

A GRASP ON THE NATURE OF LUNDAYEH THROUGH THEIR TRADITIONAL DANCE CULTURE

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Abstrak

Penduduk Lundayeh terdapat di Tenom, Sipitang dan Long Pa Sia, di sepanjang pantai barat Sabah, Malaysia. Bentuk dan sistem tarian Lundayeh telah melalui perubahan dan variasi sejak kewujudan mereka di Borneo. Artikel ini mengkaji dalam pelbagai aspek, termasuk muzik, pakaian, pergerakan, fungsi dan cerita-cerita daripada tarian tradisional yang diamalkan dalam masyarakat Lundayeh hari ini di Kemabong, Sabah. Tarian tradisional Lundayeh yang masih diamalkan berdasar terutamanya kepada aspek budaya, sosial dan agama hidup Lundayeh. Kajian ini membawa kepada penemuan corak pemikiran, falsafah hidup dan perspektif dunia Lundayeh yang dipengaruhi oleh agama dan budaya purba mereka. Tarian tradisional Lundayeh berfungsi sebagai satu saluran untuk memahami sifat orang Lundayeh sebagai salah satu kumpulan etnik kecil di dunia. Pemahaman tentang sifat orang Lundayeh akan terus menyumbang ke arah perkongsian dan penemuan dalam dimensi ilmu kemanusiaan yang baru.

Kata Kunci: Tarian Tradisional Lundayeh, Warisan Budaya Sabah, Gong dan Sekafi Tarian

Abstract

Lundayeh populations are found in the areas of Tenom, Sipitang and Long Pa Sia, along the west coast of Sabah, Malaysia. Lundayeh dance forms and systems have gone through changes and variations since their existence in Borneo. This paper looks into a variety of aspects, including music, costumes, movements, functions and stories of the traditional dances practiced in today's Lundayeh communities in Kemabong, Sabah. The surviving traditional dances found to have stemmed from the core of Lundayeh cultural, social and religious aspects of life. The study leads to the discovery of the thinking patterns, life philosophies and world perspectives of Lundayeh that are strongly influenced by their religion and ancient culture. Dance music ultimately serves as a tool to understand the nature of Lundayeh people as one of the minor ethnic groups in the world. The understanding of the nature of Lundayeh would further contribute toward sharing and discovering another dimension of human knowledge and wisdom.

Keywords: *Lundayeh Traditional Dances, Sabah Cultural Heritage, Gong and Sekafi Dances*

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Figure : Mountain Sights and Landscapes in Kemabong and Tenom.

1.0 Introduction

This paper looks into the traditional dances of Lundayeh still preserved in the communities of Lundayeh in Kemabong, Sabah. The research on Lundayeh traditional dances is very rare and limited. This paper attempts to investigate the functions, meanings and values of the dances through the dance movements, choreographs, story-lines, learning and teaching process, music, costumes and nature of performances.

This study lays its interests in pure perspectives of Lundayeh ancestors and present communities and attempts to find out the values, meanings and wisdom lying under the traditional dances of Lundayeh. With methods of observation-participation, live-in, field recordings, interviews and formation of close relationship with Lundayeh villagers, the research finds deeper interests in revealing the reasons and factors that result in the present forms and systems of the dances; and answering further research queries such as: why Lundayeh dances are choreographed in particular forms and movements; why the dances are utilized in certain functions, celebrations and festival in their communities; and what is the intimate relationship between the inner natures and life philosophies of Lundayeh people and their dances.

It is worthwhile to be able to understand the significance of Lundayeh traditional dances as an



educational, social and cultural tool to serve their people. Finally, the research analyzes, based primarily on different aspects of the dances, and reaches a deeper understanding on the nature of Lundayeh people.

2.0 Lundayeh Communities In Kemabong

Crossing the high beautiful hills and magnificent mountains along the southwest coast of Sabah for more than 3 hours or 163 kilometres in distance from Kota Kinabalu, we finally reached Tenom, the prominent town 31 kilometres away from Kemabong. Kemabong was our actual destination, where Lundayeh villages can be found. There are three major Lundayeh villages in Kemabong: Kampung Kalibatang Baru, Kampung Baru Jumpa and Kampung Sugiang Baru. Kampung Baru Jumpa consists of four small villages: Kampung Jumpa Ulu, Kampung Jumpa Tengah, Kampung Jumpa Seberang and Kampung Belumbung. There are other smaller Lundayeh villages nearby such as Kampung Meluyan Lulu (Sakai, 2012).



Figure 2 : Location of Kemabong in Sabah. (<http://www.worldplaces.net>).

Kemabong is a very small town, a central point connecting to Sapong, Tomani, Sipitang and Long Pa Sia. Local government has provided necessary facilities such as schools, police station, forest department, post office, train station, agricultural garden, museum, *pasar tamu* (market), and hospital in the district of Tenom which is approximately 30 minutes away from Kemabong. Most Lundayeh people in Kemabong involve in agriculture as their main economic resources such as wet *padi* (rice), fruits, vegetables, coco, coffee and rubber for self-sustained incomes. Besides providing sufficient consumptions for their own families, the harvested and processed crops, especially coco, rubber and coffee are sold and exported to big cities such as Tenom, Keningau, Kota Kinabalu, other parts of Malaysia and nearby countries.

