

## Investigating the Relationship between Kadazandusun Beliefs about Paddy Spirits, Riddling in Harvest-time and Paddy-Related *Sundait*

(Perkaitan antara Kepercayaan terhadap Semangat  
Padi, Berteka-teki pada Musim Menuai dan *Sundait*  
Kadazandusun yang Berunsurkan Padi: Satu Penelitian)

LOW KOK ON

Sekolah Pengajian Seni, Universiti Malaysia Sabah  
Jalan UMS, 88400 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah  
[lowkokon@ums.edu.my](mailto:lowkokon@ums.edu.my)

LEE YOK FEE

Jabatan Pengajian Kenegaraan dan Ketamadunan  
Fakulti Ekologi Manusia, Universiti Putra Malaysia  
43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor  
[leeyokfee@putra.upm.edu.my](mailto:leeyokfee@putra.upm.edu.my)

### ABSTRACT

During recent field trips to collect *sundait* (riddles) from Kadazandusun communities in Sabah, it was noted that many of the riddle answers relate to paddy farming: for example, rice planting activities and related paraphernalia are often mentioned. This paper analyzes collected Kadazandusun “paddy-related” *sundait* based on their social context and background. In addition, it also examines traditional beliefs in paddy spirits and the origin of riddling at harvest-time. Some unique aspects of paddy-related *sundait* are highlighted and the relationship between the belief in paddy spirits and the ritual of harvest riddling is further explored.

Keywords: Kadazandusun *sundait*, paddy-related riddles, paddy spirits, harvest-time riddling

## ABSTRAK

Dalam beberapa kerja lapangan mengumpul *sundait* (teka-teki) Kadazandusun di Sabah yang telah pengkaji lakukan baru-baru ini, banyak *sundait* Kadazandusun yang jawapannya berkait dengan unsur padi, aktiviti penanaman padi dan alatan padi telah dikenal pasti. Fokus tulisan ini adalah menganalisis koleksi *sundait* Kadazandusun yang berunsurkan padi berasaskan konteks dan latar sosial orang Kadazandusun. Selain itu, hubungan antara kepercayaan terhadap semangat padi dan sebab mengapa petani Kadazandusun berteka-teki pada musim menuai turut akan dibincang. Dengan berbuat demikian, keunikan *sundait* Kadazandusun yang berunsurkan padi akan ditonjolkan selain hubungan antara kepercayaan terhadap semangat padi dan berteka-teki pada musim menuai akan diketahui.

Kata kunci: *Sundait* Kadazandusun, *sundait* berunsurkan padi, semangat padi, berteka-teki pada musim menuai

## INTRODUCTION

The Kadazandusun<sup>1</sup> of Sabah, Malaysia are traditionally paddy cultivators. While those living in the hills and further inland cultivate dry paddy, the inhabitants of the coastal plains and valleys grow the wet variety.<sup>2</sup> The rice yield is of the utmost importance to these farming communities and given its prominent role in their lives, it is not surprising that the planting, growing and harvesting of the paddy are of great spiritual significance to the Kadazandusun. One central belief is that the paddy spirits, *bambarayon*, are present in paddy. Traditional spiritual ceremonies are largely agriculturally-related rituals involving the recitation of long *rinait* (chants) and performed for the protection of the paddy (Fernando 1978; Phelan 2005; Pugh-Kitingan 2009). One consequence of the Kadazandusun belief in the paddy field as a place inhabited by spirits was the evolution of the traditional harvest practice of riddling.

To date, only five academic works have been published on the Kadazandusun *sundait* (riddles) of Sabah, namely Evans (1951; 1954; 1955), Williams (1963) and Lokman (2004). Evans (1951) was the first researcher to conduct fieldwork on Kadazandusun riddles. In 1950, he managed to collect fifty examples from Kadamain village, in Kota Belud district. Later in the same year, he documented another seventy four riddles from Tombulion, Kahung Saraiyoh and Tambatuon villages in the same district. Besides giving a brief account and making a full inventory of the riddles collected, Evans (1951; 1954) did little in the way of analysis. Likewise, in his article entitled “Some Dusun Proverbs and Proverbial Saying”,

Evans (1955) listed fifty one *siriban* and *sundapat*. Of these, the *sundapat* were found to be another sub-category of riddle, i.e. sayings which require a response.

In “The Form and Function of Tambunan Dusun Riddles”, Williams (1963) stated that Dusun riddling is a fundamental part of the structure and functioning of Dusun society. Focusing on the forms and social functions of the *sundait*, he concluded that riddling behaviour could not be categorized as a leisure time game or activity. Furthermore, Dusuns do not view riddles as tests of chance, or luck. From another perspective, Lokman’s (2004) study investigates the performance of Kadazandusun riddles as a unique oral skill. Based on the above reviews of the literature, the close relationship between *sundait* and the cultural significance i.e. riddling during harvest-time was not the subject of the study by all the previous *sundait* researchers.

Hart (1964), meanwhile, in *Riddles in Filipino Folklore* stated that in a basically agriculture nation, one might expect that economically important, widely distributed, and indigenous agricultural plants and products would receive emphasis in a riddle corpus. He also assumed rice to be a common subject for riddles in a Southeast Asian country where its animistic nature is accepted by most of the people. As rice is the staple food of the Kadazandusun, the choice of paddy as a “riddle subject” (i.e. the riddle answer) by paddy planters is to be expected. This contention was verified on field trips to Kadazandusun communities conducted in 2009 – 2010, during which a large number of riddles were collected. On transcription, many of the riddle subjects were found to contain references to “paddy” (e.g. tools, food, activity etc). Besides focusing on the Kadazandusun belief in paddy spirits and the expression of these beliefs via riddling practices conducted at harvest-time, those Kadazandusun riddles with paddy and a wide range of paddy related practices and paraphernalia as the riddle subjects will be examined in detail. In so doing, the author hopes to facilitate a better understanding of the close relationship between *sundait*, the importance of rice and the cultural significance of the riddling during harvest-time among the Kadazandusun of North Borneo.

## METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

According to Dundes (1980), the study of folklore in literature entails at least two distinct methodological steps, namely identification and interpretation. In this research, the author first produced a corpus of Kadazandusun riddles with answers (subject matter) related to paddy using a combination of fieldwork interviews and library research. The collection of paddy-related Kadazandusun riddles was then analyzed with reference to social context, i.e. the specific

situation in which the riddling activity is practiced at harvest-time. Finally, the relationship between these riddling conventions and Kadazandusun beliefs about the paddy spirits was analyzed and discussed.

#### THE KADAZANDUSUN *SUNDAIT*

Like most of the Kadazandusun subgroups, riddles are termed as *sundait* (pronounced as soon/da/it) among the Rungus. Typically, a Rungus villager may ask “*Monundait oku po* [Let me ask you (a riddle)], *ikau mengarait* (you answer it.)” [Informant: Manadas Mogiom]. According to Lokman (2004), the word *sundait* in Kadazandusun is the combination of two words i.e. “sunundait” (to tell or to pose) and “karait” (to answer). The term varies between the different Kadazandusun subgroups. For example, the Tambunan Dusun refer to their riddles as *sesandaiten* or *sunandait* (Williams 1963). Evans (1951) also reported that in Kadamaian, Kota Belud, riddles and their answers are called *sundait* and *araiton* respectively (Evans 1951). In Kadazandusun, *araiton* means answering. To sum up, the term *sundait* is closely related to words like *sosundaiton*, *susundoiton* and *sunundait* as used by other Kadazandusun subgroups to denote a riddle.

#### LEGENDS RELATING TO THE ORIGIN OF *SUNDAIT*

A legend related to the origin of the Kadazandusun *sundait* was obtained from a Rungus informant during one field trip. Rundabang binti Linsapu (Informant 1) recounted the following: Once, a girl was wandering from one place to another looking for her life partner. On the way she met Rumolizan (one of the paddy spirits). At that time, Rumolizan was about to build a ladder for his *sulap* (hut). He decided to test the girl and uttered the phrase “*kazimipas sudorudun*” (*kazimipas* is a special type of wood and *sudorudun* refers to layers of things). To his surprise, the girl answered, “I know that you are going to build a *tukat* (ladder) for your hut”. Since the clever girl had been able to answer his riddle, Rumolizan decided to marry her. If this story of Rumolizan is truly an ancient one, it is conceivable that the riddle “*kazimipas sudorudun*” is one of the oldest Rungus *sundait*; and based on this evidence, the. Rinjamal Montuduk (Informant 2) added that since the time of the legend, riddling has been popular among the Rungus people.

