



JABATAN KETUA MENTERI

Mukah Kaul 1999 And Its Significance

by

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"Kaul berertinya janji yang diikrarkan sungguh-sungguh niat, nazar, janji dalam hati."

*Haji Zainal Abidin Safarwan
Pemenang Anugerah Buku Kebangsaan 1996*

It means a vow that must be fulfilled, a wish, a desire that must be accomplished.

Coincidentally the Melanau term, "Kaul" is not so much of a difference from that of "Bahasa Klasik". BP: 1991. It's a desire to celebrate, as an appreciation of the populace, after enduring long months of hardship i.e. November to February which occurred during the North East Monsoon. In the past it was really a time of privation, where lack of necessities of life for the coastal inhabitants could not go anywhere looking for food and other daily needs. The sea was rough and the areas along the villages were flooded. The Melanaus, within these areas were affected by these hardships. Therefore, due to the change of the climatic conditions, when fine weather and no floods appeared, they then organised a "kaul". It's original purpose was aimed to cleanse the village, to appease the environment both for their health and their wealth.

This year, according to Bapa Kaul 1999, Penghulu Brahim Jack bin Maya of Kampung Tellian Tengah/Tellian Ulu, Pesta Kaul started off at 6.30 am on 18.4.1999 with the journey by boat beginning from Kampung Tellian Tengah, with all the relevant items ready for the occasion. Among them was the Flotilla slowly moving as a solid mass

into the midstream. Music from the gendang, violin, *tawak* and *geletangan* were played together, bringing the *seraheng* which in the past, they believed that it could conduct the spirits out of the village. In one boat there were people wearing masks representing spirits at Kaul Ceremony. But today, this is considered only as an entertainment.

Then there were also four *bidar* paddled by ten men each, dressed with colourful yellow and black uniforms. Besides that there were long boats installed with young nipah and sago fronds. Then there were also seven big fishing boats containing the same objects nicely arranged as in the other boats. It was really nice to see such a view when the undulating boats caused by the ripples moved slowly downstream. The golden rays of the morning sun really added beauty to the scenery with tall mangrove trees on the right side of the bank and Mukah Town on the left, making it more fascinating to see, especially for the non Mukahian.

By the time they reached a Government Ship it looked more beautiful when all of them surrounded it. That was the time when they handed the *seraheng* led by Penghulu Brahim Jack bin Maya to Datuk Dr. James Jemut Masing, the Minister of Tourism, Sarawak. He was accompanied by Datuk Dr. Leo Micheal Toyad, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Assistant Minister of Communication and Works, Datuk Haji Wahab bin Haji Dollah, the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Tourism Encik Aloysius Driss, the Resident of Sibu Division, Encik Patrick Engkasan, the District Officer, Tuan Haji Othman bin Abang Fata and many other dignitaries. Then they went ashore at Kala Dana Mukah where the honourable guest of the day, Datuk Dr. James Jemut Masing implanted the *seraheng* in the ground under the located bush where "nobody should have come to the area before the *seraheng* was installed, meaning that the spirits or *ipo* like such environment, for the benefit of all concerned".

This was quite relevant because "Judging from their participation the annual cleansing of all the villages, the Kaul was the one symbolic occasion on which the focus of the ceremony was the village as a whole and not one household in it."

Morris 95: 1991

Hence judging from the present Melanau participants, either Muslim or Christians, the traditional dress used by most of them portrayed mainly on social and cultural denominations, in spite of the fact that such religions have strong effect in the areas concerned.

A good example is about how the *seraheng* was installed. In any case, today, the *seraheng* is planted by the Ketua Kaul in silence and from the bottom of his heart he might say or might not say anything because as a Christian he is in a tussle between a Christian belief (1st Commandment) in contrast to that of a Melanau Likou practice.

Today most of them considered that it is not sustainable to do so, to recite anything during the *Seraheng* ceremony apart from the Christian doctrine. However, this depends on how they differentiate about it. Through our experience, when I was a student in Mukah, the Catholic Priest held the Sunday MASS at the same place where the Kaul was held today. The congregation was reasonably quite big. After MASS we joined the normal Pesta Kaul.

But, a very long time ago, if the shaman performed the *memeng* he started with an invocation calling all the good spirits, *ipo* who were in or near the villages so that they would hear his incarnation asking for peace and prosperity in their environments. They believed in another world. There were rivers, seas, mountains and sago plantations. For

these reasons the *meng* of the Ketua Kaul who was normally a shaman, said as follows:

*"Oi Ipo', Oi Ipo', Oi Ipo'
Ipo' Langit, Ipo' Tana', Ipo' Daat
Ipo' Kala, Ipo' Guun, Ipo' Uma
Ipo' Lebo', Ipo' Nase', Ipo' Yeang."*

Which roughly means

*"Oh spirits, oh spirits, oh spirits
Spirits of the Sky (universe), Spirits of the Land
Spirits of the Seas, spirits of the Estuaries
Spirits of the Forests, Spirits of the Farms
Spirits of the Houses (Villages)
Spirits of the Padi (Rice) and Spirits of the Underworld."*

"We call on you not in a dreamlike state. We gather here, all of us to convey our gratitude to openly show our feelings. We ask that our country be peaceful and productive. We have endured the difficult months of privation and have borne the difficulties with patience. We are here without deceit and dissimulation. We gather here with our offerings at the mouth of his river. We call upon the spirits with good intention so that we may have abundance and good health."

