

TRANSFORMATION IN THE INDIGENOUS WEAVING PRACTICE OF THE IBAN OF SARAWAK, MALAYSIA AND THE DESA DAYAK OF SINTANG, KALIMANTAN, INDONESIA

Janet Rata Noel
University of Malaya
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
(janet@tunjugahfoundation.org.my)

Abstract

The Ibans of Sarawak, Malaysia, and the Desa Dayaks of Sintang Kalimantan, Indonesia, engage in similar textiles weaving practice, the tie-dye resist technique (*ikat, kebat*), a weaving heritage that was believed to be a dying art but has continued to survive due to the efforts of various stakeholders. Iban and Desa Dayak weavers used to weave large ceremonial textiles such as the *pua kumbu* mainly for their own use but today they also weave for commercial purposes. This paper compares and analyses institutions, weaving communities, weaving cooperatives and other stakeholders who focus on reviving, revitalising and preserving this intangible cultural heritage. In Sarawak, institutions such as The Tun Jugah Foundation has played a major role in revitalising and preserving the art of Iban textile weaving via its living museum and textiles weaving gallery. There are also other stakeholders such as the Sarawak Museum, UNIMAS (University of Malaysia Sarawak), University of Malaya, other NGOs such as Society Atelier Sarawak, SIDS (Sarakup Indu Dayak Sarawak), and individuals who have influenced the revitalising of this textile weaving heritage. In Indonesia, Institutions such as the PRCF (People, Resources and Conservation Foundation), Kobus Foundation, JMM (Jasa Menenun Mandiri, a weavers' cooperative in Sintang), Threads of Life Bali and Museum Kapuas Raya Sintang have played significant roles in reviving and revitalising the *ikat* weaving heritage of the Desa Dayaks in Sintang, Kalimantan. Some of these stakeholders from both countries have collaborated and worked together in promoting and preserving this textiles

weaving heritage through activities and programmes held in Borneo, such as exhibitions, workshops and other community programmes.

Keywords: textiles weaving, intangible heritage, comparative analysis, Iban, Desa Dayak, community collaboration

Introduction

Before the arrival of the Europeans, the island of Borneo was borderless, and its inhabitants who resided in the interior were collectively called the Dayaks. Until 10,000 BC Borneo was connected to the rest of South-East Asia by a land bridge which was part of Sundaland. The migration took place via land, which was the normal way of migration and also via sea travel. The first inhabitants of Borneo were Austronesians who arrived from the mainland of Southeast Asia travelling clockwise from Taiwan, across the Philippines, to Borneo. Excavations in the north-eastern part of the island show evidence of human occupation from 12,000 BC. (Fienieg, 2007, p. 71). These Austronesians were ancestors of the Dayak, and it was believed that their way of life was similar in many ways to that of traditional Dayak culture; the Austronesian's dwellings are almost identical to the Dayak longhouse. They were also agriculturalists, hunters and gatherers.

The Desa Dayaks also belong to the Ibanic group of Dayaks. According to the oral histories, the Dayak Iban of the Kapuas Ulu region in West Kalimantan and Sarawak are strongly related to the Desa Dayak in Kelam Permai. Some weaving terminologies used by the Desa Dayaks are similar to the Iban's. They share similar cultures such as their tradition of making of the *tuak* rice wine and also *ikat* weaving. Their weaving techniques are similar, and they use similar kind of raw materials, weaving tools and implements.

Sarawak is one of the Bornean States of Malaysia and sometimes referred to as East Malaysia. There are more than thirty indigenous groups in Sarawak, and the Iban is the majority ethnic group. The Ibans are also referred to as Sea Dayaks, and their population is widely distributed throughout Sarawak. They have migrated from one place to another over hundreds of years. They migrated to Borneo sometime in the 13th Century from Insular Southeast Asia, then moved swidden by swidden, up the valley of the Kapuas in Kalimantan Indonesia from the 16th to 17th Century. Some entered Sarawak and moved further westward towards the coast, to be established in estuarine rivers like the Saribas, some choose to remain in the headwaters, and some

moved further inland towards the east valley of the Rejang (Freeman, 1981, p. 5).

