

DANCING WITH THE GHOSTS OF THE SEA: EXPERIENCING THE *PAGKANDULI* RITUAL OF THE SAMA DILAUT (BAJAU LAUT) IN SIKULAN, TAWI-TAWI, SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES

Hanafi Hussin & MCM Santamaria

Abstract

Ritual reveals much about a culture through its elements, structure, and purpose. This paper discusses the importance of sacred dance performance by introducing the *bansa*, a category of “ghosts,” in the cosmology of the Sama Dilaut (Bajau Dilaut) of Sitangkai Island, Tawi-Tawi, Philippines. By having the *Pagkanduli* ritual of the Sama Sitangkai of Tawi-Tawi, Southern Philippines, it describes the process of the ritual and its significance to the community livelihood. The first part narrates the various phases of the *Pagkanduli* ritual from the journey from Sitangkai to Sikulan Island to perform the dance named *mag-igal* under the *dangkan* tree. It starts with the procession to the *dangkan* tree and moves to the grove to perform the *mag-igal*, and then return to the *dangkan* tree area for games, and finally farewell incantation to the spirits to mark the ending of the ceremony. The second part of the paper provides an analysis on the types of *bansa* and the qualities of its character and categories of what they possess, what are done to them, and what they purportedly do. The paper puts forward an argument for the importance of ritual in the formation of identity via memory making and embodied practice.

Keywords: Pagkanduli ritual, bansa, identity, memory making, and cosmology

Introduction

The *Pagkanduli* starts at the home of the Wali Jin (aka *Kalamat*) Jaafar. Employing the form of a chant, he asks permission to perform the *Pagkanduli* while facing the ritual chest or the *Duwaan* (*jinan jian ni Duwaan na atiya' na kanduli*). Jaafar chooses clothing that will be used for the *Pagkanduli* (*amene pakaian*). These include green loose pants called *sawwal* and white shirts which are all bundled up to be brought to the Island of Sikulan. After this task is done, the Wali Jin and his assistant together with all other participants assemble into boats called *tempel* and sail off to Sikulan Island. During the journey, they play the gongs and *kulintangan* (*magtagunggu na lepa/bayanan*).

Upon reaching Sikulan, participants bring out food supplies and other things from the boat. Many of the *igal jin* spirit-bearers¹ and their families eat on the boats. They dare not eat near the *Dangkan* tree (*Ficus* spcs.) for fear of despoiling the sacred spot. Eating is not allowed in its vicinity and, the Tuan Laut and the other spirits

are said not to like it. The *igal jin* spirit-bearers later on change into their ritual clothes to prepare for the ceremonies to be held in the island.

Pagkanduli Ritual Rites

Magsakap – Preparing

In a spot just a few meters away from the wharf facing the Sulu Sea, all of the *igal jin* spirit-bearers assemble and prepare ritual implements while chanting. At the same time, others play the gongs and other instruments or carry *panji* flags that come in green, yellow and white colors. In the meantime, Wali Jin Jaafar prepare two small sheets of *tumbuk*² ceremonial white cloth buntings that portray *Tuan Laut*³ and *Dayang Mangilai*.⁴ The *tumbuk* also contains sacred writing which according to Wali Jin Jaafar has something to do with attendance.

The Tumbuk of the two Bansa⁵, Tuan Laut, and Dayang Mangilai

The *tumbuk* portraying Tuan Laut bearing a male figure is attached to a branch of the *Dangkan* whereas the *tumbuk* portraying Dayang Mangilai bearing a female figure is placed in the area of the *Kamma'toolang* (*Pandanus* spcs.) grove, the female *bansa's* residence. Tuan Laut and Dayang Mangilai are supposed to be husband and wife. It is also understood that other *bansas* participate in this ritual, however, it is specifically Tuan Laut and another *bansa*, Muhammad Susulan⁶, who communicate with Wali Jin Jaafar. Muhammad Susulan then instructs Wali Jin Jaafar to hang the *tumbuk* on the *dangkan* in order to report on the attendance of *igal jin* spirit-bearers from Sitangkai. This *tumbuk* is drawn for Muhammad Susulan by Wali Jin Jaafar. The writings drawn around the figures of Tuan Laut and Dayang-Dayang Mangilai signify their attendance as they are instructed to keep draw up a list by the *bansa*. While preparations are done near the wharf, several women assisted by children proceed ahead of others to the *dangkan* in order to clean (*nihau'an*) the site for the ritual dancing.

