UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

TRADITIONAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN PRESENT MUSICAL LIFE OF LEBU’ KULIT IN SUNGAI ASAP, SARAWAK

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FEM 2012 18
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By

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Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science

January 2012
Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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Chair: Professor phil. habil. Gisa Jähnichen, PhD

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The Lebu’ Kulit people refer to themselves as belonging to one of the different subgroups of Kenyah. In the past, they migrated from Usun Apau and settled in few places on Borneo Island. The community is now separated and dispersed in different locations in Sarawak, Malaysia and East Kalimantan, Indonesia. At present, there is only one Lebu’ Kulit village in Sarawak. Since the year 1999, they have been staying in Sungai Asap in the Belaga District of Kapit Division. Along the stream of migrations and historical happenings which can be traced back to the early twentieth century, the Lebu’ Kulit people in Sungai Asap experienced a series of events such as headhunting, Dutch governance in Kalimantan, conversion to Christianity, the formation of Malaysia, the Confrontation War in the year
1963, and resettlement to Sungai Asap by the Sarawak government due to the construction of Bakun dam.

As there is a lack of information on the musical culture of the Lebu’ Kulit in Sungai Asap, this is the first study that intends to document and analyse their present musical life and the culture of the community particularly on their traditional musical instruments. Several fieldtrips were made to the village from December 2009 to July 2011, and data on music practices as well as their cultural background were collected through audiovisual recordings, interviews, interactions, and participant-observations in their activities. Analyses and reflections were derived via study of audiovisual recordings, music transcriptions, and information obtained from interviews and observations.

The traditional musical instruments in the present musical life of the Lebu’ Kulit in Sungai Asap includes udang kadung (xylophone), sampé’ daru’ (zither), sampé’ bup (lute), sampé’ ja’au (lute), selingut (transverse flute), kediré’ alo’ (mouth organ), and wing or iceh (vessel rattle). These instruments are played mostly in heterogeneous ensemble to accompany dance, songs or as instrumental music entertainment. The tuning of these musical instruments is similar to the western diatonic major scale. The musicians’ common repertoire consists of the traditional Kenyah tune Det Diet, the local folksong
Lenggang Kangkung, various Christian hymns and Gurkha songs. The performing style of a tune is usually repetitive with variations in rhythmic structures, registers, embellishments and dynamic accents.

The playing of traditional musical instruments of the Lebu’ Kulit is significantly influenced by their beliefs especially through changes in their religion, historical events, present social and economic context, and individual self-expression. It seems that the traditional instrumental music of the Lebu’ Kulit has been “restarted” in a new form and meaning around sixty years ago and has become “singularised”. Besides, the frequency of traditional musical instruments playing has reduced to functions and festive seasons. The repertoire in the traditional musical sphere consists mostly of imported materials, and of which are adopted and internalised, and are expressed in their own creativity and skills.
TRADITIONAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN PRESENT MUSICAL LIFE OF LEBU’ KULIT IN SUNGAI ASAP, SARAWAK

Oleh

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Sungai Asap oleh kerajaan negeri Sarawak disebabkan pembinaan Empangan Bakun.


persembahan sebuah lagu biasanya berulang-ulang dengan variasi dalam struktur irama, tingkat nada, hiasan dan tekanan dinamik.

Permainan alat muzik tradisional Lebu’ Kulit dipengaruhi oleh kepercayaan mereka, terutamanya melalui penukaran agama, peristiwa sejarah, konteks sosial dan ekonomi serta cara ekspresi individu. Muzik instrumental Lebu’ Kulit seolah-olah telah "diperbaharui" kepada bentuk dan makna yang lain kira-kira enam puluh tahun yang lepas dan menjadi semakin “singular”. Selain itu, kekerapan bermain alat muzik tradisional telah berkurang kepada acara dan musim perayaan. Repertoir dalam lingkungan muzik tradisional kebanyakannya terdiri daripada lagu-lagu dari komuniti lain yang telah diterima dan dihayati, dan dimainkan dengan kreativiti dan kemahiran tersendiri.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to extend my deepest gratefulness to Prof. Dr. Gisa Jähnichen for her professional teachings and guidance. Through her selfless sharing of extensive knowledge, she has shaped my understanding and thinking skills in the fields of ethnomusicology and anthropology. Besides research, she has also counselled me on conference presentations, book editing, and archiving. Her unfailing patience, sincerity and readiness to help are much appreciated.

Next, many thanks are dedicated to Dr. Chan Cheong Jan for his enlightenment and inspiration, especially during the preliminary formative year of this study. He has shown opportunities and directions in ethnomusicological studies, and greatly encouraged me to attend conferences and to meet other scholars for exchange of knowledge and experience. He has also provided the technical tools needed in this research, especially books and recording devices.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Dr. Zahid Emby. Although there are restrictions in space and time, his input during my supervisory committee meetings does contribute to my research.
To the Lebu’ Kulit community in Sungai Asap, I would like to acknowledge their hospitality in greeting my presence amongst them during my multiple fieldtrips. Most importantly, their sharing and musical performances have provided me invaluable research data.

Special thanks to Ms. Phyllis Toh and Ms. Susan Ang for they have accompanied me, not only as seniors and course-mates, but also as sincere friends who have offered help beyond academic needs. Attending conferences in different places in Malaysia and Singapore would not be as dynamic and interesting without their presence. We frequently traded insights in research with one another, and this has proved to be a great motivation. Not forgetting also Mr. Clarence Nee, because his interest in acquiring knowledge and enthusiasm to attend seminars has imparted a positive influence on me.

My heartfelt gratitude is bestowed upon all my family members for their unconditional and uncountable support in every aspect. One of them worth mentioning is my father who has freely discussed his experience in the Sarawak longhouses and directed me to the Lebu’ Kulit in Sungai Asap. Apart from him, my uncle and his family, has also taken care of my necessities in my preparation for fieldtrip, each time without fail.
Last but not least, praise and glory be to God, the Almighty Creator. His abundant blessing and provision is always timely and sufficient. Without wisdom and comprehension from the One above, this research would not be accomplished till the end.
I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 10 January 2012 to conduct the final examination of Julia Chieng Chin Yee on her thesis entitled “Traditional Musical Instruments in Present Musical Life of Lebu’ Kulit in Sungai Asap, Sarawak” in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Science.

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

JULIA CHIENG CHIN YEE

Date: 10th January 2012
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