Limpot Majalu (Informant 3) on the other hand, had this to say, “*Ah, itu dulu-dulu ada orang Rungus pergi ke tempat bambarayon, dari situ bah mereka bawa balik itu sundait.*” (“Ah, a long, long time ago, some Rungus went to the dwelling place of the *bambarayon* (paddy spirit); from there they brought back the *sundait* (riddles).”)

Both the above-mentioned Rungus legends seem to verify that the origin of the *sundait* is closely linked to legends of the paddy spirits.

### THE BELIEF IN PADDY SPIRITS<sup>3</sup> AMONG THE KADAZANDUSUN

The belief in *bambarayon* (paddy spirits) among the Kadazandusun can be traced back to the myths and legends of the various Kadazandusun subgroups. It is generally believed that after Kinoingan (the Chief God) and his spouse<sup>4</sup> created the world and human beings, the people were visited by a great famine. In order to save the people from starvation, the deity and his wife decided to sacrifice their only daughter<sup>5</sup> by cutting her into small pieces, and from the different portions of her body grew all things good to eat: her head gave rise to the coconut, her arm-bones became sugar cane and her fingers, bananas. Most important of all, her blood sprang into the first rice plant. Thus the Kadazandusun believe that the transfigured sacrifice of Kinoingan's daughter is embodied in the rice spirit known as *bambarayon* (Gidah 2001; *Daily Express* 2010; Leong 2010).

According to the religious beliefs of the Rungus from Kudat district, *bambarayon* (pronounce as *bambarazon* by the Rungus) are a group of benevolent rice spirits. They live in a country beyond the sea, although no one can explain its whereabouts. One villager reported that *bambarayon* live at the edge of the Piromitan<sup>6</sup> layer where good spirits reside. Above the Piromitan layer is the Monkulun layer, where the most powerful spirits (or Gods) - Sambavon<sup>7</sup>, Kinoringan, and Minamangun - live. These spirits on the Piromitan and Monkulun planes protect human beings from sickness, death, and other misfortunes, but they do not take care of rice. Only *bambarayon* can do this. The Rungus believe that rice was first brought to them by *bambarayon* in the remote past. To show their gratitude to the *bambarayon* for safeguarding their rice, the Rungus sacrifice fowl and pigs in their honour. If these ceremonies are not performed, a poor harvest is anticipated (Yutaka Shimomoto <http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/publications/afs/pdf/a339>).

In addition, several Kadazandusun legends refer to the paddy spirits. One of them is the legend of the paddy without husks. In an earlier time, the Kadazan believed that rice grains did not have husks. Thus rice could be eaten immediately after harvesting. But this did not last very long; for one day, while passing through their neighbour's field, some irresponsible people plucked the unripe grains from the stalks and put them into their baskets. They were even eaten without cooking. As a result, the spirit of the rice became angry and decided to cover the grains with husks, thereby protecting them from the people's terrible plucking habits (Palikat 1988).

Gumpai Beringgit (Informant 1), a Tobilung Dusun, tells a different legend regarding the paddy spirit. According to him, there once lived seven brothers, and each of them had their own piece of land in which to cultivate paddy. During one harvest an old lady wearing an extra large *wakid* (traditional Kadazandusun backpack) came seeking a job as a paddy cutter. In those days, the payment for such job was in the form of a full *wakid* of paddy. Due to the large size of her *wakid*, six of the brothers refused to offer her a job; however the seventh and youngest brother was kind-hearted and let the woman work. At the end of the day, when he went to check on the old lady, to his surprise, she had disappeared from the middle of his paddy field. After that, the youngest brother's paddy yield was greater than ever before. He knew that the old lady was in fact the paddy spirit and that she had come to test the farmers.

In general, the Kadazandusun believe that there are seven types of paddy spirits and *bambarayon* is a general name given to all of them. Evans (1953) listed down all the seven types of paddy spirit and added another category which he named "The class of chief" in the beliefs of the Tempasuk Dusun. The seven spirits referred to are:

1. Ohinopot – helps guard the supply of paddy in the store.
2. Sambilod – looks after the damaged rice and sees that the amount does not increase.
3. Gontolobon – gives rice piled up in "boulders".
4. Momiand – gives paddy as abundant as spring water.
5. Moniudan – gives paddy as abundant as spring water.
6. Sompidot – gives *opidot* (full grain in the ear).
7. Kabang – makes the rice *kambang* (swell) in the cooking pot.

Each type of paddy spirit has a distinct role to fulfill. Gontolobon, for example, has a special capability to supply rice piled up in huge quantities like *tontolob* (boulders). Prosperous farmers are assisted by most of the seven paddy spirits, who reside in their paddy fields and rice barns; whereas poor farmers are fortunate to receive the help of more than one or two. Evans in 1953 said, "I am told that at Kadamaian, the belief is that if a poor man has only one paddy spirit, it will be Sambilod, or if two, an Ohinopot and a Sambilod. Even the one spirit may desert him and go to a rich man's house, where there is plenty of paddy, only returning when the poor man has a little paddy in store" (Phelan 2005).

Many paddy spirits related rituals are performed before, during and after the harvest. As reported in the *Daily Express* (2010) under the title "The Rituals of Tadau Kaamatan (Harvest Festival)", the Kadazan of Penampang and Papar district have a series of six paddy spirits related ceremonies, whereas the Lotud Dusun in Tuaran district have eight. Listed below is a brief account of the six paddy spirit related ceremonies observed by the Kadazan:

1. The *Kumogos* Ceremony

Before a harvest begins, a *bobohizan* (ritual specialist) will select and tie-up seven stalks of healthy paddy. The stalks will only be selected after the paddy field has been completely harvested. They will then be scattered over the plot. This gesture is to inform the spirits who may be present among the paddy not to cause any disturbances during the harvest; in return each of them will be given something after the harvesting has been concluded.

2. The *Kumotob* Ceremony

The *bobohizan* selects seven stalks of good paddy from the field prior to harvesting. These are then tied together and placed in a *tadang* (traditional basket for keeping rice). The rest of the rice in the field is then harvested. The seeds from the selected paddy are kept for use during the next planting season.

3. The *Posisip* Ceremony

The *bobohizan* takes the *tadang* containing the seven stalks of paddy to a paddy hut. While reciting chants, she removes the bundle of stalks and inserts them in a bamboo pole kept in the *tangkob* (large rice storage container). The recital of the chants is to request the paddy spirits to stay in the paddy hut until the next planting season, when the process will be repeated again.

4. The *Poiib* Ceremony

In the rice hut, the *bobohizan* carefully pours the rice into the *tangkob*. The same process is repeated a number of times until all the rice has been poured into the *tangkob*. The *bobohizan* then recites chants appealing to the rice spirits to keep watch over the rice stored in the *tangkob*.

5. The *Magavau* Ceremony

This ritual ceremony focuses on the restoration of *bambarayon* as well as offering the spirit food. In olden days, the *Magavau* ritual was performed in the paddy field on the night of the first full moon after the harvest. Nowadays, this ritual is carried out in the house of the owner of the field.

6. The *Humabot* Ceremony

After all the serious ritual ceremonies, it is time to celebrate the harvest festival. The Sabah state level *Tadau Kaamatan* (Harvest Festival) is held annually from 30<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> May. After all the merry-making, which includes feasting, singing and traditional dancing, the climax of the *Tadau Kaamatan* is performed: the selection of the *Unduk Ngadau* (Harvest Festival Queen).

The *Unduk Ngadau* symbolizes Huminudon, the daughter sacrificed by Kinoingan. (*Daily Express* 2010).

According to Kadazandusun beliefs, the role of the paddy spirits is to protect the paddy and to ensure a bountiful harvest. Hence it is important that the spirits are appeased and not offended. Impolite acts, such as shouting in the paddy field and riddling outside of harvest time, are to be avoided. Riddling at harvest time is however an activity designed to please the paddy spirits.

#### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PADDY SPIRITS AND RIDDLING

As the Kadazandusun traditionally believe that *bambarayon* lives in every grain of rice, harvesting must be carried out with the utmost care: no wastage is allowed. Many taboos are associated with harvesting and with the carrying home of the rice grain; for example, it is a bad omen if a sack of paddy which is being transported on the back of a buffalo from the paddy field to the storage barn happens to fall to the ground (Phelan 2005). According to the report published by the Sabah Museum (1993), the Kadazandusun believe that if riddling is carried out while bush clearing in the paddy field, the job may consume more time than usual or necessary. Hence they will avoid riddling at such times.

Evans (1951), who did his research in Kadamaian and Kahung Saraiyoh village on the west coast of North Borneo learnt that riddles were recounted among workers at harvest-time; while at Kadamaian, folk stories and riddles were exchanged, either in the field or in the home. Gansiau (Evans' informant) told him that, if riddles were recited at other times of the year, the person concerned would be *ration do rogon* [answered by evil spirits and plagued by bad dreams] (Evans 1951). From observation and interviews, Williams (1963), who focused on the riddles of the Tambunan Dusun in the interior of North Borneo concluded that Dusun Riddling behavior in Tambunan district was associated with harvest activities and the attendant religious celebrations. He was told by his informants: "It is bad luck to say riddles at any time but harvest." Williams' records indicated that the observation of riddling behavior was less difficult during the two monthly harvest periods than at other times. Besides, Williams (1963) remarked: "Thus, one is told, it is bad luck to say riddles any time but harvest". Accordingly, both Kubin bin Bumbon (Informant 1) and Kanak binti Intang (Informant 2) stated in their interviews that in their youth, their parents used to remind them that it was a bad thing to pose a *sundait* while clearing bushes. They were advised to entertain themselves by listening to folktales instead. All the informants in this

research said that they are prohibited from riddling except for during the paddy harvesting season. Kinindangang Masani (i) and Mongulintip Momgimbal (ii) for example commented as follows:

- i. *Ah, hanya pada pesta, ah, musim menuai baru boleh “bersundait”. Kita tidak boleh “bersundait” kalau bukan musim menuai, musim menuai saja, ah.*  
(Ah, only during the harvest, ah the harvest time then only we can carry out riddling. We do not allow riddling if it is not a harvest season, only during harvesting time, ah.)
- ii. *Ah, sekarang musim menanam padi, sepatutnya tidak “bersundait”. Ah, musim dia, apabila sudah musim padi berbuah. Ah, jadi yang betul-betul masa mau mengetamalah...*  
(Ah, now is planting paddy time, by right we shouldn't do riddling. Ah, the right season is, when harvesting paddy. Ah, the correct timing is when we start harvesting...)

When asked about why the Rungus can only carry out their riddling activities during harvest season, the above-mentioned informants replied thus:

- i. *Em... sebab sundait ini, dia berkaitan dengan, dengan itu semangat padi bah, itu Odu-Odu. Semangat padi itu nama Odu-Odu. Ah, yang Odu-Odu itu hanya muncul semasa musim menuai padi. Ah, itu sundait ada kaitan sama Odu-Odu, ah Bambarazon.* (Informant: Kinindangang Masani)  
(Er... because this *sundait* (riddle), it is connected with the paddy-spirits. It is Odu-Odu. The name of that paddy-spirit is Odu-Odu. Ah, Odu-Odu will appear when we harvest paddy. Ah, *sundait* have connection with Odu-Odu, ah *bambarazon* (paddy-spirits).
- ii. *Sebab kalau “bersundait”, dia boleh mengakibatkan tanaman itu tidak menjadi. Ah, dia jadi rosak* (Informant: Mongulintip Momgimbal).  
(If we do riddling, the paddy plants may not grow well. Ah, they will be destroyed.)

Because of such beliefs, any villager uttering *sundait* outside the harvest season is liable to be scolded by their parents or other elders in the village. As rice is the staple food for the Rungus, no breaking of the taboo associated with the paddy-spirits is tolerated. Furthermore, the Rungus believe that the paddy-spirits will only appear during the paddy harvesting season. Consequently, riddling at other times will not benefit them, but may offend the paddy-spirits.

In contrast, the Rungus believe that if one utters a *sundait* at harvest time, the paddy-spirits will stay around to protect their paddy. “*Menundait*” (to pose a riddle) and “*Mengarait*” (to answer a riddle) are linked to this belief via the

legend recounted by Rundabang (Informant 3). According to the legend, the clever girl brought about the union of a paddy-spirit and a human being by answering the *sundait* posed by Rumolizan (one of the paddy-spirits). Since the marriage was possible because of a *sundait*, to “*menundait*” or to “*mengarait*”, is seen as paying homage to the paddy spirit.

One of the Tobilung Dusun *sundait* collected by the author is considered sacred by the paddy planters. Such *sundait* were specially created by Dusun ritual specialist known as *bobolian*. According to Gumpai Beringgit (Informant 4), in his youth only the *bobolian* was allowed to utter such *sundait* during the paddy harvesting season. Whenever a *sundait* was posed, it was compulsory for the hearer to answer it. These practices were a way of inviting the Bambarayon to their paddy fields. The peasants were prohibited from directly mentioning the paddy spirit so they would pose this *sundait*:

TOBILUNG DUSUN <i>SUNDAIT</i> <sup>8</sup>	TRANSLATION
<i>Oligo-oligongogono</i> (i), <i>Olipo-olipantayo</i> (ii), <i>Sondu oku ondidigo</i> (iii), <i>Kabai oku ondilungo</i> (iv), <i>Binagung-bagung id sawat</i> (v), <i>Tarok bungkau kud layagon</i> (vi), <i>Rinji kanja kumanja</i> (vii).	(i) This line is a special form of charm which uses the classical language of the Tobilung Dusun. Its literal meaning is “an act of building a wall” or “something at the wall”. (ii) This line is also a charm uttered in the Tobilung Dusun classical language. It means “having a desire to cross the wall without a door”.
<i>(Parai om Bambarayon)</i>	(iii) I am leaning and am surrounding (the object is not mentioned),
(Informant 5: Simah Gurimit)	(iv) I am holding and giving support (the object is not mentioned), (v) There is a bundle, (This “bundle” refers to the <i>pusakag</i> which is hanging on top of a Dusun Tobilung’s rice barn. It is believed to be the dwelling place of the paddy-spirits.) (vi) The melody of <i>bungkau</i> (a musical instrument) calling them from the ocean, (vii) They will come home.
	[Answer: Paddy and <i>Bambarayon</i> (Paddy and Paddy Spirit)]

This Tobilung Dusun *Sundait* 1 is posed annually and all the Tobilung folks know the answer. It is a charm used to invite the paddy spirits to the rice barn of the Tobilung Dusun to protect their paddy. The classical language used to perform this *sundait* is rich in analogies, symbols and metaphors and the whole

riddle is closely related to the Dusun Tobilung beliefs in the paddy spirits.

The relationship between the rice spirits and *sundait* is so significant that the Tambunan Dusun folk went to the extent to create a riddle with “rice spirit” as the riddle subject: “*Kano makan ina om au idi kakita.*” (Let us eat, but you cannot see it. Answer: Rice spirit). Williams (1963) went on to explain: After the rice harvest, the spirit of the rice comes to join in the celebrations. People cannot see her as she eats her food.

The psychological aspect of “fear of the unknown” is used by the Rungus of Kudat district during riddling. If one cannot answer a *sundait* for example, the poser will say, “You must answer the *sundait* (riddle) or else someone (a spirit) will sleep with you tonight.” Such sayings will normally scare small children, and as a result they will try their very best to find the answer by asking their parents, friends or other villagers. But for the Dusun Gana residing in the district of Keningau, if one cannot answer a *sundait*, the poser will start giving clues; if the recipient is still unable to do so after being given several clues, the riddler has to provide the answer. Leaving the *sundait* unanswered is considered to be an invitation to the evil spirits to respond.

The Kadazandusun will try their very best not to offend the paddy spirits. An example of this concern is evident at harvest time, when a special tool known as *linggaman* is used to harvest paddy instead of a sickle. Below is one of the *sundait* linked to the *linggaman*:

RUNGUS <i>SUNDAIT</i> :	TRANSLATION:
<i>Tumullud i-nganingani, Piopitan ddi ngani. (llinggaman om mongomot)</i>	<i>I-nganingani</i> (just a sound) is flying, <i>Ngani</i> (another sound rhyme with I- nganingani ) has landed.
(Informant 6: Addek Riupa)	

The answer to the above *sundait* is *llinggaman om mongomot* (*llinggaman* and harvesting paddy). The *linggaman* has a small blade which fits into the palm of the hand, while its wooden handle protudes between the little finger and the ring finger. Most of the modern paddy farmers in Sabah now use a sickle to harvest paddy, in contrast to the olden days. The use of the *llinggaman* reflects the respect of the farmers for the rice spirits: they do not wish *bambarayon* to see the blade of the *linggaman* as the paddy stalks are being cut (Phelan 2005).

