

Material Culture: A Digital Documentation of the Art and Culture of the Saribas Malay, Sarawak

Budaya Benda: Pendokumentasian Digital Seni dan Budaya Melayu Saribas, Sarawak

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the use and application of material culture study methods to document and organise the cultural collections of the Saribas Malay community in Betong Division, Sarawak. The main objective of the study is to identify the Saribas Malays' awareness on the importance to document material culture. A documentation template based on material culture theory was designed to preserve and sustain cultural objects, starting with a practical application can be easily used and effectively implemented by the local community. This qualitative research used in-depth interviews to gather data on respondents' awareness on the importance of documenting material culture and their perception on using the template. The respondents were selected among Saribas Malays who make, use, keep and collect cultural objects. For the purpose of this study, Fleming's (1974) and Prown's (1982) models were adapted to construct a template to document information of the artefacts and as analytical tools. The findings from the interview sessions with the Saribas community showed that they were positive towards the effort to preserve material culture through documentation. The simple template proposed was sufficient to record basic information of the artefacts. Although this will take a while to complete, but in the end, this activity will be able to document the artefacts and be used as reference for academics, museum cataloguing and antique collection purposes.

Keywords: Material culture; Saribas Malay; Borneo; digital documentation; analytical tool

ABSTRAK

Makalah ini membincangkan penggunaan kaedah kajian budaya benda untuk mendokumentasikan dan menguruskan koleksi budaya masyarakat Saribas Melayu di Bahagian Betong, Sarawak. Objektif utama kajian ini secara amnya adalah untuk mengenalpasti kesedaran masyarakat Melayu Saribas terhadap kepentingan mendokumentasikan budaya benda. Justeru, satu templat dokumentasi yang praktikal dan mudah untuk digunakan oleh masyarakat setempat direkabentuk untuk tujuan pendokumentasian sendiri. Temubual adalah kaedah yang digunakan dalam kajian kualitatif ini untuk mengumpul data mengenai kesedaran responden tentang kepentingan pendokumentasian budaya benda dan persepsi mereka terhadap penggunaan templat dokumentasi. Responden dipilih dalam kalangan komuniti Melayu Saribas yang membuat, mengguna, menyimpan dan mengumpul objek budaya. Untuk tujuan penyelidikan ini, model Fleming (1974) dan Prown (1982) diadaptasi dan disesuaikan untuk membina templat untuk mendokumenkan maklumat artefak dan sebagai instrumen analisis. Dapatan kajian daripada temubual dengan kumpulan sasaran menunjukkan petunjuk positif terhadap usaha untuk memelihara budaya benda melalui dokumentasi dan templat ringkas yang dicadangkan dikatakan mencukupi untuk merekodkan maklumat asas artifak-artifak tersebut. Walaupun usaha ini dijangka akan mengambil masa untuk dilaksanakan sepenuhnya, tetapi dalam jangka panjang, amalan ini akan mendidik masyarakat untuk terus memelihara warisan dengan menyediakan dokumentasi yang sah yang membolehkan ianya digunakan sebagai rujukan untuk tujuan akademik, katalog muzium dan koleksi antik.

Kata kunci: Budaya benda; Melayu Saribas; Borneo; pendokumentasian digital; alat analisis

INTRODUCTION

Material culture is a term from the archaeological and ethnological domain. The term is often used in the study of the artefacts found in the art and culture of a community (Prown 1982). However, in recent years, material culture study approaches have

been used and expanded into other related fields such as culture, antiquity and artistry because of its suitability for studies associated with heritage and ethnic identity.

