

**CRAFT EXOTICA :
THE ROLE OF SABAH STATE MUSEUM DEPARTMENT
IN PRESERVING AND PROMOTING ETHNICS CULTURE
IN SABAH, MALAYSIA**

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1. Introduction

The Craft Exotica is an annual programme organised by the Sabah State Museum and the programme was the brain child of the former Director of Sabah State Museum, Datuk Joseph P. Guntavid, the 13th Director of the department. This programme is one of the many activities held at Sabah Museum which promoting Sabah cultural Heritage especially it's handicrafts and traditional games. The program was held for the first time in 2005 and continuously held every year in the month of May in conjunction with Sabah Fest and Pesta Kaamatan / Harvest Festival programme. In 2015, the celebration of this programme was changed to the month of July in honour of the Sabah State Museum's Golden Jubilee, and since then The Craft Exotica were held every July until today. Today the programme held not only at the Sabah Museum complex, but also at the regional Museums such as Agnes Keith House in Sandakan, Archeological Heritage Gallery at Bukit Tengkorak, Semporna and Keningau Heritage Museum in Keningau.

For this paper I will discuss about the importance of preserving and sustaining the cultural heritage of Sabah especially it's handicrafts and traditional games . The approach through this programme will ensure the cultural heritage of Sabah remain relevan from time to time.

2. Objectives

Sabah Museum Department has outlined a number of the objectives in the programme to ensure it's ultimate goal is achieved. The objectives are as follows :

2.1 Enhancing Local Cultural Craft.

Sabah is rich with cultural heritage and one of those heritage is the local handicrafts. Over the few decades, many of Sabah's fine handicrafts are forgotten especially by the new generations. Nevertheless, the Sabah Museum introduce a suitable programme that could foster the handicrafts culture among the people especially the young generations.

2.2 Local Handicrafts and Dance Exhibition.

Sabah have variety of unique handicrafts and traditional dances that should be preserve and display to the public and also to the visitors from abroad. Through this programme, some of these cultural treasures can be displayed and exposed to the public and visitors.

2.3 Highlighting The Local Handicrafts and Dances.

There are local handicrafts and traditional dances that rarely known or seen by public. Through this programme, the handicraft maker and also local traditional dance groups will have the opportunity to highlight their unique handicrafts and traditional dances to the public and visitors.

2.4 Opportunity to Visitor and Young Generation to Appreciate The Cultural Heritage Such as Handicraft and Traditional Dances.

The Craft Exotica programme are full with various activities such as handicraft demonstration and cultural dances performance. The handicraft demonstration will give the public an opportunity to learn and gain experiences on how to make unique Sabah handicraft. Besides that visitors will also able to watch and participate in the cultural dance performance. Through these approach, visitors not only able to have some fun, exposure and experience about our cultural heritage but most importantly to create awareness the importance of preserving Cultural Heritage.

2.5 Introducing The Variety Of Traditional Game To Visitors.

Many of our traditional games are sadly forgotten and rarely seen or played in this modern era. Most of the young generations prefer to play modern games such as playstation, mobile gadget and many more . Most modern games have it's disadvantages especially the sense of real communication among the players. With the introduction of Craft Exotica , it will give opportunity to young generation to not only to participate, see, learn or gain some experience about traditional games but most important of all is to create sense of enjoyment, and real two ways communication among the participant.

3. Participation

The success of this programme are achieve through the cooperation with many government agencies, schools, associations and public. Below are the agencies involved in this programme :-

a) Ministry of Tourism, Cultural and Environment

This Ministry which responsible for the cultural heritage in Sabah plays an important role in support and coordinating the implementation of the programme among other agencies.

b) The Ministry of Finance.

Supporting and approving funds for the programme.

c) Treasury Department of Sabah

Assistance the implement of the programme's budget.

d) Sabah Cultural Board

Coordinating the participants of cultural associations involved in this programme.

e) Department of Education

This department are responsible in coordinating the participation of students in the program.

f) Sabah Tourism Board

Sabah Tourism Board is one of the agencies under the Ministry of Tourism, Cultural and Environment. To make this program a success, a good promotion must be well implemented. Thus, Sabah Tourism Board's role is to have promote Craft Exotica locally as well as internationally.

g) Ethnic Group and Ethnic Association

Participation from ethnic groups and ethnic associations leads the success of this programme. Through their participation, variety of handicraft and traditional games from all over Sabah could be highlighted. Association such as Sabah Kimaragang Association, Bajau Samah Sabah Association, Brunei Sabah Association some of those association involved in the programme.

h) Students Participant (Primary School and Secondary School)

Students are welcome and invited to participate in this programme. Their participation are important for them to gain some exposure and experience about the handicrafts, traditional dances and traditional games in Sabah.

i) Civilians and Civil Servants

Other goals of this programme are the participation of public and civil servants. This programme will give exposure as well as to enhance awareness of the importance to preserving our heritage cultural among local public and civil servants in Sabah.

