

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

Fundamentally, the basic aim of doing research is to discover, develop and to learn the truth about certain phenomenon or sciences using systematic and controlled methods. Hence, it is not just trying to ‘find out’ about something we can easily grasp or in other words easily obtainable.¹ Thus, it is the urgency to search or seek out the truth about knowledge whereby the results found will be used to answer some phenomenon or questions. And before those answers can be found, one must strive in search for it, if he really longs for the truth.

¹Bambang Sunggono, *Metodologi Penelitian Hukum* (Jakarta: PT Rajagrafindo Persada, 2009), 27

In applying whatever research methods, one has to do it objectively. This means that all observations and thereon the conclusion arrived upon by the researcher must not be based on subjectivity of personal opinion and influence of others who claim their own interest in it. The research product must not also be contaminated by the researcher's personal subjectivity or opinion and that of external pressures or factors.²

A. Research Location

The location where this research is based on is in Singapore. Being quite a fairly small country of about 697 km² in land mass, the present Malay community is dispersed throughout the island comprising of north, east, south and west of Singapore.

The majority of Malays in Singapore are Sunni Muslims belonging to the Shāfi'ī (شافعي) school of thought. A small Christian community also exists among the Malays, including Malays with mixed European blood. However, the government has strongly discouraged the publication of the Christian Bible in Malay, and strongly discourages missionaries from attempts to convert the local Malay populace. This was done so as not to cause racial and religious tensions in the predominantly Muslim community. There is also a small Buddhist community, mostly consisting of Malays with mixed Chinese ancestry.³

The majority of Malays in Singapore generally share a similar culture with those in Peninsula Malaysia. Linguistically, most Malays in

²Dr Saifuffin Azwar, *Metode Penelitian* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1998), 3

³Malays in Singapore, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malays_in_Singapore, accessed on 4/1/2012

Singapore speak the Johore-Riau variant of Malay that is similar to that spoken in the southern part of West Malaysian peninsular and the Riau Islands of Indonesia (Batam and Bintan) but further than those spoken in the northern part of West Malaysia, East Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia. Some of the older generation who migrated here or whose parents were immigrants can speak Javanese. However, most of the Malays here do not speak the language of their ancestors from Indonesia. English is also widely spoken. Arabic is more common among the Muslim religious teachers and is the preferred language learnt by the more religious Malay Muslims.⁴

The prime location where this research was done is formally called Tampines. Tampines (or Tampines New Town) is the largest residential area in the city-state of Singapore, it is the second largest commercial hub outside the city-state of Singapore after the Jurong Lake District and also will be a future logistics hub of the city-state of Singapore. It is located in the East Region of the main island. The town is so named because in the 1900's a large forest of Tampines trees were there. As of 2011, Tampines is now regarded as a high-end estate with apartments costing above average market value.⁵

Like other districts in Singapore, it is a densely populated district with the population density higher than other housing districts. Tampines New Town is a regional centre that lies in the east of Singapore's city centre, much alike to the centrally located Orchard Road (central district of Singapore or better known as Downtown Singapore).

⁴*Ibid*

⁵Tampines, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tampines>, accessed on 4/1/2012

The new town started in 1978. Construction began for neighbourhoods 1 and 2 and was completed between 1983 and 1987 although it was given the priority. Neighbourhoods 8 and 9 started in 1985 - 1989, followed by neighbourhood 5 which was completed in 1989 together with the Tampines Town Centre. Neighbourhood 4 was completed with the new Tampines North Division. Neighbourhoods 3 and 7 was only later completed, with full completion in 1997.

New construction methods expedited the development of the town's infrastructure. Using prefabricated parts, a block of high-rise flats could be built in a month. More attractive designs, colours and finishings were also incorporated into Tampines, compared to earlier public housing which consisted of uniform slabs of concrete laid out row after row with more thought given to function than form. The Housing and Development Board⁶ (HDB) managed the construction of the town until 1991, when it handed the reins over to the Tampines Town Council. The Town Council is run by grassroots' leaders and the residents themselves. The Building and Social Housing Foundation (BSHF) of the United Nations awarded the World Habitat Award to Tampines, which was selected as a representative of Singapore's new towns, on 5 October 1992. The award was given in recognition of an outstanding contribution towards human settlement and development.⁷

⁶The Housing & Development Board (HDB) is Singapore's public housing authority and a statutory board under the Ministry of National Development. HDB plans and develops public housing towns that provide Singaporeans with quality homes and living environments. HDB engages in active research and development work to ensure that cost-effectiveness and quality standards are maintained and continually improved upon. HDB towns are provided with various commercial, recreational and social facilities and amenities for the convenience of residents.