While Murut is the major ethnic group in Tenom, Lundayeh people largely proliferate and settle within Kemabong. Tenom District office claims that the populations of Lundayeh are distributed in different parts of Borneo: approximately 25,000 in Kalimantan, 2,000 in Sabah, 300 in Brunei and 10,000 in Sarawak (Sakai, 2012). In Sabah, Lundayeh people mainly reside in Keningau, Kemabong, Long Pa Sia, Sipitang and Tawau¹. Lundayeh can also be found in Sarawak such as Lawas and Limbang, and they are known in a different name as Lun Bawang (Shim, 2007: 2). Lundayeh are also called “Lun Dayu”, “Lun Daya”, “Lan Dayu”, “Lun Daye”, “Lun Dayoh”, “Lun Bawang”, “Lun Lod”, Lun Ba”, “Lun Tana Luunin” and “Southern Murut” separately in Brunei, Sarawak, Kalimantan and other parts of Indonesia (Seah, 2012).

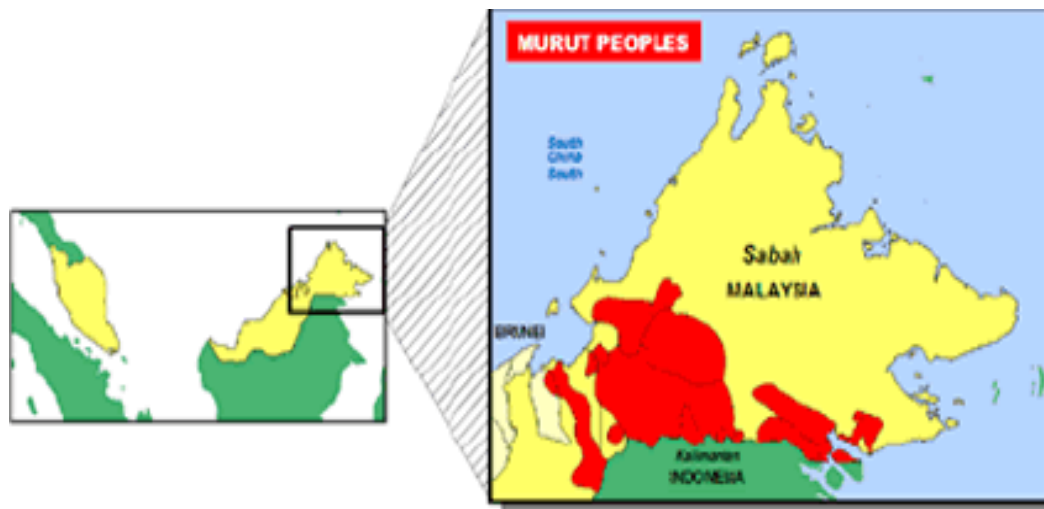


Figure 3: Distribution of Lundayeh in Sabah (Illustrated in red).
(<http://www.joshuaproject.net>)

¹Lundayeh residing in Tawau are mostly originated from Kemabong.

3.0 The Past And Present

All Lundayeh in Kemabong believe their ancestors originated from Kalimantan and other parts of Indonesia, and have settled in Sabah for more than 100 years (Pugh-Kitingan, 2004: 5). Most of the older Lundayeh generations in Kemabong were born in either Sipitang, Long Pa Sia or Kalimantan. According to an old lady about 63 years old, Anna (2012), from Kampung Sugiang Baru (established in 1940s), Lundayeh is one of the subgroups of “Lundayeh Dayak” in Kalimantan. Encik Langub Padan, about 73 years old, first village head of Kampung Baru Jumpa, related that some old Lundayeh above 70 years old in their village were born in the small villages at the border areas of Kalimantan, Indonesia, such as Kampung Long Lombuto, Kampung Long Sumpayan, Kampung Tadulan, Kampung Pak Barang and Kampung Pak Sinapan² (Shim, 2007: 289; Padan, 2012).

In the past, Lundayeh people practiced a living system in which their men and boys were taught to be brave and aggressive. During the old time in Kalimantan, Lundayeh people had many enemies such as the Murut, Iban Bidayuh (from Long Pa Sia) and far away Lundayeh groups. These ethnic groups had fought a great deal in fierce and bloodshed wars, and Lundayeh became famous as headhunters³. The ones who gain victories in the wars would be awarded the authority and power to enslave their enemies, including the children, to work as slaves in the warriors’ homes for their whole life. The slaves would even be given away as “*berian*” (dowry) for the Lundayeh brides in marriages (Sulitan, 2011; Baru, 2012).

In old days, Lundayeh people lived in remote areas of Kalimantan, up in the hills or interior highlands farming, planting rice, fishing and hunting to survive. As mentioned by Shim P. S., Lundayeh is one of the Borneo’s oldest tribe with their original homes in the central highlands near the Krian River that is now part of Kalimantan, Indonesia (Quoted by Shim, 2007: 289). They worshipped the spirits of nature and animals (such as snake and birds) that would protect or harm them. During that time, “*mangun*” or “*ngatara*”⁴ would serve as medium to communicate with the spirits and to cure illnesses with the aids from the spirits. Besides fighting in the wars and working in farms and forests to survive, Lundayeh people did not have any other specific aims in their life. Today, this ethnic group is very grateful to the Dutch and Christian missionaries who had changed their concepts of living (Baru, 2012).

