

IGAL:
**THE TRADITIONAL PERFORMING ARTS OF THE
BAJAU LAUT IN SEMPORNA, SABAH**

HAFZAN ZANNIE HAMZA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the concept and meaning of *igal*, an indigenous dance tradition of the Bajau Laut community in Semporna, Sabah. *Igal* or ‘dance’ to the Bajau Laut community signifies more than just a ‘dance’. This thesis posits that *igal* represents Bajau Laut’s culture, heritage, worldview, and cultural memory; through its epistemology and the construction of its form and content. The practice and performance of *igal* in Bajau Laut cultural landscape articulates the psychological impression of concept and meaning, and is signified as the Bajau Laut restored behavior. Thus, it is necessary to uncover the concept and meaning of *igal* through investigative studies on its practices and performances within the Bajau Laut traditional landscapes as well as stage performances. This thesis adopted Ferdinand de Saussure’s dyadic model of decoding the sign - signifier and signified; to investigate, interpret and understand the holistic conception of meaning of *igal* in the Bajau Laut society. This thesis also incorporated Richard Schechner’s concepts of performativity and restored behavior to elucidate the culturally structured movement system of the Bajau Laut community as a performative, symbolic and reflexive “performance.” This thesis attempts to discuss that *igal* as a structured movement system, is a performative expressions of an explicit and implicit coded aspect of Bajau Laut culture.

ABSTRAK

Tesis ini mengkaji konsep dan makna *igal* yang merupakan sebuah tari tradisi masyarakat Bajau Laut di Semporna, Sabah. Di kalangan masyarakat Bajau Laut, *igal* menandakan lebih daripada sekadar makna “tari.” Tesis ini menganjurkan bahawa *igal* mewakili budaya, kewarisanan (*heritage*), pandang dunia (*worldview*), dan memori budaya (*cultural memory*) masyarakat Bajau Laut melalui epistemologi dan konstruksi bentuk (*form*) dan kandungannya. Amalan dan persembahan *igal* dikalangan masyarakat Bajau Laut dalam landskap budaya menzahirkan sebuah tanggapan psikologi tentang konsep dan makna, dan ini ditandakan oleh perlakuan semula (*restored behavior*) masyarakat tersebut. Oleh yang demikian, konsep dan makna *igal* perlu dijelaskan melalui kajian bersifat investigatif terhadap amalan dan persembahan *igal* yang merangkumi landskap tradisinya serta persembahan pentas. Tesis ini mengaplikasi model *dyadic* Ferdinand de Saussure dalam menyahkod tanda (*sign*) - penanda (*signifier*) dan penandaan (*signified*) *igal*, melalui penyelidikan, pentafsiran, dan pemahaman konsep dan maksud *igal* di kalangan masyarakat Bajau Laut secara holistik. Tesis ini turut mengaplikasi konsep *performativity* dan *restored behavior* oleh Richard Schechner untuk menjelaskan bahawa sistem pergerakan yang terstruktur mengikut budaya masyarakat Bajau Laut ini adalah sebuah persembahan (*performance*) yang performatif, simbolik dan refleksif. Tesis ini bertujuan membicarakan bahawa *igal* adalah sebuah sistem pergerakan berstruktur yang secara eksplisit dan implisit menzahirkan kod-kod performatif budaya masyarakat Bajau Laut.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

This study focuses on the dance of the Bajau Laut community in Semporna, Sabah, as a symbolic and reflexive performance of *restored behavior*, a term coined by Richard Schechner (2002). In this context, dance as “performance” is the actor’s expressions of an explicit as well as implicit coded aspect of culture in a structured movement system. In relation to this, Ferdinand de Saussure’s¹ concept of *semiotics* is applied here to derive the concept of meanings from a linguistics point of view, providing a critical discourse analysis on the Bajau Laut dance tradition in Semporna, Sabah. This research also seeks to study dance anthropologically, as a means of discovering if dance can be viewed at a deeper level with multiple meanings for the performer and the Bajau Laut community of Semporna.

Dance or “culturally structured movement system” is a system of knowledge embedded by the beholders’ tradition and can be described as “communicative competence” (Kaepler, 2007, p. 56). Systems of knowledge are the products of action and interaction as well as processes through which action and interaction take place (Kaepler, 1999, p. 16). Kaepler explained that these systems cannot be observed, but must be derived from the social and cultural construction of specific movement worlds. They exist in memory and are recalled as movement motifs, imagery and as system, and are used to create compositions that produce social and cultural meaning in performance

¹ Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) was a Swiss linguistics scholar. He was one of the founders of modern linguistics, and also what is now more usually referred to as semiotics (in his *Course in General Linguistics*, 1916). His linguistic model has created an analytical method that attempted to describe the overall organization of sign systems as “languages” was responsible for establishing the basis theory of structuralism (see the work of French key structuralist Claude Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes, among others, who have applied Saussure’s theory to anthropology). Saussure’s *Course in General Linguistics* (1915) was posthumously compiled by his students, based on notes drawn from several series of Saussure’s lectures.

(Kaeppler, 1999). Kaeppler (2007, p. 56) suggests that in order to understand the dance as systems of knowledge, performers and observers must acquire “competence” in the same manner as competence in a language is acquired. Competence in *igal* dance knowledge of Bajau Laut performers are derived from passive observation of different sets of dance sequences and from physically ‘practicing’ or ‘rehearsing while performing,’ as they transform themselves from non-dancing to dancing participants in various cultural activities. Competence relates to the cognitive learning of the shared rules of a specific dance tradition, a concept shared by Saussure’s acquisition of *langue*². Competence enables the performer to understand the grammatical movement sequence, resulting in the performer’s capability of “performing” the actual rendering of a movement sequence. The “performance” is therefore the *parole*³, which assumes that the performer has a level of competence and the skill to carry it out (Kaeppler, 2007, p. 56). Therefore, the dancers’ competency to understand the shared rules of *igal* dance tradition and map the structured movement system onto their own mental representations is the *langue* while the *parole* is the dancers’ level of competence to actual performance.

Many of the dances of the indigenous communities of Sabah are associated with celebrations and festivities, which may be either spiritual or secular in nature or both, but which often highlight the uniqueness of the indigenous dance culture. “Dance” within the indigenous dance tradition however, may be understood to mean many things in the fifty-four spoken living languages of Sabah (Mohd Anis Md Nor, 2004b, p. 44). *Tandak*, *sazau*, *sayau*, *igal*, *bailug*, and *zapin* or *jepin* are examples of numerous terms of reference used by the indigenous people of Sabah to refer to their structured movement system. This signifies that the generic term “dance” or “*tari*” (Malay term

² *Langue* refers to the system of rules and conventions which is independent of, and pre-exists, individual users.

³ *Parole* refers to its use in particular instances.

for dance) should not be appropriated to indigenous dances in Malaysia, in this context – *igal* of Bajau Laut in Semporna.

