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## Gotong-royong and Halal Slaughter Practice in Feast Held by Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia

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### Abstract

Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia Association (PSSCM) is a martial art organisation that functions not only to develop and expand the Malay silat but also to educate members and families to practise Malay-Muslims way of life. The main purpose of this paper is to clarify and explain the method of developing human capital among members of the PSSCM through the practice of volunteering, gotong-royong, slaughtering, processing and preparing halal food and feast. Observation was done using case studies, interviews and personal acknowledgement of members who involved directly in these practices. All these practices were carried out in celebrating holy days in Islam and also official ceremonies organised by the association at state as well as national level. The methods and approaches applied were deemed to inculcate positive manners such as volunteering, leadership, teamwork and strengthening the relationship among the members and society. Apart from that, members could also interact and communicate effectively and be independent in the efforts to develop the economy and improve the management of the association. In the context of the slaughter practice and the preparation of halal food, self-development could be more nourished in implementing the requirements of the religion and culture of the Malay-Muslim. Eventually, the concept of teamwork in form of gotong-royong that is part of the culture can once more be practised and sustained for future generation

**Keywords:** Teamwork, Gotong-Royong, Slaughter, Food, Halal, Feast.

### Introduction

Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia Association (PSSCM) is a martial arts organization that practices the concept of "togetherness and unity" in carrying out its mission to maintain and sustain the values of positive Malay-Islam warriors (Majid, 2016). Besides developing and expanding Silat martial arts, this association also inculcates the members and their families to practice the Malay-Islam way of life (Ismail, 2016). In this context, PSSCM has been very proactive in encouraging activities

such as slaughtering and processing halal food in systematic manners through gotong-royong and feast. *"So eat of (halal slaughter of animals), which referred to the name of Allah while slaughtering, if you believe in the revelations of-His"* (Sūrah al-An'am: 118). According to this verse, it is mandatory to slaughter halal animals to ensure that they are halal for Muslim to consume. Kathir (1999) explained that Allah S.W.T. enjoins His believers to consume halal food, that is, animals slaughtered in the name of Allah S.W.T. At the same time, this verse is also meant to retort the Musyrikin who allowed carrion to be consumed. The original way of holding a feast is once again practised in a collective manner by the members of PSSCM especially in celebrating holy days in Islam and official Silat ceremonies at state as well as national level.

It is important for the members of PSSCM and Muslim community in general to learn and practice the correct method to slaughter and to process halal food as today's modern way of holding feast such as using the catering service is found to be less effective in promoting the spirit of togetherness envisioned by PSSCM. This situation has become even worrying when those who are expert in these field are decreasing. Besides that, the assumption that these practices (processing halal food, halal slaughter, and gotong-royong) are only Fardh al-Kifayah or communal obligation for Muslims has caused these practices to be extinct. Hence, PSSCM takes the initiative to implement these practices so as to sustain the spirit of togetherness.

### **The Practice of Gotong-royong and Silat**

Gotong-royong means cooperation by members of community (Kamus Dewan). It is a social-traditional practice that can strengthen social relationship among family members and community. This practice is especially crucial for Malays in the Peninsular and the entire Nusantara archipelago in accomplishing works that require cooperation by everyone such as paddy cultivation. Gotong-royong is also practised in social activities like holding feast, cleaning the village, constructing roads and moving houses (Sejarah & Melayu, 1995). Nonetheless, due to urbanisation and changes in economic structure and social values of the people, this practice has now been replaced with more modern system based on economic status and individualism.

In Islam, helping each other is encouraged and it is stated in the second verse of Al-Maidah: *"And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty"*. According to Kathir (1999), this verse explains that Muslims have to cooperate in carrying out good deeds and piety and not to cooperate in committing sin. This proposition is supported by several other Hadiths such as *"Messenger of Allah said, "If anyone calls others to follow right guidance, his reward will be equivalent to those who follow him (in righteousness) without their reward being diminished in any respect, and if anyone invites others to follow error, the sin, will be equivalent to that of the people who follow him (in sinfulness) without their sins being diminished in any respect"* (Sahih Muslim, 1997). Al-Nawawi (1392H) in his commentary on the hadith said that those who teach good deeds or bad deeds shall receive what they deserve accordingly.

In Malay tradition, gotong-royong has been practiced for generations. It is an interpretation of congregational concept of Islam in the Malay ways of life. Though this practice is not financially driven, it however requires each member of the community to collectively contribute by helping each other in carrying out heavy tasks. This practice is also reciprocated among the neighborhoods or groups because they believe that *"one good turn deserves another"*. As for example, in holding wedding ceremony, gotong-royong is not only limited to

handle the ceremony, but also involves contribution in terms of cooking ingredients and tools used specifically for the ceremony. Main ingredients such as rice, sugar and onions are sponsored by neighbors or relatives. These contributions will then be reciprocated when another member of the community wishes to hold the ceremony in the future.

