

**Balancing the Spiritual and Physical Worlds :
Memory, Responsibility and Survival in the
Rituals of the Sama Dilaut (Bajau laut) in
Sitangkai, Tawi-Tawi, Southern Philippines and
Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia**

By:

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(Paper presented at the Conference "***Oceans of Sound:
Sama Dilaut Performing Arts***" held on 9 September 2010
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PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME**Oceans of Sound: Sama Dilaut Performing Arts**

Thursday, 9 September 2010, Amsterdam

Registration (9.00 - 9.30)

Session 1 (9.30 - 11.00)

Dr Birgit Abels (IIAS & Universiteit van Amsterdam, the Netherlands): Opening**Em. Prof. Nicole Revel** (CNRS, Paris, France): *Kata-kata: Sama Dilaut epics, collected in the last decade of the 20th century for "Philippine Oral Epics Archive", Ateneo de Manila University***Ass. Prof. Matthew Santamaria** (Asian Centre, University of the Philippines, Manila): *Expanding Knowledge, Extending Ties: Sama Dilaut Music and Dance in the 21st Century*

— Coffee —

Session 2 (11.30 - 12.30)

Ass. Prof. Hanafi Bin Hussin (University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia): *Balancing of Spiritual and Physical World: Experiencing the Rituals of the Sama dilaut (Bajau) in Sitangkai, Tawi-Tawi, Southern Philippines and Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia***Prof. Bernard Ellorin** (University of Hawai'i, Honolulu, USA): *From the Kulintangan to the Electronic Keyboard: Sama Traditional and Contemporary Music in the Southern Philippines and Malaysia Timor*

—Lunch—

Session 3 (14.00 - 15.30)

Dr Benny Baskara (Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia): *"Gambus", the traditional music of the Bajo people in Wakatobi Islands, South East Sulawesi, Indonesia***Judeth John Baptist** (Senior Assistant Curator of Sabah Museum, Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia) & **Patricia Regis** (formerly director of Sabah Museum): *Magpa-igal Jin: a ritual dance, linking the Past with the Present among the Sama Dilaut of Sabah***Dr Chandra Nuraini** (Université de La Rochelle, La Rochelle, France): *Iko-iko, the epic songs of the Kangean archipelago Bajo people*

— Coffee —

Session 4 (16.00 - 18.00)

Documentaries:

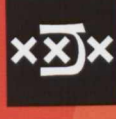
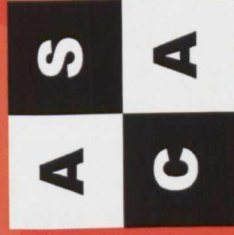
- 1) **Birgit Abels** (IIAS & UVA) & **Judeth John Baptist** (Sabah Museum): *Oceans of Sound: Sama Dilaut performing arts*
- 2) **Lamberto Avellana** (†): *Badjao (1957)*
- 3) **Nannette Matilac** (Filmmaker, Manila): *Sayaw Sa Alon, Dancing on the Waves*

Pilama Dilaut Performing Arts

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UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM
DEPARTMENT OF MUSICOLOGY

Balancing the Spiritual and Physical Worlds: Memory, Responsibility and Survival in the Rituals of the Sama Dilaut (Bajau Laut) in Sitangkai, Tawi-Tawi, Southern Philippines and Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia

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(Abstract)

This paper looks at ritual processes as means of fulfilling responsibilities between the dwellers of the physical world and the spirit world among the Bajau Laut. Ritual is, among many other ways, seen as a transactional event that binds individuals of a given community and habitues of the spirit world in a web of memory, notions of responsibility and expression of the primary value of survival and well-being or continued existence via ideas or conceptualizations of "balance." The introductory section talks about the special class among the Sama dilaut as constituted by the igal djin and their position in the Sama cosmos. The first part reviews some key concepts relating ritual to community particularly that of Victor Turner's "social drama" and Maurice Bloch "rebounding violence." It also discusses how rituals, ritual phases and elements may be read as "texts," referring to symbols with meanings. The second part introduces the idea of symbolic elements and symbolic practices, particularly those found rituals as well as in music and dance, that are observable among Sama Dilaut communities in the Southern Philippines and Insular Malaysia, relating this to memory-making, socialization to the idea of responsibility, and operationalization of "survival." The third part proceeds with a brief description of three rituals, the Magpaili-bahau, Magpa-igal and the Pag-Kanduli, and then respectively followed by a discussion of practice or elements that bring in the idea of "balance." Finally, the fourth part, as a way of tying together the discussion presents implications to future research on ritual, music and dance.