In the early 19th century, British and Dutch governments signed the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 to exchange trading ports under their controls and assert spheres of influence, in which indirectly set apart the two parts of Borneo into British and Dutch controlled areas. Kalimantan was under the power and reign of Dutch. The foreign rulers had forbidden the Lundayeh people to kill and hunt the heads of enemies. In 1922, Dutch Christian missionaries spread through Indonesia and converted the Lundayeh from their

²These villages have been buried in heavy forests and no longer exist today.

³*Headhunters* are hunters who kill enemies for their heads. It is a significant and highly respected heroic symbol for the bravest and most powerful men among Lundayeh people.

⁴*Mangun* and *ngatara* are Lundayeh terms for medicine men.



animistic belief into Christianity, and educated them with values of humanity and the holy teachings of GOD. Therefore, the first Lundayeh generation that arrived in North Borneo brought along with them the belief and philosophy of Christian Holy God. Besides Christianity, Malaysian laws reinforced after the independence of the country from British in 1957 had also stopped the Lundayeh people from killing any human being. In the early period of residence in Sabah, Lundayeh people were forced to abandon their ancient tradition of headhunting. Nevertheless, there was still a very small number of Lundayeh quietly chopping the heads of the people they sought revenge during that time (Padan, 2011).

After 1957, Lundayeh generally stopped hunting for enemies' heads and they have been living in a peaceful, harmonious, constructive and meaningful life than before. With the great influence of Christianity, realization on goodness and values of humanity has grown very strong in the present communities and life of Lundayeh in Kemabong. Nowadays, the Lundayeh people live in stable condition of economy, education and spirituality. They are regarded, especially in Tenom, as one of the most advanced and intelligent ethnic people among Sabah ethnic groups. Lundayeh people have expressed their wish that they would continue to strive in the path which places a stronger emphasis on spirituality and humanity; because they realize that those two are the backbones for the future advancement, prosperity and peace of their people (ibid.).

Lundayeh have changed their lifestyle and religion in around 1922. The older Lundayeh would be able to recall and trace their past four generations back, the time approximately after 1800s, either from their great grandparents, grandparents, parents or their own experiences. Encik Langub Padan (2012), who is currently 73 years old, is able to remember his own life experiences back in Kalimantan before 1953. He mentioned that their ancestors had practiced partly similar arts, music, dances and songs as today. When he settled in Sapong, Sabah, he used bamboo found in the forests to rebuild few traditional music instruments, such as *telingut tang* and *talab buluh*, as a memory of his ancestors and tradition. Few of his friends in Kampung Baru Jumpa, such as Encik Andrew, also made a three stringed guitar-like chordophone, *sekafi*⁵, after he came to Kemabong based on the similar old musical instrument they played during the older days in Kalimantan.

Encik Langub Padan was the first village head of Kampung Baru Jumpa from 1960 to 1975. His village was honourably acclaimed as "Kampung Contoh" (Best Exemplary Village) by Sabah Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment. He is also the only instrument maker left in the village and entire district of Kemabong who knows how to both make and play Lundayeh traditional music instruments. He is regarded as the most knowledgeable and dedicated legendary Lundayeh musician and music instrument maker in Kemabong as he was honourably awarded the title of "Cultural Figure" for his great contributions in the musical arts of Lundayeh by Sabah Lundayeh Cultural Society and Sabah Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Environment in 1970s (Padan, 2012).

Reminiscent of ancient dances are still remembered by the older Lundayeh in Kemabong: *gong*, *sekafi*,

⁵*Sekafi* is a three stringed music instrument used to accompany *sekafi* dance.



busak bakok and *monyet* dances. *Monyet* dance does no longer exist in Kemabong, whereas *busak bakok* dance is rarely performed nowadays as it is only known by the older Lundayeh villagers above 65 years old. The only traditional dances that are still surviving are *gong* and *sekafi* dances. These two dances are originated from Kalimantan and still kept alive in Kampung Sugiang Baru and Kampung Kalibatang Baru. *Gong* dance is the genuine and original Lundayeh dance whereas *sekafi* dance is adopted from other Lundayeh Dayak subgroups, Dayak Kenya and Dayak Iban, in Kalimantan during the old days (Kafong, 2012).

In the past, Lundayeh traditional dances were used in celebrations and rituals mainly to strengthen the unity and ties among their people. The dances were also part of social and cultural activities that functioned as entertainment to bring joy and happiness to the communities. The role of musical arts in strengthening the spirits of villages is very much needed and may help their people to maintain cohesiveness and energy for continuous of hard life in the villages (Tongkul, 2002: 60). Besides, dances were also meant for rituals, honouring their honourable guests or hosts, especially to celebrate and honour the victories of the warriors. Usually, the dances would be followed by drinking of “*tuak*” (wine) until drunk (Basar, 2012).

