrations of the Peranakan took place during the 19th century to Penang and Singapore during the British-colonial period (Michael, 2013).

Sarkissian (2012) mentioned the Peranakan community is primarily descended from Hokkien-speaking Chinese traders who came to the bustling entrepôt of Melaka from Fujian Province during the 17th and 18th centuries. The traders married women of Malay or other local origin after they settled down and raised families. A distinct form of the Malay language peppered with Hokkien words called *Baba-Malay* gradually evolved as the language of women and the home.

Most of the traders from China were no exception; they took local women as their second wives to establish secondary homes in Melaka. Many historians discussed the marriages between Chinese traders and local women which created an establishment of the earliest Peranakan Chinese communities in Melaka (Kee, 2012). Kee mentioned some historians argued that the original *nyonyas* known as Batak women from Sumatra, who worked as slaves, possibly had marriages with the Chinese traders (*Ibid.*), however, other historians believed that the *nyonyas* was the local Malay women often married with Peranakan men.

2.3 Peranakan Chinese Music

In Malaysia, descendants of Chinese migrants continue to practice their musical traditions such as lion dance, *shidaiqu* and Chinese orchestra (see Loo & Loo, 2012; 2013; 2014; 2016; Loo, Loo & Lee, 2011; Loo, Loo & Tee, 2014). On the other hand, the Peranakan Chinese continue a different syncretic form of musical tradition. The Malay, *Baba Nyonya*, Chitty and Portuguese communities still practiced the *dondang sayang* in Melaka (UNESCO, 2008). Matusky and Tan (2017) explained that the words *dondang* (originally *dendang*) means ‘singing’ while *sayang* means ‘love.’ Thus, it is a courtship *pantun* singing between a male and a female singer. *Dondang sayang* can be performed anywhere, at home or in public spaces, and the tunes of Malay *asli*, *joget* or *inang* were commonly used. Its origin has two theories: the first theory is originated from *Penyengat* (Riau), and the second theory started in Melaka at the height of the Malay kingdom of Melaka in the 15th century (Matusky and Tan, 2004).

Abu Talib (2015) remarked that although the *gambus* (string instrument) and *kompang* (drum) were very much part of the Melaka Sultanate, musical instruments of the the Chinese, Malays, Chitty and Kristangs which came after 1511 were through the Portuguese and later, the Dutch. *Dondang sayang* was a popular music genre of duet singing in both Malays and Peranakan Chinese during social functions, including weddings, parties, and festivals. The music sung by a pair of singers who exchange *pantuns* (poems) through songs and accompanied by a violin, harmonica, *rebana* (drum) and *gong*.

Patricia and Tan (2004) explained and analyzed the *dondang sayang* piece. *Dondang sayang* means ‘love song.’ It is originated from the words *dendang* (singing) and *sayang* (love). The song reveals a four-line *pantun* or poem, where the singers perform in a call and response singing style. The first singer sings four lines and then

another answers the *pantun*. They are accompanied by a violin, two *rebana* drums and a knobbed *gong*. An amiable and enjoyable atmosphere emerges when two or more performers sing *pantun* verses back and forth (*jual beli pantun*) while teasing each other. All *dondang sayang* pieces are based on only one melody. The D major scale is usually used in the *dondang sayang*, but sometimes the piece is based on C major. Patricia & Tan (2004) was written a clear music analysis of *dondang sayang* piece.

Phillip (1988) explained that the theoretical music analysis of Peranakan music - *dondang sayang* is a form of Malay oral poetry. The author also discusses *dondang sayang* on the basis of its cultural and historical background. From the book reviews, the system of *dondang sayang*'s poetic art is the same for both Malay and Peranakan, but there is a marked difference in the use of it by two groups. The author presents his argument according to the difference in aesthetic values between the two groups. The author said that Malays have no tradition of discussing poetry, whereas Peranakan not only discuss it, they also transfer an attitude towards literature which was formed from the old Chinese education system into Malayan context.

Thomas (1990) mentioned an introduction to *dondang sayang* and Malay *pantun*. This traditional Malay recitation and musical form began since the 19th century and was popular until the 1960s. Moreover, the author traced the relationship between the *pantun* practice to education system practiced during the colonial period. He argued that the two couplets were of no necessity. However, the two colonial education authorities, Sir Richard Olaf Winstedt KBE CMG (2 August 1878 – 2 June 1966) and Richard James Wilkinson (1867 – 5 December 1941), who were scholars that had done research on Malay *pantun*, said that there was a connection between the two couplets. In that case, they disagreed.

According to the Peranakan Life Malaysia (2015), an introduction of Peranakan music of *dondang sayang* and *keroncong*, the website states that *dondang sayang* is also known as Love Ballad, is considered a form of entertainment in the Malay community. In the singing activity, *baba* and *nyonya* exchange Malay *pantun* (poetry), in a lighthearted style. The performance has a humorous tone. Common instrumentation used to accompany the singers are one violin, with percussion instruments such as two Malay *rebana* (drums), and a *tetawak* (gong). When there is a need to replace or supplement other instruments, popular choices such as accordions and flute were used. In addition, Peranakan Life Malaysia (2015) described the *keroncong* as a popular form of Peranakan music. The name was derived by the general timbre and texture of the ensemble that sounded as “chrong-chrong-chrong” based on the instruments including flute, violin, melody guitar, cello in pizzicato style, string bass in pizzicato, and a female or male singer.

Sarkissian (2012) mentioned that the private clubs and associations had organised balls, galas, variety shows, and fancy-dress parties for the high society of Melaka. The aim of the events was catered to more exclusive memberships. Previously, some of the associations supported the Peranakan Chinese music and dramatic subsections that staged public performances which were often in aid of a charitable cause. In the year 1934, there was a performance of “Amed the Cobbler” which was a Malay-style *bangsawan* (Malay opera) performance done by the Seng Cheong Society to raise money and the *bangsawan* was incorporated with Malay, Western and other foreign elements. Sarkissian (2012) mentioned in 1929, the Seng Cheong Society was founded and lead by China-born community to promote cultural, recreational, educational and morally uplifting activities for young Chinese. There was a music band that performed for the “Amed the Cobbler” performance.

2.4 Peranakan Chinese Music in Malaysia

In this study, most of the literature review was focused only on *dondang sayang* and *keroncong* music from the past. There are limited studies on the continuity in Peranakan Chinese music in Malaysia. References were limited to Nicanor (1995), Yasin (2004), Matusky and Tan (2004), Tan (2004), Sarkissian (2012) and Loo, Loo and Chai (2016).

Sarkissian (2012) observed that the musical style of the Peranakan as modernized and diversified. Some of the music played were the up to date hits from that of the British and Americans, including Malay songs with sessions of *dondang sayang* singing. By the late 1920s, there were at least three large Peranakan ensembles in Melaka: the Chan Teck Chye Orchestra, which bore the name of its wealthy patron, the Melaka Hotspur Association's Music Section, and the Nightingale Minstrel Party (which collaborated with the Melaka Straits-born Chinese Dramatic Party). There were many other more ephemeral groups that drew occasional attention. One of them, the Dandy Coons, was described in January 1933 as "another very useful and accomplished Straits Chinese Amateur Party (Sarkissian, 2012).

The scholar Nicanor (1995) described *dondang sayang* as more of an entertainment based on *berbalas pantun* meaning '*pantun* exchange' sung by a male and a female singer. The song was accompanied by music known as one of the Malaysian folk songs in Malaysia not limited to the Peranakan Chinese community in Melaka. Another scholar Yasin (2004) added on that the origin of a *dondang sayang* performance was as a solo singing to release stress from work or daily chores such as fishing and housework. Although *dondang sayang* was famous and routinely performed in Melaka, it was also developed in a few versions, such as *Dondang Sayang Melaka*,

Dondang Sayang Tanjung Surat, *Dondang Sayang Temasik* (Singapore), and *Dondang Sayang Baba and Nyonya* (Melaka, Singapore and Pulau Pinang).

Matusky and Tan (2004) mentioned the musical culture of Malaysia in the article of a book review. The authors introduce the Peranakan music – *dondang sayang* is a love song, two singers singing in alternation and accompanied by violin, two *rebana* drums and a knobbed *gong*. *Keroncong* is also known as westernized popular songs of Indonesia origins, accompanied on violin, guitar, ukulele, banjo, cello and the like.

The fall of popularity in Peranakan Chinese music in Malaysia attracts some attention among scholars. Tan (2009) mentioned the younger generation had tried to sustain the culture of the Peranakans. The author wrote about the development of Peranakan performing arts, including the *bangsawan* and *dondang sayang* during their heyday in the 1930s and the decline in the post-war period. In a later study by Loo, Loo and Chai (2016) which made efforts in reviving Malaysian folk song by using an M-learning model, the researchers found that there was a lack of familiarity with the song *dondang sayang* although it is the most popular one among the genre. Most of the participants in the study listened to the piece for the first time. The article also written about a Penang-based non-governmental organization, *Anak-Anak Kota* create few creative projects and assisted in reclaiming a viable role and restoring a meaningful place for traditions in the community.

The majority of *dondang sayang* performances were performed for functions such as weddings, parties, festivals and also the celebration of Chinese New Year. In Penang, *dondang sayang* was performed on the day of *Chap Goh Meh* (the fifteenth day of Chinese New Year, technically the final day of the festival) before the World War II. On that day, those *babas* sung the *dondang sayang*, in attempt to attract attention from

the *nyonyas* who sat inside the horse carriage when celebrated the *Chap Goh Meh*, also known as Chinese Valentine's day, while throwing mandarin oranges into the sea (Patricia & Tan, 1997).

The Malay, *Baba*, and Eurasian music lovers in Melaka shared and enjoyed the *dondang sayang*, especially during their weddings or house parties, such as the dress party at a *Baba* house in Heeren Street of Melaka. Violin, *rebana* (frame drum), and *gong* were the main components when they performed *dondang sayang* (Sarkissian, 2012). There were few groups of musicians who played *dondang sayang* in different states, which included the *dondang sayang* group in Tampin, Yeo Guan Chin with his *dondang sayang* group in Bukit Cina Road, Melaka and Yeo Guan Chin with another of his *dondang sayang* group in Bukit Cina Road.

2.5 Peranakan Chinese Music Overseas

Tan and Tan (2010) introduced one of the associations in Singapore which were well known in 19th centuries, the Gunong Sayang Association. The Gunong Sayang Association (Persatuan Gunong Sayang), was a Peranakan social club which actively performed the *dondang sayang* by instrumental. The association promoted the culture through acting, singing and dancing. Peranakan Theatre, also known as Wayang Peranakan, was one of their well-known performances at the time. During the 1980s the association was also known for helping restore the Wayang Peranakan theatre. The Gunong Sayang Association helped to bring the original domestic art of Peranakan poetry singing sometime during February 1910. Most of the time, they would perform *dondang sayang* in a public area which was referred to as “musical debating”, meaning the singers singing *pantuns* which is a set of four-line verse to music and they will exchange *pantuns* extemporaneously. The location of the association was at 140 Ceylon Road for some years and relocated to Lorong 24A, off Geylang Road, in the 1990s.

According to the information from web page The Main Wayang Company (2004), the company was formed in 2004 which focused on promoting the *baba* and *nyonya* culture through shows, music, events. It was Singapore's first professional Peranakan cultural arts & community theatre company. They significantly contributed to sustain the Peranakan Culture in Singapore, and at the same time, involve some creative ways to promote the culture. The Main Wayang Company produced four CD albums, some of their music are "*The best of Peranakan Tunes*", "*Mari Jolly Jolly*", "*It's time for Sayang Sayang*" and "*Baba Nyonya Newstalgia*." These show efforts in originally written songs by employing the *Baba* patois language with an aim to add in new elements in order to revive the folk tunes.

