

## DABUS: REPORT OF FIELD TRIP TO THE EAST COAST OF ACEH, 1982

Sections selected from parts of Field note book 13, 1982, relevant to DABUS.

[From dictation on tape]

### SIDE A of Tape

Dabus performed in Aceh uses *pedang kecil*, (small sword). They also use *rantai* (chains which are fired until they are red hot) which are bound to the body of the dancer. The main *dabus* implement, a 5" long metal spike with a wooden handle at one end, is used to stab performers when they are in trance. Some of the performers believe that they are *jimat* (not susceptible to pain, bleeding and wounds) if they are in a state of religious concentration. They have red strands of string wound around their body or arm, or whatever, as an emblem of this.

*Pinang sinawa* is the place for the fire (?) and *parasapan* is the place where incense is burned so that everyone is fumigated with mystical power. They all play the *rabana* (frame drum). In Lhok Seumawe, where we made a recording of a really spectacular performance of *dabus* (5/11/82), the instruments used were *rapai dabus* (frame drums), *rapai grimpheung* (small frame drum used for gymnastic segments) and *rapai pase* (a very large drum).

*Pase* is the place where Islam is said to have entered Aceh for the first time. In the Dutch colonial time, the men who could not play in *dabus* performances were regarded as women. Today, there is only one organization of *dabus* performers in Lhok Saumawe. Formerly there were at least ten *dabus* groups for each *kampung* (village). Each of these *dabus* groups was headed by a *khalifah* who wore a *recong* (a special Acehnese sword). The aim of the *dabus* originally was said to be to raise the spirits of the troops during times of war. Sometime during the PRRI time under Sukarno when there was a Sumatran movement of independence from Java, and during the wars of independence from the Dutch, the Acehnese used to perform *dabus*. In those times *dabus* was not commercial at all and no money was ever paid for any performance. Today in Lhok Seumawe, because it is a Caltex oil area, often the one and only *dabus* group in the area play for quite a lot of money. The aim of the performers is to reach a state of *ilmu kebal*. (*Ilm* = knowledge, *kebal* = invulnerability, therefore the knowledge of invulnerability). Formerly it was religious people primarily who lead the fighting and *dabus* is the Muslim form of martial art. Men and women are not allowed to play it together.

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Unrelated comments:

Syarif was the child of the head of the Muslim graveyard at Pase. He made a pilgrimage to Mecca but couldn't call in to Pase on his way home to Aceh so he went to Java and married the daughter of the Sultan of Trenggano and became the panglima (commander) of the Sultanate. He then went to Bunteng and became the Sultan there. The city of Bireuen, which is near Lhok Seumawe, also has *dabus*. It was also known for its resistance against the Dutch.)

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In Lhok Seumawe, there are fifteen *dabus* groups at the moment. There used to be clashes between *dabus* groups during the Dutch time because of jealousy. Many of them used to get into a state of trance *kesurapan*. The leader of the group is also called *rifaiya* (leader); *rifai* means to raise one's spirits. The *shafia ijah* is the strand of Islam that is prevalent in this area. My informants in this area didn't really know the word *rifaiya* which is another branch of Islam, During the Dutch period Sufism was very strong in this region. Aceh's *Mohammadir* is not as strictly against *seudati* as *shafia ijah*. *Seudati* is another form of Acehnese dance.

All groups, *Mohammadir* etc., are pro-*dabus* because they say that *dabus* unifies people. All the villagers in the area must come to the *dabus* performance even if they don't take part in it. Usually about 20-40 and sometime 80 men play *dabus* together, so it unifies people. People called *Yang berdabus* are not regarded as being *pancak silat* (dancers) but they are musicians whose actions and religious concentration depends on the rhythm of the *rapai*. There are many special movements but it is not really dance because in this type of art form you are not allowed to dance because theoretically you have to concentrate on thoughts of God, repeating the names of Allah. This is a form of *Ilmu gaib* (mystical knowledge). The Muslim people in this area believe very strongly in the mystical aspects of Islam and making yourself invulnerable in times of war by using religion to become *meng kebar kan diri* which means to make oneself invulnerable.

In this area there are two *khalifah* (leaders) in a group. There are no *syekh* as in other areas where there may be a *syekh* and a *kalifah*. The *kalifah* don't play the drums and they don't move in complement to the rhythm of the drums. They are there to protect performers when they obtain a

state of religious ecstasy when they are in danger of harming themselves. The *kalifah* stops the performance if things become too dangerous. In the beginning all the performers show their respect for the *kalifah* by *salam*, which is a movement of respect with the hands. The performers go into the arena with their *recong* (swords). They ask permission from the two *kalifahs* before they start to play and when they have the permission of the *kalifah* they know that they won't hurt themselves when they are performing. In other words if you don't ask the permission of the *kalifah* and fulfil the other requirements before performing you can die. You have to pray to Allah first and then you have to lose your *halih* (knowledge of one's own consciousness).

