

PHILOSOPHY IN THE TATANA ETHNIC SAYAU MOGINUM DANCE IN THE KUALA PENYU DISTRICT, SABAH

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ABSTRACT

The Tatana ethnic group constitutes one of the ethnic minorities in Sabah, predominantly residing in the Kuala Penyu area. Like other indigenous ethnic groups in Sabah, the Tatana ethnic group owns a unique traditional dance. The Sayau Moginum dance stands among the most frequently performed traditional dances. A preliminary analysis indicates that Sayau Moginum is a significant dance within the moginum ceremonies. The results indicate that the performance of Sayau Moginum encompasses the Tatana ethnic philosophy, which underlies the intricate and captivating social structure of this ethnic group. This study is significant in this field as it gathers information on Sayau Moginum performance and may serve as a future reference for the younger generations of the Tatana ethnic group.

Keywords: Sayau Moginum, Ethnic Tatana, Moginum Ceremony, Philosophy, Social System

INTRODUCTION

The term 'ethnic' is often utilized by researchers examining indigenous ethnic groups in Sabah (Pangayan & Shafii, 2021; Pugh-Kitingan, 2016). The term ethnic refers to a group of individuals who identify as having a shared ancestry (Pangayan, 2014). This ethnicity may also be seen as a group of individuals possessing the same biological traits (Scupin & R. Decorse, 2003). Furthermore, ethnicity is defined as a group of persons who share common beliefs, practices, and historical narratives (Shim, 2007). Thus, in classifying the Tatana population in the Kuala Penyu District (Fig.1), the term "Ethnic" is more suitable and precise.

The Tatana ethnic group is classified as one of the ethnic minorities within the Kadazan Dusun group, as recorded by the Kadazan Dusun Cultural Association (KDCA) in Sabah (Luping, 2009). According to informant Nuri Suram (66 years old), the Tatana ethnic group is

not indigenous to Nunuk Ragang; they believe their origin is from a hole in the ground, as their name signifies land (Romut et al., 2016). Nuri Suram (66 years old) attributes this phenomenon to earlier disorder and riots among ethnic groups residing in the Kuala Penyu District, triggered by the boruruk drum. It is thought that anyone who strikes the drum will incite conflicts and insecurity that could result in fatalities. Consequently, most of the inhabitants abandoned their villages and sought refuge in underground caves.



Figure 1: Location of Kuala Penyu District

The Tatana ethnic group holds a distinct traditional belief system compared to the Kadazan Dusun. Upon examination, the traditional belief system of the Tatana ethnic group exhibits the impact of Buddhist culture, particularly in its New Year celebrations, akin to those of the Chinese community (Ng, 2019). A field survey additionally found that the Tatana ethnic group is involved in the organizational structure of Chinese prayer halls or Tapikong in the Kuala Penyu District (K, 2015). This unequivocally indicates that the Tatana ethnic group holds distinct beliefs compared to the Kadazan Dusun ethnic group.

DEFINITION “TRADITIONAL ETHNIC DANCES”

Traditional folk dance represents an important form of cultural representation featuring the history, beliefs and the identity of various societies across the world. Such dances are not just about performance, they are active stories told through bodily movement, rhythm, and song which often pass from one generation to another aiming at safeguarding the culture. But, in reality, the basic trait of traditional folk dance is the way it is executed as a group dance. Dances of this kind are most common in most cultures during special events such as religious ceremonies, harvest, wedding and other cultural festivals. For example, the Sumazau Dance is an important ritual performed during the Kaamatan festival to keep the history, folklore and myths of the festival alive (Hussin et al. 2018; Tay et al, 2010).

The wide variety of traditional ethnic dance distinguishes the great number of communities and races that populate the world. Each dance form has its own distinguishing features, characteristics that recall and personify the traditions of the people such as movements, costumes and music that is used. The complexity of the symbolic attributes and the cultural

significance of ethnic diversity is one of the most outstanding features of traditional dances of Sabah ethnic groups. In Sabah, there are several ethnic groups like the kadazan-dusun, the murut and the bajau, and each group has special dances which reflect the unity of the people and their beliefs about nature.

Bajau, an indigenous ethnic community, has transformed Daling-Daling into one of its most popular dances due to its graceful movements and expressive hand gestures (Hamza, 2013). The dancers usually wear costumes decorated with bright and colorful designs, which represent the Bajau culture. The beat produced by gongs or kulintangan drums which are common in their music complements the dance performance. Daling- Daling dance does not only serve as a form of entertainment, but rather it assists to uphold the identity and the cultural practices of the Bajau people.