This study focuses on the Saribas Malays' material culture that reflects the community's long existence, culture and identity. Saribas region is

located in the southern part of Sarawak, comprising of five districts – Betong, Spaoh, Debak, Pusa and Meludam, and under the jurisdiction of the Betong Division administration. The Malays constitute majority of the people in Betong. According to data released in 2013 by the Sarawak Planning Unit (SPU), Malays made up 35, 917 out of a total population of 57,730, equivalent to 62%. The study of Saribas Malay cultural material is new and the need for the study is critical. To date, the documentation of the community, particularly in term of their material culture is rare. Saribas is an important part of Sarawak’s history, as a region and community among the Five Lost Kingdoms namely Sarawak, Samarahan, Kalaka, Saribas and Melanau that constituted old Sarawak. This was portrayed in some of the earliest primary sources such as *Silsilah Raja-raja Brunei* and *Nagarakertagama* by Prapanca, a manuscript from Jawa believed to be written in 1365 (Sanib 2012; 2013).

Documenting material culture is important since they exist out of necessity and use in daily life, with own its own meaning and presence significance. The responsibility to document certainly lies with the artisans and every member of the community by transferring cultural-related practices from one generation to the next. For better organisation, a gallery or museum is desirable. However, before all this can be done, a “Cabinet of Curiosity” and activities to gather materials belonging to the community need to be in place to facilitate more focused research. Most communities are affected by

modernisation and globalisation that have influenced various aspects of their lives, both directly and indirectly. These have influenced material culture and/or intangible things such as practices, customs and rituals. Some are abandoned, becoming less significant to the community as a whole. This abandonment not only removes the intrinsic aspects of belief and customs, but also eliminates the relevant physical material, the makers, skills and value of manufacturing, indigenous knowledge and manufacturing techniques (Aishah 1999; Halina 1999). All these hinder developments, the preservation and the sustainability of both art and culture. Leiberick (1989) stated that the critical need for material culture study of a particular race or society should be in the interest of certain things, the sustainability of a society, the existence of a community’s heritage and promoting and upholding the identity of the community.

There is a vital need for more wide-spread recognition of the importance of material culture in shaping and buttressing cultural worlds, in maintaining social continuity, in providing a sense of heritage, and in promoting and reinforcing ethnic identity.....Such programs would provide an accurate and informed foundation and further promoting awareness and appreciation ofcultural heritage and ethnicity through such avenues as publication, arts and crafts development, travelling exhibitions, regional museums and school workshops in traditional skills (Leibrick 1989: 199).



FIGURE 1. Exemplification of Common Practice in a Society
Source: Sarawak Museum, 2019

MATERIAL CULTURE STUDY: THE PURPOSE

The study of material culture is the responsibility of the members of a community in order to preserve their own culture, instead of relying on outsiders. Local communities have abided with governments' and its agencies directives to preserve and document their culture since the colonial times. This has also been done by the Western societies from the Renaissance, Baroque and Rococo era, preserving and documenting their cultural heritage in various forms including antiquities, visual culture, art history, iconology and iconography.

The collection and production of cultural objects have long been practiced among the Sarawak Malays, especially aristocrats keeping brass decorative objects, pottery, *songket*, a Malay traditional woven fabric and *keringkam* (a traditional handstitched of gold or silver threads embroidery of the Sarawak Malay). In most Malay houses, these collections are common sights. However, the activities have not been documented, for instance written records of purchase or gift or in visual forms such as photographs, illustrations or paintings. Some that exist have not been systematically organised and managed by the owners, or by the trustees in the families. The inherent value of these collections has not been seriously assessed by anyone, in term of their historical significance, or even concerning the owner's sentimental value of the collection.

The involvement of the community in documenting and organising this material culture is important to instil a new culture that can be extended across generations. This can sustain the existing culture and identity of the Saribas Malay community and protect against corruption of the practices. The suggested template is based on a simplified and refined combination of two models and theories of material culture, namely by Fleming (1974) and Prown (1982), and adapted for local use and addressed the needs of relevant cultural materials. It is designed to be simple to use and adopted by the Saribas Malay community, regardless of whether they have a limited or diverse collection of cultural objects.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MATERIAL CULTURE STUDY

The cultural objects are translated into various forms by scholars according to their respective fields, including artefacts and objects. Cultural objects are

all manmade objects, used and adapted based on cultural context, beliefs and values of life that shape the identity and sustainability of a group of people and nations themselves (Dant 2005; Fleming 1974; Geertz 1973; Hodder 2012; Malinowski 1932).

