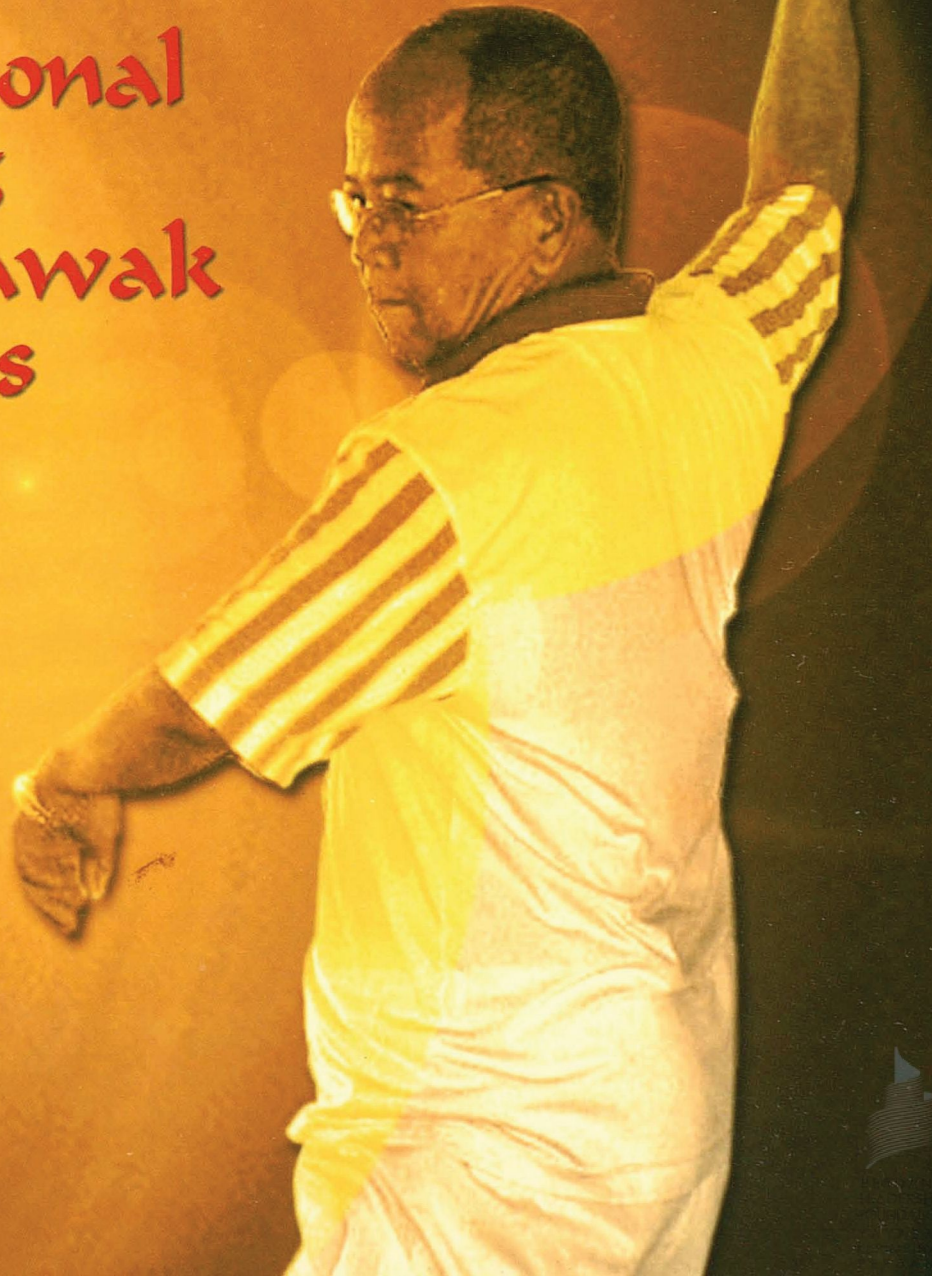


The Sarawakiana Series - Culture & Heritage

SARAWAK MALAY CULTURE

Traditional Gasing of Sarawak Malays





The
Sarawakiana Series
Malay Culture

Traditional Gasing
of Sarawak Malays



Pustaka Negeri Sarawak



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of Sarawak Malays

Kamil Salem



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Pustaka Negeri Sarawak



Foreword

"Gasing" or spinning top is one of the traditional games of Sarawak's ethnic groups. The "gasing" documented in this publication focused on the Malay "gasing".