The Bajau Laut structured movement system – *igal* may be translated as “dance,” while *magigal* is the act of performing the dance (verb: to dance). *Igal* emphasizes the mastery of hand gesture, body posture and subtle movement. It can be a slow and solemn, or fast and energetic dance depending on its musical accompaniment. This dance is accompanied by specific tunes (*titik*) of *kulintangan*⁴. Musical accompaniment is provided by a *tagunggu*’ ensemble. This ensemble consists of a *kulintangan* set of small kettle gongs or pot gongs ranging between six to eight pieces on a rack, with one up to three large *agung* (hanging gongs), and one *tambul/tambol/tambur*, a double-headed brass snare drum (Hafzan, 2012, p. 133).

In the Bajau Laut cultural landscape, *igal* is associated either as sacred or secular performance. Even though most sedentarized Bajau Laut in Semporna are now Muslims, their worldview is still traditionally pre-Islamic. They believe in the indivisibility of the physical world and the spirits in the spiritual world. Ritual ceremonies carried out are intended to maintain goodwill between the people and the ancestors and spirit world as a whole. The Bajau Laut community respects the existence of spirits in the spiritual world because they believe the spirits are bound to their ancestors, or *umboh*⁵. Hence, many of their religious practices and rituals reflect a syncretic form of pre-Islamic and Islamic beliefs.

⁴ Matusky and Tan (2004) notes that the *kulintangan* has been brought to the coastal areas in Sabah approximately two hundred years ago from the southern Philippines and Brunei. It normally functions as the main instrument that provides melody in a gong ensemble. Some communities in Sabah refer to *kulintangan* as one ensemble that consist of the *kulintangan* instrument itself, one or two single or double-headed drums and hanging gongs. As for the Bajau community in Semporna, the word *kulintangan* is specifically refers to a set of small kettle gongs or pot gongs on a rack.

⁵ *Umboh* is a mythical being, which in the Badjao imagery appears as male in gender, very old and dressed in black. Created by Tuhan (God) at the beginning of time, he is the first man and the Badjaos’ ideal ancestor. Unique in his position, he is the prototype of man and acts on one side as a mediator between Tuhan and man; on the other as the fountainhead of life, center of the world, head of the whole cosmos. He will never die. It is from him that the Badjaos’ religion takes its name. By extension, the same term (uncapitalized) is used to describe the real ancestors; that is, those who lived in the past and are still remembered. Often the spirits of these *umboh* take up residence in living persons (elders, parents, *panday*). In this case, the *umboh*-spirit is also called “*djin*” (*djin-spirit*). As a consequence, the living persons bearing them (*djin-bearer*) have their status and role sanctioned. They themselves are addressed by others with the term of respect, “*umboh*” (Bottignolo, 1995, p. 269).

The significance of *igal* in Bajau Laut rituals is marked by its functions as a conduit that connects the relationship between them and their ancestors. This can be seen at the *magpaa-baha'u* ritual, an annual three-day new rice ritual which marks the return of ancestral spirits to their descendants (Sather, 1997, pp. 304-308). Sather (1997) described how this event is celebrated by the Bajau Laut in Kampung Bangau-Bangau in Semporna:

[*Magpaa-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 rice, climaxing with the midday feasting of the ancestors. Finally, the rite concludes with early morning bathing (Sather, 1997, pp. 307-308).

In addition to *magpaa-baha'u*, the Bajau Laut perform public dances on a quarterly basis during the full moon, called *magpaigal-jin*, which are carried out to entertain village ancestors and the numerous spirits believed to inhabit the surrounding region. The dance is performed by spirit mediums who pay respect to their inherited *jin*⁶ in order to maintain the continued goodwill of the spirits. Such dancing is also thought to have therapeutic virtues. Spirit guests⁷ are said to take on the various afflictions and woes that are suffered by village members. This ceremony can also be executed in tandem with large ceremonies such as at weddings or funerals, or can be conducted together or separately with other rituals.

Failure to implement both ceremonies will result in the so-called *katulahan* (ancestral curse) or *kabusungan* (plague) resulting in pain or harm on family members, or even to the whole village. According to Garani Jikilani⁸, who is the most respected *jin* (spirit medium) in Kampung Bangau-bangau, if the *jin* fail to dance at these

⁶ The word '*jin*' is derived from the Arabic word Jinn, a pre-Islamic concept of genii. The term and its meaning has become confused or combined with other more or less similar beliefs which are, or have been, current in various countries where Islam prevails. The *jin* is responsible for certain illness, which they cause by taking possession of people (Rouget, 1985, p. 279).

⁷ 'Spirits guests' are those *jin*-spirits or spirits of the real ancestors or *umbohi* that entered the medium's (*jin*-bearer) body in the course of a ritual dance or healing rites.

⁸ Garani Jikilani is also known as *Kalamat* Garani (*Kalamat*: medicine-man or person who possessed *jin*), or regarded as *nakura' jin* (*jin* leader) that possessed strong spirits.

ceremonies, they go mad and the whole community becomes *binusung*⁹ (Sather, 1997, p. 307). Treatment on this *katulahan* or *kabusungan* can be cured by performing rituals such as *magpaa-baha'u* or *magpaigal-jin* accordingly, with the involvement of *igal* and *magtagunggu'* (music making).

Igal is not only performed during rituals: it can also be observed in more secular contexts such as at social events that include social gatherings such as *pagkawin* (weddings celebrations). *Igal* in this context is not merely seen as presentational in nature but is also participatory, involving the partaking of family members, relatives and guests.¹⁰ Today, *igal* is not just an exclusive dance within the sacred space of the Bajau Laut but it is also presented as a stage performance at the annual Regatta Lepa festival organized in Semporna since 1994.

In a performance, an act is always formalized in a way that fits the performance characteristics designed by the beholder. Schechner (2002, pp. 155-163) describes this as *codified acting*, which employs meaningful movements, gestures, songs, costumes and makeup set by tradition. The term codified acting itself was derived from the semiotic system of references. Hence, one has to have the communicative competence to decipher the code in order to fully understand what is being communicated or expressed. In this thesis, I intend to show how semiotics provides an avenue for conceptualizing, analyzing, and understanding *igal* in the context of Bajau Laut dance as a “performance,” which is embedded with culture, heritage, worldview, and the cultural memory of the Bajau Laut community.

⁹ *Binusung* means to become *busung* or inflicted with spiritual calamity which is expressed through sickness, spiritual illness or even death. It is also believed that if the deceased ancestors are neglected or shamed by the conduct of their descendants, it may cause the latter to suffer *busung* (Sather, 1997, pp.184-5, 299, 335).

