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Gendering Dance, Gazing Music: Dance Movements, Healing Rituals and Music Making

By:

Mohd. Anis Md. Nor
and
Hanafi Hussin

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Mohd Anis Md Nor & Hanafi Hussin
University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Prologue

Within the community of the nomadic 'sea gypsies' of the Sulu Sea, the Sama Bajau or Bajau Laut of Malaysia and the Sama Dilaut of the Southern Philippines share commonalities in the way dancers are gendered through the choices of musical tunes while partaking in the ritual healing ceremony of *magpaibahau* or *magduwata* (offering of newly harvested rice) and *magpa-igal* (for ancestors' spirit) or in the offering ceremony of *pagkanduli* (offerings for sea-spirits). Ritual healing ceremonies are signified with dancing (*mag-igal*) and playing of specific tunes (*titik*) by the *kulintang* music, which is often referred to as *tagunggu*, consisting of a set of graduated pot gongs, *agung* (two big hanging gongs) or *tawag* (large hanging gong), and *tambul* (double-headed snare drum). The tunes (*titik*) played for ritual healing ceremonies are meant for the spirit bearer (*jin*), which is represented by male spirit bearer (*jin lella*) or female spirit bearer (*jin denda*). The tunes (*titik*) may also signify the places where these events take place such as *titik lellang* for the *magduwata* ritual amongst Bajau Kubang in Semporna, East Malaysia or *titik limbayan* for the *pagkanduli* ritual of the Sama Dilaut in Sitangkai, in the Southern Philippines. Similarly, these tunes are associated with the gender of the spirit-bearers, such as *titik lellang* for the male spirit bearer (*jin lella*) and *titik limbayan* for female spirit-bearer (*jin denda*). In other words, musical tunes of the *tagunggu* or *kulintang* ensemble played during the ritual healing ceremonies are identified with the gender of the spirit (Jin), which have entered into the spirit bearers bodies, hence a male spirit bearing body may either become a male spirit (*jin lella*) or a female spirit (*jin denda*). As an extension to the markers of gendering bodies, dance or *igal* within the context of these rituals are also identified and named after the tunes, such as *igal lellang* and *igal limbayan* respectively. This paper aims to highlight the responses between the *tagunggu*/*kulintang* musicians and the dancing spirit-bearers in these two locations; Semporna in East Malaysia and Sitangkai in the Sulu Archipelago in Southern Philippines as they reciprocate on the gazes of the dancing spirit-bearers in sustaining appropriate rhythmic pulses to the tunes of gendered musical styles.

Sea Gypsies of Malaysia and the Philippines - Sama Bajau (Bajau Kubang) Malaysia and Sama Dilaut (Bajau Laut) Philippines

Linguistically and culturally diverse, the Bajau or Sama' are distributed throughout the region from the southern Philippines, along coastal areas of Sabah and parts of eastern Indonesia. Sabah has two major Bajau culture complexes—the west coast Bajau, and the east coast Bajau. Although all these were traditionally dependent on the sea, they differ widely in terms of languages, culture and history. The west coast Bajau, especially in the Kota Belud area, have been heavily influenced by the Iranun a smaller but historically dominant maritime people. Those along the east coast show strong Suluk (Tausug) influence in their cultures.¹

The Bajau Kubang who are also known as Bajau Sikubang, are said to be the largest Sama group in the Semporna area of southeast Sabah. The term *kubang* means "gathering" or "settling in groups." According to their genealogies, the Bajau Kubang were the original inhabitants of the area, traditionally settling on Omdal Island, then spreading to Larapan and Bumbum Islands, and finally coming to the mainland several generations ago. They speak a dialect, often called Bajau Semporna, of the Southern Samal dialect chain.² A settled shore people, they are renowned throughout the region as expert woodcraftsmen, boat-builders, ironsmiths, mat-makers, and producers of tortoiseshell combs and pendants. Sather notes that in 1965, the finest *lepa* boats in the region were produced by

the Bajau Kubang of Kampung Kambimbangan (Kabimbangan), Nusalalung and other villages of Bumbum Island.³ Other traditional socioeconomic activities include fishing and related work, supplemented with land-based practices such as hunting and the cultivation of coconut trees, cassava and, in the past, hill rice. Nowadays, many have abandoned traditional fishing activities and work as civil servants and businessmen.⁴

The Bajau Kubang is an egalitarian society with a bilateral descent system. They live in villages composed of hamlets of single dwellings, dispersed along the shorelines. Each house contains several rooms, with a wide spacious mooring jetty in front and a kitchen at the back. The nuclear family is the fundamental social unit, but households frequently include other kin such as grandparents. Elderly folk are respected in the family and the wider community for their wisdom, knowledge and sometimes for spiritual power. Marriage is generally exogamous to second parallel cousin level, but first cousin marriages are permitted between the children of sisters (due to matrilineal bias), and is often endogamous within the village.⁵

