



Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)

Volume 3, Issue 2, April 2018

e-ISSN : 2504-8562

Journal home page:
www.msocsciences.com

Representation of Buayeh in the Quality of Life of the Lundayeh People

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Abstract

Buayeh or crocodile plays a very important role in the life of the Lundayeh society. Their belief in *buayeh*, which is a ferocious river reptile, has been with them since their existence for hundreds of years. During the headhunting period the animal symbolised an enemy that was defeated. On the other hand the crocodile also symbolises strength, heroism, fame and wealth. For instance, among the Lundayeh people, strength is when a person succeeds in chopping and bringing an enemy's head after a war or headhunting expedition and is highly regarded as a hero and a grand celebration is held to welcome him. The whole community would participate in building a crocodile image made of earth where they would perform the *fekuab*, a heroic song which was led by a woman, followed by the warrior's relatives and followers. The warrior and the hero of the day would then boast and recite a self-proclamation about his fame by cutting the effigy with a sword *felefet* with all his might. In the case of wealth, only a man who succeeded in farming was able to build a huge *Ulung Buayeh* or crocodile mound in the heath forest. In this paper therefore I will examine the manifestation of the quality of life for the Lundayeh people as elements of strength, heroism, fame and wealth which are represented in the oral literature through the image of *buayeh*.

Keywords: Lundayeh, *buayeh*, strength, heroism, fame, wealth

Introduction

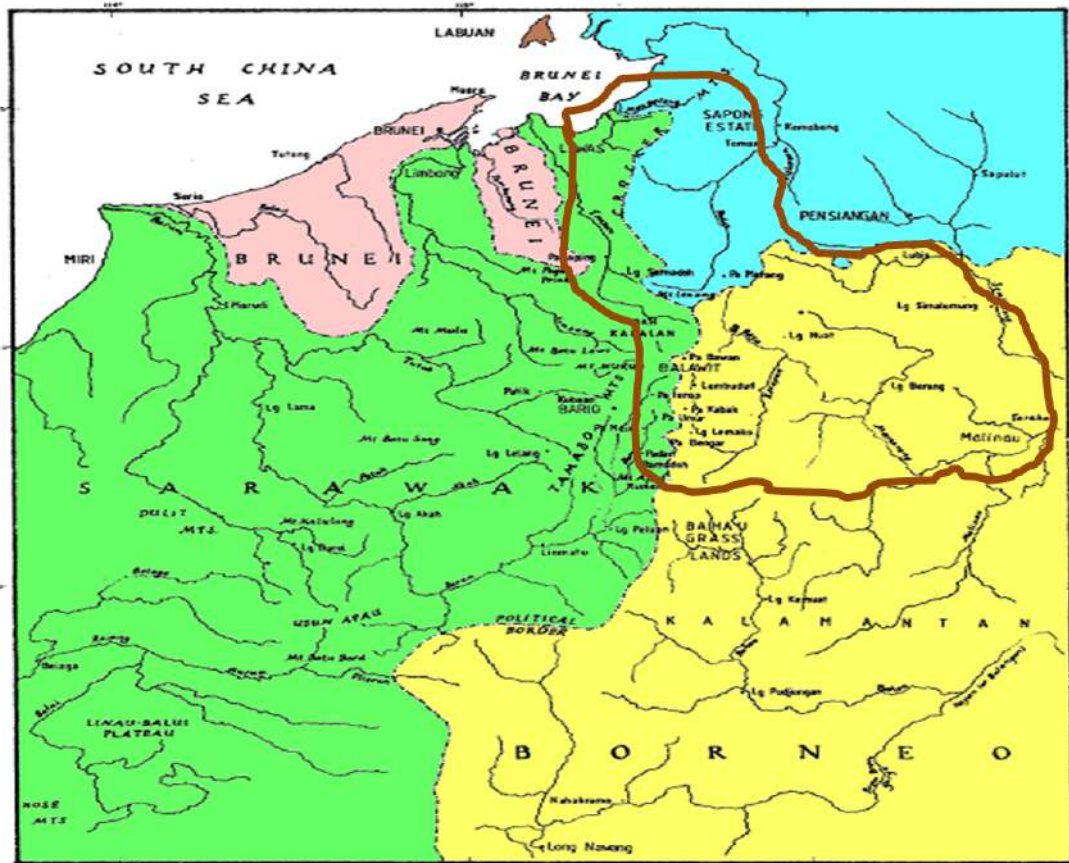
The Lundayeh people had lived in the remote highland valleys and tableland region of north central Borneo which they consider as their homeland from where they have been migrating into the surrounding lower valleys in the last few centuries.

The Lundayehs as a whole are inhabitants of Borneo highland that is at the international border areas between Sabah, Sarawak and North Kalimantan, which used to be inaccessible mountainous country. That is why they are called LUNDAYEH, which means upriver people.

It has been claimed that the Lundayeh people represents one of the purest lines from the ancient Borneo stock. This may well be so, for until recent times the bulk of the Lundayehs lived in mountainous areas considered inaccessible by dwellers on the coast¹. They are distributed in a very large but sparsely populated area which covers North Kalimantan, South Western part of Sabah, North Eastern part of Sarawak and Temburong District in Brunei.

¹ Bolang, A & Harrisson, T. (1949). Murut and Related Vocabularies, with special reference to North Borneo terminology. Sarawak Museum Journal. Vol.V, No.1, page 117.

In the colonial era, the geo-political situation of the Lundayeh was unique. The inland communities were divided by a remote border separating two rival colonial systems – the British and Dutch. These communities had lived for centuries in the upland countries where they grew vast surpluses of rice, possessed salt springs and were capable of living and surviving without the reliance on or interference of other tribes. The highly centralised and efficient system of irrigated fields sustained communities of some size, located near one another².