Introduction

The Igal Djin in Between the Spirit and Physical Worlds

Among the Sama there exist a class of persons who serve as the conduit between the physical world of human beings and the invisible world of the spirits. These persons are invariably called *Jin*, *Djin* or *Igal Djin*. The use or perhaps even the substitution of a word of Arabic origin for what seems to be a non-extant term for a local or localized phenomenon may indeed be unfortunate for it brings with it a baggage load of appropriated meanings. Regardless of origin, however, *Jin*, *Djin* or *Igal Djin* as a term

has come to refer to both the invisible and supernatural force, a spirit form, that aids a person in becoming a channel to the other world, and the person who becomes the channel.

The use of the term *djin* as spirit form can be rather confusing. Some literature appear to treat the term as synonymous to *saitan* as in Sather's reference to *saitan jin* and to *ling saitan* (language of the *djin*).¹ Other literature hold the idea of *omboh* or ancestors becoming *djin* spirit.² This article takes a different view and distinguishes among *saitan* (nature spirits), *djin* (or *igal djin* as personal spirit guides), *omboh* (ancestral spirits) and others.³

To avoid further confusion, some scholars have devised means of labelling in order to distinguish between the two. H. Arlo Nimmo parallels *djin* (the shaman or medium) with *saitan* or spirit.⁴ Clifford Sather presents a distinction of *jin*, referring to the medium on one hand, and *saitan jin* or "spirit helper," on the other hand. He sometimes refers to the spirit as the medium's "familiar."⁵ This article modifies Bruno Bottignolo's⁶ paired distinction of *djin*-spirit and *djin* bearer, and comes up with a paired distinction of "*igal djin*-spirit guide" and "*igal djin*-spirit bearer." This dual re-construction of labels shared with MCM Santamaria emphasizes the importance of *igal* as a dance tradition with religious or ritual roots, a practice that enables the *igal djin*-spirit bearer to host, among others, *igal djin*-spirit-guides.⁷

The importance of *igal* as a dance tradition and *tagunggo'* or *kulintangan* as an ensemble music tradition cannot be overemphasized. It is through *igal* dancing and the so-called "drone"⁸ producing *tagungunggo* music that accompanies the dance that produces the condition that the *igal djin*-spirit bearer achieves *pateka* or a state of conscious trance. *Pateka* allows the *igal djin*-spirit bearer to host simultaneously one, two or more spirits at a time. The spirits referred to in this case would always be, first and foremost, the *igal djin*-spirit guide together with either the *omboh* (ancestral spirits) or even powerful protector spirits known as *bansa*.⁹ It should be noted that *pateka* is not possession, but instead as described by Bottignolo, it should be viewed as "indwelling."¹⁰ Perhaps, the term "co-dwelling" would even be even more precise. In this case of *masuk djin* (entry of the spirit), the *igal djin*-spirit bearer never loses his or her own consciousness. His or her own spirit "co-dwells" with other spirits in his or her body as host. This conceptualization of co-dwelling is related to other examples found in the region such as in the case of *sinaniban* (from the Tagalog "sanib": another spirit "attaches" itself to one's body), *binahayan* (Tagalog: spirit in-dwells) or *gibalayan* (Cebuano: spirit in-dwells), with *bahay*, *balay* or *bale* as Malayo-Polynesian cognates for house. Medium in Tagalog is *babaylan* which accordingly comes from *baylan* or *balian* referring to houses or dwelling places.