According to the different Kadazandusun subgroups there are many other *sundait* with *linggaman* as the answer. The difference is in the *sundait* stems. Rosia binti Maisin (Informant 7), a Liwan Dusun supplied this *sundait*: “*Adi kopisopongo, kopi songgodo kito.*” (Younger brother come over here, together

we rise up and compete with each other). Sakuian binti Keling (Informant 8), a Bundu Dusun supplied two riddles: (i) “Kano mindahu, mongoi toko sangod.” (Let us go to the field and have war together. Answer: *Wakid* (traditional backpack) and a *linggaman*) and (ii) “Mansahau molohing, minturopik tanak.” (The adult is waiting; kids are flying around. Answer: *Wakid* (traditional backpack) and *linggaman*). The Tambunan Dusun also have one such *sundait*: “Meneni ketin-ketin, memikid tan-tan.” (The sound of tin-tin is whistled each year. Answer: *linggaman*). A *linggaman* is used at the time of harvest and it makes a tin-tin sound as it cuts down the paddy stalks (Williams 1963). These five *sundait* referring to the same object illustrate how important the *linggaman* is in the life of the Kadazandusun peasants: it is an essential medium through which to show respect to the paddy spirits.

The close relationship between harvesting and riddling is also revealed in a Tambunan Dusun *sundait*: “Nahaba lugu tridenen kagu.” (The old wood falls and then comes up again. Answer: Harvesting and riddles). As Williams (1963) explains: once a year peasants cut down the paddy and then they tell riddles.

All the informants verified that during the paddy harvesting season, riddling is carried out all day long - during harvesting on the hill, when at home with the family, on meeting friends, or during feasting and drinking sessions. Even though, undeniably, the Rungus carry out riddling activities at harvest time to amuse themselves, nevertheless the extent of this practice illustrates the depth of their traditional beliefs. Riddling activity can take place anytime after the first stalk of new paddy is harvested to before the planting of the nursery for the next season. There is much opportunity for these customary exchanges as the Kadazandusun adhere to the principle that the more time they spend in the paddy field; the more rice will be reaped. Thus, in order to make harvesting more pleasant and interesting, the harvesters “riddle” their time away. Their spirits are uplifted because, despite the intense heat and the hard work, they are engrossed in solving the riddle (Sabah Museum 1993; Lokman 2004).

#### THE PADDY-RELATED *SUNDAIT*

An important question arises when examining Kadazandusun *sundait* texts: Why are there so many *sundait* about paddy, paddy-related activities and paraphernalia? Hart (1964) stated that scholars like Archer Taylor imply the existence of a selective process in the choice of the riddle subjects as portrayed in their riddle answers. With regard to selection, Hart (1964) has identified four factors. Firstly, riddle subjects are familiar subjects. Secondly, riddles usually deal with concrete objects, occasionally with processes, and rarely with

abstractions. Thirdly, selection of riddle subjects is influenced by people’s value systems. Finally, selection of subjects is determined by their inherent riddle potentialities.

Since rice is so important to the Kadazandusun, anything related to its cultivation is likely to be a source of inspiration for their *sundait*. The same can be said of the Philippines and Thailand, two nations where rice is also the staple food and a riddle subject frequently used by paddy planters. One Filipino riddle in particular, emphasizes the central role of rice: “If there is none, you will die” [Answer: Rice] (Hart 1964).

During a recent field trip, the author gathered many Kadazandusun *sundait* where paddy, paddy-related activities and paraphernalia featured as answers. The focus of the following discussions will be those Kadazandusun *sundait* published by Evans (1951; 1954), Williams (1963) and the outcome of the field work. Firstly, those *sundait* with “paddy” itself as the riddle subject (listed in Table 1 below) will be highlighted:

TABLE 1: *Sundait* with “Paddy” as Its Answer

NO.	KADAZANDUSUN <i>SUNDAIT</i>	TRANSLATION
1.	<i>Mohtua intalo konsok omilo nogi akanon?</i> ( <i>Parai</i> ) (Informant 2: Kanak binti Intang)	What fruit ripen three times then only can be eaten? Answer and explanations: Paddy. When the paddy grains are ripe (1 <sup>st</sup> time of ripening); after being harvested they have to be dried under the sun or fried over a big pan without oil (2 <sup>nd</sup> time of ripening) and finally they are boiled till cooked (3 <sup>rd</sup> time of ripening).
2.	<i>Puun poring tuak nagas.</i> ( <i>Parai</i> ) (Evans 1951)	Plants of the large bamboo with fruit like pebble ridges. Answer and Explanation: Paddy – The poring is the largest species of bamboo. It is interesting that the Dusun note the kinship between the bamboo and the paddy plant – both grasses (Evans, 1951).
3.	<i>Igulu maganak, tahuri monontian.</i> ( <i>Parai</i> ) (Evans 1951)	Gives birth first and is pregnant afterwards. Answer and Explanation: Paddy – The seeds gives birth to the young rice plant, and the rice plant becomes pregnant with the grain (Evans 1951)
4.	<i>Ondig pirompok kito, sopipori songodon.</i> ( <i>Parai</i> ) (Evans 1951)	Girl companions standing in rows are we, together having our heads taken. Answer and Explanation: Paddy – In reaping, the heads of the rice plants, all standing in rows, are cut off by the reapers (Evans, 1951).

---

<p>6.    <i>Mahak nogi pinohus om anuon nogi; mahak nogi pohusan om amok nogi onuon. (Parai om korulu) (Evans 1954)</i></p>	<p>When it is whittled, it is taken; when it is held in the hand, it is not taken.          Answers and Explanation: Paddy and its stalks – The reference appears to be to young paddy, such as is used at the fruit fruits ceremony. This is stripped from the stems by passing the heads through the partially closed hand. What is “whittled away” is, therefore, taken while the stems, held in the left hand, are rejected. Ordinarily, paddy is trodden out of the ear (Evans 1954).</p>
<hr/>	
<p>7.    <i>Matai anak do Sama, matai migulik-gulik; matai anak do Tindal, matai da kogulik. (Parai ranau om parai tindal) (Evans 1954)</i></p>	<p>When a child of a Sama dies, it returns again and again; when a child of the Tindal dies, it dies not to return.          Answers and Explanations: Wet Paddy and dry paddy – This <i>sundait</i> ascribes wet paddy to the Sama<sup>9</sup> (Nowadays they are known as Bajau in Sabah.) and dry paddy to the Tindal (Dusun). “The child of the Sama” is said to return again and again because wet-growing paddy is planted year after year in the same fields. “The child of the Dusun” does not return because dry paddy lands, whether on the flat or the hillsides, are only planted for one year, and then abandoned. Re-use of such land does not usually take place for several years, though where the land is very good, hitherto unused (Evans, 1954). This is not totally correct nowadays, as much wet-growing paddy is cultivated by some of the Kadazandusun.</p>
<hr/>	
<p>8.    <i>Ipoi-ipo takura po om id asukod. (Parai) (Williams 1963)</i></p>	<p>You care for it well when it is small; you slay it when it is full grown.          Answer and Explanations: Paddy – When small, a paddy plant is well taken care of by the planter; it will be cut (harvested) when it is full grown (Williams 1963).</p>
<hr/>	
<p>9.    <i>Koperinan o goas kanagasan atonto. (Parai) (Williams 1963)</i></p>	<p>Bamboo at the stem but with fruit of stones.          Answer and Explanations: Paddy – When paddy grows, the shoots are green and tender like bamboo; when it is ripe, the grain is hard like a stone (Williams, 1963). Note that this Tambunan Dusun <i>sundait</i> is similar to the Kahung Saraiyoh Dusun <i>sundait</i> (No.1). They are only different in terms of the language used and the <i>sundait</i> stem formed.</p>