Sama Dilaut is more diasporic in their demographic distribution over the coral reefs of Tawi-Tawi, the seas around Sibutu Islands and the tidal flats of Jolo and Basilan, but in many ways are similar to the egalitarian and bilateral descent social structure of the Bajau Kubang. The Sama DiLaut lives as a nuclear family within a conjugal boat crew comprising of husband, wife and dependent children, living exclusively on fishing and gathering of sea produce such as tripang or sea-cucumber, pearl-bearing oysters and decorative shells. Conjugal families that are linked by kinship ties and mutual economic interest form a multi-family household (*luma'*) in on-shore pile house dwelling, which may become part of household clusters that form a village. However, the mobility of the conjugal family boat crew is often dictated by wind and tidal patterns taking them to various fishing sites around the coral reefs.⁶

The Rituals: *Magpaibahau and Magduwata, Pagkanduli & Magpa-igal*

Magpaibahau-Magduwata

Bajau Kubang, Bajau Laut or Sama DiLaut communities practice annual rice offering or *Magpai-bahau* through séance dancing and music making in the *Magduwata* rituals. Both of these are mandatorily performed annually to signify thanksgiving reunion of family members for a bountiful year and assurance of ancestral blessings for good health and plentiful future. Sather remarked how this event, which he referred to as *Magpai Baha'u*, was celebrated by the Bajau Laut (Sea Gypsies) in the village of Kampung Bangau-Bangau in Semporna.

"Magpai baha'u, marking the return of the ancestors, opens with the fashioning of the kulit mbo'. At midday, the bin is filled with new rice. Next comes the nightly dancing of the jin, followed in the morning by the preparation of the new rice⁷, climaxing with the midday feasting of the ancestors.⁸ Finally, the rite concludes with early morning bathing.⁹ In addition to magpai baha'u, the mediums perform further public dances during the year, called mag-igal 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 ([sic] an informant) insists that there is a marked improvement in village health following mag-igal jin. Garani ([sic] another informant) maintains that, by tradition, such dancing should be performed every lunar month, on the fourteenth or fifteenth night, during the full phase of the moon. This is also the time in which magpai baha'u is performed.¹⁰ In practice, the

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*." (1997: 304-308)

The *magpabahau* ritual of the Bajau Kubang in Bumbum Island, replicates the same rituals observed by the Bajau Laut (Sea Gypsies) in Bangau-Bangau Village as described by Sather. The main offering of newly harvested hill rice is accorded with a privilege status in the *kok dulang* or offering tray. Aside from newly harvested de-husked hill rice, other offerings include coconuts, sugar canes and corns. All these are processed, cooked and offered within the three-day period to the ancestors. This event is commonly known as *magjamu ni ka omboan* or *magpataluwak ni ka omboan* (to feed offerings to the ancestral spirits).

The ritual of *magpaibahau* takes place through the séance of *magduwata*, which engages the crossing of worlds between the living and the spirit guides, known as *jin* amongst the Bajau Kubang or *bansa* amongst the Sama Dilaut or Bajau Laut. The term *jin* refers to both the spirit guide as well as the spirit bearer (shaman or medium). Distinction is made between the spirit bearer, *jin* for male spirit bearer or *limbagan* for female spirit bearer, and the spirit-guide that may manifest in the form of male spirit guide (*jin lela*) or female spirit guide (*jin denda*) irrespective of the gender of the shamanic spirit bearer through ritual séance of *magduwata*. In other words the spirit bearer is the crucible for spiritual access into the world of the spirit guide.

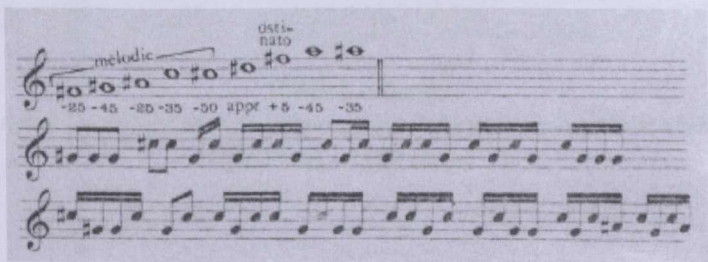
Offerings of newly harvested hill rice with other sweet meals not only acknowledges the continuity of ancestral lineage (*katurunan*) but also as a means of preventing curses (*kabusongan* or *katulahan*), which are related to displeased spirit guides for the failure of looking after ancestral heirloom known as *langkapan*. The *langkapan* is the collective nexus and conduits of spiritual energies between the ancestral spirits and the world of the living. Other than the required compliance to offer newly harvested hill rice or fulfilling the indigenous filial calendars, *kabusongan* may also happen due to the lack of respect to *langkapan*, which had been passed down from one generation to the other. These tangible cultural objects must be ritually blessed according to the indigenous ancestral calendar of *magruwata kok taon*, which is usually observed during the Islamic month of *Rejab*, two months before the advent of the holy Islamic fasting month of *Ramadhan*.¹¹

The crossing over of spirit guide (*jin lela* or *jin denda*) into the abode of the spirit bearer (*jin* or *limbagan*) climaxes during the final rites of the *magduwata* ritual which engages the crossing of worlds between the living and the spirits. This climatic event is marked by *magtagunggu'* (playing of the *tagunggu'/kulintang* ensemble) and involves spontaneous or trance-induced dancing (*mag-igal*). The *tagunggu'* ensemble is made up of a set of small kettle or pot gongs placed on a wooden rack, a double-headed snare drum called *tambul* or *tambol*, two large hanging gongs called *agung* and/or a single large hanging gong, *tawag*. This *tagunggu'/kulintang* ensemble is conventionally handed down from one generation to the other and is considered to be integral to the *langkapan* tangible objects or ancestral heirloom. The *tagunggu'* must be well looked after, like the rest of the *langkapan*, and played by an expert. Any sort of violation against taboos in the playing and caring of the *tagunggu'* ensemble may also bring ancestral curse leading to *kabusongan* or *katulahan*.