There are several ways of becoming an *igal djin*-spirit bearer which apparently may come at any point in a Sama Dilaut person's life.¹¹ The process of becoming one however usually proceeds after recovering, normally through an *igal djin*-spirit bearer's help, from a serious or near fatal illness. The person is then informed that he or she has been chosen to be saved by an *igal djin*-spirit guide and therefore must train to be an *igal djin*-spirit bearer, if not, the illness will come back and eventually result in madness or death. The novice *igal djin*-spirit bearer is then trained in ritual processes,

traditional knowledge in healing as well as curing rituals, appeasing saitan and communing with spirits.

The novice is also closely socialized into the social order or hierarchy of *igal djin*-spirit guides proceeding from the *Kalamat* (aka *Nakura' Jin* or *Wali Djin*, the head of the class of *igal djin*-spirit bearers), *igal djin lella* (male *igal djin*-spirit bearers), *igal djin denda* (female *igal djin*-spirit bearers), older generation *igal djin* spirit bearers and younger generation *igal djin*-spirit bearers. Overall, the class of *igal djin* bearers appears to constitute a core or a symbolic center that manages to create, maintain and re-establish balance in times of crisis. It seems, in a traditional or customary sense, much of the balance in the Sama dual cosmos of the overlapping physical and spirit worlds relies much on the mediation of the *igal djin* bearer. The *igal djin* bearer, and indeed the good or the truly skilled ones, are an epitome of balance. This is so because they "house" two entities, their very selves or their own *aruwa* (souls) and that of the *igal djin* spirit guide or others.

Rebounding Violence and Blessing, Social Drama, and the Efficacy-Entertainment Continuum

This sections presents concepts in anthropology, ethnography, semiotics and performance studies that may be deemed most useful in our discussion of the crucial roles played by music and dance in achieving balance in communities and individuals via ritual. These concepts are Maurice Bloch's "rebounding violence," Victor Turner's "Social Drama," Richard Schechner's "Infinity" figure for social action and performance techniques, and the semiotic reading of "texts" as symbols possessing meanings.

The Sulu Archipelago and the outlying areas of the Celebes Sea towards the East and the South China Sea towards the West, presently constitutes an area of overlapping territorial claims characterized by illegal or extra-legal activities of smuggling, piracy and transnational movement of undocumented labor. The combination of the conditions of a near absence of government(s), the presence of insurgent as well as bandit groups and the fluid character of peoples of border or frontier settlements, aspects often shared by peripheral or marginal spaces in national life, result in a life of insecurity and stability for the Sama Dilaut living in the region. This is the case now, and apparently this appears to have been also the case in the past when the dominant Tausug people held sway upon the establishment of the Sulu Sultanate. Fear of the unknown, doubt and personal insecurity, most probably led the Sama Dilaut to create rituals that seek the aid of ancestors, spirits and other powerful beings. Upon the sealing of metaphysical contract, a relationship is formed and duties to each other defined. Reneging on these duties as well as not exhibiting proper behavior by offering thanks meant the return of danger. For this reason, Maurice Bloch's idea of "rebounding violence"¹² seems to be most appropriate in understanding Sama Dilaut rituals. Indeed, not only violence rebounds but also blessings. This sets of a cycle of give and take between protector and protected in a setting of unpredictability anchored and balanced by a the continuity of this exchange. The offering of music and dance is central to this exchange.

The unpredictable lot of the Sama Dilaut appears to be a function of, among others and mainly as far as the Sulu Archipelago is concerned, the influx of outsiders, mainly the Tausug, into their habitat. In relatively recent history, particularly in the 70s, this influx resulted from a push factor attributable to the political instability of the Southern Philippines caused by the so-called "Moro Wars." The burning of Jolo by the Marcos regime has pushed out countless Tausug from their homeland towards two directions, north towards Zamboanga and south towards Tawi-Tawi. As a result, the Sama homeland has now become increasingly Tausug. This problem of being pushed off, in effect banishment, from traditional homelands constitute a crisis off sort that reaches a breach that in turn immediate redress. Traditionally, the mobile Sama Dilaut simply and literally leaves the problem. Alas with the tightening of borders, more particularly that of Malaysia, leaving has increasingly been less of an option. What has resulted is a Sama community pressed to the margins of Philippine national life by increasing Tausug influx and divided by national borders. This narrative of marginalization appear to echo Victor Turner's "social drama"¹³ constituting of problems reaching a "breach," turning into a "crisis" that needs "redress" which in turn can only result in "re-integration" or "schism." This wish for integration as well as effective schism may both be seen in the conduct of ritual.