That was why, in the past, the powerful shaman, a *bayoh bisa*, was required to chant aloud the above mentioned incarnation which today may be retained only just for the sake of upkeeping the TRADITION OF KAUL ALIVE.

In fact, whenever a *seraheng* is carried, it's already a feeling of joy and happiness for the entertainment of the Kaul Ceremony.

The Seraheng

Symbolically, the seraheng plays a very important role in the Kaul Festival. This is where "offerings for the spirits are placed in a flat round basket where a long bamboo passed through where shredded leaves was left on the top. Woven palm leaves decorations, flowers for enjoyment of the spirits were attached to the baskets and leaves." Morris: 95:1991.

Below are the items roughly listed for the *seraheng* structure.

1. Long thick bamboo pole - about 3 meter.
2. Round basket of about 1 meter in diameter.
3. Nipah/sago palm or *daun iseang* for decoration.
4. Seven small plates made of nipah leaves.
5. These plates contain *beleu*, like *daun sireh pinang*, *kapur*, gambier, rokok from nipah leaves and tobacco Jawa.
6. Yellow rice mixed with kunyit.
7. White rice with *santan*.
8. 7 pieces of *kelupeh - pa'eh*.
9. 7 pieces of *penyaram*.
10. *Breteh*.
11. Sago
12. Salt
13. 7 pieces of coconut cuttings.
14. Iseang leaves with 7 holes.
15. Nipah leaves
16. Symbol of chicken woven either from sago, nipah or *iseang* leaves.

Before leaving the *seraheng* he chanted and asked for good harvest of rice (padi), abundant catch of both sea and fresh water fish together with wild fruits and *lelamaih*. This offer is specially requested to Ipo' Balou Lakei, an old lady spirit who is always kind enough to supply them. This was also illustrated in a Melanau dance called *mengareang* performed by the Mukah Melanau Cultural Group.

(Note: Today, for religious reasons, some of the rituals are not carried out anymore. Incantations and the use of *seraheng* are maintained because it is the most important item as a symbol in the Kaul ceremony. Without *seraheng* there is no Kaul).

Speeches

Another highlight of the day were the speeches made by the following dignitaries. The first to speak was Pemanca Tuan Haji Hussain, Chairman of the Mukah Kaul Committee 1999.

“Terima kasih kerana memberi kesempatan untuk kita semua menganjurkan Pesta Kaul yang bertema “Budaya Teguh Masyarakat Maju.”

Kami juga ingin mengucapkan terima kasih kepada Yang Berhormat Datuk Dr. James Jemut Masing kerana sudi melapangkan masa untuk hadir, seterusnya merasmikan Pesta Kaul kita pada tahun ini.

Terima kasih juga kepada semua jemputan dan semua penduduk yang datang merayakan Pesta Kaul 1999 dan kita berharap agar ianya dapat

dikekalkan dan diraikan pada tiap-tiap tahun, agar ianya tidak pupus ditelan zaman.

Untuk makluman tuan-tuan dan puan-puan Pesta Kaul merupakan upacara tradisional kaum Melanau yang diadakan setiap tahun di Muara Sungai.

Ianya telah wujud lebih kurang beratus ratus tahun dari nenek moyang yang lalu, dan diadakan oleh masyarakat setempat. Ini ianya merupakan satu Pesta Sosial Kebudayaan. Tujuan utama Pesta ini adalah untuk memupuk semangat muhibbah dan kerjasama penduduk setempat. Selain daripada itu, ini juga berharap agar Pesta Kaul ini dapat menjadi daya tarik pelancongan ke Mukah dan Sarawak amnya. Tuan-tuan dan puan-puan yang dihormati PESTA KAUL pada tahun ini, walaupun diadakan secara sederhana, namun ianya satu sejarah bagi kita semua kerana pada tahun yang lepas Pesta Kaul Mukah telah diletakkan dalam Kalendar Pelancongan Negeri Sarawak dan diraikan pada tiap-tiap tahun.

Dengan ini saya selaku Pengerusi Pesta Kaul ingin mengucapkan ribuan terima kasih, kepada pihak Kementerian Pelancongan, Sarawak atas sokongan itu yang diberi dalam menjayakan Pesta Kaul pada tahun ini.

Kami ingin memohon peruntukan kewangan daripada Kementerian Pelancongan Negeri untuk membena pentas dan lain-lain kemudahan asas yang kekal, supaya dapat mencantikkan tapak Kaul dan menjimatkan pembelanjaan tahunan untuk tujuan Pesta ini.