¹⁰ The thesis uses the categorization as suggested by Nahachewsky (Spring, 1995) which he elaborately discussed in his *Participatory and Presentational Dance as Ethnochoreological Categories*. According to Nahachewsky, participatory dance is when the dancer's attention addresses their interaction with each other, while presentational dance is performed for an external human audience as well as there exist a cultural distance between the dancer and viewer.

1.2 The Statement of the Problem

In Bajau language, *igal* literally means “dance.” However, to the Bajau Laut community, *igal* connotes implicitly profound meaning beyond the literally explicit denotation by others who view *igal* merely as a dance. This denotative meaning encodes *igal* as a *signifier* to communicate the semantic content of what *igal* represents. As a lexical word, *igal* functions only as a physical object (as dance) with no other meanings or implications. Clearly, this denotative relationship between the signifier (*igal*) and the *signified* (meaning and concept) is inadequate to represent the idea or psychological construct of the Bajau Laut community.

This thesis is framed within the stage representation of *igal* during the Regatta Lepa festival, which can be a perfect example to illustrate further discussions on how *igal* encompasses multiple-layered of meanings when performed at different context. *Igal* in the Regatta Lepa festival is performed to fascinate the spectators visually, focusing on the aesthetics¹¹ and beauty of a choreographed, spectacular dance performances. *Igal* in this kind of stage performance has been re-contextualized as short, appropriate for entertainment that is not only cater for local audiences, but also international. In the context of an eclectic stage performance in Regatta Lepa festival, *igal* has undergone several reconstructions via the appointment of professional choreographers who are detached from the contextual knowledge of *igal*. Besides this, the abandonment of the *tagunggu*’ ensemble, costumes and paraphernalia embellishment are also issues that has shaped the inaccuracy in the interpretation of *igal*. *Igal* presented at the Regatta Lepa stage performance appears to be the only modus in which the state government of Sabah knows how to project the meaning of *igal* as representative of Bajau Laut culture.

¹¹ Deriving from the Greek word *aisthetikos*, which deals with “sense perception” indicate the response to art and especially concerned with beauty (Kaepler, 2003).

As a stage performance in Regatta Lepa festival, *igal* is a cultural artefact allegedly representing the Bajau Laut's cultural values and norms. To the state government of Sabah on the other hand, this interpretation is deemed to be truthful, logical and acceptable as long as it is in compliance with Malaysia's National Cultural Policy (NCP), which comprises the following three core principles:

1. The culture of this country should be based on the culture of the original people of this region;
2. Suitable and appropriate foreign cultural elements can be embraced; and,
3. Islam functions as an important element in the National Cultural Policy.

(“Dasar Kebudayaan Kebangsaan,” 2008; Rais Yatim, 2009)

Undoubtedly, the NCP heavily stresses that these three elements are indicative of the ways in which Bajau Laut culture should be represented in the context of Malaysia's performing arts. The third principle of the NCP has undoubtedly paved the way on how performing arts of the Bajau Laut is supposed to be presented. Hence, the ritual elements moulding the sacredness of *igal* have been neglected to conform to the NCP.

This research argues that the understanding of the staged *igal* solely as a ‘dance’ is imprecise and superficially signifies only the denotative meaning of *igal*. *Igal* must be looked upon as Bajau Laut culture as well and must not be separated from its culture. This idea is supported by Merriam (1974) who states that “dance is culture and culture is dance” whereby the “entity of dance is not separable from the anthropological concept of culture” (p. 17). As culture, *igal* must be interpreted and understood as:

[...] an entire configuration, rather than just a performance ... the implicit as well as explicit aspects of the dance and its reasons for being; the entire conception of the dance within the larger culture, both on diachronic basis

through time and on a synchronic basis of the several parts occurring at the same time (Kealiinohomuku, 1974, p. 99).

To study *igal* dance as culture is to embrace the notion of *igal* as being a cohesive and integrative part of culture. *Igal* as a dance is part of the Bajau Laut's system of knowledge signifying their culture, heritage, worldview, and cultural memory. It is embedded in the Bajau Laut traditional landscape and encompasses the epistemology and the construction of its form and content as it is practiced within the culture.

This thesis suggests that the approach of understanding the *igal* as a Bajau Laut performing art requires precise and truthful views. Hence, the need to understand the concept and meaning of *igal* through Saussure's dyadic model of *signs* (signifier and signified) is imperative as a means to unveil the significance of Bajau Laut performing art from the viewpoint of Bajau Laut perceptions and experiences.

This thesis proposes that *igal* has to be deciphered as a sign; something that can be interpreted as having meaning of signifying something other than itself, which can be used to communicate information to the one deciphering it. To study the entire conception of *igal* is significant because it embodies the reality, values, norms, belief, and justification of the Bajau Laut's belonging. It is a process as well as product of social interaction and functions as an essential social instrument to constitute and articulate their world.

1.3 Research Objectives

This thesis embarks on the idea that *igal* is a culturally structured movement system and should be understood as a *performative* action encompassing holistic concepts and meanings of Bajau Laut culture.

This study challenges the generalized and superficial interpretation of *igal* as a dance, while proposing a comprehensive and profound manner of understanding *igal* as a Bajau Laut performing art through the study of semiotics. This study shows how semiotics (the use of Saussurian's sign, signifier and signified) can elucidate the

*signification*¹² by which the *igal* dance culture consistently and coherently generates meanings, contrasting the shallow denotation by outsiders. The application of Saussurian's semiotics is insufficient as it will only arrive at the denotative meaning of *igal*. Therefore, the study proposes the application of *myth* (Barthes, 1972) and *representation* (Hall, 1997) as an additional conceptual framework to allow the study to investigate *igal* at a deeper level of analysis.

Additionally, the study will discuss *igal* practice within two contrasting Bajau Laut landscapes – its traditional practice within the Bajau Laut community, and its representation at the Regatta Lepa festival in Semporna, Sabah. To meet this goal, the research focuses on *igal* (dance) and *magigal* (dancing the *igal*) practiced among the Bajau Laut in the context of ritual enactments specifically at *magpaili-baha'u* and *magpaigal-jin* rituals and on social occasions found at *pagkawin* (wedding) ceremonies. The thesis also seeks to paint a vivid picture of the *igal* performances at Regatta Lepa festival to elucidate how similarities and variations at different performance contexts may alter meanings and concepts of *igal* to the Bajau Laut community in contrast with *igal* practices in its traditional settings.

This study also seeks to interpret and analyse the denotative and connotative meaning of *igal* in the first and second order of signification. The meanings and concepts of *igal* will be analyzed through identifying and examining 'igal as signs' and 'igal as signifier' of the Bajau Laut's performing arts represented in the psychological construct of the Bajau Laut community. To meet this goal, *igal* is treated simultaneously as sign and signifier, and the analysis is supported with Schechner's (2002) concept of *performativity* and *restored behavior* in order to elucidate the performative signifiers that signify *igal* and the signification processes that take place.