Map shows the homeland of the Lundayeh people. (from World Within: Borneo History)

Numbering approximately 40,000 today, they are found in all four political states in Borneo but having different identities. In Sabah they are called Lundayeh, in North Kalimantan they are known as Dayak Lundayeh, whereas in Sarawak they are known as Lun Bawang and in Brunei known as Lun Bawang Murut. Although they are separated by political, administrative control and their geographical isolation, their disintegration through artificial national boundaries is met through their common language and culture.

Some early publications referred the Lundayeh with many conflicting identities and the way they were spelt. Scholars and writers who came to Sarawak comprising of people with different backgrounds and nationalities used the terms Murut, Southern Murut, Brunei Murut, Murut Lun Daya, Lun Daye, Lun Dayah, Lun Dayoh and Lun Lod when referring to the Lundayeh people, while on Kalimantan side they used Dyah, Putuk, Lun Daya, Lun Daya Dyaks. These unfortunate terms have led to confusions and complications.

In spite of their difference in identities the Lundayehs have a common culture and belief system which is based on animism. One of the unique cultures of these upland inhabitants which they practised since immemorial time was the *nui ulung* or carving image of the crocodile in earth where they held

² Crain, J.B. (2011). Place, Person and Power: Lundayeh/Lun Bawang Pre- and Post-Christian Narratives. Sarawak Museum Journal. No. LXIX. No.90.(pp 2).

extravagant celebrations and feasts after a raiding party succeeded in bringing back an enemy's head from a war or headhunting expedition.

Objectives of this research are as follows:

- i. To study the representation and manifestation of *buayeh* in the past among the Lundayeh people.
- ii. To compare the representation and manifestation of *buayeh*.
- iii. To determine the quality of life through the representation and manifestation given to *buayeh*.

***Buayeh* or Crocodile in the Lundayeh Culture**

Since *buayeh* plays a very important role in the Lundayeh culture and way of life, the aim of this study is to explore and investigate the types of oral narratives where *buayeh* represents heroism, fame, wealth, symbol of strength and bravery. There are several types of Lundayeh oral literature which I have classified into several categories: *Arin* - entertainment, *Benging* - poem and *Uyu'* and *Tidum* - lullaby.

In the past the Lundayeh people practiced headhunting and erecting the crocodile mound *nui ulung buayeh* became a very important cultural element for them since immemorial time. As the crocodile is a dangerous, fierce, ferocious and is one of the few animals which can live both on land and in water, they used it as a symbol of strength, power, wealth, heroism, leadership and status in their culture.

When a person planned to invade another village due to revenge or blood feud, he would gather as many men as he could afford and fed them for a week or two. During this period, the men would build a crocodile mound. There is no standard size for the crocodile mound. It depends on the number of men doing it. The more people took part, the larger the size would be. This was used to commemorate the successful taking of head by the warrior when he and his group returned from invading the enemy's village. Two ceremonial poles *ulung* adorned with decorative, spiral wood shavings *kelulung* were erected flanking the reptile's midsection³. The *ulung* would display the taken heads to celebrate the courage of the warrior and reminder of his high status.

The ceremony began when the leading warrior would make cuts on the effigy, representing the number of heads he had taken in previous expeditions and at the same time indulged himself in an ostentatious boast (*nengadan*) about his prowess. He was then followed by other warriors who made similar cuts in the effigy and uttered their boasts⁴.

The big feast (*irau*) started when large amount of rice were cooked, variety of livestock slaughtered and brewed rice wine called *burak* were served to the numerous guests who came for the celebration from far and near. The amount of food and rice wine were so plentiful and the guests keep on consuming them and the host keep on replenishing them as if there is no end to the celebration.

The unique and surprising thing about the Lundayeh people who used to inhabit the remote Borneo highland where there was no crocodile used the image of an estuarine and river reptile during their *Nui Ulung* celebration. All these can be seen through the various genre of their oral literature which will be discussed later.

Most probably the Lundayeh people were once inhabitants of the coastal area but retreated to the innermost area after being pushed by new immigrants. Borneo's indigenous population today dates back to the arrival of the present coastal people from mainland Asia and elsewhere. These newcomers forced the coastal people in, to the interior lowlands. The lowland people of that time were in turn

³ Vaz, J.(2000). Ulu Padas Padas. Assessment of Tourism Potential. Manuscript. (pp 26)

⁴ Langub, J.(2016). The UNDP Equator Prize Ceremony (Nui Ulung Agung) at Long Pa' Sia', Sabah and Beyond. Borneo Research Bulletin. Vol.47. (pp 43).

pushed back to the hills, and this includes the Lundayehs who retreated from thence to the mountains where they established their homeland⁵.



The earthen crocodile mound or *Ulung Buayeh*. (Photo by Mr. Noh Dawa)

In his manuscript, Lalong⁶ says that a Lundayeh Kingdom called the Kingdom of Manjelutung had actually existed centuries ago at the mouth of the Sesayap River in the Tanah Tidung district on the eastern part of North Kalimantan. Although majority of the existing inhabitants are Tidung, some names of the existing places in the district such as Sebwang (one village), Finagar (fenced), and Seputuk (a Lundayeh sub-ethnic) are originated from the Lundayeh language. The Lundayeh adoption of *buayeh* into their belief, culture and oral literature might have started there.

Although the Lundayeh have lost nearly all their own traditions and many of their old crafts through pressure on them from other cultural groups, through depopulations and their mass conversion to Christianity in the 1930's, they still maintain the representation of the *buayeh* in their culture today.