Sebelum saya mengakhiri ucapan saya terlebih dahulu saya ingin mengucapkan jutaan terima kasih dan setinggi-tinggi penghargaan kepada semua pihak yang terlibat secara langsung ataupun tidak

langsung khususnya kepada ahli jawatankuasa pengelola Pesta Kaul, dermawan-dermawan, JKR, MDDM, PDRM, pihak swasta dan kakitangan kerajaan yang telah menjayakan Pesta Kaul 1999 Mukah. Sekian.”

Speech by Datuk Dr. Leo Michael Toyad Deputy Foreign Minister, Malaysia.

“YB Datuk Dr. James Jemut Masing, Menteri Pelancongan Negeri Sarawak, selaku Tetamu Kehormat kita Pesta Kaul 1999 di Mukah dan saya mengambil kesempatan ini sebagai wakil rakyat kawasan ini dan juga penaung bersama jawatankuasa pengelola ingin menyatakan rasa bangga kerana kehadiran beliau untuk bersama kita pada pagi ini dan secaranya merasmikan Pesta Kaul 1999 ini yang kali keduanya beliau sama-sama hadir dengan kita.

Ini dengan kehadiran beliau kita telah dapat memberikan satu gambaran bahawa Pesta ini adalah usaha bersama dengan Kementerian Pelancongan dalam kita terus bekerja sama dengan Kerajaan Negeri untuk meneruskan untuk menghidupkan atau mempertahankan keterusannya budaya-budaya yang menjadi sejarah atau tradisi di negara kita ini dan wujud di berbilang kaum di negeri Sarawak.

Dan begitu juga ia akan menjadi harapan kita untuk menjadi satu Program Pelancongan di kawasan ini untuk masa yang akan datang dan beliau akan seterusnya dengan Kementerian beliau akan terus memberi sokongan supaya ini menjadi satu punca ekonomi, kegiatan ekonomi sekurang kurangnya di kawasan ini menerusi Pesta Kaul ini.

Yang Berusaha, Pegawai Daerah Mukah Tuan Haji Othman bin Abang Fata, selaku Pengerusi atau Penasihat dan Tuan Haji Hussaini dan saya tidak lupa Datuk Wahab Dollah selaku Menteri Muda Kerja Raya Negeri

sarawak yang telah sama-sama menjadi Penasihat atau Penaung di kawasan ini untuk Pesta Kaul ini juga dan sama-sama memberi sokongan kepada kita untuk menjalankan Program Pesta Kaul 1999 ini.

Begitu juga kepada ahli-ahli wartawan, media masa yang sama-sama datang, sudi untuk meluang masa yang telah berjumpa dengan mereka. Saya nampak mereka datang dengan begitu penuh semangat dan enthusiasm untuk sama-sama memahami tradisi pesta kaul ini yang kita adakan di Mukah ini dan Ketua-Ketua Kaum, tuan-tuan dan puan-puan hadirin yang dihormati sekalian.

Akou merasa manah angai suab itou, jegem rasa syukur kerana cuaca pun dia jegem program telou lau itou pun cukup teratur jegem jaya sien Majlis Telou Lau Itou di bawah naungan Pegawai Daerah, Kementerian Pelancongan jegem kawa' AJK-AJK Pesta Kaul. Telou berharap Pesta itou akan menghidupkan semula tradisi telou memperingatkan bahawa walaupun telou sama mengejar pembangunan yang moden dan juga globalisasi telou sama mengingatkan bahawa USAL ASAL TELOU BEI KAWA TRADISI LEBEH AWEL KUMAN TRADISI MODEN. Walaupun tujuan itou tuneh adalah untuk telou memperkuat telou debei supaya telou faham bahawa dalam telou mencapaikan tahap kemajuan masyarakat telou lau itou sampai telou mencapai dalam pembangunan segi infrastruktur dari segi ekonomi dari segi pendidikan telou. Tetapi yang penting sien bahawa kewujudan tradisi itou adalah satu asas dalam telou mencapaikan matlamat kejayaan kemajuan dalam masyarakat dan sesuatu kaum itou.

Jadi telou harap itou hanya memperingat ga' telou satu tradisi yang boleh membawa kita bersama memperingatkan kesyukuran kita bahawa dalam kita mencapaikan kejayaan itu, kita tidak lupa bahawa TRADISI DAN NILAI-NILAI yang baik yang menyatupadukan rakyat kita

untuk bersama membawakan masyarakat itu dan kaum ini kemajuan dan masa hadapan yang baik.

