

Cultural Representation of Babukung Dance Funeral Ceremony Ritual of The Dayak Tomun Tribe as a Media for Character Building through Local Wisdom

Fimeir Liadi

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palangka Raya
fimeir.liadi@iain-palangkaraya.ac.id

Jasiah*

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palangka Raya
jasiab@iain-palangkaraya.ac.id

Ummi Qudsiyah

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palangka Raya
ummi.qudsiyah@iain-palangkaraya.ac.id

Mahkamah Madi

Universitas Al-Azhar Kairo
m.mahdimuhammad@gmail.com

Makmur Harun

Sultan Idris Education University (Upsi) Malaysia
makmur@fbk.upsi.edu.my

Agon

Dinas Pendidikan Provinsi Kalimantan Tengah
agon90@dinas.belajar.id

Nur Irma Yanti

Universitas Muhammadiyah Sampit
nurirmayanti658@gmail.com

Endang Andriyani

Universitas Muhammadiyah Banjarmasin
endangandriyani09@gmail.com

Abstrak

The *Babukung/Habukung* ritual is only believed by people who follow the Kaharingan religion, the community believes that the *Babukung* ritual can help the process of someone who has passed away, so the *Babukung* ritual is divided into three functions. Firstly, to summon the spirits of the ancestors. Second, to provide entertainment for the family. Third, to ease the financial burden on the family left behind. *Babukung* rituals are usually performed in the morning and at night. *Bukung* dance is still performed by Dayak people in 3 (three) villages Sudan, Karuing, and Parit. Other villages have not heard of them performing *Bukung* dance, because they have been influenced by the entry of other religions, such as Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, and Hinduism. Unlike these three villages, although they already have Christianity, Catholicism, and Hinduism, they perform the *Bukung* dance as a legacy of their ancestors. This research illustrates the phenomenon that exists in the midst of

society, that the culture and behavior of the community become special characteristics as a description of the uniqueness of the community itself. Traditional culture that has been rooted in beliefs continues to be carried out by the community as an embodiment of the heritage of their ancestors. This noble culture originating from the ancestors continues to be preserved, despite the onslaught of information technology that is increasingly intensive on human culture.

Keywords: *Babukung, Dayak Kaharingan, Culture*

Abstrak

Ritual adat Babukung/Habukung, hanya diyakini oleh masyarakat yang memeluk Agama Kaharingan, masyarakat percaya bahwa dengan ritual adat Babukung tersebut, dapat membantu proses kepergian seseorang yang sudah meninggal dunia, sehingga ritual adat Babukung terbagi menjadi tiga fungsi. Pertama, untuk memanggil Roh para Nenek Moyang. Kedua, wahana hiburan untuk keluarga ditinggalkan. Ketiga, untuk meringankan beban finansial pada keluarga yang ditinggalkan. Proses ritual adat Babukung biasanya dilakukan pagi dan malam hari. Tari Bukung hingga saat ini masih dilakukan oleh warga Dayak di 3 (tiga) desa Sudan, Karuing dan Parit. Desa-desanya lain tidak terdengar mereka melakukan tarian Bukung, karena sudah banyak dipengaruhi oleh masuknya agama lain, seperti Kristen, Katholik, Islam dan Hindu. Berbeda dengan tiga desa ini, meskipun mereka sudah memiliki agama Kristen, Katholik dan Hindu, mereka melakukan tarian Bukung sebagai warisan nenek moyang mereka. Penelitian ini menggambarkan fenomena yang ada ditengah-tengah masyarakat, bahwa budaya dan perilaku masyarakat menjadi ciri-ciri khusus sebagai gambaran keunikan masyarakat itu sendiri. Budaya tradisional yang sudah mengakar menjadi keyakinan itu terus dilakukan oleh masyarakat sebagai pengejawantahan warisan nenek moyang mereka. Budaya luhur yang berasal dari nenek moyang ini tetap terus lestari, meskipun gempuran teknologi informasi yang semakin gencar menerpa budaya manusia.

Kata kunci : Bukung, Dayak Kaharingan, Budaya

INTRODUCTION

So far, there is no conclusive evidence of when the *Babukung* ritual was underway by the *Tumon* and *Dayak Ngaju* tribes in Central Kalimantan. Based on several interviews and articles, it is stated that *Babukung* comes from “Bukung” which means “mask”, and *Babukung* with the prefix ‘ba’ and *Dayak Ngaju* language ‘ha’ *Habukung* is ‘carrying out, doing’. *Babukung* or *Habukung* means a person who carries out the *Bukung* ritual. *Bukung* is a dance of conveying the spirit and comforting the grieving family. Originally, *Bukung* was performed at burial ceremonies of the Dayak Kaharingan people or Kaharingan religion. This dance is carried out when there is a message from the deceased, so the family is obliged to carry out it. It can be concluded that *Babukung* must be done when the deceased ask to be *bukung*; it is optional.¹

Wendy, the artist from East Kotawaringin Dalam², mentioned that some types of *Bukung* are *Bukung Hewan*, *Bukung Hantu*, and *Bukung Manusia*. *Bukung hewan* is a mask that resembles animal

¹ Endah Sri Istikhomah and Enie Wahyuning Handayani, “Tari Babukung Pada Upacara Kematian Suku Dayak Di Kabupaten Kotawaringin Timur Kalimantan Tengah” (Surabaya, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, 2022).

