

Avoiding Extinction, Safeguarding Culture: The Role of Sarawak Cultural Village in Preserving Melanau Music-culture

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Abstract: Sarawak, located on the island of Borneo, is Malaysia's biggest state and home to more than 20 ethnic groups who practice an array of diverse cultures, which includes the Melanau people. A minority group which represents about six percent of Sarawak's total population, the Melanau people are originally Animists who venerated the spirits of nature, which for a long time has influenced their way of life, including its music-culture. However, presently they are mostly Muslims and due to religious factors many of its culture are no longer being practiced. To prevent the Melanau music-culture from becoming extinct, the Sarawak Cultural Village (or famously known as the SCV) was then set up by the Sarawak government of which among its main objective is to expose the heritage of the various ethnic groups in Sarawak - including the Melanau - to both local and international tourists. The SCV is a living museum that not only showcases the traditional music and dance of the Melanau but also home to the only Melanau tall house that still exist today. Using ethnomusicological approach, this paper discusses how the SCV has contributed to the preservation of Melanau music-culture. In collecting the data participant observations were conducted and interviews were held with Melanau culture bearers who up to this day maintains close relationship with the SCV. The findings reveal that the SCV is a leading revival agent particularly in promoting Melanau tradition and heritage at both local and international levels.

1 INTRODUCTION

Malaysia consists of two almost similarly sized regions—Peninsular Malaysia and Malaysian Borneo, which are separated by the South China Sea. Sarawak, along with Sabah is located on Borneo Island. As the biggest state in Malaysia, Sarawak is home to more than 30 ethnic groups, which practice a variety of unique cultures, including the Melanau. The Melanau group is a minority that represents six percent of the Sarawak's total population of which traditionally, they were Animists who venerated the spirits of nature known as Ipok. Melanau cosmology (kepercayaan tradisi) was perhaps the most important influence on the people's way of life, including their musical arts.

However, presently, the great majority of the Melanau are Muslims, followed by the Christians. Religious issues have arguably caused the Melanau to neglect their culture, for, their traditional customs (adet) including its music-culture are strongly influenced by their ancestral beliefs. Adet that was once a pivotal tenet of their daily lives began to be

neglected. The music-culture that had been embedded into the adet slowly relinquished its vitality and viability, causing the present Melanau people to become almost completely oblivious of their musical tradition and heritage.

Indeed, Melanau music-culture is on the verge of extinction and like the music of many other minority ethnic groups around the world, may be categorised as endangered. Efforts were made to prevent this situation from worsening during which in 1990 the revitalization movement gained momentum when the Sarawak Cultural Village (Kampung Budaya Sarawak) came into existence. The Sarawak Cultural Village – or famously known as the SCV among the locals - is the only living museum in Sarawak, set up by the Sarawak Economic Development Cooperation (SEDC) with the objective to expose the heritage of the major ethnic groups in Sarawak to both local and international tourists.

Therefore, this paper will discuss how the SCV has become the leading revival agent particularly through the re-creation of Tarian Alu-Alu and pretap musical instrument. Participation observations and

interviews were conducted with Melanau cultural bearers, all of whom are also working closely with the SCV in the efforts to revitalize Melanau almost-disappearing musical heritage.

2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE MELANAU PEOPLE OF SARAWAK

2.1 Religion

Melanau mythological cosmology (kepercayaan tradisi) was perhaps the most important factor which influences the people's way of life. Traditionally, the Melanau were Animists who venerated the spirits of nature, which were known by various names, including ipok, ipuk, jin, tow, duhig or amnow, though the great majority of Melanau simply call them ipok or ipuk. The Animist Melanau, better known as Melanau Likou, believe that the world consists of three parts: the Upper World (likou bah au), the Middle World (likou dagen duan), and the Under World (likou bah dibak), with humans living in the Middle World. Each world (dunia) is guarded by benign (ipuk) and evil (ipok) spirits who live in different parts of the dunia, in places such as the sea, mountains, rocks, sky, forest and riverbanks. Humans must not upset them for fear of attracting misfortune (buwen), and therefore, the Melanau practice numerous taboos (palei) that must be strictly adhered to in many aspects of their daily lives (Jeniri 1988:173)

Presently, only about one per cent of the Melanau people are practising Animists. The majority of Melanau today are Sunni Muslims, though there are also a large number of Christians (Catholic and Sidang Injil Borneo). Sidang Injil Borneo, or simply the SIB as the locals call them, are 'the fruits of labour of the Borneo Evangelical Mission (BEM)'. Based on historical records, Islam was brought by Arab traders to the region as early as the 15th century. Its influence further expanded when the Sultanate of Brunei took control of Sarawak. During the mid-19th century, in the era of the White Rajahs, it is alleged that missionaries brought in the Christian religion. As a result of the domination of these two monotheistic religions, most Melanau gradually relinquished their animist beliefs.