Palud - Procession

After a while, all preparations are done and the participants start to walk together in procession towards the *Dangkan*. During the aforementioned parade, the participants pass by two lighthouses. *Igal jin* spirit-bearers sprinkle tonics on these structures. A tonic is a brand of green-colored cologne favored in rituals. This is done because other *bansa* who come by the names of Tapsirun and Sunsulun are known to live in these structures. Through the fragrant offering, they are invited to join the *Pagkanduli*. It is said that persons who say bad things in their presence will be cursed, so will persons who dare to defile or to damage any of the lighthouses. Tonics are sprinkled around these structures because of the belief that this offering is the most acceptable and well-loved item by the *bansa*.

The *Pagkanduli*, as its name literally suggests, means to come together and celebrate. The parade ends under the *dangkan* tree. The tree itself symbolizes the "male," and thus in this case represents the "husband" of Dayang Mangilai. Even

though the tree represents maleness, it is understood that female spirits may congregate around it. Upon arriving at the *dangkan*, several *igal jin* spirit-bearers sprinkle tonics, install *panji* and hang the *tumbuk* together with other pieces of cloth around it. It is said that spirits truly prefer *panji* and other decorative tree buntings that are of a substantially large size but then their provision truly depends on their affordability or the capability of the *igal jin* spirit-bearers to provide them at the time the ritual is called.

Photo 1: Palud-a parade of *jin* approaches the sacred *dangkan*



Source: Fieldwork

Magtagunggu and Mag-igal

It is believed that Wali Jin Jaafar routinely receives instruction on how to execute the ceremony properly from his spirit-guide as soon as the entourage approaches the *dangkan* area. After a while, the *kulintangan* ensemble composed of the *agung* (big gong) the *tambul* (Spanish type of drum) and *kulintangan* (graduated gongs) starts to play signaling the beginning of dancing *igal*, Muhammad Susulan. All the *igal jin*-bearers who perform in this portion of the ritual do so upon the invitation of Muhammad Susulan through Wali Jin Jaafar. If participants dance without being invited, they will not receive any blessings from the *bansa*, on the contrary, they shall be struck ill. The dancing starts with *Igal Limbayan* which is exclusively performed by the female *igal jin*-bearers (*igal jin denda*). Senior *igal jin denda* perform first. They are then followed by younger *igal jin denda*. Some of those who perform use ornamental nail extenders called *sulingkengkeng* and hand-held clappers called *bola-bola*. It is said that these properties are associated with particular *bansa*. Therefore, the appearance of such properties in the performance signifies the attendance of these particular *bansa* via the dance.

Photo 2: *Magtagunggu'* - Kulintangan music by Timallay



Source: Fieldwork

Photo 3: *Mag-igal jin* – *Igal Limbayan* (Female *jin*) and *Igal Lellang* (male *jin*)



Source: Fieldwork

As the *igal jin denda* dance, it is said that the female *bansa* 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*.⁷ 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. Breathing becomes difficult for some who later on need to be comforted by either the Wali Jin or the other *igal jin*. 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. If the *igal jin* fails to release the *bansa* through this means, then Wali Jin Jaafar assists them in releasing the spirit(s) by pulling their fingers forcefully upwards and also by gently whipping his kerchief or *porong* on their shoulders. Almost all of the *igal jin denda* who danced *Igal Limbayan* and who later experienced "in-dwelling" (*masuk*) of the *bansa* asked for the assistance of Wali Jin Jaafar. In cases when the *bansa* are reluctant to be released or refuse to take their leave, Wali Jin Jaafar requests the musicians to play again even better and faster. He then asks the *igal jin denda* to dance again until the *bansa* becomes satisfied and agrees to be released.