² Istikhomah and Handayani.

faces, such as deer, pig, buffalo, Enggang bird, and others. *Bukung Hantu* is a mask that resembles a scary ghost face (the imagination of the mask's maker). *Bukung manusia* is *bukung* of human skin which is dressed in such a way.

Furthermore, some culturalists of Dayak Ngaju, said that *Babukung* is a dance of comforting the grieving family and occurs before the body is buried. At once, it is comforting the spirit that has left the body, so it can leave the body happily. Unlike *Babukung*, *Tiwah* (Dayak Ngaju Kahayan, Kapuas) or *Wara* (Dayak Barito) is a ritual after death. *Tiwah* aims to convey the spirit who remains in the realm Kalunen to the nirvana called *Lewu Tatau* (heaven). In *Tiwah* or *Wara* ritual, can be conducted *Babukung* dance when delivering the bones from the grave to *Sandung* (the last place where the bones are stored). (Mrs. Suriani Rangkap Inau, (the wife of deceased Rangkap Inau) in Palangkaraya)

Death is a very scary moment for the Dayak Ngaju tribe because they believe that there is eternal life in *Lewu Tatau* (heaven) after death. The function of the *Habukung* dance in the custom ritual of funeral for the Dayak tribe in Central Kalimantan is to comfort the grieving family. The mask of *Bukung* dance was created in an entertaining style and cheerful, so the grieving family can be entertained. On the day of the funeral, *bukung* was held until the coffin (*raung*) was brought to the ground (buried), and the last *bukung* was shored up and carried out the coffin to the grave. *Bukung* that shore up the coffin is *bukung kinyak* or *bukung belang*.

People who become *Bukung* must be qualified and committed to *pamali* (prohibition on doing or saying something). Those are closely related to beliefs. If the requirements are not fulfilled, the person will receive consequences, such as an early death *Lomah Layu*, *Pukak Nyawa Pandak Umur*, and a short lifespan.

The process of *Habukung* or *Babukung* is carried out according to the order or message of the deceased. Therefore, the performing of *Bukung* or *Habukung* is what the family is compelled to do. The process of *Bukung* is carried out not only during the funeral but also during the bone removal ceremony (called as *Tiwah* ceremony).

This research is important to preserve local customs as a national cultural treasury. A wide variety of cultures spreading in society become the cultural richness of Indonesia as regional and national assets to promote both natural and cultural tourism.

METHOD

This is descriptive qualitative research. It focuses on participant’s perspectives and experiences and their ways of understanding life. This research tries to understand not only one reality but also such realities.³

The research is located in three villages of Cempaga Hulu District in East Kotawaringin Regency. There are Sudan, Keruing, and Parit villages which are on the bank of the Ubar River, a tributary of East Mentaya Kotawaringi. Three villages have much Dayak Tumon tribe, so it becomes the main excuse to choose these to be a research place.

The research subject is the credible selected participants who know and understand the figures of Dayak Tumoan Hindu Kaharingan, Damang, Mantir, and people who carry out *Bukung* ritual in Sudan, Keruing and Parit village, as follows:

No	Initials of Name	Status
1	Fr	Participant/Interviewee
2	Di	Participant/Interviewee
3	Sn	Participant/Interviewee
4	Ber	Participant/Interviewee
5	Sur	Participant/Interviewee
6	Lin	Participant/Interviewee
7	Ros	Participant/Interviewee
8	Jt	Participant/Interviewee
9	Juf	Participant/Interviewee
10	Rud	Participant/Interviewee
11	HK	Participant/Interviewee
12	Tensy	Participant/Interviewee

The data research is the process of *Bukung* and the cultural values that are gained by in-depth interviews, observing the process of *Bukung*, and documentation.

To identify the trustworthiness data, the researchers employ an examination technique. This technique is based on four criteria. These are credibility, transferability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

³ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 2nd ed (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2007).

Principally, the implementation of credibility replaces the concept of internal validity from non-qualitative. It aims to conduct inquiry, so the credibility level can be reached and to show the level of result credibility. The result finding which was obtained by the researchers is a twofold fact.

Transferability is opposed to the external validity of non-qualitative. The concept of validity states that generalizing a finding can be implemented in various contexts in similar populations based on the basic findings of the sample representing the population.

The criterion of transferability is a substitution term for reliability in non-qualitative research. In non-qualitative research, reliability is shown by replication study. If there is a conducted repetition of a study in similar circumstances twice or several times and the result is equal essentially, it is claimed that the reliability was reached.

