

# Museum-Making and Indigenous Curation in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia

*Christina Kreps*

**A**s an institution specifically dedicated to the collection, storage, preservation, study, and display of objects for public benefit, the museum is generally thought to be a uniquely western and modern cultural product. Much of the recent literature on museum history situates the institution alongside other western social, intellectual, economic, and political developments such as the rise of capitalism, European expansion, the philosophical and scientific paradigms of the Enlightenment period, and the emergence of the nation-state.<sup>1</sup> However, today the museum idea is a global phenomenon. As Appadurai and Breckenridge have pointed out, "museums are part of a transnational order of cultural forms that has emerged in the last two centuries and now unites much of the world" (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1992:35). Yet museums "take on the coloring of the society" in which they exist (Hudson 1987:3). As "transnational cultural forms," they are transformed in specific national and cultural settings to become "hybrid" or "creolized" cultural forms (Hannerz 1989). "[E]very society appears to bring to these forms its own history and traditions, its own cultural stamp, its own quirks and idiosyncracies" (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988:5).

This paper examines the forms museums and curatorial practices take in the Republic of Indonesia. Focusing on the Provincial Museum of Central Kalimantan, Museum Balanga, I show how state ideologies of development and modernization inform museum practices. In turn, I demonstrate how the promotion of "modern" and "professional" museum practices is undermining and displacing indigenous curatorial methods. Descriptions of the co-curation of Museum Balanga exhibitions by museum staff and local ritual specialists, and of traditional practices surrounding the collection and care of heirloom property, specifically Chinese trade

jars, provide examples of indigenous curatorial methods. The paper argues that indigenous curation constitutes a form of cultural heritage worthy of respect and conservation in its own right. The investigation of indigenous curation reveals that while the museum may be characterized as modern and western in origin, curatorial-type behavior is a cross-cultural phenomenon with great historical depth.

## Becoming "Museum-Minded" and Indonesian Modernity

Museums have existed in Indonesia since the Dutch colonial period. For example, what is now the National Museum in Jakarta (the nation's capital) was first established by the Batavia Society of Arts and Sciences (Bataviaasch Genootschap) in 1778. The National Museum inherited the Society's buildings and collections and is now considered one of Asia's oldest museums (Taylor 1995:106). Because museums are part of the nation's colonial legacy, Indonesian museum leaders contend that the museum is not an Indonesian cultural product. They assert that the museum remains a foreign concept to the majority of the population and, for the most part, Indonesians are not yet "museum-minded." (The Indonesian use of this English phrase further illustrates how the museum idea is seen as an imported cultural form.) A perceived absence of "museum-mindedness" is said to account for the public's lack of interest in museums, and in general, is thought to be one of the main obstacles to the successful integration of museums into Indonesian society. Museum leaders stress that it is one thing to construct a museum infrastructure, that is, museum buildings and other "hardware," but quite another to create a mentality or "software" to go along with it (Directorate of Museums 1989/90:10). Accordingly, museum leaders and workers are respon-

sible for cultivating a sense of museum-mindedness in the public, or rather, a particular kind of consciousness about museums and their purposes.<sup>2</sup>

A lack of museum-mindedness is also attributed to the country's "stage" of socioeconomic development. Indonesia is considered a "developing" country undergoing a process of "modernization." Becoming "developed" and "modern" has been the overriding theme of President Suharto's New Order government, and *pembangunan* (development) has become a keyword in defining contemporary Indonesian life (Heryanto 1988:8). Consequently, all resources in society, including museums, are mobilized behind the cause of *pembangunan* and *modernisasi* (modernization).

Museums, in the eyes of government officials, are an accoutrement of modern and developed nations. "Museums are known to play a role in the modern world and museum development is evidence of a developed country" (Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan 1987:7). Thus, museums are seen as both a symbol of modernity as well as a tool of modernization. From this perspective, becoming museum-minded in the Indonesian context is largely about becoming and being modern.

Since Indonesia gained its independence from the Dutch in 1945 (formally recognized in 1949), there has been a steady growth in state-sponsored museum development. As of 1990, there were approximately 140 museums in Indonesia. Administratively, there are four major kinds. First, administered separately and in a class by itself, is the National Museum in Jakarta. Second, there are the provincial museums (*museum negeri*), one in each of the country's 27 provincial capitals. (Many provincial museums also administer separate site museums, so the actual number of provincial museums is higher.) The city of Jakarta oversees seven city museums and the Indonesian Institute of Sciences administers several science museums. Finally, private (or non-government) museums can also be found throughout the country (Taylor 1995:115).

The Directorate of Museums, based in Jakarta and operating under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture, is the primary agency responsible for planning, administering, and developing provincial museums. The Directorate provides technical assistance to museums, sponsors training programs for museum workers (often in cooperation with international museum professionals), and pro-

