

## VI. List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding

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### 1. Saman Dance

A. Local name : Saman

B. History, background

The Saman dance is cultural heritage of the Gayo people traceable to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, developed later by Syeh Saman incorporating religious messages.

C. Area

Gayo Lues District, Aceh Tenggara District, Tamiang Hulu (Aceh Tamiang District), Takengon (Central Aceh District), Lukup Serbejadi (East Aceh District), all in the Province of Aceh, the northernmost province of the Indonesian island of Sumatra., and other provinces having Gayo communities (See Maps). It is performed in villages, underneath *manah* (*lumbung* building for storing rice), underneath *mersah* /(*meunasah* traditional dormitory for boys and young men), on the borders of ricefields, backs of buffaloes, the banks of rivers, on festive occasions such as marriages, national or religious holidays, welcoming of guests, or inter-village visits

D. Community

The Saman community comprises: Saman players, Saman trainers (*Penangkat*), Saman enthusiasts, members of Saman groups, craftspersons who make traditional Saman costumes, prominent religious figures, leaders of traditional customs, arts teachers and government officials.

E. Year of inscription: Nominated in 2010, for inscription by UNESCO in 2011

F. Community involvement

The Saman community have been involved in the process of nomination of Saman in the following ways:

- Saman community members have been involved in the team which has drafted the nomination file;
- Community members have been invited to the meetings of this team;
- Field research among the Saman community has been conducted in Blangkejeren, Gayo Lues district and surrounding areas and in Banda

Aceh. Research was conducted using a questionnaire of 44 questions, administered to 83 respondents from the Saman community. The interviews were entirely voluntary, not all respondents replied to all questions.

- Representatives of the Saman community from various places attended the Verification Seminar (22<sup>nd</sup> February 2010 at Bale Musara, Blangkejeren, Gayo Lues District, Aceh Province) and gave their input in the form of additions and corrections to the draft nomination file.
- 64 of the abovementioned Saman community representatives have signed a statement of participation and free and informed prior consent to the corrected nomination file. This signed statement is annexed to the nomination file.
- Saman community representatives present at the Verification Seminar on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2010 at Bale Musara, Blangkejeren, Gayo Lues District, Aceh Province, have signed a Declaration of mutual respect and cooperation to safeguard Saman Cultural Heritage. A photocopy of this document and its translation are annexed to the nomination file.

#### G. Practitioners

Saman players, Saman trainers (*Penangkat*), Saman enthusiasts, members of Saman groups, craftspersons who make traditional Saman costumes, prominent religious figures, leaders of traditional customs, arts teachers and government officials.

#### H. Relevant events

Saman Festivals are conducted by the government of Gayo Lues District.

#### I. Abstract

The Saman dance is cultural heritage of the Gayo people traceable to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, developed later by Syeh Saman incorporating religious messages. Saman is performed by boys and young men, always in odd numbers, sitting on their heels or kneeling in tight rows. The players wear black costumes embroidered with colourful Gayo motifs, symbolizing nature and noble values. the trainer or leader, called *penangkat* sits in the middle of the line and leads singing of verses containing messages about tradition, development, religion, advice, sarcasm, humor and even romance. Players clap their hands, slap their chests, thighs and the ground, click their fingers, sway and twist their bodies and heads forward and backward, left and right, synchronizing with the rhythm, sometimes slow, sometimes fast and energetic, in unison or with alternate dancers making opposite moves. Saman movements symbolize nature, the environment, and daily lives of Gayo people. Villages invite each other for Saman competitions to build friendly relationships . Saman is performed to celebrate national and religious holidays, and is a game among village children, who learn it informally. The frequency of Saman performances and transmission are decreasing, despite community and government efforts. Therefore safeguarding is urgently needed.

J. Safeguarding projects

Until now, there have been safeguarding efforts conducted by the government of Gayo Lues District, Aceh Province., in the form of establishing and supporting a Saman Group, and organizing a Saman Festival.

K. Study survey project carried out by scholars

Research for preparation of the nomination file of the Saman Dance for inscription on the Urgent Safeguarding List was conducted by a team lead by Drs. Harry Waluyo of the Centre for Research and Development of Culture in February-March 2010.

L. Safeguarding measures

The nomination file contains a detailed seven point safeguarding plan, to be conducted over a period of four years, from 2010-2015.

The plan consists of :

- Inventory of Saman Intangible Cultural Heritage (2010-2011)
- Research and Publication (2011-2012)
- Teaching Materials and Promotion (2010-2015)
- Transmission of Culture (2012-2015)
- Saman Groups and Organizations (2011-2015)
- Revitalization of Saman (2010-2015)
- Gayo Arts and Culture Centre (2011-2015)