*Dabus* is not used for politics or for electioneering unlike many other art forms in this area. The *syarat* (requirements) of the performers depends on the particular *kalifah*. Some *kalifah* say that you must meditate every full moon, others say that if there is a traitor among you and he has lots of *ilmu* then that will go against him and the group. One, two or three people, usually *berdabus* (enter into a state of trance). If one of them cuts their tongue, all of them do it. If one of them cuts their eyes all of them do this also. On the other hand the *kalifah* in Meulaboh, which is on the west coast of Aceh will do much worse things. When we were there, we noticed he cut his arms several times and no blood would appear as well as many more extreme things than in this area. Apparently *kebar keturunang* (the ability to perform *dabus*) is inherited from the ancestors and is passed down from father to son. After Tenkul Rajah Makmud, the famous person from Meulaboh on the west coast died only his family played *dabus*. He was able to do some amazing things such as passing a piece of rope through two holes in his leg. He was very rich and was of royal blood. On the east coast in the Lhok Seumawe area, *dabus* is very often played in the villages and the towns. Not only here but also in the town of Pidie and in Langsa, although it is not quite as popular there. It is not played at weddings. It is not played in the inland areas of Aceh.

*Dabus* is often performed on August 17th, Indonesian Independence Day. Mobil Oil often has a reception of foreign guests and important Indonesian officials which is held in the Mobil Oil building. They often get a *dabus* group to perform and pay them quite a lot of money. In Langsa, there is no one performing *dabus* which doesn't mean that it is not liked there but there is no one capable of performing it. In fact *dabus* is very popular in Langsa, but there are very few people that can perform it still. In this *kabupaten* (region) there are three *kecamatan*, out of a total of thirty-two that have *dabus* performers. For example, Muara 2 is the home of the best group of *dabus* performers. Also in Kuta Makmur, there is a good group. Both of these groups are in Kecamatan Samudera. Competitions between the *dabus* groups are organised by the Department of Education

and Culture every month or so. When Mobil Oil commissions a performance they often give clothes to *dabus* players as payment for their performance. Generally speaking, if Mobil Oil has any type of reception of art performances it always includes *dabus*. According to my informants, *dabus* cannot be commercialised or politicised because it is religious in its intent. Therefore it is not popular in Banda Aceh, the capital of Aceh, but it is very popular in the villages around the east and west coasts of Aceh.

The performers generally do not want to receive money for their performances but if you give them transport, clothes, special food such as *pulut* (steamed sticky rice with sugar and desiccated coconut) and coffee they are happy. That is the tradition. That is the kind of payment that they normally received in the past and that is what Mobil Oil does today instead of giving them money. No other cakes or drinks are allowed, these are the special food and drink given at *dabus* performances in order to strengthen the body because performing *dabus* is very physically demanding. For example, if they give two performances of *dabus*, one after another, they are given food twice to build up their strength. Each person for half an hour or so and then he rests and eats and drinks. Then he plays again for half an hour and then he rests and eats and drinks again because it is very strenuous. Each time that they eat, they eat a lot until they are full so they can perform all night if they continue like this.

In Jakarta the Government is against *dabus*. Often eighty men would be involved alternating with each other, some eating and resting whilst others are performing. This is too many people to be convenient in Jakarta, they don't like the inconvenience of so many men taking part. It is not regarded in Jakarta as a people's dance, *tari ratyat* or *seniyan ratyat*. There are no women in it. Although the official art form in this region of Lhok Seumawe is *dabus* it is not really regarded as being an official art form in the province of Aceh. In the city of Meulaboh, during the post-revolutionary period spanning the last 20 years or so, the Acehnese hero Daud Beurueh was in favour of *dabus* and he never banned it. He led his group of people against the Jakarta politicians. He said it is not necessary to meditate before performing, that it just takes place spontaneously. Sometimes there are poor, skinny people who take part in *dabus*. Daud Beureuh sometimes thought that perhaps these people shouldn't be allowed to perform *dabus* but he said that if they fulfil the religious requirements and if they get permission in the right way from the *kalifah* before they start to play then no harm can come to them.

