



BIOGRAPHY

Dr Kavitha Ganesan is a Senior Lecturer at the Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning, Universiti Malaysia Sabah. Primarily trained in English Literature, Kavitha's journey with the indigenous Lundayehs began ten years ago through her broader work in the field of gender and postcolonial studies. She has spent time in the native village of Long Pasia studying the changes to the Lundayeh diet due to the influence brought by modernization and encroaching deforestation activities which had far reaching consequences to the gender complementarity that existed among the Lundayeh male and female. Her article on the shifting food systems has been published in James Cook University's in-house journal, *eTropic* ("Environmental Challenges and Traditional Food Practices: The Indigenous Lundayeh of Long Pasia, Sabah, Borneo", Vol. 19, No.1, 2020). It is while collecting the data for her research on the food systems that she secured a grant (FRGS/1/2018/WAB06/UMS/02/1) from the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education to document the oral tradition of the indigenous Lundayehs thus beginning her journey in the oral histories of the community. Her chapter, "Headhunting and Native Agency in Lundayeh Oral Literature" has been published in *The Routledge Companion to Humanism and Literature* (2022) edited by Michael Bryson. She recently won the microgrant for Environmental Humanities Month from the University of Helsinki for her work on the *Tengayen* Snack, which is a crisp form innovated by her research team from the traditional Lundayeh soup, *biter*. Kavitha currently serves as the Deputy Dean of Research, Innovation, and Community Services at the centre where she has been working for the past twenty years.

EVENT: ONLINE MARKETING EVENT

DATE: 24 NOVEMBER 2023

TIME: MALAYSIAN TIME 2-4PM

**ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES: ONLINE MARKETING
CAMPAIGN FOR TENGAYEN SNACK**

Friday, November 24 · 2:00 – 4:00pm

Time zone: Asia/Kuala_Lumpur

Google Meet joining info

Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/hzi-rfyv-ysd>

Or dial: (US) +1 402-695-5121 PIN: 392 009 346#

ABSTRACT

Tengayen, the unsung hero of the highlands: Relocating the humble wild vegetable as a crisp in modern Lundayeh diet

Kavitha Ganesan
University Malaysia Sabah
kavitha@ums.edu.my
0000-0002-5248-810

This microgrant is applied to fund an online marketing campaign of the Tengayen Snack, which is a type of crisp innovatively developed from the traditional Lundayeh rice porridge, commonly known as biter. Lundayeh, are an indigenous community, currently inhabiting Long Pasia and Long Mio villages in the Ulu Padas region. Though there are many types of wild vegetables that the highland Lundayehs consumed, tengayen, a humble plant that grew by the riverbanks, held a very special place in their native diet. As a member of the nettle family, tengayen leaves are elongated and hairy. This is perhaps the reason why the Lundayehs only consume the young shoots and crinkle them using bare hands while washing the leaves. The ingenious way that the natives have developed to handle the hairy feature of the shoots is by boiling it together with highland home-grown rice under high heat in order to break the leaves which also releases the slippery texture of the leaves and blends well to become a green liquid of porridge, or *biter*. *Tengayen* is not known to outsiders; my first encounter with it was seven years ago and I still relish the times I spent in Long Pasia and Long Mio when I was served with the gooey *biter*. Having spent twenty years in Kota Kinabalu, I brought a team of food scientists to these villages in year 2020 and together, we created a crisp form of the Lundayeh *biter* through a drum drying method, that we named as *Tengayen* Snack, which is now ready for marketing. The idea to turn biter to a crisp form came from the ongoing threats that the community is facing due to rapid logging activities, and increasing

abandonment of village-life following Lundayeh youngsters' migration to city centres.



Figure 1: *Biter*, the rice porridge



Figure 2: Tengayen leaves



Figure 3: *Tengayen* Snack (a crisp form of the traditional *biter* innovated through a drum drying method)



Figure 4: Lundayeh women with the wild vegetables and fruits foraged from the jungle