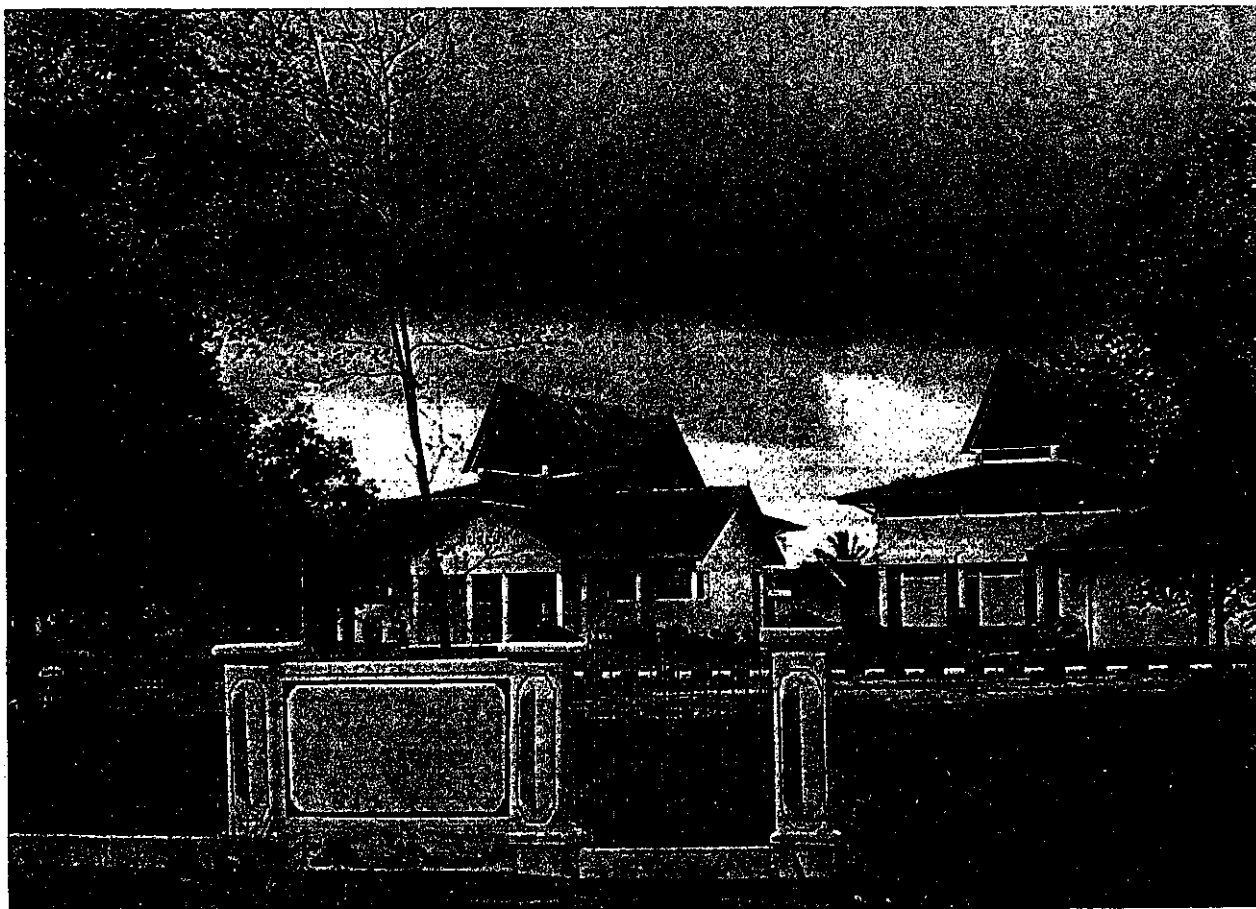
duces programmatic statements on museum functions as well as detailed instructions on how to carry out museum tasks (see also Taylor 1994). Thus, the Directorate creates standard procedures for all provincial museums to follow. The Directorate also subscribes to the International Council of Museums' definition of the museum and leading Indonesian museum professionals actively participate in international museum conferences and activities. The Directorate strives to promote standard methods and practices formulated by the international professional museum community and sees professional museum training as essential to the further development of provincial museums.

Provincial museums, like Museum Balanga, participate in the nation's development and modernization through their role as educational institutions. Museums are entrusted with instilling in the public modern ways of thinking based on science, rationality, and the use of modern technologies. For example, through educational programming and exhibitions museums compare traditional technology and means of production with more modern methods, emphasizing their scientific and rational components (Sumadio 1985:5).

### **The Provincial Museum of Central Kalimantan, Museum Balanga**

The Provincial Museum of Central Kalimantan, Museum Balanga, is located in the provincial capital of Palangka Raya (fig. 1). The town, with a population of approximately 100,000, is a "frontier" community carved out of the thick forests of Central Kalimantan. It is the commercial and government center of the province. Central Kalimantan is considered one of Indonesia's "outer island" provinces, and as such, lies on the periphery of the Java-based central government. Rich in timber, gold, and forest products, Central Kalimantan's natural resources are being exploited to fuel the national economy.

Museum Balanga was first established as a regional museum (*museum daerah*) in 1973 by community members who were concerned about the preservation of Central Kalimantan's cultural heritage. As stated in one of the museum's publications: "For a long time the people of Central Kalimantan longed for a museum which would give a picture of the various aspects of life of the people of Central Kalimantan and its natural environment. This desire led to the establishment of a museum in Palangka Raya" (Mihing 1989/90:3). In 1990, Mu-



1. The Provincial Museum of Central Kalimantan, Museum Balanga. The museum consists of nine buildings enclosed in a three-hectare complex. It is located on the outskirts of Palangka Raya, the provincial capital. Photo: Christina Kreps, 1992.

seum Balanga was officially designated a provincial museum (*museum negeri*), which placed it under the purview of the Directorate of Museums and the central government. In an interview with the director of Museum Balanga, I was told that before the museum was incorporated into the national museum system it was locally operated and thus not a "real" museum. By this he meant that the museum was not managed in line with the state bureaucracy and according to professional museum standards.