The Pinakang dance of the Kimaragang people is a ceremonial performance conducted at festivals. Dancers dressed in traditional costumes and moving gracefully in harmony with the rhythm of traditional gongs and drums. Furthermore, traditional ethnic dance serves as a repository of historical and social information (Pangayan and Shafii, 2023). The movements, postures, and sequences frequently convey information regarding the environment, social roles, and historical occurrences. The movements of the Pinakang frequently symbolize strength and nature, representing the eagle, which holds considerable symbolic significance within their cultural traditions.

Moreover, the Murut people are recognized for their energetic dances, such as Lansaran, a traditional social cohesion dance performed using a bamboo trampoline (Toh and Low, 2019). This dance is characterized by rhythmic stomping and leaping gestures that represent unity and joy. Preserving traditional ethnic dance is crucial in a progressively globalized world, initiatives to record, educate, and perform these traditional ethnic dances will ensure that forthcoming generations can access and value their cultural heritage.

TRADITIONAL DANCES OF DUSUN TATANA

Like other indigenous ethnic groups in Sabah, the Tatana ethnic group also has its own traditional dance. Jainah Ngoai (46 years old) explained that the Tatana ethnic group has four types of traditional dances that are commonly danced, namely the Sayau Moginum dance, Sayau Kolombujang, Sayau Balandaih and Sayau Bakanjar. However, among these four dances, the Sayau Moginum dance is the most frequently performed dance. This is due to the relaxed concept of the Sayau Moginum performance and has an element of drama which makes this dance performance more interesting to watch.

SAYAU MOGINUM

The informant interview results indicate that "Sayau Moginum" comprises two terms in the Tatana ethnic language. Jainah Ngoai (46 years old) explains that "Sayau" denotes a dance, while "Moginum" signifies the proper name for the Tatana ethnic ritual event. Initially, Sayau Moginum was referred to as *Sayau Kadayan* due to the rhythmic gong beating accompanying this dance performance, termed *Tungkas Kadayan* by the Tatana ethnic group. Additionally, according to Durin Tuwin (48), Sayau Moginum was later renamed Sayau Kadayan since the use of the term "Kadayan" would confuse the audience and prevent any conflict between the Tatana and Kadayan ethnic groups.

Numerous Tatana individuals insist that Sayau Moginum comprises a component of the moginum ceremony, which is a significant ritual for the Tatana ethnic group. The moginum

ceremony is categorically classified into three types: *moginum layob*, *moginum kaul*, and *moginum kahwin*, also referred to as thanksgiving. Nuri Suram (66 years old) indicates that Sayau Moginum is a mandatory dance performed in all three categories of events. Jipoh Tarin (70 years old) elaborated that each moginum ritual displays a distinct structure, with Sayau Miginum situated at the peak segment and involving the *babalian*, or head of the celebration. Based on the researcher's observations, the Sayau Moginum dance includes distinctive choreography, movement patterns, and traditional attire.

SAYAU MOGINUM'S PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY AND CHOREOGRAPHY

In overall, the Sayau Moginum performance is engaging, and the choreography of the performance includes aspects of drama. The Sayau Moginum performance that is performed today, on the other hand, is a traditional dance that has been purified and reorganized of the movement patterns. This analysis reveals that the performance is a traditional dance. In addition to that, the concept of the performance has also been altered in accordance with the requirements and preferences of the more commercially relevant audience at the present time. According to the Sayau Moginum performance, the Tatana ethnic worldview is still being meticulously developed in the framework of the stage.

In terms of the movement patterns of Sayau Moginum, Jainah Ngoai (46) noted that this dance contains three fundamental forms of movement patterns, which are menyodia, sinsid, and kangkad. These are the specific sorts of movement patterns that are used. By use of the initial movement pattern, which is known as menyodia, the main dancer will communicate to the female dancers that they should get ready and follow the tempo of the movement that is being performed. By observing this movement pattern, we can see that the menyodia movement pattern demonstrates harmony and the agreement that is practiced by the Tatana ethnic group in their social life. Aside from that, the value of leadership can also be seen in the primary dancer who leads the Sayau Moginum performance. This dancer demonstrates in a straightforward manner that the Tatana ethnic group adheres to the patrilineal social system.