¹² Throughout the writing of this thesis, the usage of the term 'signification' refers to Saussure's explanation of "arbitrary relationship between the signifier and the signified" (Saussure, 1966).

1.4 The Importance of the Study

Igal in the Regatta Lepa festival was established in 1994 by the Sabah state government, and has been portrayed as a symbolic representation of traditional Bajau Laut performing art. However, the portrayal of *igal* by the state government does not encompass a full understanding of *igal* as a signifier of the larger traditional Bajau Laut landscape. This limited understanding of *igal* has significantly excluded many aspects of the Bajau Laut landscape. Hence, this research dwells into the psychological construct of the Bajau Laut community, revealing *igal* as a practice that extends into its traditional landscape.

This study analyses *igal* objectively to discover the underlying phenomena of *igal* as a culturally coded performative structured movement system. Empirical evidence provided throughout this thesis illuminates Saussure's (1966) "concept in the mind" of the Bajau Laut to visualize what and how the *igal* is signified. This research uncovers "the various layers of the dance process, its constituents, and their meaning and function in society, thereby contributing to the understanding of people and their means of expression within the framework of a socio-cultural community" (Giurchescu & Torp, 1991, p. 7). As a pioneering study, this research focuses on the semiotics of *igal* as a dance, culture, and performance.

1.5 Research Methodology

This research was conducted through qualitative methodology from ethnochoreological perspectives. As suggested by Royce (1977), the qualitative approach applied in this study views dance "impressionistically as an object of anthropological inquiry" (p. 19). Research data was collected through fieldwork and secondary sources. Prior to conducting fieldwork, the researcher conducted library research and accessed all available material on the history, socio-cultural and ritual

practices of the Bajau community in Semporna. Library research was done mainly at the University of Malaya Library, National Library, Sabah Museum Library, National Archive, Sabah State Archive, Tun Fuad Stephen Library as well as accessing online materials on the internet. This involved sourcing information from printed materials such as books, journals, conference papers, websites, newspaper archives, and related documents. These reading materials were used to support the ethnographic findings of this research.

In addition, a detailed research strategy has been designed by the researcher in order to affirm the objectivity of the field research. A number of research tools were applied throughout the research, combining anthropological and choreological approaches to investigate the entire configuration of dance as culture and performance. Direct observation of dance events in the Bajau Laut community was essential. Comprehensive technical recordings of the entire dance events were made through videos, photographs and sound recordings.

The sacred and secular *igal* performances were observed between 2007 to 2011. The fieldwork was conducted in 2007 to identify the research area, cultural troupes and the selected communities in Semporna who continued to sustain their ritual practices. As an outsider, this period was vital to gain trust from the Bajau Laut community prior to entering their space to obtain data. A series of dance events and rituals observation were conducted from 2009 to 2011. Communication difficulties, ritual postponements, reliability of ritual dates determined by the *nakura' jin*, as well as reliance to the major rituals performed at Sitangkai were among the challenges faced by the researcher over the years.

During ritual observations, the researcher recorded the entire event with digital video recorder and DSLR camera. The researcher sought permission from the community prior to recording these events, performing ethical no-flash-photography as well as restricting the movement of the camera so as not to interfere with the course of the ritual. Apart from attending rituals, the researcher also kept abreast with the Regatta Lepa and observed the festivals' course and progression, making videographies and photography recordings of *igal* performances throughout the festival.

As an outsider, the researcher viewed *igal* as a culturally structured movement system and as a performing art of the Bajau Laut. However, the researcher was also aware that indigenous practitioners possessed other viewpoints about *igal*. Both viewpoints were essential to this research, resulting in the need to examine the structured movement system of *igal* via *etic* and *emic* approaches.¹³ Therefore the researcher needed to view the structured movement system simultaneously in terms of their *etic* and *emic* features. The researcher adopted a participant-observation approach as means to understand the dance structure of *igal* from the beholder's viewpoint – in accordance to its *emic* nature. This self-experienced method was realized by learning *igal* to comprehend the basic knowledge and structural content of the dance. This was achieved by training together with the dancers of *Kumpulan Warisan Bajau* (Bajau Heritage Troupe) in Kampung Bangau-Bangau, and direct tutelage with Intan Sulga, the founder of the troupe. The learned movements were then demonstrated repeatedly to the teacher to affirm the structural accuracy. This approach was significant to the research as “performing dance in another culture is also an excellent way of eliciting aesthetic

¹³ The neologisms 'emic' and 'etic' derive from analogy with the terms 'phonemic' and 'phonetic.' They were coined by the American linguistic anthropologist Kenneth Pike (1954), who suggested that there are two approaches to study of a society's cultural system, just as there are two approaches to the study of a language's sound system. Etic and emic are two ways to view the same thing; providing, as Pike says “A stereoscopic window on the world.” Pike suggest that etics were a way of getting at emics, somehow is an alien, cross-cultural, prepared in advance, somewhat absolute, measurable and created by the analyst. While the emic view is domestic, mono-cultural, structurally derived, relative, and contrastive in reference to the system, and discovered by the analyst (Franklin, K.J., 2009, p.1).

judgments as those native to the dance tradition correct, criticize, or praise your performance” (Royce, 1977, p. 18).

The researcher was introduced to Intan Sulga, founder of *Kumpulan Warisan Bajau* during his first field research in 2007.¹⁴ The researcher had been accepted as a dance student with her troupe and she expressed her willingness to assist the researcher throughout the research. Intan Sulga is a local expert who started *magigal* at 13 years old. She is a descendant of a *jin* family, and the daughter of *Panglima* Tiring – the longest serving *panglima* (headman) of the Bajau Laut’s kindred group. Although she is not a *jin* herself, she is the *limbagan*; a *jin*’s assistant who is also subject to the responsibility to perform *igal* during rituals to avoid being cursed by the ancestors (*katulahan*). These advantages made her the most appropriate informant considering her knowledge and her active participation in Bajau Laut sacred and secular dance events.

Participation in the *Kumpulan Warisan Bajau* was vital for this research as observation were implemented in tandem with learning the *igal*. Coupled with participant-observation, dance motifs, sequences, and styles of the *igal* could be understood deeply. Each dance movement and the musical accompaniment practiced by this troupe had been recorded for analysis.

However, studying *igal* with only one dance troupe was not sufficient. Since the *Kumpulan Warisan Bajau* is the only established Bajau Laut dance troupe in Semporna, other dance troupe within the Bajau community of Semporna were engaged for this research.¹⁵ In line with this, the researcher also observed *igal* repertoires of the PETRAS¹⁶ cultural troupe. PETRAS was selected as a comparison since it was the first

¹⁴ Intan Sulga, Kumpulan Warisan Bajau and several other informants were introduced to the researcher with the kind assistance of Ms. Judeth John Baptist who is currently working as an Assistant Curator at the Research and Development Unit, Department of Sabah Museum.