Wali Jin Jaafar also invites other members of the audience to dance *igal* as a sign of thanks to those who come and participate and also to give the chance to experience the presence of the *bansa*. The *bansa* are considered to be ancestors and therefore it is not unusual nor a frightening thing when they make contact with participants. The participants and the community in general therefore celebrate the *Pagkanduli* in both physical and spiritual senses of the word. Again, it should be noted that only those invited by the *bansa* through the Wali Jin are allowed to dance. Wali Jin Jaafar later on announced that the *bansa* in attendance were fully satisfied with the attendance and participation of the audience in the *Pagkanduli*.

Igal Lellang is the last dance to be performed. It is performed by four male *igal jin*-bearers (*igal jin lella*) and took the form of a martial arts dance that looked like *kuntao*. It is an energetic dance which symbolizes and actualizes the participation of the children of Muhammad Susulan in the ritual process. In the minds of the believers, it appears that (re)union with the *bansa* is a process of simultaneous representation and realization in dance performance.

Paturun ni Kama'toolang

After satisfying all the *bansa* at the *Dangkan*, the ritual participants parade towards a pandan grove near facing the Celebes Sea. This part of the ritual is called *paturun ni Kama'toolang*. While marching, they play the gongs and beat the drum. As soon as they are near the place, all the *igal jin*-bearers head towards the *Kama'toolang* tree while all the other participants go to the clumps of *pandan*. Wali Jin Jaafar attaches the *tumbuk* of Dayang Mangilai onto the *Kama'toolang* tree while the other *igal jin*-bearers decorate green and yellow *panji* and other buntings around it. Written on Dayang Mangilai's *tumbuk* are symbols also that relate to attendance. After finishing decorating the tree, the *igal jin*-bearers sprinkle Tonics on the participants who make wishes as they tied pandan leaf-ends into knots. The participants' wishes must all be positive or done in good faith. It is said that those that are not positive

or done in good faith will not be granted. After the tying of the leaves, dancing erupts in the small clearing surrounded by pandan. This time, the *igal jin*-bearers dance together with all the other participants of the ritual. This “sub-event” of dancing is considered to be quite important most especially when the *tumbuk* is already attached to the tree for it signifies an offering to Dayang Mangilai. The dancing also invites Dayang Mangilai to join the procession back to the *dangkan* for further celebrations. This particular dancing of *igal* that “mixed” in the sense that males and females dance together is called “*maglabad*.” Since dancing is held amongst the pandan, it is also referred to as “*maglabad na igal na pandan*” (dance or dancing in the pandan grove).

Photo 4: Dancing for all bursts make a wish in the midst of pandan



Source: Fieldwork

Pabalik ni Dangkan (Amasial Manbusong)

After some time of dancing at the pandan had passed, Wali Jin Jaafar, his assistant and the gong players start the procession back to the *dangkan* taking the route by the sea. (*pabalik ni Dangkan amasial manbusong*). The instrumentalists keep beating the gongs and the drum as Wali Jin Jaafar and his assistant leads the procession back to the *Dangkan* while dancing. This phase is called “*igal pamole’an ni dangkan*.” The ritual actions in this phase signify (and actualize) the escorting of Dayang Mangilai to join Tuan Laut, Muhammad Susulan, and his children at the *dangkan* tree as well as to celebrate the ritual ceremony as organized by the Wali Jin and the others.

Photo 5: Wali Jin Jaafar leads the procession back to the greater *dangkan*



Source: Fieldwork

Mag-ongkak

Upon reaching the *dangkan*, they start preparing for the games. Wali Jin Jaafar and his assistant prepare the swing (*dundang*). They are followed by others who help propel the rider of the swing by pulling a rope attached to the bottom of the seat. The games in this phase are as follows:

- *Magdundang* (swing) is believed to be the hobby of Dayang Mangilai. She comes over from the *Kama'toolang* to join in the pastime of swinging.
- *Mag-sipa* (a form of *sepak takraw* or kick ball using a woven rattan ball) is believed to be the hobby of the children of Muhammad Susulan, the *jin*-spirit guide of Wali Jin Jaafar.
- *Maglaka-lakad* (skip rope or jump rope) is another game associated with the children of Muhammad Sululan.
- *Mag-embet* (riding on a coconut frond as it is pulled) again is another game for the children of Muhammad Susulan.
- *Maghella* or *magtehella* (tug-o-war) is a game associated with Muhammad Susulan.