Jadi inilah keduanya harapan kita dan juga termasuk bahawa program ini akan diadakan secara teratur dan dapat juga menggalakkan orang datang untuk melancong ke kawasan ini, sekurang-kurangnya setahun sekali dan atas sebab untuk beramai-ramai di Mukah ini. Walaupun ini jadi satu punca pertama, tetapi kegiatan-kegiatan lain kita harap akan berjalan secara downstream atau berekoran dari program kaul ini. Jadi dengan harapn itu, saya percaya sekali lagi untuk memberikan ucapan terima kasih kepada YB Datuk Dr James Jemut Masing yang sama hadir saudara Aloysius Dris dari Kementerian Pelancongan dan juga ahli ahli media yang telah membawakan Program ini kepada Pandangan Masyarakat yang luas lagi dan saya berharap ini akan terus membawakan kemajuan dalam bidang-bidang aktiviti kebudayaan dan ekonomi di kawasan ini. Dengan harapan itu saya sekali lagi mengucapkan terima kasih. Sekian.”

Speech by YB Datuk Dr James Jemut Masing, Menteri Pelancongan Negeri Sarawak declaring Pesta Kaul di Pantai Kala Dana, Mukah 9.30 am 18/4/1999.

“Selamat Pagi, Selamat Datang dan Salam Sejahtera. Yang Berusaha Pemanca Haji Hussaini Haji Zahwi, Pengerusi Pesta Kaul Mukah 1999, YB Datuk Dr. Leo Micheal Toyad, Timbalan Menteri Hal Ehwal Negeri Malaysia merangkap MP kawasa Mukah, YB Datuk Haji Wahab Dollah, Menteri Muda Infrastruktur dan Perhubungan Negeri Sarawak. Yang Berusaha Tuan DO kita di Mukah Abang Othman bin Abang Fata, Encik Aloysius Dris, Ketua Ketua Jabatan, Ketua Ketua Masyarakat, Cr, Ketua Ketua Kaum, tuan-tuan dan puan-puan yang saya hormati sekalian.

Di pagi yang ceria ini saya ingin mengambil kesempatan ini untuk mengucapkan Selamat Datang dan Salam Sejahtera kepada semua yang hadir di Pantai Kuala Mukah ini terutama sekali kepada ayahanda Pemanca Haji Hussaini Haji Zahwi, Pengerusi AJK Pengelola Pesta Kaul Mukah 1999.

YB Datuk Dr Leo Michael Toyad, Timbalan Menteri Hal ehwal Luar Negeri Malaysia. YB saudara saya Datuk Wahab Haji Dollah dan kesemua tetamu khas dan hadirin sekalian. Sebelum saya membuka tirai majlis kita hari ini saya sekali lagi ingin mengucapkan tahniah kepada semua AJK Pesta Kaul Mukah serta semua penduduk di Mukah kerana usaha gigih dan kerjasama yang telah ditunjukkan mereka dalam menjayakan Pesta Kaul Mukah tahun ini. Syabas untuk mereka yang terlibat menghasilkan satu pesta tradisi yang unik dan menarik ini seperti apa yang dapat kita lihat pada pagi ini.

Di Sarawak Pesta Kaul merupakan satu cara tradisi yang unik kepada Kaum Melanau. Tradisi ini masih dikekalkan berzaman lamanya dan mempunyai potensi sebagai salah satu daripada tarikan pelancongan ke Negeri Sarawak ini.

Ini merupakan tahun kedua Kementerian saya terlibat secara langsung dari segi promosi dan penganjuran Pesta Kaul Mukah ini dan dari apa yang kita lihat yang telah menyedarkan masyarakat luar kawasan Mukah tentang wujud Pesta Budaya yang dinamakan Pesta Kaul Mukah. Dengan kata lain penduduk Malaysia yang lain sedikit-tidakunya dapat tahu tentang Mukah, Pesta Kaul nya dan yang merupakan tradisi orang Melanau.

Pesta Kaul ini penting untuk kita bangunkan kerana ia merupakan batu asas untuk kita memperkenalkan Mukah sebagai destinasi pelancongan di kawasan tengah Sarawak.

Sehubungan ini saya juga menyarankan agar penduduk tempatan, para peniaga di kawasan ini untuk mengambil kesempatan untuk melabur di berbagai sektor perkhidmatan dan dapat menampung kemudahan para pengunjung ke tempat ini.

Services yang dimaksudkan ialah seperti menyediakan tempat penginapan yang selesa dan bersih, tempat makan, kenderaan awam, dsb. Untuk penduduk Kampung Petanak mengadakan program "Hall-stay" amat baik kerana memang maklumnya tempat penginapan di Mukah agak terhad.

Selain daripada itu para penduduk di sini juga harus mengembalikan industri kraftangan seperti anyaman, ukiran dsb.

Apa yang saya telah sebutkan merupakan kesan positif yang kita dapat raihkan jika Mukah dapat terus dibangunkan sebagai destinasi pelancongan negeri Sarawak.

Tuan-tuan dan puan-puan sekalian saya juga ingin mengingatkan supaya jangan salah faham dengan acara kebudayaan seperti Pesta Kaul Mukah ini. Ia merupakan hanya satu Pesta sosial Budaya yang tidak lagi mempunyai signifikan dari segi kepercayaan keagamaannya.

