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Musical Heritage and Cultural Identity: Interpreting the Symbolic Meaning of Silotuang in Dayak Bidayuh Life

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A B S T R A C T

This study aims to preserve and maintain the traditions and local wisdom values of the Dayak Bidayuh community in Jagoi Village through investigations conducted to enhance understanding of Indonesia's rich cultural diversity. This research addresses the lack of appreciation for the traditional musical instrument Silotuang, especially among the younger generation. In the face of rapid globalization, many traditions are at risk of extinction, making it crucial to document and analyze the values in the "Mighty of Silotuang" music performance, as well as its reflection in daily practices. Using an ethnographic approach, this research involves direct observation, particularly during the preparation process until the conclusion of the Silotuang music performance. In-depth interviews were conducted with community leaders, traditional musicians, and the local community around Jagoi Babang. The data collected, documented, and analyzed to reveal how local wisdom is embedded in rituals, symbols of traditional music, and daily practices. These findings aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Silotuang musical instrument and offer recommendations for maintenance traditional music in social cultural aspects. This study concludes that preserving local wisdom strengthens cultural identity and pride within the Dayak Bidayuh community in the Jagoi Babang. These findings highlight the importance of the contribution of the younger generation in understanding and appreciating living cultural heritage to address the urgency of intangible cultural heritage conservation.

A. INTRODUCTION

The Dayak Bidayuh Jagoi ethnic group is one of the indigenous communities residing in Jagoi Village, Jagoi Babang District, Bengkayang City, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. This group is renowned for its rich and unique traditions and local wisdom, which are deeply rooted in their interaction with the natural environment

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(Sumarni et al., 2023). The Dayak Bidayuh in Jagoi Babang people uphold their cultural heritage with pride, demonstrating a profound connection to nature and their surrounding ecosystems. This cultural system mirrors the ethnic diversity in Indonesia (Ramadhan, Imran, Ismiyani, et al., 2023). One of the most significant aspects of their cultural life is their art and music, particularly the traditional musical instrument called Silotuang. This instrument is not merely a source of entertainment; it [Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International](#)

embodies profound meanings and serves as a medium to express their identity and cultural values in everyday life. This is in line with the findings of (Binder et al., 2025) which show that music and culture help build a sense of belonging through the expression of identity and strong social connectedness. The Silotuang musical instrument, can be played in *Gawai Soak* ritual (Luthfi, 2022), healing rituals, such as *Bisiak* (Ardiana, 2017), as a substitute instrument when the Gong cannot be present in the ritual. Furthermore, this musical instrument can serve as an accompaniment for dance in both ritual and entertainment events. Additionally, the Dayak Bidayuh Jagoi community is highly skilled in agriculture and nature-based daily activities (Hasanah et al., 2016). They possess extensive knowledge of plants, animals, and their natural surroundings, inherited from their ancestors. This expertise enables them to sustain their livelihoods and maintain harmony with nature, reflecting their commitment to environmental stewardship and cultural preservation. Because customs and traditions are part of the culture of every society which includes cultural values (Ramadhan, Imran, Hardiansyah, et al., 2023). The geographical area where the Dayak Bidayuh Jagoi traditions thrive is rich in biodiversity and natural resources. Jagoi Village is characterized by vast forests and swiftly flowing rivers, which are integral to their way of life (Suwartiningsih et al., 2018). The uniqueness of the nature and culture of Dayak Bidayuh Jagoi is a great potential in the development of culture-based tourism. (Kutlu et al., 2024) suggest that cultural heritage can strengthen the attractiveness of tourist areas as long as it is accompanied by the protection of its authentic value.

They believe that their cultural identity and wealth of traditions are inseparable from their existence as a community. The link between music and cultural heritage is also shown by (Yu et al., 2025) who analyzed the Tuhu musical instrument as an active cultural entity in the process of identity formation. This is in line with the belief that cultural identity and rich traditions are integral to the existence of a community, making music an expressive medium that represents shared social and historical values.