Based on non-qualitative, the criterion of confirmability comes from the concept of objectivity. Non-qualitative specifies objectivity from the aspects of agreement between subjects. It can be argued that this is objective or not depending on agreement between a few people to the perspectives, opinions, and inventions of someone. It can be stated that one's experience is subjective whereas if agreed by some or many of the people, it can be claimed objective. In this case, objectivity and subjectivity depend on the individual.⁴

To analyze the research data, the researchers use qualitative analysis. The analysis of qualitative data can be conducted when empirical data are qualitative data including words and not serial numbers and can be arranged into some categories or structural classification. The data (words) have been collected in some ways, such as observation, interview, documentation, and record. These are usually processed before already used through noting, typing, and editing. The analysis of qualitative uses words to arrange a text and doesn't use statistical calculations as an analysis tool.

DISCUSSION

Cultural studies

The meaning of culture leads to the complex everyday world we all encounter and through which we all move.⁵ Essentially, culture is a process of human life, from the action to the ways of thinking, as defined by Kluckhohn about the concept of culture. Similar to him, Clifford Geertz stated that culture is interpreted as rules, recipes, plans, and guidelines that are used by men to manage their

⁴ Lexy J. Moleong, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif: Edisi Revisi* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2006).

⁵ Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick, eds., *Key Concepts in Cultural Theory*, 0 ed. (Routledge, 2005), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203981849>.

behavior. The concept of culture is implied as behavioral changes and the level of society in Europe in the 19th century. This change is caused by the effect of fast-growing technology. The culture is meant as a comprehensive review of the definition and the analysis of the study object. The cultural analysis is an aspect related to the culture that can be seen in the current culture. In the tradition of cultural studies in England inherited by Raymonds Williams, Hoggarts, and Stuart Hall, the concept of culture is the most complicated matter to be defined, so for them, this concept is a helping tool that has use-values. Williams defined that the concept of culture which uses a universal approach is a concept that refers to shared meaning. This meaning focuses on the daily meaning, such as values, object material, and norms. Culture is experienced in daily life including various texts, practices, and one's perspective on their life.⁶ According to Williams, culture is closest meaning as the whole way of life, because he suggested that culture is observed in some terms; first institutions that produce arts and culture; then, educational formations, movements, and factions in producing arts and culture; the kinds of production included all of its manifestation; identification and kinds of culture especially the products of culture and aesthetic aims; its reproduction through time and space; the last, the ways to organize it. Compared to John Storey's opinion, the concept of culture is defined more politically than aesthetically. He assumed that the culture used in the social concept is not the concept of culture as interpreted in other studies as an object which has high value (high-quality art) or the process of aesthetic development, intellectual and spiritual, but culture is as a text and the practice of daily life.⁷ In this case, it seems that Storey agrees with Raymond Williams about the definition of culture, in contrast to Stuart Hall who puts greater emphasis on culture in the political sphere.

"To say that two people belong to the same culture is to say that they interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves, their thoughts and feelings about the world, in ways which will be understood by each other. Thus, culture depends on its participants interpreting meaningfully what is happening around them, and 'making sense' of the world, in broadly similar ways."⁸

According to Bennet, the term culture is used as an umbrella term referring to all activities and practices producing sense and meaning. He suggested that culture is a habit and ritual organizing and determining our social relationships based on daily life as is common with the texts

⁶ Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, 5th edition (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2005).

⁷ John Storey and John Storey, eds., *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, 4th ed (Harlow, England ; New York: Pearson Longman, 2009).

⁸ Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans, and Sean Nixon, eds., *Representation, Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (Los Angeles : Milton Keynes, United Kingdom: Sage ; The Open University, 1997).

(literature, music, television, and movies). Through that habit and ritual, world social and natural were appeared again or indicated-interpreted- in a specific way according to specified convention.⁹

Barker said that cultural studies can be understood as the study of culture as the meaning practices of the representation.¹⁰ The culture theory of Marxis explores culture as an ideology described in discourse and cultural practice such as media including social, economic, and political texts. He admitted that cultural studies do not have a single reference point. The others, cultural studies come from structuralist/pasca-structuralist thought and critical theory of multidisciplinary especially in England and mainland Europe.¹¹

Thus, cultural studies compose various theoretical studies of other scientific disciplines developed more loosely, so it covers pieces of models from the existing theories of structuralist/pasca-structuralist thought. Critical social theory has preceded the tradition of cultural studies through ideology criticism developed by the Frankfurt school. Critique interpreted based on the sight of Kantian, Hegelian, Marxian, and Freudian. Related to the characteristics of academics, other sites that divide cultural studies as theoretical movement, analysis mode, and criticisms of authorities (didn't come from the project of critical social theory) is an ideology criticism.¹²

Theoretical composition proposed as the characteristics of academics in cultural studies describes a new discovery of methodology to the meaningful ways of cultural practices more coherent, comprehensive, polyvocal and negated objectivity of knowledge and language claims. The academic characteristics of cultural studies engaged with methodological issues. Penteorisian not only refers to single-discipline discourse but also relates to some disciplines. It is called a distinctive feature of cultural studies namely polyvocality. In line with conveyed by Paula Sakko¹³, cultural studies take the form of studies on the topic of lived experience, discourse, text, and social context. The methodology of this cultural study are composed of discourse, lived experience, text, and social context by using a broad analysis of interactive with "existed", mediated, belief (religion), ethnics, gendered, and economic and political dimensions in the modern/capitalist era. For Saukko, the most fundamental aspect of cultural studies is an interest in cultures radically different from existing ones (high culture to low culture/popular) and a critical analysis of culture as an integral

⁹ Tony Bennet, "Popular Culture: Themes and Issues," in *Popular Culture Arts in America* (Open University Press, 1980).