⁷*Op.Cit*

The main reason for this location being targeted as a research location is because of its known reputation for being an area with dense Malay population and of their attitude towards religion. In other words, the general Malay community there seems to be ‘obedient’ practitioners of their faith (Islam) in terms of worship and obligatory matters, but at the same time diligently carrying out traditions customs which sometimes are still not clear, pertaining to its origin, inheritance and thus its permissibility issue.

1. Description of Location

Tampines New Town is a HDB new town located in eastern Singapore. Total land area is 12 km² which includes 5 km² of residential living area. It is bounded by the Tampines Expressway, Tampines Avenue 10, canal north of Bedok Reservoir, Upper Changi Road, Simei Avenue, north of private estate off Upper Changi Road, Simei Road, west of private estate off Upper Changi Road North, the Pan Island Expressway, and back along Tampines Expressway. For administrative purposes, it includes the boundaries of Simei New Town located south of Tampines New Town proper.⁸

In the past, Tampines was covered by forests, swamp and sand quarries. Ironwood trees, or *tempinis*, grew abundantly here and thus gave the area its name. Also it was part of military training area until about 1987.

The name Tampines goes back to the Franklin & Jackson map of 1828. It is named after *Sungei Tampenus*, which in turn got its name from the tampines trees (*Sloctia siderozylon*) which are said to be growing there. The oldest road in the area, Tampines Road, dates back to 1864, when it was a

⁸Tampines, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tampines>, accessed on 8/4/2012

cart tract. At the turn of the 20th century, Tampines was a rubber plantation. Among the plantations here were Teo Tek Ho estate and Hun Yeang estate.⁹

Construction of the town centre was fully completed in 1997 due to new construction methods which expedited the development of the town's infrastructure. Using prefabricated parts, a block of high-rise flats could be built in a month. The urban planning policy of Singapore is to create partially self-sufficient towns, in terms of commercial needs, in order to relieve strain on traffic drawn into the city centre. Thus, an array of facilities is provided primarily for residents in the new towns. Tampines is one of Singapore's three regional centres (along with Woodlands and Jurong East), under the plan of the Urban Redevelopment Authority. As a result, the Tampines Regional Centre not only serve the Tampines residents but also the entire East Region.

2. Transportation

A network of expressways, the Pan-Island Expressway and Tampines Expressway and arterial roads allows easy movement within the town and link it to other parts of the island. Public transportation is served by the Mass Rapid Transit at Tampines MRT Station, Tampines West MRT Station, Tampines East MRT Station and a Tampines Bus Interchange. Intra-town feeder/townlink bus services bring residents from the Town Centre (where the Tampines MRT station and Tampines bus interchange is located) to their doorsteps.¹⁰

⁹*Ibid*

¹⁰*Ibid*

Three more new MRT stations will be expected to be completed in the year 2017 to serve residents of Tampines and also to serve commuters who frequent the Tampines Regional Centre. The future Tampines West MRT Station will be located under Tampines Ave 4. It is in the neighbourhood of HDB Tampines Polyview and Tampines Palmspring and within easy reach of Junyuan Primary School and East View Primary School. The station is also within walking distance to the Temasek Polytechnic.

The future Tampines Station will be an interchange station with the East West MRT Line Tampines station. It is also next to the Tampines Bus Interchange creating a new transport hub in Tampines. It will provide commuters an alternative choice to meet their daily travel needs. It will serve commuters going to the office buildings and commercial buildings at the town centre, such as CPF Tampines Building, Tampines One, Tampines Mall and Century Square.¹¹

The future Tampines East MRT Station is situated conveniently for the residents of HDB estates in the vicinity and students of Tampines Junior College and Ngee Ann Secondary School.