Today, Lundayeh have been following a semi-traditional lifestyle based mainly on Christianity since 90% of their population in Kemabong are Christians, although a small number of Lundayeh are Muslims (Padan, 2011). Lundayeh people are able to maintain only some of their traditional *adat* (customs), for instance the traditional wedding ceremonies, baby cleansing ceremonies, guest-welcoming celebrations, “*ukui*”⁶ ritual and *Pesta Kebudayaan Lundayeh*⁷, as their new religion has naturally stopped them from practising the old beliefs.

Nowadays, Lundayeh dancers and musicians are invited by some cultural institutions, tourist destinations and hotels for cultural and entertaining performances (Genang, 2012). As innovation constantly develops in their cultural practices, there are currently more than fifteen dance forms being renovated by the younger generations (Yamat, 2012). Nowadays, the dances are utilized for the purposes of entertainment, socialization, commercialization, remembrance of cultural roots and philosophies, as well as expressions of respect and honour. On top of all, as they gradually open themselves up to the outside world, the dances are deliberately meant to express the feelings of respect and friendliness of Lundayeh toward other societies and people they meet.

In general, Lundayeh dance is an expression and reflection of Lundayeh people’s hearts. Their inner beauty and aesthetics passed down from the past to their present children, in hope to continue to travel into the future with graceful embracement of their purest souls.

⁶*Ukui* ritual is an ancient head hunting warrior ritual of Lundayeh celebrating for the victory of headhunters. Enemies’ heads are hanged on poles, and dances and singing will be performed in the ritual. Today, the ritual is revived and sacredly led by the oldest and most experienced Lundayeh in a village.

⁷*Pesta Kebudayaan Lundayeh* is the Lundayeh Cultural Festival celebrated by Lundayeh in Borneo annually in June.



4.0 Gong Dance



Figure 4: Female and Male Dancers in Gong Dance

Gong dance is the original traditional dance from Lundayeh ancestors. *Gongs* are able to produce loud, resonating and powerful sounds that uproar the warrior spirits, joy and strength of the people. In addition, the sounds of *gongs* can travel far and make effective announcements to the whole village and other villages of any festive occasions held in a village. These were part of the reasons why Lundayeh used *gongs* as the main music instruments for their dances in the ancient time. Today, traditional *gong* dance can only be found in Kampung Sugiang Baru and Kampung Kalibatang Baru, Kemabong (Padan, 2012).



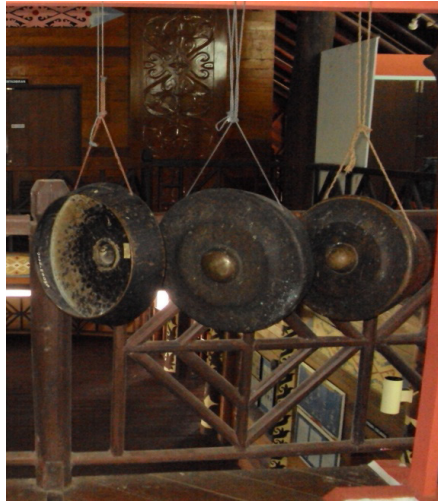


Figure 5: *Gongs used in Gong dance*



*talab
buluh*

Figure 6: Langub Padan holding a Five-Stringed Chordophone:
Talab Buluh on his Left Hand.

Lundayeh *gong* dance is accompanied by three gongs in three different sizes and thickness or a *talab buluh*. *Gong* dance is performed during celebrations and festivals mainly to cultivate and bring joyful, harmonious and happy atmosphere for their people. In old days, the dance was performed openly and freely for the villagers in the open nature without any stage-setup (Kafong, 2012). Today, it bears the new concept of stage performing for local and foreign audience in which the costumes and dance choreographs are formalized. However, the performing style still remains very casual and free as in the past.

The *gongs* can also be replaced by *talab buluh* when *gongs* are not available although *talab buluh* sounds softer and more serene compared to *gongs*. The musical nature of *talab buluh* portrays the soft, peaceful and polite nature of Lundayeh. In *gong* dance, the *gongs* musicians produce varied and improvised interlocking *gong* patterns. The rhythms intertwine tightly with each other in enchanting layers that combine into complete melodies reflecting the united, interdependent and intimate musical and social relationships among the *gongs* and musicians.

Gong is believed to have originated from Brunei where *gongs* had been traded in from China and Jawa during the Kingdom of Majepahit in 15th century (Benggon-Charuruks, 1992: 52). The *gongs* are made of bronze or brass and thick with broad rim. Each gong has its own pitch, ranging from low to high, depending on the size and thickness of the *gong*. Three *gongs* are tuned in three different tones by ears and they vary from one village to another.

Beautiful resonating and energetic melodies of *gong* dance music are produced through the tightly interwoven and interlocked tones of all the *gongs*. Therefore, the dance music would not be complete without the three *gongs*. That means, to accomplish the dance music successfully, three *gong* players are equally important and respected. This is a way for the Lundayeh to train their people to establish good connections that based on equal respect and spirits of working-together as this social concept reduces problems and promotes harmony and peace in the society. In life, Lundayeh respect each other and are not encouraged to discriminate among themselves on differences of social or political status. In their culture, they also do not nurture the notion of individualism that ends in selfishness and seclusion from others. Hence, the nature of *gong* dance music functionally reflects the tight connection within the social web of Lundayeh society: interdependence, brotherhood and altruism.