Most of the Ibans who lived in the interior regions still live in longhouses by the rivers. Each longhouse comprised of several *biliks* (family households) where one family resides, and each longhouse can accommodate as many as twenty or more families. These longhouses are headed by a Tuai Rumah or headman. In the past, most longhouses are built of wood from timber but now many are built of concrete, but they still maintain some of the characteristics of the traditional longhouse where they still have the '*ruai*' or 'gallery' for communal activities. I visited several longhouses in Kapit, Sibul, Bintangor, from 2014 to 2016 to conduct my fieldwork and interviewed more than a hundred Iban weavers and *pua kumbu* custodians. I have also interviewed weavers in Kapit town who are originally from the longhouses. Previous to that, in my working capacity as a Museum Curator and Weaver at the Tun Jugah Foundation, I have met longhouse weavers from other parts of Sarawak such as Undup and Julau.

Sintang is a district in West Kalimantan, Indonesian Borneo, and is divided into four areas: Sintang and the surroundings, the Melawi region, Semitau and the Upper-Kapuas. Currently, Sintang is the capital of the Kabupaten Sintang in West Kalimantan. Little is known about the history of Sintang. Not much has been written about Sintang on paper, and oral history is dying out. The Dutch mission first appeared in Sintang in 1822. The Dutch had their eye on Sintang as a capital to bring civilization, propagate Christianity and peace to the Dayaks but the real reason was to protect trade. At the beginning of the 19th Century, the district of Sintang consisted of eighty-six kampongs and seventy belonged to the Dayaks (Fienieg, 2007, p. 82). The Dayaks lived in longhouses, which housed thirty families or more, built above the ground and made of wood. In the 20th Century, the life of the Dayak communities remained the same as it had been in the previous century – they were still peasants, and industry was small-scale.

I first met the Desa Dayak weavers in 2014 when I was invited by Museum Kapuas Raya to judge *pua kumbu* entries at the '*Festival dan Perlombaan Tenun Ikat Dayak*' held at the Rumah Betang Cultural Centre at Kobus, Sintang. I had the opportunity to meet and speak to the Desa Dayak weavers who participated in the competition. They came from different parts of Sintang such as Ensaid Panjang and Umin. I learned that we have so many similarities in weaving practices, using similar natural dye materials and similar products such as the *pua kumbu*. In 2015, I went back to Sintang to conduct my fieldwork on *pua kumbu* and interviewed several weavers at Rumah Ensaid Panjang.

Indigenous *Ikat* Weaving Practice

The Iban and Desa Dayaks share a similar *ikat* weaving practice, a technique that has been passed down from their ancestors. *Ikat* is a Malay-Indonesian word meaning 'to tie' or to 'bind'. Hence 'to tie' warp threads using resist material to create designs before they can be dyed and the colour will not penetrate into the parts that have been tied. The Iban from the different regions of Sarawak sometimes has more than one word for 'tying', namely '*kebat*', '*ikat*' and '*tanchang*'. In this case, the terminology '*ikat*' can be used in the context of tie-dye weaving practice for both Malaysia and Indonesia, as in *ikat* weaving. Both communities use the back-strap loom to weave the warp that has already been tied and unfolded.

In the past, Iban weavers worked and weaved together under one roof in the traditional Iban longhouse. The Desa Dayaks also used to live in longhouses which are termed as '*rumah betang*' where they also weave as a community. The Iban is renowned for their *pua kumbu*, a warp-*ikat* patterned ceremonial textile. The Desa Dayaks also weave a similar textile which they also call '*pua kumbu*'. Both use natural dyes such as *engkudu/mengkudu* (*morinda citrifolia*), and they both perform a pre-treatment of the yarn before dyeing with roots of the *engkudu*. The Iban performed a ritual called '*ngar*' to treat the cotton yarn in a mordant bath so that the colour from the roots of the *engkudu* can penetrate the yarn better. Likewise, the Desa Dayaks perform a ritual call '*ngaos*', a complex oiling and mordanting process to treat the yarn. The process and basic ingredients used are quite similar, but each uses different materials as a source for the oil. The Iban uses *kepayang* oil (*pangium edule*), and the Desa Dayak use various kinds of oil from coconut and animal fat.