Magpa-igal

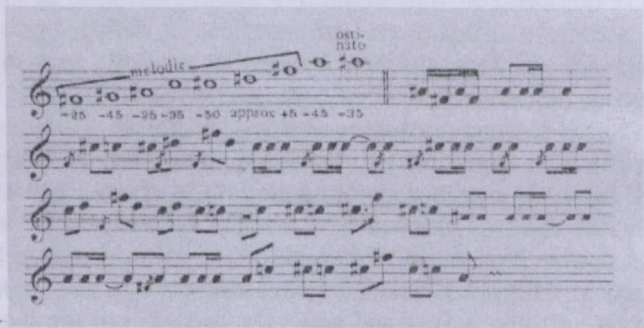
Séancing *magduwata* is achieved through a complex intermixing of music making (*magtagunggu'*) and dancing (*magpa-igal*). Spirit bearers perform the *magpa-igal jin/magpa-igal limbagan* by being

induced both by the musical tunes of the *tagunggu'/kulintang* ensemble and *kata-kata* (esoteric incantations), which are in a mixed Islamic and indigenous texts. Dancing the *igal* (dance) between male and female dancing shamans are very much similar to the styles of male and female *igal*-dancing or *mag-igal* common throughout the Bajau Laut and Sama Dilaut communities in Sabah and in Tawi-Tawi, Sibutu and Jolo islands. However, spirit bearers as shamanic practitioners are intrinsically bounded by bodily gestures, subtle or blatantly expressed through dancer's carriage, arms and hands movements, which signify gender of the spirit guide that have entered (*masuk*) the body of the spirit bearer known to the members of shamanic fraternity who are descendants of male spirit bearers or female spirit bearers (*jin* or *limbagan*). They are empowered to communicate with the spiritual world either with those of their ancestors or even with malicious spirits or *syaitan*. The spirit bearers congregate and perform the *magpa'igal jin* (dancing spirit bearer) ritual together over an average of a three-month cycle to rejuvenate their shamanic abilities as well as to serve as a form of celebration to pay homage to their ancestral spirits.¹² Without that, curses in the form of unexplained sickness or bad luck (*busog* or *katulahan*) may befall onto themselves or members of their families.¹³ Performing this ceremony is essential to their well-being of the spirit bearer (*jin*) and ordinary members of their community. Neglecting these obligations may result in recurrent illness or personal calamities inflicting those who possess powers of the *jin*. It is important to note that in the case of the Bajau Laut, the *magpa'igal jin* would conventionally begin in the Southern Philippines island of Sitangkai before continuing its journey to the Bajau Laut's village of Kampung Bangau-Bangau in Semporna, Sabah (plate 3a, 3b, and 3c). Hence, dancing styles of the *igal* by Bajau Laut and Sama Dilaut or Bajau Laut have become amorphous and less distinctive between the two. The same could be said in the music repertoire of the *tagunggu'/kulintang* ensemble. Little has changed from the field recordings done by Jose Marceda in the 1982, which are cited below.



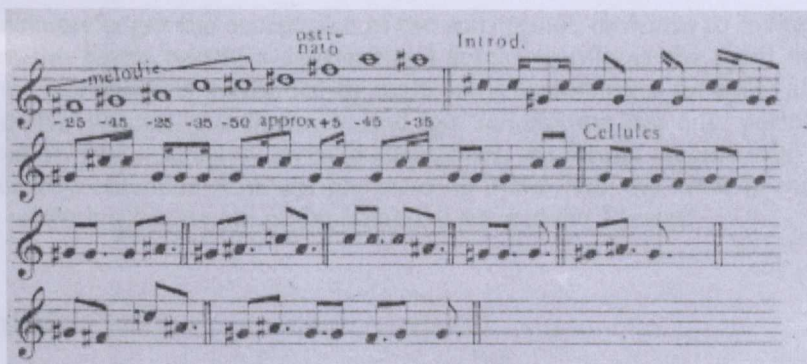
Titik limbayan:

Source: Sama de Sitangkai", a record of music and excerpts of kata-kata by Alain Martenot and Jose Maceda, ORSTOM – 1982 (page 6)