3. Commercial Services

Retail shopping in the Tampines Regional Centre is done at three main shopping malls: Tampines Mall, Century Square and Tampines 1. Commercial tenants of the shopping centres include restaurants, supermarkets, department stores, cinemas, bookstores, jewelry and gift shops.

¹¹*Ibid*

The Tampines Regional Library is located near the Tampines town centre, and organises events for children and adults to promote reading and learning. Basically there's one library allocated for every constituency all over the country.

4. Population

Being a multi-racial society, Tampines comprises of the 4 major ethnic groups as described below:

Ethnic Group and Sex in Tampines for the year 2010¹²

Type	Chinese	Malay	Indians	Others	Total Residents
Total	173,677	57,584	21,411	9,071	261,743
Male	85,075	28,500	11,079	4,214	128,868
Females	88,602	29,084	10,332	4,857	132,875

As recorded in the latest population census, Malays in this area make up slightly more than one-fifth of the general population in Tampines and about one third of the Chinese population; which happens to be the majority ethnic group in Tampines and also the country as a whole. These divisions in percentages are quite similar in other residential areas due to the population quota set by the government and by no means it signifies that Malays or other races are marginalized or belittled in terms of rights and benefits.

¹²Department of Statistics, Singapore, <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/pubn/popn/c2010sr3.html>, accessed on 10/4/2012

Below is a table showing the types of dwellings in general that the population in Tampines are staying :

Types of Dwelling in Tampines for the year 2010¹³

Type	HDB Dwelling	Condominium & Private Flats	Landed Property	Others
1- & 2-room Flats	426	-	-	-
3-rooms	12,921	-	-	-
4-rooms	29,194	-	-	-
5-room & Executive Flats	22,957	-	-	-
Total	65,666	6,697	1,216	13

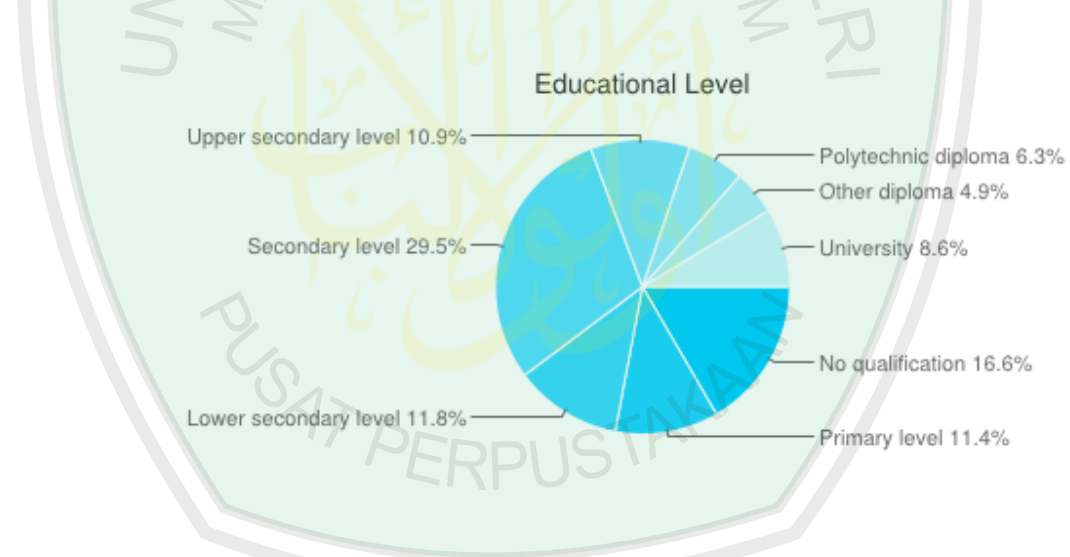
Total number of dwellings in this district is 73,591 units whereby, majority is staying in a 4-room HDB flat. This is because amongst the rest of other flat models, it is the most practical and affordable one, especially for medium sized family and newlyweds or those who are just starting families of their own. However, the HDB does allow rental of rooms or the whole unit but under strict conditions and regulations set out by the board. Another ruling by them is that at any one time a person can own one HDB flat only whereby under certain conditions, the flat owners can sell and buy another from the open market.