Sometimes, one *gong* player may be able to play two *gongs* at the same time if the third *gong* player is not available. It is a challenge and achievement of greater intelligence and excellence in musical skills if the player is able to play more than one *gong* at one time. This is one of the ways Lundayeh musicians develop their intelligence, creativity and sharpness through *gong* playing skills (Cenawang, 2012). This shows the nature of Lundayeh that tends to find challenges and advancements for better development of themselves in life.

The *gong* dance is choreographed based on the characteristics and natures of the genders. There are

four to 20 female dancers together with one to four male dancers in a *gong* dance. There is no particular restriction on the number of dancers, although massive volume of dancers would look more magnificent and beautiful when they dance to welcome and honour their guests or to hold and create huge joyful celebrations. However, male dancers are preferred to be small in number as it is very dangerous for them to dance with sharp weapons. If it is difficult to recruit the adequate number of dancers for a performance, then the number of dancers can be reduced according to the necessary circumstances (Yamat, 2012).

The feminine female dancers move gracefully during *gong* dancing. The female dancers swing their both arms and twist their hands in several different patterns while dancing. Their feet move in small quiet steps. The light movements of the hands and feet reflect the softness, sensitivity and gentleness of the females. Lundayeh express that the female dance movements mirror the “*agung*”⁸ feminine qualities of their women and girls (Kafong J., 2012).

The female dancers wear white *kuyun dechor* (blouse) and black *tekip* (skirt), decorated with yellow beads on the foreheads, silver coin belts, necklaces and braces made from beads etc. The white *kuyun dechor* illuminates the inner purity of the females, whereas the black *tekip* embodies the evil and antagonistic nature of their people in the past – of which they presently strive to abandon. The accessories are reflections of inner and outer beauty of the females. These solemn and great (*keagungan*) beauty of the females are the positive qualities that emanate from a female’s pure heart. Those are precious gems that Lundayeh women value the most (Kafong, 2012). These feminine qualities can be clearly identified when Lundayeh women care and love for their children and husbands at homes, ensure the harmony and comfortable living conditions of their households, bear heavier responsibilities to help their husbands in the working fields, and educate their children with unconditional love, understandings and sacrifices.

On the other hand, the male dancers sway their staunch swords robustly in the dance. Their dancing postures and movements are warrior-like, with heroic hunting and fighting movements. The male dancers wear the old costumes, *kuyun talun* (clothes made from skin of the wood or tree) and *chawat* (wrapping cloth for lower part of their body). The *chawat* is in red colour, representing the bloodshed and killing in wars. *Kuyun talun*, made from the skin of wood or tree, shows the difficult life within the vast nature that Lundayeh men had to venture through in the past (Kapong, 2012).

In old days, Lundayeh males worked hard in the rice fields and farms, and hunted bravely in the deep forests. In addition, they had to fight with their enemies to protect their territories, as well as to prove their power and bravery. The males very often had to expose themselves to the bad weather, dangerous environment and situations in order to survive. Therefore, the dancing movements and choreographs of the male dancers tell the stories of the undefeatable natures of Lundayeh males in the ancient time. Through the dance, the stories continue to be transmitted to their young men and boys, teaching them to be brave and strong in overcoming obstacles and difficulties in life, at the same time, to warn themselves

⁸Agung means great, a concept derived from the “gong”.



to stay away from fighting and wars.

Therefore, today one finds that Lundayeh men are usually very strong, heroic and responsible to support and protect their families and friends. They are also very brave to venture into different challenging businesses and adventures. Many Lundayeh men are very successful such as they succeeded in travelling to the West countries to study in universities, in boosting their economy with coco factories and rubber estates, in managing car workshops and learning to repair cars themselves etc. According to Murut people in Tenom, Lundayeh are faster to make advancements in their life comparing to other Sabah ethnic groups in Sabah. As modernization sweeps through rapidly in entire Sabah and Malaysia, many of their young people have been widely exposed to advanced information, devices and knowledge. This has resulted in an increasing of well-informed and erudite youngsters in Lundayeh societies.

5.0 Sekafi Dance



Figure 7: *Sekafi* Dance with Female Dancer Dancing on *Gong*.



Figure 8: *Sekafi* Musical Instrument Used to Accompany *Sekafi* Dance

Sekafi dances are adopted from subgroups of Dayak Kenyan and Dayak Iban in Kalimantan. It is usually accompanied by one to two *sekafis*. While *sekafi* improvises and varies in its musical rhythms, melodies and patterns among three surviving *sekafi* dances: *sekafi tangan*, *sekafi lilin* and *sekafi parang*, the dance movements of the three dances remain almost the same (Iping, 2012).

Sekafi dances can be performed in pairs such as in *sekafi lilin*, or four to 20 females, with one to 4 males such as in *sekafi tangan* and *sekafi parang*. Similar female dance movements are retained in all dances, with the only variance in accessory objects and compositions of choreograph. On the other hand, the male dancers would dance around with a *gayang* or *parang*⁹, mirroring different movements of the warriors. Today, recorded *sekafi* music in tapes may be obtained from Kalimantan and used for the dances in the villages because the *sekafi* musicians are hard to find nowadays in Kemabong (Yamat, 2012).