¹⁰ Barker, *Cultural Studies*.

¹¹ Barker.

¹² Ben Agger, *Teori Sosial Kritis: Kritik, Penerapan Dan Implikasinya* (Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana, 2003).

¹³ Paula Saukko, *Doing Research in Cultural Studies: An Introduction to Classical and New Methodological Approaches, Introducing Qualitative Methods* (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE, 2003).

part of struggles and culture (text and social context). In examining the social context, it is essential to be sensitive to the social context and attentive to historical factors. The most important elements of cultural studies methodology, considered valid research, are truthfulness, self-reflexivity, polyvocality, and implement a deconstructive validity usually used by pasca-structuralist researchers. They are Baudrillard (postmodern excess, Foucault (genealogical historicity), and Derrida (deconstructive critique). In the outline chart created by Saukko in his book, truthfulness is illustrated through paradigms, ontology, epistemology, metaphors, research goals, and politics aligned with the models of triangulation, prism, material-semiotic, and dialogue. Self-reflexivity is applied to critical social theory based on ideological critique and roles grounded in awareness representing dialogue and discourse, influence each other, connect various purposes, power structures, and social context and its history. Polyvocality attaches several different perspectives scoped some theories that complement and support one another easily. Although this requires carefulness in combining different perspectives to ensure alignment with the academic character of cultural studies, the paradigm used adopts a triangulation model that aims to combine different materials or methods to see the harmony of each other.

Cultural studies have great potential to offer research opportunities and to capture students' interest. Research validity in cultural studies which aims at truth relies on triangulation. An introductory book on Indonesian customary law (*Pengantar Hukum Adat Indonesia*) covers all forms of Indonesian morality and customs that became daily interactions among people.¹⁴ Tradition is the spirit of a culture. By this tradition, the system of culture becomes firm. If tradition is removed, there is a hope that culture will end at that very moment. Anything that become tradition has usually been tested for effectiveness and efficiency level. Its effectiveness and efficiency always follow the development of cultural elements. Various forms of attitudes and actions in solving problems that have low levels of effectiveness and efficiency will soon be abandoned by their practitioners and will never become a tradition. Of course, a tradition will be appropriate and suitable according to the situation and conditions of the society.¹⁵

Normally, customs are rules (actions) that have been obeyed and practiced since ancient times; patterns of behavior have become a habit; the forms of cultural ideas consist of cultural values, norms, laws, and rules interrelated forming a system. Customs and traditions are enduring practices passed down from one generation to the next. It can be concluded that customs and traditions are an ancestral heritage. Thus, it has strong integration with the patterns of public

¹⁴ R. Van Dijk, *Pengantar Hukum Adat Indonesia* (Jakarta: Sumur Bandung, 1979).

¹⁵ Suwaji Bastomi, *Kebudayaan Apresiasi Pendidikan Seni* (Semarang: IKIP Semarang, 1986).

behavior. Koentjaraningrat¹⁶ mentioned that customs and traditions are concepts and rules that are well-established and strongly integrated within the cultural system of a society, governing human behavior in that social and cultural context.

Customs and traditions are the highest-ranking behaviors within a community because they are everlasting and strongly integrated into the society that practices them. Customs are cultural concepts consisting of cultural values, norms, habits, institutions, and laws commonly practiced in a region. If these customs are not followed, confusion can arise leading to unwritten sanctions. These customary sanctions are usually imposed by the local community on those who are considered to deviate from the norms.

According to Jalaluddin Tunsam (an Arab national living in Aceh in his work from 1660), the term *Adat* originates from the Arabic language *عادات*, plural of *عادة* (*adah*). It means the way or habit. In Indonesia, the term *adat* (custom) began to be used only around the late 19th century. Previously, it was known only to the Malay people after the advent of Islam around the 16th century. This term can be found in the Malay State Laws. Customs and traditions refer to a set of customs that hold the highest status because it is everlasting and deeply integrated into the community that practices them.

Customs and traditions are various practices in a country following the ebb and flow of societal conditions. These practices generally involve the manifestation of cultural and artistic expression of the community, such as local festivities namely performance of *Randai*, *Saluang*, *Rabab*, dances and arts related to a wedding ceremony, the appointment of wedding officiant, or honoring distinguished guests. Such customs and traditions are highly dependent on the social and economic situation of the community. It can be concluded that customs and traditions encompass all the principles and teachings regarding how people behave in society. In this sense, customs serve as the foundation for societal development. Customs within a community continually adapt to the progress of the times, ensuring that they remain enduring.

