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# Jurnal Antropologi: Isu-Isu Sosial Budaya

| ISSN (Online) 2355-5963 |



## Preserving Through Change: Gamal Music in Contemporary Dayak Jawant Culture

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### ARTICLE INFORMATION

Submitted: 13<sup>rd</sup> April 2025Review: 27<sup>th</sup> April 2025Accepted: 18<sup>th</sup> May 2025Published: 10<sup>th</sup> June 2025

### KEYWORDS

Modernity, Dayak, Gamal Music, Preserving, Cultural identity

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### A B S T R A C T

This research investigates how Gamal music in the Dayak Jawant community of West Kalimantan, Indonesia has evolved from sacred tradition to contemporary cultural expression, examining how these adaptations reflect the negotiation between cultural preservation and modernization. Traditionally integral to rituals and spiritual life, Gamal music has undergone significant transformations through the adoption of new instruments and styles influenced by global and economic factors, as observed during events like the XI Dayak Gawai Week. Through ethnographic methods, this study examines the balance between heritage preservation and innovation. The research explores contested notions of cultural authenticity, indigenous responses to modernity, and music's role in preserving cultural identity. While acknowledging traditionalist concern, this study argues that these adaptations are essential for Gamal music's continued relevance and survival. By documenting this music evolution, this research contributing to understanding how traditional art forms can develop sustainable pathways forward, maintaining cultural significance while responding to external pressures. This model potentially applies to other indigenous cultural expressions facing similar challenges in rapidly changing environments. This study ultimately reveals how Gamal music serves as a dynamic vehicle for cultural expression, adapting to contemporary context while preserving core communal values.

### A. INTRODUCTION

Gamal music is essential to Dayak Jawant rituals, especially for welcoming guests, and uses instruments like Gendang and Gong. Musicians perform the Sikong Segi' ritual to seek permission from ancestral spirits, reflecting the spiritual significance of traditional practices<sup>1</sup>.

However, recent observations, particularly during the XI Dayak Gawai Week in Sekadau Regency on July 15, 2022, revealed a significant shift in the presentation and perception of Gamal music. The performance by Sanggar Pangsuma M'paguk at the Youth Center

longhouse showcased an evolved form of Gamal music, featuring additional instruments and more intricate playing patterns. This adaptation, used to accompany a creative dance competition rather than its traditional ceremonial context, sparked considerable interest and debate among attendees.

The transformation of Gamal music prompts important questions about cultural preservation amid modernization, reflecting broader changes in Dayak Jawant society. As traditional practices evolve, they often embody shifts in social structures, economic conditions, and cultural values<sup>2</sup>. Understanding how Gamal music has changed could provide insights into the community's changing relationship with their

<sup>1</sup> Mircea Eliade, "The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion, Trans. .," *Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc* 229 (1959).

<sup>2</sup> Clifford Geertz, "'From the Native's Point of View': On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 28, no. 1 (1974), <https://doi.org/10.2307/3822971>.

heritage and the pressures of contemporary life. Secondly, the transfer of a sacred musical tradition to a secular, competitive context raises complex issues of cultural authenticity and spiritual significance. This shift echoes broader global trends where ritual practices are recontextualized for entertainment or competitive purposes<sup>3</sup>, prompting us to examine the potential consequences for the music's spiritual essence and cultural meaning. Thirdly, the perceptions of community members, especially elders and cultural guardians, are crucial in understanding the acceptance or resistance to these changes. Their views can illuminate intergenerational dynamics and the negotiation between tradition and innovation within the community<sup>4</sup>.

Elders often serve as repositories of traditional knowledge and may express concern about the dilution of sacred elements when rituals become performances. Conversely, younger practitioners might view contemporary adaptations as a necessary evolution that ensures cultural survival in changing times. This tension creates spaces for dialogue where communities actively negotiate which adaptations are acceptable and which cross boundaries of respect. The authority granted to cultural gatekeepers and the processes through which communities collectively determine authenticity become critical factors in how traditional practices evolve while maintaining their cultural significance.

The debate over cultural assimilation and preservation is complex, with assimilation promoting integration but risking cultural loss, while preservation ensures continuity and community cohesion, though it may clash with modernization. Balancing these processes is crucial for maintaining cultural diversity and heritage in an interconnected world<sup>5</sup>.