"Gasing" Sarawak is a game that requires great strength, excellent timing, and dexterity.

"Gasing" games from other ethnic groups will also be documented as part of our endeavour to contribute towards our local content development.

Rashidah Haji Bolhassan

Chief Executive Officer

Pustaka Negeri Sarawak



Introduction

'Gasing' or top spinning is a past-time game and community sport that had its roots in the Malay culture. Apart from the other cultural games and activities, a community sport such as 'gasing' provides a dynamic avenue for socialization and communication in the early years.

In fact, prior to the advent of computers and other modern games, community sports such as 'gasing' served as an important interactive channel of fun and entertainment to players and spectators alike. It lends credence to the hypothesis on sports where by a person indulges in a sporting activity to reduce emotional stress and overcome depression. In the older days, 'gasing' was played after a harvest, as a form of entertainment for farmers and villagers after having worked hard in the field to harvest their crop.

According to studies, 'gasing' used in the states on the western seaboard of Peninsular Malaysia is made from wood, while that used in the east coast, especially Kelantan, is crafted from tin.

Through the joint efforts of the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism, Ministry of Youth and Sports and cooperation of the Federation of

Gasing Associations of Malaysia and Sarawak Gasing Association, the national combative top spinning game, with its own set of rules, was born. (KPSU, Bahagian Sukan, 2000:4)

According to the Glossary on Malaysia Culture: Traditional Game - 'Gasing' (Top Spinning) and Wau' (Kite Flying) (1995), 'gasing' is an ancient game played by males, whether in pair, team or group. In some spinning competitions, the top and rope are used. There are two types of top spinning (*gasing*): the robust-combative 'gasing', and the Individual rapid spinning 'gasing'.

History of 'Gasing'

Origin of 'Gasing'

Similar to the present-day plastic 'gasing', which emits sound and light when spun and is popular among children, 'gasing' itself is not a new sport. It has been in existence for a long time now, not only in the Malay Archipelago but also in other parts of the world.

As revealed in the website, Byron.com, the origin of 'gasing' can be traced to the story of the young boy who was pleasantly surprised to discover that he could spin so steadily a piece of wood that had been crafted with a pointed end by a grindstone. Meanwhile, the Jewish sect of Hanukkah is also said to have indulged in the sport of 'gasing' since 2,000 years ago.

In the United States, the type of spinning top that is widely used is comparatively more modern in terms of physical characteristics and operating mechanism. Known as 'Plunger Top', the American version of spinning top incorporates a kind of mechanism that causes the spinning top to spin fast when it is either pressed or compressed. In Europe, spring coil is used, and is wound tight before the spinning top is released to spin freely.

In the Malay Archipelago, 'gasing' is believed to have originated from Mecca in 450 AD and was brought to Malaya by Arab traders who had established trade links with Malacca. 'Gasing' was popular during the era of the Malay Sultanate of Malacca and it spread to Kelantan and Tererigganu ([//www.mygfl.net.my](http://www.mygfl.net.my)). According to Yunos Pipet, there is a story which links the origin of 'gasing' with the fruit of sonneratia alba (berembang), whose shape resembles that of the 'gasing'-round, flat and smooth. The fruit of sonneratia alba, found mainly along the coast, can easily be spun with your hand.

The fruit is also used extensively by exponents of 'silat' (Malay art of self-defence) to strengthen their hands when they undergo training.

Later, efforts to duplicate the shape of the fruit and replace it with a wooden piece emerged. The top spinners will try to spin their 'gasing' as fast as they can with their skilled hand. And as the 'gasing' rapidly picks up speed, the word 'llgaf (fast in Malay) is said aloud as 'gah' which means the 'gasing' is steady and strong. Popular belief has it that it is from this term that the game of 'gasing' began.

In Kedah, the game of '*gasing*' is said to have grown out of the friendly contest involving boiled eggs, which the contestants had to spin using their fingers. The game gave birth to a proud local innovativeness which resulted in the design and crafting of '*gasing*' from wood, fitted with a peg.