¹⁵ For comparison purposes, the researcher also observed and documented *igal* performed by the Bajau Kubang and Bajau Laut in several islands in Semporna such as Ligitan, Danawan, Bum-bum, and Omodal.

¹⁶ PETRAS is the acronym for the *Persatuan Penggerak Teater dan Tari Anak-anak Semporna* (The association of theatre and dance practitioners of Semporna). The group was founded in 1994 and is often invited to perform Bajau dance and music in

cultural troupe established in Semporna that had a complete dance and music ensemble, and was often selected to perform at various significant occasions, especially events organized by the state government. This was in tandem with the Royce's (1977) suggestion to compare several kinds of phenomena to fill the void in the inadequate description and analysis result.

The analysis of this thesis is based on the observations and descriptions that draw relative conclusions about the meanings of events, behaviours and values of the Bajau Laut society. The results of these discussions are reflected in three levels: 1) the actual behaviour; 2) the indigenous interpretation of the behaviour; and 3) the researcher's interpretation. To acquire the Bajau Laut's interpretation of the dance, unstructured interview sessions were conducted, which were specifically geared towards obtaining ethnographic information associated to *igal* and ritual practices among the Bajau Laut. Questions such as the background and context of dance presentations were randomly directed to the dancers and dance teachers. Feedback interviews were also conducted to obtain performers' comments on the dance-video recordings from various events. This was done to help understand the ways in which the Bajau Laut experienced and interpreted these events. Thus, this approach investigated the beholders' point of view, conceptually and psychologically, about their dance.

Informants were carefully selected to be interviewed, including dance and music experts, as well as individuals who were directly involved with rituals, and possessing an extensive knowledge of the Bajau Laut's traditions and cultures. They were identified based on the following categories:

1. Ritual exponents. They consist of the *jin*, *limbagan*, and family members who sustained the ritual practice,

2. Members of cultural troupes (dancers and musicians), and
3. Indigenous leaders, who represent the people in the village.

In addition to the aforementioned methodologies, the viewing of *igal* dance featured in the video clips or MTV Karaoke clips, widely available in the Semporna, were examined. This was crucial to this study due to the fact that the young Bajau Laut showed more interest in performing *igal* with the accompaniment of popular Bajau songs sung by Den Bisa¹⁷ rather than dancing to *tagunggu*' music.

1.6 Research Scope

This research observed and studied the *igal* dance amongst the Bajau Laut in Semporna, Sabah from an ethnochoreological point of view to recognize and understand the dance as a way of understanding a culture. The word 'ethnochoreology' comes from three Greek root words: *ethno*, referring to how the world is perceived by groups of people in many different ways; *choros*, meaning dance; and *logos*, a logical discourse (Harper, 2012). Through ethnochoreology, this study focuses on comprehending *igal* as "a dance from the perception and explanation" (Royce, 1977) of the Bajau Laut community.

The study focuses on the *igal* that is practiced in the context of ritual celebrations and social occasions of the Bajau Laut community. Ritual celebrations, such as the *magpaiti-baha 'u* and *magpaigal-jin* were studied as they are rituals where *igal* is the main focus. Apart from studying *igal* in the rituals, this research also studied *igal* in social occasions, such as at weddings. This research also expands its focus from the traditional practice of *igal* dance tradition to the stage performance of *igal* at the Regatta Lepa festival. Due to limitations of time, resources and other logistics, it was

¹⁷ Den Bisa is a local singer who sang songs using the Bajau language. He is the official anthem singer for Lepa Regatta – 'Lepa Sampulna.' Music videos and karaoke videos he sang often fused with the *tagunggu*' music (specifically to say – Kulintangan instrument). He is now publishing his songs under his own production house known as Den Bisa Production.

not possible to gather all samples of Bajau Laut dance practiced in Semporna. As such, this research is limited to a specific vicinity of Kampung Bangau-Bangau, Semporna.

1.7 Literature Review

The researcher conducted library research from a variety of sources and materials to acquire the information and knowledge needed for the subject and topic of the study. Literary research was focused on scholarly writings of history, sociology, politics, economics and socio-cultural aspects of the Bajau community. Notable Bajau scholars from various disciplines included Francis James Warren (1972, 1981, 1985, 2000, and 2002), David Edward Sopher (1965 and 1977), Carrol Warren (1983), Yap Beng Liang (1993 and 1985), Harry Arlo Nimmo (2001), Clifford Sather (1966, 1968, 1971, 1974, 1984 and 1997), Gusni Saat (2008), Halina Sendera (2007) and many others. Ethnographic descriptions of the Bajau Laut in this thesis was based on the abovementioned references, but mainly centred on Sather (1997), Nimmo (2001) and Bottignolo (1995).

Sather, in his book¹⁸, provided comprehensive ethnographic descriptions and historical narratives of the sedentarized Bajau Laut group in Semporna. He explained the Bajau Laut's process of mobilisation from traditionally living as sea nomads until they became sedentarized. He also explained the Bajau Laut's role in the Sulu Sultanate as fishing communities, their involvement in the colonial economic activities, as well as the effect of Islamization and modernization to the society at large. In short, Sather elaborated the economic aspects, social organizations, domestic relations, religion, kinship system, and other cultural aspects of the Bajau Laut in Semporna. Sather however, did not discuss the *igal* in depth but he did explain the *magpaiti-baha'u* and other rituals connected to it.

¹⁸ Sather, C. (1997). *The Bajau Laut Adaptation, History and Fate in a Maritime Fishing Society of South-Eastern Sabah*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bottignolo's¹⁹ anthropological study illuminates the Sama belief system and, a form of expression among the Sama speaking peoples of the Sulu archipelago. He discussed the *pag-umboh* ceremony, which is the Badjao's²⁰ symbolic feast celebrating the *umboh pai bahao* which is similar to *magpaiti-baha'u* ceremony of the Bajau Laut in Semporna. Being an anthropologist Bottignolo did not discuss Bajau dance in further detail. He did however, briefly describe *igal* and explained the concept of *igal-djins*, the dancing *djins* who are the persons chosen to become a dwelling place for a spirit. Bottignolo's writing is significant to this thesis due to its comprehensive explanations about religious observance and rituals, enabling the researcher to understand the system of thought and belief that lies within the Bajau society.

Harry Arlo Nimmo (2001), who is one of prominent scholar in the field of Bajau studies, based his research among the Sama Dilaut of the Tawi-Tawi Province in the Philippines. His book²¹ entitled *Magosaha* (literally, 'seeking a livelihood') provides a comprehensive ethnographic description, social organization, and cultural practices among the Sama Dilaut in Tawi-Tawi. He documented the way of life of the Sama Dilaut during a critical transition period that includes the shift from a boat-nomadic lifestyle to a more sedentary lifestyle. This transition period has a great impact on the Sama Dilaut social organisation and leadership structure as well as on their cultural practices. This community has very close kinship ties with the Bajau Laut in Semporna because a small number of them have migrated from Tawi-Tawi to Borneo Island to survive the Spanish, the American, and later, the Japanese colonization times. Nimmo's book contributed to this thesis in its elaborative account of Sama Dilaut's everyday activities and ceremonial rituals especially the spiritual and the aesthetic culture of the Sama Dilaut.

