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The Legacy of Indigenous Music

Asian and European Perspectives

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The Indigenous Music of Sarawak and Its Transmission Over the Last 60 Years with a Special Focus on the Music of the Kenyah and the Lun Bawang



Chong Pek Lin and Connie Lim Keh Nie

Abstract The East Malaysian state of Sarawak lies on the island of Borneo, the center of maritime South-east Asia. Sarawak's ethnic profile of 27 different indigenous groups, differs considerably from the rest of Malaysia. This chapter describes Sarawak's indigenous music and its transmission through informal and formal means over the last 60 years. In the 1960s, while Sarawak was still under strong British influence, Western music was predominant in the public sphere, but indigenous music culture also received considerable support from educationists. Several years after becoming part of the Federation of Malaysia, it was largely ignored in the school curriculum. Music and dance were only transmitted through communal based activities after school hours. With the growing awareness of the value of local culture as a tourist attraction since the 1990s, the state's music heritage has been showcased during numerous festivals and public events. Over the last 20 years, research into the music of specific groups especially those of the Kenyah and the Lun Bawang has enhanced the role of indigenous music in formal education. This chapter is divided into several different sections. Following a literature survey on Dayak music, Sect. 3 presents an overview of music education in Sarawak, Sect. 4 discusses the music of the Kenyah and its integration into the music education while Sect. 5 focuses on the music of the Lun Bawang. Finally, Sect. 6 traces the changing role and repertoire of the *sape* (boat-lute indigenous to Borneo) which has gained international prominence.

Keywords Sarawak indigenous music · Borneo culture · Kenyah songs · Lun Bawang music · Malaysia music Education

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