

Cultural Practices and Lifestyle of the Momogun Rungus Tribe of the Bavanggazo Longhouse Community in Sabah, Malaysia: Ethnographic Notes

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Abstract

This study investigates the cultural practices and lifestyle of the Momogun Rungus Tribe in Sabah, Malaysia, focusing on their communal living in the Bavanggazo Longhouse. Utilizing a micro-ethnographic approach, the research documents traditional practices, agricultural activities, rituals, and the linguistic and medicinal knowledge of the Rungus people. The Bavanggazo Longhouse, a significant cultural site, offers valuable insights into the tribe's historical and contemporary life. The findings reveal the critical role of traditional ceremonies, such as the Magahau festival, and the importance of the Rungus language and medicinal practices in maintaining cultural identity. Health challenges and the impact of modernization on cultural practices were also examined. This study highlights the necessity of preserving the Rungus cultural heritage amidst modernization pressures, contributing to a deeper understanding of Malaysia's cultural diversity and offering a resource for future preservation efforts. The comprehensive documentation aims to support cultural preservation initiatives and foster appreciation of the Rungus Tribe's rich heritage

Keywords: Rungus Tribe; Bavanggazo Longhouse; cultural heritage; traditional practices; Sabah Malaysia.

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INTRODUCTION

The Rungus Tribe, also known as the Momogun ethnicity, are an indigenous group residing in the northern part of Borneo, specifically in the Kudat Peninsula, Matunggong, Kota Marudu, Pitas, and parts of Sandakan in Sabah, Malaysia. Renowned for their rich cultural heritage, the Rungus people engage in traditional practices, agricultural activities, and communal living in longhouses, making them a significant subject of ethnographic study. The Bavanggazo Longhouse, a notable artifact reflecting the Rungus Tribe's cultural richness, offers researchers valuable insights into their historical and contemporary life (Inggul Pulok, 1991; Jeubirin Bin Sopital, 2000). Central to Rungus culture are their tradition of communal living in longhouses, large elongated structures housing multiple families. This way of life,

along with their customs, rituals, and beliefs, forms the focal point of this study. Previous research by Gesawat, Rahman, and Abdullah (2014) and Padoch (2002) have highlighted the architectural and cultural significance of Rungus longhouses, while also exploring themes of migration and cultural identity. Building on this body of research, the current study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the daily lives and cultural practices of the Rungus people through a micro-ethnographic approach.

The primary research problem addressed in this study was the preservation and understanding of the cultural practices and lifestyle of the Momogun Rungus Tribe in the face of modernization and urbanization. With increasing external influences and the migration of Rungus people to other parts of Malaysia and the world, documenting and analyzing their traditional way of life became crucial. This includes their agricultural practices, traditional ceremonies, music, language, and medicinal knowledge, all integral to their cultural identity (Bahauddin et al., 2015; Hamdan et al., 2023).

To address this issue, a comprehensive field study had been conducted in Bavanggazo Longhouse, located in the Kudat District of Sabah. This longhouse serves as a significant cultural site, providing a living representation of the Rungus Tribe's heritage. By engaging with the local community, participating in cultural activities, and conducting interviews, this study aimed to document the customs, taboos, and daily practices of the Rungus people. This approach not only aided in preserving their heritage but also provided a deeper understanding of the cultural diversity that enriches Malaysia's national identity (Batahong & Dayou, 2016).

Research on the Rungus Tribe had highlighted various aspects of their culture crucial for preserving their heritage. For instance, the Magahau festival, a significant cultural event, played a vital role in their communal life and spiritual practices. Studies by Hamdan et al. (2023) had documented the festival's significance, emphasizing its role in maintaining cultural continuity. Similarly, the traditional music and children's songs of the Rungus, as explored by Simeon (2022), were vital components of their cultural identity, reflecting their rich musical heritage and oral traditions.

Moreover, the Rungus language, part of the Dusunic family, was critical to their cultural identity. According to Al-Khaza'leh (2023), this language was integral to daily communication and cultural expressions among the Rungus. Efforts to document and preserve this language were essential for maintaining their cultural heritage. Additionally, traditional medicinal practices, as studied by Ahmad and Holdsworth (1995), provided valuable insights into their indigenous knowledge and use of local plants for healing. These practices not only demonstrated their connection with nature but also represented an important aspect of their cultural identity.