According to Rebika Yamat (2012), there is a special and unique *sekafi* dance choreograph in which female dancers dance on *gongs*. It is highly valued by Lundayeh because the *gong* symbolizes “*keagungan*” (greatness) of Lundayeh females. “*Keagungan*” here are meant by Lundayeh as the great inner values

⁹*Gayang* (Lundayeh term) or *parang* (Malay term) is a kind sword used in villages.

and qualities of their females such as great mother's love and sacrifices, great understandings, care, patience, gentleness, compassion and kindness, etc. Lundayeh people respect and feel very grateful to the women, especially their mothers, who have sacrificed their life for their families and children. Here again, one can find the importance Lundayeh people stress on the positive cultivation of feminine qualities which are defined and expressed in subtlety for the audience to feel and understand, either through the soothing and delicate *sekafi* music or dance movements.

On the other hand, the paired dances convey the social concept of Lundayeh that emphasizes on the healthy and right social relationship between females and males. The female dancers dance in soft and polite manner while the male dancers move in masculine manner bearing the intentional gestures to protect the females from dangers (Kafong, 2012). The dance choreograph not only shows the healthy and moral social contact and mentality needed to form the relationships of love and attraction between two opposite genders, it also relates the right way to establish and manage proper relationships between females and males. This shows that Lundayeh people emphasize on high morality in socialization between two genders.

Comparing to a modern culture, females and males in the modern world are very open and wild in relationships and socializations: easily get intimate physical contacts with each other, and indulged with less control in sexual relationships. When we look into Lundayeh societies, females do not beautify their appearances as much as the females in the cities by using expensive and branded facial and body care products, or sexy clothes to attract the males. The females consider their inner values more important as a woman. In Lundayeh culture, usually a good Lundayeh wife or woman needs to acquire all the good qualities within her heart before they are able to find a good husband and take good care of her family. Lundayeh believe that good inner qualities are essential to build happy, loving and long-lasting families (Sulutan, 2011).

Nowadays, younger Lundayeh have created varied forms of Lundayeh dances by adopting and adapting modern and foreign dance elements. Although the older Lundayeh do not object to the new innovations, yet those new dances somehow stray away from their traditional concepts. The new dances are not considered proper by the old Lundayeh. For example, the new variations of Lundayeh "*ukui*" ceremonial dance can be presently found in Mari-Mari Cultural Village in Inanam, Sabah, for the purpose of attracting tourists and bringing in more business profits. The new forms of Lundayeh dance in tourist attraction points have allowed the non-Lundayeh dancers, such as Malay, Indonesian, and other Sabah ethnic dancers, to perform the dances. The dance choreographers may include Malay or even Indonesians. Hence, the true souls and aesthetical values of Lundayeh fade along with the increasing of foreign elements. Lundayeh people, especially the older generations, have not shown strong signs of disagreement but treated the matter in a casual and friendly way. As a matter of fact, it seems to be very natural for the Lundayeh to take things in life easily, tolerantly and harmoniously.

6.0 Functions Of Dances

For Lundayeh people, preservation of their ancient dances is an expression of their gratitude and love toward their ancestors and origin. By still practicing their traditional dances, they are able to keep an unwritten record of their history and knowing the root of their identity. Reflecting and learning from what are left by their ancestors, Lundayeh would acquire valuable ancient life experience and knowledge.

The love for their old generations is nourished through stories and values presented within Lundayeh traditional dances. If Lundayeh traditional dances vanish in Lundayeh culture, they would lose a key to connect to their past. Many Lundayeh youngsters have gradually abandoned their own cultural root nowadays. If they are poor, they might indulge in some social problems like many of the American Indians who have lost life guidance and support in the societies of America due to their gradual loss of their identity and root. If they are not properly guided by good educations or elements in modern societies, abandoning positive aspects of their traditional culture would offer them bigger chances to be affected by materialism, individualism, fame, status and money in the modern societies. Therefore, Lundayeh traditional dances are vital not only as the arts and cultural heritage of Lundayeh, they are also tunnels that travel from the past to the present to enroot the proper values and knowledge within the life of their people.

In the past, the young ones would live and care with great attention and dedication for the old members in the family until they die. Unfortunately today, one can find some young Lundayeh in the villages have migrated to the big cities after their marriage. These children would only return to their villages once or twice a year during big celebrations, such as Christmas Day. These young people would give some money to their old folks only once in a while if they have money left from all their own expenses (Anna, 2012). If filial piety for the old is strongly instilled in their culture, their children will care and love their old folks. This will help to ensure their old people to have better life and their village to remain healthy with less social problems. It also helps in producing better inner qualities of young generations who would contribute more toward their own people and society.

Like any other ethnic people in the world, to know the root is very important for Lundayeh. Knowing their root through the dances brings about the intimate and united relations among their people in Borneo. When Lundayeh people meet each other during the cultural festivals, even if they come from different areas of Sabah, Kalimantan, Sarawak, Indonesia and Brunei, they will still treat each other with true feelings of brotherhood. Through recognition of identity and root, Lundayeh have established many close ties of friendships and brotherhood around Borneo and Indonesia. This is an essential spiritual support and healthy growth among Lundayeh societies for they live within larger family circles (Seah, 2012).