The representation and manifestation of *buayeh* in the past and present

Erecting the crocodile effigy is an old culture and tradition, which was used to symbolize heroism, bravery and leadership. When headhunting was banned in Sarawak by the Brooke regime in 1885 and was extended to the Trusan valley, following the annexation of Lawas district in 1905⁷, the *nui ulung* celebration had stopped from being practiced. This was also due to the conversion of almost all the Lundayeh people to Christianity in the early 1930s. Since their conversion, making the crocodile mound out of earth or concrete is considered by some as against the teaching of their new religion. Some consider that maintaining the *ulung buayeh* tradition and keeping the ceremony alive after their conversion is a reminder of cruelty and they feel that it is also inhumane.

Although carving the crocodile mound is no longer practised among the contemporary Lundayeh, representation of the *buayeh* still can be seen in their culture and tradition through miniature crocodile and image of the crocodile on the male overcoats and headgears which is a common sight during their celebration and official function.

⁵ Heyward, N. (1963) Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo. Donald Moore. (pp 48)

⁶ Lalong, P.M. (2011). Sejarah Lundayeh. (Manuscript).

⁷ Langub, J. (2016).. The UNDP Equator Prize Ceremony (Nui Ulung Agung) at Long Pa' Sia', Sabah and Beyond. The Borneo Research Bulletin. Vol.47. p.56.

The Sabah Lundayeh Cultural Association has been using miniature crocodile effigy and erecting the ceremonial wooden poles *ulung* during the Lundayeh festival known as *Irau Rayeh Lundayeh* fending off criticisms from conservative church members by saying these are just representations of cultural traditions and make good impressions on visiting dignitaries⁸.

In order to keep the culture and tradition alive, erecting the crocodile effigy is still practiced but by making *luba' buayeh* or crocodile rice, which is moulded from boiled rice into the image of a crocodile that exhibits the quality of life in the Lundayeh people.

Erecting the *luba' buayeh* is done during wedding feasts (*irau faweh*) and during big events such as the *Irau Rayeh Lundayeh*. During the *irau faweh*, only parents who could afford make *luba' buayeh*, as it is an additional cost to them. The bridegroom and his bride would cut the back of the neck of the *luba' buayeh* to mark the success of their marriage and wedding ceremony. The guests are only allowed to partake in the feast after it has been jointly cut by the new couple. During the *Irau Rayeh Lundayeh*, the *luba' buayeh* is prepared and served for the Association's invited guests who come from different parts of Borneo.

Problem Statement

Other than those which I have at home, there are more types of oral literature which have not been recorded and transcribed, as most of the storytellers, epic singers, spirit chanters and poem reciters have passed away before there were opportunities to record them. Most of them were born in the 1900s when the Lundayeh were still living in their traditional life and when oral narratives were the medium of entertainment.

Foreign scholars, anthropologies and linguists, who were trained and specialised in these fields came a bit too late into the Lundayeh community to tape and transcribe their oral narratives. This is due to the fact that the Lundayeh population used to inhabit the mountainous areas in the Borneo upland along the international border between Sabah, Sarawak and North Kalimantan which was considered inaccessible by dwellers on the coast⁹. It was Reverend William Ernest Presswood from The Christian And Missionary Alliance based in Sulawesi in Indonesia, who was the first Westerner to come to the Lundayeh community on the northern part of Dutch Borneo in 1932 to preach the Gospel¹⁰. Charles Hudson Southwell from the Sarawak side made it to the interior of Sarawak and northern part of North Kalimantan in the early 1940s. The later was followed by Tom Harrison in 1944¹¹ (Harrison, 1959). Although Southwell and Harrison had written articles on the Lundayeh Language and vocabularies, neither of them had done anything on oral narratives. Probably recording equipment was still not commonly available in the market at that time and transcribing something by impromptu was not something possible for them, as they were still not familiar with the language of the people who they had just encountered. If some recordings were done during those periods, the number of materials available for reference could be more than what are available today.

Since the conversion of Lundayeh people to Christianity in the early 1930s, some changes in the style and wordings had taken place in the Oral Tradition. Some composers and reciters of the oral literatures tended to soften their views due to the Christian teachings. In those days *Uyu'* was sung openly while a mother or grandmother was lulling a baby to sleep and children and young men would gather around the fireplace *tetel* in the long house and requested the elderly storytellers to tell them some folklores.

In today's Lundayeh communities, the culture has totally changed. Instead of living in a long house, all the families live in their own separate house although they are part of the same community. It is not possible for the young boys and girls to gather to listen to stories, legends or other form of oral

⁸ Crain, J. B. & Pearson-Rounds, V.(2011). Place, Person and Power: Lundayeh/Lun Bawang Pre- and Post Christian Narratives. Sarawak Museum Journal. Vol. LXIX. No.90. (p 14).

⁹ Southwell, C.H.(1949). Structure of the Murut Language. Sarawak Museum Journal, Vol.V, No.1

¹⁰ Hutchins, R.P. (1993). No Sacrifice Too Great. Christian Publications. PA, USA.

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narratives from their elderly parents, as getting together in big numbers in somebody's house is considered as invading someone's privacy, unless they are invited. Moreover, if there is a community activity, it is always held in the community hall or in the church building. Since storytelling and reciting oral literature are not part of church or religious activities, practising the culture and tradition of the Lundayeh has stopped and died of natural cause. Today, the children above the age of ten years old are busy with their studies and their parents are busy watching their favourite television programmes and therefore, practising Oral Tradition is considered as out dated and thing of the past.