With a strong sense of unity and love for their ancestral heritage, the Dayak Bidayuh Jagoi people strive to preserve and nurture their traditions amidst the ongoing challenges of modernization and globalization. Local wisdom values hold a pivotal role in the lives of the Dayak Bidayuh Jagoi people. These values encompass various aspects of life, ranging from their interactions with nature to social norms that govern interpersonal relationships (Marzuki, 2020). Culturally, these values are evident in their arts, music, and traditional dances, which are powerful representations of their identity. Spiritually, their local wisdom teaches a deep connection between humans and the universe, as well as reverence for ancestral spirits believed to protect and bless their lives.

However, the forces of social change, modernization, and globalization pose significant challenges to the sustainability of the Dayak Bidayuh Jagoi traditions and local wisdom.

The allure of modern trends and urban lifestyles can potentially erode the traditional values passed down through generations (Muhammadiyah, Mas'ud. Bashori, Muzakki. Dewi, Resnita. Mangera, Elisabet. Nurbaiti. La'biran, 2024). According to the Silotuang music artist, this musical instrument is threatened with extinction, which can be seen from the behavior of the younger generation who are less actively participating in playing Silotuang at ritual and entertainment events. Furthermore, the players of the Silotuang music are usually the elderly who still preserve and care for this traditional music. This reinforces the urgency of the need for strategic steps in Silotuang preservation, one of which is through an educational approach. (Ding & Aletta, 2024) suggest that traditional music be made part of the formal curriculum, to strengthen culture-based education. This approach supports the idea of integrating Silotuang in the learning of local arts and culture, not only as a revitalization effort but also as a way of building cultural awareness and identity of the younger generation from an early age. In fact, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy has designated Jagoi Babang District as a tourist village. However, the reality on the ground shows that the cultural potential, especially traditional music, is not relevant due to the lack of attention from the supporting community towards these traditional musical instruments that embody societal values. Although Jagoi Babang Sub-district has been designated as a tourist village, the lack of community involvement in preserving traditional music reflects a serious challenge to the sustainability of local culture. The dimensions of globalization, cultural tourism, and the risk of commodification are important concerns in traditional music preservation. (Y. Zheng et al., 2025) examined how the cultural value of Chinese opera can influence tourist behavior, suggesting that local communities' understanding and engagement with their cultural heritage is crucial to attracting tourists in a sustainable manner. Cultural values can drive creative economy cultural products as long as they maintain their original value and function (Dong & Li, 2025).

Such shifts threaten their cultural identity and the continuity of their ancestral heritage. It is therefore crucial to understand these impacts and strive to strike a balance between embracing modernity and preserving tradition. The importance of maintaining a balance between modernity and tradition not only impacts on cultural preservation, but also on the psychological aspects of the individuals involved in it. (Zhou et al., 2025) added that a strong cultural identity can increase individual psychological resilience, supporting Silotuang's position as an instrument of Dayak Bidayuh identity.

This research is expected to have substantial benefits for policymakers in formulating strategies that prioritize the preservation of local cultures. By gaining a deeper understanding of the local wisdom encapsulated in Silotuang, government programs can be developed to support cultural preservation and the ethnic identity of the Dayak Bidayuh Jagoi community. Unlike other studies, this research specifically focuses on the representation of local wisdom values through Silotuang, a unique tradition of the Dayak Bidayuh Jagoi people. This targeted approach offers distinct and profound insights into the cultural heritage of the community. For the Jagoi people, this research provides an opportunity to better comprehend and appreciate the local wisdom and cultural heritage they hold dear. This enhanced understanding can bolster their pride in their cultural identity and inspire younger generations to safeguard and continue these traditions. The primary goal of this study is to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the traditions and local wisdom of the Dayak Bidayuh Jagoi ethnicity. Thus, the research holds significant academic value while also having a tangible impact on strengthening cultural identity, expanding awareness of cultural diversity, and supporting the preservation of Indonesia's diverse cultural heritage.