Occasionally some of the performers bleed severely but they don't feel sore. They actually feel sick if the blood doesn't come out sometimes when they stab themselves. This is the knowledge of tiger craft, where it doesn't matter if you bleed a bit. Others say that they never bleed. Some of them pass a rope through two holes in their tongue. Sometimes they cut off their tongue and it returns again magically and links up with the rest of the tongue. In Meulaboh, hot chains are placed around the neck but in this region no one does that. 10 year old children used to play in Meulaboh on the west coast. Even the children in the informant's family used to perform *dabus*. There is no festival of *dabus* between *kabupatens* (regions) of East Aceh; maybe it will happen one day. Although *golkar* (the main Government party) has recently used a group called *dabus ampi*. People say that they have never used *dabus* for electioneering but here someone else is saying that *golkar* did use *dabus ampi*. The department of Education and Culture likes *dabus* as long as the people who commission the performance give transport and the right kind of food and drink for the performers. In this case they are happy to see *dabus* performed as often as possible; and they are proud of it too.

*Mau2 kebal*: sometimes you can acquire this skill of being quite immune to pain and damage to your body by these things which happen to you. But some people say that you should meditate or eat before you perform to avoid any harm. Others think that it is best to eat after you have played.

The tradition in Aceh is essentially one of war against not only the Dutch but prior to the colonialists. Whoever was the leader of the battle had to have this *kebal* quality, that invulnerability, which *dabus* gave them. There is a special medicine called *obat kebal* which gives knowledge of how to defend yourself effectively. □□.... (tape starts abruptly) .... the ability to carry these which becomes red hot in *dabus* in your pocket is one way of acquiring invulnerability. Not all people who are *kebal* perform *dabus*.

The main instruments used in *dabus* performances are firstly the *rapai pase* which is a frame drum of about one and a half metres in diameter. This is so large that it is rarely found or played. It is beaten with the fist. Secondly, there is *rapai*, just an ordinary *rapai*. There is no name specifically for a *rapai* used in *dabus* because there are varying kinds of them. The way of playing *dabus* in this region is for two groups of men all playing frame drums to be arranged in rows on either side of a free area in the middle at the end of which sits the jury. The side on the left is called *kali a*. On the other side the people are called *kali b*. The jury used to judge the performance on the quality of the drumming and the quality of the stabbing and the other actions that took place amongst the performers. □□..... (tape starts abruptly) ... took place in a yard where there are no trees. Up to 200

people or a minimum of about 40 drummers take part in the performance. Alternating groups start and stop, rest and so on. Normally it goes on all night. The idea is to attain the soul of a hero *jiwa pahlawan*, to acquire courage in the face of the enemy. If you can acquire *kebal* (invulnerability) the enemy can't hurt you. The two groups which recorded and which were competing against with other were called *ampi* and *manebayu*. The *kalifah* of one group wore white with a silver and purple *songket* (wrap-around cloth) and a white turban. The musicians are not allowed to stop playing, and if they do while *dabus* participants are performing, they might hurt themselves because this might affect their concentration. If the *kalifah* is conducting by swinging a cloth, which is something they do, but if they do this in a non-synchronised way then the performer can't stab himself properly. So it is very important that *kalifah* when he is swinging his cloth to synchronise with the rhythm of the *rapai* to assist the performer. The *rapai* players squat, they are not actually seated but they squat down. *Dabus* players are called *top daboih* and they wear *kris* (swords) in their *recong*, or *padang* (spears); they also have wooden spears and rope.

Competition, in *Bahasa Aceh*, the Acehnese language, is called *uruh*. On this occasion the Department of Education and Culture had asked this group to play for us. When they asked them to perform, they said that it would be better for the Australian guests if we had two groups of performers so we could see the competition. So they had two groups. In the first group we interviewed, the men learnt to play *dabus* in Suro Menasah. They keep their drums in the *Suro* (a Muslims boys' religious house). The word for *rapai* players is *awak peh rapai*. The *kalifah's* name was B.A. Kalisyik, who is the main *kalifah*. He had a very loud voice. He wore a *peci* (tall black head piece). All the way through the performance the players had very happy smiling faces; they were supposed to be in a state of religious ecstasy.

The story behind *dabus* is concerned with Nabi Ibrahim (Abraham of the Old Testament), who was the prophet of fire and Nabi Daud (the prophet David). Both of them are mentioned in the *syair*, the poems that are sung by the *dabus* performers. Both of these prophets were regarded as acquiring the highest in knowledge, *ilmu yang palim halas*, because they could meditate and are very mystically powerful. The drumming started off in a medium tempo and got faster and faster as things got more exciting.

One of the *rapai* players, a male, leads the choral singing. The song words are called *dike* or *dikr* as it is largely called in Muslim sources, or in Acehnese *dike* is *selaweuet*. The performance begins with them singing words that welcome the guests, that's us, and praise religiosity and the prophets.