¹³*Ibid*

The key priority of HDB is the building of cohesive communities within its towns. Living environments are provided with community spaces for residents to mingle and interact. Public housing policies and schemes are formulated not only to meet changing needs and aspirations, but they also support national objectives such as maintaining racial harmony and stronger family ties, and focus on the needs of elderly and those who may be in financial difficulty. In addition, with its network of branch offices, HDB ensures that it is well integrated in the daily lives of the community it serves.¹⁴

5. Education

The level of education in Tampines is portrayed in the pie chart below.¹⁵



The pie chart is a representation of the total residents residing in Tampines which comprises Singapore citizens and permanent residents. The total census comes to 166 111 residents because it includes students who are not yet considered in the working force as yet.

¹⁴HDB Infoweb, <http://www.hdb.gov.sg/fi10/fi10320p.nsf/w/AboutUsOurRole?OpenDocument>, accessed on 12/4/2012

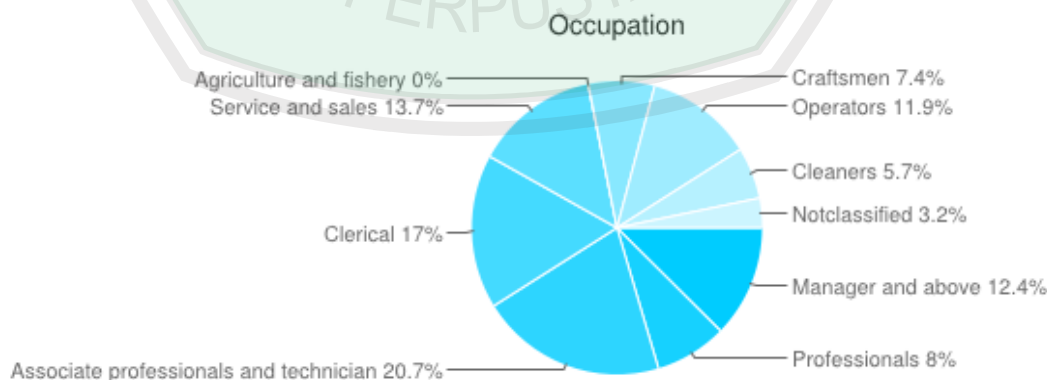
¹⁵Demographics, <http://analytics.shownearby.com/tampines-ave-singapore/1163667/demographics>, accessed on 21/4/2012

As it is shown here, the majority residents are of middle-class education (secondary level) and as for tertiary level, it only constitutes to about 8.6% of the total population. The percentage for no qualification makes up to 16.6% which mainly comprises of the older generation residents.

There are 12 primary schools, 9 secondary schools and three tertiary institutions (one Junior College, one Polytechnic and one Institute of Technical Education) which provide education for Tampines residents, as well as those living in the region.¹⁶ There are also plans to add new schools in Tampines due to a high demand for schools in the East Region of the city-state of Singapore.

6. Economy

In order to have a vivid picture of the economy status of Tampines, the data is represented by the following two pie charts, namely for occupation and industry. The different types of occupation is portrayed in the pie chart below.¹⁷