This is actually the similar case as for Chinese, Malay, Indian people in Malaysia. For example, Chinese all over the world hold to their root and identity for thousands of years and feel extremely proud of their huge pond of distributions in the world. This identity makes them safe and supported in life even though they



travel far to foreign lands. With this same identification of root, all Chinese in Taiwan, China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia, United States, Europe etc. share the close or similar language, customs, arts, costumes, music, food, culture and so on. These Chinese would never collapse but strongly spread their care and supports to each other, guided closely by their own ancient Chinese philosophies and culture although they have become Chinese with diverged claims of citizenships.

Today, the Lundayeh people have imposed two beneficial routes on promoting their traditional dances: one for altruistic cultural and functional practice in the villages, the other is to open up business and economic opportunities in cultural arts for their future generations. Due to the hard life in the villages, Lundayeh people have foreseen the benefits that stable and better economy can bring for their people. Therefore, they have accepted modernizations and changes in their cultural arts, such as dances, to bring better fortune and job opportunities for their future children. However, Lundayeh also foresee that it is extremely important for them to maintain their traditions to ensure their culture remains pure for as long as possible.

7.0 Dance Learning Process

The techniques and skills of Lundayeh dances, similar as the music instruments, are transmitted orally (Tongkul, 2002: 26). The dancers have to memorize and learn to master the skills as they practice and perform along with their older and experienced teachers and dancers.

Dances are regarded as tools for Lundayeh elder generations to train and educate their young children physically and mentally. In general, Lundayeh people need healthy and strong physical bodies and minds for them to handle and overcome the difficult life. Therefore, in the process of learning and teaching in dances, Lundayeh have put in deep considerations to help their people in their daily life. For example, the young *sekafi* female dancers are trained for good body balancing skills and increase of physical strength while dancing on the *gongs* or on one foot. The female dancers are trained physically of the best techniques and skills on the knobs of *gong*, rough floor or grass fields to control and develop their ability in balancing their bodies and enhancing their inner strength. These dancing techniques help to develop physical endurance against hardships. The physical skill and endurance are very needed for their daily work, for examples, bending their backs and planting rice stems swiftly and accurately in equal distance in the water, (they would need to finish four to more plots of rice fields within one day to earn enough money for the day); or enduring the hot sun and hard work in rubber, oil palm plantations or in forests up in the high hills.

The male dancers, on the other hand, are trained to balance their dance steps and control their movements to develop physical strength and efficiency on one tilted foot. Besides that, they would also need sharp and concentrated controls to twist their hands, wrists, waists and bodies in hunting, fishing and fighting positions while posing the sword in skilful moves of attacking, landing and defending. According to their aesthetical philosophy, good dancers and dances require right balancing, controlled physical energy, witty

and light body movements, sharp and concentrated footsteps, meditated arms and body postures, etc (Kafong, 2012). These dance techniques indirectly equip the Lundayeh males the necessary physical intelligence and ability to work efficiently in rice fields, rubber estates, coco factory etc. so that they are able to finish their work faster and more efficiently, as well as to achieve higher quantity and quality in their productions.

Therefore, the Lundayeh males and females normally are physically and mentally strong and sharp, intelligent and efficient. They are capable in accomplishing hard and massive volume of work, and they are likely to survive in the most difficult and turbulent circumstances of life.

According to Yamat Rebika and Samuel Kapong (2012), the dancers are also taught to cultivate and practice patience, team-work, quick-wit, discipline, tolerance, humbleness, spiritual depth and altruism in the process of dance learning. These good inner qualities are very essential for Lundayeh to become good dancers and to produce good dance performances. Some old dance teachers use the traditional teaching methods of scolding, beating and punishing the students in order to instil positive qualities within the inner nature of the dancers. For Lundayeh, good Lundayeh dances carry the spirits of their souls, or in other words, their essential inner values and natures. The old dance teachers usually instruct in strict manners and use “*rotan*”¹⁰ to punish the students while practicing. The students would naturally get very scared, check their own faults and observe disciplines in the lessons. In consequence, even during post-lesson periods, when the students meet their teachers and elders, they will automatically become well-disciplined, respectful and good mannered. Through dance disciplines, it eventually helps to educate their children to acquire good personalities and morality for the sake of their future. It shows that Lundayeh are wise enough to utilize the dance as a medium of education to produce good inner natures among their young generations.

However, Rebika Yamat (2012) commented that the young children have gradually changed nowadays due to the modern education and exposures they have in the modern societies. Most of their children are more difficult to teach and old teaching method sometimes would cause their children to lose interests to learn the dances or become rebellious. Therefore, young dance teachers have become softer, more understanding and friendly in order to stir the children’s interests, to enhance relationship between teachers and students, and to encourage the children to learn the old dances. Many young teachers would prefer to create happy, easy and funny atmosphere while teaching so that the children would feel happier and cultivate enough interests to learn. These new teaching methods seem to work well among the new generations, however, the quality of the dances decreases as the young students do not go through the appropriate trainings. For Lundayah, it is proven that all good dancing skills and qualities derive from difficult and hard trainings instead of the easy and relaxed methods. The students would usually need to tolerate and overcome all the hardships and pains in the tasks that they are given before they acquire the right and profound dancing skills (Kafong, 2012).