Origin of the term '*Gasing*'

According to a number of sources, the term '*gasing*' originated from a combination of 'to' the subword of '*kayu*' (wood) and '*sing*', which is the subword of '*pusing*'. Over time, people referred to it as '*kasing*' and later the pronunciation of the word evolved to become '*gasing*'. Other sources, with slightly different interpretation, suggest the term '*gasing*' originated from the subwords of '*gah*' (*gagah*) and '*sing*' (*pusing*), and when combined they formed the word '*gahsing*'. Over a period of time, the pronunciation and spelling evolved from '*gahsing*' to what is today '*gasing*' ([//www.mygfl.net.my](http://www.mygfl.net.my)).

Physiology of 'Gasing'

Shape and forms of Malaysian 'Gasing'

There are five different shapes of 'gasing' found in the country: plate shape (gasing piring), heart shape (gasing jantung), flat-shape (gasing leper), egg shape (gasing telur) and conical shape that resembles the fruit of *sonneratia alba* (gasing berembang). However, there are also other shapes such as depicted in 'gasing botol' (bottle), 'gasing dulang' (tray or pan), 'gasing kelawar' (bat) and 'gasing payung' (umbrella).

In Sarawak, the heart-shaped 'gasing' (gasing Jantung) is most popular and is also the type found in Kedah, Pahang, Perak and Negeri Sembilan. Some exponents of the sport also refer to it as 'gasing Lundu' or 'gasing S/mun/an'(Sadong). The types of wood that is popularly used for making 'gasing' in these states are melawis, mengeris (*commas excelsa*) and sepetir (*Sindora spp*). However, in Kelantan, merbau wood is used for making the heart-shaped 'gasing'.

The body parts of 'gasing':

Head (*Kepala*) - 'Palak' or the heading

Neck (*Leher*) - The neck is the part that is located between the head and shoulder of the 'gasing', and is where a strong cord is tightly wound into a coil.

Shoulder (*Bahu*) - Located between the neck and gourd (*buah labu*) 'gasing'. This is the part of the 'gasing' which has to be hard and sturdy and must be able to withstand pressure from hard knocks.

Fruit (*Labu*) - Popularly referred to as the fruit of the 'gasing', this is the part where an iron band, made from tin or metal, is fixed while balancing of the 'gasing' is done. It also prevents the 'gasing' from cracking easily when facing hard knocks.

Patak - The part that is located beneath the fruit of the 'gasing'.

Plaster (*Turap*) - Plaster is fixed at the head of the 'gasing' to prevent it from cracking and breaking into parts.

Axle (*Paksi*) - It's shaped like a baby's dummy or teat, with its top end firmly embedded into the wood at the lower end of the '*gasing*'. But the lower end of the '*paksi*' is left to remain sharp and pointed. When the '*gasing*' spins, it is this part that is in direct contact with the ground, Normally, the '*paksi*' is made either from metal or fibre. However, according to Peri bin Mail, the aforementioned '*paksi*' is only found in the modern '*gasing*' of Sarawak, which had its birth in the 1980s, It was not used in the traditional '*gasing*' designed for children and youths in the 1960s.

The traditional '*Gasing*' of Sarawak Malays

The traditional Malay '*gasing*' in Sarawak can be classified into three categories: '*gasing*' for young children, '*gasing*' for youths, and modern-day '*gasing*'. Attention will be paid in the paragraphs that follow to the traditional '*gasing*' for children and youths in the 1960s because they are gradually becoming extinct if compared to The Malaysian '*gasing*'.

The traditional '*Gasing*' for children

In the First Division of Sarawak during the 1930s, the type of '*gasing*' that was popular among children then was '*gasing pedada*' which was made from the fruit of *sonneratia alba* found in abundance on river banks and along the coast. As the original shape of the fruit resembles that of a '*gasing*', work to refine it into the right form would not take long. Apart from the fruit of *sonneratia alba*, the betel nut (*areca catechu*), which was popularly consumed by the elderly folks during the early years, was also used to craft the heart-shaped '*gasing*' or '*gasing Jantung*', and the process was relatively easy and utilized a knife. The lower part of the '*gasing Jantung*' is hard and it is only suitable to be played on the floor of a house. In the early days, when betel nut palms and '*pedada*' were found in great abundance, hundreds of '*gasing*' were made daily from the fruits of these trees.