2.6 Conclusion

Research of Peranakan Chinese music has not only shed light on the musical culture, but has also brought a richness of references used to introduce the Peranakan Chinese culture itself. It was found that many scholars focused on defining Peranakan Chinese music such as *dondang sayang* and *keroncong*, the most popular musical form among the culture. The gap identified in reviewing past literature is that scholars focused less on how Peranakans try to sustain their musical tradition and ways of promoting their music performances in the contemporary Malaysian society. Many studies were introduced and explained about the style of Peranakans Chinese music, however, often missed out the human agency, who are the insiders of the culture especially the active organisations and associations that led on many efforts and faced hardship in the sustainability for the music. Discussion on authenticity was also rare, and thus, this study attempts to close the gap in the literature.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study focuses on the problems faced in the transmission, sustainability, the efforts made to sustain, and the changes to the Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka. A qualitative research is chosen to obtain detailed description and analysis about the way of sustaining the Peranakan Chinese music with the characteristics in these aspects.

This research focused on the history of Peranakan Chinese music in Malaysia, as well as the musical form and the style of musical performance. From the literature reviews and the analysis data, the results will come out by evaluation of materials and to assist in understanding the Peranakan culture in Melaka.

3.2 Qualitative Research Methods

A qualitative research is a type of research that requires observing and qualitatively describing the behavior and events in their natural settings by collecting qualitative data for analysis and interpretation. The importances of qualitative research methods in this study are to provide a description of institutional, groups, and individual level of an organization (Mangal & Mangal, 2013).

The three main methods applied for collecting data were ethnographic fieldwork, non-participant observation and semi-structured interview. Documentary analyses of the recordings were applied to fulfill the need for certain information that was not collected in the three main methods.

3.2.1 Fieldwork Research

Ethnography and fieldwork are the main approaches used by anthropologist, including researchers from cultural studies and sociology (Benjamin, 2013). In this study, the selected field was Melaka (see Fig. 3.1).

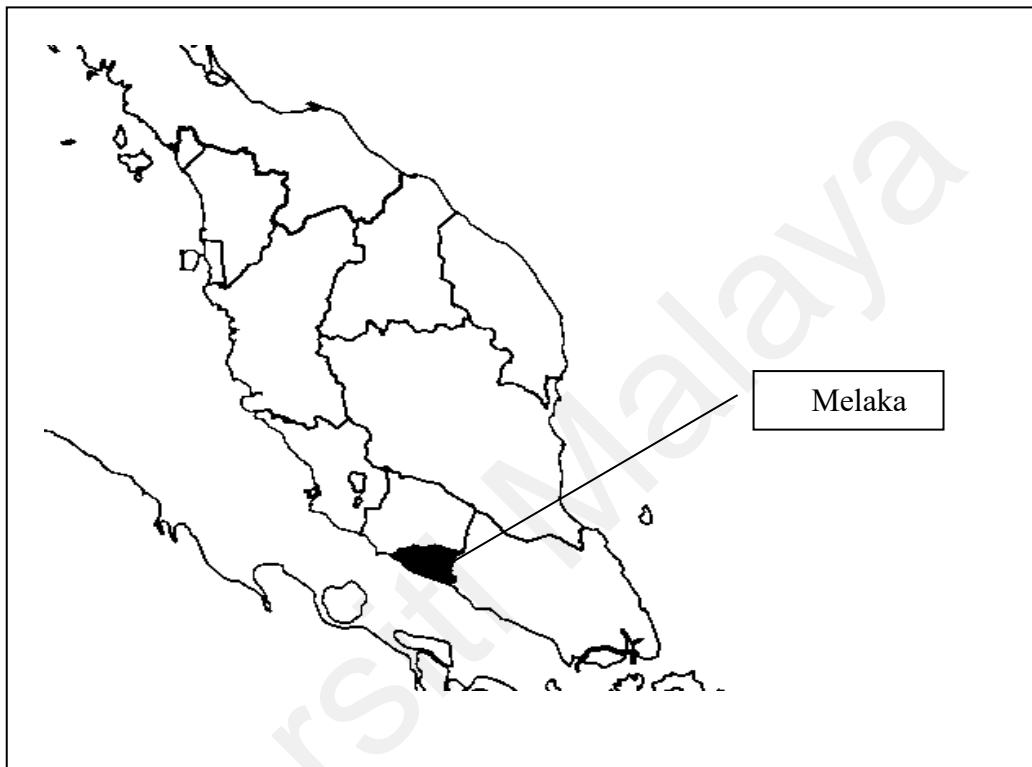


Figure 3.1: Map of Melaka in Peninsular Malaysia, adapted from Google Map.

Carrying out an ethnographic fieldwork in this study enabled observation, interview and personal communication to the selected sites: associations and non-associations of Peranakan Chinese through an extended period of time for the purpose of collecting the various types of data thru the interview, observation and fieldnotes about the activities or events organised by the Peranakan Chinese in Melaka, the researcher in this study managed to answer to the research objectives. Selection of field sites was based on a pre-field inquiry to find out active associations and non-

associations that are still sustaining Peranakan Chinese music. The selected sites included in this study are:

- *Nyonya Heritage Museum Melaka*
- *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka (PPCM)*
- *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Malaysia (PPCM)*
- *Badan Kesenian Babah Nyonyah Melaka (Bukit Rambai)*
- *Nyonya Village and Casababa Gallery in Melaka*

In terms of recorded live performances, the author also employed virtual fieldwork to obtain data from YouTube where it gave access to past performances as data for analysis, such as the genre of *dondang sayang mambo*. Additionally, social media sites as a platform to sustain and promote Peranakan Chinese music was also analysed in this study.

3.2.2 Non-participant Observation

Field observation is significant in this study to record and document all the details of the events occurring naturally in their environment using a variety of senses. In this case, it is an on-site non-participant observation, where the researchers observe the activity in the same space with the participants, however without involving themselves in the activity (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Since the current Peranakan Chinese music documented in this study had moved away from its tradition, the research took on an urban ethnomusicological point of view instead of a conventional one, looking at how a tradition sustained in an urban environment, and thus, participant-observation was not employed as an approach here.

The goal of field observation in this study is to observe how the Peranakan Chinese music is carried out by the associations, groups and non-associations in

Melaka. The observation sites were determined by inquiry to the insiders, so that any opportunity with Peranakan Chinese musical activities will not be missed. The activities gathered from insiders were:

- Dinner of Chinese New Year celebration called “*Our Selamat Taon Baru Celebration 2018*” by *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka* (PPCM) on 9th March 2018 (Friday) from 7.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m.,
- the traditional dance performance by Melaka *Nyonya* Village on 24th March 2018,
- the *Nyonya*’s traditional dance accompanied by the Peranakans Chinese music at Encore Melaka on 11th September 2018,
- the Peranakan music instruments exhibitions at The National Department for Culture and Arts of Malacca, *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka* (PPCM) and *Baba & Nyonya* Heritage Museum Melaka.
- the ceremony of *baba* and *nyonya*’s wedding on 2nd February 2015.

During the observation, the researcher’s iPhone 6s was used for recording the live music performance with dance while field notes were taken.

3.2.3 Semi-structured Interview

A semi-structured interview involves designing series of interview questions as a general guide in formally interviewing the informants selected in this study, while allowing the conversation to stray away from the guide while remaining in the direction of the topic. In other words, the informants are allowed a degree of freedom to express their views in their own terms (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

The interviews cover the management, development, musical practices, the problems faced in the transmission, problems faced in the sustainability, the efforts of sustaining and the changes to the Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka.

Ten separate interviews included associations and non-associations are conducted under consent with the five informants as below:

Informants	Interview and personal information
Mr. David Tan	- The president of <i>Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka</i>
(Baba)	- Interview date and time: 9 th March 2018, 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. - Interview venue: office of <i>Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka</i>
Mr. Daniel Ang	- Member of <i>Persatuan Peranakan Baba Nyonya Malaysia</i> .
(Baba)	- Interview date and time: 31 st May 2020, 6.30p.m. – 7:30p.m. - Teleconference interview: WhatsApp
Mr. Siah Pei	- The musician of Chinese clarinet (Seronee Besair).
Ken	- Interview date and time: 18 th July 2020, 9.00p.m. – 9:30p.m. - Teleconference interview: Facebook Messenger
Ms. Betty Ong	- An administrate of <i>Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka</i>
(Nyonya mix with Chinese)	- Interview date and time: 9 th March 2018, 12 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. - Interview venue: office of <i>Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka</i>
Mr. Victor Yeo	- Member of <i>Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka</i>
(Baba)	- Vice president of <i>Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka</i> (2009 - 2017) - The leader of The Melodians (a group of Peranakan Chinese musician) - Manager of Unicorn Café in Melaka - Interview and time: 10 th March 2018, 1 p.m. – 2 p.m.

	- Interview venue: Unicorn Café in Melaka
Mr. Lee Yuen	- Manager of <i>Baba & Nyonya</i> Heritage Museum in Melaka
Thien	- Secretary of <i>Persatuan Peranakan Cina Malaysia</i> (PPCM)
(Baba Thien)	- Interview date and time: 24 th March 2018, 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.
	- Interview venue: <i>Baba & Nyonya</i> Heritage Museum
Ms. Julie Wee	- Member of <i>Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka</i>
(Nyonya)	- Vice president's wife of <i>Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka</i> (2018)
	- Interview date and time: 9 th March 2018, 8.30 p.m. – 8.45 p.m.
	- Interview venue: Dinner of “ <i>Our Selamat Taon Baru Celebration 2018</i> ”
Mr. Johnny	- Member of <i>Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka</i>
Goh	- Interview date and time: 9 th March 2018, 9.00 p.m. – 9.30 p.m.
(Baba)	- Interview venue: Dinner of “ <i>Our Selamat Taon Baru Celebration 2018</i> ”
Ms. Winnie Ho	- An administrate of <i>Melaka Nyonya Village</i>
Guat Bee	- Non – associations of Peranakan Chinese in Melaka
(Nyonya)	- Interview date and time: 24 th March 2018, 5.00 p.m. – 5.30 p.m.
	- Interview venue: <i>Melaka Nyonya Village</i>
Ms. Nor'aini bt. Harun	- The cultural officer, Department of Leadership for Art and Culture, The National Department for Culture and Arts of Melaka.
	- Interview date and time: 3 rd July 2018, 3.00 p.m. – 4.00 p.m.
	- Interview venue: The National Department for Culture and Arts of Melaka.

Table 3.1: List of the informants for interview sessions.

An iPhone 6s and Huawei P30 Pro was used to record the interview sessions for later transcription and translation. Since English and Mandarin is the common language used among the informants, all interviews are carried out in English and Mandarin, in order to let the informant speak in the same way they would talk to others in their cultural scene (Spradley, 1979). The interview questions are formulated into two sets: one for the associations, another one for non-associations. This is to acknowledge the significant differences in perspectives, primarily in terms of the physical and psychological experiences of the informants in their own professions. The interview questions are as follows:

Interview questions for associations

- a) What are the problems faced in the transmission of Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka?
- b) What are the problems faced in the sustainability of Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka?
- c) How many organisations and associations of Peranakan Chinese in Melaka are in the effort of sustaining Peranakan Chinese music currently?
- d) In what way these organisations and associations sustain their musical culture in the contemporary Malaysian society?
- e) In what way do the organisations and associations introduce and promote Peranakan Chinese music to the public?
- f) Are there any differences in developing the music culture in different states of Malaysia?
- g) Have there been any changes to Peranakan Chinese music when compared with its authentic form?

- h) Is there any special identity of Peranakan Chinese music that remains and what has been changed?
- i) What are the famous and popular songs of Peranakan Chinese music and are they transmitted to the younger generation?
- j) Has the authentic instrumentation remained or changed in Peranakan Chinese music performance?
- k) If changes occur, in what way was Peranakan music changed and what are the reasons that affect its authenticity?

