

Sustainability of Indigenous Music Culture through Video Documentation

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Abstract

The aim of the *Sape Karaang* Sustainable Project; a short video product with a narrative that is inhibiting and supporting the sustainability of *sape karaang*, folklores, music and cultural heritage of the Dayak Bahau people, is to revitalize the musical culture of the Dayak Bahau tradition. This project combines the interest of Bahau youth generation in technology and the forms of conservation that parents of the Bahau culture want. Those who are benefitted by this project is Dayak Bahau community as well as Indonesia as a multicultural nation. The purpose of this paper is to discuss a practice-led approach used in empowering selected Bahau young people. This method is useful in providing guidance to researchers in finding realistic practices that actually bridges the gap between theory and practice during the project. This paper presents two significances: the practical approach and perceptibility in the decision-making process during a research project and the innovation to sustain indigenous traditional arts.

Keywords: culture, Dayak Bahau, music, revitalization, sustainability

Introduction

One of the ethnic groups in Samarinda City, East Kalimantan, is Dayak Bahau Tribe. Bahau ethnic group originates from Mahakam Hulu (Mahulu) district, a place often associated as hinterland. They had been migrating since early 20th century. In Samarinda, Bahau youth are practicing traditional arts from the Bahau culture. An art studio (*sanggar seni*) called Apo Lagaan was formed in the center of Samarinda City to accommodate the young Bahau generation in preserving and sustaining the traditional art of Bahau.

There is a distinct type of Dayak Bahau music play which is called as *sape karaang*, named directly by the musical instrument it is specified to. The musical instrument *sape karaang* from Bahau culture has only two strings, therefore, it is believed to be the oldest musical instrument among the other *sape* instrument (generally made with four strings or more). For Bahau people, *sape karaang* music play is not only a musical instrument performance, but it also includes dance and some cultural history of the Bahau people.

Recently, members of the Sanggar Seni Apo Lagaan have been actively developing *sape karaang* music genre. They attempt to combine the genre of *sape karaang* music with popular music. This, however, is considered appropriate because it is meant as an adaptation to the changing times. It can be said that this practice has resulted in a new form of creativity for the play of *sape karaang* music, and it becomes more diverse. On the other hand, the 'old' *sape karaang* music play has the potential to become extinct. This may be caused by how the ethnic communities change their lifestyle (Grant, 2014, p. 8). Many perceive that indigenous music performed in the world music idiom is a "one way flow of products from West to the Rest". That will eventually result in cultural "grey-out" (Nettl, 2005, p. 8). Cultural "grey-out" posits fear that musical interaction and wider communication systems will lead to the standardization music (Nettl, 2005, p. 8).

In line with this, Agnes Gering Belawing, an influential Bahau tradition practitioner, said that traditional music does not always have to follow modern patterns. She is concerned with the practice of modifying traditions which is done without having an understanding of the origin and nature of the

traditional arts. Furthermore, she hopes for a study on the preservation and sustenance of the traditional arts for the younger who are the “bearers” of Bahau culture (personal communication, 2020). The urgency to sustain the old *sape karaang* culture by integrating young people’s interest in digital technologies led to the emergence of this research.

Dayak Bahau Music Culture

Dayak is one of the indigenous tribes found in East Kalimantan. Dayak is a term generally given to non-Muslim and non-Malay communities in Kalimantan (King, 1993). Based on the location of settlement, Dayak tribe occupies areas on the banks of the upstream river (Commans, 1987, p. 4). Dayak houses big sub-tribes such as Tunjung, Kenyah, Punan, Bahau, Kayan, Lundayeh, Modang, Krayan dan Penihing (Maunati, 2004). Dayak Bahau are known to have similarities with other Dayak sub-tribes, for example their habit of living in long house (*lamin*), sharing oral stories, telling myths, performing ritual, organizing communal dance, even using Banana leaves as one of dance properties (Mulyana, 2009, p. 79). The ancestors of Bahau people were a semi-nomadic group who practiced shifting cultivation. Today, most of Bahau people live in permanent dwellings. Some are still earning the living from agriculture and plantation and some others are in mining industry sectors or other general occupations.