The practice of gotong-royong meets the objective of PSSCM that has members all over the country. With limited financial source and in the spirit of Malay-Islam warriors, gotong-royong is suitable to be applied among the members. The economy of PSSCM has been developed under the notion of self-independence as it is one of the objectives of PSSCM:

“to inculcate the spirit of self-reliance and sense of responsibility towards oneself”  
(PSSCM, 2016; PSSCMUSM Constitution, 2005)

As a result of the above concept, PSSCM has held many activities through gotong-royong. This approach is hoped to develop human capitals who carry positive values and able to sustain the sociocultural and socioeconomic components that have been developed by their ancestors.

### **Celebration of Holy Days in Islam and Official Silat Ceremonies**

The use of Gregorian calendar (Masehi) as opposed to Islamic calendar has made the new generation to be less or unaware of the important dates in Islam that should be celebrated. In accordance to that, PSSCM has taken an initiative to revive the use of Islamic calendar by holding ceremonies to celebrate holy days and months in Islam in the hope that the practices are preserved without neglecting the existing system (PSSCM, 2015). Every year at state and national level, PSSCM celebrates Islamic New Year (Awal Muharram), Isra and Mi'raj, Mid-Sha'ban, First revelation (Nuzul Quran), Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, and Mawlid al-Nabi with suitable activities. Besides celebrating these holy ceremonies, PSSCM also holds programs like PSSCM general assembly, convocation and trainer day at national level.

In order to ensure that the ceremonies celebrated are handled smoothly, PSSCM at national level, agrees that at least two celebrations should be combined (PSSCM, 2017). With the combination of at least two celebrations in one, the content of the programs and the members who attend the programs can easily be managed. As for examples, PSSCM combines the celebration of Trainer Day and Islamic New Year, Convocation and General Assembly, Eid al-Fitr and Traditional Sport Carnival (PSSCM, 2014; PSSCM 2017). Important ceremonies such as Karnival Waja Diri however, is held separately as it involves thousands of PSSCM members and takes more than one day. Eid al-Adha is celebrated at every state and also at national level. The celebration starts with the Eid Takbir on the eve of Eid al-Adha and followed by the prayer in the morning and the slaughters of cattles and goats through gotong-royong and feast (PSSCM, 2015). All the mentioned celebrations held by PSSCM are meant to ensure their members continue to practice these Malay-Islam values hand in hand with the current values.

### **Slaughter Course for Members of PSSCM and its Implementation**

When PSSCM holds slaughter programs for almost every Eid al-Adha, they have successfully instilled awareness of the importance of the slaughter methods according to Islam. Slaughtering or sacrificing cattles requires expert or accredited slaughterers who are now very limited in numbers. The expert slaughterers needed can no longer be fulfilled by the State Islamic Religious Council that PSSCM has to wait for their turns. In order to curb the situation, PSSCM takes an initiative to send several members to take the slaughter course held by the State Islamic Religious

Council to produce more expert and accredited slaughterers. Nonetheless, this effort is not as easy as it looks because it requires not only those who have knowledge on how to perform the correct slaughter but also those who are willing, resolute and particular in performing the task.

Since sending members of PSSCM to take the slaughter course does not help much in tackling the problem, the organisation starts to hold their own slaughter course that is monitored by representatives from State Islamic Religious Council (Ahmad, Jaih, Ismail, 2017). In Penang and few other states, for example, PSSCM have appointed members who have experience as mentors to hold their own slaughter course. These courses are monitored by the State Islamic Religious Councils who act as advisers and issue certificate or accreditation to participants who pass the course. (Figure 1) The course is carried out in two parts; the theoretical part and practical part of the slaughtering and skinning process. Slaughter is a religious act and an art that needs to be learned because it has some steps and strict guidelines that need to be adhered (Othman, 2010; JAKIM, 2013). To ensure that all steps and guidelines are adhered, PSSCM provides suitable place, interested members and candidates to learn and tools required such as knives and machetes (PSSCMCNK, 2017). In addition to that, PSSCM also provides animals to be slaughtered during the course like chickens, goats and cattle.