Interview questions for non – associations (shops and restaurants in Melaka)

- a) How to incorporate Peranakan Chinese music into the current business?
- b) What are the famous and popular songs of Peranakan Chinese music being played in the shops or restaurants?
- c) What are the feelings of visitors or customers when listening to the Peranakan Chinese music being played?
- d) Is there any special identity or need for Peranakan Chinese music to be played in shops or restaurants?
- e) In what way does management introduce and promote Peranakan Chinese music to the public?
- f) What are the problems faced in the transmission of Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka?
- g) What are the problems faced in the sustainability of Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka?

3.2.4 Video Recordings and Documents

To supplement the necessary information about the Peranakan Chinese music, the technique of documentary analysis is applied in this study. This technique is carried out by analyzing documents that are available and relevant in providing answers to the research questions (Mangal & Mangal, 2013). The significance of this technique in this study is to provide solid findings of the development of the music and performance, on record, in its social environment over time.

Researcher had recorded the performance by Sweetheart Band during the night of Chinese New Year celebration by *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka*. The focus examined the development in the performance practice of the Peranakan Chinese music with performance in its optimum condition over time.

3.3 Analysis

John (2018) explained that data gathered from qualitative approach are non-numerical. Examples of these are transcripts of interview, text, visual images, and recordings. There are five types of qualitative data analysis: content analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, framework analysis and grounded theory.

The completion of data collection employing the above approaches led to an analysis of the primary and secondary data. The researcher had categorized the verbal data from each interview session, and thereafter to classify, summarize and tabulate the data. All the references and recording data had translated into words which presented by respondents according to the respondent's experiences, as well as the journal, books, articles and all the resources about the current issues of Peranakan Chinese music. It also included the revision of primary qualitative data by researcher.

The researcher analyzed data according to the naturally occurring conversation and all types of written text during the interview session with respondents. Framework analysis was used by the researcher to identify a thematic framework to investigate the efforts in sustaining the Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka. Lastly, the researcher summarized the data to link all of the research findings to achieve the aim and objectives of the research.

3.4 Summary

The methods of data collection in this study provided a foundation for critical analysis of the efforts of sustaining and limitations faced by the associations and non-associations of Peranakan Chinese in Melaka, while possibly providing an opening for insight regarding the issues of Peranakan Chinese music happening in the present-day. While the finding has most of its parts descriptive, it creates a need for explanatory researches in this field in the future.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, data collection from observation, video recording, semi-structured interview and personal communication were coded and analysed. The chapter introduced the main associations identified by the author in Melaka that are actively promoting Peranakan Chinese music, along with roles played by smaller groups and tourist sites such as gallery and museum. The findings reveal a discussion on musical practices and changes in the course of revitalizing the tradition and its consequences affecting authenticity.

4.2 Identifying the Active Associations and Non-associations

During fieldwork carried out in Melaka during the period of 2015-2018, interviews were carried out with local informants (Tan, 2018; Ong, 2018); a few associations and non-associations of Peranakan Chinese in effort of sustaining their musical practices were identified. Among the many, four most active ones are:

1. *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka* (PPCM; Melaka Straits Chinese Association)
2. *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Malaysia* (PPCM, Tengkerah; Malaysia Straits Chinese Association) and
3. *Badan Kesenian Babah Nyonyah Melaka* (Bukit Rambai; Melaka Baba Nyonyah Arts Body)
4. National Department for Culture and Arts of Melaka (JKKN)

Several non-association-based organizations were identified in their efforts of sustaining the Peranakan Chinese music culture: Melaka *Nyonya* Village, Casababa Gallery and *Baba* and *Nyonya* Heritage Museum Melaka. During the fieldwork, observation showed these groups played live Peranakan Chinese music on a daily basis as part of their business.

4.2.1 *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka (PPCM)*

Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka (PPCM) among others can be traced back to having the longest history spanning 118 years. PPCM first started on the 25th of September, 1900 (see Fig. 4.1), and was known as The Straits Chinese British Association (SCBA). It started due to an increase of the Straits Chinese population and subsequently, a greater awareness of the Straits Chinese as a distinct grouping (Tan, personal communication, 2018).

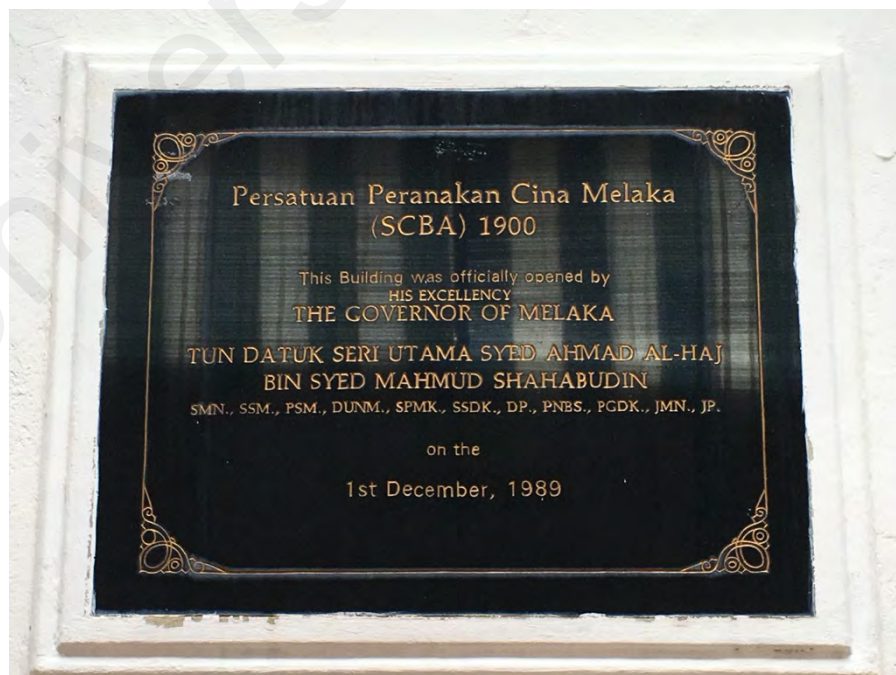


Figure 4.1: Signboard of PPCM. (Picture taken by author, with permission of Ong, 2018)



Figure 4.2: *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka* (PPCM) on Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock. (Picture taken by author, with permission of Ong, 2018)



Figure 4.3: Living room of *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka* (PPCM). (Picture taken by author, with permission of Ong, 2018)

Wee (2016) mentioned the Straits Chinese British Association (SCBA), Melaka was formed on the 25th of September, 1900 with *Baba Lee Keng Liat* as its inaugural President and Tan Chay Yan as Vice President. The name of the SCBA was changed after the independence of Malaya to Melaka Peranakan Association. The location of *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka* (PPCM) has remained at 149 and 151, Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock since 1984 and its history was documented by Sarkissian (2012). At present, the premise boasts a well-equipped office, hall, and other facilities. The members are required to pay RM 60 per year as a membership fee (Goh, personal communication, 2018).

As observed, the façade of the PPCM shows traditional elements of Chinese cultural heritage (see Fig. 4.2) and the interior décor reveals a nostalgia reminiscent of the past (see Fig. 4.3). Compared to the archival photos of Peranakan Chinese weddings and other activities taken during the 1920s and 1930s documented in Sarkissian (2012), the PPCM had gone through efforts in maintaining its traditional décor although refurbished. Pictures of past presidents (see Fig. 4.4) and display of *gongs* and *rebana* (see Fig. 4.5) and a more modern meeting room can be seen (see Fig. 4.6) during the author's observation.



Figure 4.4: Presidents of *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka*. (Picture taken by author, with permission of Ong, 2018)

Ho (2015) explained that the accompaniment of *dondang sayang* is usually a small band. The instruments commonly used in *dondang sayang* are violin and Malay percussion instruments, such as the *rebana* and *gong*. The president of the PPCM (Melaka), David Tan (personal communication, 2018) mentioned the display of *gongs* and *rebana* (see Fig. 4.5) in the meeting room were played by the Peranakan musicians many years ago. These were a part of the core instruments. Other instruments that may be used are guitars, drum set, tambourine, accordion and flute. The violin is used to play the counter melody to accompany the singing (Ho, 2015).



Figure 4.5: Gong and rebana found in Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka. (Picture taken by author, with permission of Ong, 2018)



Figure 4.6: *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka* meeting room. (Picture taken by author, with permission of Ong, 2018)

Ong (personal communication, 2018) explained that the associations had cooperation with the global Peranakan's associations such as the associations from Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and other countries to discuss and share information regarding ways of developing the association and festivals such as Chinese New Year, Mandarin classes, and food fair. A *baba* and *nyonya* convention at Tengerang, Indonesia held yearly is part of their activity and meeting point too. The PPCM conducted exchange programmes and activities with The Peranakan Association of Singapore, State Chinese Associations of Penang, Peranakan Association of Penang, *Baba* and *Nyonya* Association of Kuala Lumpur & Selangor, and the Gunong Sayang Association of Singapore. The aim of keeping the culture alive and promoting and educating its members found in these associations provide more support and encouragement (Wee, 2016).

As a form of development, the PPCM also set up a "Youth Section" led by the late *Baba* Chan Kim Lay in which the primary tasks are to instill and inculcate in the youths of the Peranakan community of the vitality of its cultural traditions (Wee, 2016).

The society organised and invited *babas* and *nyonyas* to join the activities of cultural, social, musical, sports and cooking. Currently, an outreach activity is also part of PPCM's effort in promoting the Peranakan Chinese culture. The PPCM regularly organised cultural sessions to invite the members of the PPCM to join as facilitators and to promote their own culture to the public. For example, dance, cooking, singing and craft classes among others.

4.2.2 *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Malaysia (Tengkera)*

Wee (2016) mentioned the association which was found by *Baba Koh Her Chiewnh* in 1986. The association opened its membership to all Peranakan Chinese throughout the country as opposed to PPCM (Melaka) whose members must be Melaka-born Peranakans. Currently, the PPCM (Malaysia) has a total of 1800 members and its office is located at Wisma Peranakan at 243, Jalan Tengkera, 75200, Melaka (see Fig. 4.7).



Figure 4.7: Wisma Peranakan (PPC Malaysia) in Tengkera.

(Picture taken from Facebook of Wisma Peranakan, with permission of *Baba Thien*, 2018)

Baba Thien (personal communication, 2018) mentioned that the current President of the PPCM (Malaysia) is *Baba* Ronald Gan and himself is the Secretary of the associations. The PPCM (Malaysia) has a comfortable modern meeting room which can be seen (Fig. 4.8) during the author's observation of the site. The overall objectives are primarily to educate, inform and create awareness and form strong bonds among the Peranakan Chinese Communities of Malaysia with the intent of promoting, strengthening and perpetuating the Peranakan Chinese cultural heritage in the country (Wee, 2016).



Figure 4.8: Wisma Peranakan (PPC Malaysia) meeting room.

(Picture taken from Facebook of Wisma Peranakan, with permission of *Baba* Thien, 2018)

4.2.3 National Department for Culture and Arts of Melaka (JKKN Melaka)

The National Department for Culture and Arts of Melaka also known as *Kompleks Jabatan Kebudayaan dan Kesenian Negara, Melaka* (JKKN Melaka) which is located in Lebuhraya Ayer Keroh, Hang Tuah Jaya, 75450 Melaka (see Fig. 4.9). As observed, the goal of the JKKN in Melaka is to serve as a center of Melaka cultural activities and also became a center of references about the artistic and cultural of Melaka.