The health and well-being of the Rungus population had also subjects of scientific inquiry. Studies by Wei et al. (2019) had highlighted health challenges, particularly hypertension and cognitive functions. These studies underscored the importance of addressing health disparities while preserving cultural practices. The cultural ecosystem of the Rungus Tribe, described by Appell (2005), reflected their deep connection to land and traditions, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to preserving their heritage.

Despite the extensive body of literature on the Rungus Tribe, several research gaps remained. For example, while studies had documented the architectural and cultural significance of Rungus longhouses (Gesawat et al., 2014), there was limited research on daily practices and communal life within these structures. Similarly, although the significance of traditional ceremonies like the Magahau festival had been recognized (Hamdan et al., 2023), there was a need for a more detailed exploration of the rituals and their socio-cultural implications.

Additionally, preserving the Rungus language had been identified as a critical concern (Al-Khaza'leh, 2023). However, further research was required to develop effective strategies for revitalizing and promoting this language among younger generations. The traditional medicinal knowledge of the Rungus, while documented (Ahmad & Holdsworth, 1995), necessitated deeper investigation into the sustainability and transmission of this knowledge in modern healthcare contexts.

The health challenges faced by the Rungus population, particularly in rural areas (Wei et al., 2019), highlighted the need for an integrated approach that combines cultural preservation with health interventions. Furthermore, the impact of modernization and migration on Rungus cultural practices and identity required comprehensive studies to develop strategies for safeguarding their heritage in a rapidly changing world (Kurz et al., 2020). Addressing these research gaps was essential for a holistic understanding and preservation of the Rungus Tribe's cultural heritage.

The objective of this study was to explore and document the cultural practices and lifestyle of the Momogun Rungus Tribe in Sabah, Malaysia, with a particular focus on their communal living in Bavanggazo Longhouse. This study aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of their daily lives, customs, taboos, and the unique functions of each part of the longhouse. By doing so, it sought to contribute to the preservation and appreciation of the Rungus cultural heritage, which faced challenges from modernization and external influences. This study lies in its comprehensive approach to documenting the Rungus Tribe's cultural practices through a micro-ethnographic methodology. This approach allows for a detailed and nuanced understanding of the Rungus people's way of life, based on direct observations and interactions with the community. Unlike previous studies that focused on specific aspects of Rungus culture, this research provides a holistic view of their lifestyle, encompassing agricultural practices, traditional ceremonies, music, language, and medicinal knowledge.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research used a field study method with a micro-ethnographic approach to gain a deeper understanding of the traditional culture of the Rungus Tribe in Bavanggazo Longhouse. This approach was chosen because it allowed the researcher to be directly involved in people's daily lives, as well as allowing the researcher to gain an in-depth picture of the observed cultural values, norms, and practices.