¹⁰*Rotan* is a beater made from *rattan*.



8.0 Conclusions

From looking into the divergent aspects of *gong* and *sekafi* dances, it may conclude that Lundayeh people put spiritual cultivation beyond all other mundane pursuits in their life. Throughout their history, they have realized that the values of humanity are the cores to build a good society. Through different forms and designs of their dances, their people are educated and guided toward positive natures. Turning around, their dances are deliberately constructed in positive ways springing from their good mentality and values.

When I first entered the villages of Lundayeh in Kemabong, the first impression that I received was softness, serenity and peace. Lundayeh in Kemabong live in the environment which is surrounded by high magnificent hills, thick tropical forests and wonderful nature. Their life is very simple, contented and harmonious. After almost a year of making friends with Lundayeh people, I was convinced that most Lundayeh people are basically soft, gentle, peaceful, relaxed, friendly, helpful, kind and good. This is further confirmed when I was told by the village heads that there is no crime such as theft, killing, robbery or rape in their villages. Even someone among them who was legally divorced by law would still seem very strange, inappropriate and rare for them (Baru, 2011). This is definitely a heaven if compared to the cosmopolitans with all sorts of horrible crimes and problems. The first village head of Kampung Baru Jumpa, Langub Padan (2012), said that the only problem hard to be solved in their villages is road accidents of drunken drivers. He also recalled the bad traditions and life they had in the old time when most of their people liked to get drunk and start to kill.

Marten Baru (2012), present village head of Kampung Kalibatang Baru, related that all Lundayeh abide on the holy teachings of Christian God and they seldom commit any wrongful or evil acts. In the past, Lundayeh had the term of “*Lun Doh*” for people or warriors who have lands, houses, crops and power. Today this term is used for the highly respected figures who contribute great goodness to their people and communities. With strong adherence on Christianity, their final aim in life is to reach the heaven, not the hell, after death. Therefore, goodness, humanity and morality are regarded as valuable and sacred guidance of spirituality for them. Therefore, these spiritual values have been emphasized and taught to every children at home with the hope that their children would become better people, useful for the society and country, and live meaningfully in the future.

Analysis of the dances above finds that Lundayeh females are soft, gentle, caring, understanding and rich of feminine good values; while the males are brave, strong, protective, patient, endurable, quick-wit, intelligent, sharp, etc. Lundayeh people basically love to have joy and happiness in their life. However, they are not selfish or isolated groups but they try to form good relationships among themselves and with others. They are usually caring, respectful and helpful to others and even strangers. When I came to Kampung Kalibatang Baru, I was truly moved by how the villagers had treated me. All of them would greet and talk to me as though I was one of them, and a woman even came up to me, held my arms and greeted me with warmth and sincerity giving me the purest gaze. Even the moment we departed, they seemed so

casual, natural and relaxed, yet not losing their sincerity and pure hearts. It seems that it is so easy and natural for them to be “good people” to even strangers or foreigners. I rarely see these people thinking of protecting themselves from the strangers and keeping guard on every words and acts of the people they meet. This is hard to find in the big cities where people are usually selfish and protective, pretend to be friendly, bear bad or harmful motives.

It is also very easy to communicate with Lundayeh people as they are very understanding and sensitive. They would easily get entertained, feel joyful and funny when they chat with others. The atmosphere around them is usually very happy, soft, relaxed and friendly. That is why the Lundayeh villages in Kemabong emanate harmonious, joyful and relaxed atmosphere, which is definitely different from the big cities that are full of pressures, frenzies, crimes and social problems. From listening to stories related by the villagers, it is found that Lundayeh people rarely harm or betray others. On the other hand, they are usually eager to offer their help if one is in trouble or danger. It can be concluded that the general nature of Lundayeh are virtuous, friendly, genuine and sincere.

Lundayeh people see the benefits of their traditional arts, especially dances, for their communities and our country. However, they do not deny that there is a possibility their people and our country may lose an ancient cultural knowledge if their efforts of cultural preservation are blocked by the developments of materialism and modernization of our country. Especially our government promotes tourism hastily in rapid speed encouraging many companies and institutions to exploit and take advantages of our native ancient traditions without establishing adequate systems of protection and contribution to our people and communities. Most of all, with the unavoidable influences from materialism and modernization, one day the young generations might probably forget about the values and knowledge of their cultural arts as nowadays they have started to leave behind their own traditions.

Therefore, it is important for us to protect and preserve the cultural heritage of our ethnic people, in this case the Lundayeh. Although these minorities do not stand out in the political, social and cultural circles of our country, yet they hold reservoir of valuable knowledge in bringing true happiness, prosperity and goodness for our people and country. Their heritage is not merely to be displayed in museums or to generate income for the country, but it is undoubtedly an ancient wisdom that is capable of offering meaningful contributions for the entire humanity.



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