Tradition (from Latin: *tradition*, meaning to pass on) refers to a custom that develops within a community, whether it becomes a customary practice or is assimilated through ritual customs or religion. In another sense, it is something that has been done for a long time and becomes a part of public life, usually from the same country, culture, era, and religion. These are passed down either through oral information, such as stories, or written information like ancient texts or inscriptions. These traditions are typically connected to human activities, the interaction between

¹⁶ Koentjaraningrat, *Metode-metode Penelitian Masyarakat* (PT Gramedia, 1980).

people, and the relation between people and creator (in a general sense). Instinctively, humans recognize the need for some form of control over certain things to prevent them from disrupting human activities (In Islam, this is known as the divine *fitrah* that has been ingrained since the primordial era, as when humans were still in the realm of the soul and testified to the existence of the Creator). One of the traditions in Hindu Kaharingan in East Kotawaringin Regency of Central Kalimantan province is *Babukung* or *Habukung* (Ngaju). It is usually performed during a mourning ceremony when the body is prepared for burial. The process of *Bukung* is also carried out during the *Timah* ceremony, which involves guiding the spirit of a deceased relative to heaven by purifying and moving the body from the grave to a place called *Sandung*. This is a small house with very tall posts.

A Glimpse of Tumont/Tumoan Tribe

Dayak Tumont or Tumoan tribe is a sub-group of the Dayak tribe located in Lamandau, specifically in villages bordering West Kalimantan. This tribe speaks the Tumon language and related to the Tamuan language. This relationship is based on language research conducted by Swades, which found a similarity of approximately 73,05% between the two languages.

The Tumon/Tumoan tribe is a nomadic or migratory tribe. According to Mr. Jata, *Demang Desa Sudan* (the village headman), they are farmers and fishermen and live along the riverbanks, from the Lamandau River to the Mentaya Sampit River and the Arut River in Pangkalanbun. They set up temporary settlements and, when they become older, they settle down while their children move to new areas to find land for farming and fishing. “We arrived in Parit village in 1983, and we have stayed in this village ever since, while some of my children have lived in other areas such as Seranau or Tualan river” (Demang Sudan). Similarly, Demang Parit and Demang Sudan are still related to Damang Keruing, who has been settled in Keruing village since 1987.

The origins of *Babukung/ Habukung*

Based on interviews with several Dayak community leaders in Cempaga Hulu, the origins of *Babukung/Habukung* can be summarized as described below. In the Pendahara village of Katingan regency, there is a tradition known as *Habukung*.

“*Habukung atau Babukung nampara bara jaman huran, kesah ab tege lewu ji belum uju (tujuh) huma, pada masa te tege uluh tabela buah musibah, iye nah haru ije nyelu jalan hakabali, dan sawa ji malus batibi uju bulan nah malih. Musibah jikau berah ab nampa ka sedih bana, manangis kanjera mabukup hantu sawa ab.dan satabin lihi sawa matei nah bana ab dia maku kuman belum, sampai hamaupun dia*” (Mr. Jata, public figure of Dayak tribe in Sudan village) *Habukung/Babukung* dates back to ancient times. It is said that there was a village with seven houses. During that period, a young person who had just gotten

married faced a tragedy. His wife, who was seven months pregnant, passed away. The tragedy deeply saddened the husband; he cried, refused to eat, and wouldn't speak (translated by the authors, the interview was not conducted Tumoan language, since the respondent was fluent in the Dayak Ngaju language).

The ritual ceremony of *Habukung* originates from an ancient time in a village consisting of seven houses. It began with a legend of a young man who had recently started a family about a year ago.

One day, an unexpected tragedy occurred. The young man's wife suddenly passed away when she was seven months pregnant. Due to this incident, her husband was deeply sorrowful and always cried when holding his wife's body. During this time, he refused to eat and speak to anyone. His parents and family tried to advise him to bury his wife's body at all times but he didn't respond. He continued to lie down holding his wife's body. The family grew increasingly anxious. About fifteen days later, one night, the young man's father dreamed of meeting someone who said they would help you to comfort your grieving son gradually and instructed the villagers not to be afraid of their arrival. Upon waking the next morning, the father immediately shared the dream with the locals. That night, around 9.00 P.M., a loud rumbling and the sound of footsteps accompanied by gong music and other sounds could be heard. Then, many people appeared wearing masks made from Palawi wood. These masks are called *Bukung*. They played musical instruments and performed various dances making noise with bamboo called *Selekap*. The dance was performed in a humorous style, entertaining and making those who saw it laugh.

Every night, *Bukung* appeared in the young man's dream, so he got better. He began to eat and to talk with others. The *Bukung* came every night bringing money, and other items to be donated to the grieving family. This continued for several nights. After that, a large number of donated items were provided, such as rice, sugar, coffee, chicken, pork, and more.

One night, the young man's family conveyed to him a plan to bury his wife. As a result, he agreed to bury his wife's body on the condition that the family would cover the expenses of the funeral ceremony with the support of *bukung* (collected fund).

On the day of the funeral ceremony, *Bukung* continued to walk every night without stopping. On the day of the funeral, it was present throughout the process until the coffin (*raung*) was placed in the grave (buried) and the last *Bukung* helped lift and carry the coffin to the grave. The *Bukung* who participated in lifting the coffin were *bukung kinyak* or *bukung belang*.