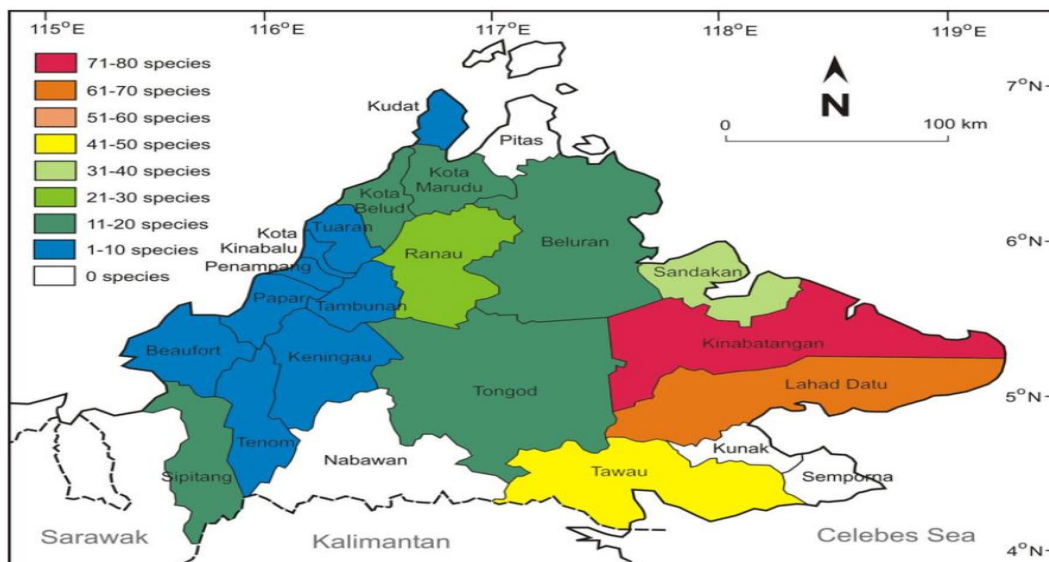
Participants

In this study, the researcher interacted with several respondents from the Rungus Tribe community at the Bavanggazo Longhouse. One of the respondents, who played an important role in data collection, was AJ, a 49-year-old tour guide from the Rungus Tribe. As a tour guide at Bavanggazo Longhouse, AJ had a deep knowledge of the culture and traditions of his people. He provided valuable insights during the interviews and observations. In fact, he had also shared his knowledge about the longhouse and the culture of the Rungus Tribe through documentation broadcast on television and YouTube.

Research Sites

The Bavanggazo Longhouse, located in the Kudat District of Sabah, Malaysia, is an iconic symbol of the Rungus Tribe's communal living practices and traditional lifestyle. This longhouse is not only a residential structure but also a cultural repository, reflecting the tribe's rich heritage and social organization. Built from bamboo, hardwood, and palm leaves, the Bavanggazo Longhouse exemplifies traditional Rungus architecture, characterized by its elongated form and the capacity to house multiple families under one roof. Each family occupies a designated section, with shared communal areas that foster a strong sense of community and mutual support. The design and construction of the longhouse are deeply rooted in the tribe's history and environmental adaptation, showcasing their ingenuity and sustainable living practices.

Figure 1: Location Map of Kudat, Matunggong, Kota Marudu and Pitas, Banggi and Sandakan



Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection techniques included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and visual documentation. As stated by Genzuck (2003), "Typical

ethnographic research employs three kinds of data collection: interviews, observation, and documents." Primary data were obtained through semi-structured in-depth interviews with respondents who are the members of the Rungus Tribe in Bavanggazo, Kudat, Sabah, Malaysia. These in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives and experiences of individuals in the community. This study used instruments in data collection such as audio recording to ensure the quality of the conversation. The recorders were portable voice recorders and voice recorders on smartphones. The acquisition of this data received verbal consent from all five (5) respondents. Vulnerability and sensitive elements that were likely to discomfort the participants were carefully screened. Next, the data from the audio was transcribed into writing, including the work of inserting abbreviations and adapting speech symbols through Jefferson's (2004) transcription system.

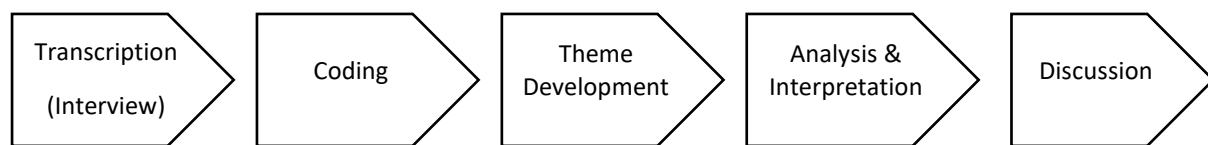
Table 1: Types of Marking Abbreviations and Symbols

Abbreviations and Symbols	Description / Meaning
R	Respondent
P	Interviewer
(.)	<i>Micro-pause</i> (pause) less than 0.5 seconds
<u>SAY</u>	Volume: use of capital letters and lines

This method was used for the purpose of conversation analysis to capture real phenomena in speech. The data collected were then analysed qualitatively to identify patterns, themes, and meanings that emerged in the Rungus Tribe. This approach allowed the researcher to explore a better understanding of the complexities of the Rungus Tribe's traditional culture and the role of the Bavanggazo Longhouse in preserving their cultural heritage. Observations were also conducted on the transcription to ensure accuracy and authenticity and to avoid transcription errors from audio recordings. Transcriptions that were completed were used for analysis purposes. Furthermore, participant observation allowed researchers to directly observe social activities and interactions in the cultural context of the Rungus Tribe. Visual documentation, such as photos and videos, was used to record the traditional activities and the surroundings of the Bavanggazo Longhouse.