Prown (1982) stated that the importance of cultural studies is based on four elements: (i) cognitive level; expertise and wisdom, (ii) human activity, (iii) accessibility of material and manufacturing technology and (iv) value. In cultural object study, objects are used as the primary data, linking human relationships with the material; symbolising various aspects of culture and society, beliefs, values and environment.

Cultural objects are used as physical evidence to understand human history and cultural activities in anthropology and archaeology (Lavenda & Schultz 2010). In term of technology, the study of cultural objects is used as an investigative method to trace how an object was used, created and designed in the past, by associating it with the patterns and changes in usage, technological development and innovation (Schiffer & Skibo 1987; Schiffer et al. 1994; Skibo & Schiffer 2009; Schiffer et al. 2010). Hence, cultural object studies help scholars interpret the various aspects of civil society being studied.

MATERIAL CULTURE STUDY OF THE SARAWAK SARIBAS MALAY

Being the most culturally diverse community in Malaysia, the people of Sarawak possess a range of material culture in various form of arts, crafts, instruments, visual arts, textiles and manuscripts that determine the cultural traits of ethnic (Welyne 1999). Each object made required indigenous knowledge starting from the selection of raw materials to use of specialised tools and invented instruments. The documentation of some material culture in Borneo was never initiated by the locals but rather started by explorers, colonial personnel, geologists, or missionaries at the end of the twentieth century (Sellato 2016). A large portion of Sarawak's material culture remained unknown and lost through time. Currently, there is no documented Sarawak material culture database to cater for tourism and educational purposes. Sellato (2016) stated that there is limited information on documented Sarawak material culture for scholars and curators to study, making it difficult to understand the society's history, culture, values and beliefs. Thus, in term of the larger picture, the main purpose of this project is to digitally

preserve and document Sarawak material culture. Specifically, the data is to cater for related purposes such as tourism and education in various material culture studies including cultural anthropology, archaeology and curatorship. This project consists of a web portal making the data easily accessible online via the Digital Sarawak Centre of Excellence (DSCoE) a Sarawak state government initiative.

The documentation of Sarawak's artefacts, only started in the latter part of the nineteenth century and all the documentation were kept in museums with limited access. Most of the information available for scholars and curators were very brief, providing little insight into the communities' life – their culture, history, manufacturing techniques, material and functions. Hence, this research focuses on establishing a digital database of Sarawak's material culture in the form of photos, videos and documentation that will provide inclusive information to cater to scholars and the public.

Cultural studies of Sarawak Malay society are still new. Although Sarawak is part of Malaysia, there are significant differences in local wisdom and heritage between Sarawak Malays and Malays in Peninsular Malaysia (Awang Azman 2010). The study of Sarawak Malay culture had mostly focused on the Malays in Kuching, portrayed in books by Hajjah Maimunah (1999) 'Glimpses of Malay Life in Sarawak' and Siti Zaharah Abang Husaini (1991) cited in (Awang Azman 2010). The two books showed the lives of Sarawak Malays, only in villages around Kuching, covering in general culture, language, heritage and traditional activities.

Although Saribas is part of Sarawak's history and believed to be the first region inhabited by the Malays, there has never been a comprehensive documented history of the Malays there. Many artefacts show the existence of Malay from Sumatera and Brunei, as well as proof of Islamic influences

in Saribas. Cultural studies of the Saribas Malay community remain scarce. Hence, the critical need for this research. The next section discusses some of the significant material culture of the Saribas Malay.

MATERIAL CULTURE STUDY OF THE SARAWAK SARIBAS MALAY: *TIKAR BERGERANG*

Tikar bergerang or berkerang (Saribas local term) is a *pandan* mat with open weave pattern. This mat is believed to have originated from Saribas. It is rarely made and found in other regions in Sarawak. Pusa, Tuie', Spaoh and Semarang are several Malay villages in Saribas where the mat is still made and used (Sahari, 2018c). The uniqueness of the mat lies in its intricate open weave pattern, so fine that it creates a lace pattern impression, framing the body weave of the mat. *Empelam* (mango), *bunut* (local fruit) and *katak* (frog) are some common patterns that weavers imitate, inspired from the natural surroundings to create geometrical and symmetrical patterns of *tikar bergerang*.