A weaver's knowledge is passed down from mother to daughter, orally and via the practice of the art. It is a continuous process where indigenous knowledge has been carried down and sustained from one generation to another. The knowledge was also a closely guarded secret by families especially the designs. However, today this weaving tradition has very much transformed, partly due to global change, innovation and commercialisation. In the past, they weave for functional purposes, but now they weave for commercial purposes. Traditionally, cotton was the main material used, but now many of the Iban weavers from Sarawak are using silk yarn which is imported from China. Tourism has also led to the production of souvenir *ikat* items by both communities, where the products are much smaller and usually dyed in bright colours using chemical dye.

Decline in the Traditional Weaving Practice of the Iban

The decline in the indigenous knowledge of this intangible cultural heritage can be attributed to many factors such religion, education, economic development and urbanization. With the coming of the European, Chinese and other foreign traders in the 17th Century, fundamental aspects of indigenous cultural tradition and belief are slowly disintegrating. Today, the younger generations live in a different world from their parents, reacting to influences outside the family and community. In most rural areas, they have to stay in boarding schools and are no longer exposed to the weaving activities. For those who succeeded in getting into higher education, weaving is no longer in the picture, and they slowly lose touch with the tradition.

Many of them were converted into Christians, and many of the cultural practices which are linked to the production of traditional and sacred *pua kumbu* were discarded because they conflict with the new religion. Many had to discard rituals such as *miring* (sacrificial offering) and are forbidden to own charms resulting in a significant decline in the number of master dyers who can perform the *ngar* ritual, a highly skilled vocation which can only be performed by weavers who have received sanction from the Gods through dreams, have divine assistance from the deities and owns powerful charms. This knowledge is fundamental to the survival of the much-valued *pua engkudu* (cotton *pua* that has undergone the mordant bath and dyed with roots of the morinda). *Ngar* can only be performed occasionally, and it is a communal participation led by the master dyer. Today, there are very few surviving master dyers. I have participated in five *ngar* rituals, and two of these master dyers have passed away – one from Kapit and one from Julau.

Economic development has a huge impact on the lives of the Iban in the longhouses. Extensive timber and logging activities meant a decline in the natural resources used for weaving. They have to obtain the bark of the *sebangki* tree (*neesia* sp.) which produces a red-brown colour, from timber camp workers who sold them for a high price. In the urban areas, exposure to material wealth attracts the longhouse community especially the young school leavers to look for jobs in the towns and cities. In the 1990s, the coming of new materials such as synthetic dyes has transformed traditional *ikats* into modern products but sometimes poor in quality especially if the dyes care used incorrectly. Tourism has also transformed the weaving industry where weavers began to make smaller pieces as souvenir and commodity items.

In some parts of Sarawak where there are small clusters of weavers, such as in Bintangor, cotton threads are getting more difficult to acquire. Currently, only Kapit has plenty of cotton as there is a constant demand for the

material. In other places, many weavers stop making *ikats* and instead, weave other decorated textiles such as the floating weft weave technique referred to as *anyam* or *sulam* or *karap* or *sidan* which do not need dyeing and can be completed in a shorter time. They use polyester threads for the warp and other coloured threads or silver/gold threads as the weft threads for the designs.

Decline in the Indigenous Weaving Practice of the Desa Dayaks

Sintang is well known for its traditional Dayak *ikat* weaving, and most of the skilled weavers are the Desa Dayaks from Kelam Permai and Dedai Sub-Districts. The weaving tradition is carried down from generation to generation but underwent a decline in the 1980s. By then it was difficult to find any *ikat* weaving activities in villages (Maessen, 2014). The weaving knowledge is no longer passed down to the younger generations. The older weavers are getting fewer, and there were few young weavers. This decline is attributed to religion, development and global change. Religious conversion to either Christianity or Islam undermined the old religious beliefs and rituals inextricably tied to the weaving of traditional *ikats*. Many of the weavers are Catholics, and many have discarded the old beliefs and practices of their ancestors. Development into forest areas also meant more difficulty to source for raw materials such as dye plants and trees for producing the traditional *ikats*.

Today, many weavers have resorted to using the synthetic dyes, and this has a negative impact on the quality of the *ikat* products. Imported raw materials such as cotton are not cheap, and not many weavers can afford them. A few of these weavers are still planting their cotton and spinning their cotton threads which are very time-consuming and laborious. It is also increasingly difficult to find old *ikats* as overseas collectors have bought many. Only a few families who value their heirloom textiles still keep their old *ikats*.