The central issue explored in this study is how Gamal music's recontextualization—marked by the incorporation of electronic instruments, improvisational styles, and performance-oriented formats—reflects the Dayak Jawant's adaptive strategies to maintain cultural relevance amid external pressures. While traditionalist view these changes as a dilution of sacred meaning, proponents argue that such innovations ensure the music's survival and appeal to younger generations. This dichotomy raises critical questions: Can a tradition retain its spiritual essence while adapting to secular demands? How do communities navigate the competing imperatives of cultural authenticity and creative evolution?

Through ethnographic fieldwork, including participatory observation during the XI Dayak Gawai Week and interviews with musicians, elders, and youth, this research examines Gamal music's evolving role as both a cultural relic and a living, adaptive practice. Framed by theories of 'strategic traditionalism' and the 'indigenization of modernity', the study

positions Gamal music's transformation as a microcosm of indigenous resilience. By analyzing shifts in instrumentation, performance context, and intergenerational perceptions, this paper illuminates how the Dayak Jawant reinterprets tradition to forge sustainable pathways for cultural continuity.

The findings contribute to broader anthropological discourses on how traditional art forms negotiate modernity. As globalization intensifies, Dayak Jawant's experience offers a model for understanding how indigenous communities worldwide might balance preservation with innovation—ensuring cultural survival without surrounding to homogenization. Ultimately, this study argues that Gamal music's secular adaptation is not a departure from tradition but a reimagining of its, one that sustains communal identity while engaging with the realities of a rapidly changing world.

## B. METHOD

This study employs an ethnographic research method, which emphasizes participatory observation and in-depth understanding of a specific culture or community group. The research methodology for this study is designed to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the evolution of Gamal music within the Dayak Jawant community. It begins with participatory observation, scheduled for March 17, 2024, where the researcher will immerse themselves in the community, observing both traditional and contemporary Gamal music practices. The final step in the methodology involves a rigorous data analysis process. Following Miles and Huberman's qualitative data analysis framework, this process will involve three key stages: data reduction, where collected information is sorted and focused; data presentation, where the reduced data is elaborated into a coherent narrative; and conclusion drawing, where findings are synthesized to address the research questions<sup>6</sup>.

## C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. The Evolution of Gamal Music

Gamal music, integral to the Dayak Jawant community in Borneo, plays a vital role in their social and spiritual life. This musical tradition is characterized by traditional instruments like gongs, drums, and bamboo flutes, which create a rich soundscape. The bronze gongs vary in size and tone, while drums made from hollowed trees provide rhythm. Bamboo flutes, or "suling," contribute haunting melodies. The arrangement of these instruments reflects the Dayak Jawant philosophy of communal harmony and nature's

<sup>3</sup> Gretchen Sullivan Sorin and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage.," *The Journal of American History* 87, no. 1 (2000), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2568073>.

<sup>4</sup> John P. Clark, Margaret Mead, and George A. Pettitt, "Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation

Gap.," *Contemporary Sociology* 1, no. 2 (1972), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2062813>.

<sup>5</sup> E Hobsbawm and T Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> Djoko Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Kualitatif Dan R&D*, Penerbit Alfabeta, 2010.

balance. Their music often mimics natural sounds, such as flowing rivers and rustling leaves, emphasizing the interconnectedness of life in their worldview.

Gamal music serves both as entertainment and a spiritual connection to ancestors, promoting community welfare. Musicians are highly respected as spiritual intermediaries, preserving sacred melodies. Modern Gamal music has evolved, blending traditional instruments with electronic ones, creating a unique fusion of ancient and contemporary sounds. This evolution includes improvisation and global influences like jazz, making it more appealing to younger and broader audiences. This evolution manifests in performance where the resonant tones of traditional string instruments intermingle with synthesized bass lines and digital sampling. The renowned ensemble Gamal Fusion Collective exemplifies this approach, layering the hypnotic rhythms of the bendier frame drum with programmed beats while maintaining the music's essential modal structures.

During annual festival performances, the musician demonstrates how jazz-influenced improvisational techniques have transformed the traditional call and response patterns. The other performer incorporates loop pedals to build textural landscapes beneath traditional vocal melodies, making the ancestral sounds more accessible to global audiences while honoring the music's ritual functions. This evolution includes improvisation and global influences like jazz, making it more appealing to younger and broader audiences while maintaining its cultural significance.