Nor'aini (personal communication, 2018) explained the function of the JKKN of Melaka is to plan, implement, coordinate and promote the cultural and artistic activities in Melaka. The JKKN also managed to organise the cultural event cooperating with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). In the past, the JKKN had organised many events such as the State Dance Festival, Guidance Program of Art and Culture, and Innovation Laboratories and Entrepreneurship Products of Art and Culture.



Figure 4.9: The National Department for Culture and Arts of Melaka in Ayer Keroh. (Picture taken by author, with permission of Nor'aini, 2018)

As observed, there was a small exhibition hall located in The National Department for Culture and Arts Melaka. One of the exhibition stalls is about the culture of *baba* and *nyonya* in Melaka. The *baba* and *nyonya*'s exhibition stall exhibited the reception hall, jewelry, furniture, devices and textiles (see Fig. 4.10). The JKKN in Melaka also had exhibited the instrument which used to play the *dondang sayang* among the old generation of Peranakan Chinese in Melaka.

Nor'aini (personal communication, 2018) introduced the old instruments of *dondang sayang* which involved some musical instruments, like violin, Malay *rebana* (drums), *tetawak* (gong) and accordions at the exhibition (see Fig. 4.11). This exhibition corner was provided important advantages and supports the organisations and associations introduced and promotes the Peranakan Chinese culture to public.



Figure 4.10: The *baba* and *nyonya*'s exhibition stall. (Picture taken by author, with permission of Nor'aini, 2018)



Figure 4.11: The *dondang sayang* musical instruments exhibition corner in The National Department for Culture and Arts Melaka. (Picture taken by author, with permission of Nor'aini, 2018)

4.2.4 Melaka *Nyonya* Village

The location of Melaka *Nyonya* Village has remained at 178 Jalan Parameswara, 75000, Melaka, Malaysia. In the restaurant, the stage of performance is used for theatrical performances such as Peranakan culture dances, *baba* and *nyonya* weddings and also the Peranakans musical performance which can be seen (Fig. 4.12) during the author's observation to the site. Ho (personal communication, 2018) explained that the aims of the restaurants are to make Melaka tourism more colorful and more cultural atmospheric, to promote *nyonya* culture as attraction for more tourists in Melaka and to cause people to have an in-depth understanding of the history and development of Melaka and Peranakan Chinese culture.



Figure 4.12: Signboard and performance stage of Melaka Nyonya Village.

(Picture taken by author, with permission of Ho, 2018)

Melaka Nyonya Village professionally introduced the *baba* and *nyonya* traditional foods, dances, songs and art. There are theatrical performances to welcome the tourists while are dining. The traditional *baba* and *nyonya* wedding is the highlight of the performance. The performance also aims to increase the audience awareness and interest in the *baba* and *nyonya* culture. The programme was produced in hoping that they deliver better understanding of the culture to their audience members.



Figure 4.13: Traditional dance performance at Melaka Nyonya Village. (Picture taken by author, with permission of Ho, 2018)

Ho (personal communication, 2018) mentioned this commercial idea will enhance Melaka's city value in regards to tourism and branding, also giving tourists a wonderfully enriching time in Melaka. Besides, the tourists are able to learn about Peranakan Chinese music while having the meal. The picture of the stage performance by the dancers (see Fig. 4.13) during the author's observation of the site.

4.2.5 Casababa Gallery

The Casababa Gallery located along the "Millionaires' Row" of historical Heeren Street of Melaka (now Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock) remains at 87, Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock (Heeren Street), Melaka 75200, Malaysia. Casababa Gallery is a house that captures the Peranakan culture and lifestyles. As I observed, visitors were able to see a mock setting and lifestyles of the Peranakan family culture, especially that of a wealthy one, that capture the ambience of the 19th and early 20th centuries (Fig. 4.14).



Figure 4.14: Casababa Gallery on Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock. (Picture taken by author, 2018)

4.2.6 *Baba and Nyonya Heritage Museum Melaka*

The *Baba and Nyonya Heritage Museum* is located along the Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock which remained at No. 48 & 50 Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock 75200 Melaka. Three terrace lots are combined to make up the museum which has been owned by the Chan family since 1861. Four generations of the Chan family had lived in the house before it was opened as a heritage museum in March of 1985. To this day, the Chan family still manages the museum by preserving the house for all people to visit and learn about the identity and culture of Peranakan in Melaka (*Baba & Nyonya Heritage Museum*, 2017).

As observed, the façade of *Baba & Nyonya Heritage Museum* shows a traditional element of Chinese cultural heritage (see Fig. 4.15). In the reception hall (*thia besar*) only men were allowed as it is for the use of entertaining the honoured guests with business negotiations and normally the men of the household conducted the meeting (see Fig. 4.16). *Baba Thien* (personal communication, 2018) explained that some of the interior decorations can be traced back to the Peranakan Chinese's roots in China. Such as for example, the silk-embroidered tall panels in the hallways have traditional Chinese graphics. The reception hall was designed to the tales of Chinese values and culture and the household inherited the culture of Peranakan Chinese which were used for all suited formalities such as entertaining business partners and having meetings with people who were invited to the house. As mentioned by *Baba Thien* (personal communication, 2018), there is another hall named *thia gelap* (dark hall). The *thia gelap* was where women were only allowed to sit and peep at the invited guests.



Figure 4.15: *Baba* and *Nyonya* Heritage Museum Melaka on Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock. (Picture taken from Facebook of Nyonya Heritage Museum Melaka, with permission of *Baba* Thien, 2018)



Figure 4.16: *Thia Besar* (Reception Hall) at *Nyonya* Heritage Museum Melaka. (Picture taken by author, 2018)

4.3 Modern Effort in Sustaining Peranakan Chinese Music by the Associations and Non-Associations in Melaka

There were three major Peranakan ensembles: the Chan Teck Chye Orchestra, the Melaka Hotspur Association's Music Section, and the Nightingale Minstrel Party founded in Melaka by the late 1920s (Sarkissian, 2012). The name of Chan Teck Chye Orchestra was named under its patron. Unlike an orchestra, this was a band with musicians who played gigs at fund raising events or other celebrative events. The Melaka Hotspur Association was the one of the larger social clubs among the Peranakan Chinese in Melaka during the late 1920s and the most prominent ensembles had performed during the association functions. The Hotspur's Music Section had 23 musicians who played the string instruments including violins, ukuleles, banjos, mandolins, and guitars. The Nightingale Minstrel Party collaborated with the Malacca Straits-born Chinese Dramatic Party (Sarkissian, 2012).

David Tan (personal communication, 2018) mentioned a few groups of Peranakan music ensembles: Seck Kia Enh Band, Senior Citizen Band, The Melodians and Sweet Memories, were famous Peranakan bands in Melaka in some years ago. According to Tan, the second and third generations were still active in performing Peranakan Chinese music during functions organised by the associations and government a few years ago but lately the activity decreased. The members of the groups consisted of approximately ten people. (Tan, personal communication, 2018).

Another informant, Yeo (personal communication, 2018) gave similar information, as he mentioned that the information regarding few groups of Peranakan musicians such as Mellows Band (Eurasians) and Keroncong Malindo (Melaka), and like Tan, he also mentioned The Melodians and Sweet Memories as the active bands previously. Yeo explained that the leader of Melodians, Victor, actively led the group

to perform gigs such as weddings, commercial functions, and anniversaries of associations. In addition, Victor organised classes for young generations to learn about the Peranakan Chinese music but the activity has since ceased. Some of the younger generations have continued to study and very few of them had the interest; the classes ended in 2016. Despite this, he mentioned that he could still see some effort in music-making by some third and fourth generations of Peranakan Chinese in Melaka.

During the researcher's observation of Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka, there were a few events, social functions and musical performances performed by the indigenous Peranakans as a continuity of the tradition of the intangible Peranakan Chinese music. Most of the Peranakan in Melaka continued efforts in developing and sustaining their culture, they also introduced the Peranakan Chinese music with *joget* that functions as dance music during a dinner function. The modern form of Peranakan music can be witnessed through musical performance such as the modern *nyonya's* dance performed at Encore Melaka. In addition, some of the Peranakan still follow the traditional wedding customs by having a small ensemble played during the ceremony. The current associations and non-associations in Melaka are active and thrive to sustain the Peranakan culture and Peranakan Chinese music by having different kinds of functions and events, despite the highly globalized and modernized society in Melaka. The effort aimed at enhancing the community's knowledge about the history and Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka.

In a previous research published by Sarkissian (2012), the ethnomusicologist mentioned private clubs and associations organized balls, galas, variety shows, and fancy-dress parties for Melaka's higher-class society. The aim of the events catered to more exclusive memberships while some of the associations supported the Peranakan

Chinese music with stage performance that were often hosted in conjunction with a charitable cause.

Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka (PPCM) was one of the selected Peranakan associations being focused on in this study as well as a past study by Sarkissian (2012). The same research methodology carried out an ethnographic fieldwork in both studies and enabled observation, interview and personal communication to collect and analyse the data by participating in the functions, observing the wedding ceremony and attending the dinner dance which was organised by the associations of *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka* (PPCM). Both studies introduced the Peranakan culture and explained the changes made to Peranakan music. In the past study, the focus was on the historical aspects of Peranakan culture where the main source of data came from one of the Peranakan associations in Melaka which was *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka* (PPCM).

In this study, a few associations and non-associations of Peranakan Chinese were visited where informants were interviewed regarding the effort of sustaining the Peranakan musical practices especially that of the Department of Leadership for Art and Culture which had cooperated with local Peranakan associations to sustain the Peranakan Chinese music in current. In addition, the current changes of Peranakan Chinese music were analysed in this study and compared with the data on Sarkissian's findings (2012), which mostly explained the functions or events organised by *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka* (PPCM).

4.3.1 Modern Band as Peranakan Dance Accompaniment

After communicating with interviewees, the researcher was invited to attend the Chinese New Year dinner celebration called “*Our Selamat Taon Baru Celebration 2018*” by the *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka* (PPCM) on the 9th of March 2018. Gaining access to the dinner function allowed the researcher the opportunity to participate in this cultural event (see Fig. 4.17). It was held on a Friday and began at 7pm. The event lasted for four hours ending at 11pm and dinner was served at 8pm.



Figure 4.17: The invitation card of “*Our Selamat Taon Baru Celebration 2018*”.

(Picture taken by author, 2018)

All programmes were carried out under the permission of Mr. David Tan, President of the *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka* (PPCM). As a complete observer according to Mangal and Mangal (2013), the researcher did not interrupt the on-going dinner and tried to be as discreet as possible while taking photos and video recordings. Unlike a foreigner, the researcher’s hometown is Melaka so his presence at the observation site as a researcher was not obvious and taking photographs of the crowd appeared to be a normal social act. Some Chinese customs normal to Malaysian Chinese

New Year celebration can be observed when the Peranakans took photographs with the God of Fortune (财神) which brings the symbols of “luck” and “money” to the people (see Fig. 4.18).



Figure 4.18: The God of Fortune at the event. (Picture taken by author, 2018)



Figure 4.19: Dinner dance party. (Picture taken by author, 2018)

The invitation indicated that the theme of the night was red, the colour that symbolizes auspiciousness and good fortune. Most of the guests were dressed in red cheongsam, dresses, t-shirts or shirts, dinner blouses, and *kebaya*. Similar to past research, dancing was part of the dinner and a band was invited to play during the dinner function. Instead of local musicians, a group of singers from the Philippines consisting of two members, mother and daughter (Imelda and Ana) known as The SweetHeart Band was invited. Imelda has over 30 years experiences in singing and her daughter Ana has over 14 years of experience singing for the band. The band played different genres of music after the dinner which can be seen (Fig. 4.19) including popular music, pop, reggae, jazz, country, and folk which reflected a globalized influence to the Peranakan Chinese community.