The Desa Dayaks no longer live in longhouses, and most of them now live in individual houses in villages. Today only one longhouse remains, Rumah Ensaid Panjang, Kelam Permai District, Sintang Regency. This longhouse (*rumah betang*), rebuilt in 1986, is made of hardwood and has 28 biliks (room for one family) and 26 households with more than a hundred occupants. More than twenty years ago there was a longhouse at Ransi Panjang with thirty households, but they have moved on to build single houses, abandoning the longhouse which has fallen into ruin.

Revitalising and Preserving Iban Textiles Weaving Heritage

In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in the preservation and revival of the art and craft of traditional techniques of *ikat* textiles weaving. This was partly due to the role of individuals and stakeholders like The Tun Jugah Foundation, SIDS (Sarakup Indu Dayak Sarawak), Society Atelier Sarawak, UNIMAS (*Universiti Malaysia Sarawak*) and University of Malaya. Many non-governmental organizations have been active in reviving the weaving heritage due to notable individuals who are passionate in the art. In the beginning, only a small percentage of the weaving population are involved in these activities that are aimed at revival. The weaving population is very widely distributed, and therefore concentration is more towards the Kapit region where the majority of weavers are found. On the whole, the response is encouraging and positive. Perhaps this is because Iban weavers have been selling their *pua kumbu* for a long time basically to earn money for their children's education and, any assistance given which could help them earn more money are always welcomed.

Stakeholders

The Tun Jugah Museum and Gallery in Kuching, Sarawak, was set up by the late Puan Sri Datin Amar Margaret Linggi in 2000 and is targeted at reaching out to the urban population. She was a keen Weaver and collector, and she was very passionate about wanting to keep this intangible weaving heritage alive. In 1993, she started a weaving class at her resident working together with ladies from Kapit who are expert weavers. With the completion of the Tun Jugah building in 1999, she set up a weaving gallery at Level 4, where weaving classes were conducted to preserve and develop the traditional *ikat* textiles weaving of the Iban community. Located in the middle of Kuching city, it serves as a platform for the urban community to come and learn the art of traditional weaving. Currently, it is the only living museum showcasing Iban textile weaving in Malaysia. It has also attracted local visitors and tourists all over the world who wish to view the woven textiles and to observe the weaving techniques used in producing the *pua kumbu* and other textiles. Margaret also displayed her heirloom and antique *pua kumbu* at the museum aimed at giving awareness and understanding of the aesthetic values of the *pua kumbu* and the need to preserve the tangible heritage for the benefit of future generation. Most importantly, through this exhibition, the foundation hopes to inculcate interests among the community.

Among the activities of the Foundation aimed at revitalising and preserving the art are weaving workshops, exhibitions, competitions, talks, dialogues, *ngar* rituals, and weaving classes. One of the earliest events organized by the Foundation is the International Exhibition of Iban Ikat Fabrics at the Muscarelle Museum of Art, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia, the USA from 11th July to 16th August 1998, co-sponsored by the National Science Foundation, USA. About seventy *pua kumbu* from the collection of Margaret Linggi, Tan Sri Empiang Jabu and the Sarawak Museum were on display, with weaving demonstration by two master weavers from Kapit. The main objective of the exhibition was to introduce to the American and other foreigners, the unique traditional Iban fabrics and the complexity of producing them. In September 2004, the Foundation invited natural dye experts from Threads of Life, Bali, Indonesia, to give talks, demonstrations on natural indigo dyes, and to share their knowledge with the local weavers. The Threads of Life in Bali is a textile arts centre which work together with Indonesia's weavers towards sustainability in the traditional textile arts. From the workshop, the local weavers gained an insight into various dyeing techniques using a variety of natural dyes used by the Centre in Bali.

In recognition of her commitment to keeping the crafts heritage alive, Puan Sri Datin Amar Margaret was given a special award, the Seri Angsana Award, by the National Handicraft Development Corporation in 2001. She passed away in 2006 leaving a legacy, a museum and weaving gallery now named in her honour. Today the Foundation has continued to collaborate with other institutions such as SIDS, UNIMAS (*Universiti Malaysia Sarawak*) to revitalise, preserve and sustain the weaving practice. The Foundation has jointly organized weaving workshops and *pua kumbu* competitions with SIDS to encourage Dayak women to weave and, to promote *pua kumbu* as a cottage industry for Dayak women. Institutions like UNIMAS, through its' Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts, collaborate with the foundation for students' practical training placement at the weaving gallery, where the students learn weaving for three months to fulfil the University's requirement. Today, the Foundation has also become a centre for research and learning for students of all levels and local and foreign academic researchers especially in Iban textiles weaving.