Based on the legend/myth, for followers of the Kaharingan Hindu religion in Pendahara village, Tewang Sangalang Garing district, Katingan regency, the *Habukung* ritual is always

performed whenever a family member passes away. From the past to the present, for those who have not yet embraced to Kaharingan Hindu religion, when someone dies, especially an adult, whether male or female, they must perform the funeral ceremony of Kaharingan Hindu called *Habukung/Bukung*. This ritual involves a person posing as a ghost or spirit beings with a painted face and engraved chest and using accessories made from coconut leaves and thousands of leaves, or sometimes wearing a mask known as *Bukung Raja*.

The process of *Bukung* dance

Other public figures of Sudan, Mr. Tajangga, explained that the funeral ceremony of Dayak Ngaju in Central Kalimantan is known as the *Habukung* or *Bukung*. This tradition involves a dance performed for the grieving family. The dancers wear *Bukung* masks with *Sababuka* patterns.

The mask design of *Sababuka* can feature a frightening and terrifying face with characteristics such as a long nose, large eyes, fangs, and a protruding tongue. The *Bukung*s with a *Sababuka* mask come with a dance called the *Bukung* Mask Dance. This dance is performed in a playful and joyful style, aimed at entertaining the grieving family. It is a tradition of the Kaharingan followers

Death is a very sacred moment for the Dayak Ngaju people because they believe that after death there is eternal life in Lewu Tatau (heaven). For this reason, this tradition has been preserved to this day. People who become *Bukung* must meet specific requirements and adhere to certain taboos. These requirements and taboos are closely related to their beliefs. If these requirements are not met, the person may suffer consequences such as: dying young, early withering, losing their soul, shortened life, and so on (not living a long life). (This summary is based on information gathered from 9 respondents who served as sources for this research).

The babukung ceremony must meet these requirements, as follows:

1. “*Penari Babukung jikalau harus masih jalaban meskipun kejau, pali tukep hanjenan, ji bahalap kau puna jalaban kejau, dan tingkatannab harus tutur hunjun, mama, Mina, Bue minimal pahari, dia tau aken kan penda*”(Jata Damang Adat Desa Sudan). It means that the *Bukung* dancers must be an adult and not a close family, so that the dancer can hide their own sadness and not become too immersed in the sorrow.



2. The level of kinship, *Jurus*, must be higher or equal to the deceased.

The *Bukung* dancer should ideally be a close family, such as an uncle, aunt, or someone of equal standing in the family tree as the deceased, like a cousin or a distant relative. Relatives of lower status, such as nieces, nephews, or grandchildren, are not appropriate for this role, as they typically show their grief more visibly - *Damang Desa Keruing*.

3. *Bukung* must be carved with charcoal and chalk on the face, chest, and back. The carved called *Hitam Arang, Putih Kapur*.

There are two types of *Bukung* masks: one made of wood and the other made of facial skin. The wooden *Bukung* mask must be carved and should not be painted, whereas the *Bukung* mask made of facial skin should be dolled up by charcoal and chalk on the face, chest, and back. The *Bukung* dancers must wear *Cawat Torap* (a loincloth made from the bark of Kepua tree) and no shirt and they must wear *Tekuluk Jenjamut* (a headband made from fern plants).

The wooden *Bukung* mask is called *Pahera*. This type of wood is typically used to make knife handles or *Mandau* sheaths. It is fairly light to be used for making masks (Demang Keruing).



The second type is the *Bukung* mask made from facial skin. It is not actually made from facial skin, but rather a human face that is carved to resemble a mask. The carving is colored with *Buring* (charcoal that is ground into a fine powder and applied to the dancer's face) and usually

white, which is typically made from *Kapur Simpa*. It is betel lime used for chewing betel nuts, and it is usually made from seashells processed into betel lime. The combination of the black *Buring* and white *Kapur Simpa* creates the frightening appearance of the *Bukung* dancer's face.



4. They must wear *Cawat Torap* (a loincloth made from the bark of the Kepua tree).

The kepu tree is a tree with thick bark which can be tanned into fibers for spinning. These fibers can be used to make bark cloth clothing.



5. They shouldn't wear clothes.

Originally, wearing clothes was not allowed; however, based on the fatwa of Damang, it is permissible to wear clothing with plant and animal patterns.



6. They must wear *Tekuluk Jenjamut* (a headband made from fern plants).

And most essentially, the *Bukung* dancers must not be afraid or disgusted. They should try to act funny and are allowed to use vulgar and obscene language. (Agon, the humanist from Central Kalimantan)

Takuluk Jejamut is a fern plant worn on the head so that the visible face only.



7. Shouldn't be scared and disgusted.

A *Bukung* dancer must not be scared and disgusted, as it could offend the feelings of the grieving family.