For the Saribas Malays, *tikar bergerang* is a non-utilitarian mat. It reflects their social values and indigenous technology in mat weaving and can be easily distinguished from other mats from other parts of Sarawak for its distinct features. In the past, the mat was used as a prayer mat and for ceremonial purposes in weddings and celebrating new-borns.

Whether *tikar bergerang* is part of the cultural influence from Sumatera or other regions spread through the Islamic diaspora has not been ascertained since no study has found any relationship between the mats found in Saribas with similar looking mats from Sumatera, made by the Minangkabau Malays and the Romblon mats from the Philippines.

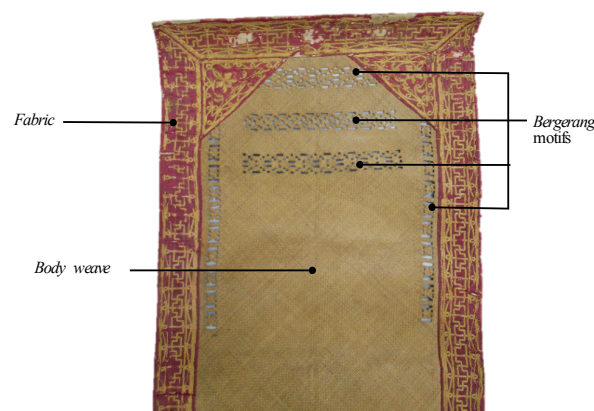


FIGURE 2. Tikar Bergerang of Saribas
Source: Author, 2011

Figure 2 shows tikar bergerang from the Sarawak Museum collection, used as a prayer mat. The mat was decorated with gold thread embroidered fabric. In another variation, this prayer mat comes with a pouch to keep the telekung (white praying veil for Muslim women).

MATERIAL CULTURE STUDY OF THE SARAWAK SARIBAS MALAY: TRADITIONAL FOOD KNOWLEDGE

The Saribas Malays are known for sago- and nipah-based food such as *gula apong* (palm sugar), *garam apong* (palm salt) *cuka apong* (palm vinegar), *jarik mayang* (palm blossom delicacy), *air sadap* (palm blossom juice) and the sago tree (locally known as *mulong*) producing *lemantak* (sago-wet flour). This is explained by the abundance of these two common swamp vegetation of river mangrove and peat swamp, living along the rivers in Saribas (Tsuji et al. 2011), where most Malay villages are situated. Sabihah (1972) found that *garam apong* was used in barter trade by the Saribas Malays since the mid-16th century with the Dayak for rice and jungle produce, which suggested the Saribas Malays, relied on the river and its terrestrial resources to produce food and sustain their livelihood.

An interesting fact to ponder is to understand why Saribas Malays consume sago palm- and nypa-based food and produce cultural object such as food wrapping and packaging. This may explain

how the environment relates to demand, relating to the sociology of consumption. Cultural ecology or ecological anthropology explains human dependence on culture and how it mediates human adaptation to their environment. Often, diet and basic material resources of any population depended largely on what their local environment provide (Aishah 1999; Lavenda & Schultz 2010).

Sago palm- and nypa-based food consumption and cultural object production among the Saribas Malays could also be due to communal preference. Although coconut was widely available, most food, food packaging and wrapping materials were mainly produced from nypa purely out of cultural preference.

Each culture, ethnic group or communities have their own specific traditional food. In this sense, traditional foods refer to foods that originate from a particular area, district or sub district, regions or countries and consumed by generation after generation. Different regions have different types of food based on culture, related to its history, which shaped its characteristics (Mohd Shazali et al. 2013). Therefore, food connects people and is a cultural manifestation.