2.2 Social Class: The Pangkat Pikul System

Historically, the Melanau had a social class system that was especially apparent in the practice of their adat, mainly during marriage and death ceremonies. Presently, some of these customs are still being practiced. The social ranking system among the Melanau people, is known as Pangkat Pikul. The Pangkat Pikul is headed by the Orang Sembilan Pikul (the Nine-Rank Noblemen), followed by the Orang Tujuh Pikul (the Seven-Rank Commoners), the Orang Tujuh Betirih (the Seven-Rank Freemen) and the Orang Empat Betirih or Dipen (the Four-Rank Servants), respectively. The Orang Sembilan Pikul practices a certain set of customs exclusive to their standing. For example, when there is a death among the Orang Sembilan Pikul, a group of musicians would play music on a set of gongs, which could not be played for those who were not Nine-Rank Noblemen.

There is, however, one more rank in Melanau society: the Orang Lima Belas Pikul (the 15-People), sometimes known as the Pangeran ('prince'), though some Melanau claim that the Orang Lima Belas Pikul and Pangeran are different from each other (Yasir 1989: 201). The term Pangeran is closely related to the people of Brunei, and it still widely used today. It is claimed that the Melanau people of this category are not 'original' (asli) Melanau, as they were born of Brunei-Melanau parentage. Prior to the mid-19th century during which Sarawak was under the power of the Brunei Sultanate, many of the Sultan's officials stayed with the Melanau community. A number of them married the daughters of the local leaders and their offspring carried the title Pangeran as a prefix to their names. Presently, while the majority of the Melanau people no longer practice the Pangkat Pikul system, a relatively small number of them still maintain the adat system in some death and marriage ceremonies.

2.3 Language

The Melanau people speak both the Melanau language (Bahasa Melanau) and the Malay-Sarawak language (Bahasa Melayu Sarawak). Although Bahasa Melayu Sarawak is one of the many dialects of the Malay language (Bahasa Melayu), most people outside of Sarawak do not really understand or use this dialect. One needs to be familiar with it in order to understand and use it. However, all Sarawakians are able to speak Bahasa Malaysia, the official language of Malaysia, which is the medium of

instruction in all primary and secondary schools throughout Malaysia, and in all official communications and discourses as well. The locals call this language ‘Bahasa Semenanjung’, or the language of the Peninsular, and they usually converse in this language with anyone who comes from Peninsular Malaysia, who are even called by some locals as ‘Orang Malaya’.

According to Zaini Oza (1989: 241), the Melanau consist of six subgroups that are identified according to the similarities in their dialect: Melanau Mukah-Dalat (Mukah, Dalat, Oya, Sungai Kut), Melanau Matu-Daro (Matu, Daro, Oulau Beruit, Batang Lasa), Melanau Kuala Rajang (Rajang, Jejeh, Belawai, Segalang, Paloh), Melanau Sibit (Sibu, Kanowit, Tanjong, Igan, Banyuk), Melanau Bintulu (Bintulu, Tatau, Niah, Sungai Kemena, Sebiew) and Melanau Balingian. Each Melanau subgroup has its own Bahasa Melanau dialect, which is said to be comprehensible to all, regardless of which subgroup they belong to, although some claim that the Melanau Bintulu dialect is hardly understood by the other Melanau subgroups.

According to the locals, few hundreds years ago the Old Melanau language (Bahasa Melanau Klasik) is somewhat different from its present usage. Present-day Melanau do not speak Old Melanau, and only a small number of elderly Melanau can still understand it. This language was widely used in traditional Melanau vocal music, especially in the various chants (tigaps) performed in many traditional rituals such as healing ceremonies as well as in traditional games and work-related activities.

Words like “is”, “or”, “then”, etc should not be capitalized unless it is the first word of the subsection title.