Apa yang harus kita banggakan ialah dari segi budaya yang unik. Justeru itu, dapat menarik orang luar untuk berkunjung ke kawasan Mukah dan bagi penduduk tempatan ini merupakan acara yang dapat mengeratkan lagi perpaduan di kalangan mereka.

Ini selaras dengan tema Pesta Kaul Mukah 1999 iaitu "Budaya Teguh Masyarakat Maju". Saya ingin juga merakamkan rasa bangga saya dengan penduduk di sini yang telah menunjukkan satu budaya kerja yang baik dalam menjayakan Pesta Kaul ini.

Hanya 3 tempat di Sarawak di mana acara pelancongan dikendalikan oleh penduduk tempatan dengan kerjasama Pejabat Daerah. Satu di Bau dengan acara Krokong, Motor Cross. Di Mukah dengan acara Pesta Kaul dan satu lagi di Kapit dengan acara Balleh/Kapit Raft Safari.

Oleh yang demikian saya harap semangat ini terus dipupukkan untuk menjayakan Pesta Kaul 2000 kita yang ditetapkan pada penghujung minggu kedua bulan April. That is the second weekend of April every year. Untuk menjayakan Pesta Kaul alaf baru tahun 2000 saya juga menyeru agar pihak swasta dapat menghulur bantuan kepada kita dari segi penajaan acara dsb.

Ladies and gentlemen, my ministry is very pleased to be associated with the people of Mukah in organising Pesta Kaul. I have said it before and I am to repeat it again that this Pesta Kaul will not be successful if the people of Mukah do not do it themselves. My ministry can only help and assist but you must lead in the organisation. On this my ministry therefore is very proud to be associated with the people of Mukah in organising Pesta Kaul.

You organise it, in order to create awareness for the people of Sarawak where Mukah is. What Mukah has to offer and the potential that Mukah has in term of tourism as a tourist destination.

It is with you and with your own organisation that will make Mukah a prime destination at least in the middle part of Sarawak.

I like to congratulate the organisation that organised Mukah for the last few years and until today and I hope that it will continue to do so in the spirit of unity and goodwill.

Tuan-tuan dan puan-puan sebagai akhir kata, selain daripada berseronok berpesta kita juga jangan harus lupa untuk mengekalkan kebersihan bandar dan pantai kita dan sopan santun kita dalam melayan para tetamu.

Sekian, sekali lagi saya mengucapkan berbanyak terima kasih kepada Yang Berhormat Datuk Dr Leo Michael Toyad, Yang Berhormat Datuk Haji Wahab bin Haji Dollah serta AJK Pengelola Pesta Kaul Mukah 1999 kerana menjemput saya untuk hadir sebagai tetamu kehormat ka Majlis Perasmian Pesta Kaul Mukah kali ini. Sebelum saya merasmikan upacara ini biar saya berpantun dalam Bahasa Melanau. This one I have to be very carefull on the pronunciation.

Melou Ba' Subet Tabe' Upa'

Ba' sise' tana' nai.

Melou menyabe' kelou tapa

Melou suka peden kelo ramai.

I hope you can understand me.

Translation

We intend to make containers made of sago frond and coconut shell

In order to be filled with sandy soil

We invite you to come and feel well

To participate enthusiastically ater the toil.

I have a translation. Datuk Wahab Dollah explained to me what it was, but whatever it is, it is good and we welcome all of you to come here at this Pantai here.

Dengan ini tuan-tuan dan puan-puan sukacita saya merasmikan Pesta Kaul Mukah 1999. Sekian terima kasih.

Dances

Every ethnic group has its own identity, in its dance and music. The Melanau as in "*Mengarang*" is one of them.

Then there is a *Petada'* or *Bergendang* which is performed on various occasions except during mourning period. Kaul occasion is no exception. The songs used are usually in Malay and recently Melanau words were used instead.

However, the *gendang* performed during the Kaul ceremony was just to get the tempo and the music in addition to the one that's already listed in the agenda for the occasion.

Games

when the speeches were over various games and other cultural activities were organised for all those present. Some participated in these activities while most became spectators.

The games performed were competitions in rolling sago logs. They used sago logs in view of the fact that sago was not only their chief food it was also the source of natural and economical importance since seven hundred years ago. For this reason, even in games, various parts of sago tree were used for its significance as Low (1968:339) stated.

“It is from the Milanowe settlement, particularly from Hoya and Mocha that the greater part of the sago from the West Coast of Borneo is exported, which is cultivated by the Millanoes to the same extent as rice is among the other tribes.”

Another popular game among the Melanaus is *tarik tali* (tug of war). It is organised mainly on the “knock out system” and for “the winner stay” is a big feat for them, and the competition is very tense.