Skill in Oral tradition is not something learned, it is gifted to certain people only. The *Arin, Tido, Uyu', Benging* etc. are very nicely composed and the composers are illiterate people. Some of the words in them are hardly used today as those words and terms are rich in vocabulary and they describe the situation and environment of the time they were composed and where they were composed.

Methodology

This is a qualitative research:

- i. The data used in this research are primary source of Lundayeh culture collected from the 1970s to 1990s.
- ii. This research also uses data from interviews conducted with experienced informants (in Sabah, Sarawak, and Kalimantan) in 2016 and 2017.
- iii. To examine how each of the thematic representation given to *buayeh* is reflected in contemporary Lundayeh culture.

Although I have a number of recorded and transcribed materials with me, similar ones are still in the possession of other people. Since most, if not all Lundayeh storytellers, epic singers, spirit chanters and poem reciters have passed away, I had interviewed some Lundayeh elders in Sabah, Sarawak and Kalimantan, including Mr. Joseph Dawat Langub, who is a former staff of Radio and Television Malaysia at Limbang in Sarawak, Lun Bawang Section. He had kept a series of Oral Narratives which he permits to be used as reference in my research. James Deegan, who did his research on Lun Bawang Spirit Chants (1970) and Lun Bawang Folktales (1972) in Lawas did not cover anything on the role of *buayeh* in the oral literature he recorded and transcribed.

Buayeh was used as a symbol of strength, power, heroism, leadership and status

The *nui ulung buayeh* (erecting a crocodile mound) ceremony was originally a headhunting ceremony. It was held when warriors returned from a successful headhunting or war expedition.

A huge image of the crocodile was carved in earth and flanked by two decorated wooden poles (*ulung*). A hornbill icon (*menangang*) would be hung at the top of two bamboo posts mounted on top of each of the vertical wooden posts, decorated with spiral wood shavings hanging at the top. This would make the environment in a ceremonial mood. The leading warrior would make cuts on the effigy, representing the number of heads he had taken and indulged himself in an ostentatious boast (*nengadan*) about his prowess, and followed by others.

The big feast (*irau*) started when large amount of rice were cooked, variety of livestock slaughtered and brewed rice wine (*burak*) were served to the numerous guests who came from far and near. When headhunting was banned by the Brooke regime in Sarawak in the 1905, followed by conversion of the Lundayeh people to Christianity in the early 1930s, the *nui ulung* celebration had stopped from being practiced. Today, *buayeh* is seen in the Lundayeh culture and tradition through the miniature crocodile effigy, *luba' buayeh* (crocodile rice), and image of crocodile on their overcoats and headgears.

Present and Past

Erecting the crocodile effigy is an old culture and tradition, which was used to symbolize heroism, bravery and leadership. Since their conversion to Christianity, making the crocodile mound out of earth or concrete is considered by some as against the teaching of their religion. However, the Sabah Lundayeh Cultural Association has been using miniature crocodile effigy and erecting the wooden *ulung*, fending off criticisms from conservative church members by saying these are just representations of cultural traditions and make good impressions on visiting dignitaries.

In order to keep the culture and tradition alive, erecting the *buayeh* effigy is still practiced but made of boiled rice. This is done only during wedding feast (*irau faweh*) and during the Lundayeh Lundayeh big feast (*Irau Rayeh Lundayeh*). During the *Irau Rayeh Lundayeh*, the *luba' buayeh* is prepared and served in respect of the willingness of the guests who took the trouble to come from different parts of Borneo to attend the biennial festival.

Quality of life through the representation of buayeh

In the past, in order to claim his status as a warrior and leader, a man had to sponsor a big celebration after returning from a successful headhunting or war expedition.

The feast would start as soon as the warriors involved in the head-hunting expedition successfully returned with an enemy's head. They would build bon-fire and performed the *fekuab* or the song of praise to the heroes who brought home heads of their enemies. They would then skin the heads to get rid of the flesh and smoke dry the skulls over the fire before handing them over to the *Lun Ngimet Kuran* or the keeper of the basket *kuran*, where skulls were kept. While the men were doing that, his family members and guests would perform the *fekuab* (singing the praise song) while circling the effigy to praise him for his bravery. The women would continue doing the *fekuab* and the men who were not involved in the expedition doing the *ngudub* or praising the heroes. The men would lead the women to walk in a row around the monument and the heroes would take turn to show their might by cutting and slashing the back of the crocodile with their *felefet* sword. The celebration continued into the night with several merry-making events, which included dancing, eating and drinking.

In contemporary Lundayeh, holding a celebration around an earthen crocodile is abandoned. However, instead of holding a celebration, it is replaced with special cooked rice which is then made into the shape of a crocodile. The rice is mixed with meat, boiled eggs and other ingredients to make it tasty. It is served to the guests during a feast which represents wealth, where only certain individual could afford to make.

Literature Review

Bilcher Bala, Ismail Ali & Baszley Bee B. Basrah Bee (2010) of University Malaysia Sabah (UMS) who carried out an ethno-archaeological investigation in various sites around the villages of Lung Pa' Sia and Lung Mio in the Ulu Padas area in Sipitang District, Sabah, found not less than ten crocodile mounds from past *nui ulung* ceremonies performed by the Lundayeh ancestors. These evidences prove the existence of Lundayeh early settlements in the area. Ipoi Datan (2011 & 2015) also did some archaeological surveys and researches on crocodile mounds in Sarawak and Sabah¹², and the results found were similar to those found by the UMS team. Maradona (2016) who carried out research on the same topic at the village of Lung Bisai in the Mentarang District, Malinau, North Kalimantan, found that the Dayak Lundayeh used to have a *nui ulung* ritual which is worth preserving for posterity due to its uniqueness. He made some proposals to preserve the *Nui Ulung* ritual, as he believes the tradition is dying off due to educational advancement.

