

Sumaranun dance: Movement changes from medical ritual to dance movement

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to discover the history of *Sumaranun* dance creation and conduct research on the implicit meaning of each *Sumaranun* dance movement in the community of Iranun. This minority ethnic group lives on the beach coast, particularly in the Kota Belud district. The *Sumaranun* dance began as a medical ritual involving both the supernatural and reality. When this medical ritual was rarely practised, it was modified to become a dance, the *Sumaranun* dance. This research focuses on the changes in the *Sumaranun* dance, from a medical ritual to a dance. This research is field research that uses the method of direct observation and interviews to gain detailed information that has been done in the community of Iranun that lives at Rampayan Laut village, Nanamun village, and Kota Bongan village. This research finds that medical ritual and *Sumaranun* dance are closely related until they become entertainment performance.

Keywords: Iranun, change, movement, medical ritual, *Sumaranun* dance.

Tarian Sumaranun: Perubahan gerakan dari ritual pengobatan menjadi gerakan tari

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap sejarah penciptaan tari *Sumaranun* dan mengkaji makna tersirat yang terkandung dalam setiap gerakan tari *Sumaranun* pada masyarakat Iran yang merupakan etnis minoritas yang tinggal di pesisir, khususnya di wilayah Kabupaten Kota Belud. Tarian *Sumaranun* yang awalnya merupakan ritual pengobatan yang melibatkan alam gaib dan dunia nyata. Akibat ritual pengobatan ini tidak lagi dilakukan, maka ritual pengobatan ini diubah menjadi sebuah tarian yaitu tari *Sumaranun*. Penelitian ini melihat perubahan yang terjadi pada tari *Sumaranun* dari ritual medis menjadi sebuah tarian. Penelitian ini merupakan studi lapangan yang menggunakan metode observasi langsung dan wawancara untuk memperoleh informasi rinci yang telah dilakukan antara masyarakat Iran yang tinggal di desa Rampayan Laut, desa Nanamun dan desa Kota Bongan. Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa ritual pengobatan dan tari *Sumaranun* memiliki hubungan yang erat sehingga menjadi sebuah pertunjukan hiburan.

Kata kunci: Iranun, perubahan, gerak tari, ritual pengobatan, tarian *Sumaranun*

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INTRODUCTION

According to the notes of a world-renowned dance historian, Sachs (1937), most dance historians worldwide are unable to pinpoint the dance's specific origin date. Rust (1969) remarked that the dance might be traced back to human origins when asked about its origins. Similarly, Cass (1993) claimed that folk dance has existed since the prehistoric period, and Adshad-Landsale and Layson (1994) argued that the general history of specific dances was closely linked to the extended time frame always began with speculations about the dance function in the prehistoric period. This issue frequently emerges in beliefs about the significance of dancing's narrative function in ancient societies. All the previous studies had raised the case that a researcher interested in the origins of traditional dances would encounter.

Based on the ancient Malay world, the history of dances started when they were used as communication tools with the souls of ancestors who were believed to be natural phenomena. This dance ritual became the basis for rationalising natural phenomena that could not be anticipated at that moment. To comprehend the evolution of Malay dances, a historical perspective in Southeast Asian regions was required. The early residents of these regions created complete rituals that contained movements. Unfortunately, the forms of the rituals were not able to be identified. Furthermore, the dance ritual was one of the traditional medical alternatives, and it was a medical system practised by village societies (Nornis, 2018: 102).

According to Nasuruddin (1994), traditional Malay dances evolved from brief ritual gestures. After then, they evolved into folk dances before becoming more elaborate and refined court dances. The dances performed by the Malay community served two purposes: secular and spiritual. The secular purpose was to teach and relate fairy tales, stories, customs, and amusement in a material way. Meanwhile, the spiritual side served as a vehicle for communicating with, inviting, and worshipping animism's spirit.