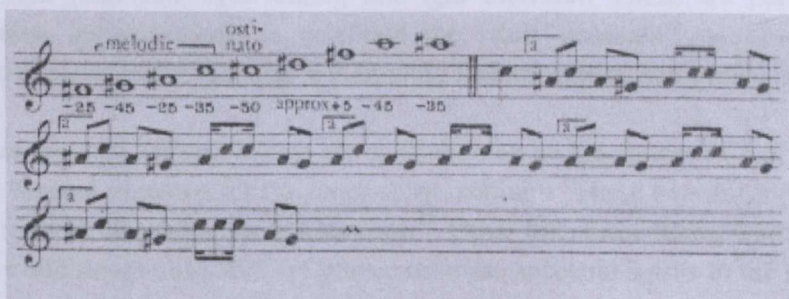
Titik Jin:

Source: Sama de Sitangkai", a record of music and excerpts of kata-kata by Alain Martenot and Jose Maceda, ORSTOM – 1982 (page 7)



Titik Tabawan:

Source: Sama de Sitangkai", a record of music and excerpts of kata-kata by Alain Martenot and Jose Maceda, ORSTOM – 1982 (page 5)



Titik Lellang:

Source: Sama de Sitangkai", a record of music and excerpts of kata-kata by Alain Martenot and Jose Maceda, ORSTOM – 1982 (page 7)

Pagkanduli

While ritual healing dance and music séancing of *magduwata* and *magpa-igal* may not be present in the Sama Dilaut communities in Sitangkai or in the shallow reefs of Tawi-Tawi of Southern Philippines, similar form of gendering dance and music may be observed in their *pagkanduli* rituals. *Pagkanduli* means coming together to celebrate the *bansa*, spirits or ghosts, of benevolent ancestors associated with seas just as *jins* are celebrated and placated by the Bajau Kubang in Sabah. However, the *bansa* of Sama Dilaut is represented by male and female spirits such as Tuan Laut and Dayang Mangilai respectively. Being benevolent ancestors, contact between the spirit bearers and their spirit guides (*bansa*) is celebrated physically in the form of a ritual dance while spiritual contacts are reserved to the esoteric communicative competence between the spirit bearers and the spirit guides. A successful *pagkanduli* séance is achievable through full participation of conjugal families that are linked by kinship ties in a multi-family household, which may be part of household clusters forming a village. The *kulintangan* musical ensemble similar to the *tagunggu* of the Bajau Kubang is played throughout the *pagkanduli* ritual but begins with the signalling of the *igal* dance by the senior most spirit bearer. The dancing commences with *igal limbayan* exclusively performed by the female spirit bearers (*igal jin denda*) hierarchically from the senior most female shaman to the youngest in tow. Ornamental extended faux fingernails or *sulingkengkeng* and hand-held clappers or *bola-bola* are often used as properties associated with particular *bansa*¹⁴ signifying their attendance in the ritual dance performance (Hanafi and Santamaria, 2008: 161).

The hierarchical structure of *pagkanduli* dance and music repertoires continues when the leading

séance shaman acknowledges the acceptance of the spirit guide or *bansa* to invite others to join in the dance. When the *bansa* becomes satisfied and agrees to release the spirit bearer from being under its spell, the last dance is performed by male spirit bearers (*igal jin lella*) in the form of *igal lellang*. The two *igal* dances, *igal limbayan* and *igal lellang*, are not only performed by specific gender groups but display contrastive stylistic differences, the former languid with curvaceous arms and hands movements extended from upright torso on pliant feet, the latter in the form of martial arts movements mirroring the *kuntao* of the Sama DiLaut and the Tausug.

Gendering music

Dancing (*mag-igal*) cannot happen without *magtagunggu*’ or music making. Hence, the ritual musical repertoire of *magtagunggu*’ includes musical pieces (*titik*) and dances (*igal*) which is normally performed for non-ritual performance as well as specific ritual pieces and dance styles. The musical tunes of *titik limbayan*, *titik lellang* and *titik tabawan*¹⁵ are performed with corresponding dancing styles known as *igal limbayan*, *igal lellang* and *igal tabawan*. These are performed by family members and guests spontaneously to celebrate the ritual occasion¹⁶ as observed in *magpai-bahau/magduwata* ritual of Bajau Kubang in Kampung Kabimbangan, Semporna, Sabah.

Only *titik limbayan* and *titik lellang*, which are accompanied by the dances of *igal limbayan* and *igal lellang*, are music tunes designated for the *jin* or spirit mediums. These two music tunes are classified as tunes for the ancestors also called as *titik duwata*.¹⁷ Other than these tunes, which are accompanied by dance, there are additional tunes that are played to invite ancestral spirits to the realm of the living. These are *titik tagna* (introductory piece), *titik jampi* or *titik jaupi* (incantations for the ancestors), and *titik lakkas-lakkas* (is similar to *titik tabawan* from Tabawan island and *titik lubak-lubak* (literally means to play fast and fast) played amongst the Tausug.

Whereas in *magpa-igal* and *pagkanduli ritual* of Sama Dilaut in Sitangkai of Southern Philippines and Bangau-Bangau of Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia, only three tunes (*titik*) are identified. These are the *titik limbayan* for *jin denda* (female spirit bearer), *titik jin* and *titik lellang* for *jin lella* (male spirit bearer).