Apart from '*gasing*' crafted from fruits, the others are made from softwood such as '*kayu pelaik*' which are found in the villages. For children in Lundu during that early era, playing '*gasing*' was a form of entertainment during their past time. And there was no trophy or incentive to look forward to, except that the winner would be given the honour to pinch the hand of the loser. In addition to that, the loser would be required to be under the sun, as a form of punishment,

In Simunjan, however, the design of the '*gasing*' and the style adopted by the children in playing the game differ from that in the other districts. Apart from using wood to make '*gasing*', they also use bulb batteries or cell batteries for improvising '*gasing*'. A cord is wound around a battery to enable the player to spin it. For the children here, when they engage in a '*gasing*' competition, it is not based on a combative knockout of each other's spinning tops but on the length of spinning time of the '*gasing*'. In other words, the owner of the '*gasing*' which spins the longest is the winner, and he will be rewarded with rubber bands. And the game is played either on a makeshift wooden court or on a wooden floor or rubberized mat in a house. The game is normally played non-stop for one or

two hours before the players adjourn for lunch break and resume playing in the afternoon.

Types of traditional 'Gasing' for children **Gasing Buah Pinang** (Betel nut spinning top)

This type of children's 'gasing' is made from betel nut with its outer skin still intact, As the amateurish work is done by children, the upper portion of the fruit has to be sharpened and refined to produce the head and neck of the intended 'gasing'. Size is not a crucial factor as long as there is ample space for the cord to be tied around the 'gasing'. It is not a problem for the children if the 'gasing' breaks or cracks as they can easily make a replacement. Of importance to them is the satisfaction of playing the 'gasing buah pinang'.

Gasing Buah Pedada

The all-season 'pedada' fruit can easily be plucked from the tree of the same name which grow along the river banks. Normally, the 'pedada' fruit that is old and hard is selected for making 'gasing'. Similar to the making of 'gasing buah pinang', the shape of 'pedada' fruit makes it easy for children to make the game toy on their own,

Gasing Bateri (Battery Spinning Top)

The shape of this 'gasing' differs from that of the conventional type. All that the children require to have a game of 'gasing' of this type are a torchlight battery and a thick string. It is not played in a combative manner to get one 'gasing' to physically knock the other out of play but rather it is a game where the children enjoy watching their 'gasing' spin steadily and for a long time on a given spot.

Process of making traditional children's 'Gasing' from 'pedada' and betel nut

1. Plucking the 'pinang' (betel nut) and 'pedada' fruit.
2. Prepare the tools such as the sharp whittle knife for carving the shape and sharpening the pointed end. For the 'pedada' fruit, the main work to be done on it is smoothing and sharpening the upper part to create the head of the 'gasing' while only basic peeling work is done to the lower portion. It is not necessary to carve and smoothen the body of the 'pedada' fruit as it already has the natural shape of a 'gasing'. But the lower part is soft and gets spoiled fast after it is spun many times.

To make a 'gasing' from a betel nut, one has to use a freshly-plucked betel nut fruit. The upper part of the fruit, which forms the head of the 'gasing', has to be duly smoothened and sharpened to get the desired shape. The same, too, with the lower part. Compared with the 'gasing' made from *pedada*, the betel nut 'gasing' is hard and sturdy, especially after it has been spun a few times. It is not necessary to smoothen or carve the body as it already has its own unique shape.

3. For children who have just started playing 'gasing', they are happy to settle for a 'gasing' using torchlight battery and a string, if they cannot afford to get one that is made from wood.

The cord or string used in the traditional 'Gasing Pedada' and 'Gasing Pinang'

Children would normally use the anchor-brand thread of size '2' or popularly referred to by village folks as crocodile thread (*benang buaya*). Raffia string can also be used.

Multi-stage process in making the cord or string for the traditional 'Gasing Pedada' and 'Gasing Pinang'.

1. Preparing the thread according to the required length.
2. Ascertaining the desired size of the cord.
3. If the player's hand is small, the cord has to be made much smaller to match the hand. Similarly, if the player's hand is big, the size of the cord has to be made accordingly.
4. Splitting string into two.
5. Twinning a bigger string and combining with several others to form three or four layers.
6. After the twinning of the strings is completed, the next process involves plumping or thickening the string with hands or feet.
7. Plumping the cord or multi-layered string by an experienced hand will produce a cord or string that is firm and strong. The desired result may not be achieved if an inexperienced hand handles it.

8. The strength of the cord or string that has been plumped and knotted tightly depending on the strength of the hand of the craftsman.
9. If the strings which are knotted together to form a cord are not strong, they may come off after the cord is used several times.
10. At the end of the cord or string, a ring-shape holder will be made for the little finger or any other finger to slip through.