Wright (1980) regarded Main Peteri as a healing dance that formed a complex art. Main Peteri was a healing method used by the elderly that existed for centuries before the advent of Islam. This ritual was popular in Kelantan. Main Peteri had two roles: as a traditional game in the form of entertainment and for medical purposes to heal sicknesses that could not be detected or cured through modern medicine.

Through the writing of Rahman (2013), researchers did a study on a ritual dance, Kuda Kepang Mabuk (KKM), to observe the trance phenomenon as a manifestation of the dancers' mystical journey symbolic during the performance. Researchers found out that the trance state in this dance had a strong relationship with metaphysics that had gone through multiple initiation levels. This KKM dance ritual is still significant in the context of the Jawa community at present because of their belief that the initiation process was mixed with various religious influences. Ritual performance is a ceremony formed due to the actions or desires of those who seek to find relationships with the supernatural world. This matter means that the function of ritual performance is to unite the desires of society with beliefs through various procedures and actions that are being done in a symbolic way. These procedures are in specific forms such as worshipping, sacrificing, praying, eating together, dancing, marching, the art of drama, fasting, intoxication, and meditation. This ritual performance was considered a mystical process because of its close relationship with religious matters.

The earliest writings concerning traditional dances in the state of Sabah were written by Abbas and Shaong (1984). They did an earlier study on some traditional dances in Sabah by various ethnic groups. In those pieces, both writers focused on the backgrounds, costumes, and musical instruments used in every dance. In Abbas and Shaong's writing, forty traditional dance types of Sabah ethnics were assembled. The *Si Tubau* dance, a traditional Iranian dance, was also mentioned in the reports. Not only that, but there was also little information regarding the origin and meanings of the Iranun ethnic group.

In an effort of cooperation between Lembaga Kebudayaan Negeri Sabah (LKNS) and Persatuan Bahasa dan Kebudayaan Iranun (BKI), a book called "Inventori Budaya Etnik Negeri Sabah: Ethnic Iranun" was published around the year of 2017. This book was edited by Sading and Roslan. The book recorded all the information regarding the traditions, cultures, rituals, traditional dances, musical instruments, and foods of the Iranun ethnic group. Besides that, the writing also touched on various traditional dance types in the Iranun community. For instance, the *Sumaranun* dance, *Dayang Sulud Sulampit* dance, *Mang-Mang Bumbungan* dance, *Si Tubau* dance, and *Sumagayan* dance. The stories behind all these dances were included in each of the dances. This research studied and documented the origin and changes in the *Sumaranun* dance, which used to be a medical ritual in the Iranun community found in the region of Kota Belud, Sabah.

METHOD

The writer used the qualitative method to acquire data for this research. The writer went to the field location to meet with informants and the *Sumaranun* dance creator to make observations

regarding the research material. Furthermore, the writer conducted a face-to-face interview with the informant to acquire the related data for the research. All the information obtained from the informant and the observations made were recorded as a reference for the writer to analyse his research findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Prehistoric Creation of Sumaranun Dance

Alang (2004) was well-versed in the diverse forms of cultural patterns and traditions such as traditional clothes, singing, poems, and traditional dances. He stated that there were several Iranun community traditional dances: *Sumagayan* dance, *Tinubau* dance, *Singkil* dance, and *Sumaranun* dance. In any cultural performance organised by the government or other organisations, the Iranuns always perform their cultural performances.

The inventory book of Iranun ethnicity edited by Sading and Roslan (2017) stated that the *Sumaranun* dance originated from the *Ajung* dance, a dance performed during a traditional medical ritual. However, in today's time, the dance has been cultivated into a welcome dance. The number of dancers was six to eight people, dancing in pairs. The dancers who perform this will move by circling something called "Ajung." They put on the traditional costume of the Iranun ethnic group known as *Balburu* or *Maraburu*.

According to Samad (60), the *Sumaranun* dance was created around the year 1970, and it started to be performed around the year 1971. Initially, four dancers performed this dance, consisting of two men and two women. Then she created this dance with a friend, Aspiah Bakar. They worked together to form movements, and new music adapted from the medical ritual of *Parinang*.