Table 1 shows tunes (*titik*) in the rituals of *Magduwata*, *Magpaigal* and *Pagkanduli*

	Magduwata	Magpaigal	Pagkanduli
Tunes for Female Jin (Jin Denda)	Titik limbayan	Titik limbayan	Titik limbayan
Tunes for Male Jin (Jin Lella)		Titik Jin	Titik Jin
	Titik Lellang As a final piece, titik tabawan is played to the accompanying of igal tabawan Both are often referred to as as titik duwata by the community	Titik Lellang Titik lubak-lubak marks the end of magpa-igal and is played for the leader of the male spirit bearer Titik limbayan, titik lellang and titik tabawan are played as final pieces.	Titik Lellang

	Other titik – titik tabawan, titik jampi or titik jaupi, titik lakkas-lakkas (is similar to titik tabawan from Tabawan island and titik lubak-lubak		
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Similar *tagunggu'kulintang* tunes are played in the *magpa-igal* dance of the Bajau Laut in Bangau-Bangau village in Semporna, Sabah, as well as in the Southern Philippines island of Sitangkai. However, unlike in the *magpai-bahau* and *magduwata* rituals of the Bajau Kubang, the tune of *titik jin* is only played for male spirit bearer (*jin lella*). Nevertheless it is common in the rituals of *magpa-igal* and *pagkanduli* that *titik limbayan* is played by the *tagunggu'kulintang* ensemble in the beginning repertoire of female spirit bearers (*jin denda*) who perform the *igal limbayan* dance. This is followed by *titik jin* for the dance of *igal jin lella* by the male spirit bearers, which is followed with the tunes of *titik tabawan* and *titik lubak-lubak* for female spirit bearers who dance the *igal lellang*.¹⁸ Hence, tunes of the *tagunggu'kulintang* may correspond to gender specific dance of the spirit bearers when names of the musical tunes may also lend its name to the dance being performed. It has been observed that the male tune of *titik lellang* designated for male dancers and spirit bearers is marked by thunderous beating of the drum and gongs to facilitate and induce trance dancing during the ritual séance. Once in a trance, the spirit bearers (*jin*) danced vigorously, constantly stamping their feet on the wooden floor of the pile house, which reverberate the energetic movements of the male spirit guides in the body of the male spirit bearers.¹⁹

Gendering dance

Dance (Igal) repertoire in the rituals of Magduwata, Magpaigal and Pagkanduli

	Magduwata	Magpaigal	Pagkanduli
Dance for Female Jin (Jin Denda)	Igal Limbayan	Igal Limbayan	Igal Limbayan
Dance for Male Jin (Jin Lella)	Igal Jin	Igal Jin	Igal Jin
	Igal Tabawan – a finale dance piece of the magduwata ritual accompanied by titik tabawan	Igal Lellang	Igal Lellang
	Titik Tabawan is played for everyone to dance, which includes all the spirit bearers i.e. Jin Lella and Jin Denda as well as participants and observers of the magduwata ritual outsiders at the end of the ritual event.	Titik Tabawan is played in the middle of the ritual enabling Jin Denda and Jin Lella to dance together at the same time.	Titik Tabawan is played in the middle of the ritual enabling Jin Denda and Jin Lella to dance together at the same time.

Magi-igal or dancing by participants and observers of the *magduwata* ritual and the playing of the *tagunggu'kulintang* pot-gong ensemble (*magtagunggu'*) are integral parts, which are virtuous and profound to the *magduwata* ritual. It is the culmination of celebratory moments in the intense rites

of the prescribed ritual, cathartic and salutary, the former to ill health, while the latter to the spirits of the ancestors. Hence, individuals with the strongest inclination to fall into trance while dancing are encouraged to take the role of dancing spirit bearer (*igal-jin*). For the rest who dance along threads liminal spaces as conduits for the merging of spirits of the ancestors and the living lineage. *Jin*, like humans, is gender specific. Thus, possession by male or female *jin* is acknowledged through the playing of specific tunes (*titik*).²⁰ *Titik Lellang* is associated with male *jin* while *Titik limbayan* is recognized as possession by female *jin*. Spirit mediums who dance the *igal-jin* (dance of the spirit bearer) holds a handkerchief in his right hand and areca palm fronds in his left hand. In the Malay myth, palm fronds from the Areca plant has long been considered to be fodder for roaming spirits. It is quite possible the same holds true with the Bajau Kubang.²¹

In a specific case study on the *magduwata* ritual in the Onnong family in Semporna, the younger brother of Haji Bakhara bin Onnong, Haji Jenari bin Onnong, displays tendencies of an emerging *jin* (spirit bearer) as he dances with costumes from the ancestral heirloom. He is believed to be the bearer of ancestral spirits and the receiver of *katuruman* (ancestral lineage). As the *jin* falls into a trance, a member of the family would place a *jimpau* (handkerchief) on his or her shoulder to ensure that the dancing (*mag-igal*) becomes a trance dance of the spirit bearer (*igal-jin*). It is during the *igal-jin* that ritual healing takes place. The *jin* in trance takes the position of the healer by rubbing or massaging the sections of the anatomy of the sick person. The handkerchief (*jimpau*) is also used to beat the patient as trance dancing intensifies to a rapid pace. When dancing becomes arduous, the spirit bearer collapsed on to the floor in a faint. He is soon revived by the shaman, who could also be the village Imam, to recover from his exhaustion.