However, this modernization is controversial, with traditionalists concerned about cultural dilution and supporters seeing it as necessary for the music's survival and relevance. The modernization has also opened up new performance venues, including urban music festivals and international world music events, raising awareness of Dayak culture beyond its traditional boundaries.

The evolution of Gamal music has significantly influenced its transmission to younger generations. By incorporating modern elements, it has rekindled interest among performers, balancing innovation with tradition, reflecting a global trend of indigenous art forms adapting to modernization and globalization. Improved technology has exposed Dayak communities to global music trends, inspiring young artists to blend traditional Gamal elements with contemporary genres. This fusion creates unique styles appealing to both local and international audiences, demonstrating how cultural traditions can adapt and thrive while maintaining their core identity. Despite these changes, there remains a strong desire within the Dayak Jawant community to retain the cultural essence of Gamal music, with many artists and leaders working to strike a balance between innovation and tradition to

ensure the music remains relevant and serves its social and spiritual functions.

This delicate balancing act between adaptation and preservation reflects the broader challenges faced by indigenous cultures in a rapidly changing world. The evolution of Gamal music serves as a microcosm of these global dynamics, illustrating how traditional art forms can be reimagined to ensure their survival and relevance while striving to maintain their cultural integrity and spiritual significance.

In the Dayak Jawant community, Gamal music's changes symbolize cultural resilience and active identity negotiation. These adaptations have sparked revitalization efforts that blend traditional documentation with innovative interpretations, showcasing the community's creativity in preserving heritage amidst change. This process exemplifies "strategic traditionalism," allowing the Dayak Jawant to maintain their cultural identity while engaging with global cultural exchanges. Ultimately, this evolution highlights their agency in shaping their cultural future, navigating the complexities of authenticity and cultural direction in a rapidly changing world.

## 2. Recontextualization of Gamal Music

Tables and Figures are presented center and cited in the manuscript. The figures should be clearly readable and at least have a resolution of 300 DPI (Dots Per Inch) for good printing quality.

Traditionally, Gamal music has held a sacred place in the Dayak Jawant community, particularly in rituals such as welcoming honored guests. In these settings, the music served as a bridge between the physical and spiritual worlds, with specific instruments and patterns carrying deep symbolic meanings<sup>7</sup>. For example, the rhythm and melody were believed to invoke the presence of ancestral spirits, blessing the event and the participants.

The performance of Gamal music in its traditional context was imbued with profound spiritual significance. Before playing, musicians and tribal elders were required to perform a ritual called *Sikong Segi*, seeking permission from ancestral spirits. This practice aligns with Mircea Eliade's concept of the "sacred" in traditional societies, where certain activities are elevated beyond the mundane and connect the community to their cosmological beliefs<sup>8</sup>.

The instruments used in traditional Gamal performances, such as the *Gendang* (drum), *Canang Bondih* (small gong), *Tawak* (medium-sized gong), *Gong*, and *Kromong* (set of small gongs), each had specific roles and symbolism<sup>9</sup>. The deep, resonant sound of the gongs, for instance, was often associated with the voice of ancestors. At the same time, the rhythmic patterns of the *Gendang* were believed to

<sup>7</sup> R Malinowski, "The Role of Traditional Music in Dayak Communities of West Kalimantan," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 49, no. 2 (2018).

<sup>8</sup> Eliade, "The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion, Trans. ."

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<sup>9</sup> Margaret J. Kartomi, "The Processes and Results of Musical Culture Contact: A Discussion of Terminology and Concepts," *Ethnomusicology* 25, no. 2 (1981), <https://doi.org/10.2307/851273>.

mimic the heartbeat of the community, unifying participants in a shared spiritual experience.

The structure of traditional Gamal performances was closely tied to the ritual's purpose. For welcoming ceremonies, the music might start with a slow, solemn tempo to invite the spirits' presence, gradually building in intensity to create an atmosphere of celebration and unity. The duration and progression of the music were often dictated by the ritual's requirements rather than by aesthetic or entertainment considerations<sup>10</sup>.

The contemporary use of Gamal music in creative dance competitions diverges from its original spiritual context. Now, it enhances the aesthetic appeal of performances, reflecting a broader trend of recontextualizing traditional cultural elements for new, often secular purposes. The core musical elements remain, but their meanings and functions have evolved to align with changing societal needs and values<sup>11</sup>.