Photo 6: *Mag-ongkak* of Sama D'Laut of Sitangkai



Source: Fieldwork

Amuhun na man Dangkan

After the games, an activity that can be seen as a most inclusive kinetic expression of re-union with ancestral spirits, come the closing of the ritual. Wali Jin Jaafar chants a mantra (*angamuk-ngamuk*) in front of the *dangkan tree* and sprinkles tonics around it before taking his leave. The other *igal jin*-bearers follow suit and bid farewell (*muhun amolek na kami*) to all of the spirits who are supposedly gathered under the tree. In cases when diseases have struck down members of the community, they appeal to the *bansa* for cure and protection. It is understood, that at this time, spirits enter the Wali Jin's and few other *jins'* bodies to inform the participants about their satisfaction with the conduct of the *Pagkanduli*. This message may sometimes be announced through one of the *Igal Jin Lella* who assists the Wali Jin in the ceremony. In the case of this *Pagkanduli*, the Wali Jin is seen lying down to communicate with the spirits, very much similar to the ritual curing practice of the Sama Dilaut *kata-kata*. Ritual ends when permission to close the ceremony from the spirits is granted.

Photo 7: Wali Djin Jaafar say goodbye at the *dangkan*



Source: Fieldwork

Some Observations: Characterizing the *Bansa*

Having reviewed the phases of the *Pagakanduli* ritual, its purpose, its perceived efficacy for the participants and other aspects, it is now most proper to re-examine the characteristics of the *bansa* in order to fully understand their position in the Sama Dilaut order of things. These characteristics or attributive correlates can either be gleaned from what was actually observed in the ritual process or from what has been explained by main informants. They may roughly fall into three categories: a) what the *bansa* have or possess, b) what are done to them by ritual participants or believers, and c) what they do to participants. The characteristics are as follows:⁸

What they possess

The *bansa* have personality. The spirits “encountered” in the *Pagakanduli* ritual are addressed by their titles or names, Tuan Laut, Muhammad Susulan, Dayang Mangilai, Tapsirun and Sunsulun. Although “the children of Muhammad Susulan” are unnamed, for the moment, it is not unwise to surmise that they too have names and may be identified by ritual participants. Personality, at least in the minds of the Sama Dilaut participants, is further articulated by preference. In the case of the *Pagakanduli*, it was quite clear that individual *bansa* preference was expressed via dance property. Particular property such as the *sulingkengkeng* and the *bolak-bolak* were associated with particular *bansa* who were in attendance. In addition, preference is also expressed via their supposed participation in the games. Swinging (*dundang*)

is associated with Dayang Mangilai. The *sipa* (rattan kick ball game) and the tug-of-war (*maghella*) are associated with Muhammad Susulan. Jump rope (*maglaka-lakad*) and riding on the palm frond (*mag-embet*) are associated with the children of Muhammad Susulan.

The *bansa* have specific habitation or abode. Like their human counterparts, *bansa* keep residences. Tapsirun and Sunsulun live in the lighthouses and serve as their protectors. Tuan Laut, Muhammad Susulan and his children apparently share the *dangkan* much like a communal dwelling place, and Dayang Mangilai lives in the *Kammahto'olang*, the area of the pandan grove. It is interesting to note that there is a sexual division of habitation in the case of the *Pagkanduli*. The female *bansa*, Dayang Mangilai, lives in a place defined by space, essentially a circular projection bounded by pandan plants while the male *bansa* lives in a massive form, a vertical projection defined by the upward growth of the tree.⁹ It would be most interesting to find out through comparative research what forms, that is apart from rock, coral islands, and trees that have already been identified by past research, the abodes of *bansa* take.