Literature that specifically discusses the music play from Dayak Bahau tribe is still very rare. Much of the literature is more interested in other aspects of Bahau culture such as the long ears (Sedyawati, 1993) and Hudoq dance (Yanti, 2019). *Sape Karaang* in Bahau culture is a genre for both music and dance, which does not only include the play of the *sape karaang* musical instrument but also, the myths talking about the birth of this instrument. Initially, *sape karaang* was performed purposely for healing rituals and traditional ceremonies (Kuleh, 2020). At present, the performance with *sape karaang* is nothing more than just an entertainment where it is only played for accompanying the dances.

In Bahau tradition, there are 26 music plays and dances specially performed with *sape karaang*. Some of them are still popular with the Bahau people, such as *Ta’a* and *Telaang Mayaak*, while the rest are rarely heard. *Sape karaang* as musical instrument, *sape karaang* has the shape like a “guitar” which has only two strings. Because of the simplicity of the organology, Bahau people believe that the *sape karaang* is the oldest musical instrument in the Bahau culture (Huvat, 2014, p. 52). It is related to Grant’s argument who (2014, p. 7) believes that songs that are deeply rooted in a culture are an important medium in transmitting knowledge about nature, medicine, myths, prohibitions or social norms. Thus, the loss of traditional music also means the loss of the ability of future generations to adapt to unexpected changes in the future (Marett, 2010).

Bahau Youth Involvement with Technology

Most of the Bahau old music culture plays have now changed its functionality. The old *sape karaang* music has gradually changed, due to the influence of media such as television and internet. In the inland area around tropical rainforest, Bahau people can watch television via satellite dish or tv cable. Likewise, Bahau young generation who live in the era of digital technology where it brings the mass media closer to their reach from the use of, computer, cellphone and internet network. Their cellphones also have internet access to make it easier for them to connect to the wider world through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and YouTube. This is, not to take it as a mistake, the main reason that in turn shift the taste of Bahau younger generation who lives in urban areas to be more interested in popular culture and modern music.

Currently, Bahau youths who live in Samarinda are making a renewal in the musical culture of *sape karaang*. They are likely to add the touch modern musical instruments, the addition of lyrics, and to get some influence from popular music and western music. In addition, there is also *sape karaang* performance which is played only to entertain the tourists. Many of these recordings, both performance videos and rehearsals, are distributed on social media. After being traced, most of them state similar tone that ini, making modern style on tradition is a successful way to adapt to the changing situations. Rather than focusing on how musical style affects these communities, our research project aims to revive and consolidate the old tradition of *Sape karaang* music. It is accomplished by engaging young Bahau generation and their passion for technology.

Project of Sustainable *Sape Karaang*

The *Sape karaang* Project is a traditional music conservation program involving Dayak Bahau youth. This project begins by identifying the factors that influence the viability of traditional music. Bahau youth are actively involved in the research process by conducting interviews with older customary leaders, stakeholders, and policy makers regarding the performing arts. The obstacles and supporting factors for the sustainability of the traditional music of *sape karaang* were formulated jointly by the researchers' team and the Bahau youth. The final product of this project is a short film with a duration 10 minutes including some narratives telling the factors that are obstructing and supporting the sustainability of the *Sape karaang*.

The *Sape Karang* Project engages the creative industry as a medium to promote cultural sustainability. This program is not to reproduce the original form of music and dance in the Bahau tradition, but to explore the desire of the cultural bearers in preserving the traditional music play where there is hope for transformation into the digital media. This is a necessary attempt because the traditional music documentation video contains more innovative content. It effectively, talks about the descriptions on the musical heritage and also the threats of the extinction if *Sape karaang* music play.