The performance by Sanggar Pangsuma M'paguk at the XI Dayak Gawai Week exemplifies this transformation. In this new context, Gamal music has been adapted to suit the requirements of a stage performance and competition setting. The addition of new instruments and more intricate playing patterns suggests a focus on musical complexity and audience engagement rather than spiritual communion<sup>12</sup>. Traditional bamboo flutes have been complemented with amplified string instruments, while performers arranged themselves in a semi-circle formation facing the audience rather than the traditional inward-facing circle used in communal rituals. The group introduced dramatic tempo shifts and synchronized movement patterns clearly designed for visual impact, electing enthusiastic applause from spectators. Most notably, audience members engaged as passive observers rather than active participants, marking a significant departure from the call-and-response interactions that characterize traditional Gamal performances. These innovations in instrumentation and more intricate playing patterns suggest a focus on musical complexity and audience engagement rather than spiritual communion.

The structure of the music in these modern performances is likely to be more standardized, with defined durations and arrangements that cater to the format of dance competitions. The emphasis may shift from the music's spiritual power to its ability to showcase the dancers' skills and creativity. This adaptation demonstrates the flexibility of cultural traditions and their capacity to find new relevance in changing social contexts<sup>13</sup>.

However, this recontextualization raises important questions about cultural authenticity and the preservation of traditional knowledge. While the adaptation of Gamal music allows for its continued presence in Dayak Jawant's cultural life, it may also lead to a gradual erosion of its deeper spiritual meanings. The absence of rituals like Sikong Segi' in these new performance contexts could potentially disconnect younger generations from the spiritual aspects of their musical heritage<sup>14</sup>.

On the other hand, this evolution can be seen as a form of cultural resilience. By finding new venues and purposes for Gamal music, the Dayak Jawant community ensures its continued relevance and appeal to younger generations. This adaptive approach aligns with the concept of "strategic traditionalism," where aspects of traditional culture are consciously reframed to serve new purposes in changed circumstances<sup>15</sup>.

The shift from ritual to performance also reflects broader societal changes within the Dayak Jawant community. As society becomes more integrated into the global economy and exposed to diverse cultural influences, traditional practices inevitably evolve. The adaptation of Gamal music can be seen as a microcosm of these larger transformations, illustrating how the community negotiates between maintaining cultural distinctiveness and engaging with contemporary realities<sup>16</sup>.

The transformation of Gamal music within the Dayak Jawant community is evident in its evolving instrumentation and playing styles, reflecting shifts in cultural values. Traditionally, performances featured sacred instruments with distinct roles: Gendang (drum): Served as the rhythmic foundation, symbolizing the community's heartbeat. Canang Bondih (small gong): Created intricate rhythms, representing nature spirits' voices. Tawak (medium gong): Produced deeper tones linked to ancestral presence. Gong: The largest instrument, symbolizing cosmic order. Kromong (set of small gongs): Added melodies mimicking natural sounds.

These instruments adhered to strict playing patterns believed to have spiritual significance, such as inducing trance states or invoking ancestral spirits through specific rhythms and sequences.

Traditional Gamal music emphasized repetitive patterns for spiritual communion with limited improvisation. In contrast, modern performances by Sanggar Pangsuma M'paguk incorporate electric keyboards and guitars, blending traditional sounds with contemporary influences. This evolution has

<sup>10</sup> Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-One Issues and Concepts* (University of Illinois Press, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*.

<sup>12</sup> Martin Stokes and Carol Gee Zarbock, "Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place," *Musicology Australia* 18, no. 1 (1995), <https://doi.org/10.1080/08145857.1995.10415274>.

<sup>13</sup> T Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

<https://doi.org/10.25077/jantro.v27.n1.p118-125.2025>

<sup>14</sup> Alan P Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Northwestern University Press, 1964).

<sup>15</sup> Mark Salber Phillips and Gordon Schochet, *Questions of Tradition, Questions of Tradition*, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.42-5942>.

<sup>16</sup> Arjun Appadurai, "Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization / Arjun Appadurai," *Public Worlds: V. 1*, 1996.

expanded the tonal range and complexity of Gamal music, allowing for improvisation and individual creativity. Performances now feature defined sections and interlocking patterns, adapting to new contexts while maintaining cultural roots. Modern Gamal also utilizes technology for amplification and recording, reflecting a cultural shift towards secularization and broader accessibility. While this innovation risks diluting spiritual connections, it showcases the Dayak Jawant's ability to balance tradition with modernization, highlighting the dynamic nature of cultural traditions amid social change.