The *bansa* have status and status-based relations. The *Pagkanduli* appears indicate the presence of status, and therefore some form of social structure, among the *bansa*. For now, it would be prudent to state that two levels of status are observable: titled *bansa* as the likes of *Tuan Laut* and *Dayang Mangilai*, and untitled *bansa* like Tapsirun, Sunsulun and Muhammad Susulan. Actions appear to follow the entitlements of status. Note that the "lady" Mangilai is properly "invited" and escorted to the celebration at the *dangkan*. Also note that Tuan Laut does not do this by himself but "sends" an invitation entourage for the lady. These appear to be very formal codes of conduct projected onto the actions of spirits. It should also be noted that the locals claim that the spirits are of Sama lineage and that they are considered protectors, or, ones "who are responsible for the well-being of the Sama people."¹⁰ In this vein, it can also be said that the *bansa* have or are ascribed ethnicity.

What are done to them?

The *bansa* are invited to join in the celebration of rituals. They do not simply come, they have to be invited and conditions will have to be all in proper order for them to make their presence felt. The *Wali Jin*, also called *Kalamat*, takes the main responsibility in inviting the *bansa*, most specially the main ones such as Tuan Laut, Muhammad Susulan and Dayang Mangilai, to come and celebrate the ritual with community via incantation or chanted prayers that may be considered as a form of Sama *kata-kata*. Another method of "cajoling" them is to sprinkle tonics, a particular brand of green colored and highly fragrant cologne, in the ritual area(s). The *bansa* supposedly like to come when the ritual site smells good. Tonics are supposedly the most acceptable fragrance to the *bansa*.¹¹ It may be surmised that in the past, aromatic oils or even flowers may have served as original offerings. It is noteworthy to mention that compared to other rituals in the region, the *Pagkanduli* does not seem to have the presence of the elements of fire or smoke in the form of incense or sandalwood bark. Perhaps ash, the by-product, is considered a defiling element to the sacred site or also perhaps the element of fire may be considered to be too dangerous for the sylvan abodes of the *bansa*. Another method of invitation is the playing of sacred music or music associated with trances dances by the *kulintangan*

ensemble. The playing of gongs during the procession appears to be a method of announcing to the *bansa* that the participants intention to commence the ritual. Furthermore, trance-in-ritual may very well be induced by the poly-metered and “droning” music of the gongs.

The *bansa* are offered gifts. In the case of the *Pagkanduli*, gifts come in the form of music and dance. It seems that “materiality” is not of importance, and that the giving of “self” in the case of the *igal jin*-bearers as temporary vessels of “in-dwelling” for the *bansa* in dance is considered an ultimate form of gift or offering. It appears that the “gift” is the whole section of *kulintangan* playing and *igal* dancing in front of the *dangkan* tree. The program-as-gift is quite structured. It always begins with *kulintangan* music called *Titik Limbayan* and a corollary dance called *Igal Limbayan* performed by female *igal jin*-bearers who become hosts of female *bansa*. This may be followed by *Titik Tabawan*, a non-sacred music, with the corollary *Igal Tabawan*. This dance piece may be performed by non-*igal jin*. It appears that the proxies or the representatives of *igal jin* who cannot attend performs during this section. So do non-Sama Dilaut peoples who may have received healing from the Wali Jin and are therefore given the opportunity to offer “gifts” in the said section. Towards the end of this phase, the male *igal jin* performs to the music of *Titik Jin*, and at the very end, the Wali Jin himself dances *Igal Lellang* together with some other *igal jin* to *Titik Lellang*. Furthermore, it should be noted that the Sama Dilaut appear to continue the very Asian practice of bringing gifts to persons being visited, a form of tribute to the host, so to speak. It should be remembered that the participants in the *Pagkanduli* are actually “visiting” the residences of the *bansa*. Respect and cordiality are expressed in this practice of gift giving.