Arena for playing the traditional children's 'gasing' (Betel nut spinning top)

The arena for the traditional children's 'gasing' is not required to conform to any specific size. Nonetheless, an area that is spacious with a ground that is hard and firm is most suitable for this game. Sometimes, even the ground that is partially marshy can still be used as an arena for top spinning for children. However, the children's 'gasing' will spin more effectively if it is played on a wooden floor as its surface is even. Since children's 'gasing' are made from fruits, the lower parts will wear away fast if they are played on a ground that is hard.

Traditional 'Gasing' of teenagers **Types of traditional 'Gasing' of teenagers**

Gasing Piring (Plate-shaped spinning top)
It is popularly known as 'Gasing Piring' (Plate-shaped spinning top) because it is flat and thin and resembles a plate. It is made from softwood, especially for the part which lends support to the speed of spinning. Because it cracks easily after getting hard beating from another 'gasing', the 'gasing piring' is suited only for spinning on its own,

Gasing Jantung (Heart-shaped spinning top)
This type of 'gasing' is popular among teenagers as it is often used as a combative 'gasing' to knock out the rival. Its shape of heart appeals to teenagers.

Gasing Tempayan (Jar-shaped spinning top)
Round and tall like a jar, this type of 'gasing' is often used to knock out the rival's 'gasing' and stop its spinning.

Gasing Lonjong (Oval-shaped spinning top)
It is so-named because it has an oval shape and is relatively taller. In the Sarawak Malay dialect, it is known as 'ganjo'.

Process of making 'Gasing' for teenagers on softwood.

1. Selecting the piece of wood of the right size.
2. Preparing the tools such as carving knife, cleaver, axe, saw, scrapper or sand paper (rough and fine).
3. Start work on the lower part of the 'gasing', based on the intended design - whether it is heart-shaped, plate, round or oval-shaped.
4. Work on shaping and smoothening the chest or upper body of the 'gasing' according to the preferred design (as per itgm 3 above).
5. Ensuring whether the head of the 'gasing' is big or small.
6. Carving the overall body of the 'gasing' using whittling or trimming knife.
7. Checking on the spinning behaviour of the 'gasing' while keeping a watchful eye on parts which need further trimming or whittling.
8. Checking on the balance to ensure the 'gasing' spins at fast and steady speed. The 'gasing' is spun, while a trimmer knife is pointed to the lower part of the 'gasing'. The part which touches the knife or bears some scratches from the knife will be trimmed later. The part with knife scratches indicates that the 'gasing' is tilting to one side.
9. The above process is repeated until the spin of the 'gasing' is considered satisfactory.
10. After work on stabilising the 'gasing' is completed, the product will be smoothened using either a rough sand paper or scrapper and finally a fine sand paper.
11. Adding colour to the 'gasing' is the final stage but this depends on whether the owner prefers it or otherwise.
12. Finally, the 'gasing' will be put to test again.

The cord or string of 'gasing' (spinning top) for teenagers

The cord or string of 'gasing' for teenagers is made from the bark of 'putat paya' tree (*planchonia valida*) or *hibiscus tiliaceus*.

Method of making the cord or string (plumping the thread)

1. Prepare the bark of the selected tree according to the required. It must be sufficiently dry.
2. Decide on the size of the cord or string.
3. The cord or string will be made to match the size of the fingers of the 'gasing' player.
4. A small string will be combined with another.
5. A slightly bigger string will be twinned with other strings to form three or four interlocking layers. The thickness of the bark of the tree is between 4 and 5 centimetres.
6. After the strings have been laid together in several layers, they will be stretched and plumped using bare foot and hand.
7. Plumping the cord or multi-layered string by an experienced hand will produce a cord or string that is firm and strong. The desired result may not be achieved if an inexperienced hand handles it.
8. The strength of the cord or string that has been plumped tightly depending on the strength of the hand of the craftsman.
9. The cord or string made from a bark is tougher and stronger than the one used for children's 'gasing'.
10. For those who are reluctant to use a string or cord that is made from a tree bark, they can turn to the normal string or the anchor-brand thread number 2 that is used by children in spinning their 'gasing'.

Gasing arena for teenagers (Gelanggang Gasing)

The arena for teenagers to play 'gasing' is not determined by the size of the selected land or area. Teenagers can play the game on any open space which is hard and sufficiently big.