The concept of "invented tradition," as discussed by historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, is particularly relevant in the context of Gamal music's recontextualization. According to this concept, traditions are often selectively adapted or entirely invented to serve new social or political needs<sup>17</sup>. In the case of Gamal music, its adaptation from a sacred ritual to a secular performance can be seen as a form of "invented tradition."

A clear illustration of this process is the Sanggar Pangsuma M'Paguk's 2022 performance, where Gamal music was detached from its ritual context and repurposed for a competitive dance showcase. Traditionally, Gamal accompanied sacred ceremonies like *Sikong Segi'*, where musicians sought ancestral blessings before playing. However, in its new secularized form:

1. Ritual protocols were omitted, removing the music's spiritual framing
2. New instruments (keyboards, loop pedals) were introduced, altering the acoustic symbolism tied to ancestral voices
3. The performance structure shifted from participatory ritual to spectator-focused entertainment

This process of reinvention is not unique to Gamal music but is part of a broader trend observed in many cultures facing rapid social change. As anthropologist Arjun Appadurai notes, cultural practices often transform in response to global flows of people, media, and ideas<sup>18</sup>. In this light, the evolution of Gamal music can be understood as a response to the changing sociocultural landscape of the Dayak Jawant community.

While the music retains its traditional roots, its modern iterations are often reinterpreted to fit new contexts, such as cultural festivals or tourism. This adaptation aligns with what ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino calls "cultural reformulations," where musical practices are reshaped to meet new social needs while

maintaining a sense of historical continuity<sup>19</sup>. For instance, the performance by Sanggar Pangsuma M'paguk at the XI Dayak Gawai Week demonstrates how traditional elements of Gamal music are reconfigured for a contemporary stage performance.

This adaptation is not necessarily a loss of tradition but rather a re-invention that allows the Dayak Jawant community to preserve their cultural heritage in a rapidly changing world. As cultural anthropologist James Clifford argues, cultural authenticity is not about preserving a static, unchanging set of practices, but rather about maintaining a dynamic, ongoing process of cultural production and reproduction<sup>20</sup>. In this sense, the recontextualization of Gamal music can be seen as an act of cultural resilience.

Moreover, this process of reinvention serves multiple purposes. On one hand, it allows the Dayak Jawant community to maintain a sense of cultural distinctiveness in the face of homogenizing global influences. On the other hand, it provides a means of engaging with modernity and participating in broader cultural dialogues. As ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes points out, music often plays a crucial role in negotiating identities in multicultural contexts<sup>21</sup>.

The recontextualization of Gamal music thus becomes a way to maintain cultural identity while engaging with modernity. It exemplifies what anthropologist Marshall Sahlins terms "indigenization of modernity," where indigenous communities actively appropriate and transform elements of global culture to fit their cultural frameworks<sup>22</sup>. Through this process, the Dayak Jawant community demonstrates agency in shaping their cultural future, rather than being passive recipients of external influences.

However, this process of reinvention is not without challenges. As ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl notes, there's often a tension between preservation and innovation in musical traditions<sup>23</sup>. The challenge for the Dayak Jawant community lies in striking a balance between maintaining the spiritual essence of Gamal music and adapting it to contemporary contexts. This ongoing negotiation reflects the dynamic nature of cultural traditions and their capacity for renewal in the face of social change.

The shift from sacred to secular has profound implications for the spiritual significance and cultural meaning of Gamal music. In its traditional context, the music was imbued with spiritual power, serving as a vital component of rituals that connected the community with the divine. This aligns with Mircea Eliade's concept of "hierophant," where certain objects or practices become manifestations of the sacred<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*.

<sup>18</sup> Appadurai, "Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization / Arjun Appadurai."

<sup>19</sup> Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*.

<sup>20</sup> Kathleen McGill and James Clifford, "The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art," *The Journal of American Folklore* 102, no. 406 (1989), <https://doi.org/10.2307/541791>.

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<sup>21</sup> Stokes and Zarbock, "Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place."

<sup>22</sup> Marshall Sahlins, "What Is Anthropological Enlightenment? Some Lessons of the Twentieth Century," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28 (1999), <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.28.1.0>.

<sup>23</sup> Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-One Issues and Concepts*.

<sup>24</sup> Eliade, "The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion, Trans. ."