The Sama appear to lean on their ritual performances in order to change their "social drama." Likewise, they also appear to appropriate themes and techniques from real social and political action in their conduct of ritual performance. For this reason, Richard Schechner's infinity imaging of social drama and aesthetic performance¹⁴ appear to be also appropriate in trying to understand Sama ritual performance. Schechner notes what he observes as the "relationship between aesthetic processes and social processes." Both affect each other. Each domain has a seen and unseen part. For instance, in social drama, what is most observable are actual social and political action. This can be range from peaceful action like witness speeches in congressional hearing, political rallies or violent like hostage taking events or the bombing of cities. At any event, this set of social and political action rely much on the performance techniques of aesthetic performances. Vice versa, aesthetic performance relies much on the action as seen in "real events." What is most interesting about ritual among the Sama is that, given certain conditions as will be discussed in the next section, it can either be one or the other or both.

Finally, borrowing from semiotics, rituals and the elements they contain may be read as "texts" constituting symbols and meanings. Indeed, if culture can be perceived as a "gallery of symbols and meanings,"¹⁵ then membership to a certain culture should mean the ability to "read" such symbols and meanings. In the case of this paper, the insider reading of their own artifact is given priority over other readings. Ritual performance elements among the Sama in terms of color, natural property and provenance are highly coded. The coding and decoding appear to reach high levels of expression during ritual performance which eventually (re)transmit meaning to the next generation of Sama.

Three Rituals: Sites, Symbols, Participation and Meanings

This section will look into the significance of ritual performance to the Sama Dilaut by using the concepts discussed in the preceding section as framing devices as well as by presenting opinions from the field. As ritual phases and other particulars are already well known and discussed in past research only a brief summary of such will be mentioned in this section. Music and dance repertoires will be given emphasis.

Mag-Pai Bahau

The *Mag-Pai Bahau*, also known as the *Magmbo' Pai Bahao* or *Umboh Pai Baha-o* is said to be "the grandest feast" of the Sama Dilaut. If the *Pag-Igal Djin* is mainly the responsibility of the *igal djin*-bearer collective, the *Mag-Pai Bahau* is the responsibility of the family or the clan as an extended collective. New rice is ritually consumed to please the *omboh* for them to help the clan avert disaster. The following articulation of this theme is presented by Bottignolo:¹⁶

The *Umboh Pai Baha-o* has a distinctive meaning specified by its seasonal context. It can be celebrated only during the span of two or three months starting around the beginning of September when the new rice is harvested. Against this agricultural background, the rite takes on the meaning of thanksgiving and offering. The offering of the first fruits of the rice harvest is the symbolic offering of the entire harvest. And by offering their harvest, the *Badjaos* offer themselves. The small basket of rice becomes a pledge and a reminder, ultimately of their dependence on *Umboh* who guarantees their sustenance and their well-being.

There appears to be no *igal* dancing or playing of the *tagunggo'* ensemble in the ritual ceremony of *Mag-Pai Bahau*. The expressive genre that serves as an instrument of communication between the beings of the physical world of humanity and the unseen world of spirits is, oddly or so it seems, the ritual chanting of prayers in Arabic (*jikil*) as performed by a local *imam*. Sather relates the following description by Garani, an *igal djin* spirit bearer based in Semporna, of what appears to indicate a reflexive process in performance:¹⁷

...'The spirit helpers come into each medium's head. If a spirit is dissatisfied with the *imam's* chanting, it will scream and if it is displeased with the offerings, it will cause the mediums to knock down the cones of rice, so that they will have to be formed again properly.'