¹² Langub, J. (2016).. The UNDP Euator Prize Ceremony (Nui Ulung Agung) at Long Pa' Sia', Sabah and Beyond. The Borneo Research Bulletin. Vol.47. p.56.

All three researches above seem to focus on the ritual ceremony around the crocodile mound when the warriors succeeded in bringing their enemies' heads after returning from war or headhunting expeditions, a culture which is already abandoned after the ritual was banned more than one hundred years ago. Hosting the feast during the *nui ulung buayeh* ceremony was meant to publicise one's heroic feat, to show a man's great achievement or to restore a man's tarnished image. Remnants of the crocodile mounds may be found in several locations in the Lundayeh former settlements in Sabah, Sarawak and North Kalimantan, but holding similar ceremony is no longer practised due to its barbaric in nature.

Role of *Buayeh* through Oral Literature

Oral literature is a broad term which may include ritual texts, curative chants, epic poems, musical genre, folk tales, creation tales, songs, myths, spells, legends, proverbs, riddles, tongue-twisters, word games, recitations, life histories or historical narratives. Most simply, oral literature refers to any form of verbal art which is transmitted, orally or delivered by word of mouth¹³.

Before the arrival of the Christian missionaries, the pagan tribe of the Lundayeh people abided to the teaching of their oral tradition. Their oral traditions which have been passed down from one generation to another had played a central role in their culture and daily activities. The oral traditions which consist of songs, epics and ceremonial chants were performed in a special poetic language, usually archaic prototypes of the tribal colloquial languages¹⁴. The language used is not easily be understood by the young and even the middle aged Lundayeh group. The singers or bards who know the lyrics content and meaning of the songs are almost gone and those who know a bit of the oral traditions no longer practise them as the contents are either bad omens which are against Christian teachings. Moreover, learning and practising the oral tradition is no longer in their culture since they are no longer essential to their livelihood and society.

Compared to other ethnic groups in Sabah, the Lundayeh are small in number. Due to their isolation and the distance of the sparsely populated area they inhabit, the Lundayeh has been unrepresented and understudied in scholarly and academic research. Towards the end of 1970s the educated young generations migrated to town for higher education and job opportunities. Due to this reason their culture and their oral literature have been slowly disappeared from their community. In order to address this gap, I will try to explain how *buayeh* plays an important role in the Lundayeh culture through the genre of the oral literature and *luba' buayeh* in detail in the succeeding sections. I will also attempt to identify and provide an account of the importance of *buayeh* and how it is represented in the Lundayeh culture, its place and how it influence status and quality of life of the people in contemporary Lundayeh society.

Buayeh in Lundayeh Oral Literature

The oral literature which are in the form of chants, songs and poems are rich in religious and historical allusions, expressions of social values and shared assumptions regarding the relationship of man, nature and the spiritual world. The words and the creative use of the imagery in the Lundayeh oral literature presentations are examples of the language skills of the bards, singers and the other experts. Each of them has his or her own distinctive style of presentation as reflected in the originality, personal inspiration and command of the esoteric language. Their usage of local allusions, varied imagery, rhyme, repetition and stress enriches the basic form of the Lundayeh language¹⁵. The genre identified

¹³ University of Cambridge, (2011). World Oral Literature.

¹⁴ Connie Lim Keh Nie. (2007). Music, Its Style and Functions In the Lun bawang Ethnic Group of Lawas District, Limbang Division, Sarawak Malaysia. UNIMAS. (Manuscript)

¹⁵ Jugah, L.L. (1992). Iban Oral Literature. Paper Presented at the Second Biennial Conference of the Borneo Research Council, at Kota Kinabalu. Page 2.

and selected which represent *buayeh* in the Lundayeh Oral Literature categorized as entertainment, poems and lullaby are *Arin* (entertainment), *Benging* (Poem), *Uyu'* and *Tidum* (lullaby).

If the name of a person is quoted in the oral literature, the people have high regards for his status in their community through the following:

Fame and power

The *buayeh* had been used by the Lundayeh people in one of their most important cultural celebrations for hundreds of years, the *Nui Ulung* celebration. It reflected its importance and significance to the people. The appearance of *buayeh* in the Lundayeh oral literature also indicates its importance to the Lundayeh culture.

In the *Arin*, performed by Leku' Labung in 1992¹⁶, a famous man by the name of Basar Murang Dawat, who is presumably a well-known leader proclaimed himself as *Buayeh of Tang Tuyu*. Wherever he went, he was welcome and respected and whenever he arrived at a certain place, he would announce his arrival and people would welcome him into their house and served him rice wine (burak). This is how the representation of *buayeh* depicts fame and quality of life in the Lundayeh people, culture and society.