However, the idea of organising it, was just to have a harmonious get together, especially on that day. To some, it may be the beginning of their socialization. This eventually lead them to mutual understanding which is beneficial to the society affected.

***Tibou* games and its significance**

Tibou games is not part and parcel of the Kaul ceremony. It is a game by itself and it can be held anywhere in the Melanau village. However, today this activity is added to the Kaul ceremony because it is interesting and many people enjoy it.

Traditionally, most Melanaus live along the coasts of Sarawak, extending from the estuary of the Rejang river in the South right to the mouth of the Baram in the North. Their hinterland dwelling zones are the Seduan (Sibu) and the Tanjung in Kanowit District.

Throughout history culture has largely been the pressure of the privileged. There is no exception to the Melanaus. Hitherto, one of the activities is a *Tibou* Game. In the past, the *Tibou* Pastime was traditionally performed and enjoyed after North East Monsoon which brought landas atmosphere also to the affected areas. This was coincidentally done as if they were welcoming the new season. During

this occasion, almost all wild fruit trees began to bear flowers. Then three to four months later fruits from these flowers could be eaten together with the fresh fish caught from the seas.

To most people tibou was a traditional game whereas to others the affected ones thought that there was a hidden curriculum in the "tibou agenda". Like many other traditional games, tibou activities gave a good chance for people to get physical exercise. This game made ample chance for them to develop a good and cordial atmosphere for socialization. This would eventually enable them to meet often, either during the tibou pastime or somewhere else with a chance to meet one another more often which could be planned so as to make them more intimate.

Besides that its agenda also enhanced people from various villages to meet one another which either directly or indirectly gave them a chance to get to know each other well either in social, economical and cultural fields.

How would the tibou game start? Here, various steps should be carefully studied before the game itself functioned effectively. Firstly, before a tibou site was earmarked, a Headman or Chief called for a meeting to get views from his country men where to find a peat area suitable for the construction of a "tibou". They should be reminded that the soil should be reasonably soft. It must not be too hard also, so that should the players fell off the swing they would not be injured because of its height. As have been said earlier, the game was organised at the beginning of the Melanau Calendar, i.e. *Bulan Pengejin*. The activities were performed in late evenings or right into the nights if the environment was favourable. This pastime was performed in such a

way because they were busy during the day time either with fishing or farming activities.

The apparatus used for making a tibou are listed as below:

1. Two round "*batang kayu*" without taking the skin off - of about 30 feet long.
2. About twenty medium size "*batang kayu*" for the steps where the players used to wait for the game.
3. Reasonable size of rotan "*sega*".
4. Young sago branches together with the leaves on.
5. Cooked *kacang bubur bersantan*.
6. One set of "*canang*".
7. One *gendang*.

Although *tibou* is played as a traditional pastime, it is also played with a big number of people present, only suitable to the "strength" of the rotan used.

However, before erecting a tibou, various activities should be observed. One of them is to serve everybody with a bowl of kacang bubur so that everybody affected should be safe and sound. It would be a bad omen if he/she refuses a good offering and the main reason was to please the spirit by taking it with an open heart.

When comes to erecting a *tibou* the top end should be tied with a fresh *rotan sega* with the support of a wooden bar. The bar is to be used to tie the swing i.e. the main part of the *tibou*.

One interesting thing about erecting a *tibou* is that all the people involved in it chanted the relevant recitals loudly at the same time.

*"Kat Kerarat
Kekureng Udat
Tibou idei pada mekat."*

The above recitation was cited to appease the goddess of *tibou*, to enable them to erect the *tibou* safely.

When it is ready the leader, *uyan* tied a very big *rotan* called *sega*. When he started the first swing he shouted by saying "*segem bueang*" meaning to say that every player should hold the swing firmly like the grip of that of a bear. He has to go up the ladders which is built in odd numbers (like 5, 7, 9, 11 or 15 steps) and the reason why even number are not used is due to the fact that it will become "*pesa'eb*" and this would bring disaster to the participants. This means that whenever a *tibou* is erected the ladders should be odd in number.

The top end of the *tibou* and every end of the ladder were tied with the young sago palm branches believing from that the participants would be prevented from any evil spirits or accidents and therefore no nails are to be used in constructing a *tibou*. In their belief, in the past, if they nailed the *tibou*, it meant that they nailed the *ipo'*, and anything disastrous could happen to them.

However, if an accident happens it might be due to “nature”. According to *Jamuh* accidents would happen in the following categories.

1. The swing might be broken off after being used for a very long time.
2. The swing might become loose because of not being tied tightly at the top end of the *tibou* and also may be due to the frequency of the swing that has been used for too long.
3. The participants did not hold firmly to the swing and fell down on the ground. That's the reason why the soil, where the area of the *tibou* built should be soft so that when the participant fell down he would not be seriously injured.
4. The participant could not hold the swing. He must be sure that he must not miss the swing. If he fell on the ground everything is upset.

Here is the time when accuracy and expertise play the major role.