The responses and information expressed by the two groups of respondents *either* through the survey form or structured interviews were analysed through qualitative analysis (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Data Analysis



Based on Figure 2, the researcher took simple steps to process qualitative data from the interviews and questionnaires conducted in the research and to figure out how to analyse and discuss the data. The first step was for the researcher to transcribe the interview recording as accurately as possible to ensure that all the informant's verbal responses were captured verbatim. This would make it easier for the researcher to discuss the results of the questionnaires. After that, the researcher attempted to become familiar with the data by reading the transcript several times and then taking notes on the main themes, patterns, and interesting quotes before coding manually. In the coding step, the researcher utilized both inductive (letting themes emerge from the data) and deductive (based on existing theories or research questions) approaches. Next, the researcher grouped similar codes together to form broader themes. These themes included the main ideas or topics discussed in the interviews. The researcher then attempted to analyse and interpret the data by discussing the implications of the findings.

Data Validity and Reliability

According to Norwaliza Wahab (2015), validity is needed to measure the accuracy of a measure used in the study. It also aims to ensure the measure or indicator encompasses all the new features or ideas that the concept encompasses and to guarantee the validity of the items (instruments) is defensible. This ensures that the results of the study remain accurate and useful, accurately answering the research questions, appropriate and relevant to the purpose of the study, and providing meaningful and usable data to support decision-making. Meanwhile, reliability refers to the consistency and stability of a measurement. The purpose of reliability is to determine whether the measurement produces the same answer when measuring the same concept for the same population, sample, or informant (Marican, 2005).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bavanggazo Longhouse Structure

Description of Binatang Bavanggazo

Binatang Bavanggazo is a traditional house located in Kudat District, Sabah, Malaysia. This house is a longhouse inhabited by the Rungus Tribe, an ethnic group in Sabah. In the Rungus language, "Binatang" means longhouse and "Bavanggazo" means "Big River" because of its location close to the river. The Bavanggazo longhouse has a unique feature that distinguishes it from Sarawak's longhouse, which is occupied by

the Iban Tribe. One difference is the middle part of the Bavanggazo longhouse, where the longhouse in Sarawak tends to be more open. The Longhouse is an important residential unit in the Rungus Tribe due to its role in forming a village that has several residents under the leadership of Vezo'on.

According to respondent, a longhouse is a type of building that is elongated and built on hardwood poles with a height of 15 to 20 feet from the ground that extends for about 100 yards or more along the village. The purpose of building a longhouse for the Rungus Tribe is for security measures against headhunter attacks, to provide help to the sick, and the marriage factor, where the son-in-law must live with his in-laws for one or two years before building a house next to his in-laws' house. With the construction of a longhouse that extends and accommodates all the residents in a village, a sense of security is created as it facilitates communication with each other when something happens. The floor of the house consists of bamboo, nibong, and tagung, which is a type of bark that is dried as a binder. The floor of this house is divided into three parts: the inner, middle, and basement. All these floors are tied together to provide good ventilation for the household because the air flows through the house through the floor, and the floors help reduce dust and maintain the cleanliness of the house.

The tradition of living in Bavanggazo longhouses is still maintained today. Although most Rungus people have now converted to Islam or Christianity, they still practice this tradition. Modern longhouses built of concrete, like those in Pinang, are still called "longhouses", but old longhouses like Bavanggazo are used only for exhibition purposes. Thus, the Bavanggazo longhouse serves as a welcoming place for foreign guests who wish to experience the culture of the Rungus Tribe. Although the government encourages residents to move to modern longhouses made of concrete, traditional longhouses like Bavanggazo are still used as homestays for travelers.

The Role of Community Leaders in Longhouses

In every longhouse, the role of the community leader, known as Vezo'on, is crucial. Vezo'on ensures the continuation of harmony and order in the longhouse society. They make important decisions in matters related to the daily life of the community, including marriage, customs, and conflict resolution. The presence of Vezo'on signifies stability and unity in the community, while also ensuring that cultural heritage and traditions are well maintained. Vezo'on occupies the first room in the longhouse to welcome guests upon entering the longhouse and to manage the residents of the house.