---

<p>10. <i>Gulu nogipagannak ko monontian.</i> (<i>Parai</i>) (Williams 1963)</p>	<p>First giving birth, then pregnant. Answer and Explanations: Paddy – When planted paddy seeds grow, the Dusun call these young paddy plants <i>moganak</i> (to have young); when the paddy plants bear grains, they are said to be pregnant (Williams, 1963). Note that this Tambunan Dusun <i>sundait</i> is similar to the Kahung Saraiyoh Dusun <i>sundait</i> (No.2). They are only different in terms of the language used and the <i>sundait</i> stem formed.</p>
<p>11. <i>Tagad ko tanak tarantai nakatagakon do gonsilo, moli nopo id gonsilo ina ongomol santanud.</i> (<i>Parai</i>) (Williams 1963)</p>	<p>I harvested the field and the yellow was gone. I went home and found that the yellow had followed. Answer and Explanations: Paddy – The rice grains are all yellow when ripe and when they are cut (Williams 1963).</p>
<p>12. <i>Koporingan o'guas kosumbilingan o'tuntuh.</i> (<i>Guas parai</i>) (Informant 9: Anjulipah binti Kindog)</p>	<p>The tree looks like bamboo but its end looks like <i>sumbiling</i> (a small and thin bamboo). Answer and Explanations: Paddy plant. The shoot of the paddy plant looks like a bamboo shoot, and its sharp end looks like a fine and sharp bamboo.</p>
<p>13. <i>Tumagak manuk silou, gumuli nga sanrayat-rayat oh tanak.</i> (<i>Parai monilau</i>) (Informant 9: Anjulipah binti Kindog)</p>	<p>Yellow hen get lost, it comes back with many chicks. Answer and explanations: Paddy plant. Yellow hen is the metaphor for paddy grains which are yellow in colour. After the grains are harvested (gone), they will be brought home in huge quantities (metaphor for many chicks coming home).</p>
<p>14. <i>Kopoguru maganak au koh monantian.</i> (<i>Parai</i>) (Informant10: Ganing bin Sagunting)</p>	<p>Give birth first before being pregnant. Answer and Explanations: Paddy. Similar to <i>sundait</i> No. 2 and No. 8</p>
<p>15. <i>Tanaknu putulon liu, ulakan nu om tonokon nu; om pimbabagan nu gisom do oruta; au apatai okon nogi gumomu.</i> (<i>Tua do parai</i>) (Informant 11: Yusang bt Kakoh)</p>	<p>Your child's neck was cut; you got stepped and hit until crushed into pieces and then boiled; you did not die but increased in number instead. Answer and explanations: Paddy grains. First, the paddy plant was cut (harvested) and stepped on to separate the grains from the plant. Next the grains are pounded and finally cooked. The cooked rice will swell thus and is considered to have increased in number.</p>

---

<p>16. <i>Palado kopo gia ondig, Sumondot ko nogi sondoton, Sumangkad nogi sangkadon, Todop nu nogi tilombuson, Tolong nu tibusuwon, Kapo gia dagai ti ondig, Molot-rolot nogi paku tiou, Mirag-sirag nogi paku rundun, Rundun patayan nogia dagai. (Parai) (Informant 12: Rubaya Salaodin)</i></p>	<p>A friend has got something, Another one is getting jealous, You come down, and down, Your sleep will be continue, and continue with a deep sleep, But we are friends, We are always facing problems, Walking in between the bushes, And finally being sacrificed.</p> <p>Answer and explanations: Paddy. This <i>sundait</i> is rich in classical Tobilung Dusun words, analogies and symbols which are known only to the ritual specialists. Hence the translations provided here are only the approximate meanings of each line. Gumpai Beringgit, the translator of this <i>sundait</i> said that it is the last line, “And finally being sacrificed” that implies that the “paddy” has been cut.</p>
---	---

---

The proliferation of *sundait* with “paddy” as the answer indicates the central role of rice in Kadazandusun life. These may be in a form of simple or long descriptions (*Sundait* No. 1-15) or in a more complex poetic form (*Sundait* No. 16). *Sundait* No. 15 may be amusing, but the descriptions are precise when come to describing the characteristics of the “paddy” from the moment it is harvested to the time it is cooked. *Sundait* No. 16 consists of many classical Tobilung Dusun words that are known only to their ritual specialists. Such *sundait* represent a genre of traditional chants in themselves, being rich in analogies and symbols. Typically, many lines rhyme with each other giving the chants an enchanting quality in terms of the language used. Such *sundait* serve to emphasize the notion of rice as sacred.

Continuing the analysis, it is interesting to note that *sundait* No. 3 (Table 1): *Igulu maganak, tahuri monontian* (Gives birth first and is pregnant afterwards) is similar to *sundait* No. 10: *Gulu nogipagannak ko monontian*. (First giving birth, then pregnant) and *sundait* No. 14: *Kopoguru maganak au koh monantian* (Give birth first before being pregnant). These similarities may be due to contact between the various Kadazandusun subgroups, but this does not account for the Filipino riddle: *Umon-una nga aganak sa agbugui* [First it gives birth before becoming pregnant. Answer: rice plant]? (Hart 1964)

Furthermore, *sundait* No. 8 (Table 1): *Ipoi-ipoi takura po om id asukod* (You care for it well when it is small; you slay it when it is full grown. Answer: Paddy) bears similarities to the Filipino riddle: *Kung diotay guina palangga, kung dako na biya-biya* [When small, beloved; when big, left alone. Answer: Rice plant] (Hart, 1964). At this point in time, it is hard to say whether such similarities are due to coincidence or the result of contact between the Kadazandusun and Filipino peoples. Further research is needed to clarify the origins of these riddles, shared or otherwise. To summarise, Table 1 clearly reveals “paddy” to be a main sources of inspiration for Kadazandusun riddle writers.

In term of wet paddy planting, one particular *sundait* contains a vivid description: *Sanan tisan do raat nondilimon ko kadari kagonguli oku po ina bombrain nanperiison* (By the edge of the sea, long ago, I went along. When I returned home, there were no green leaves to be seen). In this Tambunan Dusun *sundait*, the sea is a metaphor for the newly planted rice fields, for when they are flooded, they look like the sea; the people walk along the dikes at this time to go from one place to another. When one returns after harvest, the fields are bare and dry (Williams 1963). Such vivid descriptions refer to *linagob* (flooded paddy fields), *binatan* (paddy field dikes) and *namut* (harvest). In term of dry paddy planting, Yusang binti Kakoh (Informant 11) has a *sundait* with her: *Mandus tandus-tandus id toguanngun nga mahalalap id tohuri* (Those in front poking the soil while those behind bending over). This is a common act when planting dry paddy on the slope of a hill. And the answer for this *sundait* is *mangasok om monupos do parai* (planting dry paddy). There is a specific *sundait* regarding preparing the hill for planting dry paddy: *Surubon poh pintokonon nogi* (Burn first then poking. Informant: Lanuin bt Bolintok). The answer for this *sundait* is *tumoh* (hill for planting dry paddy). It is normal practice for the hill site to be cleared and burned before the surface of the soil is poked with sharp stick to accommodate the paddy seeds.

Another *sundait* refers to the bearing of grains: *Tumagak manuk silou, gumuli nga sanrayat-rayat oh tanak* (Yellow hens are disappearing but many chicks are appearing later). According to Kanak binti Intang (Informant 2), yellow hens are metaphors for the paddy flowers, after they fall, many paddy grains (chicks) will appear later. When the paddy is ripe, it is time to guard again them from being eaten by birds. Such important farming activities clearly prompted the *sundait* creators to practice their art. Table 2 contains two such examples:

TABLE 2: *Sundait* Related to Guarding the Ripe Paddy

KADAZANDUSUN <i>SUNDAIT</i>	TRANSLATION
<p>1. <i>Kulli no pitamangan, Apo nokulli ong it momitamong.</i> (<i>Momuhau ddot pirit</i>) (Informant 6: Addek bin Riupa)</p>	<p>The ones who are taken care of have gone home but the caretaker remains there.  Answer and explanations: Guarding the paddy field (scarecrow). When the sparrows have flown away from the paddy field, the scarecrow remains.</p>
<p>2. <i>Songara gara managid, pakada sogodon. Sumandak oh rumuba tombolog mogidu.</i> (<i>Momuhau do parai</i>) (Informant 11: Yusang binti Kakoh)</p>	<p>The killers making lots of noise but the victims are quite. When meeting the <i>sumandak</i> (young girl) the killers run away.  Answer and explanations: Scarecrow guarding the paddy field. The killers referred to the sparrows which make a lot of noise while the paddy plants remain quite. <i>Sumandak</i> (young girl) is a metaphor for scarecrow.</p>
<p>3. <i>Mongigol ikaiyangik mimpit ngaik mondilib.</i> (<i>Tompurolosi</i>) (Evans 1954)</p>	<p>Dancing and bending at the waist puts to one side all that blows away. Answer and explanations: A hawk-shaped scarecrow made from palm-leaf – Such a scarecrow, made from coconut or sago-palm leaves, hangs from a fairly long string attached to a stick, thrust into the ground. They dance in the wind with bending movements like women dancers and frighten away the birds. The things that “blow (fly) away to one side” are the birds (Evans 1954).</p>

Several *sundait* have “harvesting paddy” as their answer: *Sangadau managad, amu innig ot llopok* (Cutting trees throughout the day without the cutting sound). According to Mongulintip Momgimbal (Informant), cutting paddy is different from cutting trees which produces a loud noise. After the harvesting job has been done, the paddy has to be stored. In relation to this, the equipment used to store un-husked paddy and rice feature in many *sundait*. Listed in Table 3 are examples of *sundait* related to storing paddy.

TABLE 3: Paddy Storing Related *Sundait*

KADAZANDUSUN <i>SUNDAIT</i>	TRANSLATION
1. <i>Sumandak inggoiiton nopuhabaian mantad.</i> ( <i>Tangkob</i> )  (Evans 1954)	A young girl of the jungle already engaged. Answer: (Bin made of tree-bark for storing un-husked rice.)
2. <i>Sadak-sadak bakalang, sangadau monginsisik.</i> ( <i>Tukob</i> )  (Evans 1954)	Talang fish, all day scaling them. Answer: (Bin made of tree-bark for storing un-husked rice.)
3. <i>Matai solugu setalun, muli sekulit selamin.</i> ( <i>Lingkut</i> )  (Informant 2: Kanak binti Intang)	A tree died in the jungle, its skin returned home. Answer: ( <i>Lingkut</i> – bin made from tree-bark)

*Sundait* No. 1 in Table 3 is associated with the traditional Kadazandusun practice, whereby a useful tree in the wild is said to belong to the person who first notifies others of its value. The notification is done in specific ways: for example, a man walking in the jungle may encounter a *malapih* tree which has bark suitable for making cylindrical store-bins for rice without husks. He will then tie a ring of rattan cane around the tree as a notification that it is “engaged” to him (Evans 1954). *Sundait* No. 2 in Table 3 uses the Talang fish as a metaphor for the *malapih* tree, and the bark to make the bins is scaled from the tree. Finally, *Sundait* No. 3 in Table 3 is a straight forward reference to *lingkut* – a Kadazandusun traditional rice store-bin made from tree-bark.

After being harvested, other works need to be carried out before paddy is pounded in the traditional way. The Kadazandusun peasants either sun them, or use a special method to dry the paddy as revealed in this Tobilung Dusun *sundait*: *Gumara songkokubangan salagon di lumpion* (The whole valley was noisy stirred by *lumpion* (a tool used to stir paddy in a big frying pan) [Informant 13: Abar Gumpai]. The answer to this *sundait* is *gumooi* (People frying paddy on the big frying pan without oil for the purpose of drying them). The husked dry paddy has to be pounded before it can be cooked. For this activity, Bunou Masipman (Informant 14) has a *sundait*: *Llinggallinggahon ddallid, timubburullai pallang* (A piece of stick keeps on knocking and a white substance appears later). This *sundait* refers to the act of pounding paddy, when a rice pounder hits the unhusked paddy, its husk comes off, revealing the white rice. After all the husks have been removed from the paddy due to the pounding, it is time to separate the husks and the white rice. Not surprisingly, *sundait* have also been created to describe this process:

- (i) *Mara-gara mingana, solovoton do limo, id tanga kaganaan* [Noises are on flat land, meeting five *solovoton* (symbolizes five fingers holding the tray while winnowing paddy) at the middle of *kaganaan* (the space which separate the husks and the white rice)]. This *sundait* describes the act of winnowing paddy where the tray will be moved from left to right and vice versa until all the husks and the white rice have been separated (Anjulipah, Informant 9).
- (ii) *Iri kesimbor au anuan; iri au kesimbor anuan nogi*. (Those that are jumping around will not be taken; those that are not jumping around will be taken). Those jumping around are the paddy husks, while those not jumping are the white rice grains which are heavier than the husks (Informant 2: Kanak binti Intang).

After the process of separating the paddy and its husks, the white rice is ready to be cooked. Several *sundait* refer to the cooking of the rice. Traditionally, the rice was boiled in a pot over a fire. Hence the *sundait*: *Mara-gara i-ondu singkulon do maragang*. (The hawk cries aloud when thrust by the red). The answer is *tapoi om rinakan* (fire and a boiling pot of rice). In this *sundait*, the hawk is the pot which is thrust at by the red tongues of flame. The pot, as it boils, bubbles and shrieks (Evans, 1954). For the *sundait* creator, the cooked rice resembles “*Giring-giring pantai rahat kaasakan*.” (Little bells at the edge of the seashore with the tide ebbed), to which the answer is *akanon* (cooked rice). Evans (1951) explains, that when cooking rice, the water is boiled away until the grains are dry.

The close connection between paddy, paddy spirits and *sundait* does not end here. From the rice, the Kadazandusun brew various beverages such as *padi tapai* (rice wine), *lihing* or *hiing* (rice wine sediment) and *talak* or *montoku* (distilled rice wine). Rice wine is also one of the main offerings to *bambarayon* during the thanksgiving ceremony to the paddy spirits. Other than rice, the main ingredients needed to brew rice wine are yeast balls, which have their own *sundait*: *Tontoluk ponsu, sinuluh, mongologiau tinuk* (Eggs of a turtle, pierced with a cord that are warbling now). Yeast balls are white and more or less the size of turtles’ eggs. They are pierced with a strip of rattan and hung up by it to dry (Evans 1954). Table 4 describes two *sundait* related to rice wine and the effect of drinking it:

TABLE 4: Rice Wine Related *Sundait*

KADAZANDUSUN <i>SUNDAIT</i>	TRANSLATION
1. <i>Sompidding ulan-ulan, Pingansak ddo siou.</i>  ( <i>Tapai</i> )  (Informant 6: Addek bin Riupa)	A piece of the “moon” gives rise to courage.  Answer and explanations: <i>Tapai</i> – Rice wine. A person may become courageous after drinking rice wine.
2. <i>Kara monuvang bbotung, kara avanit.</i>  ( <i>Kinomol miinum</i> )  (Informant 15: Mongulintip Momgimbal)	A Monkey fills up the lake and gets poisoned.  Answer and explanations: A person drinking rice wine and who gets drunk.

The solving of *sundait* is a harvest time amusement for the Kadazandusun folks. While gathering paddy into their *wakid* (backpacks), they will engage in posing and solving *sundait*. The practice helps them to make an otherwise monotonous job somewhat pleasant. Wrong answers to riddles produce ripples of laughter and the weary hours of labour pass pleasantly. Kaivola-Bregenhøj (2001) and other riddle researchers considered that leisure time to be the most popular occasion for riddling. For the Kadazandusun however, riddling is a way of killing time during the day while labouring under the hot sun. *Sundait* are also posed at *tapai* (rice wine) drinking sessions when groups of men and women gather together in one house after completing a hard day’s work. The offering of *tapai* (rice wine) by the paddy planter is considered a reward for those who helped him in the paddy field. This is done in lieu of wages as there is no payment in money for community cooperation in the work of the fields (Fernando 1978). Concerning the relationship between rice wine and *sundait*, Evans (1954) said, “Their effect, when the drink has been made, is to make everybody sing, “as now” riddles being asked – when the people are drinking and rejoicing at harvest-time”.