Edric Ong, President of Society Atelier Sarawak, recognizing the skill of the weavers at Rumah Gareh, Sungai Kain, was one of the pioneers in revitalising and transforming Iban *ikat* weaving in the 1980s where he gave the weavers at Rumah Gareh a new material to work with, the silk yarn. He tested the yarn by selecting several weavers to experiment, and in the beginning, it was not easy as the silk yarn is so fine and they are used to tying the thicker

cotton. Iban weavers are quite adventurous in fact, and they are willing to try new materials, and they were successful in producing fine and high-quality silk *ikat* products. Unlike cotton yarn, silk yarn does not need pre-treatment as in the Iban *ngar* ritual. However, silk is expensive, and the weavers are not able to afford them. Ong continued to give the weavers silk yarn projects and was one of the people who started this system of '*beragih*' where the weaver produce two pieces, one for herself and one for the silk sponsor. His success with silk has attracted other weavers, but Ong has his selected group of weavers at Rumah Gareh. Other weavers from the same longhouse also wanted to try silk and approached The Tun Jugah Foundation and practically begged the foundation to supply them with silk yarn. Today the foundation has continued to provide silk yarn to skilled weavers from several longhouses in Kapit town and Sungai Kain. However, the *beragih* system has also led to competitive groups within the longhouse which can be unhealthy for the community. On the other hand, however, there has been a positive increase in the production of silk *pua kumbu* and modern products such as silk shawls which are increasingly in demand from both the local and foreign market.

Ong is also one of the few people who brought Iban *ikat* weaving to the international scene and brought fame to Iban weaving and Iban weavers such as Bangie anak Embol from Rumah Gareh, Sungai Kain, Kapit. Ong, through his position in the World Crafts Council, took the lead in international collaborative efforts such as the World Eco-Fibre Textiles Forum, held in Kuching once in two years, which is targeted at bringing together both local and international textile enthusiasts, researchers, artists and designers. Among the speakers for the WEFT Forum in 1999 and 2007 was Pastor Jacques Maessen from the Kobus Foundation in Sintang and he talked about the Desa Dayak weavers and the weaving situation in Sintang. Other stakeholders who took part in organizing some of this event were the Sarawak Museum, Kraftangan Malaysia (Malaysian Handicraft Development Council), The Tun Jugah Foundation, UNIMAS, and SIDS.

Tan Sri Empiang Jabu, the president of SIDS, played a leading role in encouraging the preservation and promotion of weaving as a traditional art form. SIDS is a voluntary organization of Dayak women in Sarawak, with branches in many parts of the State. Its members are mainly from the Iban community. SIDS members were continuously encouraged to take up the art. Through its Sibu Branch, SIDS has been active in organising State-wide *pua kumbu* competition. She has also been active in trying to promote the weaving art to the community and stressing the importance of preserving the tradition. Recently, a group of weavers has started to weave the *pua ikat* in a longhouse in Betong. She has also continuously given silk yarn projects to weavers of Rumah

Gareh using the system of *beragih*. She is also an avid collector of *pua kumbu*, and she owns her heirloom collection which she inherited from her ancestors who were also skilled weavers.

The University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, through the efforts of Dr Welyne Jeffrey Jehom, senior lecturer at the University, has brought knowledge on *pua kumbu* and its production to the people in West Malaysia and people from other parts of the world. Through the *Pua Kumbu* exhibitions she organizes at the University's Art Gallery and using new media and high technology in the exhibition areas, the visitors were able to explore and learn more about the *pua kumbu* of the Iban of Sarawak on a higher level. Her research and community engagement work for "Iban, natural dye and weaving industry" funded by High Impact Grant from University Malaya, has received: Malaysian Best Practice for Social and Economic Solidarity under the SuSy Project, France in 2015. She works closely with the Iban weavers at Rumah Gareh and is currently funded by the Malaysian Ministry of Finance to help weavers market their *pua kumbu* products on the global market. She has placed the Rumah Gareh longhouse on the World-Wide-Web, and one can search for them under 'Iban Sungai Kain' and 'Rumah Gareh' which contains a rich source of information on Iban textile weaving. Dr Welyne also gives silk projects to the weavers while at the same time, giving them new materials to experiment with but using natural dyes, such as bamboo yarn and combed cotton which is both comparably much cheaper than silk.