Rahmawati (60) stated that the origin of the *Sumaranun* dance was from the medical ritual of *Parinang*. In former times, based on the beliefs of the Iranun community, *Parinang* was known as a medical method involving a spirit entering the body. The summoned spirit will possess the shaman who led the ritual. Given that the ritual had not been practised for a long time, it was then used as a foundation to create the *Sumaranun* dance.

This idea arose through the teachings of her late father in the arts and cultures of Iranun, such as playing musical instruments and Iranun *berlugu*. During the creation of this dance, the informant said that they would take turns creating the dance movements. The reason was that they also had to produce a song melody and music suitable to accompany this dance.

In the early stages of the creation of this dance, it was named *Parinang*. The rationale behind its name is that it was adapted from the medical ritual of *Parinang*. Years later, after the name had been used, it became a talking point among the people of Iranun, saying that the name *Parinang* was not fit to be used because it referred to a medical ritual. According to the informant, the name was not pleasing to the ear because when spoken, it would be referred to as the ritual, but on the stage, it was a dance. Therefore, it was not appropriate. Since then, the name *Parinang* has been changed to *Ajung*.

Ajung is a house replica made of cloth or paper. It would be decorated with colourful clothes that matched the Iranun community's colours, and flags would be placed at each corner of the *Ajung*. The dance's name was changed to *Ajung* because *Ajung* was used in this dance as props. To start this dance, *Ajung* would be taken out first and placed at the front part of the stage; then, the dance would be started. Back to the *Parinang* ritual before this, *Ajung* was admittedly used to wash away all the foods for the involved spirits. Given that name was not considered suitable and pleasing and did not depict that the dance was the Iranun ethnic dance, it was then changed once again to *Sumaranun*.

According to the linguistics of Iranun, the word *Sumaranun* means 'missed' or 'the one who misses'. This dance was named *Sumaranun* because there was a longing felt when listening to the music played when the dance was being performed. Not only that, but this dance could also mend the feeling of longing for one's village when it was being performed on stage (Masrin, 60).



Diagram 1. Sumaranun name changes chronology.

Forms of movements that changed from medical rituals to dance movements

Through the findings acquired by the writer from the informant, two movement sets have been modified into *Sumaranun* dance movement sets, and they have become the main symbols of the dance. According to the informant, the apparent changes in the movement sets done and adapted into a dance were in the legs and hands. When the ritual was being performed, the leg rhythm done by *Si Panai* was sliding along, and when the music beat became more dynamic, the leg movement sets would change to floating. *Si Panai* would lift their body as if jumping during the ritual.

The same goes for the hands part of *Si Panai*. In the initial stage of the ritual, the hands of *Si Panai* would be at the side of the body while going around the patients that were lying and doing the *bpangalai*. When the music and the beat became energetic, the *bebendir* and *agung* would also become energetic so that the hand movements would change into a bigger movement.

These movements, said by the informant, became a symbol of the uniqueness of *Sumaranun* dance. The movements were valid proof that the dance was adapted from a medical ritual in the Iranun community, *Parinang*.



Picture 1. The leg form of the Parinang ritual



Picture 2. The leg form of the Sumaranun dance

The pictures above depict the change of leg form from the *Parinang* medical ritual into a stage performance, *Sumaranun* dance. Rahmawati (informant) stated that her leg would stay in the same place for the leg dance sets when performing the dance. It could not be modified or changed because it symbolises the *Sumaranun* dance's uniqueness and authenticity.



Picture 3. The hand form during the ritual



Picture 4. The hand form in Sumaranun dance

When the ritual was being performed, according to the informant, the hands of *Si Panai* at that moment would do the *bpangalai*. In addition, *Si Panai* would always open their hands while going around the patients. Until a stage, *Si Panai* would take the *mayang pinang* and move it on the patients' faces, starting from the head down to the leg. At that moment, *Si Panai* would close their hands while holding the *mayang pinang*. The informant stressed that that was why the wrist form was open and not tak sudah handheld when performing the Sumaranun dance.