Figure 4.20: The *baba* and *nyonya* dance after the dinner. (Picture taken by author, 2018)

A more traditional experience was when the musicians performed *Joget Pahang* (Malay folk song) followed by an English country song, *Aky Breaky Heart*. The *baba* and *nyonya* enjoyed dancing the traditional Peranakan dance accompanied by the band (see Fig. 4.20). The observation was surprising, where according to insiders, modern songs and Malay folk songs accompanying Peranakan dance has become a common theme.

4.3.2 Peranakan Music in World Heritage City Celebration

On the 7th of July 2008, Melaka was declared as a UNESCO World Heritage City (UNESCO, 2008). Along with this, the Melaka Historic City Council (MBMB) organised an anniversary celebration that showcase their cultural activities, including a presentation of local traditional cuisine. The event mostly being held at Melaka city and cooperating with the associations, organisation and performance groups in Melaka to present the unique culture in Melaka. The celebration attracted tourists from other countries as the cultural activities and display of traditional cuisine complimented visits to well-preserved heritage buildings, cultural display, with attractive sites visit.

The local associations play important roles during government and tourism functions. For example, on 5th July 2013, the *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka* (PPCM) had performed the *baba* and *nyonya* dance accompanied by the Peranakan Chinese music during the 5th Anniversary of UNESCO World Heritage City Celebration of Melaka in the Melaka Sultanate Palace Museum (see Fig. 4.21). The dancers performed the story of inter-marriages between migrant Chinese traders from China and locals where the former brought the traditional trousseau for the wedding (Nor'aini, personal communication, 2018).



Figure 4.21: Peranakan traditional dance performance. (Picture taken by JKKN Melaka in 2013, with permission of Nor'aini, 2018)

During the dance, the accompanied song was titled *Nyonya dan Baba* (LGM) sung by Aminah Yaakop and composed by *Baba Ong Cheng Hoe*. This Peranakan Chinese song was part of the *Orkes Keroncong Malindo Melaka* album. The main instruments used were guitar, flute, ukulele and violin, typical of a *keroncong* ensemble. The song was at a slow tempo and sung lyrically by the singer. The ukulele mostly involved 2 parts called the *cak* (pronounced “chak”) and the *cuk* (pronounced “chook”). The steel-stringed instrument played the role of off-beat drums that were accentuated and is onomatopoeically named as “cak”. The larger and three gut or nylon string is called “cuk”. In this Peranakan Chinese song, a flute was played for introductory passages. The song *Nyonya dan Baba* tells the story of romance between the male and female Peranakan community in Melaka. The lyrics describe courtship between the two, where the *baba* (the Chinese traders) tried to attract the *nyonya* (local women) with

pantun. *Nyonya dan Baba* is one of the love songs of Peranakan Chinese music in modern ensemble style.

4.3.3 The China-Malaysia Effort in Encore Melaka

A complete face-lift to the revitalization of Peranakan Chinese music may be witnessed in the production of Encore Melaka (又见马六甲), a Melaka-themed theatrical performance using the state-of-the-art theatrical technique in a modern rotating theatre to perform Melaka cultural song and dance performance. The director of Encore Melaka is Wang Chaoge, one of the key figures among the creative teams responsible for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games Opening Ceremony. The name Encore Melaka as Wang (2018) described in an interview is ‘a place worth to encore for a thousand times.’

The hall is located at Impression City in Kota Syahbandar, Melaka. The production was a reflection of the historic state’s beginnings and growth through a timeline of six centuries. As observed on 7th of July 2018, the Encore Melaka performance lasted 70 minutes on a 360-degree rotating audience auditorium where the 2000 capacity guest seats rotated in a synchronized way towards the direction of Wang was believed to be the first in Southeast Asia. Instead of an authentic traditional performance, the performance employed a nostalgic storytelling, complexity in choreography, stage sets and lighting that re-presented Melaka in an art performance.

The storyline included the scenes titled *Parameswara*, *Cheng Ho*, *Nyonya & Wedding*, *Six Mothers*, *Pregnant Women*, *Wau* and *Finale*. The scene titled *Nyonya & Wedding* presented the sight of local daily events of the Peranakan Chinese in Melaka, and also presented the traditional dances during wedding events of Peranakan.

The story of *Nyonya & Wedding* was the second scene of the show. The scene of *Nyonya & Wedding* was divided into three parts which the first part introduced the uniqueness of *nyonya*'s modern dance, the second part performed the *baba* (the Chinese traders) and *nyonya* wedding story and the third part performed a combination dance by using the wedding basket (*Bakul Sia*) with the Peranakan and Chinese red lantern. During an interview, the director Wang (2018) explained that:

I think there has never been an art work which described Melaka from such angle with the people at the moment and go back in time to see what people did and how people think.

However, as observed, Encore Melaka may not be an ideal example in presenting the authentic historical and cultural past of Melaka. The background music used in the first part of the performance of *nyonya*'s modern dance was different than the authentic Peranakan Chinese music form. The song was sung in Peranakan language and accompanied by a combination of instruments of the Malay, Western and Peranakan like string ensemble, *gamelan*, *gong* and chimes in slow tempo. The newly composed music revealed a fusion of East and West that had a quasi-local Peranakan theme-like music as its backbone. The performance involves traditional dances with unconventional props display that is often colourful and attractive, and therefore, differs to that of the simplicity of traditional performing arts. Performance contents also included displays of ancestral practices such as bowing. The bowing was related back to the tradition of paying respect to ancestors, such as Cheng Ho. The traditional props were included such as the *Baba Nyonya* wedding basket (*Bakul Sia*), red lantern and the authentic wedding robes.

For the second and third parts of the *Nyonya & Wedding*, the background music was a recorded Chinese orchestra music that reveals a symbolic representation of the

Chinese. The *serunee* (Chinese *suona*) was the main instrument in the performance and was played during the introduction to show the Peranakan instruments used in the traditional Chinese wedding ceremonies of China. The dancers were dressed in the Peranakan bride and bridegroom's traditional gown and others danced and carried the Peranakan and Chinese red lantern to show the cultural of Peranakan wedding ceremonies in the performance.

4.4 Efforts in Sustaining the Peranakan Chinese Music Instruments in Melaka

During the researcher's fieldwork, efforts put on to sustain the Peranakan Chinese musical instruments were mainly by associations, non-associations and private bands, while archival record for preservation was kept in a museum. In the modern Melaka society, the presence of traditional instruments and Peranakan Chinese music were found to be uncommon. However, some communities still practice and employ it in their wedding ceremonies.

Some of the associations and non-associations in Melaka are still maintaining the use of traditional musical instruments to perform the Peranakan Chinese music. Although the younger generations are not interested in the authentic musical performance, the current Peranakan musicians and modern bands are still using the violin, gong, *serunee* or Chinese *suona*, Malay *rebana* (drums), a *tetawak* (gong), and accordion to perform Peranakan Chinese music during the wedding ceremonies, *joget* performances, functions and festivals celebrations. Among the instruments, the *seronee* is the one that is most identical to the Chinese heritage (see Fig. 4.22). During an interview, Lee explained that the *seronee* is used in auspicious events and also funeral. (Lee, personal communication, 2018)



Figure 4.22: Photograph of Mr. Yeo Kim Swee played *Seronee*. (Picture taken from Facebook of Nyonya Heritage Museum Melaka, with permission of *Baba Thien*, 2018)

The *Seronee* instrument which originated from China is called *suona* and is commonly used during weddings to ward-off evil spirit (Abisheganaden, 2005). In Melaka, the *seronee* is typically played during joyful occasions at the Peranakan Chinese home, more especially for auspicious ceremonies such as weddings and birthdays (Cheo, 2009). During the researcher's observation, *Baba Thien*, the manager of Nyonya Heritage Museum Melaka had managed to invite the public for a special *seronee* performance together with a lion dance to usher in the Chinese New Year on Saturday the 24th of February 2018. Data gathered from fieldwork revealed that there are still some community practices of the Peranakan Chinese ensemble that are closer to its authentic tradition. In the ceremony of *baba* and *nyonya*'s wedding, the instruments of the *serunee* band comprised the *serunee besar*, the clarinet like instrument with a big copper bowl which produces a loud and resonant sound. A smaller version of the

instrument produced a softer and gentle sound played by the *serunee kechil*. The Peranakan Chinese musicians also used a pair of very small cymbals as chimes, a Chinese bamboo flute, a Chinese drum with a strap which is slung over the shoulder, a small flat drum with one brass piece (the ting-ting) strapped to it and a Javanese gong.

During the researcher's observation, he was afforded the opportunity to witness a young Peranakan couple, *Baba Khoo Kim Cheng* and *Nyonya Chan Li Cher* from Melaka carried out their wedding ceremony with traditional band and costumes at Ramada Plaza in Melaka on the 2nd of February 2016 (see Fig. 4.23).



Figure 4.23: The bearers carried the sedan chair and led the way with the bridal couple walked to the stage. (Picture taken by author, 2016)



Figure 4.24: The Peranakan musicians played the traditional Peranakan Chinese music in the wedding ceremony. (Picture taken by author, 2016)



Figure 4.25: Peranakan Chinese music instruments: (from left) Chinese clarinet (Seronee Besair), hand-held Chinese flat drum, small pair of cymbals, and a Javanese gong. (Picture taken by author, 2016)

There was an announcement for the arrival of the bride and groom before the dinner. Dressed in traditional wedding costumes, the couple walked forward from the entrance to the stage instead of the bride sitting on a sedan. The bearers carried a sedan chair, which is typically used in traditional weddings, while following closely behind them. There was a small group of four Peranakan musicians who played traditional Peranakan Chinese music while the bride and groom walked to the stage (see Fig. 4.24). The instrument involved in the performance was the (Seronee Besair), small pair of cymbals, hand-held Chinese flat drum, and a Javanese gong (see Fig. 4.25).

The Peranakan Chinese band's role in the wedding was to accompany the entrance of the bride and groom. The good *serunee* players mostly played at the front while other players followed behind to lead the bride and groom to perform the most graceful manner in the ceremony. During the wedding ceremony, they played for 45 minutes including welcoming the guests and leading the bride and groom. The musicians played a big clarinet called the *serunee besar*, a drum which was slung over the musician's shoulder, small cymbals and the Javanese gong played as accompaniment. The Peranakan Chinese band played instrumental music and the songs titled *Ayer Kuning* and *Tiong Baru* which were the blend of Chinese and Malay melodies.

Conversely, the same instruments were used during funerals while playing a more solemn and subtle melodic line. Besides, the *Seronee* would also be played during funerals but with a more subtle melody. In a traditional Peranakan Chinese music band, other instruments such as the Chinese clarinet (*Seronee Besair*), smaller version of the Chinese Clarinet (*Seronee Kecik*), small pair of cymbals, Chinese bamboo flute, small

Chinese drum with a strap, hand-held Chinese flat drum, and a Javanese *gong* were used.

In the museum, some of the music instruments that are no longer used in current day ensembles are displayed (see Fig. 4.26). Archival records of past Peranakan music were played at the exhibition hall for visitors. In terms of intangible Peranakan cultural heritage, music was the least familiar when compared with others such as *nyonya*'s cuisine, clothing, pastry and utensils. Thus, the playing of recorded Peranakan music allows visitors to know more about the auditory experience while viewing the instruments at the exhibition, as a means of preserving the tradition.



Figure 4.26: (from left) an accordion, a *gong*, two Malay *rebana* and a violin.

(Picture taken by author, with permission of *Baba Thien*, 2018)

In the past, the Peranakan families indulged in listening to music from 78 rpm vinyls on their gramophone machines (Wee, 2009). The antique gramophone player is

by His Master's Voice, a popular band. They would listen to music of all kinds such as *dondang sayang*, Western big band music and even the Chinese opera (see Fig. 4.27).