A minority of the Saribas Malay community in Kampung Tambak still produce *gula apong* as a mean of livelihood (Sahari et al. 2018a). Thus, traditional equipment and tools used in palm sugar production still exist (as shown in Figure 3). The figure also shows the materials and the process involved in the production.



FIGURE 3. The Implements used in *Gula Apong* Production of
(a) *Buluh Tuak*, (b) *Pernaluk*, (c) *Ngujak* and (d) *Ludan* and *Solen*
Source: Author, 2018

Traditional food constitutes an important element of culture, identity and heritage and it is often recognized by people with unique characteristics that linked to regional identity and quality. Foods either raw or fresh, cooked or fermented are wrapped and packaged in purpose. Packaging is a necessity as means to preserve food and make it easily portable,

using whatever material found at hand in the rural areas of their origin. In the olden days, the wrappers used as it is, or manipulated into rolled/cylindrical, open box, closed box, pouch, helical, conical forms.

Similarities in food wrapping and packaging from other places, within other parts of Sarawak are realized, but slight variation can also be seen

in terms of terminology, materials and methods used due to many concerning aspects. For instance, *kelupis* in Saribas is made of glutinous rice and cooked in *santan* (coconut milk) and the wrapper is made of *daun palas* (palm young leaf). As compared

to the northern part of Sarawak such as Bekenu and Lawas, the Kedayan people use *daun biris/nyirik* to wrap *kelupis*. This variety of *kelupis* is wrapped as *suman* (*lepat* style) and boiled instead of steamed as the common practice in Saribas.



FIGURE 4. Saribas Malay Traditional Food Wrapping and Packaging
Source: Author, 2018

The Malay people of Saribas's choices of wrapping and packaging materials depend on how the material suit the intention. The community practiced basic principles of traditional food wrapping and packaging methods and design variations including:

1. the characteristics of the content: solid, liquid or semi liquid
2. the purpose to enhance flavour, aroma or medicinal value
3. the availability and accessibility of the material within the environment

Figure 4 shows various traditional food wrapping and packaging of the Saribas Malays, ranging from the simple to the complex, they come in various forms and shapes; cylindrical, conical, helical, boxes, wrappers and containers. They are not merely a representation of arts and crafts, but also reflect the technology, indigenous knowledge and skill of the community. Nypa leave is used largely by the community for traditional food wrapping and packaging, being the preferred choice and in abundance. This shows the importance of the nypa tree to the Saribas Malays and their close connection to nature, which also relates to culture.

Traditional food knowledge includes production and processing methods, consumption, wrapping/packaging, contributes to material culture, and an intrinsic part of the identity and culture of the people who make and use them. The information related to traditional food and objects associated with it are part of local knowledge to be preserved digitally.

MATERIAL CULTURE STUDY OF THE SARAWAK SARIBAS MALAY: *JONG* FOR SPECIAL CEREMONIAL OCCASION

Jong (litter) is a transporter, a decorated implement for carrying a person, paraded around the village to celebrate special ceremonial occasions like weddings and *khatamal Quran*. In Saribas, the *jong* is still used, although it is no longer borne by human porters, but with wheels attached for easy maneuverability.

The design of *jong* is inspired by cultural object such as *perahu* (boat) and flora and fauna. Bright colour paints and glitter paper were frequently used to decorate the transporter. Figure 5 shows a recent *Khatamal Quran* ceremony organised by the primary school and local community in Kampung Serabang, Saribas.

The parade is usually led by a group of *hadrah*, a music performance with different types of traditional drum instruments such as *tar* (similar like *kompang*) and *gendang* (a Malay drum) and accompany with *dhikir* (song recital). *Bunga manggar*, *pulut kuning* and *bunga telur* are the components of decorative and giveaway items that commonly integrate with the parade. The Saribas Malay community has been practiced this substantial ceremonial event for a long ago to manifest their gratitude to Allah for the prosperity and to celebrate the accomplishment in life.