4. Activities

4.1 Handicraft Demonstration

Public or any associations who involved in this program will be given the opportunity to demonstrate their handicraft making skills. With the demonstration, visitors able to know how the handicrafts were made. They also will have the opportunity to participate through actual activity in the making of chosen handicrafts.

These demonstration will give a valuable and memorable experience to visitors. Handicrafts mostly demonstrated are baskets making (Barait) from Dusun ethnic Ranau, hat making (Sirung) from Makiang ethnic, basket making from Dusun

Tatana ethnic, Kuala Penyu, woving fabric from Dusun Boakan ethnic, Keningau, wood handicraft *Alud* (boat model) from Tombonuo ethnic, Pitas beads necklace from Rungus ethnic, Kudat and many other handicrafts from diverse areas in Sabah.

4.2 Cultural Performance

Various cultural associations from several districts in Sabah were also invited to participate in the program. These associations will perform their cultural performances according to the schedules of the performances. These performances receive most attention by visitors because of the unique and interesting traditional music and dances. The performances encompass the dances from Iranun ethnic dance, Kota Belud, *Sazau* Papar dance from Kadazan Papar ethnic, *Kuda Pasu* dance from Bajau ethnic Kota Belud, *Magunatip* dance from Murut ethnic Tenom, *Pokudinding* dance from Kimaragang ethnic Kota Marudu, *Sayau* dance from Murut Nabai ethnic Keningau, *Angalang* dance from Murut ethnic Nabawan, *Sumazau* dance from Kadazan ethnic Penampang and many more. This cultural performance not only be watch by the visitors but they also can participate in the dance with the dancers or play with the musical instruments.

4.3 Traditional Game Competition

Various traditional game that are also demonstrate and contested. Through this competition, visitors will have a chance to participate in the traditional game and get a chance to win a prize as well as gaining new experience. Traditional game that are select not only from the uniqueness but also suitable played by all group of ages and genders.

Traditional games that commonly contested are slingshot, blowpipe, Rampanau (walk on stick), 'Gasing', fishing and others.

4.4 Drawing and Coloring Contest for School Student

School students are among the younger generation who need to be guided and educate on the importance of preserving our cultural treasures. In addition, to provide exposure and recognition of this cultural treasure, schoolchildren are encouraged to participate in painting and coloring contests in conjunction with Craft Exotica. Drawing or colorings are commonly based on traditional motive, clothes and many more that

are related with culture. Through this method, school student will learn something different from what they had learned in school

4.5 Lucky Draw for Public

Lucky draw are side event while this event held. However, it can attract many visitors because they not only get the chance to visit and participate in the programme Craft Exotica but also get the opportunity to win lucky draw prizes.

5. Programme Impact

Since Craft Exotica programme was introduced in 2005, Sabah Museum Department has received such a positive response. According to the visitors statistic while this programme was held on July for the year 2016, 2017 and 2018 at 3 location that is at Sabah Museum Complex Kota Kinabalu, Agnes Keith House at Sandakan and museum of heritage Keningau at Keningau. Visitor statistics are as follows:

SABAH MUSEUM COMPLEX KOTA KINABALU

YEAR	LOCAL VISITORS	STUDENT	FOREIGN VISITORS	TOTAL
2016	5214	1427	1336	7977
2017	5306	1626	1724	8656
2018	5811	1057	2606	9474

AGNES KEITH HOUSE SANDAKAN

YEAR	LOCAL VISITORS	STUDENT	FOREIGN VISITORS	TOTAL
2016	893	36	360	1289
2017	713	78	439	1230
2018	913	134	439	1486

HERITAGE MUSEUM OF KENINGAU

YEAR	LOCAL VISITORS	STUDENT	FOREIGN VISITORS	TOTAL
2016	2171	650	120	2941
2017	1498	618	10	2126
2018	1845	1463	10	3318

According to the statistic for three year in a row, there's an increasing of local visitors and foreign specifically in the area from Kota Kinabalu and Sandakan showing impressive ascending. This escalation shows that this programme can attract the interest of visitors to join Craft Exotica Programme.

6. Conclusion

Artwork or handcraft and traditional games represent cultural heritage treasures country in general and state in particular. Craft Exotica programme are among the positive step taken from the government to liven up cultural treasures that are slowly disappear. The initiative by government will give oppotunity to the individuals or organizations who wish to see cultural treasure relevant along the current development but also will gain economic return from “Spill Over” visitors coming to the Craft Exotica programme. Thus, The Sabah Musuem Department will able to play role as one of the platform in promoting and preservation of Cultural heritage as well as a center for cultural heritage research.

References

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