B. METHOD

The research employs a qualitative methodology with an ethnographic approach. According to Dosinaeng (2020), ethnographic studies analyze various phenomena from the perspective of natural cultural contexts (Firmaningtyas & Jatmiko, 2024). This method involves direct interaction with research subjects and field observations, aiming for an in-depth exploration of the culture, traditions, and values of the Dayak Bidayuh Jagoi community. Researchers actively participate in observations, interactions, and daily activities to gain a nuanced understanding of the community's inherent values. Furthermore, the ethnographic approach incorporates in-depth interviews with key informants to better understand the cultural context being studied. The goal of ethnography is to produce a comprehensive description and interpretation of social and cultural life from the perspective of the subjects under study.

The ethnographic method is particularly relevant for investigating the representation of local wisdom values in Silotuang within the Dayak Bidayuh Jagoi ethnic group, as it facilitates a profound exploration of their culture, traditions, and societal values. Through direct observation, participation in daily life, and in-depth interviews, ethnography enables researchers to understand how these values are embodied in the community's practices and everyday life. Observations are conducted by directly monitoring the community's activities, while interviews provide detailed answers and opinions from informants, including community leaders, traditional practitioners, and local residents. Additionally, documentation is collected through interview transcripts, field notes, and relevant materials (Prasetyo, Kamarudin, and Dewantara, 2019).

The research is conducted in Jagoi Village, home to the Dayak Bidayuh community in West Kalimantan,

Indonesia. This village is known for its rich traditions and culture, including the presence of Silotuang in community rituals and entertainment. The subjects of the research consist of various elements of the community, such as traditional leaders, cultural practitioners, and local residents. The research instruments include several data collection methods designed to obtain in-depth information about the local wisdom values associated with the Silotuang musical instrument. Direct observation was conducted from the preparation to the implementation of the Silotuang music festival in May 2024 to observe cultural practices and social interactions within the Dayak Bidayuh Jagoi community. In-depth interviews with key informants, namely Mr. Ahau as the Silotuang artist, and Mr. Miftah as the Silotuang craftsman. In addition, the researchers will collect documentation data, including field notes and related materials to support the analysis. Purposive sampling techniques will also be used, so the combination of these instruments is expected to provide a holistic understanding of the societal values represented in Silotuang traditional music.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study emphasizes the importance of preserving local culture, particularly the traditional musical instrument Silotuang, as an effort to prevent the extinction of traditions that have endured for centuries. Originating from Jagoi Village, Jagoi Babang District, Bengkayang Regency, Silotuang is a legacy of the Dayak Bidayuh ancestors. Within the realms of education, sociology, and the arts, this research provides deep insights into how Silotuang functions beyond merely a musical instrument. As widely recognized, humans and culture are inseparable entities, with humans acting as both supporters and preservers of culture (Sitorus et al., 2024). This is also evident in Silotuang, which serves as an instrument for welcoming guests and accompanying traditional rituals. Traditional arts not only serve as entertainment, but a means of strengthening a sense of unity and togetherness. (Ramadhan, 2021). Furthermore, in the context of this research, Silotuang in a musical performance is not merely a means of entertainment but also a symbol of cultural identity.

1. Silotuang as the education

With its long history, Silotuang has become an integral part of community life, reflecting local wisdom values passed down from generation to generation. The cultural diversity of Indonesia is a blessing that offers great potential for national progress (Hakim & Darajat, 2023). In the context of education, Silotuang can serve as an effective medium for teaching local wisdom values to the younger generation. This is in line with the interview results with Mr. Ahau, that by learning Silotuang, children can understand the history and meaning behind the musical instrument, as well as the techniques needed to play it. Ahau, 2024).