¹⁹ Bottignolo, B. (1995). *Celebrations with the Sun: An Overview of Religious Phenomena among the Badjaos*. Quezon City: Ateneo De Manila University Press.

²⁰ There are various spelling of 'Bajau' in the literature which include Badjao, Bajao, Badjaw, Bajau and Badjau. This specific paragraph retained the spelling 'Badjao' to explain Bottignolo's account on the Badjao people of the Sulu archipelago. The rest of the thesis, however, used the spelling 'Bajau.'

²¹ Nimmo, H. (2001). *Magosaha: an Ethnology of the Tawi-Tawi Sama Dilaut*: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Several writings published by dance and non-dance scholars have discussed, both briefly and in detail, the structured movement system of the Bajau community. However, none of these writings have discussed the semiotics of *igal* from the point of view of the Bajau Laut diaspora in Semporna. Hafzan Zannie Hamza (2012),²² in his article wrote about the hybridity in *igal* and the processes undertaken by local choreographers in re-choreographing *igal* for presentational purposes. In their article, Mohd Anis Md Nor & Hanafi Hussin (2012)²³ thoroughly discussed how *igal* is performed at the *magduwata* ritual of the Bajau Kubang in Semporna. M.C.M Santamaria (2010)²⁴ described the appropriation of the *igal-pangalay*, the traditional indigenous dance in the Sulu Seas in the Philipines while Rodney C. Jubilado, Hanafi Hussin, & Maria Khristina Manuelli (2010),²⁵ studied the Sama-Bajau of Sulu-Sulawesi seas from the linguistic and cultural point of view. Hanafi Hussin (2008)²⁶ wrote about the preservation of cultural practices amongst the Bajau Laut diaspora in Sabah which stressed the maintenance and continuity of Bajau Laut's ritual practices. Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan, Hanafi Hussin & Judeth John Baptist (2005)²⁷ discussed the differences of *igal* in the context of ritual celebrations, social occasions and stage performance among the Bajau Kubang community in Semporna. Their work is descriptive in nature, but it nevertheless discusses how the development of the tourism industry in Semporna has significantly impacted the performative nature of *igal*.

²² Hamza, Hafzan Zannie. (2012). Hybridity in Presentational Dance: The *Igal* of Bajau Laut in Semporna, Sabah. In M. A. M. Nor (Ed.), *Dancing Mosaic: Issues on Dance Hybridity* (pp. 132-140). Kuala Lumpur: Cultural Centre University of Malaya & National Department for Culture and Arts, Ministry of Information, Communication and Culture, Malaysia.

²³ Mohd Anis Md Nor & Hanafi Hussin. (2012). Mag-igal and Igal-jin: Dancing the Spirits of the Ancestors in the Rituals of Magduwata of the Bajau Kubang in Bum-Bum Island, Semporna, East Malaysia. Paper presented at the 24th Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology, Cluj-Napoca.

²⁴ Santamaria, M. C. (2010). *Igal-Pangalay: Reconstituting Culture via the Appropriation of Traditional Dances of the Sulu Sea. Tirai Panggung, 10*, 62-80.

²⁵ Jubilado, R. C., Hanafi Hussin, & Manuelli, M. K. (2010). The Sama-Bajaus of Sulu-Sulawesi Seas: Perspectives From Linguistics and Culture. *JATI, 15*, 83-95.

²⁶ Hanafi Hussin. (2008). Diaspora Bajau Laut dan Pengekalan serta Penerusan Amalan Tradisi di Sabah. *Borneo Research Journal, 2*, 149-163.

²⁷ Pugh-Kitingan, J., Hanafi Hussin, & Judeth John Baptist. (2005). Dance as Ritual, Dance as Celebration - Tradition and Change Amongst the Bajau of Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia. In Mohd Anis Md Nor & Murugappan, R. (Eds.), *Global and Local: Dance in Performance: Cultural Centre, University of Malaya & Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage Malaysia*.

This thesis also considers Yap Beng Liang's (1993)²⁸ publication that has elaborates the role and the importance of *igal* and *tagunggu*' music at wedding ceremonies among the Bajaus in Omadal Island. These aforementioned publications have been significant to this research as they have given better insight into the history, background, development, and changes that have occurred in *igal* and its practice among the Bajau community.

The writings of Saussure (1966)²⁹ and Schechner (2002)³⁰ have formed the basis for discussion on the semiotics of *igal* and provide the foundation of the arguments in this thesis. Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure created an analytical method to study the sign systems and described the overall organization of sign systems as 'languages.' According to Saussure, languages are the system of signs which are responsible for human communication, consequently making the system a model for the study of other symbolic systems. Saussure explained that the signifier is the sound image and the listener's psychological impression of a sound, while the signified is the abstract content of the sign. He claimed that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary where there is no rational connection between the physical object (the signified) and the symbol attributed to it (the signifier). His dyadic model of signifier and signified are significant to the study of the Bajau Laut community's structured movement system to illuminates *igal* as signs that plays an important part in Bajau Laut social life.

For Schechner, performance studies deal with "behavior" which includes artistic, everyday ritual and playful acts. The inquiry about behavior is then expanded to what he coined as "restored behavior," which is a recombination of the "already behaved behavior." Schechner theorized the restoration of behaviour as an embodied

²⁸ Yap Beng Liang. (1993). *Orang Bajau Pulau Omadal: Aspek-aspek Budaya*: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kementerian Pendidikan, Malaysia.

²⁹ Saussure, Ferdinand de. (1966) *Course in General Linguistics*. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye (Eds.) in collaboration with Albert Riedlinger. Trans. Wade Baskin. New York: McGraw-Hill.

³⁰ Schechner, R. (2002). *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. Routledge. London and New York.

practice, enacting the symbolic and reflexive conventions or traditions and need to be decoded by those in the know. According to Schechner, performance in the restored behaviour sense is never for the first time, always for the second time to the *n*th time; twice behave behavior.