	
<p>Sample certificates of accredited slaughterer from MAIPP</p>	<p>Examples of Poster of Slaughter Course held by PSSCM Kelantan Branch (PSSCMCK, 2017)</p>

Figure 1: Sample certificate of an accredited Slaughterer from Penang Islamic Religious Council (MAIPP) and poster of a Slaughter Course held by PSSCM Kelantan branch

The speakers for the courses come from the State Islamic Religious Councils themselves whereas the accredited slaughterers are from PSSCM. There are eight components of performing the slaughter taught in the course; how to have correct intention (niyyah), how the animals are slaughtered in a comfortable way, how to cut the throat, food-tract and jugular veins, how to position the animal prior to the slaughter, the animals that are permitted for Muslims to eat, sharp knife and how to slaughter the animal in one stroke. The participants are also reminded to remain in Islam faith and not in ihram while performing the slaughter (Syeikh Abd Ghani, 2010; JAKIM, 2013) (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Slaughter Course organised by PSSCM Kelantan Branch inconjunction with Kelantan Islamic Religious Affairs on June 2nd 2017 (7 Ramadhan 1438 H) (PSSCMCNK, 2017)

### Gotong-royong in Processing, Cooking and Holding Feast

Gotong-royong and feast have been practised by PSSCM in sacrifice since 1994 (PSSCMCPP, 1995). Sacrifice of animal like cattle is done every year during the celebration of Eid al-Adha by most PSSCM branches. The practice is carried out according to the Trade Description Act 1972 (Food Regulation 1975) that determines the methods and the management of slaughter. Besides that, they also observe the Guidelines for Foods and Beverages (Halal) issued by Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) and State Islamic Department. Permits from State Department of Veterinary Service are also required to perform the slaughter outside slaughterhouse (PSSCMCPP, 1995). The cattle used for the sacrifice usually bought and chosen based on JAKIM guideline (JAKIM, 2013). All the seven buyers of the cattle should attend during the slaughtering process to give permission to the slaughterer and to witness all the process from slaughtering to skinning. The meat and all the parts of the cattle are then separated into seven parts before they are given to Muslim neighbors, poor people and to PSSCM for feast (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Example of the slaughtering and skinning process at PSSCM Penang Branch (PSSCMCPP, 2010, photos courtesy of Mr. Azlizal).

Some parts of the meat is given away to hold a feast that is done in gotong-royong by members of PSSCM, family members and people from the community (JAKIM, 2013). The Eid al-Adha feast is then celebrated together and the food from the sacrifice is the main dish for that day.

The gotong-royong practice in slaughtering and cooking the food for Eid al-Adha is crucial especially when the program is organized at national level when it normally involves more than one thousand participants that require food preparation of up to three mealtimes (breakfast, lunch and high tea). As for examples, the concept of gotong-royong was practiced during the 34th Convocation Ceremony that was organized along with the 45th General Assembly of PSSCM on 20th May 2017 (23rd Syaaban 1438H). The cooking team who called themselves the The Warrior Kitchen was led by a chef<sup>1</sup> who was also a member of PSSCM from Pahang. This method of organising feast and programs have saved the cost for almost 50% as compared to catering and tender system<sup>2</sup>. On top of that, this practice has proven to be the medium to instill the spirit of volunteerism and to strengthen the bonds between members of PSSCM (Figure 4).

<sup>1</sup> Chef Abdul Raof Bin Muntil is the Chief of Information and Class Supervision PSSCM Pahang Branch. He is the lead chef of The Warrior Kitchen, who manages and supervises the food for the program.

<sup>2</sup> Statement made by Miss Nur Farrah Diyana bt Samsudin, 24 years old, on 20th June 2017. She is one of the trainers for SSCM and also a student of INTEC in Certificate in Professional Accounting.



Figure 4: Gotong-royong practice in preparing food (Photo courtesy of YDP, PSSCMJDT, 2017)

The combination of soft skills like volunteerism, teamwork and efficient communication skills are needed by university graduates. Most university students involved in these programs believed that the concepts used had spread the spirit of togetherness among the members and inculcated them with good values<sup>3</sup>. This is because the experience of practicing gotong-royong cannot be gained by just attending lectures at universities.

All the practice like slaughtering, preparing place and tools to cook, choosing the menu, and buying all the ingredients in big events organized by PSSCM are aligned to the command of Allah SWT in verse 71 at-Tawbah "The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoy what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayer and give zakah and obey Allah and His Messenger. Those - Allah will have mercy upon them. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise". In this verse, Allah SWT says that the believers with good characteristics are those who help each other's in righteousness (Kathir, 1999). This approach has also educated the members with good values and sustained the organization that was established through the concept of volunteerism, identity and independence.

### Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, the programs organized by PSSCM prove that they have successfully brought back to life the elements of Malay Islam that has been practiced by their forefathers. PSSCM has also managed to produce accredited and expert slaughterers and prepare them for events such as during Eid al-Adha. Soft skills like gotong-royong in the slaughtering process and preparing halal food for feast has been well practiced by members of PSSCM. Besides that, this concept has also improved the members of PSSCM in terms of management and economy. All in all, the concept of gotong-royong applied in all programs organized by PSSCM

<sup>3</sup> Statement made by Miss Nur Farrah Diyana bt Samsudin, 24 years old, on 20th June 2017. She is one of the trainers for SSCM and also a student of INTEC in Certificate in Professional Accounting.

has shown that this organization is the key player in sustaining the concept that has been practiced by the Malays in glorifying Islamic sharia in their daily life.

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