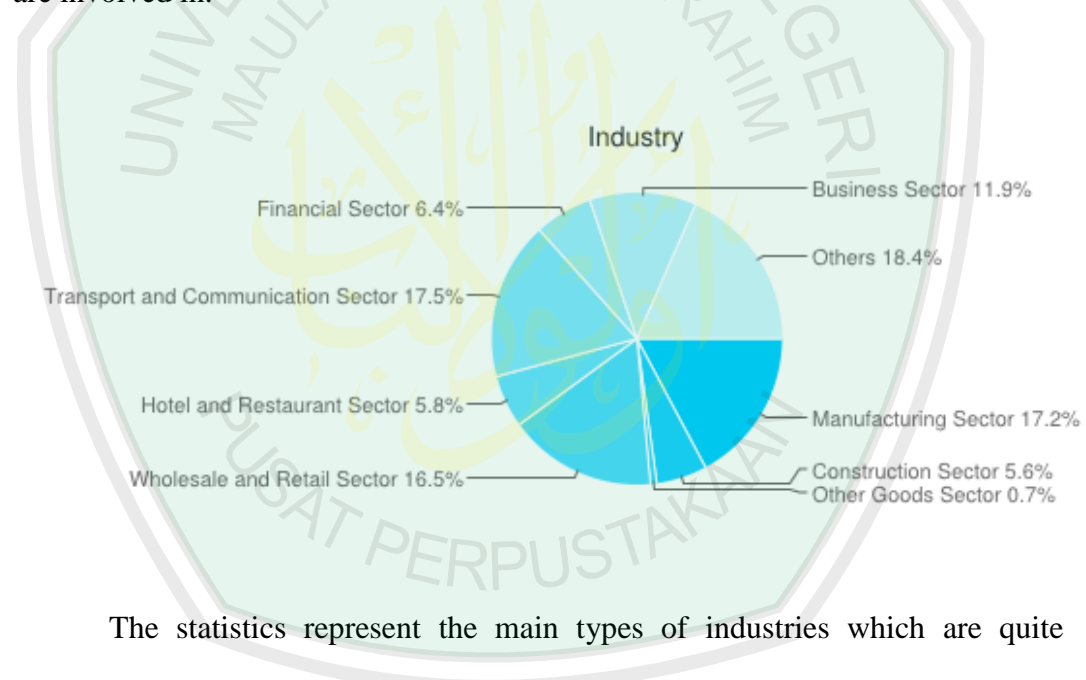


¹⁶Ibid

¹⁷Ibid

The total census for working class residents totals up to 110 216 residents whereby it comprises resident working persons aged 15 years and above. The country itself being a business and trading hub, is reflected by the types of occupation performed by its population. The majority population is involved in services, clerical, management and professional occupations and this is no different for Tampines. As for agriculture and fishery, it is considered to be irrelevant due to shortage of land.

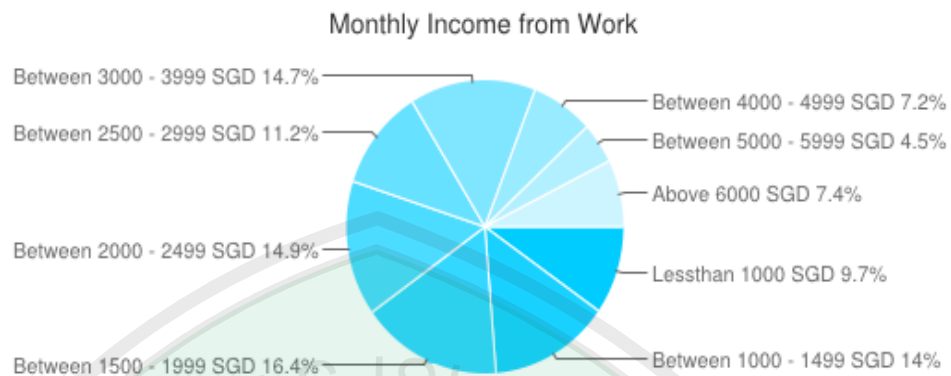
The pie chart shows the different types of industries which the residents are involved in.¹⁸



The statistics represent the main types of industries which are quite diversified, ranging from financial sector to the ones in construction and retail sectors, while others may include those in education sectors and as freelance agents or brokers working on commission based jobs. The total census is 110 216 residents of working persons aged 15 years and above.

The monthly income for residents is represented in the pie chart below.¹⁹

¹⁸*Ibid*



The above pie chart shows the general percentage of income earners per monthly basis for where the majority range falls in the window of between 1000 to 4000 SGD.

This reflects a healthy and stable economy in terms of livelihood for the residents because the said range of income enables them to buy a decent HBD flat or even a condominium and also the means to buy an automobile or a motorcycle. While those earning less than 1000 SGD are considered to be in the class of less than average income earners. The high flying earners of 4000 SGD and above normally comes from the business class or professionals and normally reside in private apartments or houses (landed property).