Figure 2: *Menyodia Movement* in Sayau Moginum
Source: Patricia Jipoh (2024)

In the second and third movements of the Sayau Moginum dance, which are known as *kangkad* and *sinsid*, respectively, we can observe that male and female dancers do moves that are slightly distinct from one another. The hands of the female dancers are put at waist level, showcasing their elegance and tenderness, while the hands of the male dancers are raised at shoulder level, highlighting their bravery and leadership. However, if one examines the movements in greater depth, one will notice that the tempo of movement is the same for both movements. This demonstrates that the two movements are complementary to one another, as we can observe from these movements. Aside from that, the number of female dancers will also be greater than the number of male dancers, and at the conclusion of the performance, the female dancers will continue to dance alongside the male dancers. This makes it abundantly evident that the Tatana ethnic group adheres to an egalitarian system in their social system, as seen by the fact that they accord equal rights to both men and women.



Figure 3: *Kangkad and Sinsid Movements*
Source: Patricia Jipoh (2019)

Moreover, regarding the choreography of Sayau Moginum, it provides a clear representation of the past practices and beliefs that are associated with the Tatana ethnic group. According to Nuri Suram, who is 66 years old, members of the Tatana ethnic group have a strong belief in the spirits of nature as well as the spirits of their respective ancestors. During the moginum and moginum kaul rites, this is made abundantly obvious. During these two ceremonies, it is thought that the spirits of their ancestors would accompany them to the ceremony by utilizing the body of the babablian as an intermediary. This is to ensure that the ceremony is successful. All of the children and grandchildren who are present at the ritual will be able to stand and dance with the babablian as it descends, and the poningarung will be able to provide them with drinks afterwards.

Table 1: Summary of Philosophy in Sayau Moginum's Performance and Choreography

Performance Aspects		Philosophy
Movement	<i>Menyodia</i>	The Tatana ethnic family system was defined as patrilineality. The Tatana ethnic group upholds the principles of harmony and cooperation in social interactions.
	<i>Kangkad & Sinsid</i>	The implementation of a social system that is egalitarian and ensures equality between genders.
Choreography		The traditional customs and beliefs of the Tatana ethnic group towards the spirits of ancestors and other natural spirits. The presence of <i>babalian</i> and <i>sairan</i> dishes.

Table 1 illustrates that the Sayau Moginum performance encompasses a variety of dance movements and choreography that express the Tatana ethnic philosophy of life. The Sayau Moginum performance allows the audience to learn about the Tatana ethnic social structure, which is delineated by historical practices and beliefs. The habits and traditional beliefs of the Tatana ethnic group have indirectly shaped their intricate social system. The fundamental aspects of the Tatana ethnic group have led to the creation of traditional dances, such as Sayau Moginum, which symbolically embody their contemporary life philosophy.

The Sayau Moginum, the traditional dance of the Tatana people, exemplifies an interesting blend of performance philosophy and choreographic technique. This dance is fundamentally connected to the Moginum ceremonies, a customary thanksgiving ceremonial. The Sayau Moginum represents appreciation and respect for the spirits and ancestors, symbolizing a peaceful relationship between the community and the spiritual domain. The dance choreography frequently incorporates slow, intentional movements, representing balance and reverence. Dancer's don traditional clothes featuring elaborate beadwork and woven designs, while the music, produced by gongs and other indigenous instruments, establishes a rhythmic basis that enhances the spiritual atmosphere of the show. The Sayau Moginum functions as a spiritual offering and a communal festivity, capturing the Tatana philosophy of unity and appreciation.

CONCLUSIONS

Traditional ethnic dance serves as a significant manifestation of cultural identity and heritage. It acts as a conduit between history and contemporary society, linking individuals to their heritage while cultivating a sense of community. By cherishing and safeguarding these dances, we pay tribute to the diversity and depth of human culture, ensuring that their narratives endure for future generations. The Sayau Moginum performance, frequently executed by the Tatana ethnic group in the Kuala Penyu District, represents their life philosophy. This idea is fundamental to the establishment of the Tatana ethnic social system. Sayau Moginum indicates that the Tatana ethnic group employs a hybrid social system that integrates both patrilineal and egalitarian elements. The family system is led by men and women as loyal followers. However, women and men have equal rights in becoming community leaders or leading the group. This explicitly shows that the Tatana ethnic group likewise engages in egalitarianism. Nonetheless, their customs and traditional beliefs serve as both a barrier and a framework in establishing an optimal social order, laying the foundation for the distinct identity and self-esteem of the Tatana ethnic group in the Kuala Penyu District.

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INFORMANT

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4. Jainah Ngoai, 46 years old, Kampung Kelampung, Kuala Penyu