In the beginning, as we know, the players have to request permission to start from the *kalifah*, who smiles at them. Then the *kalifah* leads them into a state where they begin to dance. They dance as if they are in a trance. One of the dancers lifts up a knife; he licks it slowly, all the while moving to the beat of the drum. The *kalifah* actually dances with him while moving up and down to the beat and waving his arms. They make battle cries of war all the time. Two small boys one with a knife in each hand comes in and they stab their wrists; no blood. Then one of the dancers bares his legs and hits it with all the force he can manage with the knife. But the knife which is pointed into his skin doesn't actually enter into the flesh despite him beating the wooden end of the implement in an attempt to force it through his skin. Syncopated rhythms are used. They dance up and down repeatedly stabbing the upper part of their leg and while doing so, moving their left hand up and down to the beat. Each man had a little boy next to him who wore the same colour as his costume and waved a knife.

The music keeps getting faster and faster. If you beat in the middle of the *rapai* drum with an open hand and outstretched fingers, the name of this is sound *phruok*. *Phreuk phon* means the first beat. There are a lot of interlocking rhythms. Some of the drummers are fully conscious and are not in a trance. Some of the dancers when hit with all their force on the *dabus* implement (knife) into their flesh raise their two hands in the air so that it really looks like they are applying all their force. It becomes very exciting. They have three knives in their belts which are bent during the performance which is a way of displaying their religious power. They hop up and down and they throw their spear and knife onto the ground. Different men come into the ring one after the other and perform, showing their religious power. The *kalifah* keeps conducting everything, waving his hands in and out. He often inspects the performers to make sure that their concentration is maintained so they won't harm themselves. If they are coming out of concentration they will harm themselves of course.

The dancers wear bamboo *ratan* around their necks which they will use later on. The *kalifah* must always be positioned behind the dancers so he can look after them. So that when the dancer licks the knife with his saliva and dances and smiles and puts the knife through his tongue or whatever he doesn't actually harm himself. The *kalifah* holds the leg of the performer while he gets it ready to stab; smiling away. If there is blood on the knife he might remove it with a cloth. He puts a piece of *ratan* from around his neck and this is passed through the two holes made in the leg of the performer. The *ratan* makes the blood flow but the performer doesn't even wince because he is in an anaesthetised state. The *kalifah* wipes away the blood. Another one licks the blade of a knife with

his tongue; stabs the top of his head and moves the knife around in the wound in his head. This self-mutilation keeps going and the blood flows. They all yell when they are stabbed, I suppose to make it sound and look more exciting. The dancer looks up and smiles proudly into the audience as he is doing it. The blood comes eventually after repeating stabbing. In the beginning the stabbing doesn't come but eventually it does. The dancer steadies himself on the last heavily accented beat in the pattern. Then another performer pokes a sword into his stomach. He pretends to feel pain and faint; it's a bit amusing, then he gets up and smiles. They use their *recong*s too (a special Acehnese sword used in agriculture).

The competition between the two sides develops. One side wears yellow and the other side is wearing pink and green clothes. The *kalifah* dances among them all at first and says, "Who is going to win?". The long sword is stabbed into one performer's leg. A boy stands on the sword which is being held by the *kalifah*. The sound is deafening like a disco. The drumming is so loud and intense; then it gets slower towards the end. Then it gets faster again in the next section. The men wear orange turbans in the side wearing yellow clothes and wave red flags. All through the performance they are smiling. The musicians play very very loudly and intensely. The idea of the competition is that if one side becomes slower in rhythm it means that they lose. You are not allowed to get slower. Either you stay on the same tempo or you get faster. They all wear colorful trousers and long sleeve shirts, sarongs and a head ribbon. Only the *kalifah* wears the *peci* (the Muslim hat I mentioned). The leader of the drums squats in front and changes the rhythm high in the air before making each stroke on the drum. At the end he asks permission from the *kalifah* to leave. They all bow to the *kalifah*.

The leader of one side is called Muhammad Paid from Bleng Arin in Kota Makmur. The leader of the other side is Hasim from Menasuh Mane Bayu in the region called *kecamatan* Samtalirah Bi. If you want to use the expression 'beautiful when heard from afar', in this area it is called '*got-got bagus denge dari jao*'.

The Sound of the *Rapai*.

First of all there is *Alunan* which means *demung* (low pitched).

- If everyone beats the drums together at once it is called '*sare dalam peh rapai*'.
- If you are playing on the edge of the drum with your fingers, the onomatopoeic sound for this stroke is *gum*.
- If you hit with your hand open outstretched in the middle of the drum, the sound produced is

called *pereuk*. The beginning roll on a drum is called *pereuk phon* (*pereuk* = roll, *phon* = first).

*Pereuk* is the first sound of a roll and *phon* is first. (?) This is one of five rhythms.

The second is called *dike* which is the rhythm while the *kalifah* is singing.

Thirdly there is *kuta* which means city; the second word *meuligo* which means slow. (?)