Museum Balanga functions to collect, preserve, document, study, display, and disseminate information on the cultural heritage of Dayak peoples of Central Kalimantan. The name "Dayak" is a generic term commonly used to refer to the non-Malay, non-Chinese indigenous inhabitants of Indonesian Borneo.<sup>3</sup> A number of different Dayak groups exist in Central Kalimantan who possess their own

names, languages, and cultural traditions. Museum Balanga is primarily devoted to the representation of Ngaju-Dayak culture. This is partly due to the fact that the Ngaju are the most numerous Dayak group in Central Kalimantan (their population was estimated at 500,000 to 800,000 in 1994 out of Central Kalimantan's total population of approximately 1.5 million [Schiller 1997:14]), and the most economically and politically powerful. Historically Dayaks have lived in villages along the banks of Kalimantan's many rivers and subsisted from hunting, gathering, fishing, swidden cultivation, and the trade of forest products. Although Dayak cultures have always been changing, over the past twenty years their ways of life have changed rapidly due to government efforts to open the province to further economic development (King 1993; Padoch and Peluso 1996).

Exhibits in Museum Balanga are designed to give an overall picture of Dayak culture. For example, one exhibition leads visitors through the stages of life by showing objects used in rituals related to birth, courting, marriage, the breaking of incest taboos, and death. A life-size diorama features a house on the river complete with canoes, hunting gear, and fishing equipment such as traps, weirs, nets, blowpipes, and spears. Other displays include implements used in mining and agriculture as well as tools and materials for the production of basketry and bark-cloth. Also on display are ritual paraphernalia and objects associated with Kaharingan ceremonies. Kaharingan is the indigenous religion of the Ngaju and other Dayaks of Central Kalimantan. What actually constitutes Dayak culture is a matter of debate among government officials and local people, but to many, Kaharingan is the basis of Ngaju-Dayak culture and provides the inspiration for much of its unique cultural expression (see Schiller 1997). Many of the objects on display in Museum Balanga are examples of things still being used in everyday life and found in people's homes, in the market, or in villages.

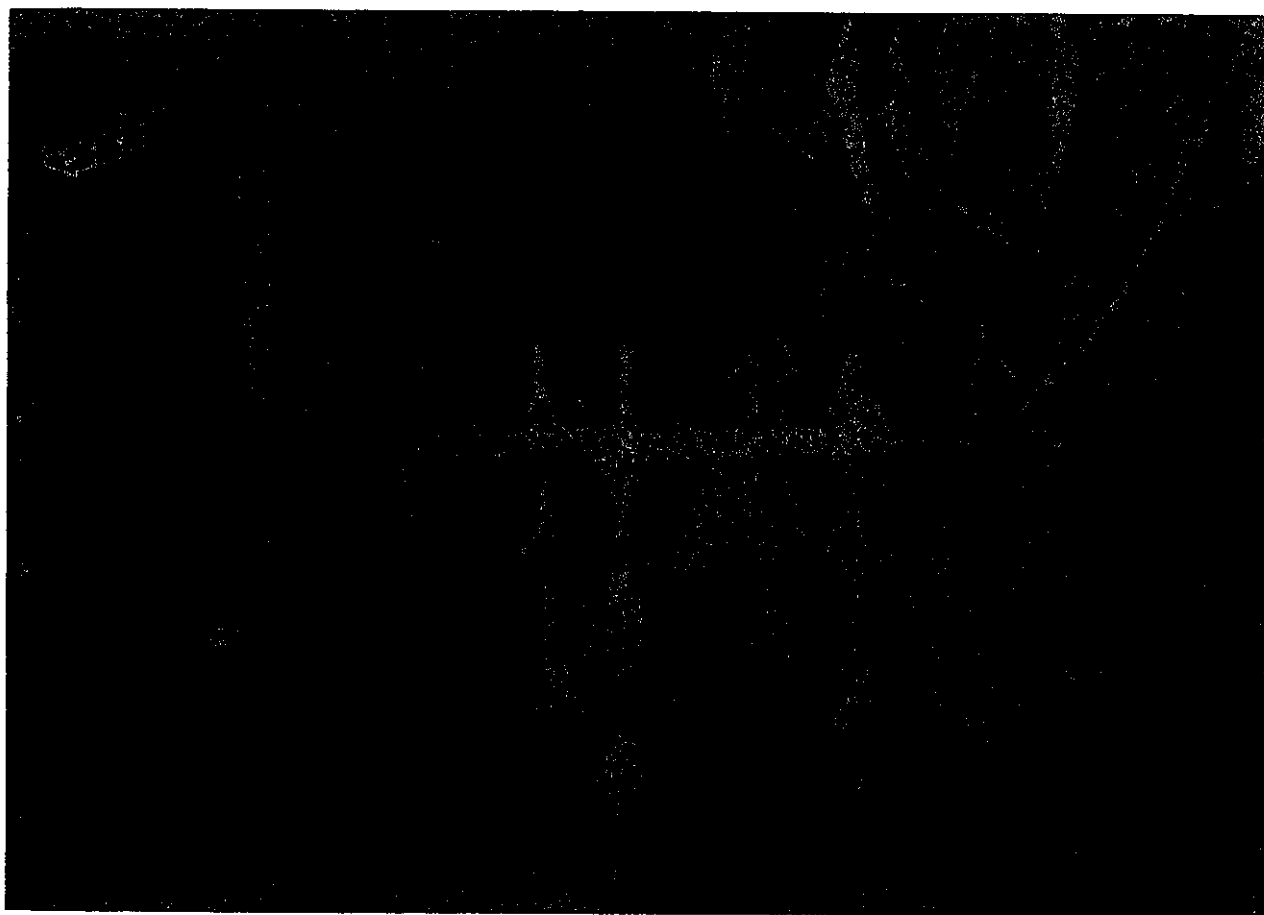
The majority of Museum Balanga workers are Dayaks who retain, to varying degrees, ties to their traditional culture. (The terms "tradition" and "traditional" are used throughout this paper to refer to customs, practices, and beliefs of a living community that have been passed down through the generations, usually orally or through practice [Parker and King 1992]. In Bahasa Indonesia the term *adat-istiadat* [customs and traditions] is often used to connote traditional culture.) They are also civil servants who generally have had no formal museological training before coming to work at the museum. They receive their training on the job and under the guidance of the Directorate of Museums staff.