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2.4 The Malay-Melanau Identity Crisis

Malay (Melayu) culture has greatly influenced the lifestyle of the Melanau, with whom people of Malay descent have had a long association. One can only assume that this happened because of the conversion of the many formerly Animist Melanau to Islam. When someone converts to Islam in Malaysia, he or she is said to ‘become Malay’ (masuk Melayu) and is therefore expected to lead a life like other Malays, with no explanation. The Malays, who are constitutionally Muslim, represent the largest ethnic group in Malaysia.

The process of Malayisation is greater among the Melanau than the other ethnic groups and this it has

affected the way they perceive themselves. A large number of Muslim Melanau now prefer to be known as either Malay-Melanau or Malay. According to history, by the early 19th century Sarawak had become a loosely governed territory under the control of the Brunei Sultanate during which the Melanau were introduced to Islam and Malay culture. Some historians believe that the people of Brunei were in contact with Sarawak as early as the 15th century but there are insufficient historical documents to confirm this theory. In governing Sarawak, the Sultan of Brunei placed his representatives—Malay nobles commonly known as Pangerans—in various territories along the Rajang River. The Pangerans were also responsible for collecting tributes from the inhabitants of the respective territorial dominions. There, the Pangeran stayed and mixed with the local people, some of whom married the local women who were mostly of aristocratic lineage (such as the daughters of the village headmen), thus indirectly ‘forcing’ the females to become Muslims. Apparently, proselytisation was never a part of the Sultan’s agenda—he was more interested in collecting tributes than converting the Melanau to Islam—but intermarriage certainly contributed to the early Islamisation of its people. Thus, the Melanau began to adopt a Malay life style and speak Malay.

Clearly, the criteria defining ‘Malay’ as stipulated in the Constitution to some extent parallels the criteria defining of a Melanau in the case of those who have converted to Islam. The Malays of Brunei and the Melanau have been in contact for at least 170 years, making the Melanau to be one of the earliest ethnic groups in Sarawak to have largely adopted the Malay culture. Other ethnic groups, such as the Iban and Bidayuh, mostly lived in the interior parts of Sarawak and had very little contact with the Brunei officials

3 THE SARAWAK CULTURAL VILLAGE: HOME OF THE MELANAU’S TARIAN ALU-ALU AND PRETAP MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

Being one of the most popular tourist destinations in Malaysia, the SCV has come a long way. Located nearly 35 km from the town of Kuching on 17 acres of land at the foothills of the legendary Mount Santubong, the SCV serves as a living museum where visitors can witness the lifestyle of several ethnic groups native to Sarawak, namely, the Iban, the

Bidayuh, the Melanau, the Orang Ulu, the Penan, the Chinese and the Malays.

The SCV was established in 1989 by the Sarawak Economic Development Cooperation, and houses one of the most popular cultural groups (Artis Budaya Kampung Budaya Sarawak), which has won numerous awards in dance competitions in Malaysia and overseas. By purchasing an entry ticket for USD 20, visitors can not only enjoy a 45-minute cultural show held at the Theatre Hall, they can also visit the fascinating longhouses that stand majestically amid the lush green foothills, amongst which stands the one and only Melanau tallhouse in Sarawak

Despite the success of SCV in promoting and preserving the musical arts of the various ethnic groups in Sarawak, at the beginning of its existence the SCV was not well supported by the locals, including several people who held high positions in the state government, for reasons that were somewhat personal. A significant proportion of the traditional music and dance of Sarawak is ritual-related, and it was perceived by some that to perform it for the sake of 'tourist entertainment' was offensive. In addition, it was also made known that some ethnic groups were not very happy with the idea of 'other' people performing their music and dance, for instance, when Malay dancers performing the Iban dance. To them, their music and dance could only perform only by their own people. They were, undeniably, very protective of their own culture.

Besides this, the dances performed in the daily cultural show at the SCV were newly created dances (tarian kreasi baru), which included new elements but retained most of their traditional components. This, to some locals, was an act they deemed disrespectful to their original traditions. For example, the colour of the dance costumes of almost all Sarawak ethnic groups was black, but for the purpose of tourist attraction, coloured costumes were created (Kak Mida, personal communication, 21 February 2012). Initially all SCV dancers wore black costumes, but because one of the feedback they received from the tourists was that they were having difficulties in distinguishing which dance belonged to which ethnic group, the coloured costumes were instituted for the dances.