The fourth name of the rhythm is *lagu dabus* which means a fast rhythm.

Lastly there is *lagu peh pereuk ake* (*lagu* is rhythm is rhythm or piece, *peh* is towards, *pereuk* is moving, *ake* is until morning). There is an expression *awak [anak] top daboi dan awak [anak]peh rapai*. (I'll have to find out what this means because I can't read my notes at that stage.) In the *lagu peh pereuk ake*, the last of the rhythms, you hold your hand high in the air for beating.

On each side there were five groups, and in each group there were sixty performers. They performed one after the other. On one side there were sixty times five, and on the other side there were forty times five. Each of the five groups kept competing with each other. In the *kampungs* and in this performance also there is no jury, everyone evaluates the performance freely. If the majority say that side A wins then side A wins. On this occasion, no special jury was appointed.

The singing began in the fifth rhythm. When the *rapai* was playing the fifth rhythm, *lagu peh pereuk ake*, the opening high pitched singing was called *ceureung*, and the concluding section was called *cow*. If the drums stopped playing the performers of *dabus* get sick or harm themselves mortally and they die. So it is important that all the drummers play synchronically, they must play exactly the same rhythms. If the coordination of the drumming is not good or they need to practice much more the *kalifah* has to stop the combined *dabus* from stabbing themselves.

According to the Koran, the prophet Hidra moved from Mecca to Medina with the *duff* [*daf*] (which is the Arabic name for frame drum). The frame drum had goat skin *kulit kibas*. This means that the frame drum, according to the Koran, is allowed to be used. As we know some Muslims won't allow any kind of drumming or any use of musical instruments. In the case of *uruh*, that is competition between groups they usually have a fire to burn the chains so that they are white or red hot. A while ago in this area they said that they didn't use red hot chains but now they are saying that it is not only on the west coast in Meulaboh but it is also here that sometimes they have red hot chains, especially in a competition. The audience consists mostly of women and children who are separated from the performers by a space. Sometimes little boys take part at the age of ten years. They learn

how to perform in the *surau* (the Muslim boys' schools). They are not allowed to learn in other art forms in the *surau*.

SIDE B of Tape

... (tape starts abruptly) ...

*ilmu dabus* (the ability to lead and perform *dabus*) and also *ilmu bersmedi* (the ability to meditate). He is in fact a *pawang*. *Pawang* is the local pre-Muslim word for shaman. He can bestow this knowledge on other people once he has acquired it and considerable quantities of it himself. His third ability is that he can protect people while they are performing because he has given the *ilmu* (ability to perform) to them. Therefore he can protect them while they perform. The fourth ability he has is *ilmu rapai* (the ability to play and to lead the drumming). He can use this *ilmu* to raise the pitch of *rapais* if necessary while he is reading prayers. Fifthly he has *ilmu prang* (knowledge of how to wage war). In traditional practice he decides whether they go to war. Traditionally, *dabus* was either performed before a war or in the harvesting season for entertainment when everyone could afford it. He believes he acquired the *ilmu* from Nabi Daud (the prophet David) who was the expert in the field of physical invulnerability. He was so learnt (?) from Ibrahim who was the specialist on red hot chains and fire in general.

To reiterate, with a little bit more detail about the sounds produced on the frame drum.

*Gung* is the sound produced when you beat on the edge of the drum with your hand curled a little bit to make a low pitch which is the bass sound.

*Pereung* or *cereung*, which is a high sound, not damped, is obtained by beating the finger of the edge of the skin of the drum.

*Pereuk* is obtained by beating the whole hand and the fingers in the middle of the drum and gives a medium-pitched sound.

A frame drum that is not used in *dabus* includes *rapai bereuk* which is the smallest of all *rapai*. It is made from *tualang* wood. It is about 16" in diameter.

They also have gongs in this area which have diameters of 8", the bosses have a diameter of 1á«á". This is irrelevant to *dabus*.

The *rapai pase* which is used in *dabus* is suspended from a stand because it is so large. It was found in Kharajuangø Pase kingdom, Kecamatan Sameudera, which was the first kingdom in Aceh. It is about 16" long, 3" in diameter at one end and at the other end about 2á¬á' in diameter. It

is a frame drum with a very large body which curves inward like a waist of a human being. It is drawn on page 241 of my field notes. It is tightened at the back with *rattan* and played with one fist while the other hand holds the back edge, so the player is standing. It is played only on occasions when important guests are received during which time 10-15 and even 20 of these *rapai pase* are played together. There may be a competition between them.

Now for a summary of *rapai* in northern Aceh.