In studying dance as a phenomenon and viewing it as dance from the beholders' viewpoint, this research was approached from an ethnochoreological perspective. This thesis reviews a few essays that support the critical investigation of dance from a cultural studies perspective. Relevant to this study is the theoretical essay entitled *Panorama of Dance Ethnology* by Gertrude Kurath (1960).³¹ The work critically reviewed and discussed the subject matter, scope and procedures in dance ethnology and concluded that an ethnographic study of dance was a branch of anthropology. This meant that dance ethnology provided an avenue to demonstrate what dance means to a community of people. Kurath's notion of ethnochoreography is defined as "the scientific study of ethnic dances in all their cultural significance, religious function or symbolism, or social place" (Kurath, 1960, p. 235). Kurath also suggested that ethnochoreography is synonymous with dance ethnology, which is defined by Franziska Boas as "a study of culture and social forms as expressed through the medium of dance; or how dance functions within the cultural pattern" (as cited in Kurath, 1960, p. 235). Meanwhile, Royce (1977)³² in *The Anthropology of Dance* complements Kurath for providing an informative introduction about the anthropology of dance and develops Kurath's theory by linking the relationship of dance with cultural anthropology. She highlights several issues pertaining to the difficulties and problems in defining dance, as well as proposing methodologies to dance research as guidelines for the dance ethnologists. Royce also emphasized the methods of studying dance using structural and functional approaches to produce a holistic study. Kurath's *Panorama of Dance*

³¹ Kurath, Gertrude P. (May, 1960). *Panorama of Dance Ethnology*. *Current Anthropology*. Vol. 1, No. 3. The University of Chicago Press. Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2739713> Ms. 233-254

³² Royce, Anya P.(1977). *The Anthropology of Dance*. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press.

Ethnology and Royce's *The Anthropology of Dance* specifically assisted this research in the understanding of how to look upon *igal* as Bajau Laut culture, specifically in interpreting *igal* as an entire configuration of culture, rather than just a mere dance performance. The writings also contribute to the establishment of the ethnographic study of this research on *igal* as a formal part of the discipline of anthropology.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces concepts which are fundamental to this study, which will in turn set the tone for the arguments and analyses of the subsequent chapters. The conceptual framework of this study on *igal* dance focuses on the following theories: (a) Semiotics, (b) Myth and Representation, and (c) Performativity and Restored Behavior. The theoretical framework applied in this thesis derives from a re-understanding of a culturally structured movement system from the point of view of performance studies and semiotic analysis.

The research attempts to demonstrate that the dance (*igal*) examined in this thesis should be understood as a performative expression encompassing concept and meaning of the beholder's culture. The understanding of "performative expression" will be clarified by adopting Schechnerian concepts of performativity and restored behavior (Schechner, 2002). The culturally structured movement system of the Bajau Laut (*igal*) will be reconceptualised *as performance*: "that is made of 'twice-behaved behaviors,' 'restored behaviors,' performed actions that people train to do, that they practice and rehearse" (Schechner, 2002, p. 22). As the Bajau Laut community continuously rehearse and practice dance (and dancing) in their daily lives, the performance is naturally codified, rendered from their cultural values and norms. To Schechner, "codified acting is present only when there is a semiotic system of meaning separate from everyday behavior" (Schechner, 2002, pp. 156-158). Through this notion, every performance element of *igal* within the landscapes of Bajau Laut culture becomes a sign; hence the

whole performance becomes a set of signs that will need to be decoded to reveal its cultural concept and meaning, which is distinct from Bajau Laut's everyday behaviour.

The concept and meaning of *igal* will be explained through the use of semiotics, from the viewpoint of Saussurean's dyadic model of sign; signifier and signified. Ferdinand de Saussure (1916) argued that his semiological analysis is imperative in understanding and uncovering the concept and meaning of a 'language' within the language nature. However, the application of Saussurean study of signs, signification and signifying systems in this study is inadequate without examining *igal* in a broader context – outside the narrow focus of language nature.

Therefore, the study will also examine *igal* through the connotative order of signification embodied in the concept of *myth*. Roland Barthes' (1972) theory on myth is applied here as a means of moving from a narrow, linguistics analysis to a wider, culturally specific examination of *igal* in the broader Bajau Laut culture. Barthes also suggests that in myth, the sign "is more general, global and diffuse, [which] the signified have a very close communication with culture, knowledge, history" (Barthes, 1964, pp. 91-92).

The semiotic analysis and arguments in this thesis are also supported by Stuart Hall's concept of *representation* (Hall, 1997) in order to connect the meaning of *igal* that is derived from semiotic approach to the Bajau Laut culture. The underlying argument behind Hall's concept of representation is that the cultural objects and cultural practices can function as signifiers in the production of meaning (Hall, 1997, pp. 36-37). Therefore, this chapter will discuss Hall's representation and his application of Saussure's linguistics concepts (of sign, signifier and signified, and their principles) in arriving at the cultural meaning of *igal* performance by the Bajau Laut community.

2.2 The Application of Semiotics

This thesis uses the term “semiotics” rather than “semiology.” Hall (1997) and Chandler (2006) note that both terms are now generally referred to as “semiotics.” Hawkes, in *Structuralism and Semiotic* (1977) explained that both terms are used by semioticians to refer to the science of signs. He explains that “the only difference between them being that semiology is preferred by Europeans, out of deference to Saussure's coinage of the term, and semiotics tends to be preferred by English speakers, out of deference to the American Peirce” (p. 124).

Semiotics traces its origins to the influential work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, the founder of modern structural linguistics, and to the American pragmatic philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. Stam, Burgoyne, & Lewis (1992) noted that “Saussure established what he termed the science of semiology³³ while Peirce the science of semiotics” (p. 3). Semiotics and semiology, the terms used by Peirce and Saussure respectively, involves addressing physical objects in terms of their ability to convey meaning as signs (Counsell & Wolf, 2001). Supporting these ideas, Umberto Eco (1976) states that “semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign. It involves the study not only of what we refer to as ‘signs’ in everyday speech, but of anything which ‘stands for’ something else” (p. 7).

However, defining semiotics and semiology were not without its problems and arguments. While both Peirce and Saussure developed fundamental definitions of signs, there were crucial differences in their approach to semiotics. Saussure argued that signs comprised the signifier and the signified, while Peirce had devised a tripartite concept of signs encompassing the interpretant, representamen and object. Fellow scholars of semiotics were not without their respective opinions. Hall (1997) stated that the

³³ From the Greek *semeion*, “sign” (Saussure, 1974, p. 16).

underlying argument of semiotics is the use of signs as “all cultural objects convey meaning, and all cultural practices depend on meaning” (p. 36).

On the other hand, other scholars have defined semiotics beyond the boundaries of its discipline. Seiler (2005) suggested that semiotics could be applied to all sorts of human endeavours, including cinema, theatre, dance, architecture, painting, politics, medicine, history, and religion. In line with this, a new space emerged: the semiotics of dance. Investigated by Jordan & Thomas (1994), they suggested that the “movement themselves, cannot be studied without any reference to meaning or in isolation from the whole work” (p. 6). Expanding on Jordan and Thomas’ work, Zelinger (1979) suggested that “semiotics has a part to play in filling out dance theory [and] a theory of dance semiotics must be capable of explaining how a dance signifies (signs); and how spectators can ‘read’ a dance” (pp. 39-50). However, Zelinger limited his research to the semiotics of dance theatre, using semiological and linguistical concepts in order to complement dance aesthetics as a means of addressing signification.