Nevertheless, the difficulties that were encountered did not dampen the spirits of those working at the SCV. After almost ten years of operation, the locals finally realised that the purpose of the SCV was to preserve their musical arts for the appreciation of future generations (Kak Mida, personal communication, 21 February 2012). In fact, a substantial number of dance troupes have been seen

imitating the dances created by the SCV when they perform in various local dance competitions (Abang Jo, personal communication, 22 February 2012). Thus, the SCV, to some extent, has influenced the music-culture of the Sarawak people.

3.1 Tarian Alu-Alu

One of SCV's efforts in preserving Melanau musical arts is through the re-creation of Tarian Alu-Alu, a newly created game dance that was inspired from a traditional game played during a mourning period, a period known as peligin. A peligin can last up to 15 days after the funeral during which fellow visitors would conduct various activities to not only fill their time - especially when they had to stay awake at night - but also to entertain the deceased's family members who were grieving due to the loss of their loved one. Storytelling and 'guessing' games (teka-teki) were among the activities that were frequently held during the peligin period of which stories such as local heroes, myths and legends were told. Teka-teki, on the other hand, could have any matter as its subject, and this guessing game was among the most popular peligin activities, attracting quite a crowd.

The alu game (permainan alu) was another traditional game that was frequently played during the peligin period. As the name suggests, alu refers to a five feet-long wooden pestle, commonly used in pounding sago and rice. Two players would sit across each other cross-legged on the floor and as they held one end of a pair of alu, the game was played by clacking the alu together and onto the floor in a prescribed rhythmic pattern, during which the other players jumped in and out of the clacking pestles. To avoid having their feet hit by the clacking alu, the players must first carefully observe and identify the rhythmic pattern before attempting to step between the alu. When the players had succeeded in doing so, usually the two players who were clacking the alu would deliberately increase the tempo until eventually, it was almost impossible for anyone to play without getting their feet caught between the wooden pounders.

Apart from clacking the alu, the players would use them to play another game. After positioning an alu vertically on the floor and placing a coconut shell (tempurung kelapa) on its peak, several players would hold the alu, after which one particular player would place his stomach onto the tempurung kelapa. The players underneath him would then spin the alu as fast they could, with the player on top resembling a human helicopter. The alu game was indeed a fun and popular game among the youngsters, especially for its

acrobatic elements. Despite the fact that one can no longer see this game performed after a funeral (for the now predominantly Muslim Melanau no longer practice the peligin period, nor do the Christian Melanau), there is one particular place where one can see its performance. Today, the alu game is being presented in the form of a newly created dance (tarian kreasi baru) that was first popularised by the dance troupe of the SCV.

According to my informants, the person responsible for creating this dance is Mr Ramli Ali, a choreographer at the SCV who is also a Melanau. Prior to the birth of the SCV, Ramli Ali and few SCV dancers and musicians had gone to various places around Sarawak, especially to the interior parts where they conducted research concerning the traditional dances involving the Bidayuh, Iban, Orang Ulu, Melanau and the Malay groups. In relation to the Melanau dance, Ramli and his team had gone to Mukah in which where most Melanau elderly reside. Upon completion of their research, Ramli Ali began to put the ideas together and choreographed them into a tarian kreasi baru, now famously known as Tarian Alu-Alu. Ever since the emergence of this dance, the SCV has been actively performing it, not just at their daily cultural performances, but also in numerous local and international festivals, cultural shows and events. Indeed, the Tarian Alu-Alu is one of the SCV's defining acts and because it has become so popular that apparently, other dance groups imitate its choreography whenever they need to perform a dance representing the Melanau group, since the Melanau in general has acknowledged this tarian kreasi baru as part of their culture.

According to Mr Ramli because the tarian kreasi baru served to entertain the visitors of the SCV, they had to make some adjustments to the original dance. For example, although the alu game served to entertain the deceased's family during peligin, apparently the players played them without getting 'too happy' as a sign of respect for their recent loss. Therefore, in playing this game, no one was allowed to smile, and in addition, all moaners were required to wear black. Bearing these facts in mind, the SCV dancers wore an all-black costume when the Tarian Alu-Alu was first performed in the 1990s, and they did not smile while dancing on the stage.