This description implies that the *igal djin* spirit guide can be displeased and may demand a better performance, in this particular case from the chanting *imam* via the channel which comes in the person and the body of the *igal djin* spirit bearer and via his or her interpretation from *ling djin* (the language of the *igal djin* guide known only to the *igal djin* spirit bearer) and *ling Sama* (the Sama language). It should be noted that displeasure may also be expressed over the offerings of rice, and perhaps by extension may also apply to any other element of the ritual performance such as any other property, costume, arrangement of implements in the ritual space and the like. This displeasure, as indicated in the quotation above, may elicit a tantrum-like reaction. Indeed, *igal djin* spirit guides have been described to possess the countenance of children, and like children may exhibit impetuous if not often times insufferable

behaviour. The *igal djin* spirit bearer must therefore learn how to convince, nay, cajole his or her *igal djin* spirit guide.¹⁸

It should be stated that the title of *imam* is often loosely used in the Sama Dilaut context. As already noted by H. Arlo Nimmo¹⁹ the title is sometimes indiscriminately used to refer to persons who are able to conduct life-cycle ceremonies. As such, *igal djin* bearers are sometimes called *imam*. Nimmo relates that he only knew three persons who held the title of *imam* who were not at the same time *igal djin* bearers. The three men were brother who learned to chant in Arabic from their father who in turn learned from a Sama Dileya *imam*. Accordingly, the three brothers know that their chanting in Arabic, as Nimmo notes, "make ceremonies effective because they please Tuhan and discourage saitan."

The form in which the Magpai-Bahau ritual takes may perhaps, borrowing Turner's "social drama," be viewed as a result of redress and integration. The Sama Dilaut habitat is a habitat of difference and the Sama Dilaut mode of living is that of selective integration and accommodation. The Mag Pai Bahau obviously releases a memory of this integration; on how land and sea Sama have devised a symbiotic relationship to the degree that Sama Dilaut used to work Sama Dileya rice lands. To possess rice is to possess the ability to feast ritually or otherwise. In this ritual, the accommodation between land and sea Sama is sealed in a memory-making practice and linked to the idea of collective survival. As for the presence of the Islamic *jikil*, it may be surmised that its integration into the Sama Dilaut ritual complex marks an accommodation where one religion yields to the other, and in so doing relies on an alliance and avoids an immediate confrontation. This giving and giving up of space appears to be a *liet* motif in Sama Dilaut life and memory.

Thus, the breach is treated, and thus, a crisis averted... tamed by and tamed in ritual.

Pag-Igal Djin

The Pag-Igal Djin or "the ritual of the *igal djin*" seems to be the ritual performed with the greatest degree of regularity and frequency as it is supposed to be performed every full moon. The ritual starts in front of the *langkapan* of the *Kalamat* who consults with ancestral spirits by praying in front of the *duwaan*. After he distributes costumes, presumably requested by certain *omboh* for certain *igal djin*-spirit bearers to wear. He also receives offerings of cash, cigarettes and other things from proxies of *igal djin*-spirit bearers who could not participate in the performance of the ritual. Participation is very important and *igal djin*-spirit bearers are only allowed a limited number of absences. Dancing happens at the *pantan* fronting the house of the *Kalamat* where a *tagunggo*' ensemble has been set up. Female *igal djin*-spirit bearers start the dancing with the *tagunggo*' music called *Titik Limbayan*. It appears that the name of the highly improvisational dancing follows the name of the music, and thus is called *Igal Limbayan*. Throughout the dancing phases, the dancers may approach the *Kalamat* to ask to take a leave. The *Kalamat* determines whether the spirits are decided to allow leave to be given or not. If leave is given, then a towel is whipped gently over the shoulders of the dancers, or the dancer may be given a back rub of sorts. These acts are supposed to help give comfort to the dancers who often describe the in-dwelling experience to be

particularly exhausting if not painful. If not given leave, the Kalamat while holding the folded arms of the dancer, "throws" the dancer back into the performance space. Somewhere in the middle of the dance phase, Titik Tabawan is played and the corollary Igal Tabawn is danced. It is during this phase when proxies and other persons who are not igal djin-spirit bearers may perform. After this inclusive phase, Titik Djin is played signaling the male portion of the dancing phase with the dance performance of Igal Djin. Dancing is concluded with Titik Lelang and the corollary Igal Lelang, associated with the Kalamat.