Excerpts from the **Arin**:

Suet mo' iSelutan Tumaang me' dei' takep – *Selutan Tumaang entered the room*
 Nan Beluluk Sigar riruh-riruh mieh – *Beluluk Sigar wa smiling at him*
 Buley' kinanak kenem – *my dear sister*
 me' nated burak nei – *you take out some burak*
 me' nguad sakai – *go and serve the guests*
 Tunge' Basar Murang Dawat deh – *Basar Murang Dawat and group are here*
 Ret Tang Tuyu kenem – *from Tang Tuyu, he said.*
 Basar Murang Dawat uwi, - *I am Basar Murang Dawat,*
 Buayeh Tang Tuyu uwi – *I am Crocodile of Tang Tuyu*
 ini ecing meh - *I have just arrived.*
 Teu' ngadan meh me' ngutang - *I simply give a name when I borrow something,*
 Tadem Dawat kudeh twi mengutang – *I am Tadem Dawat, I dare to borrow*
 Tadem Dawat buayeh Tang Tuyu wim – *I am Tadem Dawat Crocodile of Tang Tuyu*

Wealth

All the reciters of the *Benging*, mentioned about wealth. In the olden days, Chinese jars called *rubih moon* and *tabu'* in Lundayeh were considered very highly priced items. One *rubih moon* cost up to 12 buffalos, which an ordinary person could hardly afford to own. In the *Benging*, when a young man wanted to marry a girl, the first thing the parents asked as a bride price was one *rubih moon* with a horizontal image of a crocodile carved on it. In the *Uyu'* the parents of another girl also asked for a *rubih* which was carved with a horizontal image of the *buayeh* too.

To own an old Chinese jar with *buayeh* image on was the dream of every girl's parents as a bride's price when their daughter got married. The image on the jars was actually that of a dragon, but they somehow consider it as a *buayeh*. In the past, only the wealthy could afford old Chinese jars and they were not easy to get. In spite of its short supply, it was a common item given as a dowry or bride price. If the parents of the bride asked for an old Chinese jar, the parents of the bridegroom had to get one from somewhere in order to fulfill the wishes of the girl's parents. The excerpts from the *Benging* below tell all.

¹⁶ Leku' Labung of Kampung Seri Menanti, Sipitang, Sabah. Born on November 11, 1917, she was a well-known person among her community for her skills in Lundayeh oral literature. Most of the oral literature which I had taped from her in 1992 have been transcribed.

Benging

Eme' wi diu' nan turuk ku useh-useh - *I shall go to bathe at the head of the bamboo pipe
which brings stream water to the house with heavy
heart*

Eceh teh decur nguiit me' faweh – *there was a girl asking me for marriage*

Merey demulun yeh sinul mateh – *she would give me a slave as a present*

Merey rubih moon lufung buayeh – *she would give an ancient jar with crocodile image on it.*

Benging iGuya' Muyang

Ret kuh meneten ni Dayang Tuan – *Ever since I mentioned Dayang Tuan's name*

iDayang Babu' ret Tang Lipadan – *Dayang Babu' of Tang Lipadan*

Ret kuh delei wi nurun barang – *Since I am a man I give away things*

Memerey furut ecur iDayang - *Give dowry for a girl named Dayang*

Merey demulun wi eceh ngetilung dalam – *I will give one stretch road of slaves*

Merey uluh mata' wi ceh ngatang kuran – *I will give one basketful of freshly chopped human
heads*

Merey rubih moon wi buayeh tefalang - *I will give an ancient jar with a crocodile image lying
in a horizontal position.*

Merey tawak rayeh wi ngerugag bawang – *I will give a big gong which sounds causes
uneasiness to the village.*

Benging Nguiit Faweh

Eme' wi ngarang faa bawang didih – *I will take a trip to their village*

Ngarang Pa' Bawan neh bawang rayeh – *travel to Pa' Bawan which is a big town*

Fanen muh ruua bubpu' melibuh – *you carry a bamboo water container with a round
opening on your shoulder*

Ruua bulu' betung udung mesiruu – *water container made of a straight section of the
"betung" bamboo*

Eme' noor abpa' yeh lidung batuh – *she fetches water from the corner of the boulder*

Lidung Kerayan nan buayeh lukuu – *corner of Krayan district where crocodiles rest*

Nan luang umak eme' nginaruh – *where the big fish "luang" would gather to spawn*

Benging Lemudan Luun

Wa' kuh ceh benging Lemudan Luun – *let me make a benging about Lemudan Luun*

Lemudan Liang sakai nefemung – *at Lemudan Liang's house where strangers gather*

Me' wi diu' liang turuk beneh – *I go to take bathe under a low bamboo pipe*

Mulang mi tinam nguiit negkuh faweh – *your mother came asking me for marriage*

Mutuh demulun yeh silo mateh – *she asked for slaves with glittering eyes*

Mutuh rubih moon melefung buayeh – *asking for an ancient jar with crocodile image
on it*

Kei tuni' Lemudan Luun – *go and ask Lemudan Luun*

Lemudan Liang sakai nefemung - *at Lemudan Liang's where strangers gather*

Fenu' nan takep dieh demulun – *his room is full of slaves*

Fenu' nan lidung dieh rubih moon - *corner of his house is full of ancient jars*

Sinafang felabaa liip yeh emung-emung – *and all his guns are of same type.*

Strength, bravery, and leadership:

While the reciters of the *Uyu'* was lulling the child to sleep she told the child that her father was such a strong man that he gathered an army of men to carve a crocodile image in earth which was extraordinarily huge and no other men could match. In the the same *uyu'* only a warrior who succeeded in defeating his enemies and with many followers was able to sponsor big number of people to build a huge crocodile mound, where a welcoming celebration for the return of warriors from a war expedition was held. A poor man or a person who did not have enough rice to be cooked and served to the guests and few domestic animals to slaughter during the celebration would not afford to hold the celebration around the crocodile mound.