This 'grim-face' Melanau dance drew much criticism from the visitors, especially international tourists who felt that the dancer's facial expressions were rather unpleasant. Moreover, their all-black attire was worn not only during the Melanau performance, in fact, all five dances had incorporated the black costumes, resulting in the audience not being able to distinguish

which ethnic group that the dances belonged to (Kak Mida, personal communication, 2012). Therefore, to accommodate these demands, the SCV had to make some changes to its stage presence. Now, the dancers of the Tarian Alu-Alu are required to smile during their performances, and they no longer wear all-black costumes. Some Melanau are said to be rather unhappy with these changes because they feel that although the Tarian Alu-Alu is a newly created dance, it should maintain the original traits of its performance as closely as possible.

Additionally, there was one other issue that the locals raised of which the local people were quite protective of their own cultural heritage, to the point that only their 'own people' could perform these dances. For example, a Malay male dancer performed the Iban dance, which caused some locals to disapprove such 'intrusion'. Clearly, if the SCV were to abide to this ruling it would be highly impractical. Nevertheless, as time passed and upon seeing the SCV's endless efforts to promote and preserve their cultural heritage, eventually the local people began to accept these differences.

The daily 45-minute cultural show began with the Iban, followed by the Bidayuh, Melanau, Orang Ulu and Malay performances, respectively. The performances were accompanied by live music, played by a group of musicians who sat on a raised platform located on the stage, facing the dancers and the audience. They played on the engkromong, canang, tawak, gong and beduk for almost all performances, except for the Orang Ulu performance, in which only the sape was played.

Based on my observation, the Tarian Alu-Alu delighted most of the audience, especially its acrobatic and game-like movements, in which the bamboo poles were used instead of the wooden pounders. The dancers comprised of four males and females. While the female dancers wore a long-sleeved blouse and a songket sarong with various accessories on their costumes and hair, the male dancers wore a long-sleeved top with a pair of pants. Throughout this performance, the Tarian Alu-Alu was accompanied by a musical ensemble, which consisted of musical instruments such as an engkromong, a canang, a tawak and a beduk (a single-headed drum). The engkromong used in this performance was made up of eight gong-chimes that were laid horizontally in a wooden frame, and was set to a hemitonic pentatonic scale (E, G, A, B, C1, E1, G1, A1). In this piece, the engkromong played the melody that was somewhat improvised yet orderly in a certain way. It was entirely up to the engkromong

player to decide on the number of bars he wished to play for every phrase, but the melodic motif consisted a series of three notes that was somewhat fixed.

The piece began with an introduction by the canang, followed by the other musical instruments, which cued the entrance of the dancers came. The piece was performed in quadruple meter and in a relatively fast tempo, mainly controlled by the beduk. As previously stated, the engkromong played the melody freely, without any restriction on the number of bars within each musical pattern, and the canang, tawak and beduk all played within a periodic rhythmic pattern.

3.2 PRETAP, The Extinct Melanau Musical Instrument

Rainforest Music House is a gallery in the SCV that exhibits a huge collection of Sarawak's musical instruments. At the Melanau musical instrument section, however, contained the least number of musical instruments in comparison to the other Sarawak's ethnic groups – only three. The double-headed drum (gadeng) and a pair of gong that were displayed are a common sight but the third instrument was a rare sight. This musical instrument is known as pretap.

This particular pretap was re-constructed by a well-known Melanau cultural bearer who is also the man responsible for designing the only Melanau tallhouse that still exists in Sarawak, the tallhouse that is still standing majestically in the SCV. He is fondly known as Pak Sill, a man of which the SCV has worked closely since its existence. In my interview with him, Pak Sill claimed that in the past, the pretap and the other three obsolete instruments were used on many occasions, as supported by local legends. However, most Melanau are no longer familiar with these legends. Pak Sill, on the other hand, comes from a family who treasures Melanau oral history and he inherited many stories of the past from his grandparents and parents. The various functions of the obsolete musical instruments as well as the history of the ceremonial canang, gong, tawak and engkromong are described in those legends.

According to him, among the main reasons why the Melanau are unaware of the pretap is simply because it is not deemed to be a musical instrument. According to tradition, the pretap was actually an apparatus that was primarily used to locate people who were lost in the forest. 'Pretap' is a Bahasa Melanau Klasik word, which means 'clapping' (bertepuk); it is probably an onomatopoeia, reflecting the sound it makes when beaten with a stick. It was customary for the Melanau to go deep into the forests

in search of forest products, and they became forest experts. If they got lost they were assumed taken by the ipok. As mentioned earlier, the Melanau Likou believed that the world is governed by the ipok, who live in various parts of the world, with the forest being one of their habitats.