The dancing is followed by an address by the Kalamat, essentially transmitting a message from the participating omboh or ancestral spirits, after which the ritual participants are dismissed. The following morning, chanting of the jikil (zikir) is done by an imam whose back is to the langkapan and duwaan. Facing him is the Kalamat. Around them sit the igal djin-spirit bearers, women on one side and men of the other. In the central space which they define by sitting in a circle, plates of white and yellow rice are served. Upon the chanting, this rice is consumed first by the igal djin spirit-bearers and then by other participants.

The Pag-igal Djin, as observed in Sitangkai appears to have, among others, several functions. First of all, new igal djin-spirit bearers are initiated during this ritual. This means transforming themselves by wearing the traditional colors of the igal djin-spirit bearers. Female igal djin-spirit bearers wear combinations of green and green or green and yellow badju (traditional cut blouse, or upper wear) and tadyung tubular wear. Men wear white and white or white and green badju lapi (Shirts with rounded Chinese collars) and sawwal kantiu (loose pants) combinations. Folded in different ways over their head is the saputungan (head cloth) and over their shoulder is a porong (kerchief). It has been explained that yellow stands for the richness of the earth, abode of spirits and that green stands for newness, verdure or life itself. Secondly, their participation in an "ordered performance" socializes them into a hierarchy of igal djin bearers. Thirdly, regular participation, which as earlier mentioned is a strictly observed rule, forces upon the igal djin-spirit bearer a practice of sorts, one that allows a forging of a relationship with the spirit guide in moments of pateka or conscious trance.

Balance appears to be a tremendous concern in Sama Dilaut rituals as it may be observed in the Pag-igal Djin. Sather details its main function in maintaining the general well-being of the community in the following description:²⁰

In addition to *magpai baha'u*, the mediums perform further public dances during the year, called *magigal jin*, meant to entertain the village ancestors and the numerous spirits believed to inhabit the surrounding region, and so preserve their continued goodwill. Such dancing is also thought to have a therapeutic virtue, as the spirit guests are said to bear off with them when they disperse the various afflictions and woes suffered by village members. Tandoh insists that there is a marked improvement in village health following *magigal jin*. Garani maintains that, by tradition, such dancing is held less regularly, or at least it was in 1964-5. Its time and planning are fixed by a meeting of mediums called by the *nakura' jin*. During the time that I was in the village, dancing was set one day earlier in Bangau-Bangau, as in the case of *magpai baha'u*, so that the village

could take part in the following night in the dancing held at Labuan Haji. Similarly, *jin* from Labuan Haji could join in the dancing at Bangau-Bangau. Dances were held twice during the thirteen months that I lived in the village, and as I was preparing to leave semporna near the end of August 1979, they were again being planned. The dancing itself is similar to that performed during magpai baha'u, and involves both the *jin* and their *lembagan*. According to Garani, if the *jin* fail to dance, they go mad and the whole community becomes *binusung*.

At nighttime when all are rendered visible by the moon, the igal djin-spirit bearer dances with the igal djin spirit guide, communes with the omboh under the sky of Tuhan. The dance is a dance of man, , cosmos and Tuhan. Ritual when unfulfilled in dance performance results in the return of crisis in the form of either madness, illness or eventual death may occur. If fulfilled, then the balance of elements for living is restored.

Rebounding violence and rebounding blessing alternates in propelling a task most required.