The "gasing" arena today has undergone a lot of changes, for not only is it set up on an open space or in the exterior compound of a house, it is also properly designed and constructed to specific size. It makes use of good construction material and takes into account the presence of puddles which have to be avoided or filled. The entire process, from the selection of the construction materials to its completion and maintenance, comes under close scrutiny.

In summary, the arena in the olden days for the above-mentioned category of 'gasing' was just an open space in a house compound fronting a village path or road. Such a situation could obviously attract a lot of onlookers and individual enthusiasts, As it is exposed to the elements and not enclosed, the arena would get drenched during a rainy day but would dry up again on a sunny day.

Design of a modern arena from the 1980s to the present day

Site:

Hard and flat ground, devoid of grass and is wide and open.

Dimension:

8 metres x 8 metres (square).

Circle:

Has a radius of 0.76 metre.

It is positioned between every corner of the arena. Incorporated for every circle is a passage way for a player.

Characteristics of a fast-spinning 'Gasing'

A fast-spinning 'gasing' is admired by every player and exponent of the game, Apart from being the defining factor in determining the winning 'gasing' team, the fast spinning speed gives the cutting edge value and uniqueness to the 'gasing'. Its speed is attributed to its shape and weight. Therefore, the 'gasing' maker pays particular attention to the axle and the body when it is being made. The heavier a 'gasing' is, the faster will be the spin. On the contrary, the taller a 'gasing' is, the slower the spin will get, and this is attributed to the law of gravity. Hence, the taller type of 'gasing' will not be suited for competition involving spinning on a narrow horizontal piece of wood.

To ensure that a 'gasing' will be able to achieve the desired spinning speed, the choice of wood is important. The wood has to be hard, not easily broken and sufficiently dry, According to Encik Peri bin Mail, it took him a year to dry the wood that had been chosen for making a modern 'gasing' for use in present-day competition. The drier the wood is, the stronger it becomes; this will ensure the physical durability of a 'gasing'.

A 'gasing' that spins rapidly is difficult to be overpowered and knocked down by a rival

'gasing', because the former has its own unique characteristics, especially when a 'gasing' maker understands and takes into account the law of the centre of gravity and nature of air movement.

Interestingly, this type of 'gasing', when struck on by a rival 'gasing' in a keen competition, will, in effect, spin faster on the ground. Only a skilful exponent of the game will be able to outmanoeuvre and beat this type of 'gasing' at the game.

A notable weakness of this type of 'gasing' is that it is not able to function as a tactical 'gasing' due to its inability to move to the left or right when it is spun. Because of that, the traditional 'gasing' used by teenagers, crafted from wood that is soft and light, can easily outsmart a 'gasing' that is made from hardwood in a competition.

Method of playing '*Gasing*'

There are several components or stages which form an integral part of the game from start to finish. These include: spinning, combative striking, lifting the spinning handle, placing in firm position the handle and rendering support to it. The first step involves getting the cord to be tightly wound around the '*gasing*'. To a large extent, the spinning behaviour and speed of the '*gasing*' is influenced by how skillful a player is in coiling the cord. It is a crucial stage in the game.

Coiling the cord

The cord or string, which is an important feature of '*gasing*', has to be coiled tightly and neatly first to enable the '*gasing*' to be spun rapidly and smoothly. There are two ways of holding the cord whilst working on the coil: one is by lying one end around the wrist, and the other by twirling it around the index finger. But the best and safest way is to tie one end of the string or cord around the arm. If coiling is not done well, it may endanger the player. However, on whether to use the index finger, wrist or arm to grip the string or cord, much depend on the individual.

Coiling the '*gasing*'

In a modern-day '*gasing*' game, the job of coiling a string or cord around a '*gasing*' no longer involves tying one end to a tree trunk. Instead, it is twirled around the arm of the player. The cord or string is coiled around the shoulder, body and neck to provide for even distribution of grip on the '*gasing*'. To facilitate better grip, a player would normally wind the string or cord tightly around the '*gasing*' until the coil is complete. The '*gasing*' is held on the left hand while the right hand holds on tightly to the cord or string. After the string or cord is completely wound around the '*gasing*', the player will ensure that one end of it is securely tied around his wrist and that he has a good grip of it. The grip is important to ensure that the string is properly tied and to avoid the '*gasing*' from losing its stability.