“*Ela sampai mikh narai dai dia ulih payah ji papa, harus babanyi. Mun mikh keh manyinggung keluarga ji mate?*” (Don't be afraid or disgusted; you must be brave. If you're afraid, it will offend the family of the deceased - *Damang Parit*)

8. Must be funny and naughty, permitted to use vulgar and obscene language.

9. Must not speak to people who are not *Bukung*.

According to *Damang Parit*, *Bukung* dancers are not allowed to talk to anyone other than fellow *Bukung* dancers, and most importantly, they must not be sad and cry (thinking about the deceased).

The *Bukung* dancers should look pleased, so the grieving family is going to be entertained. “*panari bukung kau harus ngamburau, nauhi atei sedih tapi harus payah keluarga tetap bau ab*

gembira, mangat keluarga ji dinun musibah te dia sedih dai, tapi tatap sanang atei ah” (The *Bukung* dancers must be able to lie; even though their heart is grief, they must still look happy, so that the grieving family doesn't become too sad and can accept the ordeal over with sincerity).

10. Must be pretend to be sorrowful.

Manamburau is slightly different from lying. It is like camouflage; means showing happiness when you're sad, or appearing wealthy when you're poor. It is not a true reflection of one's character; it's just a temporary facade to comfort someone who is going through misfortune - Agon, The humanist from Central Kalimantan.



11. Have to shower *Lundangan* water or wastewater until the knee (dipping the feet)

Ludang water is muddy or wastewater. Its purpose is to appear disgusting and frightening. This is necessary because, during the transcendental period, spirits come to join in the festivities. The Dayak people believe that these spirits will come if the atmosphere is similar to their natural environment. (Suryani, the humanist from Central Kalimantan)

12. It must be an even number; odd numbers are not allowed

The number of dancers must be even, because before placing the body into the coffin (*Lancang*), the *Bukung* must perform *Manamburau*, and beforehand, they must strike the *Rebung Buluh* against the wall where the body is laid out.

13. *Bukung* is not allowed to go into other people's houses or yards.

14. If they want to stop being a *Bukung*, they must ask permission from the authorities at that time and there must be a replacement.

15. *Bukung* must not get angry and should be able to joke.

Bukung calls people who are not *Bukung* as *Omong/Domong* and refers to themselves as *Ukong*. *Ukong* means I, servant, and slave. Before performing *Habukung*, a *Bukung* must undergo a special ritual. A *Bukung* must carry and guard the coffin to the grave and to remain present until the burial process is complete. Only after everything is finished is the *Bukung* allowed to shower. Thus, the role of *Bukung Tembulai* as a servant is complete.

In the *Bukung* ritual, *Pisor/Basir* prepares the necessary items required before performing *Bukung*. These items serve as offerings for the ancestral spirits, believed to ensure an easy burial process and to protect the *Bukung* from any undesirable events. Other materials used to color the entire body include turmeric, rice flour, finely ground charcoal, and lime. The *Bukung* ceremony begins with the Temenggung reciting mantras.



The *Bukung* ceremony involves traveling along public roads until reaching the mourning house as part of the ritual to welcome the spirit of the deceased. Upon arriving at the mourning house, the dancers do not immediately enter the house; instead, they go around the courtyard of the mourning house seven times. When they are about to enter the house, the dancers must leap and avoid stepping on the steps (if the house has stairs). This is because they are believed to be possessed by ancestral spirits, which are thought to grant them the ability to perform light, graceful jumps into the mourning house.

Inside the mourning house, they continue to dance around the body seven times. This is done to ensure that the spirit of the deceased remains calm, having been welcomed by the *Bukung* dancers. After the dancing in the mourning house is completed, the body is then prepared for burial, accompanied by the *Bukung* dancers until it reaches the cemetery. The casket is carried not only by the *Bukung* but also with the help of the local community. This is because if the dancers start to show signs of fatigue, residents participate, although they do not wear the same attire as the *Bukung*. Throughout the journey to the cemetery, the dancers do not perform any dances as they are tasked with carrying the casket. Upon reaching the cemetery, the *Bukung* circle the grave seven times as a sign that the body is ready to be buried, ensuring that the deceased's spirit finds peace in its final resting place. As the burial proceeds, the *Bukung* ritual is considered complete. However, this does not mean that the *Bukung* are free from the ancestral spirits that have possessed them. Therefore, before returning home, each *Bukung* must circle the body again seven times. This

is meant to signify the end of their journey. Once finished, the *Bukung* remove their attire at the cemetery. Afterward, they must bathe thoroughly and then share a meal.

The closing ceremony is the final part of the *Bukung* performance. After the burial, another ritual is performed to return the souls of the *Bukung*, absolving them from ancestral spirits so they can reunite with their family and community. The final ritual to conclude the burial process involves cleansing with water, sprinkling rice, biting a piece of iron, and being smeared with pig's blood. Finally, the *Bukung* are dabbed with a chicken. This is intended to ensure their souls return. The next step is a communal meal at the mourning house. This is believed to prevent the ancestral spirits from disturbing the *Bukung*. Once everything is completed, the *Bukung* return to their homes and gather with their family members.