Uyu' Taman Metueh

iTamam lei metueh - *your father is a strong and powerful man*
 Icuk itefum ngemung baweh - *he was told by your grandfather to gather a group of warriors*
 Nemudut yeh buayeh - *he built a crocodile mound*
 Buayeh tana' meluun rayeh - *a very large earthen crocodile mound*
 Naa luk mafaad kudeng ineh - *no other can match that*
 Feringidang uned fayeh - *it sunbathes in the middle of the heath forest.*
 Nui ulung kayuh tanid - *erects a ceremonial pole made of tanid (a type of hard wood)*
 Ley mecing yeh dei' langit - *so that it would reach the sky*
 Mutuh furut tefum neneh - *your grandfather asked for dowry from him*
 Uluh mata' lap neh lineh - *he took a fresh human head*
 Mutuh rubih faat buayeh - *he asked for a jar engraved with crocodile image*
 Mutuh tabu' arit meteh - *he asked for a jar with special design*
 Mutuh tawak dueh rayeh - *he asked for two big gongs*
 Flabaa liip batang refid - *a gun with double barrel too.*

Tidum Unii Beribidang

Em firud dey ki emu' - *My little girl, please be quiet*
 Unii yeh beribidang - *listen to the songs of the cicadas*
 Em eberibidang ngemunii - *the cicadas are singing*
 Emu' em ngerugag gebawang - *my little girl, their songs are making the village restless*
 Ngerugag geruma' - *making the inhabitants of the house feel restless*
 Emu' ideh Abpa' eMatang - *the people of Pa' Matang*
 Em ruu nge negkum medecur - *they look down at the females*
 Ideh emu' ku ine' ku tienidan - *those who have become old spinster*
 Em ine' ewi ku etanid - *I became a single old spinster*
 Emu' em luk eulang-ngeulang - *I can easily be seen*
 Em linaak aban iama' - *it was my father's faults*
 Emu' emikat etakang - *he asked for expensive bride price*
 Em ngalap pe-iyeh demulun - *he asked for slaves*
 Emu' em ceng bieturan - *asking for one full corridor (of slaves)*
 Em mutuh erubih moon - *he asked for ancient jars*
 iEmu' buayeh tefalang - *with crocodile image lying horizontal*
 Em ngawal etawak erayeh - *reaching out for large gongs*
 iAma' emu' ku kebinan neh fayen - *to fill up his shelves.*
 em ngalap pe-yeh felabaa liip - *he ask for a gun*
 yeh ferafid delubang - *with a double barrel*
 Em idi fuun kuh anak - *that is why my little girl*
 Emu' ine' yeh ku tienidan - *I have become an old spinster*
 Em ine' ewi ku etanid - *I became an old spinster*
 Emu' em luk ku ulang-ulang - *and I can easily be seen.*
 Em ine' etieh medelei - *there was a gentleman*

Emu' nudur eti Fengiran – *Fengiran was interested*
 Em linat tieh edelei – *he tried his best*
 iAma' linat tieh nefian – *but my father had disagreed.*

Buayeh in Lundayeh Modern Society

Although *buayeh* in the old Lundayeh culture has been abandoned due to their new belief through Christianity, it is still seen through the *luba' buayeh*, miniature crocodile, image of the crocodile used as decoration on overcoats and headgears, and in male personal names.

i) Luba' Buayeh (crocodile rice)

Luba' buayeh is made of boiled rice which is moulded into the shape of a crocodile. During Lundayeh wedding feast, the parents of the bride would prepare the *luba' buayeh* either on a long table or on a floor mat in the house. Boiled eggs and pork or beef is mixed with the rice. This is prepared especially for the parents and relatives of the bridegroom. Normally, *luba' buayeh* is not prepared unless there is a pre-arrangement between the families of the bride and bridegroom, as to make one is an additional cost for the family involved and unless the bridegroom is prepared to pay for it.



The bride and groom symbolically cut the *luba' buayeh* before the guests are allowed to take them like in buffet.

Since it is not part of the negotiated bride price during the betrothal, a certain amount is charged by the bride's parents which has to be paid in cash by the bridegroom's parents before the guests were allowed to partake in it. According to the Lundayeh custom, if the *luba' buayeh* is not totally consumed by the guests during the event, the bridegroom's parents are expected to take home all that is left on the table.

ii) Miniature buayeh

Headhunting among the Lundayeh was banned in 1885 by the Brooke regime in Sarawak as it was considered as morally inhuman. After their conversion to Christianity, the grizzly celebration by skinning and hanging the taken head at the top of the ceremonial pole erected near the crocodile mound had stopped. In addition, killing someone in order to get his head as a trophy was against the teaching of their new religion. Today, instead of carving the *ulung buayeh* in earth, a miniature crocodile made

of fibreglass is used during the *Irau Rayeh Lundayeh*, which is cut by the VIP to symbolise the opening or closing of the event. The *fekuab*, a ritual song of praises for the heroes and warriors of today also no longer practised, but those present during the opening ceremony of a special occasion would clap their hands after the symbolic cutting the back of the neck of the crocodile is performed.

iii) Image of the buayeh is used as a decoration on men's overcoat and head gear

Having the images of the crocodile on the front portion of a man's headgear and overcoat is a very common site during any Lundayeh celebration in Sabah, Sarawak or North Kalimantan. This does not mean the animal is worshipped. Although the crocodile is not revered by the Lundayeh people, its image is used on their traditional costume and headgear as a decoration that symbolise strength and heroism in the past. Today, it is only used to symbolize how important it is in relation to their culture. During the Lundayeh festival one can see many men wearing red headgear and black overcoat with a couple images of crocodile on them.

iv) Buayeh as male personal name

It would be abnormal for other natives in Borneo to name their male children *Buaya* or *Buayeh* which means crocodile. It may be due to the fear that when a person is called *buaya darat* in the Malay Language, it means the person is a womaniser, a scoundrel or a thief. There is a certain man in Sipitang whose father's name is "Buaya", and afraid of being called *buaya darat*, a scoundrel or thief, he changed his father's name to Buayie, but that did not stop people from calling his surname by his father's original name. However, naming a male child Buayeh is very common among the Lundayeh community due to their belief and culture. A child who is named Buayeh by his parents is either named after his great grandfather who was famous or the parents' hopes and wishes are that someday the child will follow the footsteps of his well-known ancestors. Some people name their children Buayeh without any significance, some name their child Buayeh for certain belief and others name their child to follow the name of his grand father or great grand father.