Hierophany refers to the manifestation of the sacred in the world, where certain objects, rituals, or practices become a means through which the sacred is revealed to humans. So, in the context of Gamal music, traditionally, it served as a hierophant by connecting the community to ancestral spirits during rituals. The traditional Gamal music, with its strict rituals and symbolic instruments, was a clear hierophant, manifesting the sacred through sound and ceremony. But now, in contemporary settings like festivals and competitions, the music has lost some of ritualistic elements. As Gamal music becomes more secularized, this spiritual dimension may be diminished or even lost, raising concerns about the erosion of its cultural significance.

The process of secularization in traditional music is not unique to the Dayak Jawant community. Ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl observes that as societies modernize, sacred music often undergoes a process of "desacralization," where its religious functions are reduced or eliminated<sup>25</sup>. In the case of Gamal music, this process is evident in its adaptation for secular performances and competitions.

The secularization of Gamal music may also lead to what ethnomusicologist Anthony Seeger terms "Schizophonic mimesis," where recorded or performed versions of traditional music become separated from their original context and meaning<sup>26</sup>. This separation can potentially lead to a loss of the deep cultural knowledge embedded in the traditional practice of Gamal music.

The globalization of Gamal music presents a paradox: even as it risks cultural dilution through commodification, it also gains unprecedented platforms for preservation and innovation. This section examines how Gamal's entry to global circuits- from world music festivals to digital platforms- has reshaped its meaning, reception, and future trajectory. These adaptations generate tension. As one elder lamented: "When foreigners dance to Gamal beats in a nightclub, do they feel the ancestors in the music?" Yet, such exposure also brings economic benefits, incentivizing younger musicians to keep the tradition alive.

The secularization of Gamal music allows for cultural renewal by adapting to new contexts and reaching wider audiences, preserving its essence even as its spiritual meaning evolves. Ethnomusicologist Timothy Rice notes that musical meaning is continually reconstructed through performance<sup>27</sup>.

Moreover, the adaptation of Gamal music to secular contexts can be seen as a form of cultural resilience. Anthropologist Marshall Sahlins' concept of the "indigenization of modernity" suggests that indigenous cultures often appropriate and transform elements of modern culture in ways that reinforce their own cultural identities<sup>28</sup>. In this light, the secularization of Gamal music can be viewed as an active strategy by the Dayak Jawant community to maintain their cultural distinctiveness in a rapidly changing world.

The evolution of Gamal music also reflects broader trends in the globalization of indigenous music. Ethnomusicologist Steven Feld's concept of "schizophonia" describes how recorded music becomes detached from its original context, allowing for new interpretations and uses<sup>29</sup>. While this can lead to a loss of original meaning, it can also create opportunities for cultural exchange and innovation.

Ultimately, the implications of this shift for the spiritual significance and cultural meaning of Gamal music are complex and multifaceted. While there are valid concerns about the potential loss of traditional spiritual elements, the adaptation of the music also represents a dynamic process of cultural negotiation and renewal. As anthropologist James Clifford argues, culture is not a fixed entity but a "contested, temporal, and emergent" process<sup>30</sup>. The evolution of Gamal music thus reflects the ongoing negotiation of identity and tradition in the face of modernity.

The recontextualization of Gamal music is met with mixed reactions within the Dayak Jawant community, particularly among elders and cultural custodians. Many of these figures view the changes with concern, fearing that the music's sacred significance is being lost in the shift toward secular performances. For them, the traditional rituals and their associated music are essential to maintaining the community's spiritual and cultural identity. This perspective aligns with what anthropologist Sherry Ortner terms "key scenarios," or cultural patterns that are central to a society's worldview and identity<sup>31</sup>.

The concerns of elders and cultural custodians reflect a broader phenomenon observed in many Indigenous communities facing rapid cultural change. Anthropologist Keith Basso's work with the Western Apache, for instance, highlights how traditional knowledge keepers often view cultural adaptations as potential threats to community cohesion and identity<sup>32</sup>. In the context of Gamal music, these concerns may be

<sup>25</sup> Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-One Issues and Concepts*.

<sup>26</sup> Anthony Seeger, "Ethnomusicologists, Archives, Professional Organizations, and the Shifting Ethics of Intellectual Property," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 28 (1996), <https://doi.org/10.2307/767808>.

<sup>27</sup> Timothy Rice, "Reflections on Music and Meaning: Metaphor, Signification and Control in the Bulgarian Case," *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 10, no. 1 (2001), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09681220108567308>.