The *Sape karaang* Project envisages the sustainability of the music play through the innovation as, defined by sustainability theories and concepts and applied in ethnomusicology. Using a practice-led approach, this article delivers the issues of challenges and evokes the decision-making process that ultimately encourages the sustainability of traditional music through innovation. While many previously written articles focus on presenting the product of a research project, this article directs the reader to understand the limitations, constraints, and the negotiations that the researchers team met during the production and in the research stages. Understanding the context and situation of any research is important in order to avoid the 'top-down' generalization or conservation model that is prevalent in the studies of cultural heritage and applied ethnomusicology.

The *Sape karaang* emphasizes an approach in order to read the sustainability of traditional music, which is based on the information from the past, present condition, and the Bahau people's hope for the future. An approach like is proven to be more dynamic rather than just 'museumizing' traditional music in the form of recording or merely inventory. This model of conservation really requires the involvement of the indigenous communities as the bearers of their own culture. Therefore, in the future, they can learn how to apply the practice and adapt their culture based their own needs in regard to the changing era.

Sustainable and Preservation of Traditional Music Concepts

The urgency of preserving cultural expressions has become a global concern since the last two decades. Notable initiatives are contained in UNESCO declarations and conventions, such as; Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2001); Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003); Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (UNESCO, 2005); and The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNHCR, 2007). The four documents simultaneously illustrate those cultural expressions, including indigenous music practices which, are under threat of extinction.

The same background encourages the preservation programs of ethnic music in Indonesia. In 2017, the Ministry of Education and Culture designated 594 arts of various ethnicities as Intangible Cultural Heritage (Paluseri et al., 2018). In addition, there are found some agencies in the regions that regularly record and make the inventory for the varieties of the indigenous ethnic music under their respective territorial authority. Although it is able to increase public awareness of the threat of extinction, however, this program, which is generally initiated by the government, tends to see the practice of traditional music as an artifact that must be immediately "preserved" into the form of archives rather than being seen as a "living" practice in a society.

Howard (2012) said, "cultural preservation must be dynamic" (p. 5). To be dynamic means that it is somehow enriched the cultural material in accordance to the current conditions. Then, the results of which are transmitted to the future generations (Boyu et al., 2015). Schippers is not even too ambitious in translating the matter of sustainability. It is, the conditions that are considered appropriate for the musicians, the communities, and the stakeholders to preserve the traditional music (Schippers & Grant, 2016, p. 8). In line with this, it is important to consider that the changes and the threats to the extinction of traditional music are mostly the matters experienced by the people who own them. Therefore, the proactive efforts counted to be more effective when it involves the indigenous communities who still continue their ancestral

traditional up to the present. Moreover, the indigenous population is no longer a group of people living in the isolated areas, where it cannot be separated from the influence of the capitalism, ideology, and power. Many of the indigenous communities have settled in urban areas, but they still promote the ideas of their predecessors in daily life. The objective of the *Sape karaang* project is then in accordance to the concept of cultural heritage which states that cultural sites have the potential to be reproduced into creative culture through the means and wishes of cultural bearers.

Although music appears and disappears as the tastes and the circumstances change, some “minority music” is forced to “disappear” by non-musical factors (Grant, 2014). Pop music hegemony is the main factor in narrowing the space for traditional music to move (Chan & Saidon, 2017). Likewise, the distribution of traditional music on the internet raises problems related to the ownership rights (Martini, 2014). In addition, there are factors that come from the community itself, such as the changes from the rural way of life to the urban way of life (Grant, 2012). They are also detected to have, low pride for their own culture (Putra, 2018). Last but not the least, there is also some lack in the inheritance process (Irawati, 2016). Given the many factors that influence the sustainability of traditional music, this research is not only limited to the activities of preserving the beauty of the instrument shape and the structure of its sound, but also has to take into account the complex network of non-musical factors at play.