Pag-Kanduli

The Pag-Kanduli is an annual ritual done between two islands, Sitangkai and Sikulan, and between two seas, Sulu and Celebes. Kanduli, a cognate of kanduri or kandoori, connotes celebration. The "celebration" revolves around the offering of igal dances, tagunggo' music and traditional games to two important *bansa* or protector deities, Tuan Laut (Lord of the Sea) and Dayang Mangilai (Princess of the Bush or Forest) along with their children, two other *bansa*, Tapsirun and Sunsulun, and Mohamad Susulan. The ritual like many others starts in Sitangkai, in front of the duwaan and langkapan of the Kalamat. It proceeds with a flotilla travel by boat to Sikulan Island. In Sikulan, a parade starts from the shore and passes by the abode of Tapsirun and Sunsulun who are invited to join the celebration. After winding through a grove of coconut palms the parade ends in front of a mighty Dangan tree (*Ficus* species), the abode of Tuan Laut where music and dance offerings following the same order as that of the Pag-igal Djin happens. Interestingly, in the middle part of the ritual phase, outsiders who wish to participate, in this case three Tausug women and one Tausug man, are allowed to join the celebration in music in dance. After the last dance, the Kalamat leads a walking procession to the music of the tagunggo' towards the abode of Dayang Mangilai. The abode is a clearing surrounded by pandan (*Pandanus* species) located slightly inland from the Celebes Sea side of the island. Here the participants, igal djin-spirit bearers, non-spirit bearers and even outsiders like this researcher, go to the pandan plants and form a knot at the end of its long leaf sheaths and make a wish. The binding of a knot supposedly symbolizes a promise fulfilled, and in return a signification of a blessing, which comes in the form of a wish that will be granted, to be collected. After the tying of the leaf ends, an explosion of simultaneous and improvised igal dancing to tagunggo' music happens. After this phase, the Kalamat leads the group back to the Dangan in a jolly if not jumpy rendition of igal. At the Dangan, traditional games of sipa (kick ball using a rattan ball), tug-o-war, swinging high up coconut trunks (Mangilai's past time), and the riding of coconut fronts are played for the children of the

bansa. The ritual concludes after the Kalamat prays at the base of the trunk of the Dangan tree and gives a homily of sorts to the participants.

The primary site of the Pag-Kanduli draws attention to trees as *tempat* or sacred residences, a notion that appears to be observed not only in Maritime Southeast Asia but also in Okinawa and the main islands of Japan.²¹ Although, unable to actually observe the Pag-Kanduli, Clifford Sather emphasizes the importance of great trees as *tempat* and offers the following description.²²

"...In Sitangkai, *magtulak bala'* is followed by a final celebration, called *magkanduri*, held on nearby Sikulan Island. After the bathing, all who took part go directly to the gathering place of local spirits. Large fig trees (*Ficus* spp., especially *F. microcarpa*) are thought to be a favoured spirit habitation and in the Semporna district, are often important *tampat* sites. I have never witnessed this gathering, but according to Garani, this final celebration, which seems to have much the nature of a picnic, is an ancient rite performed by the *jin* from early times. There is no *nunuk* tree growing near Bangau-Bangau, so that the ritual bathing concludes *magpai baha'u*. However, at Labuan Haji there is a *nunuk* tree, located near the edge of the village inlet (*lo'ok*). The site is sacred, and the Labuan Haji people tell how a troop of monkeys once disturbed the offerings placed nearby and were miraculously killed. It is a frequent practice to schedule *magpai baha'u* one day earlier in Bangau-Bangau, so that the mediums from the village can join those of Labuan Haji in dancing at the site of this tree following *magtulak bala'*.

The Pag-Kanduli again balances spirit and physical worlds with the *igal djin* spirit bearer at the liminal yet crucial core. Apart from these two worlds, the balance between man and nature as well as the reification of Sama Dilaut living space as symbolized by Tuan Laut of the sea, Mohamad Susulan of the coast and Dayang Mangilai of bush or forest are given importance or re-affirmed.

On a sociological and perhaps even political level of performance as social drama, the Pagkanduli appears to affirm (redress) a Sama order of things by assigning proper space to persons of differing statuses. The dominant Tausug appears to give respect to this order of things. Another interpretation would state that perhaps the Sama Dilaut accommodated the Tausug in their ritual, thereby showing how social drama and performance truly feed on each other. But then again, the Pag-kanduli is a real ritual performed, making the separation of the theatrical from the social difficult. Perhaps this is because, the ritual although very real, performs this very reality and therefore may be said to encompass both social drama and performance event.