Although the region is recognised as one of the Five Lost Kingdoms of Sarawak, due to the lack of research and findings into the culture of the Malay community, researchers find it difficult to



FIGURE 5. Jong's Design
Source: Author, 2019

obtain data on the region. Hence, the urgent need to document and catalogue the cultural heritage of the Saribas Malays. The findings of this fundamental cultural study will be the starting point for further studies on the relationship between the Saribas Malay community and its cultural heritage. This will help the understanding of the various aspects of the community's own culture, socio-economic, values, beliefs, language and indigenous knowledge. Further studies such as comparative studies between the Malay community in other parts of Sarawak and Peninsular Malay can also be realised.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OF MATERIAL CULTURE

Due to the wide-ranging cultural diversity of objects, Prown (1982) suggested that classification of objects should be according to functions for cataloguing purposes for the convenience of accessing information. The six categories are:

1. Art (paintings, drawings, print, sculpture, photography)
2. Diversions (books, toys, games, meals, theatrical performances)
3. Adornment (jewellery, clothing, hairstyles, cosmetics)
4. Modifications of the landscape (architecture, agriculture)
5. Applied arts (furniture, furnishings, receptacles)
6. Devices (machines, vehicles, musical instruments, implements, scientific instruments)

Nevertheless, these categories can still be modified according to the needs of the study and the cultural interests of the communities studied. Table 1 shows a template of the documentation worksheet used to record the basic information of objects being examined for cataloguing and documenting purposes.

Scholars in various disciplines have formulated many methods to analyse objects, such as Finley (1990), Fleming (1974), Prown (1982) and Skibo and Schiffer (2009). Fleming's and Prown's models were adapted for use in this study. The Fleming's model provides a direct and simple way to record basic information, namely the five basic properties of an artefact: history, material, manufacturing technique, design and function. The Prown's model was adapted for artefact analysis to provide a useful mean to look at an artefact as a reflector and to understand its relationship to human, cultures, values and technologies. By combining these two models, artefacts are not seen as merely physical objects, but representative of the lifestyle, livelihood, values, and beliefs of the communities.

This social science research applies a community-involved method, participatory or collaborative research approach to gather data by purposely engaging the selected community members to share their perspectives and local knowledge. For the purpose of this project, the research team engaged the Saribas Malay community to collect and document data. The community engagement approach is useful and able to expedite the whole research project and ensure the validity of data, as

it is obtained from the root community itself. Prior to the interviews and self-documentation exercise, the respondents were briefed on the documentation method and guided in using the template.

CATALOGUING AND DOCUMENTATION

Cataloguing and documenting activities are very important for a small museum and personal collectors for two reasons, enrich the intrinsic and cultural value of the object and enhance the collection administration (Ericksen & Unger 2009). The proper and systematic documentation information will benefit people who has interests in material culture related research, can benefit from the comprehensive record. The research will become more effective if the information is documented accurately and easily accessible. Computer is seemed to be an essential tool, not only that it replaces the manual cataloguing work but also able to manage and digitize large files in the form of documents, images and audios.

At the early stage of the project, the research team approached and collaborated with two

organisations, Sarawak Museum Department and Sarawak Craft Council. These bodies assisted the researchers with the documentation and cataloguing system, providing access to records, data and documents and connecting the research team to the community.

Sarawak Museum Collection Management System (SMCMS) is a digital platform implemented by the Sarawak Museum Department currently, which uses QR Code for getting access to artefacts' information. Figure 6 shows one of the artefacts exhibited in the Sarawak Museum gallery. Upon scanning the code using any scanning application installed in an electronic device, a brief description in Malay will appear on the device's screen. The content displays the users' or/and makers' ethnicity, material, function and weight. Since the function of the artefact can be ambiguous, the information can be perceived as inaccurate and unreliable. Besides, Malay is the only language available, visitors who do understand Malay cannot benefit from the system.
