Essentially, the dance of death is not just a ritual to alleviate sorrow but also a means of guiding the spirit to Nirvana (Lewu Tatau, according to Kaharingan belief), ensuring that the spirit feels honored and respected by its family. According to Mr. Tawon Dimas, a community leader of the Tumon tribe in Sekadau, West Kalimantan, the *Bukung* dance is a tribute to the soul/Liau, intended to make the deceased feel pleased and to help grieving family left behind not feel too sad. (Sekadau is a village on the border of Central Kalimantan and West Kalimantan).¹⁷

Each region has its philosophy of the Dance of Death. This ritual serves as a form of comfort (as reflected in the Hebrew Bible, Hebrews 13:5), where God says, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (The Bible, Hebrews 13:5).

A ritual in the process of releasing the deceased can sometimes become an object of entertainment for the community and family. Consequently, the Dance of Death ceremony is often packaged as a form of entertainment and presented at cultural festivals and tourist destinations. For example, in Gorontalo and Central Kalimantan, the *Babukung* Death Dance is featured as part of the Annual Tourism Festival in Central Kalimantan.

The *Bukung* death dance procession is a social dance that emphasizes fraternity and a sense of togetherness among the tribe and the villagers. Among the three villages that were the subjects of the study, there are many differences in the process; however, the core of the ceremony remains the same, as described below.

In Sudan village, the *Bukung* dancers are required not to wear clothes; instead, they are wrapped entirely in plant roots

¹⁷ Tawon Dimas, Phone, Agustus 2023.

In Parit Village, dancers are allowed to wear clothes, although they are still wrapped in fern roots. In Keruing Village, it is the same as in Sudan: *Bukung* dancers are not allowed to wear clothes, and most importantly, they wear masks made of human skin.

In carrying out the requirements of the *Bukung* ceremony, the role of the Basir is very dominant. However, in Sudan Village, the Basir's role is the same as that of the family heirs, meaning that before the *Bukung* ceremony, the Basir discusses with the family. In contrast, in Parit and Keruing Villages, the entire process is entrusted to the Basir, including overseeing the funeral ceremony.

Offering condolences to the grieving family is also part of Islamic practice. According to Hadith, this act of consolation is called *Ta'ziyah* and aims to alleviate deep sorrow for the grieving family. *Ta'ziyah* is to share in the sadness and grief caused by the calamity. It is a Sunnah for all family members and relatives, both male and female. *Ta'ziyah* can be performed after the burial of the deceased or up to three days thereafter, as detailed in the book *Fikih Sunnah 2nd edition* by Sayyid Sabiq. The legal basis for *Ta'ziyah* is cited from a Hadith narrated by Amru bin Hazm. He reported that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) spoke about the virtue of offering condolences to those in mourning.,

مَا مِنْ مُؤْمِنٍ يُعَزِّي أَخَاهُ بِمُصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا كَسَاهُ اللَّهُ مِنْ حُلَلِ الْكِرَامَةِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

It means: "A believer who offers condolences for the loss of a fellow believer will be adorned by Allah SWT with the robe of honor on the Day of Judgment." (Narrated by Ibn Majah and Baihaqi).

The values that can be derived from the implementation of the *Babukung* include:

Religious Value: There is a belief that the spirit guided by the *Bukung* dance will feel pleased and will not doubt leave the world for *Lewu Tatau* (Nirvana). This belief is reinforced by continuing the *Bukung* ritual during the burial process and the subsequent lifting of the bones through the *Timah* ceremony, where they are placed in the *Sandung*, the final resting place for the body.

Family Value: The *Bukung* dance cannot be performed by just anyone. It must be carried out by someone who is at least of equal familial rank to the deceased, and it is preferable if the dancer is a close relative, such as an aunt or grandparent.

Public value: When a member of the village passes away, the whole community participates both physically and financially to ensure that the *Bukung* dance and the funeral process are carried out smoothly and perfectly.

Aesthetic Value: The *Bukung* dancers are adorned with frightening makeup. Some wear wooden masks, while others use human skin (for facial decoration). The scary makeup requires skillful blending of base colors to ensure the dancers can move comfortably and attract attention. The typical dance performed is the *Tasai* dance, which is relatively easy to execute. Traditional music accompanies the performance, provided by traditional musicians using instruments such as the *kecapī, rebab, gong, kenong,* and *gendang*. The music also includes *Karungut*, which are hymns praising the creator and the guardian deities of the Kaharingan religion

CONCLUSION

The *Bukung/Babukung* dance is a family tradition or the wish to guide the spirit of the deceased. It is performed during the funeral procession and the lifting of the bones to be placed in the *Sandung* (the final resting place). The dancers in the *Bukung* are individuals who meet the criteria set by local customs.

Interestingly, this dance serves as a form of entertainment amidst the sorrow. While the family feels the grief of losing a beloved one, other family members strive to provide comfort. This is where the *Bukung* dance plays its role, offering solace to the family and guiding the spirit toward Nirvana.

Due to the many values embodied in the *Bukung* dance, the districts of Lamandau, East Kotawaringin, and West Kotawaringin hold an annual festival called the *Babukung* Festival, as part of their cultural tourism agenda. It is hoped that this will allow younger generations to see how their ancestors provided cultural teachings to be preserved for the future.

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