Balance and The Future: Some Conclusions and Observations

Indeed, it may be stated that ritual reveals much about a culture through its elements, structure and purpose. This paper discusses the importance of sacred music and dance performance for balancing life between human being in the physical world and spirits in the spiritual world of Bajau Laut or Sama dilaut of Sitangkai of the Philippines and Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia. The rituals introduced by the ancestors through male

Endnotes

- ¹ See: Clifford Sather, *The Bajau Laut: Adaptation, History, and Fate in a Maritime Fishing Society of South-Eastern Sabah* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford university Press, 1997), p. 12 and p. 301.
- ² See: Bruno Bottignolo, *Celebrations with the Sun: An Overview of Religious Phenomena Among the Badjaos*, (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1995), pp. 111 to 121.
- ³ Hanafi Hussin and MCM Santamaria, "Between Two Seas: Integrative Elements in the Pagkanduli Ritual of the Sama Dilaut (Bajau Laut) of Sitangkai," in Hanafi Hussin and others, eds., *Southeast Asian Religion, Culture and the Art of the Sea* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Ocean and Earth Sciences, Universit of Malaysa, 2008), pp. 39-64.
- ⁴ H. Arlo Nimmo, *Magosaha: An Ethnography of the Tawi-Tawi Sama Dilaut* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2001), pp. 148-152.
- ⁵ Sather (1997), 301.
- ⁶ See: Bottignolo (1995), pp. 111 to 121.
- ⁷ See: Hanafi Hussin and MCM Santamaria, "Dancing with the Ghosts of the Sea," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, JATI 13 (2008), pp. 159-172.
- ⁸ Jose Maceda has done quite an extensive theorizing on this aspect of Asian music. For further readings, see: Jose Maceda, *A Manual of Field Music Research with Special Reference to southeast Asia* (Quezon City: College of Music, University of the Philippines, 1981).
- ⁹ This researcher has discussed the concept and characterization of the *bansa* in relation to other beings in Hussin and Santamaria in Hanafi Hussin and others, eds., (2008).
- ¹⁰ Bottignolo (1995), p. 131.
- ¹¹ For a rather comprehensive discussion of different possibilities, see: Nimmo (2001), p. 148-49.
- ¹² See: Maurice Bloch, *From Blessing to Violence: History and Ideology in the Circumcision Ritual of Merina of Madagascar* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
- ¹³ See: Victor Turner, *On the Edge of the Bush: Anthropology as Experience* (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1985).
- ¹⁴ Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction Second Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2002).
- ¹⁵ See: Ross Poole (reference to be given please check University of Hawaii library).
- ¹⁶ Bruno Bottignolo, *Celebrations with the Sun: An Overview of Religious Phenomena Among the Badjaos*, (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1995), p. 85-86.
- ¹⁷ Clifford Sather, *The Bajau Laut: Adaptation, History, and Fate in a Maritime Fishing Society of South-Eastern Sabah* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford university Press, 1997), p. 306.
- ¹⁸ This piece of information about "imaging" or "imagining" the *igal djin* spirit guide to collaborative research partner, Dr. MCM Santamaria, by the head *igal djin* spirit bearer, Kalamat Jaafar Insahali in several instances of personal communication in Sitangkai in the year 2007. Indeed Santamaria on several occasions has witnessed Kalamat Jaafar seemingly "scold" his invisible partner during ritual sessions.

¹⁹ See: H. Arlo Nimmo, *Magosaha: An Ethnography of the Tawi-Tawi Sama Dilaut* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2001), pp. 152-153.

²⁰ Sather (1997), p. 307.

²¹ The Shinto practice of venerating deities or *kami* living in, among other awe-inspiring natural spaces, trees support this continuity as well as the practice of *noro* or Okinawan shamaness of holding rites in sacred groves. In the Noh theater, the depiction of ancient pine tree serving as a backdrop to its relatively sparsely decorated stage traditional stage also reflects this continuity of belief. The pine tree, in this case supposedly a portrayal of an actual tree in Kasuga Shrine of the ancient City of Nara, becomes the bridge to the spirit world.

²² Clifford Sather, *The Bajau Laut: Adaptation, History, and Fate in a Maritime Fishing Society of South-Eastern Sabah* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford university Press, 1997), p. 307