First of all just to comment: to get *ilmu kebal* (invulnerability) you have to inherit this skill, you can't learn it. But it is not just people who practice *dabus* that are invulnerable. For example, if you carry a pick chain in your pocket this means that you are *sakti*, that you have acquired this ability too. □ The set of 5 *rapai pase* drums are very highly respected gifts of the ancestors. We didn't get to see these but the following is based on a description which was given to us. These drums are suspended from a big wooden frame with 5-10 *rapai* suspended on each, 1 on one side and another frame on the other side (?). Each *rapai* has its own name, for example, there are *si keuneng* (the yellow one), *si mirah* (the red one), *si kunyet* (the kunyet-coloured one). Each *rapai* has a proper name like the gongs in Java, they are so highly respected. In this *kabupaten*, there are still 7 groups of *rapai pase* players. The skin of the drum is made from *lumbuh* (cow). These 7 groups were assisted by the Government to buy the leather to keep their *rapai* in shape. So that means there are about 200 *rapai pase* in North Aceh, for example, in the town of Lhok Sukon, Matangkuli, Arun, Baktiya and Senudon.

In the western part of Aceh there is no *rapai pase*, it is only in the northern and eastern part of Aceh. There are some quite wild stories about *dabus* performers pulling out their eyes, cutting off their tongues and putting them back again and jabbing themselves in the stomach. One king who was supposed to have a very high ability in this area was Rajah Mahmud. He is dead now but was a very clever royal person who acquired invulnerability.

*Dabus* today is almost always performed at official ceremonies for the Government and Mobil Oil. *Dabus* has been encouraged since *Pelita 2* (five year plan no.2). As I said, the performers have to be given steamed *pulut* (rice), coffee and transport. If two people play, then that means two lots of food. Normally they just play for half an hour each.

*Rapai dabus* is the normal type of frame drum used in almost all *kecamantan* in Aceh where *dabus* is performed. In addition there is *rapai puleut* which is used for gymnastic displays. In the

*kecamantan* called Peusangan Samalanga, they use the *rapai grimfeng* and the *rapai dabus* to accompany dance. To perform on *rapai grimfeng* (*grimpheng*) the performer sits, not squats. It is smaller than the *rapai dabus* and it is popular in Samalanga and in the Dwara Dua Kecamatan.

The biggest of the frame drums is the *pase*; the next size down is the *dabus*; then there is the *grimfeng*. When these *rapai* are performed together, the competitions usually go all night. The *rapai pase*, or *pusaka* as they are also called are covered with a yellow cloth when they are not being played, as a sign of respect. The yellow cloth is moved to the top of the frame when it is played. The only difference in the way of performing *rapai pase* and *rapai dabus* is that in the *rapai dabus* the players sit and in the *rapai pase* the players have to stand to beat it. There is no *shekh* in *dabus*, only in *sendati*. A *kali rapai* is the leader of the drumming. A *kalifah* is the head of all the dancers, the whole *dabus* show. On this occasion the name of the *kali rapai* was Mochtar Ansari, a specialist in Aceh.

To repeat, there are five basic *rapai dabus* rhythm patterns

- 1) *pruk pon*, which contains many separate rhythms,
- 2) *dike*,
- 3) *kuta meuligo* (palace),
- 4) *lagu dabus*,
- 5) *lagu pruk habett*, this last one is so difficult that the performers were not able to play it. □□

*Pruk pon* rhythm is in *pereuk* pitch only and in free rhythm, introductory, with the fingers wide open beating on the drum. *Gung* is almost low c, *cereung* is high c and *pereuk* is a damped high c. (see attached sheet for examples)

There is a rhythm called *lagu takbir*/ played in the *surau* (the Muslim boys' houses) at the end of the fasting month's celebrations. On this occasion the *rapai* have to begin with *lagu takbir* or *ngadap* which literally means played at holy ceremonies. If they play on Friday nights or on other Islamic celebrations, they perform those rhythms. The piece *Lagu Takbir* is sung slowly by everyone in choral unison. The *rapai* and choir are led by the *kali rapai*.

There is another *irama* or rhythm which I mentioned ...e.g... (see attached sheet) where the low pitch is notated in the bass clef, c below middle c, and the other note around middle c. □As I mentioned, the inherited *rapai* are very respected and given proper names such as Raja Itam (black

king); Raja Naga (snake king). Putro Ijo; Buya Itam (black crocodile); Putro Bahrin (name of an anti-Dutch heroine) in Aceh Besar. Other proper names for *rapai* are Boh Beureutah (like a bomb); Gulan teure (?) Cat Uroe (lightning in the middle of the day); Duta Gileng (someone who can crush other sounds because it is so high pitched and loud); Siracon (the poisoning one); Geulanteuh (hililintar), and Gunong Geureudong (one of the highest mountains in Aceh, 2900 metres high, and near the area where we recorded).