Figure 4.27: The gramophone player. (Picture taken by author with permission of Ong, 2018)

Wee (2009) mentioned Peranakan Chinese music was an important part of the Peranakan lifestyle. Traditional music like *serunee* music was mostly used for the wedding ceremony accompaniment by *gong*, *serunee*, and a *tambo*. As the Peranakans began embracing European culture, the Peranakan Chinese also began to learn how to play the Western musical instruments like accordion, which was also an important instrument used to accompany the *dondang sayang* music. Thus, the instruments that are still employed to date are the violin, *gong*, *seronee*, Malay *rebana*, a *tetawak*, and accordion. Siah (2020) mentioned that cultural inheritance should be enlightened at an early age. He believes that guiding the young learners at an early age will lead to better

understanding and appreciation of the values and origins of the *baba nyonya*'s music, including raising their awareness and interest. Figure 4.28 is a picture of the Peranakan Chinese musicians, Siah and Ang and their effort in introducing the Peranakan Chinese music and instruments to a group of young children.



Figure 4.28: A group of young Peranakan learned to play the Peranakan Chinese music instruments. (Picture taken from Siah's Facebook, with permission of Siah, 2020)

4.5 Changes to the Peranakan Chinese Music in Melaka

In Melaka, the most popular Peranakan Chinese music performances included the *dondang sayang*, *keroncong* music and the *joget*. There have been some changes which were influenced by the pop and Western music. The changes included new instrumentation applied to current performances and variations of the themes in the music.

4.5.1 The changes of *dondang sayang* in Melaka

In the past, *dondang sayang* was a popular form of Malaccan courtly pastime and entertainment. It was then practiced by the common people and they performed this singing and dancing activity during events and traditional festivals. In the 19th century, after Melaka came under British rule, *dondang sayang* gradually transmitted to straits of Singapore, Penang, and to other parts of Malaya (Ho, 2015).

The *dondang sayang* was composed for the purposes of singing *pantun*, and this gave the *babas* the opportunity of expressing their feelings in an even more inspiring way (Chia, 2015). In the performance of *dondang sayang*, the style of performance included the exchange of verses such as compliment for compliment, humour for humour, romance for romance and even insult for insult between the singers were often made in the authentic form.

Mandulara (2004) mentioned the Peranakan Chinese in Melaka were the second of the community to perform the *dondang sayang* which is a famous musical after the Malay community. Some of the differences between *dondang sayang* performed in Peranakan Chinese music when compared with *dondang sayang* performed in Malay musical form are about the spoken language of the *pantun* and the performance style of the *pantun* in the singing of *dondang sayang*. The authenticity of the musical ensemble was the same as the *dondang sayang* in Malay form which played by violin, *rebana* drums and knobbed *gong*.

Ang (2020) mentioned most of the Peranakan Chinese music was passed down thru his late grandmother who had played the piano by ear. It was influenced him when playing the music of *dondang sayang* by listening in nowadays. He mentioned that most of the Peranakan musicians used the chords on keyboard and guitar instead which

different with the authentic instruments. He pointed out that the musicians must know how to sing the Peranakan Chinese music songs before use the instruments to play the chord.

As mentioned in Chapter 1 about the introduction of Peranakan Chinese music, Ho (2015) had pointed out that *dondang sayang* singers are accompanied by a small band of musicians. The instruments commonly accompanied the singing are the violin, *rebana*, and *gong*. Nowadays, due to the influence of Western music, involvement of Western instruments like that of the accordion, flute and tambourine becomes the norm.

In Melaka, the Malay groups of *dondang sayang* also used addition instruments like an accordion and tambourine in their performance. One of the famous *dondang sayang* singers in Melaka was Nyonya Tan Abdullah, a *dondang sayang* enthusiast of Peranakan descent who always sung the *dondang sayang* with Malay groups in Melaka (Nor'aini, personal communication, 2018).

One of the important key figures in sustaining the *dondang sayang* performance in modern Melaka was Nyonya Tan. Tan has over forty years of experience in *dondang sayang* with three recorded albums. Her performing experiences included local and abroad, including the events organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris, as a promotional campaign of the declaration of Melaka as one of the World Heritage Cities. On the 10th of May 2012, she won her many honours with her struggle for art and culture and she also earned the title of National Heritage Living Icon. She also had received the awards with the winner of *Pesta Dendang Rakyat 1976*, *Pingat Bakti Masyarakat (P.B.M)*, *Bintang Khidmat Terpuji (B.K.T)*, *Pingat Jasa Kebaktian (P.J.K)*, Melaka Cultural Icon and Artists of All Time Award in *Dondang Sayang* in 2006 by the Singers, Musicians and Composers Association of Malaysia (Papita). Unfortunately, Nyonya Tan passed away at 62 years

of age in the early morning on the 17th of August 2012 after struggling with her illness. *Nyonya* Tan was dedicated to retaining the *dondang sayang* national heritage. Her performances were loved by the community and this has been a monumental loss for the National Heritage Department (The Star, 2012).

The authentic form of *dondang sayang* was recorded and analysed by Matusky and Tan (2004). The authors mentioned that new changes were made to the song with new instrumentation, similar to that of the *ronggeng* ensemble. Because of that, the *asli*, *inang* and *joget* tunes which are performed as interludes by the *dondang sayang* groups in Melaka have changed. Chia (2015) described that *babas* could spontaneously compose replies to verses with ease and confidence in the *dondang sayang*. Some of the *dondang sayang* groups among the Peranakan Chinese in Melaka were often at those occasions when the *ronggeng* (a Malay square dance) was much in demand at festivals gatherings. The performance of spontaneity in the play of *pantun* and singing by the *Babas* had always surprised the members of the *ronggeng* party.

Nor'aini (personal communication, 2018) mentioned that the *dondang sayang* performances are still active among the present Malay community as compared to the Peranakan Chinese in Melaka. She also pointed out that the JKKM Melaka are still making an effort to welcome the audience and foreign tourists to attend the musical performances which are organised by the government, one of which is about the performance of *dondang sayang*. The JKKM Melaka used to collaborate with Peranakan Chinese societies in Melaka to perform the *dondang sayang* during the festivals such as Chinese New Year, *Hari Raya Aidilfitri*, and the concert of *Kesenian Tradisional Negeri Melaka*. This led to a new form of the tradition called *Dondang Sayang Mambo*, which was a hybrid musical style with Latin dance rhythm popular during the 1950s.

There are some differences between the performance of *Dondang Sayang Mambo* and the original tradition of *dondang sayang*. The *Dondang Sayang Mambo* is a more high-energy, Cuban-style dance with a catchy rhythm and the music is combined with the origins tradition of *dondang sayang* which attracted more people to enjoy the performance when compared with the original tradition. Another difference between the *Dondang Sayang Mambo* with the original is about the style of the performance. The authentic version of *dondang sayang* is sung in duet by a couple of singers with the authentic musical instrumentals in a moderately slow tempo, but the *Dondang Sayang Mambo* performance has an exaggerated motion of the hips, rock steps, side steps, kicks and flicks of the feet, also, the music is performed with the dance which has a sensual feel and an expressive touch by the singers and dancers. The dances of *Dondang Sayang Mambo* dance to a wide range of tempos with a 4/4 rhythm.

Live performances of *Dondang Sayang Mambo* were not encountered by the researcher, however, virtual fieldwork returned search results with recordings of past performances uploaded at YouTube. For example, a recording of the *Dondang Sayang Mambo* sung by Mohd Baharaim and Nona Othman from the Malay *dondang sayang* group who collaborated with the Peranakan Chinese to build up a performance during the Chinese New Year celebration on 24 February 2007 in Melaka was taken by Oklahlabu (2009). In the researcher's analysis, the tempo of the music was found to be much faster with a catchy opening rhythmic riff led by the piano that reflected that of the 1987 Mexican song *La Bamba*.

The authentic *dondang sayang* accompaniment employed violin, gong, Malay *rebana* (drums) and accordion. However, in the mambo version, the background music of the melody is produced by using the keyboard, synthesized strings, western drum set and electric guitar which took its influence from the Western mambo genre.

Performers included a group of dancers of Peranakan Chinese – *nyonyas*, Malay, Chinese, and Indian descent who performed the *Dondang Sayang Mambo* with singing and dancing together. Compared with the original tradition, the *Dondang Sayang Mambo* appeals more to the modern society due to the adaptation of a Western form, faster tempo and more catchy rhythm. Thus, the mambo version was favoured more by some during the formal and non-formal events such as the wedding ceremony and parties which were organized by different communities.

In addition, changes to the instrumentation of the *Dondang Sayang Mambo* can be viewed in recordings at YouTube such as the *Nada Sutra* group that performed the *Dondang Sayang Mambo* in Singapore, published on the 4th of October 2017, and the *Ghazal Warisan Seni Muar* group which performed the *Dondang Sayang Mambo* during a Malay wedding ceremony, published on the 14th of September 2016. The *Nada Sutra* group used the keyboard, electric guitar and a western drum set instead of using the authentic music instrumentation, but the *Ghazal Warisan Seni Muar* still maintain to use the authentic instrumentation during their performance.

4.5.2 The changes of *keroncong* music in Melaka

Matusky and Tan (2004) pointed out that in the 1920s, the *keroncong* was very popular among the *babas* in Penang and Melaka and that they had set up their own *keroncong* music group. In 1924, a book on *keroncong* music was printed by H.S.L. containing 16 pieces with notation for the melodies and chords for the guitar. The pieces published include *Stambul Satoe*, *Stambul Dua*, *Keroncong Meritzkey*, *Keroncong Pulau Jawa*, and *Keroncong Pandan* recorded by the 78 RPM recording company. The melodies were accompanied by chords played by the guitar and piano. The *keroncong* competitions took place in the entertainment parks in the cities of the Malay Peninsula.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, the instruments involved in the *keroncong* performance were accompanied by the ukulele or a small guitar. They believed that the name of *keroncong* is onomatopoeic and that it was originated from the sound 'krong, krong' similar to the ukulele. The violin, guitar and tambourine also added to the ensemble. During the 1930s, the formation of a new style and instrumentation was established in Indonesia and on the Malay Peninsula. The typical *keroncong* ensemble consisted of one or two singers where some musical instruments carried the melody and others played the rhythm parts (Matusky & Tan, 2017).

Marianne (2017) mentioned that the *keroncong* ensemble consists of an orchestra and a vocalist. A flute, violin, two ukuleles, cello, double bass and guitar are the orchestra's core musical instruments. The vocalist sings the melody with slow sustained notes often sung in vibrato style. Apart from this, the flute and violin was carried and ornament the melody; the three-string ukulele (*cuk*) emphasized the on-beat; the four string ukulele (*cak*) emphasized the off-beat; the double bass was played pizzicato and punctuated the melody. The cello played the rapid pizzicato, which adds rhythm and tone. Lastly, the guitar augmented the rhythm and played the melody.

Bonny (2015) mentioned that the *babas* in Melaka were musically influenced by their Malay, Javanese, Boyanese and Portugues Eurasian counterparts. There were some improvisations of the *dondang sayang* and the classical *keroncong* music was performed with the flavours of English songs, classical music, bosanova, jazz and modern music which also enticed them to hold stage as plays, dramas and perform dances like the waltz, fox trot, tango and cha-cha.

Peranakanlife (2011) recorded a group of *keroncong* musicians which stated bands such as The Melodians from PPCM Melaka had performed the *keroncong* music during the *Persatuan Peranakan Baba Nyonya Kuala Lumpur & Selangor* (PPBNKLS)

Joget Night 2011 and the *keroncong* performance on YouTube. In the video reviewed the singer *Nyonya* Emily Lim performed with the musicians group by Victor Yeo, the Melodians group leader and also the drummer, guitarist Daniel Ang, keyboardist Robert Seet and others musicians. The instruments used in the performance were slightly different than the authentic form and included Western drum, electric guitar, bass guitar, accordions, and keyboards. They used the keyboard to play sounds of the violin and flute instead of using instruments to play them as they were lacking the musicians to do so.