In spite of the seemingly clear division of labor between dancing the *mag-igal* and dancing the spirit bearer (*igal-jin*), the perceived boundaries are often crossed over if someone who dances the *mag-igal* has the callings to become spirit mediums for their ancestral spirits. They too may perform trance-dancing and becomes the *jin* (spirit bearer).²² At the end of the trance-dancing (*igal-jin*) and ritual healing, all members of the family continue to dance the *mag-igal* for the rest of the afternoon as they await the sun to set. At this juncture, the dance becomes spontaneous social-dancing which is often performed in a linear formation around the living quarters that was once a sacred healing space. When *magduwata* is about to end, a series of Islamic verses (*an-Nas*, *al-Ikhlās*, *al-Falah*, *al-Fatihah*, *al-Baqarah*) and a recitation of a *doa* (prayer) is performed to conclude the event, thus marking the end of a syncretic event of indigenous and Islamic rituals.

Contrastively, *igal* dancing in the *magpa-igal* ritual is performed both by the male spirit bearer (*jin lella*) and female spirit bearer (*jin denda*). The dance of the female spirit bearer (*igal jin denda*) is accompanied with the tune of *titik limbayan* while the dance is referred to as *igal limbayan*. In this slow and languid dance, body cologne is sprinkled onto the female spirit bearer as an inducement to bring forth spirit guides into the body of the dancing shaman. A burst of rapid and virtuosic movements of the body and hands marks the union of spirit guides into the body of the spirit bearer. Similarly processes are also observed in the dancing of the *igal jin lella* (dance of the male spirit bearer) when *titik jin* (for Bajau Laut/Sama DiLaut of Sitangkai) or *titik lellang* (Bajau Laut in Bangau-Bangau, Semporna, Sabah) are played during *magpa-igal* ritual dance.

The same situation could be observed in the dance of Pagkanduli ritual. As the *igal jin denda* dance, it is said that the female *bansa* (spirit guide) watches the performance being offered to them. If the music is particularly good especially during the portions with fast tempo, the *bansa* supposedly

comes and dances together with the human performers. It is also said that they sometimes show their pleasure by entering the *igal jin denda*'s body through a central spot of the head referred to as the *imbun-imbunan*.²³ They therefore take temporary residence in the body of the *igal jin denda*. When they are in residence, the *igal jin* feels weary and oftentimes some pain. To release the *bansa* from their bodies, the *igal jin* should recite sacred words or phrases (*kata-kata*). This recitation may come in the form of chanting or incantation.²⁴

Epilogues: Gazing music - Gendering dance

Discussions on the *tagunggu'*/*kulintang* and *igal* for ritual healing (*magpaibahau-magduawta*) or celebrating of progenitors' spirits (*pagkanduli*) so far have shown that music of *tangunggu'*/*kulintangan* ensemble tells events beyond conventional soundscapes. Music not only accompanies dance and ritual activities but facilitates the crossing of worlds between the living and the spirit guides (*jin* or *bansa*) through the interactive actions of the spirit bearers (*jin* or *limbayan*) during séance dancing (*igal jin/igal limbayan*). In other words, the tunes of *tangunggu'*/*kulintang* are not only meant to identify the genders of spirit bearers at pre- and post-séance dancing but are signifiers of gendered spirit guides that have entered (*masuk*) the bodily abode of the spirit bearers. Some generic examples of tunes (*titik*) associated with specific genders of dancing spirit bearers highlighted by this paper are as follows; *titik limbayan* for dancing female spirit bearers (*igal limbayan*), *titik tabawan* for dancing male and female spirit bearers (*igal jin* and *igal limbayan*) or for communal dancing (*magigal*), and *titik jin* or *titik lellang* for dancing male spirit bearers (*igal jin*). All of the *titiks* and *igals* in séance dancing (*magpa-igal*) in *magduwata* and *pagkanduli* follow an archetypical generic sequencing as mentioned above.

In this context, the type of tunes chosen for the spirit guides during séance dancing is determined by several factors. First, tunes chosen to induce trance for the spirit bearers are determined by the biological sex of the spirit bearers (*jin* or *limbayan*). Secondly, tunes are changed to satiate the continual presence of the spirit guides that have entered the bodily realm of the spirit bearers irrespective of the biological sex of the spirit bearers when séance dancing (*magpa-igal*) begins and it will last as long as the séance continues. Thirdly, tunes would again change when spirit guides have left the performative space signified by visible exhausted spirit bearers, falling to the floor in spasms of convulsive fits. At this point, dancing (*magigal*) becomes a communal event to celebrate a successful completion of séance dancing cycle. Musicians are either informed by the senior male spirit bearer (*jin*) to play different tunes at the point when spirit guides are known to have entered (*masuk*) the bodily space of the junior spirit bearers or by their head or senior musician who may have acquired communicative competence in recognising the presence of the spirit guides.