Although curatorial tasks in Museum Balanga are similar to those of museums in other countries, I observed that the manner in which these tasks are carried out often reflected local values, perceptions, uses, and treatment of Dayak material culture as well as traditional notions regarding "curatorial authority."<sup>4</sup> As a case in point, museum staff frequently collaborated with people they referred to as "local cultural experts" to interpret objects in the collection. Staff members also called upon *basir* (Kaharingan ritual specialists) for advice on how to interpret and present objects used in Kaharingan

rituals. They looked to *basir* for guidance both out of respect for traditional customs and beliefs associated with these objects and the specialized knowledge of *basir*, which is considered sacred, non-public, and only acquired through long apprenticeship (also see Schiller 1986; Sellato 1989; Taylor and Aragon 1991). Certain objects, such as carved wooden figures used in healing ceremonies, are considered unique creations endowed with meanings and powers known only to the *basir* who created them. Consequently, museum workers were reluctant to write generalized statements about the objects for museum labels and interpretive texts.

Because of the staff's concern for traditional rights related to the authority of ritual specialists, they also called upon *basir* to assist them in the production of particular exhibitions. For example, on one occasion the museum hired three *basir* from Palangka Raya to help them renovate the museum's exhibition on the *tiwah*, an elaborate secondary burial ceremony of the Ngaju (fig. 2). The *basir* were engaged to advise the staff on how to make the exhibition more "authentic," or closer to the image of a real *tiwah* ceremony (fig. 3). The *basir* not only advised the staff, but did much of the work themselves in accordance with Kaharingan prescriptions. They selected objects for display, constructed models of ceremonial structures, and arranged them in their appropriate positions. After the renovation was completed, a cleansing ritual (*hapalas*) was held at the museum to cast out any lingering bad spirits and to summon good spirits to bestow their blessings on the museum, the staff, and visitors.<sup>5</sup>

Collaboration with cultural experts and *basir* is one example of how indigenous curatorial practices have been integrated into Museum Balanga operations and the curation of the museum's collections is shared among the staff and the community members. However, to some administrators, these practices are unprofessional, too closely tied to religion,<sup>6</sup> and not in keeping with the idea of the museum as a modern, secular institution based on scientific principles and professionalism. As a result, such practices are being discouraged. In fact, it is important to note that the renovation of the *tiwah* exhibition took place during a period in which the director of the museum was in Jakarta attending a four-month-long management seminar. The project and idea to enlist the *basir* was initiated by a lower-level staff member.



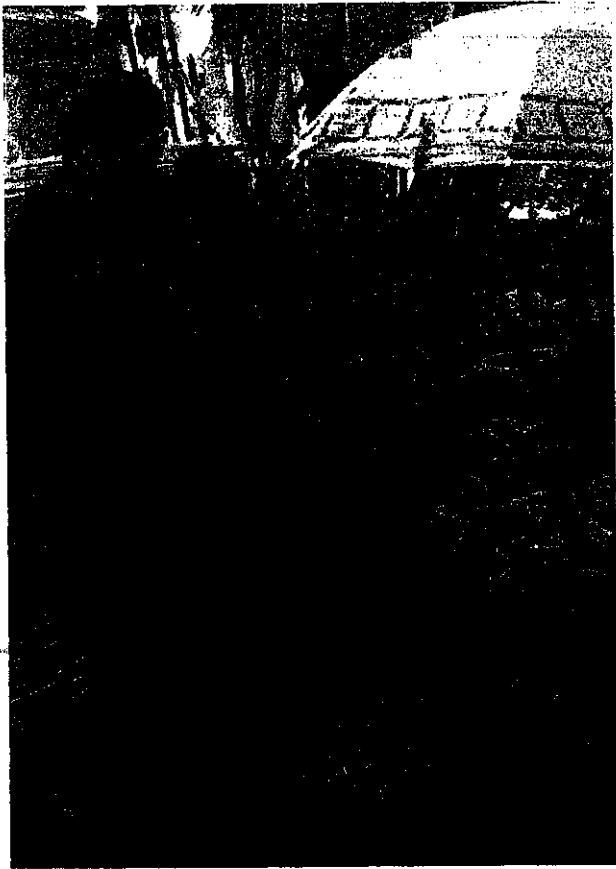
2. Two *basir* and a Museum Balanga staff member erecting *pasah pali* for display in a *tiwah* exhibition. The large bamboo structure covered with cloth and festooned with flags is a *sangkaraya*. Photo: Christina Kreps, 1991.