In the past, when the villagers learned that a fellow villager was lost in the forest, they immediately formed a rescue group and carried the pretap with them. The pretap is made from the species of yellow bamboo (buluh gading) of which Pak Sill claims the spirits are extremely afraid. Apparently, regarded as a mystically potent plant by many Southeast Asians. Some Malays plant the buluh gading in the compound of their houses to protect them from being disturbed by evil spirits (jin) sent by individuals who wish them harm, usually for personal reasons (Madzhi, personal communication, 10 January 2013). According to Pak Sill, a group of rescuers would beat the pretap with a stick and shout the lost man's name as they walked into the forest. Most members of the search team would hit the pretap continuously and as loudly as they could, hoping that the ipok would be terrified when hearing the sounds of the pretap and would release the victim. The pretap was beaten freely with no fixed rhythm.

The SCV Rainforest House Gallery's pretap was made by Pak Sill and sold to the SCV in 1994. A skilful craftsman, Pak Sill claims that he was involved in every step of the construction of the pretap. He even searched for and cut down the bamboo himself, and then constructed the pretap in his small, home-based workshop. The last pretap that he saw dated back to 1952; it had belonged to his grandmother. That pretap no longer exists, for it was eventually used as firewood (kayu api) in hard times.

The process of making a pretap requires that certain techniques must be followed strictly otherwise it will rot. It is forbidden to cut down the bamboo during a full moon (from the 25th day of the month and lasts until the fifth day of the following month). If the bamboo is cut down during a full moon, the pretap will last only for three to four years, as it will most probably be eaten by bubuk, a species of beetle that feeds on wood. Pak Sill insisted that his grandmother's pretap was more than a hundred years old, as he had been told that it was inherited by many generations before it was finally handed down to his grandmother. Because Pak Sill had constructed the pretap by carefully following every tenet (petua) that he knew, the 20-year old pretap at the SCV remains solid to this day.

The pretap consists of several parts. The frame that holds the structure of the entire pretap is constructed

to hold several tubes of buluh gading and planed wood. The base of the frame is made of four pieces of planed wood tied together using rattan and arranged into a rectangular shape, measuring 90 cm x 30 cm. Next, two pairs of buluh gading about 85 cm in length are placed vertically opposite each other and again tied to a pair of planed wood strips.

Then, eight almost similar sized pieces of bamboo are placed on a buluh gading structure that securely holds them in place. Pak Sill claims that when played like a musical instrument, these bamboo pieces' function as eight 'keys.' The eight horizontal 'keys', which are cut from one piece of bamboo, are arranged in order of the lower to the higher pitches; Pak Sill claims that the thicker the bamboo, the higher the pitch when it is beaten. In addition, two pairs of bamboo that are about 77cm in length with two holes carved on their surface are placed in between the frame and tied vertically – these bamboos also serve as the 'keys.' The pretap is beaten, using a pair of wooden mallet. Thus, when the pretap is converted into a musical instrument, the player would beat on all 12 tubes of bamboo 'keys.'

Pak Sill reconstructed the pretap in the form of a musical instrument that could easily be dismantled and carried by rescuers. Weighing about 13 kg, the pretap could generally be categorised as an unpitched percussion instrument

4 CONCLUSIONS

Despite having been through many challenges, the SCV no doubt has proven to be one of Sarawak's leading revival agents particularly in promoting Melanau tradition and heritage. Through their newly created Tarian Alu-Alu the great majority of the Melanau people have collectively accepted the dance as their identity to which many music and dance troupes have actively perform in various local and international competitions and festivals. The fact that the SCV keeps a close relationship with many culture bearers such as Pak Sill, is an effort that is deemed as extremely essential, especially in making sure that new dance/music creation are still being performed within its original context.

The SCV has played an important role in helping to define Melanau cultural identity, particularly through the re-creation of Tarian Alu-Alu as a tarian kreasi baru that has become so popular that it is recognised as the signature dance of the Melanau. At the SCV the voice of the remaining cultural bearers can also be heard as they teach Melanau traditional songs and re-create some of their obsolete music instruments in the

hope of reviving some of the musical arts for the benefit of their own people. Indeed, the SCV is the leading revival agent in Sarawak, showcasing Melanau musical arts in a new form but at the same trying to maintain some of the fundamental elements of structure, content and style.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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