5. The wooden *tiang* broke and fell on the participants. This was due to the weight of the participants involved during the swing because every swing there was an additional of at least one of two participants jumped and held on to the swing.
6. The *tibou* was not built strong enough to hold quite a number of participants. This broke down and fell together with the participants.

7. The ladders were not tied strong enough to enable many people to sit on them and thus gave way to the weight of the participants involved.

To officiate the opening ceremony of the use of the *tibou* itself

When everything was ready with the construction of the *tibou* the leader gave order to all those present to take a light meal consisting of *bubur kacang*. However, meat or anything that has blood should not be served in view of the fact that anything that has blood or originally has blood present in the food should be avoided during the opening ceremony. This was to avoid anybody or participant from getting injured and blood would ooze from the wound of the injured party affected.

Hitherto, when the ladder number nine reached the bar the *canang* and the *gendang* were played. The beat of these items which they believed that the goddess of the *tibou* was officially informed so that the pastime could be done without any accident occurred thus bring peace and harmony to the people in the vicinity. Then the food was served and everybody had taken it every one was ready for the next step. This was expected by everybody present because they would not start the game until the leader had chanted the poem to appease the goddess concerned. Then the leader who was usually a shaman would say the following:-

1. *Nibuong aan ba' tibou*
Nyibuong dipah sebelah kala Matou
Nyibuong ien teteken kenyu tatou

2. *Nyibuong aan ba' aleang*
Nyibuong dipah sebelah kala Rajeang
Nyiuong ien teteken kenyyiu tateang
3. *Nibuong aan ba' taga'*
Nyibuong dipah sebelah kala Oya
Nyibuong ien teteken kenyyiu tata

N.B. Matu, Rajang and Oya Kala Bunut (Mukah) are usually Melanau dwelling places even up till this very day.

After that he held the swing and went up the ladders until he reached the top one with one hand he held the swing and another hand he held the ladder. Then he recited another poem.

Wai aan ba' itut
Wai dipah sebelah Kala Bunut
Wai ien teteken kenyyiu pulut

Then he raised his hand that held the ladder and the swing began to swing. Immediately after that he cited this poem.

1. *Akou adep lua-luep leta-letut*
Akou ninai lou sakai memerai mabar suput
Jala' teluong jebea'k seput
Serupa manuo'k ka keang-kakut
Menyane' bunga jekan alud
Bisa' pilei da'an petud
Ji bungan susuong kahud
Enda pule aneka lai makan alud.

- 2 *Dag aju' berangai bu'eng tuju' dipun retou*
 Dag dana sadia lekap lula usah bulo'
 Usah bulo' ba' menyawa balei daya japah ajo'
 Sarunei tija tijo'
 Sabe' dipen plu'en lima pulo'
 Dipen lakei mada lo'
 Sudah tagep kah nga tujo'
- 3 *Tisa-tiseng tangisan tangeh dageng*
 Manisieng mambah taluaih aba lawaeang
 Mudah lawaeng tanaa' tail meneng
 Tail urai karejeng
 Tail kenah melayah mela dageng
 Bau tagul amou piyeang
 Aman pinyau sama nejemang
 Sapah sagul jamaliteng
 Sagul kelin mahou dageng
 Dau hari telou siang memilih bau tekeng
 Selu bulan musik kedeng
4. *Seda-sedu tangisan tangih paku'*
 Menyedu' manibah taluaih aruong lebu'
 Mudah lebu' betabat telu' kesu'
 Nalubeang asu' bubu'
 Sawa' lengen aruh legu'
 Sawa' mapen gamuru'
 Gemulai belen depu'
 Belen ba' amen dipen paku'
 Dipen paku' begelem gaa-gaau'
 Lalu namat nelalu'
 Namat labang uluh duku'

After the leader concerned descended from the swing and other participants took their turns accordingly together with their own prepared chanting. Their chanting also in same ways appealing to the spirits without leaving behind their own proverbs as well as some romantic *pantun* that were specially aimed to some people who were present there.

Among the traditional *tibou* song are as follows:-

1. Appealing to the spirits for the abundant catch of fish from the sea as well as the hunting wild animals and collecting of *lelamaih* in the forest and catching of fresh water fish. It is chanted in ancient Melanau terms and very few know about it today.

Pada' padou a panau utuong tulou
Migam tiraek penganeak lawei tibou
Tibou juah bagi manah matai tipou
Tibou belei pemagei giem gemei gebuong uou
Tibou sisaeng takureang usuok bajou
Tibou daya jabatu lamin alou
Tibou ajo' ja lelu' ju-uong asou
Asou banyang bilem bulou
Asou mu-uong bajutuong bilem bulou
Asou mu-uong bajutuong panyin alou
Asou palun lubeang guun dina dinou
Asou meba' adaeng jita' pelangasou
Mada kidam tibah tipou
Lalu balieu buen likou
Bawai amut usah kayou

2. How hard is it to get *lelamaih*. *Lelamaih* is a very delicious (food) worms found among the leaves of certain trees which could be found

once in several years after the monsoon season. Eventhough nowadays if the *lelamaih* is available it will cost between RM70-RM100 per kilo.