While the intrinsic knowledge of gazing the spiritual presence of spirit guides during séance dancing during *magpaibahau-magduwata* and *pagkanduli* remains as esoteric skills of the Bajau Kubang and Sama Dilaut, academic speculation may suggest that indigenous musicians and observers alike may have learnt subtle kinaesthetic nuances of séance dancing in the way as *parole* is to communicative competence. At the broad level of competence, *igal* dance is performed with stylistic gender differences. Female dancers are generally more fluid with their hands, extending, curling and flexing their fingers with or without the faux fingernails (*sulingkengkeng* or *janggay*) to accentuate and amplify arms and hands movement while sustaining relatively upright torso. The male dancers, on the other hand, are agile and display martial art-like movements of *kuntao* or *langka* (Mohd Anis Md Nor 2003: 180). But within and between these broad dance motifs, are the smallest meaningful units of dance movements (*morphokines*) that are idiosyncratically different from the conventional movements, performed or practiced knowingly by members of their communities. These are probably interstices or empty spaces between spaces full of structured movements that are filled with dynamics of body movements and gestures peculiar to performance styles of gendered spirit guides. It is perhaps within these interstitial spaces that the mastering of the esoteric knowledge in capturing the gendered dance movements is gazed by the music.

Endnotes

¹ See Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan, Hanafi Hussin and Judeth John Baptist, 2005 "Dance as Ritual, Dance as Celebration—Tradition and Change Amongst the Bajau of Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia," in *Global and Local*, Cultural Centre, University of Malaya.

² Walton, Janice and Moody, 1984 "The East Coast Bajau languages," in *Languages of Sabah: A Survey Report*, Julie K. King and John Wayne King (eds). *Pacific Linguistics C(78):113-123*. (reprinted in 1997). Canberra. Australian National University: 114, 119; Sather, Clifford, 2004, "Keeping the Peace in an Island World of Violence: Sama Dilaut Ways of Managing Conflict," in *Leadership Justice and Politics at the Grassroots*, edited by anthony R. Walker, pp.127-158. *Contributions to Southeast Asian Ethnography*, No.12: 131.

³ Sather, Clifford, 2000. "Bajau Laut boat building in Semporna," in *Techniques & culture*, 35-36: 177-198:181.

⁴ Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan, Hanafi Hussin and Judeth John Baptist, 2005 "Dance as Ritual, Dance as Celebration—Tradition and Change Amongst the Bajau of Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia," in *Global and Local*, Cultural Centre, University of Malaya:208

⁵ Ibid. 208

⁶ See Sather 1997 and Victor T. King 1993.

⁷ "On the morning of the second day of magpai baha'u, eight plates of cooked rice are set out on the floor of the nakura' jin's house, as a food offering to the souls of the village ancestors (amakan sumangat kembo'-mbo'an). The offerings also include drinking water and incense. The ancestors are then invoked by the mediums and invited to eat and drink the meal prepared for them. At the same time, they are asked not to punish their descendants, who are honouring their memory, but, instead, preserve them from calamity. The ancestors are said to be visible to the medium at this time, and converse freely with them. As soon as the mediums indicate that the ancestors have finished eating, the nakura' jin bids the guests who have gathered to take their places, and all eat from the same plates. The mediums then join them" (Sather, 1997: 305).

⁸ "The village mediums assemble at midday. An imam opens the ritual by chanting in Arabic (jikil). While the imam chants, the mediums go into trance (pataka). 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.' While in trance, each medium is believed to be the vehicle of his or her spirit-helper, through whom the spirit communicates. The medium enters into a dialogue with the spirits and ancestors conducted in spirit language (ling saitan). Each medium generally asks why there is so much sickness in the village, or why so many children have died during the year, and the spirits respond by listing grievances, and by making requests for special favours. At this juncture, the mediums invite questions from the spectators who have gathered. The mediums, as Garani expressed it, act in this exchange like interpreters or 'intermediaries' (paganti), passing questions and answers back and forth between this world and the spirit world. The villagers typically ask advice regarding important decisions they must make, request news of the dead, seek remedies for illness, or advice on problems affecting themselves or other members of their house group. The mediums translate the questions into the language of the spirits; the spirits then speak through the mediums, and the mediums translate the spirits' answers or advice back into ordinary language. The questioning generally lasts for some time, as a great many villagers typically gather to put questions to the spirits and ancestral souls. Finally, the spirits announce through the mediums their intention to take leave, and one by one the mediums return from trance. Later, the rice and cakes used to make the bottong are divided by the nakura' jin between the mediums and the imam who performed the opening chant" (Sather, 1997: 306).

⁹ "The final morning of the magpai baha'u is marked by a ritual bathing (magtulak bala'), similar to that performed during bulan sappal, conducted by the mediums and one, or possibly several, imam. Its purpose is similarly to drive away sickness and other misfortune. In Sitangkai, magtulak bala' is followed by a final celebration, called magkanduri, held on near by Sikulan Island. After the bathing, all who took part go directly to the island where an ancient fig tree (nunuk) grows, believed to be a gathering place of local spirits. Ritual bathing concludes magpai baha'u." (Sather, 1997: 305).