Traditions of Selection and Inheritance of the Chief or Vezo'on

The selection of Vezo'on is not random; on the contrary, it is a process that is respected and organised according to the customary traditions of the Rungus Tribe. The selection of leaders in the Rungus community, including in Bavanggazo involves generational inheritance. Usually, Vezo'on candidates are selected based on criteria such as wisdom, justice, and experience in the community. The selection process involves consultation with community members and traditional leaders. After being

elected, Vezo'on takes the oath and accepts the mandate to lead the community with full responsibility. Vezo'on occupies the first room in the longhouse. If the first room is full, Vezo'on's son builds an adjacent longhouse. If the Vezo'on lacks children, the next Vezo'on is chosen from among family members who are related.

The Function of Each Room and the Construction of a New Room in a Longhouse

Although the longhouse appears as a single house with a connected roof, inside there are separate rooms that accommodate each family unit. The average occupants in one room are eight people, depending on the number of children in a family. Typically, children aged around 9-10 years old sleep in the outdoor living room. Each room also contains a large room (ongkob), an attic (abai), a dry kitchen, a porch (dapad), a platform (lansah), a place to wash dishes (salou). The longhouse features a shared toilet facility positioned outside the main living area.

Picture 1: Room (Ongkob) Sources: author.



Picture 2: Living Room Sources: author.



Picture 3: Attic (*Abai*) Sources: author.



Picture 4: Porch (*Dapad*) Sources: author.



Picture 5: Kitchen Sources: author.



The main room, which is the first room, is inhabited by the leader of the longhouse (Vezo'on). This room holds an important role as a symbol of status and power in the longhouse. The chief or Vezo'on and his family usually live in this room, and this room is also often used to welcome special guests or important people who come to visit. If the longhouse is full, someone builds a new longhouse elsewhere. The living room is often used to welcome guests and other social activities. This living room serves as a venue for interacting with guests and showcase cultural traditions. Next, the materials used to build longhouses include bamboo, and nipah leaves. The empty space above the room serves as storage to store items or musical instruments. These traditional longhouses still resemble modern longhouses but are not built from concrete materials.

LIFE AND TRADITIONS OF THE RUNGUS TRIBES

Daily Life of the Rungus Tribe Community

The daily life of the Rungus Tribe is enriched by activities rich in traditional cultural values. Every day, this community engages in various activities such as gardening, plantation work, and household chores. In the morning, they wake up early to carry out daily tasks such as planting rice, weaving, or managing livestock. The women primarily engage in activities at home and leave to work in the fields during rice harvest season.

Traditional Marriage of the Rungus Tribe

In the marriage custom of the Rungus Tribe, the process of finding a life partner is parentally arranged. However, if a young man seeks specific woman, the young man must ask his parents for permission first. If agreed, the man's parents observe the girl of their choice in his absence. Interestingly, the girl's family cannot refuse even if the daughter does not like the man to avoid facing a 'sogit' (fine). The fine may involve a two-legged animal for a minor offense, such as a chicken. For major offenses, they must provide a four-legged animal, like a pig or buffalo. Once both parties agree, the man's parents will set the engagement date. After a month from the delivery of the bridegroom, the discussion about gifts, punishments, and wedding expenses occurs under the supervision of Vezo'on and some family members from both sides. The day of 'tontong' (full moon) is considered a good day for the father to send a betrothal. When the appointed wedding time arrives, the man must bring "bujak", dagger, or sword (Paes). After the wedding ceremony, Vezo'on creates a marriage reminder letter to be registered in the Children's Court. However, if this marriage is a mixed marriage between clans, the woman follows her husband after marriage. Meanwhile, their children belong to their father's tribe.

Rungus Traditional Game

The Rungus Tribe enjoys two popular traditional games. The first game is called Ranggow, which means bamboo stick. The game involves a bamboo structure

that tests the player's balance and agility as it requires walking on bamboo poles. Poles can be placed horizontally on the ground, and the challenge is walking across them without falling. Variations might include the poles swaying or timed walking. This game does not require a game partner and can be played alone. However, this game is rarely played nowadays. Children of the Rungus Tribe prefer to play the second game, Mengatip-atip or Mogunatip in the Murut language. Mengatip-atip is a traditional dance that doubles as a child's game. Mengatip-atip means foot tapping or leg touching. This dance-style game involves two or more players with elements of competition or cooperation, depending on how the game is played. Activities like this are not only entertaining, but also serve to teach children about the values of life and the traditions of their society.