In Melaka, a *keroncong* band has made many efforts to record *keroncong* music into an album and promote it to the market. The name of the *keroncong* group is *Orkes Keroncong Malindo*, published by *Baba* Ong Sek Choo. There are a few famous selected *kroncong* songs from Malaysia which were performed and recorded by *Orkes Keroncong Malindo* in the album. The contents of the album contained *keroncong* music, *kroncong* songs and popular music. The instruments used for the album included the ukulele, flutes, guitar, violin, cello and double bass. The album was named *Keroncong Nyonya & Baba*.

The following are the contents of the album:

- *Nyonya dan baba* / Aminah Yaakop ; created by Baba Ong Cheng Hoe (4:38)
- *Ciptaan lama* / Noordin Yusof ; created by Budiman B.J. (5:20)
- *Saya kira* / Aminah Yaakop ; created by N.N. (4:29)
- *Senja di Kampung Pandan* / Noordin Yusof ; created by Sudar Majid (3:50)
- *Berjumpa diri* / Aminah Yaakop ; created by N.N. (4:33)
- *Indahnya Malaysia* / Noordin Yusof ; created by Sudar Majid (4:34)

- *Nasib diriku* / Aminah Yaakop ; created by Baba Ong Cheng Hoe (4:48)
- *Menanti janji* / Noordin Yusof ; created by Noordin Yusof (3:50)
- *Jangan duka* / Aminah Yaakop ; created by Budiman B.J. (4:37)
- *Saputangan yang putih* / Noordin Yusof ; created by Baba Tan Eng Ann (5:05).

The standard *keroncong* instrumentation was documented but due to cultural influences, these instruments may be replaced by other music instruments. As an example, the banjo could be replaced by a mandolin, or to add another ukulele to the band. In addition, the melodic line can also be played by alternative instruments like that of the accordion. Instruments such as the trumpet, clarinet, piano and double bass on the other hand, were employed in big bands for jazz and swing music. The genres are called ‘rumba *keroncong*’, ‘slowfox’ and ‘tango *keroncong*’ and these were popular from the 1940s and 1950s. Nowadays, the synthesizer was used to play parts of the violin, double bass, cak and cuk by using sound samples (Matusky & Tan, 2004).

4.6 Efforts of the Social Media to Introduce, Promote and Sustain the Peranakan Chinese Music in Melaka

The development of social media has an intimate relationship with the culture of today. Social media plays a major role in our daily lives, one being an increased connection between people in an environment which we share our opinions, pictures and more. It has improved the creativity and social awareness of society by allowing frequent interactions with one another while enhancing the ease of sharing new ideas and opinions.

Social media regularly influences the public via television, newspaper, magazine, internet and other ways of communication which are becoming an essential

part of today's social life. Online efforts made by television programmes, web pages, blogs and articles have introduced, promoted and sustained the Peranakan Chinese Music in Melaka.

4.6.1 The Cultural Television Programme of *Baba* and *Nyonya* in Melaka

This television programme was produced by the Yellow Pictures which was an international film and television Production Company who were led by the founder cum director Wong Kew Lit, the co-founder, Chan Shiau Wei, who is also the senior producer, and the co-founder and chief editor Wee Pei Jun, as well as the support from a team of enthusiastic young people. This television program was hosted by the folklorist Li Yong Qiu to explore the evolution of the Peranakan Chinese culture in Melaka.

| 56 12 37 765 | 35 2 1.2 35 | 26 53 232 2 | 3 5 25 562 |

| 1 . 6 5 3235 ||: 2 - 265 35 | 265 3235 2.3 1.2 | 3 . 2 5 6765 |

| 35 61 2.3 65 | 1 . 6 1 23 | 1 3235 2.1 6176 | 5 5 55 6.76 |

| 5 65 5 3235 | 2 - - 3 | 1 3235 21 6176 | 5 5279 7.2 6.72 |

| 5.6 72 7. 65 | 3 - 56 53 | 2 1.2 35 26 | 5 - 6.7 65 |

| 35 61 2.3 65 | 1 6156 161 23 | 123 6765 1 6765 | 3 . 5 25 572 |

| 1 . 6 5 3235 :|| 123 1265 1 7 | 7 65 35 2 ||

Figure 4.29: Music scores for *Seronee*. (Transcription by Author, 2019)

According to the television program, “The Cultural of *Baba* and *Nyonya* in Melaka” (马六甲峇峇娘惹民俗文化) the host of the programme introduced the culture

of Peranakan Chinese in Melaka such as the lifestyle, heritage of *nyonya* cuisine, Chinese New Year's traditional etiquette, wedding ceremony and the cultural music. The television programme played on the channel of Astro AEC (301 and 306) on the 9th of April 2017, 9:00pm. *Baba* Thien cooperated with the team of the programme to introduce a group of Peranakans musicians, a small ensemble of four who played the Chinese clarinet (Seronee Besair), small pair of cymbals, hand-held Chinese flat drum, and a Javanese gong. Siah (2020) mentioned that he used a music score to perform the Peranakan Chinese music (see Fig. 4.29), but most of the time, he will play by memory.

4.6.2 Efforts by Local Press

An effort was made by the local press to sustain and promote Peranakan Chinese music. In 2018, an article was published on the 30th of December by The New Straits Times. In the article, the author Alan Teh Leam Seng (2018) lent his effort in documenting *dondang sayang* to the public. The author expressed that interest in *dondang sayang* led to a collection of documentations on the musical culture. This includes newspaper articles, photographs and book related to the tradition practiced by the Straits Chinese communities in Malaya and Singapore. During the press interview, the author clearly introduced the origin of the love ballad, explaining the meaning of the Malay words *dondang sayang* and the function of the songs in the community. Teh also explained further about the moral values of tolerance and compassion attached to the singing culture of *dondang sayang*.

Besides, Teh (2018) explained the meaning of the *pantun* in *dondang sayang*. *Pantun*, a Malay poetic form, is based on a chosen topic, where the call and answer between singers can be taken as a form of light hearted competition based on the Malay *pantun*. He explained that the contents in *dondang sayang* encourages the community to focus on good behaviors and caring attitude, and quite often nature elements were

included too, for example, appreciation towards flowers, fruits or the sea. Musical elements such as the instrumentation were also explained.

The beating of the *rebana* alternates with the *gong* to coordinate rhythm as well as highlight points made by the opposing sides during the vocal tussle. The author also pointed out the changes of the musical instruments which are sometimes accompanied by guitars, accordions, western drums, tambourines and flutes. As the vestiges of Portuguese influence in this part of the world, there were a mixture of Eastern and Western instruments which point to an archaic cosmopolitan musical form.

Teh (2018) made an effort to explain the role in the social gatherings and the melting pot of cultures of *dondang sayang*. The author had mentioned *dondang sayang* was not only confined to the Malays and Peranakan Chinese as the recital of this beautiful melodious poetry, but is also enjoyed by the Chitty Peranakans and Portugese communities in Melaka, but differs in the language used during the *pantun* singing or recitation.

The club members travel around the city in gaily decorated buses to serenade the people with evergreen favourites like *Chap Goh*, *Chap Lak* and *Burung Kakatua* during the *Chap Goh Meh* as known the 15th day of the Lunar New Year. The Peranakan use three main languages which are Malay, Mandarin and English to sing the songs and sometimes incorporate the dialects of Hokkiean and Cantonese. This was a beautiful change of the *dondang sayang* performance today.

Similar to data gathered from the informants in this study, Teh also explained musical changes in *dondang sayang* with mention of the popular *dondang sayang mambo* in the 1950s. In the 1970s, due to Western influences, the tradition adapted to modern styles. He explained that although the younger generation's interest began to

wane in the traditional art form including *dondang sayang*, it still managed to survive to the 21st century and many private and public figures made selfless efforts to develop and sustain the culturally rich tradition of the present-day.

On the 29th of November 2018, *dondang sayang* gained recognition from the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003 gave a recognition to *dondang sayang* while efforts of the community to list *dondang sayang* in the UNESCO aided in an official preservation and protection of the identities of the art form which enhance, promote and elevate their level not only for Malay but also for the Peranakan Chinese as well as gaining popularity among the locals and foreign tourists (Teh, *Ibid*).

4.6.3 The efforts of the current Peranakan Chinese Band – The Melodians

The Melodians are the most active Peranakan Chinese band of current who are also the *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka*'s own house band. The Melodians always perform for the weddings, birthday parties, Chinese New Year celebration. Their gig performances include private functions, reunion gathering, and they had weekly singing sessions with the public at the *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka* (PPCM) town house located at Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock. The group is led by Victor Yeo, a drummer of the band. They are a few musicians maintaining the efforts by playing in the group, the piano and keyboardist Robert Seet, the guitarist Daniel Ang, Zakariah Hashim and Manap Bujang, and Eddie Ong as the keyboardist and vocalist. Their performance includes basking at local fanfare while the Peranakan community continued to enjoy their music.

Percy (2012) introduced the bands of 'Nightingales of Malacca' and 'Chaya Bulan Radio Minstrels' which were the two most popular bands on call comprised of *Baba Yeo Kuan Jin* and family members and relatives. The bands often played and sang the popular songs broadcasted by the radios and thus repertoire included local and Western songs. They also performed *dondang sayang* classics made popular by past artists such as Hamzah Dolmat. Started in the 1960s, *Baba Yeo Kuan Jin* (Victor Yeo's father) who was a reputed crooner and regular nightclub musician who continued the tradition by setting up 'The Melodians'.

Following the passing of *Baba Yeo Kuan Jin* in 1996, Victor Yeo donated all the band instruments, music scores and records to the *Persatuan Peranakan Cina Melaka* as a way of documentation and preservation of past musical tradition. These days, Victor is still very much experienced in the performance and often organised jamming sessions to continue the tradition, as a continuity to 'The Melodians'(Percy, 2012).

Victor (personal communication, 2018) pointed out the current problem of sustaining Peranakan Chinese music is due to a difficulty in gathering musicians to learn and practice Peranakan Chinese music. He mentioned in the personal communication that an attempt was made in training a group of younger generation musicians, who were between twenty and thirty years of age, to play Peranakan Chinese music for two to three months but the group ended their training early to study overseas. He also mentioned the young generations Peranakan were interested in learning Peranakan Chinese music at the time of the practice sessions before they left to study. The young generations in Melaka are more difficult to train in comparison to the young generations who live in Singapore, this is because the Peranakan Chinese community in Singapore puts a lot of effort into training the younger generations and building up their interest to learn the authentic Peranakan Chinese music. There are another two groups

of Peranakan Chinese who are still active in Melaka, the Mellows (a Eurasian group) and the Sweet Memories lead by Eddie Ong, these two groups played the Peranakan song and *joget*. Peranakan music once functioned as a musical accompaniment and practice during wedding and funeral.

The Melodians performed Peranakan songs such as *Ole – ole Bandung*, *Di Tanjung Katong*, *Jit-Jit Semut* and more during the wedding (see Fig. 4.30), PPCM's anniversary dinner and others events. The musicians also played some pop, Western country, and Chinese folk song which were requested by the hosts. Victor (personal communication, 2018) mentioned that they cannot only play Peranakan music for the entire performance because peoples are no longer familiar with it. Rather, they tried to perform few of the repertoires of Peranakan Chinese music and added some western and Asian pop songs to attract the crowd. For the costumes, the wedding singer wore a fancy dress and the musicians wore the *batik* (a traditional textile originating from the island of Java, now popular in Malaysia) and Chinese Tang suit.



