Creativity And Strategy:
Marketing The Bangsawan Kampung of Sarawak In The 1950s

by

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The Bangsawan or Malay Opera was adopted from the professional Bangsawan touring troupes from Malaya and Singapore by the locals of Sarawak. Eventually by the late 1930s, Bangsawan performance was performed by the Malay of Sarawak. Its amateur performers and minimalist performance approach placed Bangsawan under the village Bangsawan (Bangsawan Kampung) category in Sarawak. Although Bangsawan Kampung in Sarawak could not outdo the professional and extravagant nature of Bangsawan from Malaya and Singapore, it managed to merge as a popular theatre amongst the Malay community members during the 1950s in Kuching. The local Malays intelligently altered the contents of 'extra turns' (among the vital aspects in Bangsawan performance structure) to attract audiences. Their efforts were fruitful and Bangsawan managed to retain its commercial nature, although its production mode was amateur.

This paper intends to magnify changes in extra turns of Bangsawan performance among the Sarawak Malays in the early 1950s. Detailed observation on new aspects of extra turn in Bangsawan Kampung will highlight the Malay organizers creative strategies in marketing the art form.