FIGURE 6. Sarawak Museum Collection Management System (SMCMS)

Source: Author, 2018

The main objective of this research is to document all cultural objects made, used and possessed by the Saribas Malay community. The project seeks to prioritise traditional objects that may become extinct, with other objects in mind, as a first step to preserve material culture of the community. The respondents were selected from the Saribas Malay community. The public and artisans were interviewed, asked to provide information and viewpoint on their general awareness towards the

conservation of material culture and their perceptions about the proposed documentation template. From the analysis, it was found that the respondents were generally aware of the importance of documenting material culture for future reference, knowledge and their related terminology for the younger generation. This will help them understand their own culture, history and identity. The respondents also found that the template was easy to understand and agreed to self-document to preserve their cultural artefacts.

TABLE 1. Documentation Worksheet Template

Object	Basic Information	Notes
<p>Name: </p> <p>Category:</p> <div data-bbox="334 865 693 1208" style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">  Photo/illustration </div> <p>Calling info (Object classification) </p>	<p>History </p> <hr/> <p>Material </p> <hr/> <p>Construction Techniques </p> <hr/> <p>Design Dimension:  Form/shape/style/ornament:</p> <hr/> <p>Function </p>	
Legend	Description	
<p> Basic Properties</p>	<p>Five basic properties of an artefact:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> History</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> Material</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> Construction</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> Design</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> Material</div> </div>	
<p> Object Details</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> Object Name & Category</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> Object Image</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> Object Classification</div> </div>	
<p> Notes</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">  Additional notes </div>	

Source: Author, 2018


The awareness and perceptions of the respondents were critical, and provided important insights into the local communities' acceptance and willingness to embark on the conservation program.

Table 1 shows the proposed documentation worksheet template, which has been adapted from Fleming's (1974) and Prown's model (1982). It contains five basic properties in order to yield sufficient information on the artefact. The template consists of three main categories: (1) Object

Details – name, category, photo/illustration and classification, (2) Basic Information – history, material, construction technique, design and function and (3) Notes – any additional information related to the object.

Table 2 shows the sample application of the documentation worksheet. The worksheet recorded one of the apparatus used by the community in the *gula apong* (palm sugar) production, *buluh tuak*.

TABLE 2. Sample Application of Documentation Worksheet

<p>Name: Buloh tuak (Bamboo container)</p>	<p>History This material culture emerged from the gula apong (palm sugar) production activity.</p>	<p>The object is sometimes replaced with a plastic container.</p>
<p>Category: Receptacle/Container</p>	<p>Material Bamboo</p>	
	<p>Construction Technique Cutting the bamboo to the required length</p> <p>Design Dimension: Ø 8 -10 cm and ↑50 cm height</p>	
	<p>The original form is retained.</p>	
	<p>Function Container to collect the sap of the apong flowering stalk. The container need to be smoked prior to use to ensure it is completely dry. The presence of moisture in the container will ruin the sap, making it sour and affecting the quality of the palm sugar.</p>	
	<p>Receptacles (Applied Arts)</p>	

Source: Author, 2018

CONCLUSION

From the interviews conducted with the Saribas Malay community, generally, most of them were not aware of the importance of material culture, which explained their ignorance and lack of effort to conserve and document cultural artefacts inherited from their ancestors. This was due to the impact of modernity that caused rapid changes in their lifestyle and values. The impact of this change affected the sustainability of indigenous knowledge and technology of material culture production and use.

Material culture study is a study of things, used to gain insights in understanding the various important aspects of a community like culture, social, economic activity, trust, value, wisdom and technology. Lack of documentation of the material culture of the Saribas Malay necessitates this

study since Saribas was once an important part of Sarawak's history. The community were positively inclined towards the effort to conserve their material culture through self-documentation using a simple template.

This study attempted to establish a comprehensive inventory and digital database, documenting existing objects and those nearing extinction for conservation purposes. The results of the cataloguing and documentation help researchers to obtain and analyse data, which help explain and provide a holistic understanding of the culture, history and significance of the Saribas Malay community from both historical and current perspectives related to the people of Sarawak and Malaysia generally.

The initiative to document digitally material culture will take time to complete, but in the end, this project will be able to document material culture

to be used as reference for academics, museum cataloguing and antique collection purposes. This helps scholars to interpret the cultural and past materials related to the community and to make this available and known to future generations.

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