### The Politics of Culture and the Ideology<sup>7</sup> of Museum Development

Cultural development in Indonesia officially lies in the hands of the government. The 1945 Constitution made the government responsible for the nation's cultural development and provided the legislative basis for cultural planning and policy-making. The People's Consultative Assembly outlines policies and programs for cultural development as part of its five-year development plans. Cultural development is seen as inseparable from overall national, socioeconomic development and modernization (Sumadio 1985:12). The following statement outlines the aims of cultural development and the role of the government in this process: "The government draws up plans for cultural development that imply rediscovering, preserving, developing and *telling* the people about their cultural

heritage, enabling them to avoid the negative effects of certain foreign influences while at the same time being ready to absorb what is good from outside and can further a necessary modernization" (Soebadio 1985:10, emphasis added). Hence, government officials determine, at least theoretically, what culture is and how it should be developed.<sup>8</sup>

Within the government's framework of cultural development, traditional culture is seen as having both negative and positive attributes. In a positive light, elements of traditional culture are valued as reflections of certain primordial values and beliefs thought to give Indonesian national culture its unique identity. In a negative light, certain aspects of traditional culture are viewed as obstacles to development and modernization, and, as such, are targeted for change.<sup>9</sup> Examples of these include indigenous religious beliefs and practices, certain ag-



3. Woman anointing *sangharaya* during an actual *tiwah* held in a village outside Palangka Raya. Structure with umbrella and inverted gong (*pasah pali*) holds ritual of offerings. Photo: Christina Kreps, 1991.

ricultural techniques such as swidden cultivation, and forms of social organization and settlement patterns.

Because development and modernization are linked with the new, development programs oppose and reject whatever is thought to work against modernization. As Heryanto, an Indonesian social scientist, observes: "A few things which are 'traditional' are tolerated and given the right to exist, but tolerance varies greatly as do the tolerating parties. Those leaders of society who are the most acutely afflicted with the ideology of modernization are also the least inclined to tolerate anything which is valued as 'traditional' . . . Things which are 'traditional' are used as antique or esoteric 'spectacles' in the midst of a wave of industrialization" (Heryanto 1983:22). In general, "traditional" culture tends to be stripped down to what are called the "cultural arts" (*seni budaya*), a category of culture

which includes traditional music, dance, drama, costumes, handicrafts, and architecture. Cultural arts commonly receive the strongest support from the government (Foulcher 1990:303, also see Acciaioli 1985; Pemberton 1994; Yampolsky 1995).

Provincial museums are supposed to preserve local cultural heritage. But as part of the state apparatus their ultimate allegiance is to the national government and its interests. Material culture is collected and preserved in museums under the assumption that objects and the traditional ways of life they represent will disappear and become obsolete as local communities become "developed" and "modern." In effect, provincial museums relegate parts of people's living cultural traditions to the past by "objectifying" them (Handler 1988) and placing them in the museum, reducing culture to artifact. But as Foulcher attests, "local cultures do resist the state's attempts to disempower and incorporate them, sometimes finding ways to accommodate directives of the state on their own terms" (Foulcher 1990:309).

### Indigenous Curation among Dayaks: The Case of "Balanga"

Dayaks, as well as other Indonesian peoples, are well-known for their collection, care, conservation, and reverence of heirloom property collectively known as *pusaka*. Examples of *pusaka* are gongs, weapons, ritual paraphernalia, cloths, beads, and ceramics. Museum Balanga's collections contain many objects which were once family heirlooms. Of special importance are *balanga*, or a particular type of large Chinese ceramic jar from which Museum Balanga takes its name. *Balanga* are the most highly valued class of Chinese jars, known in Bahasa Indonesian as *tempayan* or *guci*. Europeans refer to this jar style as *martavan* (Adhyatman and Rhido 1982:48). Historically, *balanga* have played a prominent role in Dayak economic, religious, and social systems (see Harrisson 1990; Hose and MacDougall 1966; Sellato 1989; Scharer 1963). A replica of a *balanga* stands in front of the museum as a symbol of Dayak identity. *Balanga* and other ceramics constitute the core of the museum's collection, numbering some 400 out of a total of approximately 1,300 objects.

A Dayak fondness for Chinese jars and their high value in local exchange is well-documented in nineteenth-century European accounts of Southeast Asia as well as in the ethnographic literature.

Archeological evidence reveals that jars were being imported into Borneo as many as 1,000 years ago (Chin 1988:61). Over the centuries, jars were integrated into Dayak culture and became a part of life's most significant occasions (O'Connor 1983:403).

Many of the customs and beliefs associated with the collection, care, and treatment of *balanga* are analogous to museum curatorship. Harrisson describes the importance of jars to Dayaks and how they are treated:

Among the many peoples of Asia, those of the great island of Borneo developed a most special and lasting regard for large jars. They used them in their daily lives: to keep water cool and sweet, to store rice and other staples securely from pests, or to brew rice wine during festivals. Above all, jars were collector's items. They lined the walls of family rooms and communal galleries [in longhouses]. The farmers who owned them knew many different types. Most precious among them were jars handed down over the generations. Ancestors had paddled them up great rivers on their backs, men had borne them across rapids and over mountains. As treasured *pusaka*, such jars were surrounded with beliefs and legends. They were treated with ceremony and respect. Privileged families used them as ossuaries for the bones of the dead. (Harrisson 1990:1)

Today, as in the past, jars are considered private property and contribute to a family's wealth. The possession of many jars bestows on their owners great status and prestige (Adhyatman and Rhido 1982:51). Accordingly, display is one of the primary reasons for owning jars (Harrisson 1990:28). A person's or family's wealth is measured by the number of jars that line the walls of their home. Consequently, jars have been highly sought after and much attention has been given to their acquisition.