Silotuang can serve as an effective learning medium to introduce the younger generation to their cultural heritage. Through this form of art, local wisdom values can be learned and preserved, thereby strengthening the

nation's cultural identity (Mahmudah et al., 2021). By learning Silotuang, children not only learn how to play the instrument but also understand its meaning and historical significance. Silotuang learning not only shapes musical understanding, but also strengthens cultural awareness and local history in children. This demonstrates the importance of value-based preservation. In the realm of technology and preservation, (Wang et al., 2025) serta (Taenzer, 2025) offer data-driven musical transcription and analysis approaches, which enable precision documentation of musical elements such as Silotuang. This study supports the potential of digitizing traditional music for long-term preservation purposes. This fosters pride and love for the local culture while encouraging active participation in preserving traditions (Salmin et al., 2024). One such effort can be seen in the traditional Silotuang music festival in Jagoi Babang. Rooted in the spirit of local cultural preservation through active community participation such as in the Silotuang Music Festival in Jagoi Babang, (Purba, 2025) dan (Mazlan et al., 2025) assert that the integration of cultural heritage into education and community-based tourism is an effective strategy to maintain the sustainability of traditions while strengthening the cultural identity of local communities. Silotuang can serve as an effective medium for teaching local wisdom values to younger generations.

By learning about Silotuang, children can grasp the history and meaning behind the instrument, along with the techniques required to play it. Musically, mastering the traditional Silotuang helps develop motor skills and the coordination of both hands. The diverse timbres of each Silotuang string require players to focus on rhythmic patterns so the resulting music harmonizes. The use of Silotuang as a traditional musical instrument is increasingly relevant in introducing the concept of sonic heritage. As shown by (Zihana & Chaysalina, 2023) the visual representation of Angklung Paglak plays a role in strengthening cultural identity. In line with this,, (Schofield & Wright, 2020) emphasized the concept of sonic heritage as a means of forming a sense of community through musical practices, such as playing Silotuang, can strengthen a sense of community and increase awareness of local cultural heritage. The interlocking rhythmic patterns reflect traditional community values of mutual cooperation and collaboration, further reinforcing the instrument's role as a cultural symbol.

Figure 1. The Silotuang Community Comprising Students



This initiative not only enhances students' knowledge of local culture but also fosters a sense of pride and appreciation for their cultural heritage. By integrating Silotuang into the educational curriculum, schools in the region can play a pivotal role in preserving this tradition. Socio-cultural education strengthens the cultural resilience of Dayak communities amid globalization (Ramadhan et al., 2025). Such efforts also encourage active youth participation in cultural activities, ensuring that traditional values and practices are passed down to future generations. Incorporating Silotuang into formal education not only emphasizes its artistic and cultural significance but also helps instill a deeper understanding of community identity and unity. As (Veber et al., 2023) showed that music school educators' perceptions of local musical heritage shape the sustainability of cultural education, this is relevant to a deeper understanding of traditional values, such as Silotuang. Furthermore, (Yi, 2025) examines the importance of time and space dimensions in cultural identity, which is in line with efforts to introduce Silotuang in the curriculum, which can strengthen cultural awareness and strengthen unity within the community. Through this approach, educational institutions can serve as a bridge between historical cultural practices and the dynamic modern world, making traditions like Silotuang a living and evolving part of the students' lives.

2. Silotuang as the education Silotuang in the social context of the Dayak Bidayuh community

From a sociological perspective, the Silotuang musical instrument reflects the social structure and values held by the Dayak Bidayuh community. Music often serves as a medium for expressing group identity, and Silotuang is no exception. In this context, Silotuang functions as a tool to strengthen social bonds among community members (Ahau, 2024). The festivals held to promote Silotuang also play a role as spaces for social interaction, where people can gather, share stories, and celebrate their cultural heritage. Along with the festival's role in foregrounding Silotuang as a space for social interaction,, (Brown et al., 2025) examined the function of traditional vocal music in conveying social values and community identity. Through this celebration, vocal music serves not only as entertainment, but also as a means of strengthening relationships between community members, creating a common space to share and celebrate a valuable cultural heritage. Thus, Silotuang is not merely a musical instrument but also a symbol of unity and collective identity for the Dayak Bidayuh people.