Weaving Communities in Sarawak

Iban weaving communities, groups and clusters can be found in different parts of Sarawak. In Kapit and also Sibul, urban weavers have come together as cluster groups or formal cooperative (*genturung*) groups. An example is a group of weavers who are staying in a housing area in Kapit town led by Jati anak Ju who is also a master dyer who can perform the *ngar* ritual. They have formed a group called *Genturung Sekaban* and have been actively getting projects from the government in the form of silk yarn. They have been encouraged by the government to submit their request as a group. This group has continued to perform the *ngar* rituals and to produce the traditional *pua kumbu*. They are also actively weaving using silk yarn. Most of them originally come from different longhouses, but they are somehow related to each other by blood and by marriage which is why they work well as a team. They still have their *bilik* in the longhouses which they occasionally visit. There are hundreds of weavers from Nanga Sebiro and Entawau, Balleh but more than half have moved to the town areas of Kapit and Sibul. There are also many scattered

urban weavers who were originally from Sungai Gaat, Sungai Merirai, Sungai Kain and Sungai Mujong.

Currently, we can find weavers in several longhouses in Kapit who are still actively making the *pua kumbu*. These include weavers from longhouses at Sungai Kain which is located in the interior region of Kapit and a few longhouses which are closer to the town area such as at Sungai Amang, Sungai Sesibau and a few more. There are also other weavers in other longhouses in Lubok Antu, Julau, Betong, Undop, Bintangor and Kanowit but further research needs to be carried. Rumah Gareh, Sungai Kain, is one of the longhouses where the traditional weaving practice has survived for many years and is revitalized as a result of the efforts of individuals and institutions. Their leader, the renowned weaver and master dyer, Bangie anak Embol, still performs the *ngar* ritual but using the Christian way as she has claimed. Thus, the weavers can maintain the dyeing of cotton using *engkudu* to achieve the deep rich red-brown colour sought after by many collectors. Many of the weavers also weave using silk provided by individuals and interested institutions, thus maintaining a continuous demand for *pua kumbu* products. At Rumah Jampang in Sungai Kain, we can also find several weavers and their master dyer, Gading anak Mayau. Many other longhouses no longer have any master dyer who can perform the *ngar*, which means they are not able to dye using *engkudu* but have to resort to other natural dyes and synthetic dyes. They can use silk yarn, but many cannot afford it.

Revitalising And Preserving The Weaving Heritage Of The Desa Dayak

In Sintang, the revival of the traditional weaving practice is a result of the efforts of notable individuals such as Pastor Jacques Maessen, a Dutch pastor with the Kobus Foundation. Maessen was one of the first few individuals who rediscovered the skills of the Desa Dayaks. Through the Kobus Foundation, Father Maessen began to revive the weaving practice, and he received an award from the Ministry of Culture for his efforts in preservation the cultural heritage. He began collecting *ikat* textiles in the 1970s to preserve them. In the beginning, the weavers were hostile and Maessen's efforts did not receive a positive response and the process to revive and revitalise the *ikat* weaving was slow. It was only in 1999 that efforts to revitalise Desa Dayak *ikat* weaving was accelerated and became well-known. This was a result of the collaborative efforts of various institutions namely, the Kobus Foundation, the Dian Swadaya Khatulistiwa Foundation, the PCRf (People Resources and Conservation Foundation, Indonesia), with the support of the Ford Foundation. This collaborative programme is called Restoring Dayak *Ikat*

weaving. The project goal is to strengthen the revival of the valuable Dayak *ikat* weaving culture by enhancing the present artistic, managerial, and institutional skills needed to reach self-sufficiency.