The wrist cycle form of Sumaranun dance

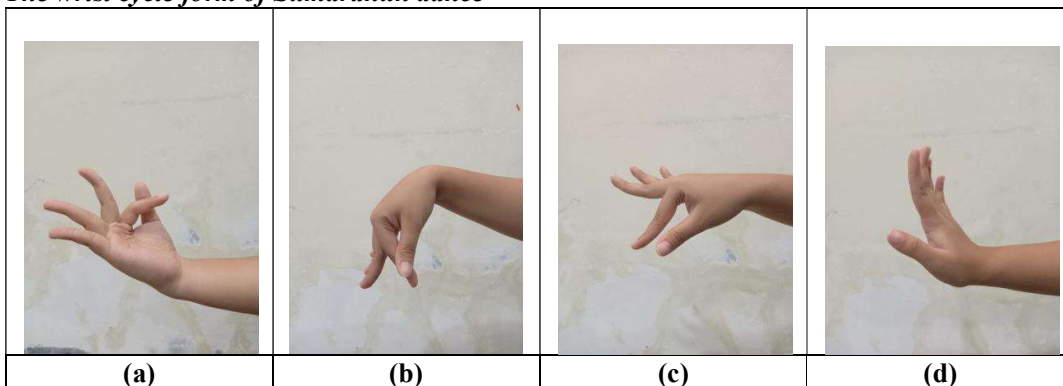


Diagram 2. The wrist cycle form of a female dancer in the open state

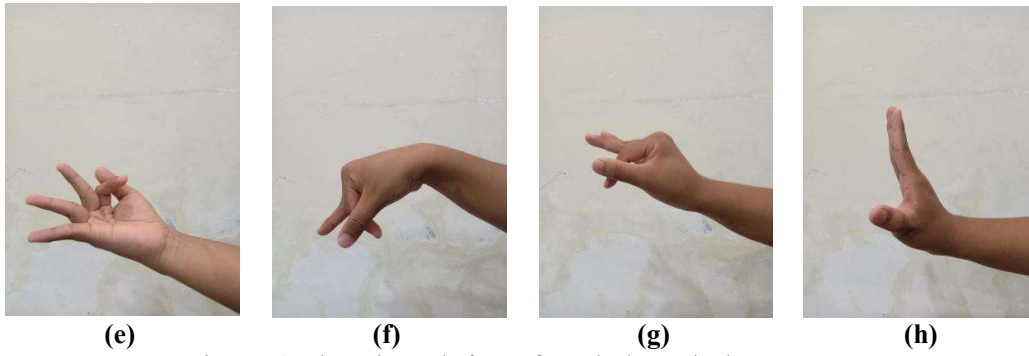


Diagram 3. The wrist cycle form of a male dancer in the open state

The above diagrams depict the chronological female and male wrist cycles when performing the *Sumaranun* dance. Each picture shown has its own count. There are two counts for each cycle to do the full wrist cycle. Starting from the picture (a), the counts start with 'o', then (b) 'ne'. Hence, two half-cycles (a) + (b) = "one". The same goes with picture (c), "t", then (d), "wo," becoming (c) + (d) = "two." This matter happens similarly in Diagram 2. This wrist cycle can be counted as two, four, or eight. The informant clearly stated the wrist movement set in the *Sumaranun* dance. This form of movement is known as the "*bpangalai* movements" and was performing the *Parinang* ritual.