<sup>28</sup> Sahlins, "What Is Anthropological Enlightenment? Some Lessons of the Twentieth Century."

<sup>29</sup> S Feld, *From Schizophonia to Schismogenesis: On the Discourses and Commodification Practices of "World Music" and "World Beat"* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>30</sup> McGill and Clifford, "The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art."

<sup>31</sup> SHERRY B. ORTNER, "On Key Symbols 1," *American Anthropologist* 75, no. 5 (1973), <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1973.75.5.02a00100>.

<sup>32</sup> K. H Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

particularly acute given the music's traditional role in mediating between the physical and spiritual worlds. Elders' reservations about the secularization and modernization of Gamal music can be understood through Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital," which gives them a privileged position in the community. However, younger generations and some cultural leaders see the adaptation of Gamal music as necessary for its survival in a modern world, aligning with Arjun Appadurai's idea of "the work of the imagination," where communities reimagine their practices in response to global influences<sup>33</sup>

The viewpoint of younger generations often reflects what sociologist Margaret Mead described as a "prefigurative culture," where the younger generation becomes the primary source of knowledge and innovation due to rapid social change<sup>34</sup>. In the case of Gamal music, younger musicians and performers may see themselves as cultural innovators, bridging traditional practices with contemporary contexts.

This intergenerational dialogue reflects the broader tension between preservation and innovation, a central theme in the ongoing transformation of Gamal music. Ethnomusicologist Anthony Seeger's work on musical change in Indigenous communities suggests that such tensions are often productive, leading to new forms of cultural expression that maintain continuity with the past while engaging with the present<sup>35</sup>.

The debate over Gamal music's evolution also touches on issues of cultural authenticity and representation. As anthropologist James Clifford argues, cultural authenticity is not about maintaining unchanged traditions, but about negotiating identity in the face of historical change (Clifford, 1988). In this light, both the preservationist stance of elders and the adaptive approach of younger generations can be seen as strategies for maintaining cultural authenticity in different ways.

Furthermore, the differing perspectives within the community highlight what anthropologist Sally Falk Moore terms "processual ethnography," emphasizing the ongoing, contested nature of cultural change<sup>36</sup>. The transformation of Gamal music is not a linear process but a complex negotiation involving multiple stakeholders with diverse interests and viewpoints.

Ultimately, the varying perspectives on Gamal music's recontextualization reflect the community's active engagement in shaping its cultural future. As ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino suggests, music often serves as a key site for negotiating identity and community in the face of social change (Turino, 2008). The ongoing dialogue about Gamal music's role and meaning thus becomes a crucial part of the Dayak

Jawant community's broader process of cultural adaptation and resilience.

The transformation of Gamal music, traditionally a sacred ritual soundscape into a performance art adapted for modern audiences, as seen in the case of Sanggar Pangsuma M'Paguk's performance at the XI Dayak Gawai Week. By doing so, it brings attention to the tension between spiritual continuity and artistic innovation, a dimension that remains underexplored in both ethnomusicological and anthropological discussions of cultural adaptation.

## D. CONCLUSIONS

Gamal music's evolution in the Dayak Jawant community mirrors broader cultural and social changes. Its shift from sacred ceremonies to more secular, modern expressions symbolizes the community's adaptability. The integration of new musical elements reflects how the Dayak Jawant are actively reshaping their cultural identity in response to modernization, globalization, and urbanization.

This process of adaptation aligns with what anthropologist Marshall Sahlins terms the "indigenization of modernity"<sup>37</sup>, where indigenous communities actively appropriate and transform elements of global culture to fit their cultural frameworks. The changes in Gamal music exemplify this process, showing how the Dayak Jawant community is not passively receiving external influences but actively shaping them to maintain cultural continuity.

The evolution of Gamal music in the Dayak Jawant community demonstrates how traditional practices adapt to modern contexts while preserving their essence. This aligns with Turino's concept of "cultural formations" and Clifford's idea that cultural authenticity involves negotiating identity through change. The adaptation sparks debate between traditionalists and those advocating for necessary changes to ensure the music's relevance.

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<sup>37</sup> Sahlins, "What Is Anthropological Enlightenment? Some Lessons of the Twentieth Century."

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<sup>33</sup> Appadurai, "Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization / Arjun Appadurai."

<sup>34</sup> Clark, Mead, and Pettitt, "Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation Gap."

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