In former times, jars were acquired through trade, and particular Dayak groups such as the Bajau, Ngaju, Melanau, and Iban are said to have been especially adept at the jar trade (Harrisson 1990:17; O'Connor 1983:403). Dealers, or collectors, traveled on extensive trading expeditions throughout Borneo and the archipelago to obtain and exchange jars. Harrisson writes that "jar festivals" were sometimes held in villages where antique jars were collected (1990:27). Certain Dayak groups favored particular styles and forms, and dealers, or

what Harrisson calls "jar experts," were familiar with local tastes and predilections. Jar experts knew the various types and values of jars among their own people and other Dayak groups (Harrisson 1990:18-19). Jar experts were concerned with matters of authenticity, provenance, dating, qualities of glazes, form, decoration, and other formal criteria for evaluating a jar (O'Connor 1983:402-405). Harrisson describes the qualifications of jar experts: "To become an expert, a person needed a keen perception of the touch, sound and look of jars, good memory for their individual characteristics, experience obtained from another expert and the trust of the community" (Harrisson 1990:21).

Before jars were purchased by a family, the elders of the community in addition to jar experts were consulted to appraise a jar's quality and value. This was done to uphold customary laws surrounding their exchange and use. Because heirloom jars were among the most precious possessions, damaging, destroying, stealing, or trying to pass off "fakes" was a serious offense and a threat to the peace of a community. Large fines had to be paid by those violating laws governing the exchange, use, and possession of jars. Antique jars were the most valuable and commanded the highest prices. Harrisson notes that "native connoisseurs" overcame the difficulty of establishing whether or not a jar was genuine by following one simple rule: "Whatever the individual evidence for the local history of any jar might be, only jars with patterns no longer available in the trade qualified as 'genuine' heirlooms" (Harrisson 1990:22). One European traveler who was notably impressed with Dayak expertise in identifying heirloom jars wrote in the late nineteenth century: "High prices paid for jars motivated the Chinese to imitate them. Some have taken the trouble to travel to China with samples in order to have them copied to the smallest detail. I have seen such reproductions and must admit they were perfectly made. I was unable to observe differences between old and new when they were placed side by side. However, not a single Dayak has, so far, been duped" (Perelaer quoted in Harrisson 1990:21). In addition to being "jar connoisseurs," some Dayaks were also conservators. When jars were broken they were repaired using a mixture of resin, oil, and lime as glue (Harrisson 1990:28).

Most importantly, jars have historically been seen as part of the divine order, integral to religious experience, embodying sacred properties and vital

powers. While jars and other ceramic wares circulated through trade, warfare, inheritance, and were discovered accidentally, in some Dayak cosmologies their genesis is attributed to divine agency. Carl Bock, writing in the late 1800s, reported that Dayaks believed jars were made of the same clay from which Mahatala (the Almighty) fashioned the sun and moon (Bock 1988:198). According to Scharer, the Ngaju of the Katingan river believed that ancient jars were gifts from the divine powers or gods, given as fruits of the Tree of Life (Scharer 1963:166). Jars were not considered mere inanimate objects, but were capable of action and transformation. Numerous accounts exist relating how jars transformed themselves into animals and people (O'Connor 1983; Adhyatman and Rhido 1982).

Most of the authors cited above focus on the past, assuming that the uses and treatments of jars, as well as the knowledge and customs surrounding them, have all but disappeared. Harrisson wrote in 1990 that little traditional jar expertise still existed in Malaysian Borneo, that antique jars were becoming increasingly rare in villages, and that this was probably true for the whole of Borneo (1990:1). But during my stay in Central Kalimantan from 1991 to 1992, I found this not to be the case. In visits to villages and to people's homes in Palangka Raya, I observed large collections of jars. Jars were also essential elements of all the Dayak religious ceremonies I attended. Jars were still being offered as bride price and used to settle community grievances according to customary law. I also encountered several individuals who knew a great deal about jars, including methods of conservation, classification systems, various customs dictating their uses, and legends telling of their divine origin based on Ngaju cosmology. One individual related that in order to become a "jar expert," one had to *berguru*, or undergo apprenticeship, to acquire the requisite specialized knowledge and skills. Specific *syarat-syarat* (requirements, rules, or conditions) have to be observed and payments made for this knowledge. I also heard accounts of families who owned jars with supernatural powers. Clearly, jars are still held in high esteem and revered for both their intrinsic and cultural value (fig. 4).

### Museum Professionalism and the Undermining of Indigenous Curation

The preceding description of *balanga* and their care and treatment provides one example of how

Dayak peoples historically have had their own methods of curating cultural materials. It also demonstrates that while the museum may be a new and modern institution in Central Kalimantan, curatorial-type behavior is not. During my period of research at Museum Balanga, I observed how local perceptions, uses, and means of displaying objects are being integrated into museum operations. In this respect, Museum Balanga exemplifies processes of cultural hybridization whereby local cultural complexes are merged with those of the wider, transnational museum culture.<sup>10</sup> However, indigenous curatorial practices are being discouraged in Museum Balanga in favor of modern and professional methods.

Although *balanga* and other ceramics comprise the largest portion of the museum's collection, at the time of my field work little information or documentation existed on the collection. Ceramics were displayed with little interpretation or labeling. I was told that not much had been done with the collection or exhibition because the Directorate of Museums intended to send a ceramics specialist from Jakarta to help the staff curate the collection. In June 1992 a well-known ceramic specialist came to Museum Balanga to assist in the registration and documentation of the collection. He instructed the staff in dating, assigning provenance, and in identifying styles, clays, glazes, and production techniques. He also offered advice on conservation methods and restoration. This project was the first opportunity many museum workers had had to receive formal curatorial training.