When naming their children, most Lundayeh parents use two names for one child, one is the child's name and followed by the father's name. They consider this to be important as the name indicates their identity. Lundayeh names have special characteristics and very few are identical or the same with other ethnic groups in Sabah or other parts of Borneo.

It is also a prime important for the Lundayeh people to choose suitable names for their children, as the name reflects a person's ethnic identity. But as time passes, some members of the community are carried away by glamorous and famous names. There is a tendency that they choose names of famous film stars, singers, football stars and even name of famous political leaders which are foreign to their race.

According to the Lundayeh custom, parents of a newly born child must choose a name from among their ancestors' or grand parents' name. Before choosing a name for the child, the grand parents have to be consulted and it was them who suggested a few names before one was chosen. The name chosen must be suitable and must be from among the names of their ancestors or name of their close relative. If the name given to the child is not suitable, his health will deteriorate and it will get sick very often. This happens when the child is given is the name of a well-known person or from another clan. In order to recover the child's poor health, a new and suitable name must be given to him. This will be conducted by taking three pieces of corn seeds by placing them on a clean mat. Each seed represents a name. For example, seed A represents Selutan, seed B represents Buayeh and seed C represents Agung. A cockerel is then brought forward and released to pick the corn seed. If the cockerel picks seed A first, the child will be named Selutan, and so on. The same procedure is done when choosing a name for a baby girl. The cockerel which was selected to chose the child's name will be treated well and fed daily. No one is allowed to abuse it or throw things at it when it came into the house, as it had given a good and healthy life to the child.

Spirit of crocodile lingers on

In the late 1980s, the Sabah Foundation community service held a Community Service Development Programme at Kampung Kaban, about 25 kilometers from Sipitang town, where the only Lundayeh long house in Sabah at that time was found. During the programme, staff of the Sabah Foundation built a concrete crocodile effigy somewhere in the middle of the village. It was supposed to be a simple token or souvenir given by Sabah Foundation to the village for their cooperation to make the Sabah Foundation programme a success. But after some time, some conflicts and frictions arose among the occupants of the long house and they put the blame on the spirit of the crocodile effigy. They believed that the spirit of the crocodile had stirred some domestic issues which had caused members of the community to quarrel among themselves. In addition, some members of the Borneo Evangelical Church in Ba' Kelalan, Lawas Sarawak who came for a goodwill visit and conducted church services in the village claimed to have vision that it was the spirit of the crocodile that had caused the conflicts among the church members at the long house. They advised the community at Kampung Kaban that in order to bring peace among the villagers the effigy had to be demolished and destroyed¹⁷.

In 1996, a concrete crocodile effigy was erected by Sabah Forest Industries Sdn. Bhd. at Kampung Mendulong to mark the first grand Pesta Lundayeh Sabah held there. It was built very close to the Sidang Injil Borneo Church (SIB) building and in front of the Pastor's house where a volleyball court is also built.



The concrete crocodile effigy at Kampung Mendulong, Sipitang (Photo by Ricky Ganang)

About ten years after that, some conflicts cropped up among of the Church members there. Having learned from the history of the crocodile image that was destroyed at Kampung Kaban, some of the church members in Kampung Mendulong thought that it was the spirit of the crocodile effigy which had caused the frictions among them and the church committee members decided that effigy had to be destroyed and demolished.

¹⁷ My interview with Buing Balang, a villager of Kampung Kaban, on March 18, 2018.

As the concrete crocodile mound was very close to the volleyball court and not fenced, when the game was on, those who were waiting to take turn to play sat on the crocodile effigy. At the same time hard objects were used to knock the effigy's tail, legs and head. As a result it was damaged. There was no attempt to repair the damage image, so the village head decided that it would better be buried than having the ugly replica standing there¹⁸.



Symbolic : Chief Minister of Sabah, YAB Datuk Seri Panglima Musa Aman, officiates the closing of the Irau Rayeh Lundayeh 2010 by cutting the *ulung buayeh* replica made of fibre glass using the Lundayeh sword *felefet*.

Conclusion

The influence of *buayeh* representation in the Lundayeh culture is so important that although the *nui ulung* ceremony has been abandoned due to official restriction and criticism from the more fundamentalist members of the established Churches among the Lundayeh communities, the tradition is still practiced in different but acceptable ways.

Ulung Buayeh which was built to celebrate the return of warriors from war or headhunting expedition in the past is being recreated in the form of a small miniature crocodile which is cut by VIP to mark the opening or closing an important ceremony. At wedding ceremonies, it is normal for the bride's families to prepare a big *luba' buayeh* out of cooked rice for the couple to cut at the back of its neck before the guests are allowed to partake in the feast.

It also has become the practice of the Sabah Lundayeh Cultural Association to prepare the crocodile rice during its biennial *Irau Rayeh Lundayeh*, which is served to their special guests from Sarawak, North Kalimantan and Brunei. For the Lundayeh people serving the *luba' buayeh* represents their cultural past; a cultural heritage worth sharing with other communities.

¹⁸ My personal talk and interview with Singa Libat, 58, Kampung Mendulong Village Head, on March, 19, 2018.

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