*Irama pase* starts off with *dike takbir* rhythm and then there is *salawat* singing when guests are paid respect and welcomed. Then there is no more singing, there is only *rapai* playing. It goes on all night starting at 10 p.m. and going through to 6 a.m., dawn, after which it is not allowed to be played. In former times, the *dabus* rhythms were used to praise guests, just like the *pase* but that doesn't happen very much at the moment. Among the sounds made on the drum, *gung*, the deeper sound, is the most important theoretically for the *pase*. *Cereung* is the most important sound for the *rapai dabus*.

There are several rhythms, the first is *lagu sa*, in Acehnese which means the first rhythm, (*sa* is *satu* or first). Then there is *lagu dua*, (second rhythm); then there is *lagu lhee* (third rhythm); then there is the fourth rhythm *lagu limong*; fifthly there is *lagu tujoh* (seven). In this region *lagu* is (means) rhythm. Depending of the skill of *kali rapai* (the leader of the drumming), the performers maybe be very adept at improvising. Sometimes you have a very free performance. In the case of a competition, the jury will say that in the case of a side that does not win is the one which is out of time with each other, this being referred to as *meugeunton gum*. Some interlocking of the rhythms takes place (see transcription). While the drumming continues, people call out "he!" in a very high pitched voice. That is called *surak menang*. In Java that is known as *senggakan*, someone exclaiming in the middle of things to give spirit. *Lagu dua* is ...(see example)... it keeps repeating over and over. In the case of the third rhythm, you also get *gung* and *cereung* (notated on the bottom of page 243). *Lagu lima* is ...(see example). ... *Lagu tujoh* is ...(see example).

A beautiful sound on any *rapai*, including the *rapai pase*, is called *got su*. The quality of playing or the sound of the *rapai dabus* is evaluated according to its *pereuk* stroke, while the *rapai pase* is evaluated according to its *gum* sound (the most important sound of the *rapai pase*). The term for strong or loud is *kreueh*, because it is high pitched. Here, people don't talk of high pitched but of loud pitched. *Gum*, the low pitched sound of the *rapai pase* can also be described as *kreung*. It is a good thing to say. It means loud because it is high pitched and the taughtness of the drum is correct.

*Suara pusing*<sup>2</sup> means the sound has been lost for a long time, i.e. beautiful. It is much more difficult they say to play the *lagu lawan* (interlocking sound). The *lagu lawan* (off beat rhythms) are much more difficult to play than the *lagu pokok* (down beats). *Lagu lawan* players interlock with the *lagu pokok* players.

The term for a group of drummers is *sigodong*, and the opposing interlocking group is called *sigodongi* or *lawan sigodongi* (enemy). If there is a group of sitting *dabus* players, they are called *sigodeuk*. If they are standing then they are called *sigodong*. The standing players of course would be playing the *rapai pase*. The sitting ones would be playing *rapai dabus*.

According to the statistics of the office of the Department of Education and Culture in Lhok Sewumawe on the 12th Oct. 1982, the following *kecamatan* in North Aceh had *pase* drums; Syam Talira Aron, Matang Kulir, Baktiya, Tanah Jambo Aye<sup>2</sup> and Lhok Sukon. According to this Department, there are *dabus*, or in the official Acehnese spelling, *daboh*, groups in the following areas:

Kc. Samalanga

Peudada

Jeumpa

Peusangan

Muara Batu

Dewantara

Muara Dua

Syam Talira Bayu

Samudera

For comparison with other Islamic art forms, *nasyid* or *gambus* groups are found in the following areas:

Samalanga

Peudada

Jeumpa

Peusangan

Gandapura

Muara Batu

Dewantara

Muara Dua  
Banda Sakti  
Samudera  
Syam Talira Aron  
Baktiya

The *rapai pase* is only played in this area and is only used for religious purposes, including *dabus*. But it is not associated with trance or non-Muslim mysticism. The leader of a *rapai dabus* group must be a *Kuat Agana* (strong on religion).

In this area leather is known as *kulik*. Wooden is *baluk*, e.g. the wooden part of the drum is called *baluk*. The rim of the leather is called *bingke*. The *ratan* that links the drum together is called *sidak*, while a big wooden peg used to tighten the *ratan* is called *keulaphat*.

All these *rapai* were used for war. The waisted frames of the *rapai pase* are about 3' long. The purpose of *rapai pase* music is to praise God and heroism for war as well as for entertainment and competition.