Five areas where there are remaining weavers are Ensaid Panjang, Ransi Panjang, Umin and Menaung. Most of the weavers were more than forty-five years old. These weavers were brought together to discuss their problems and other matters. This attracted other weavers from other *desa* to come forward, and in the year 2000, a cooperative of weavers was set up, and in the following year, this cooperative was officially registered as Jasa Menenun Mandiri (JMM). To date, the cooperative has more than 870 members and has been successful in helping the weavers economically (Sagita, 2007). The cooperative buys and sells *ikats* produced by the weavers and helps to preserve the *ikat* weaving culture by providing training to the weavers to enhance their skills.

The Museum Kapuas Raya Sintang plays an important role in revitalising the weaving heritage. The museum was officially launched in the year 2008 with the aim of serving as a cultural information centre, to promote the local culture, and to strengthen the local and international community relations. Among the exhibits on display are *pua ikat* woven by master weavers from Sintang. The Museum Kapuas Raya, together with the Kobus Foundation and JMM, takes a leading role in organizing the 'Festival dan Perlombaan Tenun Ikat Dayak' usually held at the Rumah Betang at Kobus. This rumah betang is called Tirta Dharma Weaving House, inaugurated in October 2009, built as a centre for culture activities such as this *ikat* is woven textile competitions and it also houses the office of the JMM Cooperative. The *ikat* exhibition and competition is held to increase awareness among the community on the need to preserve the local cultural heritage.

Weaving Communities in Sintang

At Rumah Ensaid Panjang village, there are several weavers, old and young, who are producing traditional *ikat* textiles dyed using natural dyes like *engkudu* (morinda) and *tarum* (indigofera). Other weavers are found in other villages such as Umin, Baning Panjang, Mangat and Ransi Panjang. Some of the older weavers still perform the *ngaos* mordanting ritual, and many of them are master weavers who can produce beautiful *ikat pua kumbu*. Most of them still use cotton because these are more affordable. Some of them buy their raw materials through the cooperative, JMM. However, the weavers also use synthetic dyes to make *ikats* for their use as costume and the tourist market. They also make smaller synthetic dye products such as sash and shawls which

are easier to sell. These they can sell directly to visitors who come to Ensaid Panjang longhouse.

Collaboration Across The Borders Of Borneo

Over the past few years, stakeholders from both Sarawak and Sintang have organized collaborated efforts via both large and small scale programmes with the aim of promoting strong ties and cooperation in preserving textile arts from both countries. On 21st October 2014, an international exhibition on textiles and costume, named “*Pameran Wastra Borneo: Serupa Tapi Tak Sama*” (similar but different) was held at the Sarawak Textile Museum in Kuching. The exhibition was organized as one of the efforts to increase cooperation between Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei Darussalam under the Malaysia Indonesia Social Economic Forum (Sosek Malindo)

It was a collaborative effort between the museums from Sarawak, Sabah, Indonesia and Brunei to expose the community to the history and uniqueness of the cultures of Borneo Island. Among the participating museums were Museum Negeri Propinsi Kalimantan Barat, Museum Kapuas Raya Sintang, Museum Negeri Propinsi Kalimantan Selatan, Jakarta Textile Museum, Brunei Museum Departments, Sabah Museum Department and Sarawak Museum Department and The Tun Jugah Museum and Gallery. It is hoped that this kind of exhibition will be able to help establish a harmonious bilateral relationship and promote an appreciation of the textile culture in strengthening national identity.

The Museum Kapuas Raya and the Tun Jugah Museum and Gallery have also worked together on a small scale and have forged a close relationship. Several years ago, a group of Desa Dayak weavers from Sintang visited the Tun Jugah Museum and Gallery, bringing their weaving looms to compare weaving techniques. They also took part in the WEFT Forum held in Kuching and have demonstrated their weaving techniques to the participants at the Forum. No doubt, their weaving techniques are very much similar to the weaving techniques used by the Iban community.

Conclusion

In any community, to encourage and to convince the younger people to be interested in taking up the weaving art is indeed a very challenging task. Stakeholders who share the same interest and objectives need to collaborate to revitalise and preserve the indigenous weaving tradition. In order to sustain the tradition, they need to jointly organize more weaving programmes and

activities which can inculcate interests and motivation among the younger generations. More collaborative programmes and activities should also be organized by both countries to promote closer ties to overcome challenges in the efforts to revitalise, preserve and sustain the indigenous textile weaving heritage of both countries.

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