All the *sundait* referred to in the above discussions are concerned with the four principle agricultural operations: (1) soil preparation; (2) planting; (3) care, and (4) harvest (Honigmann 1959). Rice itself is clearly the main attraction to the Kadazandusun riddle creators, based on the 16 documented *sundait* with “paddy” as their answer. Second in terms of popularity are the *sundait* with answers related to matters such as preparation for planting, dry (hill) and wet paddy planting, the paddy field, paddy planting activities, bearing

of paddy grains, guarding the paddy field, harvesting, paddy storing, the bin for storing paddy, paddy pounding, rice cooking and finally the rice wine used in conjunction with praying to the paddy spirits and rejoicing at harvest-time.

In comparison, although rice is a staple food for other Southeast Asian countries, like the Philippines and Indonesia, it does not feature in their riddles any more than other crops. Rice is not a common riddle subject among pagan Filipinos, and when several hundred Indonesian riddles were examined, rice was the subject of only a few (Hart 1964). Although a colleague of Hart (1964) wrote to him that his “impression” is that rice is a frequent subject in Thai riddles, unfortunately, he did not furnish any figure to support this assertion. Furthermore, Kaivola-Bregenhøj (2001) conceded that themes common and important in a culture may, on the other hand, be missing entirely from the answers to riddles. Although lime trees and oaks are common species in the Cheremis forests, they never appear as the answers to riddles. Some scholars believe the reason for this is that limes and oaks were used as sacrificial trees in sacred groves; using them as answers to riddles would, therefore, have been taboo (Kaivola-Bregenhøj 2001). But this does not apply to the Kadazandusun. Hart (1964) goes on to say, rice may be a common riddle subject in one Southeast Asian country where its animistic nature is accepted by most of the people. This explains why so many paddy related *sundait* have been amassed by the Kadazandusun people of Sabah over the last hundred years.

## CONCLUSION

As rice is the staple food of the Kadazandusun their belief in paddy spirits is clearly of great significance. They consider that the role of these spirits is to protect their paddy and to ensure a healthy harvest. In return for this protection the spirits need to be appeased, while giving offence is to be avoided at all costs. As well as carrying out rituals, the Kadazandusun practice riddling at harvest-time as an additional form of appeasement. Consequently, a plethora of *sundait* has been created over the centuries for this purpose. Many of the *sundait* subjects relate to paddy practices and paraphernalia (specifically wet and dry paddy planting, preparing the site for paddy planting, the act of planting paddy, bearing of paddy grains, guarding the paddy field, harvesting paddy, equipment used to harvest paddy, equipment used for storing un-husked paddy and rice, the process of drying the harvested paddy, pounding and winnowing paddy, cooking rice, the rice wine and most interestingly - the paddy spirit itself). The wealth of *sundait* subjects related to paddy and paddy farming indicates the importance of rice to the Kadazandusun; and if nothing else, this study has highlighted that the

close relationship between the belief in paddy spirits, riddling in harvest-time and those *sundait* with paddy as its answers is indeed a prominent characteristic of traditional Kadazandusun cultural practice.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The term Kadazandusun - officially coined in the 1990s - is a combination of the words Kadazan and Dusun, devised with the aim of uniting all the sub-ethnic groups encompassed by these two major ethnic groups. The official Kadazandusun language was first taught in schools in 1997 (Reid 1997). According to the constitution of the Kadazandusun Cultural Association of Sabah (KDCA), Kadazandusun is a generic term for forty indigenous communities of Sabah (Topin 1996). All the informants involved in this research i.e. Bundu, Gana, Liwan, Lotud, Rungus, Tobilung etc. are listed as Kadazandusun sub-ethnic groups in the above mentioned source.
- <sup>2</sup> Regarding agriculture practice, in the interior district of Tambunan practically every family in the seventy sectors under review has its own paddy field and is thus self-supporting in the commodity. In 1976, four thousand three hundred acres of wet paddy and one thousand seven hundred and fifty acres of hill paddy were cultivated in Tambunan district. The people in Keningau district cultivated five thousand forty three acres of wet paddy and one thousand five hundred and seventeen acres of hill paddy in the same year (Fernando 1978).
- <sup>3</sup> A variety of synonyms are used for the term "paddy spirit (s)" such as paddy-spirit (s) or rice spirit (s) [rice-spirit(s)] or rice soul (s) [rice-soul (s)].
- <sup>4</sup> The name of Kinoingan's spouse varies according to the different Kadazandusun subgroups. Typically, she is referred to as Suminundu, Umunsumundu and Yumun (Evans 1922; Williams 1965; Leong, 1968).
- <sup>5</sup> The only daughter of Kinoingan (Kadazandusun Chief God) is now commonly known as Huminudon. She volunteered to sacrifice herself in order to save the human race from famine. According to legend, Ponompuan's flesh became rice, and most sacred of all, her spirit dwelled in the paddy, and became the Seven-in-One Bambarayon, the rice spirit. Since then, Penompuan has been referred to as Huminudon (The Transformed Sacrifice) in the context of Kinoingan's salvation of the Kadazandusun people (Topin, 2003).
- <sup>6</sup> Piromitan is a layer in the sky. Luma'ag, Dioato, Lugu, and Onkusigal spirits reside on Piromitan. All these spirits help human beings (Yutaka Shimomoto <http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/publications/afs/pdf/a339>).

- <sup>7</sup> Sambavon is stronger than any other spirit on Piromitan. Minamangun is the creator and the most powerful deity. Kinoringan is the second most powerful deity (Yutaka Shimomoto <http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/publications/afs/pdf/a339>).
- <sup>8</sup> The transcription of this *sundait* and the rest of the *sundait* in this paper are based on the oral reports from the informants representing the different Kadazandusun subgroups. *Sundait* spellings are in accordance with the informants' spoken language. In other words, all the transcriptions (in terms of spelling) in this paper are not the same among the different Kadazandusun subgroups; neither are they representative of the official Kadazandusun language.
- <sup>9</sup> Ethnically, Sama or Bajau or Sama-Bajau are Malays and they exhibit many Malay cultural traits. They are referred to by many names: Orang Seleter in Johor and the waters off Singapore, Orang Suku Laut in Riau and Sama-Bajau in the southern Philippines, Sabah and Sulawesi (Harrisson 1975). 'Sama' in Malay means 'kita' or 'we'. It is believed to have originated from within the group itself, a belief supported by the fact that it is still commonly used as a term of in-group reference. This practice is almost universal in Sabah, the southern Philippines and in southern Indonesia (Gusni Saat 2003).

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was conducted under the Universiti Malaysia Sabah Seed Money Grant (2009-2010). The author would like to thank Mr. John Mark Storey (proof-reader) and the anonymous reviewer from *MALIM* who provided many constructive comments prior to publication.

#### REFERENCES

- Appel, Geroge N. 1986. Social Anthropological Research among the Rungus Dusun (A talk for the Sabah Society): 1-36. August 22.
- Dundes, Alan. 1980. *Interpreting Folklore*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Evans, Ivor H.N. 1922. *Among Primitive People in Borneo*. London: Seely Service & Co. Ltd.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1951. Dusun Riddles. *The Sarawak Museum Journal V*: 553-561.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1953. Religion of the Tempasuk Dusuns. London: Cambridge University Press.