For the most part, the documentation of the collection conformed to standard professional museum documentation and registration methods. Although some local names for certain jar types were noted, the collection was not organized around any indigenous classification system. Rather, a classification system was used that had been developed by the Directorate of Museums for provincial museums. According to this system, an object's place of origin or *lokasi* is one of the criteria used to classify objects. Following the Directorate's guidelines, objects or collections (*koleksi*) can be categorized as: *koleksi propinsi* (originating within the province), *koleksi asing* (of foreign origin), or *koleksi nusantara* (originating within the Indonesian archipelago). Because most of the ceramics housed in Museum Balanga are Chinese jars they are consid-

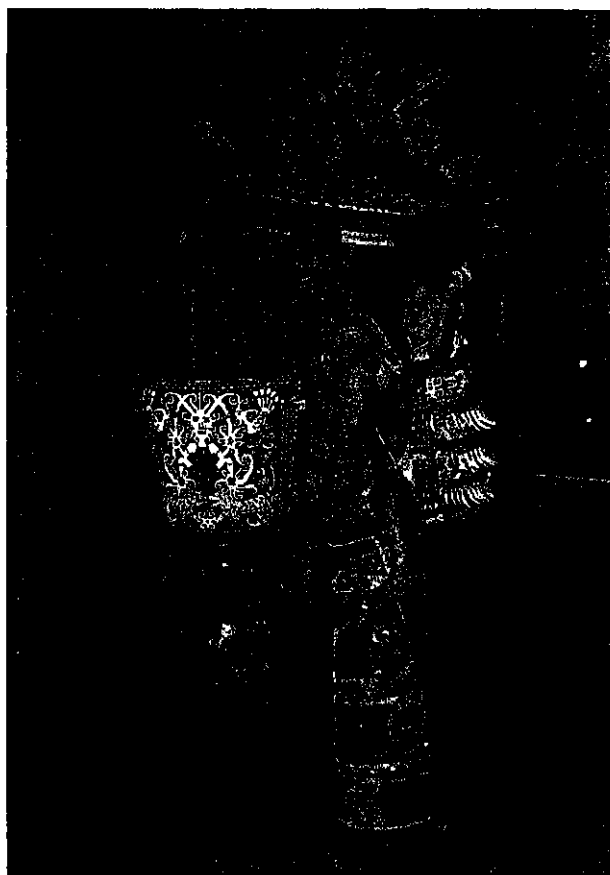


ered "foreign objects," even though *balanga* have been incorporated into Dayak culture.

On the one hand, this project gave the museum staff the chance to acquire valuable professional museum skills. But on the other hand, the project was a missed opportunity to co-curate the collection with local jar experts, and to incorporate their unique knowledge and skills into the museum's ethnographic records. The documentation of indigenous curatorial knowledge, for example in the case of *balanga*, is crucial since this knowledge may be lost with the passing of the older generations.

While greater professionalism can help Museum Balanga workers carry out their tasks more efficiently and aid in the protection of valuable cultural resources, we may still question what gets displaced in the process of professionalization and its long-term effects on localized museum practices. At issue here is the role of the museum in "cultural preservation," and the ways in which preservation is interpreted in conventional museum practice. Also at issue is the ideological framework of the Indonesian state, which sees the museum as a modernizing agent. A motivating force behind the collection and preservation of people's material culture in provincial museums is the assumption that it will inevitably disappear in the wake of progress and development. Preservation, within such paradigms, tends to be static, oriented to the past, and embedded in a "salvage paradigm" (Clifford 1987).<sup>11</sup> As many authors have noted, preservation does not just entail the collection and conservation of material objects, but also support of knowledge, customs, and traditions linked to objects (Handler 1992; Kappler 1992; Cruikshank 1995). Preservation that focuses on the people and culture behind the objects helps sustain living cultural traditions rather than fossilize them in the museum.

The paradoxical nature of Museum Balanga as an instrument of both cultural heritage preservation and modernization was not lost on museum staff. While working at the museum, one staff member confided in me that he was apprehensive about what the museum might be like in the future. He recognized the importance of professional museum training for the development of the museum in addition to its role in the modernization process. Nevertheless, he was also concerned about the fate of living cultural traditions in an institution dominated by modern ideas and professional curatorial methods. In his opinion, the museum should strive



4. Kenyah Dayak woman of East Kalimantan displaying family heirlooms, including an antique Chinese jar. Photo: Christina Kreps, 1996.

to keep traditional values alive while acknowledging and promoting new values.

### Conclusion

Museums are increasingly being seen as sites of "public culture" where various communities debate what culture is, how it should be represented and who holds the power to represent it (Karp et al., 1992). The "new museology" movement promotes the idea of community-based museum development, that museums should grow out of the communities in which they exist (Walsh 1992). The work of cultural documentation and conservation is said to be an organic and dynamic process that is part of how a changing community defines itself (Lavine 1992:155). Local communities determine the purposes and meanings of museums in the process of defining themselves (Fuller 1992). The new museology stresses the democratization of museum practices and the importance of community

participation, not only as visitors, but also as participants in the construction of museum representations and interpretations, or rather, in the interpretation of meanings. The movement also encourages the formation of alternative museum models which challenge conventional notions of museum definition and practice (Vergo 1989). The aim is to widen the museum concept to embrace a variety of forms and meanings.

Contrary to the views of Indonesian museum leaders, I discovered that people in Central Kalimantan were museum-minded, but in their own ways. They have their own means of interpreting and appropriating museological concepts to fit into their own cultural patterns. What Indonesian museum leaders see as a lack of museum-mindedness stands as a form of resistance to a predetermined idea of the museum's meanings and purposes as well as forms of cultural representation imposed from above and outside local communities.