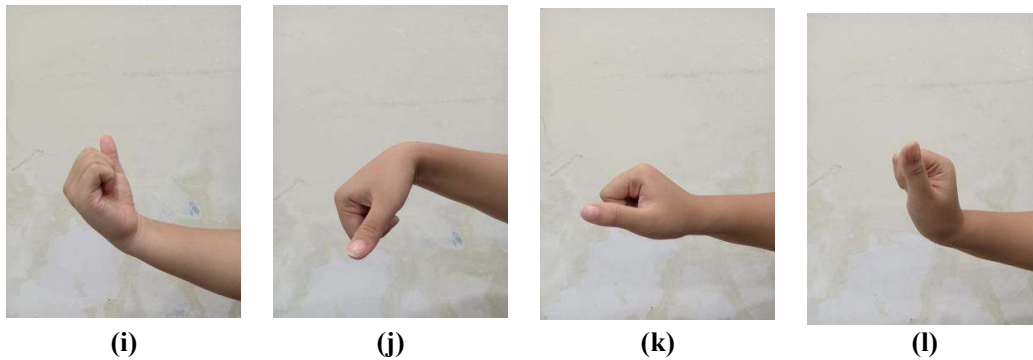


Diagram 4. The wrist cycle form of a female dancer in the *tak sudah* handheld state

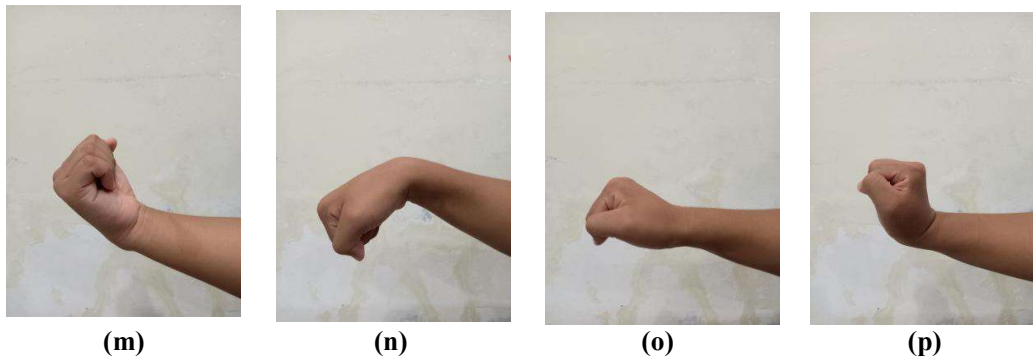


Diagram 5. The wrist cycle form of the male dancer in the *tak sudah* handheld state

Diagrams 4 and 5 depict the wrist cycle form of a male dancer in the *tak sudah* handheld state. These movements happen simultaneously as the movements shown in diagrams 2 and 3. The difference between the movements is in their forms; one is open, and the other is gripped. *Tak sudah* handheld means the grip is not too tight. According to Kadizah Alimun (40), she created and added the number of movements sets of the *Sumaranun* dance by making the *tak sudah* handheld in line

with the existing movements in the *Parinang* ritual, when *Si Palai* was healing the patients using the *mayang pinang*. Rationally, the movements made by gripping or holding the *mayang pinang* became an idea for the informant to add a new movement to the *Sumaranun* dance. Moreover, according to the writer's observation and understanding, the addition of this movement set could still be accepted because the movement sets created did not stray away from the dance's origin.

Movement sets or movements of Sumaranun dance

After carrying out the research and obtaining the data by interviewing the informant, the writer has found out that the *Sumaranun* dance has three types of movement sets. However, when the writer analysed all the information acquired, it had three movement sets when this dance was created. Still, it had four movement sets when it was upgraded and refined. According to the outcome information acquired from Rahmawati and Hjh Aspiyah (informants), there are three movement sets only in *Sumaranun* dance. They are *D'sayud*, *Matiburun*, and *Tindeg agu Paguntud*. Initially, the three moves were the only ones created as the dance movement sets of the *Sumaranun* dance. However, when the dance movement sets of *Sumaranun* dance were upgraded and refined following today's development, according to Kadizah Alimun (informant), the number of dance movement sets has increased to four movement sets with the addition of a movement set called *Limbai*.