Mudah daya ko bunga susuong laben

Bung pelim bunga pesen

Jaraeng neh a peden

Lubeang peti dagen kaben

Nase' kerek tita' saten

Sido' da'un beba' pamen

Lelamaih mega buen

3. Praising the leader of the government or the headman concerned.

Juluh pamen likou Manyug pesa' du'an

Pige' tapiek tapuriek bua' dian

Tapiek piteang Raja Kayan

Ba' melel tana' tawi ud Lesan

Ba' lulet manabet kala du'an

Du'an yuong geretan

Yuong peup lawei nyato' usah pungan

Mamou rihau mauoh lengan

Yuong umiek da'ou lengan

4. Physical parts of a person's body (lady)

Diba'diba belema' belebuwou

Ga' lawei ruda-rudei ruda-rudou

Ga' pu-un sisuok buyun kelajepou

Ga' singap sisuok bat belabukou

Da'ou adep diba' takep tabe' bulou

Wa' menyaek rega-regou

Wa napih danipih patih betih lou mahou

This version created anger among ladies or grandparents who had grand daughters during the occasion.

Once the informant revealed that he and his friends were accused by singing this “song” and they were brought before the headman of the village. However, when the case was settled they were not fined in view of the fact that those who went there during the *tibou* occasion were not fined because they came there on their own accord without being invited to do so; whether to sing a song or to be sung by somebody who were very good in chanting the “*tibou* song”. Thus who were affected in the song should not get angry after all its just for fun so that everybody would share the fun of the day.

According to Jamuh “*tibou* song” are played for the following themes.

1. The starter of the swing cited a *tibou* song by saying that the trees were bearing flowers.
2. The second player who jumped and grabbed the swing and cited the song that the flowers had become small fruits in abundance.
3. The third player grabbed the swing firmly above the other and continued the song thus informing that the fruits had become big enough.
4. This was continued by the fourth player who continued the song that the fruits had healthily become bigger.
5. While the fifth player said that the fruit were fit for consumption.
6. The sixth continued the song and said that the fruits might fall any time for consumption.

7. Whereas the seventh player informed that the monkeys come to take the fruits for their food.

Then when the swing was unable to bear the weight of the seven participants and automatically slowly stopped swinging which eventually made all the seven players walked back to their individual places thus giving way to the other groups to repeat the swinging. However, their songs or poems might be different because they were free to start any new songs which portrayed different topics.

Those who were expert in composing interesting recitals were given chances to stay longer with different participants. If he had sweet melodious voice he could be heard far away in the village which attracted many people even right into late night.

However, if he was a young man there a good chance for him to meet many people even girls of his age were also interested in praising him for his contribution to the society in this respect. However, to some "his journey of a hundred miles began with the first step here". So to meet, to know, to get acquainted made them more closer until fate made them asunder for some believe that "Marriage is planned in heaven".

However, *tibou* pastime was usually played for three months. I had said earlier that this was one way how the early civilization thanked the spirit for the good "harvest of the sea and the forest" as conducted in the past.

It had nothing to do with the Melanau Kaul Festival. However, today the Melanau perform this during the Kaul occasion because many Melanaus believe that it has nothing to do with religion. They propagated the *tibou* game during the Kaul ceremony so that the game

would not die out. However, today it is just practised for cultural purposes.

This is a good idea. Otherwise it will die out, and race without culture will make it hard for people to make a research on their roots.

KEMAN KAUL AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Most Melanau Kampung performed an annual Kaul which was traditionally organised during the month of *Pengejin*, the return of plenty when before that the inhabitants, in the past, endured four months of extreme privation.

Keman Kaul, Makan Selamat masa Kaul is a get together occasion when "Food for spirits and humans was prepared by every household". The food consisted mainly of sago-based, rice-based and fish-based Melanau traditional dishes.

According to Kaul *palei*, no blood should ooze on that day and therefore meat-based food should not be taken. In the past, when the Ketua Kaul chanted an invitation to every kind of spirit that have been mentioned in his incantation, to join the villagers and shared a meal with them happily so that they may endure a prosperous year ahead of them before a new Kaul Festival was observed.

Everybody then ate the food, that had been brought, taking care to leave none. However, before setting out on the journey to their own homes, they had to leave all the left-over food to the base of the *seraheng* if they could not eat them all. There were then left to the spirits which were actually taken by the birds or any other creatures in the vicinity of the area.

Although today Makan Kaul is still observed, it has been slightly rectified due to religious infiltration and their influences, both Islam and Christianity, played their major roles in this.

However, today irrespective of their religious belief, the Melanaus treat the Kaul only a social and cultural values. In any case, the family and ethnic unity are sustainable for the benefit of the society at large.

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