7. Religion

Majority of the Malays in Tampines are Muslims, either by descent or conversion (*muallaf*). Similarly to their fellow Muslims in Central Asia, the majority of local Muslims traditionally follow the mazhab of Syafi'i and the perspective of *Asy'ariyyah* teology.²⁰ This is mainly due the the migration of

¹⁹*Ibid*

²⁰Sejarah dan Perkembangan Islam di Singapura, <http://www.segenggam-harapan.com/2012/07/sejarah-dan-perkembangan-islam-di.html>, accessed on 19/5/2012

Malays (since early 19th century) from Jawa, Sumatra, Sulawesi, Riau, Bawean and also Muslims from continents like India and Arab especially *Hadrilmaut*, who basically follow the Syafi'i mazhab. The majority of local Malays are defined as such because they follow the methodologies set out by the Syafi'i school of thought in terms of their worship and Islamic related activities.

As Malay Muslims (*Melayu Islam*), they are obligated to follow the rulings and general directions set out by MUIS as the authority in Islamic matters not only for Tampines, but for the whole of Singapore.

The Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS), also known as the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, was established as a statutory body in 1968 when the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA) came into effect. Under AMLA, MUIS is to advise the President of Singapore on all matters relating to Islam in Singapore.²¹

The role of MUIS is to see that the many and varied interests of Singapore's Muslim community are looked after. In this regard MUIS is responsible for the promotion of religious, social, educational, economic and cultural activities in accordance with the principles and traditions of Islam as enshrined in the Holy Quran and Sunnah.

The principal functions of MUIS are as follows:

- a. Administration of zakat, wakaf (endowment), pilgrimage affairs, halal certification and da'wah activities;
- b. Construction and administration of mosques development and

²¹<http://www.zabihah.com/ad.php?id=21>, accessed on 24/4/2012

- management;
- c. Administration of Madrasah and Islamic education;
- d. Issuance of fatwas (religious rulings);
- e. Provision of financial relief to poor and needy Muslims;
- f. Provision of developmental grants to organisations.

For every constituency in Singapore there is only one big mosque to facilitate the needs of the Muslim community. For Tampines this happens to be Darul Ghufuran Mosque, situated in central Tampines. Also known as *Menara Biru* (Blue Minaret) among the Tampines residents. The Minaret stands at 10 stories high (130ft). It is Singapore's second largest mosque with a capacity to hold 4000 people and has a floor area of 4,063 sq metres.²²

Apart from the usual religious services offered like other mosques, Darul Ghufuran Mosque is also a certified Zakat centre, conferred by Singapore's Islamic authority, MUIS. The mosque also provides other services such as *Tahnik* for newborns and free legal consultation by a volunteer lawyer.²³

B. Research Design

As implied in the title "*Malay Wedding Culture and Traditions in Singapore*", this study is directed to the understanding of traditions and non-verbal symbols in a particular socio-cultural event. Thus this kind of research is viewed as descriptive in nature and being descriptive, the essence of it is to describe or explain about a particular phenomena in its raw and general form.

²²History, <http://www.darulghufuran.org/about/history/>, accessed on 2/5/2012

²³Daruh Ghufuran Mosque, <http://www.darulghufuran.org/about/services/>, accessed on 2/5/2012

In the process of understanding, descriptions play an important role in this study. The descriptions cover the procedures or protocols that are usually observed carefully in such an event and also include various symbolic things and acts in the said culturally organised ceremony. In light of all these, therefore the suitable design for this study is said to be that of a qualitative research where the substance of qualitative inquiry generally searches for ‘understanding’ and ‘meaning’ of a particular phenomena.

By doing so, it causes the actual reality to be understood as something subjective and yet proportional. The reality also becomes dynamic and yet not certain. Thus it becomes something that is not imminent and static. These special traits therefore depends on what is predicted from the related proportions.²⁴

1. Research Approach

The approach employed in this research is that of an empirical approach. Other than studying the basis of Islamic law that is from the Al-Quran, Al-Hadits and literature which is related to this topic of study, the author also conducted empirical or field research in order to find and consolidate data which serves as the basis of discussion and review.