As stated earlier, ethnic music preservation programs in Indonesia rarely promote the need to connect with the communities who own the piece of musical arts. To complement the government’s efforts, this research activity collaborates with the indigenous communities as the owners of traditional music by emphasizing more on their own decision making and actions that is taken based on their own wishes for their future cultural heritage. Tan argues that cultural festivals with a “bottom up” approach are very important in enhancing the sustainability of local cultural resilience, as well as for the people (Tan, 2014, pp. 21-22). Therefore, the first phase of the research project is initiated to empower the young Dayak Bahau generation to explore deeper about the originality of the tradition and the understanding on the factors that contribute to the sustainability of their traditional music.

Methods

A practice-led approach was used in this research to document and produce the possible means for the sustainable *Sape karaang*. The practice-led approach focuses on the nature of practice for the subject to gain significant new knowledge (Candy, 2006, p. 3). The practice itself is mattered on the knowledge that contribute to further researches. The practice-led approach argues that collective decision making is made through reflection ranging from the action to the achieving of specific goals. Researchers who respond to the emerging situations, are flexible and open to change. Therefore adapting to the open possibilities is an important conduct in a practice-led approach. The strategy of this research project also uses an applied ethnomusicology method, which is meant to empower cultural communities to make planned changes through the ethnomusicological knowledge (Pettan, 2015). Ethnomusicology knowledge is related to the strategic models and traditional music conservation techniques are delivered to the Dayak Bahau youth (Harrison, 2012).

In the realization of the program, selected Dayak Bahau youths is trained to build their intellectual capabilities in exploring the obstructing and the supporting factors faced in the sustainability of the traditional music. They also learn about how to make a recording for the traditional performances, recording narratives about the obstructing and supporting factors of the sustainability of traditional music, synchronizing the narratives into digital documentation, and finding sources for distribution of digital documentation. Although the researchers might bring a prior idea about the results of the research project, during the process, we managed to be open up for the matters in the discussion and accept some changes during the process in a one-year period research. The practice-based approach allows the research team to direct, evaluate, and reflect on the original plan when the new ideas emerged during the research process.

The *Sape karaang* Sustainable Project was implemented in collaboration between a research team of academics and Dayak Bahau youth as the cultural bearers. University researchers are individuals who are trained in knowledge of world music, traditional music preservation issues, documentation and recording skills. Mean, while, the cultural bearers have in-depth knowledge of the traditions. One of the practice-led guided decisions is to collaborate with cultural bearers in ascertaining a "level" of authenticity in the art of *sape karaang*. This collaborative approach is based on the fact that "creativity appears within individuals" (Kaufman and Sternberg, 2015), in teams (Gilson, 2015), and in networks (Cattani et al., 2015).

This paper also presents the challenges, dilemmas, and decisions that the research team made during the Project. Through the practice-led approach the researcher emphasizes three important criteria in advocating for the sustainability of the *Sape karaang* tradition in digital documentation i.e., the collaboration between the research team from the university and the Dayak Bahau cultural bearer, the exploration of the authenticity of the cultural expressions and the adaptation to digital technology.

Collaboration between Culture Bearers and Researchers

The *Sape karaang* sustainable project began with a workshop attended by a research team consisting of academics from the fields of ethnomusicology and literature and speakers on the behalf of Bahau culture which included eight *Sape karaang* musicians and dancers. At this stage, the research team presented models for preserving traditional music from various cultures in the world. In addition, cultural bearers are also introduced to ethnomusicological methods related to field research, such as interviews, participant-observation, analysis techniques, ethnographic writing, and recording of *Sape karaang* music performances. The collaborative approach here was meant to try to ensure that the voices of cultural bearers are heard, especially in the originality of the folk tales surrounding the art of *Sape karaang*. Researchers and cultural bearers from the younger Bahau generation then consults to the older Bahau cultural figures and the senior Bahau traditional musicians to hear their stories and views about *Sape karaang*. The research team also contributed to the digitizing of the practice of *Sape karaang* music and dance with the young Dayak Bahau people.