Furthermore, the writer will analyse every movement set contained in the *Sumaranun* dance in the analysis context. Starting from the earliest movement set until the newly added movement sets. Through this analysis, the writer is hoping to help further clarify all the movement sets contained in this Iranun ethnic traditional dance.

Ragam D'sayud



Picture 5. *D'sayud* Movement

Picture 5 depicts male and female dancers doing the movement known as *D'sayud*. This movement is usually done in the early stages of the dance. Typically, the movement is done by both males and females.

The difference between the movements of males and females is, firstly, the left hand that is placed on the hip. The female's hand appears to be knotting by holding a cloth, while the male's hand is only placed on the hip. For the right hand, the swinging movement is called the *D'sayud* movement, meaning "swinging". The *D'sayud* movement depicts the second difference between the male and female movements. For the female *D'sayud*, this movement is done slightly differently; the level of hand swing is low only until the hip, while the male level of hand swing is high until the chest. The wrist cycle movement for both males and females is the same as in diagram 2. They begin

with the legs by moving the left leg to the front and the right leg pointing in the same direction as shown in Figure 1. Following that, the right leg will be moved to the back, and the left leg will point in the same direction as shown in Picture 1. This movement is usually done in a diagonal direction. When moving to the front, the feet step forward toward the left diagonal, and when moving to the back, the feet step back facing the right diagonal. This movement is done in the same place as the original position. The dancers' body postures in this movement will look manly to a male while the female is in a lower state. The tempo of this movement can be set to the counting of four or eight.

According to Rahmawati and Kadizah (informants), the movement of *D'sayud* was the first one to be adapted from the *Parinang* ritual. This movement was done by *Si Panai* when they were circling or going around the patients while doing the *bpangalai*. In the medical practice, *Si Panai* would spin the patients, accompanied by the rhythm of the music. Rahmawati adapted the movements to create *D'sayud*.

Pagaia Sa Mayang a Mamaan movement set



Picture 6. *Kinasadan* Movement



Picture 7. *Matiburun* Movement



Picture 8. *Lima Sa Kababan* dan *Lima Sa Puruan* Movement

All the movements in the above pictures are the movements contained in the movement set of *Sumaranun* dance. Initially, the above movements were known as the *Pagaia Sa Mayang a Mamaan* movement, meaning "carrying the mayang pinang".

Based on the above pictures, this movement has been divided into three different movement sets by the *Sumaranun* dance coach, Kadizah Alimun. Rationally, this movement set was divided to make it easier for the public to understand the pattern of the movement set and for many people who wanted to learn it. According to Kadizah (informant), despite the

movement having been divided into three different movement sets, it still has its own meaning and is adapted from the original meaning of the dance story. The main reason this dance was divided was to upgrade and refine the existing movement. Besides that, she also thought that this movement set would be easier to follow and learn when many people were interested in learning it.

After acquiring information from the informant, the writer tried to understand all of the data following the information given to the writer by the informant. The informant has explained that each divided movement set has its value and meaning.

Referring to the pictures above, picture 6 explains the *Kinasadan* movement, which means moving the hip sideways while walking. The stride rhythm with the stepping method is maintained, and at the end of the counting, a foot is pointed at a place. The stepping movement in this movement is usually done with the count of one, two, three, and four, similar to the counting when doing the opposite movement. This travel step is completed by walking sideways to the right and then to the left. According to the informant, this movement is usually done in pairs by the dancers. The composition of this movement is usually done by crossing.

In picture 7, the *Matiburun* movement means "circle" or "do a circle". Based on the informant's explanation, this movement came from a situation where *Si Panai* was healing the patients while doing the *bpangalai*. In the medical ritual *Parinang*, this situation happened when *Si Panai* was carrying the *mayang pinang* when circling the patients while doing the *bpangalai* movement. When it was modified to become a stage performance, the movement was refined according to the form of a stage performance. The counting for this movement set is similar to the *Kinasadan* movement; one, two, three, and four. After that, the opposite movement is made using the same four counts. The form of this movement alternates; some dancers sit in the counting of four, then stand up in the same counting.

