

Ethnic Identity Formation in Diaspora of Bajau Samah: An Ethnomusicological Study of Bertitik Music Ensemble in the Northwest Coast of Sabah, Malaysia

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Abstract : The Bajau Samah is a maritime ethnic community that inhabits the west coast of Sabah, Malaysia. The majority of these ethnicities embrace Islam and practice their own culture. Bertitik music ensemble is one of the musical practices performed in various social events, especially weddings. The ensemble, which combines several musical instruments including gongs, drums and kulintangan is played by six musicians to accompany various social events in the community. The position of the Bajau Samah in a multi-ethnic community such as Kadazandusun, Rungus, Suluk, Malay, Iranun and others exposes to the cultural activities with various artistic elements of the surrounding community. Western influences have also played an important role in the process of hybridity and acculturation in this society. Cultural change and the influx of foreign cultures have threatened the sustainability of this musical practice. This study aims to musicologically analyze the elements of bertitik ensemble that form the uniqueness of the cultural identity of the Bajau Samah Ethnic group. An ethnomusicological approach has been used to parse the essence of the bertitik music repertoire in depth. Ethnographic study design which comprises fieldwork, interviews, observations and document analysis as the main methods were utilized to collect data. Music recordings were transcribed in the form of musical notation and then analyzed based on the theory of "the norms of musical styles". This study reveals that musical elements featured in the ensemble represent the symbol and cultural identity to this ethnic group. The findings of the study were documented in the form of musicological analysis, audio and video as well as transcriptions of the musical notation of the repertoire of the music ensemble. This study is in line with the National cultural policy gazetted by the government, which is "Conservation, preservation and development of culture towards strengthening the foundations of National Culture through joint research, development, education, expansion and cultural relations" It will benefit various parties including students, teachers, academics, cultural arts activists and so on towards preserving the nation's cultural heritage as well as strengthening the spirit of nationhood among the people of various races and ethnic group in Malaysia.

Keywords : ethnomusicology, ethnic music, Malaysian music, cultural identity

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