What they do

The *bansa* may watch, mingle and “inhabit” ritual participants. During the offering of music and dance, the *bansa* are supposed to be present amongst the ritual participants. They are believed to watch or mingle and more importantly, in the case of the “class” of *igal jin*-bearers, they may decide to participate more directly via “in dwelling” or what is called *masuk* (literally, to enter) by the Sama Dilaut. In-dwelling results in mystical and most extra-ordinary *pas de deux* where two beings, the person of the *igal jin*-bearer and the *bansa*, share one body in dance. This may very well be the most important part of the ritual where an actual “union” between *bansa* and believers happen in the embodied experience of the *igal jin*-bearer. The result is *patakka*, a half or conscious trance. The Sama Dilaut trance is unique in this manner. The host never loses consciousness of self. He or she in fact gains the consciousness of “others.” Furthermore, the in-dwelling is not limited to one spirit being hosted. In fact, multiple in-dwelling is not considered rare. The hosts are noticeably animated. They also feel pain and tiredness. These qualities of trance may be worth observing and may also serve as clues to patterns of the people’s dispersal in maritime Southeast Asia. For instance, a most interesting observation with the trance in the *Pagkanduli* is that hosts of spirits are given relief by gentle “whipping” with towels, kerchiefs or other pieces of cloth. This “whipping” of persons in trance appears to be a pan-maritime Southeast Asian practice found, among other places, in Bali where “igal” (igel) is also used as a generic term for dance.

The bansa provide cure for illness, protection from disaster and grant wishes.

The *Pagkanduli* is supposed to be, among several interpretations, a form of thanksgiving and a form of duty by the community for being spared from an epidemic or saved from some form of calamity. Maurice Bloch¹² conception of “rebounding violence” seems to be quite applicable in the case of the *Pagkanduli* for it is said that if the ritual is not done in regularity, not done properly, or not attended to by the individual, then sickness or some calamity will happen. Belief in this proscription, apart from belief in the *bansa* as well as the many elements present in this ritual, makes it truly a non-Islamic artifact among the supposedly “semi-Islamic” Sama Dilaut people. Individual pleas for curing are also “heard” by the *bansa* and some “petitioners” come from as far as Semporna to participate and be healed in this ritual. Healing is not the only incentive for participation. Individual wishes are supposed to be granted by binding the pandan leaf ends at the grove of Dayang Mangilai. This practice is most interesting because of, once again, the presence of double signification. It has been explained that one ties the pandan leaf to announce that one has done ones oath or fulfilled ones promise to join the ritual and at the same time to make a wish for oneself. This double entendre in ritual practice may, paralleling Bloch’s idea of rebounding violence, as a Sama idea or notion of “rebounding blessing.” Simply put, the more one participates and the more often one announces his fulfillment of a vow then the more wishes will be grant or the more aspirations will come true. Indeed, this part of the practice seems to “balance” the discourse on ill fate or rebounding violence or misfortune.

The bansa can strike persons ill or cause physical injury. This characteristic or ability is related to the preceding section and has much to do with the proper execution of the parts of the ritual. A strange case has indeed been observed in this particular *Pagkanduli*. One of the *Tausug* (Suluk) women, the lighthouse keeper’s daughter-in-law failed to ask permission from the Wali Jin as she spontaneously danced into one of the middle phases of the *igal* section of the ritual. After a while she felt some pain in her arms and legs. Most fortunately, as it was explained later, the Wali Jin interceded and averted the near personal disaster. It appears that the *bansa* and the Wali Jin had been able to affirm a Sama Dilaut order of things. The offender was *Tausug* and a non-*igal jin* at that had to be disciplined. Whether this talk is true or a subject of artistic license is not the central concern in this narrative. The fact that such a story was narrated with great affect indicates that some transmission of belief, memory and normative standards of behavior...that can only be Sama Dilaut in origin has indeed occurred. *Busong* is the word for calamity due to wrong doing by commission or omission. Again, a comparison of this concept across communities can only help enlighten scholars about Sama Dilaut culture.

The bansa can accept the presence of outsiders. The Sama Dilaut spirit world of the *bansa* is apparently open to the presence of outsiders (researchers included). This openness however is not unconditional. They must follow the general rules of the ritual ceremony which is communicated and enforced through the Wali Jin by instruction and through the other *igal jin* spirit-bearers by their exemplary behavior. Moreover, a certain place and time is allotted for their participation. In the case of the *Pagkanduli*, certain parts are open to all such as the parts of the parades, the tying of the pandan leaves and the games. However, during critical periods such as that of the music and dance offerings, some degree of proscription is observed. Outsiders may participate during this phase but only with the permission of the Wali Jin who serves as some kind of celebrator or liturgist of the ritual process. An

“opening” to outsiders is observed in the middle portion of this phase, one that is, as mentioned earlier, accompanied by non-sacred music of *Titik Tabawan*. If the values of the *bansa* reflect the value of believers, or the other way around, it may indeed be stated with a great degree of confidence that this whole ritual process indicates a high degree of accommodativeness and value for integration of people (individuals) and peoples (communities).