Steps in spinning the '*gasing*'

There are several ways, whether traditional or modern, of spinning the '*gasing*'. Using the proper method will result in a spin that is fast, steady and long. Spinning the '*gasing*' in an abrupt manner is not a safe method as it can endanger the player and spectators. The two most popular methods are **(a)** pull with a jerk, and **(b)** push forward-and-pull back hard.

The push-forward-and-pull back method is a spinning tactic to lift the axle whilst the 'gasing' spins on it, while the pull-with-a-jerk method ensures that the 'gasing' spins fast and steadily. The differences in the two methods can be seen from the characteristics and functions of their spins.

The Push-and-Pull Spin

The technique of spinning:

- The 'gasing' is held in a secure position and then swung to the rear.
- The player's eyes are to focus on the direction and intended spot of spinning.
- When swinging the 'gasing', the player must maintain a bending-forward position until he arrives at the designated front spot when he will unleash the coiled string or cord.
- The player is to maintain an almost squatting position with the legs and feet kept a safe distance away from the spinning spot.
- The swing of the arm must be kept in tandem with the swing of the 'gasing', while the body of the player bends at 45 degrees.
- The estimation has to be done well.

The Pull-with-a-Jerk Spin

The technique of spinning:

- The 'gasing' is held firmly and securely.
- The head of the 'gasing' points to the sky and is lifted.
- The hand bends 30 degrees against the arm.
- The hand swings forward to the intended spinning spot while the 'gasing' remains in firm grip until he arrives at the designated front spot when he will unleash the coiled string or cord.
- A brief pull with a jerk is made as soon as the 'gasing' hits the ground. It is done to keep it an upright and stable spinning position, otherwise it will be tossing to the left and right before running out of balance.

The Cast-Spinning Method

The technique of spinning:

- The 'gasing' is held firmly at the chest level.
- When casting or hurling it, the 'gasing' will hit the ground and it does not need to be pulled with a jerk any longer.
- This spinning method is used to close the gap in the arena and to direct any 'gasing' spinning at the side to move to the centre. The plate-shaped 'gasing' uses this method of spinning.

Striking a gasing

Types of strike

1. Sledge-hammer strike (*Pangkak Tutok*)
2. Hard combative knock (*Pangkak Hentak*)
3. Gliding strike (*Pangkak Layang*)
4. Flying strike (*Pangkak Terbang*)

In the game of 'gasing' played in Sarawak, the word 'pangkak' means 'pangkah' strike, while the word 'tutok' means 'tokok' or sledge-hammer strike.

Methods of playing the traditional 'gasing' in the old days

In the old days, 'gasing' was normally played by two or six people. Initially, it was either spinning a 'gasing' on an axle or engaging in a competition in which the victor would be the one whose 'gasing' spun the longest. Whereas the person whose 'gasing' went out of play earliest would be assigned to fix up the apparatus for the next round of the game. Hence, if six people were to be engaged in a game, the owner of the 'gasing' which stopped spinning first would bear the task of fixing the next game. His 'gasing' will be hit by the other five rival 'gasing' which were able to stay in spin longer than the former. The last player to hurl his 'gasing' at the loser's will be the one whose 'gasing' had earlier stayed in a spinning position over the longest period.

'Gasing' for teenagers

The game is played by four to five young people, although the number sometimes exceed that. The shape of the 'gasing' that's popular among teenagers is not much different from the one used in a normal 'gasing' game. The strength of this type of 'gasing' lies in the design of the body, and among the most popular is the heart-shaped 'gasing' which is said to be able to spin longer than the bottle and plate-shaped type,

According to Mr Zaidi Bin Bujang from Kampung Stunggang Melayu Lundu, players without much skill will face difficulty in spinning the teenagers' 'gasing', because the style of play is different from that of other 'gasing', because it is spun in a reverse position. This means that the player will have to coll the string or cord around the 'gasing' against the direction of spin. For example, if, in a normal game, a 'gasing' is made to spin from right to left, the teenagers' 'gasing', on the other hand, will have its string or cord coiled right around it in an opposite direction, that is from left to right. If it is not done in that manner, it would be difficult for a player to spin his 'gasing' effectively and enjoy a satisfying competitive game against his rival.

There are times when the 'gasing' has to be fixed or adjusted two to three times when it fails to spin well. Normally, the shape of the teenagers' 'gasing' is not much different from that of the types popularly used in daily games, except that its head is more pointed to facilitate spinning.