¹⁰ "The timing and organization of these events are planned in each local community by its mediums. The time of magpai baha'u is fixed, according to village jin, by the appearance of a constellation of stars above the north-eastern horizon of the sky, corresponding to the source of the north-east winds (utall' lo'ok), called the pupu (Pleiades?), shortly after sunset (pallawa' allau). Once these stars appear in position, a group of mediums is sent inland to buy newly harvested rice (pai baha'u, literally 'new un-husked rice') from agricultural communities. Not cultivating rice themselves, the timing of the rite is thus determined by the harvest season of their neighbours. In Semporna in the 1960s, the medium generally traveled to Lihak-Lihak, although at times new rice was also obtained from mediums in Sitangkai, who are said to have made an annual pilgrimage to Tawitawi to purchase newly harvested rice from Sama farmers on the island. The rice obtained is shared out

between the village mediums and is husked, using a wooden mortar and pestle, by the female members of each medium's household" (Sather, 1997: 304).

¹¹ Amongst the paraphernalia of ancestral heirloom commonly found in the households of the Bajau Kubang are; lai (large ancestral ceramic plates); ceramic plates of various sizes for sweetmeals, bowls that served as coasters or bowls used for rain seeking rituals; drinking glasses; Kuha' (a pair of large ladder); Pamamaan (betel leaf containers made from Ipil wood); Buku Maulud (book of Islamic hymns reciting praises for the holy Prophet); Jimpau (yellow cloth); Ampit (red cloth); Lantaka' (miniature canon); Tepo (pendanus mats); Baung (coconut sheels, which are filled with water and are expected to shake during spirit trancing); Ancestral four poster beds; A set Kulintangan pot-gongs with two Agung (hanging gongs) and Tambul or Tambol (brass snare drum). (Mohd Anis Md Nor & Hanafi Hussin, 2006, "Mag-igal and Igal-Jin: Dancing the Spirits of the Ancestors in the rituals of Magduwata of the Bajau Kubang in Bumbum Island, Semporna, East Malaysia", Paper presented at 24th Ethnochoreology International Symposium, Cluj, Romania (10-17 July 2006), pg 11.

¹² Judeth John Baptist and Patricia Regis, 2010 "Magpa-igal Jin: a ritual dance, linking the Past with the Present among the Sama Dilaut of Sabah," paper presented at International Conference, Oceans of Sound: Sama Dilaut Performing Arts Conference, 9 Sept, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 6.

¹³ Interview, Intan Sulga, 2005.

¹⁴ Hanafi Hussin & MCM Santamaria, 2008, "Dancing with the Ghost: Experiencing the Pagkanduli Ritual of Sama Dilaut (Bajau Laut) in Sikulan, Tawi-Tawi, Southern, Philippines," in JATI (Journal of Southeast Asian Studies), Kuala Lumpur: Department of Southeast Asian Studies: 161.

¹⁵ In the case of Bajau Laut of Bangau-Bangau, Titik Tabawan is always called as Titik Lubak-Lubak, which is used in the Magpaigal ritual.

¹⁶ Mohd Anis Md Nor & Hanafi Hussin, 2006, "Mag-igal and Igal-Jin: Dancing the Spirits of the Ancestors in the rituals of Magduwata of the Bajau Kubang in Bumbum Island, Semporna, East Malaysia", Paper presented at 24th Ethnochoreology International Symposium, Cluj, Romania (10-17 July 2006).

¹⁷ Interview, Hj Bakhara Onnong, 2004.

¹⁸ Information provided by MCM Santamaria who did the fieldwork on *magpa-igal* in Sitangkai, Southern Philippines in 2008.

¹⁹ Judeth John Baptist and Patricia Regis, Op.Cit., pg. 17.

²⁰ Mohd Anis Md Nor & Hanafi Hussin, Op.cit. (2006).

²¹ The same can be said for some indigenous people of the Bangsa Moro and other indigenous tribes in nearby Mindanao in southern Philippines where the Bajau are supposed to originate.

²² Inda' Aishah bt. Haji Abagat, a female relative from the village of Kampung Tongkaloh in Semporna spontaneously took the role of the dancing spirit bearer and administered spiritual-healing when she fell into a trance. She even went to the extent of admonishing the musicians for not playing to the right tune when she was in trance. However, the most significant observation made on this event was her request to drink sea water at the height of her trance-dancing. It caused a slight commotion when her request was not eagerly granted for fear of dire consequences to her health. This was finally resolved when she drank almost half a pitcher of sea water before she fainted in exhaustion. Upon regaining herself, she told the sick patient to repair the dilapidated house, a request transmitted to her by the ancestor spirit who came in contact with her during her trance-dancing. This remark was seriously taken by the family members as a reminder to upkeep the ancestral lineage and heirloom, a causal reminder of cursed miseries or sickness from their ancestral spirits. Mohd Anis Md Nor & Hanafi Hussin, Op.cit. (2006: 11).

²³ Hanafi Hussin & MCM Santamaria, 2008, "Dancing with the Ghost: Experiencing the Pagkanduli Ritual of Sama Dilaut (Bajau Laut) in Sikulan, Tawi-Tawi, Southern, Philippines," in JATI (Journal of Southeast Asian Studies), Kuala Lumpur: Department of Southeast Asian Studies: 163.

²⁴ Ibid. 163.

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