Some of our informants included a lady Aisyah Daud of the Education and Culture Office in Lhokseumawe, Kabupaten Aceh Utara. Another informant was Djakfar Ismail, head of the staff of the Dept. of Ed. and Culture in Lhokseumawe. Also we interviewed an expert musician on the *rapai pase*. His name was M. Husin Amin. He was the *penilik kebudayaan* (leader of culture) in Kc. Jamboaye, North Aceh. The songs in *dabus* often mention the prophets Isa, Daud, Harun, Adam and of course Muhammad. *Rapai* is not allowed to be played on the occasion of the birth of Muhammad except on the first day of *Moharram*.

We went to the museum Malikussaleh. The Pase kingdom was first centred in Malikus Saleh. The graves of Mali Kusaleh of the Pase ocean kingdom, the first Islamic kingdom in Indonesia, are here. There is a grave of a Gujarati there with writing in Arabic. The Dutch first landed here in 1873. This is where Cut Mutia, the husband of Nangaweh, a north Acehenese hero was shot. It is supposed to be from 1225 A.D. It is a grave with Javanese writing on it.

We visited the grave of the first Pase King, Mali Kussaleh (1220-1297 A.D.). He acquired his Muslim name and rank after his conversion to Islam. Many people come to his grave for a *kenduri* (

a religious ceremony). They bring goats and rice etc.. The Portuguese came to this area where the grave is the 16th Cent. but they didn't leave any traces. They fled from Pase to the Gayo area in the interior of Aceh because the Pase kingdom was powerful. Recently many coins, some Chinese, were, and still are being, found in this area. Javanese Kings from Mujopayat apparently attacked this grave too. The whole of the Al Quran is carved on the grave which proves that there was a deep Islamic knowledge here at that time. Marco Polo said that the marble was brought here from Gujarat. In fact the marble for this grave came from Gujarat. Malik Ibrahim, the son of the King went from Jakarta to Beuten. The quality of the carving on the marble graves is very high.

Hindu-shaped grave stones. The ruin of the palace is still there. 167 ceramic plates have been found here. There is some Javanese writing on one of the graves which can't be deciphered. The Hindu shapes of the graves prove that Hindus lived here before Islam came.

The Samudera kingdom and the Pase kingdom became one kingdom when Queen Raja Putri Nahrisah (1405-1428) was in power. Her descendants included Almalikussaleh. Her name is written in Arabic on the marble of the grave.

Sultan Zain al-`Abidin (ca. 1477-1500) lived here in the period of Sultan Mancur Syah of Malacca (1458-77). He had asked help from Malacca in a civil war in the region. Malacca sent an army and weapons to Pase. On the grave of the Sultan is written Sultan Zain al-`Abidin ibn Mahmud but the year can't be deciphered. That stone is in the Jakarta museum now. When the Mujopayat kingdom attacked Pase, defeated Sultan Ahmad Malik al-Zahir (1346-83) fled.

The story *Hikayat Raja2 Pasia* is about this event. (See the journal of the Malayan branch of the Royal Asiatic Society which describes the *Hikayat Raja2 Pasia*, the revised Romanised version of the Raffles manuscript 67, in which translation by A.H. Hill, vol 33, Pt.2 No.190. Pasi is the local word for *pasisia* or post.

According to Mark Durie, whom we met in this area, in the Pidie area you write *dabo-h*, not *daboih* and you write Hasan, Husen. (page 82 of field notes). This is according to 'Tatabahasa Aceh' by Budiman Sulaiman. There are dialectic variations throughout Aceh, e.g. in Pide you can write *daboih*. The best way to write *rapai* is *rapa'-i*, or *rapa'i*. In Acehnese, you write *seurune kalee* whilst in Meulaboh it is written *seurune kale*. You should write *geureumpheng*.

On this field trip we went by road from Medan, the capital of North Sumatra up through Kualasimpang and Langsa which is in south-east Aceh to Lhok Seumawe, and from there to Sigli and Banda Aceh. On the way to, and from, Banda Aceh to Lhok Seumawe we went through Takengon.

In west Sumatra, according to the statistics of the Department of Education and Culture, *dabus* is found VII Koto Sei Sarik in the Pariaman area and VI Lingkung. In Banda Aceh, we were informed by department officials that *dabus* is very rare in Aceh Besar, the area around the capital Banda Aceh, but it is found in almost every *kampung* in north and west Aceh. The heroine Cut Nya'dien fought against the Dutch from 1905. Her husband was Tengku Chik Ditiro who was born in Pide and was capture by the Dutch in 1905 and sent to Java. He died in Sumadang in 1908. There are not many songs in Aceh about Cut Nya'dein or anything else because religion does not approve of too much singing. Now they are beginning to create lots of songs and lullabies, and revolutionary songs are being sung again.

The art of self-defence, *silat* is popular only in south and west Aceh where there is a Malay influence and where other Malay art is popular.

That is the end of field notes of Acehnese *dabus* 1982, Fieldbook 13.