For the player who intends to engage in knocking his rival 'gasing' out of play, the tactical method to be used is the same as in spinning. Knocking a rival 'gasing' in a combative style involves turning your 'gasing' into an upside-down position and that also means positioning the head of your 'gasing' on the axle. The 'gasing' that spins the longest is the clear winner. However, the teenagers' type of 'gasing' is seldom used for competition as it is characteristically different from most other popular types of 'gasing'. And generally not as entertaining.

Dress Code

No specific dress code is imposed on the 'gasing' player.

Summary

The game of 'gasing' is no stranger to our society, especially in Sarawak. It is played by people of all ages; from young children and teenagers to adults. Different shapes and sizes of 'gasing' are designed to cater to the needs of the players; from the carefree time of chicken. when a 'gasing' is carved out end made from a fruit, to the time of adolescence and old age, when the same product is made from wood which is hard and of quality.

Apart from the creation of different designs and shapes of 'gasing'. there have been innovations which delude, among others, the adaptation of equipment and tools specifically for use in coiling the string or cord for a 'gasing'. Clearly, the game has opened up the opportunity for people to create new ideas and improve on existing ones in order to enrich what will become the legacy of 'gasing'.

The system used in the game of 'gasing' has also undergone a lot of changes not just in the refereeing of the game but also in training and administration. In efforts to revive the traditional game of 'gasing' attention must be paid to preserving the art that has evolved with it. The present-day generation needs

to be exposed as much as possible, albeit discerningly, to the fun and entertainment that 'gasing' provides, otherwise we will not be able to bequeath to them a rich cultural heritage which may face the fate of possible extinction.

With the setting up of a 'gasing' association in every division in Sarawak, there will be more opportunities for players and enthusiasts alike to improve their skills and techniques and to also advance the game to the level comparable with that of other more established competitive games.

The introduction of 'gasing' as a competitive sport at Malaysia Games (Sukan Malaysia) for children and teenagers is certain to pave the way for the promotion and expansion of 'gasing' in the future. It is not impossible to have the game introduced at the national level. By breaking that deadlock, we would be creating an opportunity to lure foreign players to deepen their interest and skill in Malaysian 'gasing' and also to promote the game at the International level in a more aggressive but orderly manner.

The role of associations and support from the government in order to give the due recognition and status to the game is important. An arena that is conducive for the game of 'gasing' needs to be set up in every district so that more young people will be drawn to the game and at the same time to sustain public interest in what is still a proud cultural legacy of our community. We are confident that more young people will be interested in the game but what is important now is to identify and establish strategic approaches to promote the game. These strategies include holding training and management clinics from time to time. But sadly the different types of traditional 'gasing' of children and teenagers - made from betel nut, softwood and 'pedada' fruit - are gradually disappearing from the scene.

Glossary

Baru'

Hibiscus Tiliaceus

Berembang/pedada

Sonneratia alba

Gagah

Mighty, gallant, valorous

Ganjo

Lofty, stature

Gasing

The Malay word for the game of top spinning and the top itself. 'Gasing' is a popular traditional game played in the Malay Archipelago, especially in the villages.

Labu

Pumpkin

Ligat

Spin/rotate rapidly, fast

Mengeris

Commas Excelsa

Pinang

Betel nut

Putat paya

Planchonia Valida

Sepetir

Sindora spp.

Silat

The Malay art of self-defence which entails cri exponent to exercise patience, restraint and respect when engaging in the sport.

Tempayan

Jar

Wau

The famous Malaysian kite which is known for its various elaborate and colourful designs.

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He obtained his Bachelor's degree in Graphic Design from UiTM, Master's degree in Music and Film Studies and a doctorate in Visual Communications in United Kingdom.

In the 1970's, he produced poetry, radio drama scripts, composed songs and acted in radio dramas produced by Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) Kuching. Kamil led D'Crescendos which was the first singing group from Sarawak to win the Bintang RTM Singing Contests (1978) in Kuala Lumpur. With D'Crescendos, he recorded two LPs in 1982. He is also a member of Fdam.

Before assuming his current position as Managing Director of Nonakraf Communications Sdn. Bhd., Kamil underwent training at Clio Advertising and ROS & REM, served as designer at Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in Kuala Lumpur and was Manager at OBYU Communications Sdn. Bhd., Kuching. In 2003, Kamil was awarded the Ahli Bintang Kenyalang (ABK) by the Yang di-Pertua Negeri of Sarawak.

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