Figure 2. Bipokat Traditional House



In this context, the festivals promoting Silotuang serve as spaces for social interaction, where people can come together, share stories, and celebrate their cultural legacy. By revitalizing public spaces such as the Bipokat Traditional House, the community not only creates a venue for Silotuang performances but also builds a stronger sense of community. As noted (Dong & Li, 2025), traditional rituals such as Silotuang strengthen cultural communication between community members, deepening their understanding of their traditions and identity. This was also reflected in the observation on May 3, 2024, when the community directly participated in the festival preparations, cleaning the area around Bipokat and creating spaces for sitting and socializing. These public spaces become centers for social and cultural activities, where the younger generation can learn, practice, and interact with elders who possess knowledge and skills in playing Silotuang. However, elders often serve as guardians of traditional knowledge and are often concerned about the weakening of sacred elements when rituals turn into performances (Aryandari & Adenta, 2025) (Aryandari & Adenta, 2025).

a. Musical Silotuang

In the realm of art, Silotuang holds significant aesthetic value. This musical instrument is made from Toling Manah Basah bamboo, with three strings taken from the bamboo skin (Ardiana, 2017). The instrument is played by striking it with sticks made of wood. The right hand strikes the sticks, while the other hand holds the hollow left side of the Silotuang, creating a distinctive musical resonance. The choice of bamboo is due to its uniqueness and beauty. The process of making Silotuang involves skills and creativity that are passed down through generations. One end of the bamboo segment is drilled to form the top of the Silotuang, while the bamboo body is shaved to the width of two finger joints. This thinning process forms the resonance hole easily, shaped like two equilateral triangles (Miftah, 2024). Once the strings are made, a rattan piece called "gelangan" is shaped. These are attached to each end of the string, producing a specific tension and vibration when struck, as seen in Figure 3. Additionally, there is "Badadn," a thinly carved piece of wood in a hexagonal shape, which clamps the strings on the Silotuang.

Figure 3. Aesthetic Organology of Silotuang



art plays a significant role in preserving culture (Ardiansyah et al., 2024), and Silotuang is a tangible example of how art can bridge the past and the present. Through Silotuang performances, the community not only enjoys the beauty of the music but also experiences the deeper meaning embedded in it. This creates a rich and profound experience for the listeners and provides musicians an opportunity for self-expression. In line with this thought, the inheritance of philosophical values in Nanyin performance art allows the younger generation to better understand the profound meaning of musical expression, which is not only entertainment, but also cultural reflection (Yongjie, 2024). Silotuang possesses high aesthetic value. The selected bamboo not only considers quality and durability but also aesthetic value and beauty as an expression of the Dayak Bidayuh community (Efriani et al., 2024). The process of creating Silotuang involves craftsmanship and creativity passed down through generations. Art plays a crucial role in preserving culture, and Silotuang exemplifies how art can connect the past to the present. Through Silotuang performances, people not only enjoy the beauty of the music but also feel the profound meaning within it. This creates a rich and deep experience for the audience and offers musicians a platform to express themselves.

b. Innovation in the Silotuang music performance

This study also emphasizes the importance of innovation in preserving local culture. By revitalizing public spaces such as the *Bipokat* traditional house in Jagoi Babang, the community hopes to create a venue for sustainable cultural activities. These public spaces not only serve as venues for Silotuang performances but also as centers for social and educational activities. By involving the younger generation in the planning and execution of activities in these spaces, they will feel a sense of responsibility for preserving their culture. Furthermore, the festivals held to promote Silotuang also serve as a platform to attract the attention of local governments and the wider public to the importance of preserving local culture. With support from various stakeholders, including the government, more initiatives are expected to arise for preserving the Silotuang musical instrument and its accompanying traditions. This creates synergy between the community, the government, and the younger generation in efforts to safeguard valuable cultural heritage. As Silotuang is preserved, it is important to ensure that this process is not only limited to aesthetic elements, but also considers the impact of globalization that may alter the original meaning of the culture. Active participation of the local community in preserving this heritage is necessary to prevent commodification that diminishes the value of the culture. Close collaboration between the community, government, and the younger generation will strengthen efforts to maintain the authentic meaning and historical value of Silotuang. (Zulkifli et al., 2025) analyzed aesthetic transformation as a response to global cultural dynamics, which can also happen to musical symbols such as Silotuang. However, (Tica, 2025) warns of the risk of cultural commodification, where identity symbols can be reduced to market objects. This is supported by (S. S. Zheng, 2025) who examines identity hierarchies in transnational cultural landscapes. This study serves as an important reminder that the