Finally, it may be said that the *bansa* evaluate rituals. At the end part of the ritual when the Wali Jin bids them goodbye, the *bansa* express their satisfaction with the conduct of ritual and in return assure the community that they will be protected from calamity and spared from disease. This promise of “rebounding goodness of blessing” appears to be a strong source of community solidarity as well as individual psychological support in the context of the highly volatile politics of the region of the Sulu Sea. The assurance given upon communion with the spirits of the community as interpreted and narrated by the Wali Jin forms a strong bond of continuity with past as well as with communities separated by the arbitrary boundaries of the nation-state. The *Pagkanduli* ritual therefore, in many ways, reconstitutes the community in their processes of memory making through the passing of narratives, their shared experiences in communing with sacred as embodied in the dancing of the jin who co-dwells with the spirits, and their shared realization that ritual in a significant way informs their *pusaka* or heritage of identity that sets them apart from others. This form of “benign and accommodative bothering” is implicit in the opening of spaces for external participants within the *Pagkanduli*. Implied in the act of “opening” is the realization that this is *their* ritual and that others are merely *sharing* in it. This may be appreciated by echoing one of Nimmo’s¹³ early informants’ comments on the Tausug:

“We believe in most of the same spirits, I think. The big difference is that they attend the mosque and pray whereas we have the *magomboh* (annual ceremony for ancestral¹⁴ spirits).”

By logical extension...as is the *Mag-omboh*, so is the *Pagkanduli*.

Endnotes

¹ The term “jin” or “djin” refers to both the spirit as well as the shaman/medium. To avoid confusion, the authors of this paper have decided to adopt Bottignolo’s device of distinction. He uses “djin spirit” to refer to the spirit and “djin-bearer” to refer to the shaman/medium. The terms were further modified to “igal jin-spirit guide” to refer to the spirit and “igal jin-bearer” to refer to the shaman medium in this paper. See Bruno Bottignolo, *Celebrations with the Sun: An Overview of Religious Phenomena among the Badjaos* (Quezon City: Ateneo De Manila Press, 1995).

² White flag symbolizes male and female protector of the sea and Sama people i.e Tuan Laut and Dayang Mangilai.

³ Protector of the Sea and Sama people.

⁴ Co-protector of the Sama people.

⁵ Identified as Sama Dilaut (Bajau Laut) ghosts.

⁶ Spirit guide of the head *Jin* - Wali Jin Jaafar.

⁷ Although the Sama cosmology still stands to gain from more research, the authors of this paper put forward the idea that two levels of ghosts or spirits are present in the *Pagkanduli*. The first would be the bansa community or place protectors as represented by Tuan Laut, Dayang Mangilai, Tapsirun and Sunsulun. The second would be “jin” or “jin-spirit guides,” who are personal guardians and/or intercessors, represented in this ritual by Muhammad Susulan. An alternate view would be to see all of the spirits involved as “bansa” with the idea that the term jin was simply a synonym of a more generic nature made available to the Sama Dilaut with the coming of Islam.

⁸ The main informants are Walin Jin Jaafar and his assistant Maasurin. Interpretation was provided by Hadji Musa Malabong of Sitangkai.

⁹ MCM Santamaria notes that there appears to be correspondence with what he calls the “linga-yoni” projection, that is, female denoting space and male denoting mass. This will have to be ascertained by comparative studies of *tempat* or dwellings.

¹⁰ Interview with Wali Jin Jaafar, 6 March 2008.

¹¹ It is said that other brands may also be acceptable, but Tonix is the most efficacious.

¹² See Maurice Bloch, *From Blessing to Violence: History and Ideology in the Circumcision Ritual of the Merina of Madagascar* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

¹³ Harry Nimmo, *Bajau of the Philippine* (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1972), p. 72.