Figure 4.30: The Melodians performed in the wedding dinner. (Picture taken by author, 2018)

The social dancing of *joget* is another cultural identity among the Peranakan Chinese. Most of the *baba* and *nyonya* will dance after a meal or function until midnight. There are some comparisons of current Peranakan Chinese dance with the dance party in the earlier period which shows the Peranakan Chinese dress codes had changed over the time. In previous, the *nyonyas* wore a fancy dress to dance due to the influence of western culture but now the Peranakan *nyonyas* wear the elegant *sarong kebayas* (see Fig. 4.31), and the *babas* were the *batik*, Chinese Tang suit, plain shirts etc to dance. The Peranakan Chinese like to dance the *joget* in the form Chachas, rumbas, foxtorots, waltzes, and other ballroom forms which are currently most popular among the community.



Figure 4.31: Wedding dinner with dance party. (Picture taken by author, 2018)

4.7 Summary

The data collection in this study provided an analysis of the efforts of sustaining and the limitations faced by the associations and non-associations of Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka, while possibly providing an opening for insight regarding the present-

day issues of Peranakan Chinese. The finding has most of its parts descriptive; it creates a need for explanatory researches in this field in the future. According to the data collection, a lot of the associations and non-associations had tried to enhance the culture of Peranakan Chinese music by introducing the music in different ways such as changes to the instrumental of *dondang sayang* and *keroncong*, the traditional musical performance for weddings and praying, the *nyonya's* dance, corporate function, and anniversary dinner.

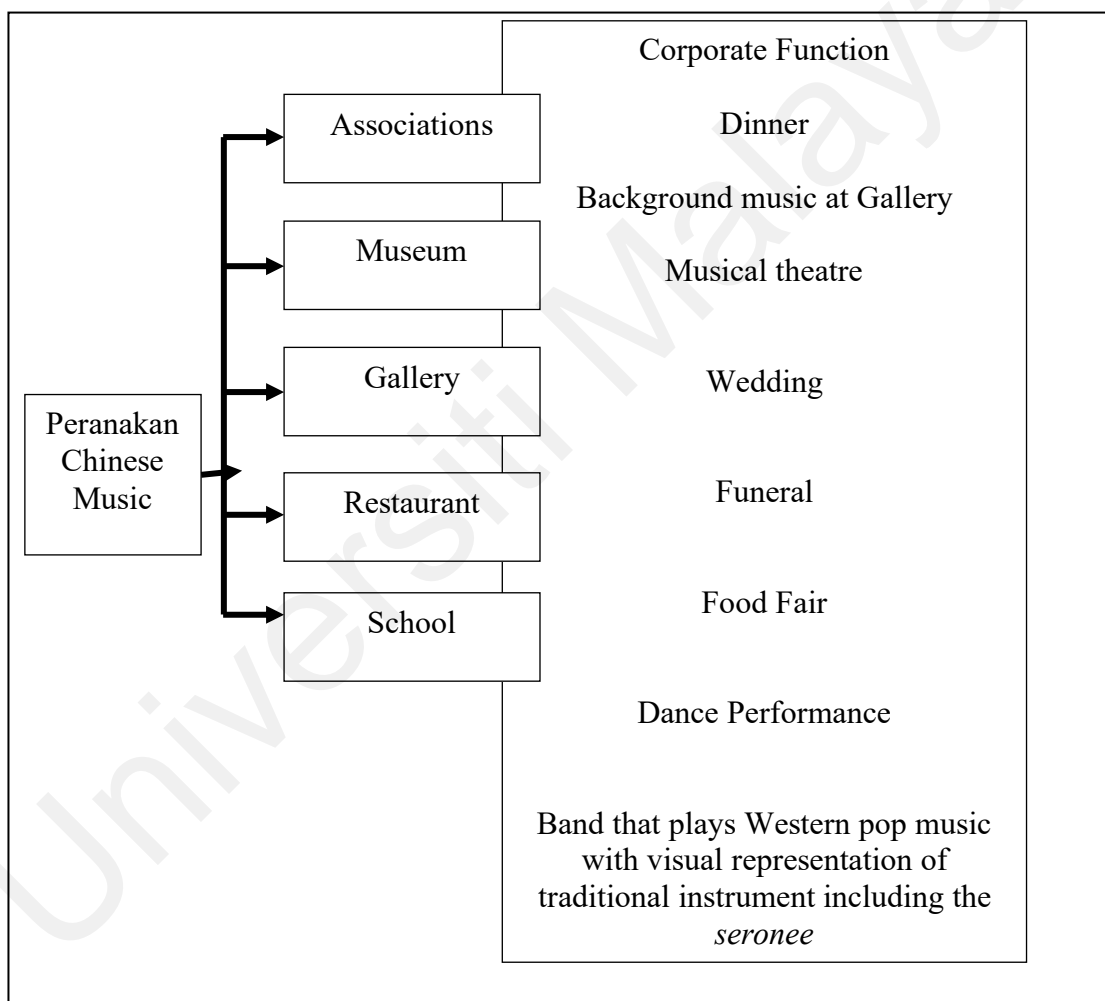


Figure 4.32: New functions of Peranakan Chinese music

Peranakan communities in Melaka still make a lot of efforts in the present-day to sustain and enhance Peranakan Chinese music despite facing difficulties such as a lack of interest among the younger generation, lack of Peranakan musicians to play the

authentic music, and the influence of other genres which have caused a decline of Peranakan Chinese music. The following diagram (see Fig. 4.32) shows the various efforts carried out by the associations in promoting and sustaining the musical tradition of the Peranakan Chinese in Melaka, which transformed the functions of Peranakan Chinese music that differ from its authentic version.

Universiti Malaya

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a summary of findings, suggestions for future research and conclusion of this study were pointed out. The chapter evaluated all of the literature review, methodology of research and data collection of this study. The chapter also suggested some ideas to future researchers who can further the topic of sustaining the Peranakan Chinese music.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The literature review of this study gave a lot of information and knowledge about the history of Peranakan Chinese, history of Peranakan Chinese music, and the introduction of Peranakan Chinese music in Malaysia and overseas. Through the literature review, the scholars, writers and authors made many efforts in noting their findings and shared them with the public. All the information and knowledge were used as references to analyse the issues of Peranakan Chinese music in this study. Some of the literature review helped to learn about the Peranakan Chinese music traditions and musical lifestyle of the early 15th century. From the literature reviews, the writers mentioned a lot of the history regarding the role of the Peranakan Chinese music among the Peranakan community. Besides, some of the writers explained about the theoretical music and analysed the Peranakan Chinese music such as *dondang sayang* and *keroncong* which are popular music genres among the Peranakan Chinese community. The information from literature reviews also helped to compare the previous and current issues faced by the organization and association of the Peranakan in Melaka. Although

many studies have explained the history of Peranakan Chinese music, there was lack of information regarding the sustainability of Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka.

In this study, a qualitative research was chosen which was used to provide a detailed description and analysis on how the communities of Peranakan Chinese in Melaka are sustaining their musical culture by looking into the problems faced in the transmission, issues of sustainability and the efforts to introduce the Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka. The qualitative research methods employed were suitable in which data were collected through ethnographic fieldwork, non-participant and semi-structured interview. Fieldwork research was the primary methodology used to survey and observe the associations and non-associations of Peranakan Chinese in Melaka who were still active at the time. This methodology was found to be effective and offered the researcher an ease in gathering data and information about the study during the fieldwork. The fieldwork research was beneficial to the researcher in obtaining detailed data and emphasizing the role and relevance of the social context of the Peranakan Chinese in Melaka. All the informants uncovered the social facts such as the problems facing in sustaining Peranakan Chinese music and how the musical culture is surviving the current issues. This helped the researcher analyse the various types of data by interview, observation and taking notes.

Unfortunately, the researcher was unable to interview the association of *Badan Kesenian Babah Nyonyah Melaka* (Bukit Rambai) due to the president being sick and a lack of members who could provide valid data in this study. The *Badan Kesenian Babah Nyonyah Melaka* is an active association in Melaka which are famous for the dance performance of *joget*. Most of the memberships consist of elderly *baba* and *nyonya* but some of the members are no longer active. During the semi structured interview, informants had provided the information of their management, group development, musical practices, problems faced in the transmission, issues of

sustainability, efforts in sustaining and the changes to the Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka. This method employed was adequate for the study because informants were free to express their personal opinions in accordance with the research questions asked. All data given by the informants was based on their experience in sustaining the Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka.

The data collection focused on the current problems faced in the decline of Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka. The data was collected by observation, video recording, and semi-structured and personal communications. Based on the data collected, it was shown that even though the associations and non-associations had faced the same problems in which the young generation of *baba* and *nyonya* were not interested in learning and sustaining Peranakan Chinese music, the members of the groups put a lot of effort into promoting such and have collaborated with the government to introduce Peranakan Chinese music. The researcher used this data to examine the efforts of the organisations, associations and non-associations where the programmes aimed at sustaining Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka, such as the history of the groups, the exhibition of the Peranakan culture, events, social functions, musical practices, and the wedding and festival ceremonies.

Furthermore, the researcher had investigated the efforts in sustaining the Peranakan Chinese music among the organisations and associations in Melaka as a continuation of past studies by ethnomusicologist Sarkissian (2012). Both studies focused on the efforts in sustaining the Peranakan Chinese music among the selected organisations and associations in Melaka. The data collection showed that the community of Peranakan in Melaka kept developing Peranakan Chinese music by adding new instruments, changing the music when compare with its authentic form, creating bands to play Peranakan Chinese music and inherited its authentic form for weddings, prayer and funeral ceremonies. Sarkissian (2012) mentioned several Chinese-

speaking and Eurasian professional musicians who play or have played in funeral bands in Melaka. Through the duration of this study, the researcher had no chance to obtain recordings of or information about the funeral bands. This study also covered the changes of *dondang sayang* which were made by the community in attempt of sustaining Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka. Nowadays, *dondang sayang* performances are seldom played among the Peranakan Chinese compared to the *joget* performances which are most active and always organised after the events, social functions, and weddings. Sarkissian (2012) in her study explained that many groups were formed and patronaged by wealthy *Babas* included Malay, Eurasian, and later Chinese musicians who played together on the basis of shared musical interests which provided a space for each community to keep these traditions alive. A rich collection of data helped the researcher analyse the efforts of sustaining, promoting and developing the Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka.

5.3 Suggestions for Future Research

According to the literature reviews and data collection of this study, the efforts in sustaining Peranakan Chinese music in Singapore have been more successful when compared with the organisations in Melaka. In Singapore, there are many groups like The Peranakan Association Singapore (TPAS) and Gunong Sayang Association (GSA) which are developing Peranakan Chinese music by recording Peranakan Chinese music albums, hosting annual concerts, choir competitions, conferences, music classes, Peranakan musical theatrical performances and the like. These members consist of a mix between young and old, some of which are retired elders who still make an effort to promote and retain the special identity of Peranakan Chinese music. These efforts made afforded the opportunity to build up an interest in the younger generation to learn about the authentic musical form. Some of the Singapore Peranakan groups of younger generations who performed an ensemble of instrumental Peranakan Chinese music.

Therefore, findings in this study reveal the situation in a Malaysian context, by providing new knowledge in the sustainability of Peranakan Chinese music. This information will help future researchers to compare the different ways of sustaining Peranakan Chinese music and serve as a reference to develop and keep the Peranakan culture alive.

5.4 Conclusion

As a final conclusion, the efforts in sustaining the Peranakan Chinese Music in Melaka were documented. According to the data collected, the analysis shows Peranakan Chinese musical changes are due to many issues among the communities of Peranakan Chinese in Melaka. Findings lead to the question of how long the intangible heritage will survive when continual changes are taking place throughout the course of sustaining Peranakan Chinese music in Melaka, and making them more homogenous and adaptable to current taste than their unique authentic form. Thus, I hope this research may provide a significant source of reference to the government body, ethnomusicologists, and local bodies in future.

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