- . 1954. More Dusun Riddles. *The Sarawak Museum Journal*. Vol. VI: 21-35.
- Fernando, Carl. 1978. *The Way of Life of the Kadazan (Dusun) in the Interior of Sabah (Borneo)* (thesis). South India: Madurai University.
- Gidah, Mary Ellen. 2001. *Archetypes in the Cosmogonic Myths of the Australian Aboriginal People and the Kadazandusun of Sabah*. Kota Kinabalu: Penerbit Universiti Malaysia Sabah.
- Gusni Saat. 2003. The Identity and Social Mobility of Sama-Bajau. *Sari (21) (International Journal of the Malay Studies)*: 3-11. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Harrison, Tom. 1975. The Bajau: Their Origin and the Wide Importance. *Sabah Society Journal*, Vol. 6: 38-41.
- Hart, Donn V. 1964. *Riddles in Filipino Folklore: An Anthropological Analysis*. New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Honigmann, John J. 1959. *The World of Man*. New York: Harper and Brothers.
- Kaivola-Bregenhøj, Annikki. 2001. *Riddles: Perspective on the Use, Function and Change in a Folklore Genre*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society.
- Leong, Frederick Charles. 1968. How The World Was Made? In Marsh, Ignatia Olim (ed.). *Sabah: Legends and Customs*. Keningau, Sabah: St. Francis Xavier's Secondary School.
- Lokman Abdul Samad. 2004. *Sundait* Pengucapan Istimewa Masyarakat Kadazandusun. (*Sundait* as a Special Speech of the Kadazandusun). In Mohd Sarim Hj. Mustajab (ed.). *Warisan Budaya Sabah Etnisti dan Masyarakat*: 41-52. Kota Kinabalu: Penerbit Universiti Malaysia Sabah.
- Palikat, Nicholas. 1988. The Legend of Hay and Rice. In Ignatia Olim Marsh (ed.). *Tales and Traditions from Sabah*: 67-68. Kota Kinabalu: The Sabah Society.
- Phelan, Peter. 2005. *Comparison: Sabah Local Customs and the Bible*. Kota Kinabalu: Brother Peter Phelan.
- Pugh-Kitingan, Jacqueline and Baptist, Judeth John. 2009. Music for Cleansing the Universe – Drumming and Gong Ensemble Music in the Mamahui Pogun Ceremonies of the Lotud Dusun of Tuaran, Sabah, Malaysia. *Borneo Research Bulletin*: 249-276. U.S.A.: Borneo Research Council, Inc.
- Reid, Anthony. 1997. Endangered Identity: Kadazan or Dusun in Sabah. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* Vol. 28, Mac: 120-136. National University of Singapore.
- Sabah Museum. 1993. *Rice Power and Its Magic: A Brief Introduction to the Culture of Rice in Sabah*. Kota Kinabalu: Department of Sabah Museum.
- Topin, Benedict. 1996. *Sharing on Kadazandusun Culture*. Penampang: Sabah State Library, Penampang Branch.

- \_\_\_\_\_. 2003. The Significance of Unduk Ngadau in Kaamatan Festival. *Buku Cendera Hati Pesta Kaamatan 2003*: 31 - 33. Federal Territory of Labuan, Malaysia.
- Williams, Thomas Rhys. 1963. The Form and Function of Tambunan Dusun Riddles. *Journal of American Folklore*: 95-110.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1965. *The Dusun: A North Borneo Society*. London: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Yutaka Shimomoto. Myths and Ritual for Rice Spirits Bambarazon among the Rungus. In <http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/publications/afs/pdf/a339>. Accessed on 10 August 2010.

### INFORMANTS

Notes: The sequence of informants listed below is based on the order in which they appeared in this article. The words “bin” and “binti” in the middle of the name indicate “male” and “female” respectively. With reference to the venue, the Malay word “Kampung” means village.

---

<p>1. Informant: Kubin bin Bumbon Age: 73 Ethnicity: Gana Dusun Venue: Kampung Apin-Apin, Keningau. Profession: Farmer Date of interview: 3 June 2010</p>	<p>2. Informant: Kanak binti Intang Age: 68 Ethnicity: Liwan Dusun Venue: Kampung Pangas, Apin-Apin, Keningau. Profession: Farmer Date of interview: 2 June 2010</p>
<p>3. Informant: Rundabang binti Linsapu Age: 74 Ethnicity: Rungus Venue: Kampung Matunggung, Kudat. Profession: Farmer Date of interview: 26 Sept. 2009</p>	<p>4. Name: Gumpai bin Beringgit Age: 60 Ethnicity: Tobilung Venue: Kampung Kukut-Timbang Menggaris, Kota Belud Profession: Village head Date of Interview: 19 Mei 2010</p>
<p>5. Informant: Simah binti Gurimit Age: 65 Ethnicity: Tombilung Venue: Kampung Timbang, Kota Belud. Profession: House wife Date of interview: 19 May 2010</p>	<p>6. Informant: Addek bin Riupa Age: 84 Ethnicity: Rungus Venue: Kampung Matunggung, Kudat. Profession: Farmer Date of interview: 26 Sept. 2009</p>

---

- 
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>7. Informant: Rosia binti Maisin<br/>Age: 42<br/>Ethnicity: Liwan<br/>Venue: Kampung Warisan, Inanam.<br/>Profession: Farmer<br/>Date of Interview: 18 Oct. 2008</p> | <p>8. Informant: Sakuian binti Keling<br/>Age: 59<br/>Ethnicity: Bundu<br/>Venue: Kampung Tombong, Kiulu.<br/>Profession: Farmer<br/>Date of Interview: 20 Dec. 2009</p> |
|---|--|
- 
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>9. Informant: Anjulipah binti Kindog<br/>Age: 59<br/>Ethnicity: Gana<br/>Venue: Kampung Apin-Apin,<br/>Keningau.<br/>Profession: Farmer<br/>Date of interview: 2 June 2010</p> | <p>10. Informant: Ganing bin Sagunting<br/>Age: 70<br/>Ethnicity: Gana<br/>Venue: Kampung Apin-Apin,<br/>Keningau.<br/>Profession: Farmer<br/>Date of interview: 2 June 2010</p> |
|---|--|
- 
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>11. Informant: Yusang binti Kakoh<br/>Age: 55<br/>Ethnicity: Dusun Gana<br/>Venue: Kampung Ranggom, Apin-<br/>Apin, Keningau.<br/>Profession: Farmer<br/>Date of interview: 3 June 2010</p> | <p>12. Informant: Rubaya binti Salaodin<br/>Age: 70<br/>Ethnicity: Tobilung<br/>Venue: Kampung Timbang, Kota<br/>Belud.<br/>Profession: House wife<br/>Date of interview: 19 May 2010</p> |
|--|---|
- 
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>13. Informant: Abar bin Gumpai<br/>Age: 47<br/>Ethnicity: Tobilung<br/>Venue: Kota Belud<br/>Profession: Native Chief, Kota<br/>Belud.<br/>Date of interview: 17 May 2010</p> | <p>14. Informant: Bonuo binti Masipman<br/>Age: 57<br/>Ethnicity: Rungus<br/>Venue: Kampung Matunggung, Kudat.<br/>Profession: Farmer<br/>Date of interview: 24 September 2009</p> |
|--|--|
- 
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>15. Informant: Mongulintip binti<br/>Mongimbal<br/>Age: 60<br/>Ethnicity: Rungus<br/>Venue: Kampung Guomon,<br/>Matunggung, Kudat.<br/>Profession: Farmer<br/>Date of interview: 24 Sept. 2009</p> | <p>16. Informant: Manandas Mogiom<br/>Age: 56<br/>Ethnicity: Rungus<br/>Venue: Kampung Guomon,<br/>Matunggung, Kudat.<br/>Profession: Farmer<br/>Date of interview: 24 Sept. 2009</p> |
|---|---|
-



## Aspek Estetika Labu Acu (Aesthetical Aspects of Labu Acu)

HAMDZUN HARON  
Pusat Pengajian Umum, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia  
hh@ukm.my

NARIMAH ABD. MUTALIB  
Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Bukit Changgang  
neryzone@yahoo.com

### ABSTRAK

Labu Sayong kini dihasilkan dengan menggunakan acuan dan dipanggil Labu Acu. Penginovasian ini dapat menghasilkan produk yang lebih komersil lagi produktif berbanding cara lama. Ia juga merupakan jalan penyelesaian bagi memelihara industri ini daripada pupus malah produk yang dihasilkan relevan dengan kehendak masyarakat masa kini dari aspek estetikanya. Namun persoalannya, adakah Labu Acu dapat mengekalkan kehalusan Labu Sayong tradisional? Melalui pendekatan analisis kualitatif, penulis mendapati perubahan cara penghasilannya secara tidak langsung ada memberi kesan terhadap nilai estetik Labu Acu itu sendiri. Berdasarkan itu maka penulisan ini akan melihat sejauh manakah estetika labu acu dapat dilihat Perbincangan dimulai dengan pendefinisian estetika dan kehalusan. Seterusnya menjurus kepada perbincangan utama iaitu kehalusan pada reka bentuk dan reka corak Labu Acu. Secara kesimpulannya, transformasi teknologi ini bukan sahaja dapat menghasilkan Labu Sayong yang produktif malah dapat mewujudkan dapat perubahan dari aspek reka bentuk dan reka corak Labu Sayong tradisional.. Menariknya warisannya masih dapat dikekalkan sehingga kini.

Kata Kunci: Labu Sayong - Labu Acu - Estetika

### ABSTRACT

Labu Sayong making has now adopted the use of molds, or also known as Labu Acu. This new innovation is able to manufacture commercial products and is more productive than the old ways. This innovation is also regarded as