Picture 7: Mengatip-atip (*Mogunatip*) Sources: author.



Prohibition of the Rungus Tribe

In Rungus tribal society, taboos are not just a set of rules, but an important part of their cultural heritage and beliefs. Based on the results of interviews with respondents, the researcher identified that there are four types of prohibitions respected by the Rungus Tribe (see Table 2).

Table 2: Types of Rungus Bans

No	Rungus Clan Prohibition Type
1	Prohibition related to beliefs or Myths
2	Ban on noise

3	Prohibition of behavior
<u>4</u>	Prohibition against certain objects or places

First, forest-related prohibitions highlight their deep connection with the natural environment. The prohibition of entering the forest at night and playing on the edge of the forest reflects the belief in the existence of jinn or supernatural beings in it. The forest is considered the home of these creatures, and by observing this prohibition, the Rungus people practice caution and respect for the nature around them. Second, the ban on noise after 8 PM highlights aspects of decency and harmony in community life. Nighttime is considered a time of calm and rest, and loud noises can disturb this tranquility. More than just ethics, this prohibition is linked to the belief that loud noises at night can anger Satan or other supernatural entities, which may have a negative impact on the society.

Third, the ban on certain behaviors such as unmarried women and men speaking only during the rice harvest season shows the importance of tradition and social norms in Rungus society. This practice not only emphasises the rules but also highlights the role of gender and work in their traditional community life. Compliance with this prohibition maintains harmony in the relationships between individuals in society. Finally, the ban on bringing banana trees into the room highlights the spiritual aspect of the daily life of the Rungus community. The banana flower is considered a sensitive symbol and has the potential to attract Satan's wrath if not properly respected. In this context, this prohibition is not just a physical prohibition but rather shows respect for traditional symbols and spiritual awareness held firmly by the Rungus people. Overall, taboos in Rungus society are not just rules but reflect their values, beliefs, and cultural identity. By understanding and respecting these taboos, the Rungus people preserve their cultural heritage while continuing to harmonise traditional life with modern times.

Preservation of Traditions and Cultural Change

The preservation of tradition and cultural change is two important aspects of cultural and social studies. Preservation of tradition refers to efforts to preserve and continue practices, beliefs, and cultural values that have been inherited from many generations. On the other hand, cultural change refers to the transformation or shift in the way of life, beliefs, and practices of society that can occur due to various factors such as globalisation, urbanisation, and the influence of religion or technology. In this study, I examine the relationship between the preservation of tradition and cultural change in the context of the Rungus Tribe. I study how efforts to preserve traditions by the Rungus Tribe affect the dynamics of cultural change within the tribe.

In addition, I also study the impact of cultural changes on the lives of the Rungus people, including how these changes affect their social structure, beliefs, and way of life. It is important to understand that although the preservation of tradition is

important to preserve the cultural identity of a society, cultural change is also a natural phenomenon that cannot be avoided. Therefore, in this study, I adopt a holistic approach to observe how the preservation of tradition and cultural change interact and shape the cultural landscape of the Rungus Tribe. By understanding the dynamics between the preservation of tradition and cultural change, I hope to provide a deeper insight into the cultural complexity of the Rungus people and a more effective guide for the preservation of their cultural heritage in the face of modern challenges.

Efforts to Preserve Traditions by the Rungus Tribe Community

The Rungus Tribe community undertakes various efforts to preserve their traditions. First, they continue the tradition of building longhouses using traditional materials such as bamboo, nipah leaves, and reeds. Although most of the Rungus people have converted to Islam or Christianity and live in modern longhouses made of concrete, they still practice and display traditional longhouses to tourists as part of their cultural heritage. In everyday life, the older generation of Rungus attempts to preserve their heritage by encouraging the younger generations to speak Rungus and conducting workshops to pass down skills in traditional crafts such as weaving and wood carving. Dance, music, and storytelling performances are other ways to preserve traditions, often during festivals and cultural events where the younger generation is encouraged to participate and learn. In terms of education, they integrate Rungus history and culture into the school curriculum to ensure that the younger generation learns about their heritage.