Originality of Cultural Expressions

Senior musicians from Bahau ethnic were involved to enrich the vocabulary related to the knowledge on the origins of *Sape karaang*. Their expressions play an important role in the sustainability of verbal expressions of Bahau culture. There are various expressions of senior Bahau culture musicians that can be perceives in the production of the sustainable *Sape karaang* video. The senior musicians' contribution for the narratives in the video allows the researcher to analyze specific cultural components contained in the story. Thus, some unexpected cultural knowledge actually comes from the dialogue between the researcher and the senior Bahau musicians. He told about the origin of *Sape karaang*.

“There was a person named Belawing Turiing clashed with a nobleman from the Punan Country over a beautiful girl named Lalang Lirung Uraan. At the end of their fight, they finally agreed to have Lalang Lirung Uraan together, Belawing Turiing had the right for the girl's waist up body part, while the Punan aristocrats got the girl's lower waist. As time went on, Lalang became sick and eventually died. Belawing then tried to bring Lalang back to life by dancing and playing *sape karaang*, and finally Lalang came back to life” (personal communication, n.d.)

The above verbal expressions told by the senior musician from the Bahau culture is manifested in the Bahau culture and belief system. Until now, the use of *Sape karaang* is only in traditional ceremonies and rituals (Huvat, 2014). The shape of *Sape karaang* is also believed to have not changed from its original shape and is considered the oldest musical instrument in the Bahau culture.

Oral and Aural in Transmission

One of the important factors in the learning process of *Sape karaang*, is that it is carried out oral and aural. According to Wade, oral transmission takes a teacher's perspective and implies an interaction between teacher and learners, while aural transmission takes the perspective of the learner, who hears music through several aural sources (2004, pp. 16-17). The senior Dayak Bahau musician explained that there is no specific reference or notation used to determine the scale distance, string tension, and notes contained in each *ga'n*, a term to replace the word fret in Bahau culture. Everything is played based on memorizing the scale pattern from the teacher to the student. Thus, it relies heavily to the, sharp memories of sounds, and feelings that are embedded in their hearts.

The next stage is a learning method that relies on aural sources as a source of learning material. This method is performed by a *sape* player who has understood the structure and technique of playing the *Sape karaang*. The aural learning stage is more personal, meaning that the *Sape karaang* player trains memory sensitivity to sounds, patterns, and the ability to imitate what he hears from aural sources. Knowledge of oral and aural transmission is incorporated into several video scenes. Researchers emphasize

the form of practice rather than dialogue or narrative in this regard, which features a teacher teaching student to play *Sape karaang*. Sustainable Narrative of *Sape karaang*

The second criterion, after confirming the ingenuity of the musical culture of *Sape karaang*, during the Sustainable Project, is to explore the constraining and the supporting factors for the sustainability of the artistic aspect of *Sape karaang*. Grant (2012) emphasizes the significance of integrating local community expressions into sustainable development projects. Grant believes that this is because local people are those who experience the most on the development and change in their traditional arts. Decisions that allow knowledge contributions from older cultural bearers or traditional leaders have added layers of knowledge that can be integrated into the knowledge of younger cultural bearers. These actions, in effect, create slight differences in the expected models of conservation, but mutually reinforce one another.

Intergenerational Transmission and Non-Institutional Tradition

The older cultural bearers voice has been integrated into the *Sape karaang* sustainable project. Their decisions are generally based on past experiences and the existence of this art in their hometown, especially in Mahakam Ulu district. The influence of technology that had not been as big as it is today, and the rare contact with the ethnic immigrants, is causing them to aspire that the cultural heritage of *Sape karaang* music only stay internally in the Bahau ethnic community. By allowing the cultural bearers of the older Bahau generation to speak, the research team from the university received an unexpected enrichment, which came from the experiences and analyzes of the cultural bearers themselves.

Meanwhile, Bahau youth who have experienced modern life in an urban setting have become more critical of the training that has been given. They think that the existence of art institutions or colleges that offer traditional music study programs has obscured their traditional art custom. These young cultural bearers had seen the *Sape karaang* play performed by art students from the university, but it is considered to be played against the convention of the Bahau culture.