By doing field research, it also involves the use of what is called the *grounded theory*. And the most important thing about *grounded theory* is the realization of a theory based on the empirical data acquired. In its relationship with culture or traditions, most likely new theories about the culture will be found based on actual data. It is this new found theory which seems rooted to the

²⁴Bambang Sunggono, *Metodologi Penelitian*, 18

related culture, because it originates from them and most probably will be of good use to them in the near future.²⁵

2. Data Source

The source of data originates from two main sources, that is of primary and secondary sources :

a. Primary Source

This kind of data comes from the original source that is the object of research, in this case the Malay wedding culture. Due to the quality of data which is in its raw and original form therefore it has not been processed by any party yet and mainly comes from sources like informants, respondents, experts in the related field and others. The important thing that one has to keep in mind is that, any amount of data or its manifestations that a researcher is about to consolidate and analyze thereon, has to be based on facts and not just findings or proof that is based on assumptions, guesses, stories, folktales and anything of the sort.²⁶

b. Secondary Source

Various literature relating to the research problem will be studied. This secondary source of data includes reference books, journals, newspapers, magazines, internet and documents related to the subject matter.

²⁵Suwardi Endraswara, *Metodologi Penelitian Kebudayaan* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 2006), 69

²⁶Bambang Sunggono, *Metodologi Penelitian*, 49

3. Data Consolidation Techniques

There are various known techniques in acquiring and consolidating data in field research. The main techniques that are employed in this study are as follows :

a. Observation

Actual wedding procession or procedures, as well as symbolic rituals or actions are observed and treated as data for research. Observations on wedding ceremonies are done over a stipulated period of time and in an exhaustive manner to maximise the data consolidation process. In the effort to consolidate research data, the writer has spent about one and a half month observing first-hand the actual processions involved in such ceremonies, spanning the whole research location. Information from observations collected were either written down or recorded by video, so as to consolidate as much details as possible. This was accomplished by observing wedding ceremonies at a few locations in Tampines area itself as Malay weddings are normally held on weekends.

b. Interview

Conducting interviews is amongst one of the most effective ways of acquiring data direct from the research object. In this case, open-guided interviews were implemented - that is, interviews that were conducted in a controlled or guided fashion by using a pre-planned questionnaire. Targeted persons that the researcher had interviewed over the said observation period, are notable individuals like Islamic scholars and professionals who are well-versed in the areas of Malay wedding culture

and traditions. Other targeted persons that the writer had the opportunity of interviewing are notable individuals from the community who are directly or indirectly related to the field of study, and also from organizations like MUIS, Perdaus and others alike. These interviews were carried out not only at the research location, but also at offices and residential premises to suit the convenience of the interviewees.

c. Documentation

Documents pertaining to Malay weddings may come from a variety of sources, such as reference books, journals, tabloids, newspapers and others. Historical facts and literature about the subject matter are also used as a basis of conceptualising theories. Documents have long since been used in many types of researches as a source of data because in many cases documents (as a source of data) is used significantly to examine or study, translate and even to sum up a prediction.²⁷

The researcher also had the opportunity to view old magazines, tabloids and photos of Malay weddings, from library archives and from interviewees' photo collections. These serve as documentary proof depicting the old customs and traditions practised during those old days of our forefathers.

4. Data Analysis Technique

Data accumulated over the period of field research are analyzed in a descriptive qualitative manner. This technique does not involve the analyzing of data in its numerical form or numbers, rather than an explanation and

²⁷Lexy J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif, Edisi Revisi* (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 1989), 217

manifestation of data acquired through verbal input from informants and interviewees in a structured and systematic manner.

The method of thinking involved here is inductive thinking. This is the deduction of general facts where it is processed hypothetically and streamlined into a viable conclusion. This method of thinking is used in qualitative research due to certain reasons:²⁸

1. Firstly, by inductive process, the consolidated facts (in its raw form) is realised more effectively from the data.
2. Secondly, by doing inductive analysis, the relationship between researcher and respondent becomes more explicit, recognisable and accountable.
3. Thirdly, this kind of analysis explains the basis (background of culture) fully and is able to make the decision more clearly, as to whether to focus on another basis or not.
4. Inductive analysis also professes the related influence which in turn sharpens the inter-relationship.
5. Lastly, such an analysis accounts for explicit values as it becomes part of the analysis structure.

²⁸Lexy J. Moleong, *Metodologi*, 10