Cultural Change and its Impact on Community Life

The disappearance of idols from the homes of the Rungus community is clear evidence of how their cultural practices have evolved. The influence of new religions, especially Islam and Christianity, has brought significant changes to the daily life of the Rungus community. This new religious belief has also had an impact on the way the Rungus built their houses. For example, a traditional Rungus house may once have had a dedicated space for worship or storage of statues, but now is designed with more emphasis on functionality and simplicity in accordance with the teachings of the new religion. Likewise, customary ceremonies or rituals that formerly involved idol worship may be adapted to align with their new religious beliefs. However, the Rungus community still strives to maintain some of their heritage traditions. Prohibitions such as avoiding entering the forest at night because of the belief in spirits remain observed. In addition, traditional musical instruments such as sompoton and sundatang continue to be played in certain events, ensuring the continuity of Rungus musical art heritage. These examples show the ongoing efforts of the Rungus Tribe to find a balance between new religious teachings and the preservation of their cultural identity.

Approaches to Ensuring Cultural Heritage Remains Relevant and Inherited

Ensuring cultural heritage remains relevant is important to create a strong sense of identity and connection between the younger generation and the heritage of

their ancestors. Therefore, the Rungus Tribe takes an active approach to preserve and pass on traditions to future generations. For example, Rungus language recovery programs are offered in schools or community centers to encourage the use of the language in everyday life. Traditional children's games are taught through workshops or fun events, ensuring the continuity of these games as part of cultural heritage. In addition, traditional musical instruments such as sompoton and sundatang are played not only in traditional ceremonies but also in contemporary music performances, thereby exposing the sound and culture of Rungus to a wider audience.

Innovation and adaptation also play a role in ensuring cultural heritage remains relevant. For example, Rungus folk stories can be adapted into comics or graphic novels to appeal to young readers. Likewise, traditional handicrafts can be integrated into the design of modern decorative items, creating a new twist and appeal to the younger generation. Through continuous preservation, transmission, innovation, and adaptation efforts, the cultural heritage of the Rungus Tribe continues to grow and is passed on to future generations.

Language and Communication

This section discusses the greeting system and use of the Rungus language, as well as its development among the younger generation. By understanding the greeting system, language use, and challenges in preserving the Rungus language, the Rungus Tribe in Bavanggazo continues to strengthen their identity and cultural heritage through aspects of language and communication.

Greeting and Language System

The greeting system and language play an important role in the daily life of the Rungus people in Bavanggazo. More than just a communication tool, the Rungus language and the greeting system reflect the social structure of the community, respect for elders, and serve as a vehicle for the preservation of their cultural identity. The Rungus language is still widely used in daily interactions, despite the influence of Malay and English. The greeting system is used based on hierarchy and level of familiarity. For example, to show respect to older men, Rungus people address them as "*amai*" (brother) and "*sasarap*" (good morning). The same goes for the addressing "*inai*" (sister) for older women, and "*minosodop*" (evening) for evening greetings. The Rungus language also has its own uniqueness in terms of vocabulary. For example, there may be specific terms used to refer to elements of their culture such as tools, building materials for longhouses, or plants commonly found in their living environment. By continuing to use and preserve the Rungus language, the Rungus Tribe community ensures that their cultural heritage is preserved and passed on to future generations.

Development of the Rungus Language Among the Younger Generation

Although the Rungus language is still maintained in the community, there are challenges in its preservation, especially among the younger generation. Young

people tend to use Malay or English in their communication, and there is a lack of interest in learning the Rungus language and traditions. However, efforts are still being made to teach the Rungus language to children from an early age to promote its use in everyday life.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the rich cultural heritage and daily lifestyle of the Momogun Rungus Tribe in Sabah, Malaysia, with a particular focus on the Bavanggazo Longhouse. Through a micro-ethnographic approach, the research documented the communal living practices, traditional ceremonies, agricultural activities, and linguistic and medicinal knowledge of the Rungus people. The findings underscore the importance of preserving these cultural elements amidst the pressures of modernization and urbanization. By engaging deeply with the community and participating in their cultural practices, this study has contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the Rungus cultural identity and highlighted the necessity of ongoing efforts to safeguard their heritage for future generations. The documentation and analysis provided here serve as a crucial resource for cultural preservation initiatives and offer valuable insights into the cultural diversity that enriches Sabah, Malaysia's national identity.

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Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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