The research team emphasized a form of preservation of indigenous cultures based on their wishes and first-hand experiences in the Bahau culture. Researchers do not want elaborated versions of knowledge from artists with less experience with Bahau culture. Therefore, when the narrative has been completed, old artists and traditional Bahau cultural figures have been able to add another layer of culture to the narrative by including history, rules of music and dance games, teachers to meet, and attributes that are affiliated with the Bahau cultural tradition. The critical thinking of Bahau youth and the wishes of Bahau parents is shown in the narrative in the video which is concerned about the weakness of the inheritance process in their own culture and the existence of formal art institutions that tend to obscure the values of other cultures.

Audio Video Recording of *Sape karaang* Traditional Music

The video recording of the *Sape karaang* performance emphasizes the sustainability of traditional music based on the interest of Dayak Bahau youth with technology. At this stage, the content of the video documentation was discussed mutually between the research team and cultural bearers in order to obtain forms of cultural promotion that are relevant to modern life, without neglecting the wishes of those cultural bearers. The final production of the *Sape karaang* sustainable project is a creative approach in presenting indigenous knowledge of the Bahau tradition into short films. Folklore related to the cultural history of the emergence of the *Sape karaang*, and the factors inhibiting and supporting the sustainability of the *Sape karaang* were recorded in the form of narration and dialogue. The audio recordings of the narration and dialogue complement the visual recordings of actors playing *Sape karaang* and dancing. The languages use in the audio and narration recordings, the researchers decided to record them in two languages: Dayak Bahau and Indonesian. The researcher emphasizes the importance of recording the narrative in Dayak Bahau language because it can play a role in maintaining the original meaning of the story. Meanwhile, a translation into Indonesian language is useful for bridging understanding among the multicultural communities in Samarinda city.

As the conclusion of this section, this research does not create traditional music based on Dayak Bahau idioms, or rearrange traditional Bahau music. For the purposes of background music in the sustainable *sape karaang* film, researchers recorded the Bahau youth's play directly for *Sape karaang* music genres, such as songs *Telaang Banyak*, *Dusang*, *Sekivak Lung Bakung*, and *Tingang Nelise*.

Conclusion

The findings of this study contribute to the preservation and continuation of cultural heritage music in indigenous peoples in a sustainable manner in a way that emphasizes on their own desires towards the future of their traditional arts and culture. Specifically, this paper presents two important assertions. First is on the importance of practical approach and visibility in the decision-making process during a research project. The second is the innovation to sustain indigenous traditional arts.

The led-practice-based approach used in this study provides transparency guidance in the negotiation process on issues related to the interest of the cultural bearers' communities in sustaining and preserving traditional music, the challenges they faced, and the process of decision making. Although the current discourse has begun to oppose any form of conservation by imposing the non-indigenous ideas or a 'top-down' approach, we propose the need for thoughtfulness in generalizing the forms of empowerment to people, which ultimately neglect their own creativity and voices. It is important for researchers to adopt a practical and realistic approach in order to make decisions that are relevant to the context and the situation of each cultural community.

In general, the *Sape karaang* sustainable project has succeeded in implementing an alternative collaboration regarding traditional music conservation techniques. Preservation of traditional music is no longer limited to only focusing on developing sound forms and structures but can also be done by refining the intellectual capacity of the people who own the traditional arts through analysis of various factors that contribute to the sustainability of the traditional music. A researcher may use theory as a guide but in the process, these theories are prone to change along with the development of society or the changing era. Therefore, researchers are the agents of change, who develop new theories and approaches according to the context and situation of the research.

As a part of this dedication given to the *Sape karaang* played as Bahau cultural heritage, further assistance is certainly needed. Especially when discussing the sustainability factors of traditional music, it is recommended that the stakeholders, cultural chief, and the government who are functioning in the field of cultural preservation are involved. Likewise, the implementation of the analysis results should not only be limited to video and audio formats. More concrete actions are needed such as some policies to resolve the factors that hinder the sustainability of traditional music practices.

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