Picture 8 depicts the hand movement. This movement is known as the *Lima Sa Kababaan* movement (hand is below) and *Lima Sa Puruan* (hand is on top). The creation aspect of this movement was created by adapting the *Si Panai* movement by moving the *mayang pinang* on the bodies of the patients after circling them while doing the *bpangalai*. Therefore, this movement created one hand below and the other hand on top. The below hand movement depicts a precise meaning to the real sense of why this dance was created, while the hand on top was added as an added value to the movement form created so that it could portray the aesthetics of the movement. The tempo of this movement is set similar to the other movements, counting to four. Next, the opposite movement is also counted in the counting of four.

However, the perspective of Rahmawati, the creator of this dance, is different. According to her, the original movement of this dance is called "*Pagaid Sa Mayang a Mamaan*," meaning "carrying the *mayang pinang*." This movement is done by circling the patients with the same leg movement rhythm as the *Kinasadan* movement, counting to four. The foot movement technique is done by stepping while slightly moving sideways to the right and left. The foot movement happens simultaneously with the hand movement, the *Lima Sa Kababaan* and *Lima Sa Puruan* movements. When the hand movement is done, the wrist is turned two times on the count of four. This means a wrist cycle is equivalent to two counts, similar to the opposite movement of the left hand. Usually, this movement is done in the form of *Matiburun*, a circle. If referring to the medical ritual before, *Si Panai* is circling the patients while doing the *bpangalai*. At this moment in the early stage, *Si Panai* was not yet holding and carrying the *mayang pinang*. When *Si Panai* had reached the climax stage of the ritual and became more dynamic, then *Si Panai* would take the *mayang pinang* that became a decoration on the *sungkuban* to be used to heal the patients. Through this situation, this movement has been adapted into a stage movement that could please the audience.

Tindeg and *Paguntud* movement set



Picture 9. *Tindeg* and *Paguntud* Movement

The above picture depicts the movement forms known as *Tindeg* and *Paguntud* in the community of Iranun. *Tindeg* means standing up, and *Paguntud* means sitting down. The above picture portrays the male dancers doing the *paguntud* movement while the female dancers do the *Tindeg* movement. The form of the hands of the dancers was, as stated before, the *Lima Sa Kababaan* and *Lima Sa Puruan* (a hand on top and a hand below). The stage pattern composition shown in the picture is the dancers in the form of a circle. All of the dancers are facing inward as if they are doing something.

Based on the writer's research findings, this movement gives meaning to healing patients, like how *Si Panai* moved the *mayang pinang* on the patients' bodies to ward off evils in their bodies. This is further explained by Rahmawati (informant) that this movement was created from the adaption of the movement of *Si Panai* had finished doing the *bpangalai* while circling the patients. They then took the *mayang pinang* hanging as a decoration on the *sungkuban*, and *Si Panai* did the *paguntud* (sitting down) movement to move the *mayang pinang* on the patients' body, starting from the top of the head to the end of the legs. After *Si Panai* had finished moving the *mayang pinang* three times, they would do the *tindeg* (standing up) and then walk again in a circle. The informant had the idea of modifying the movements into a stage performance through these ritual movements. According to the informant, given that the movements were taken and turned into a stage performance, they were processed and modified according to the aesthetic value of stage performance and refined appropriately with the performance concept.

CONCLUSION

In essence, each chapter examined the changes in Sumaranun dance in terms of movement set changes. Formerly, this dance was a medical ritual that was always practised by the Iranun community. The relationship between this performance and healing is closely related because its origin was rooted in the narrative of the existence of nature, humans, and supernatural relationships. However, given that the medical ritual was no longer practised, the movement sets contained in this ritual were taken and modified into a stage performance. This was because common points between the medical and the performance were preserved, such as the hand movement set and stage pattern composition. It was proven that the *Sumaranun* dance is an image of the Iranun ethnicity in the context of the traditional cultural dance of the Iranun community.

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