Indigenous curation, such as that practiced in Museum Balanga, has much to contribute to our understanding of museological behavior cross-culturally, and to ways people in diverse cultural contexts perceive, value, care for, and conserve cultural resources. These concepts and practices are worthy of recognition, documentation, and preservation in their own right since they form part of a people's unique cultural heritage.

#### Acknowledgments

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#### Notes

1. On museum history and museums as expressions of western modernity see Ames 1992, Bazin 1963, Bennett 1995, Kaplan 1994, MacDonald 1996, Pearce 1992, Prossler 1996, Stocking 1985, Walsh 1992. On Indonesian narratives of time and modernity see Errington 1994.
2. For a more detailed discussion on the processes behind making Indonesian society "museum-minded" see Kreps 1994a.
3. The Republic of Indonesia is an archipelagic nation composed of over 13,000 islands stretching some 3000 miles from east to west. The island of Borneo is divided among three nations: Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei. Central Kalimantan is one of four provinces that make up Indonesian Borneo, referred to as Kalimantan. The other provinces are East Kalimantan, West Kalimantan, and South Kalimantan. The states of Sarawak and Sabah form Malaysian Borneo to the north. Brunei is also located on the north coast of the island.
4. It should be noted that none of the Museum Balanga staff carried the title "curator" and I never heard the management and care of the collection referred to as "curation."
5. Though museum workers were attempting to honor the Kaharingan community by representing the *tiwah* as realistically as possible, the project was criticized by some members of that community. For instance, some believed the three *basir* hired by the museum had not gone through the proper channels before embarking on the project, that is, they had not first consulted with the Great Kaharingan Council (the official Kaharingan authoritative body). Others felt the exhibition did not adequately reflect the power and vitality of a real *tiwah*. In their view, the exhibition was a diluted version of one of the hallmarks of their culture. These criticisms underscore how, like most communities, the Kaharingan community is not homogenous in its views. It is composed of various segments that have overlapping, but sometimes different interests and perspectives. It also raises questions regarding any museum work involving community participation, that is, whose version of a cultural form should be represented, and how is consensus achieved on its interpretation. These questions also point to one of the problematic aspects behind identifying and promoting "indigenous" or "local" curatorship. We must always ask: who and what constitutes "indigenous" and "local"?
6. The Indonesian government officially separates culture (*kebudayaan*) from religion (*agama*) through policy administered respectively by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religion. While conducting research at Museum Balanga, I observed that this distinction often posed problems for museum workers who had a difficult time differentiating between culture and religion, especially regard-

ing the representation of Kaharingan as an aspect of Dayak culture. When I asked one museum worker how he classified the *tiwah* ceremony represented in the museum, he replied that that was a difficult question, but in his opinion, for people who still practice Kaharingan the *tiwah* is *agama* (religion). But for those Dayaks who have converted to Islam or Christianity, it is *kebudayaan* (culture). Religious matters are of the utmost importance in Indonesia. "Belief in One God" is the first principle of the state ideology known as Pancasila. Religious freedom is recognized in as much as one adheres to one of the five official religions: Islam, Protestant and Catholic Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Belonging to one of the official religions is associated with literacy, progress, and in general, being "modern" (Kipp and Rogers 1987:21). Kaharingan is one of the few "minority" religions recognized by the state, although it has officially been made a Hindu sect and is now known as Hindu-Kaharingan (see Schiller 1997).

7. As used here, ideology refers to a system of ideas which express the interests of a particular group or class (Williams 1983:157) as well as a symbolic order of "interacting symbols [and] patterns of interworking meanings" (Geertz 1973:207). While the interpretation of ideology as a "sense of illusion or false consciousness" (Williams 1983:157) is limiting for the analysis of ideology as a sociocultural phenomenon (Geertz 1973:196-200), nonetheless, it is useful for understanding how ideological complexes obscure, deflect, or falsify certain social realities. The Indonesian government's ideology of museum development is enacted through state formulated cultural policies and programming.
8. On the adoption of western social science categories and the objectification of culture in the service of nation-building, see Handler 1988 and Spencer 1990.
9. For anthropological critiques of the tradition/modern dichotomy in orthodox development paradigms, see Dove 1988, Escobar 1995, and Hobart 1993.
10. It should be stressed that the idea of cultural hybridization does not imply a belief in the simple combination of discrete elements of traditional and modern culture, nor is it about fixed identities. Cultural hybridization is seen as a process of cultural creation and re-creation as people actively accommodate and resist hegemonic forces that emerge from multiple sources (cf. Escobar 1995). Such a view acknowledges an ongoing dialectic between cultural continuity and change (Sahlins 1994). Consequently, this paper does not make the claim that there exists an "essential" or purely "authentic" category of Dayak (or otherwise) indigenous curation.
11. The term "salvage paradigm" to Clifford "names a geopolitical, historical paradigm that has organized western practices of art-and-culture collecting. Seen in this light, it denotes a pervasive ideological complex" (Clifford 1987:121).
12. Elsewhere I have argued for a "comparative museology," which entails documenting and analyzing alternative perspectives on museums and museological practices (Kreps 1994b). For other examples of indigenous museum models and curatorial practices see

Simpson 1996 and Canadian Museum of Civilization 1996.

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CHRISTINA KREPS is a Research Fellow at the Smithsonian Institution and consultant to the World Wide Fund for Nature Programme, Indonesia, on a community museum development project in East Kalimantan.