preservation of Silotuang must involve community participation so as not to be trapped in commodification that destroys the original meaning. Humans, as bearers of culture, play a crucial role in the preservation of the Silotuang musical instrument. Preservation is not only about maintaining tradition but also about allowing others to learn from life and reflect on cultural values, thereby building a strong and sustainable cultural identity (Putri & Yanuartuti, 2020). The performances of Silotuang, whether presented in a large-scale format or as part of musical compositions, represent tangible steps in preserving and maintaining the values of the Dayak Bidayuh community. The training process for compositions involving artists, local communities, students, and learners generates motivation to learn and pass down the ancestral creations to younger generations. Parents also respond positively when their children are actively involved in this positive activity. The values of mutual respect and cooperation can be created from the training process all the way to the performance of Silotuang music.

In the context of education, sociology, and art, Silotuang functions as a tool for educating the younger generation, strengthening social bonds, and expressing creativity. By involving the community in preservation efforts, it is hoped that local culture can continue to thrive and evolve, making a positive contribution to society as a whole. Through innovation and collaboration, we can ensure that cultural heritage like Silotuang is not only remembered but celebrated and preserved for future generations. Multiculturalism and ritual practices complement each other in building social harmony and collective identity in Indonesian society. (Ramadhan et al., 2024). This also gives them an opportunity to contribute to the development of local culture, thereby fostering a stronger sense of ownership over their cultural heritage. The festivals held to promote Silotuang also serve as platforms to draw attention to the importance of preserving local culture from both the local government and the wider public.

Figure 4. Togetherness in the Silotuang festival



With support from various stakeholders, including the government, it is hoped that more initiatives will emerge to preserve the Silotuang musical instrument and its accompanying traditions. Through this

collaboration, it is expected that more educational and training programs will be developed to help the younger generation learn about Silotuang and how to play it. This is in line with the opinions of (Knapik & Król, 2023) and (Storm, 2025) which emphasize that culture-based development and identity resilience are very important in supporting the sustainability of local communities, including in the strategy of preserving traditional musical instruments as part of the cultural heritage that must be maintained and developed. In the context of education, sociology, and art, Silotuang serves as a tool to educate the youth, strengthen social bonds, and express creativity. By involving the community in these preservation efforts, it is hoped that local culture will continue to thrive and evolve, making a positive contribution to society as a whole. The preservation of local culture, especially traditional musical instruments, is very important in maintaining the cultural identity of the community.

As stated by Brown et al. (2025), traditional musical instruments reflect social values and community identity. By involving the community in this effort, preservation is better maintained, enriching collective memory and enabling the younger generation to contribute to maintaining the existing cultural heritage (Ding & Aletta, 2024; Huang et al., 2024). Through innovation and collaboration, we can ensure that cultural heritage such as Silotuang is not only remembered but also celebrated and preserved for future generations. Thus, this research not only provides an overview of the importance of Silotuang in the context of Dayak Bidayuh culture but also highlights the vital role that public spaces can play in preserving and revitalizing traditions. The Bipokat traditional house in Jagoi Babang serves as a symbol of hope for the community to continue celebrating and preserving their cultural heritage. Through education, social interaction, and artistic expression, Silotuang can become a bridge connecting the younger generation with their cultural roots while also creating a stronger, empowered community. Therefore, efforts to revitalize public spaces and preserve the Silotuang musical instrument are crucial steps in maintaining the sustainability of rich and diverse local culture.

D. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the preservation of *Silotuang* is vital for maintaining the cultural identity and social cohesion of the Dayak Bidayuh community. The synergy between the community, government, and youth enables sustainable cultural initiatives that link heritage with modern social life. Reviving traditional spaces like the Bipokat house provides both a cultural and educational platform for transmission across generations. Ultimately, *Silotuang* embodies collective identity and creativity, proving that innovation and collaboration are key to ensuring the continuity of local traditions in the face of change.

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