Drid Williams (2004), on the other hand, developed semasiology, which is the study of meaning in signification, or human signs. Erleigh & Hanstein (1999) noted that Williams’ semasiology is an explanatory theory based on semiotics that intended to move the study of dance away from an examination of function and towards an understanding of human beings as meaning-makers. Williams employed the analogy of linguistics based on Saussurian ideas (*la langue/la parole*, signifier/signified) to calque the phonological level the linguistic model directly to bodily movement.

The application of a semiotics approach in this thesis is parallel to what earlier dance scholars have achieved in revealing meanings in dance within the context of adopting Saussure’s linguistics signs. Additionally, this thesis adapts Barthes’ (1972) “myth”, Hall’s (1997) “representation” theories and Saussure’s linguistic signs in the

examination of *igal* practice by the Bajau Laut community in Semporna, Sabah to arrive at a holistic meaning of *igal* (the sign), specifically at broader cultural levels of meanings.

2.2.1 Sign, Signifier, Signified

A linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern. The sound pattern is not actually a sound; for a sound is something physical. A sound pattern is the hearer's psychological impression of a sound, as given to him by the evidence of his senses. This sound pattern may be called a 'material' element only in that it is the representation of our sensory impressions. The sound pattern may thus be distinguished from the other element associated with it in a linguistics sign. This other element is generally of a more abstract kind: the concept (Saussure, 1966, p. 66).

In *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure advocated that signs comprised a "signifier" (*signifiant*) and a "signified" (*signifié*) (1966, p. 67). A signifier is the form which the sign takes while the signified is the concept it represents. Saussure designates the former as a "sound-image, [which is] not the material sound, a purely physical thing, but the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes on our senses" (p. 66). The "sound-image is sensory," "material" or concrete in the sense that it may be opposed to the latter; the "other term of the association, the concept, which is generally more abstract" (p. 66). Saussure added that the proof that our sound-images have a "psychological character" is borne out by the fact that "without moving our lips or tongue, we can talk to ourselves or recite mentally a selection of verse" (p. 66).

A sign is the associative total of the signifier with the signified – a combination of a concept and a sound-image. It is a "two-sided psychological entity" (Saussure, 1966, p. 66). They are as inseparable as two sides of a piece of paper.³⁴ Thus, a sign must have both a signifier and a signified. This relationship between the signifier and the signified is referred to as 'signification.' Whenever only one element is retained, the

³⁴ Saussure at this point compares language to a "sheet of paper": thought is the front and the sound is the back; one cannot cut the front without cutting the back at the same time; likewise in language, one can neither divide sound from thought nor thought from sound; the division could be accomplished only abstractedly, and the result would be either pure psychology or pure phonology (1966, p. 113).

entity of the signification vanishes. Saussure stressed that in the absence of signification, a signified is completely formless while the signifier rendered meaningless (1966, p. 67). ‘Signification’ in the study of *igal* refers both to the processes by which *igal* itself as a word (written or spoken), and behaviour³⁵ carry meanings for members of Bajau Laut community, and to the content they convey. In Saussure’s sense, this signification process involves communication. Therefore, semiotics in this sense is ultimately the study of how communication (of meaning and content) is possible through shared codes established and understood by the beholder of the tradition.

The essence of semiotics is the isolation of systems of signification and the rules that govern their use. Peirce declares that “nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign” (1931, p. 58). Chandler supports this argument by asserting that “signs ... have no intrinsic meaning and become signs only when we invest them with meaning” (2007, p. 13).

Using a linguistic sign as an example, if we encounter the word “Close” at a shop doorway and provide them with meanings, the sign can consist of:

Table 2.1

Example of linguistic sign, ‘close.’

SIGN	Signifier	Sound-image	The word “Close”
	Signified	Concept	The shop is closed and not open for business

³⁵ For the purpose of explaining the application of semiotics in the study of *igal* in this chapter, the word ‘behaviour’ is used rather than ‘dance’ as it denotes the physical actions of a human body, thus can work as a signifier to the sign ‘*igal*.’ While the word ‘dance’ has a wider definition and denotes more than just human movements.

Based on the given example in Table 2.1, we could apply the same analysis to examine *igal* as sign. *Igal* as a sign consist of:

Table 2.2

Example of igal as sign

SIGN	Signifier	Sound-image	“ <i>Igal</i> ”
	Signified	Concept	The dance of the Bajau Laut community

Here, *igal* as a sound-image works as a signifier – either as a word (spoken or written) or behaviour. *Igal* as word or behaviour can only be interpreted as signs when signification happens, which is when we provide *igal* with meaning – the dance of the Bajau Laut (refer to Table 2.2). Further explanation of *igal* as signs will be discussed in chapter four of this thesis.

Counsell & Wolf explain that in signification processes, the “signifier expresses the signified” (2001, p. 14). Chandler puts the argument further and suggests that the “same signifier could stand for a different signified” (2006, p. 2). Simply put, if we weigh the same signifier (the word/behaviour ‘*igal*’) with a different meaning, it may signify differently, therefore becoming a different sign. Likewise, many signifiers could signify the concept of ‘dance of the Bajau Laut,’ for instance, signifiers such as structured movement systems, the music, and the costumes.³⁶

For Saussure, both the signifier and the signified were purely “psychological” (1966, p. 15). ‘Psychological’ in Saussure’s sense is that the signifier and the signified does not appear to have any physical existence (immaterial), but rather exist as an impression in the mind of a human being. Their ‘psychological existence’ is similar to

³⁶ Further discussions on several signifiers that signifies ‘the dance of the Bajau Laut’ is explained on chapter four of this thesis.

language, as Saussure suggests that language “exists in the form of a sum of impressions deposited in the brain of each member of a community, almost like a dictionary of which identical copies have been distributed to each individual” (1966, p. 19). The sound-image (signifier) and the concept (signified) materiality only exist as what Saussure called the “psychological impression” (Saussure, 1966, p. 66). Both signifier and signified are ‘form’ rather than ‘substance’ (Chandler, 2006, p. 2).³⁷ The ‘signifier’ in Saussurian sense refers to the form of linguistic signs that are either spoken or written. The signified on the other hand, is a mental construct that is not to be identified directly with a referent but rather a concept in the mind that gives notion about what an object is.

Although the signifier signifies the signified, Saussure (1966) stressed that the basic nature of any linguistic sign lies in the arbitrariness of its relationship. This means that there is no link inherent, essential, transparent, self-evident or natural, between the sound-image of a word ‘close’ to the concept in which it refers. To relate the notion of arbitrariness in the study of *igal* as a signifier, there is no necessary reason why ‘*igal*’ should be called as ‘*igal*.’ Saussure added that there is “no connection between the letter and the sound that it designates” (1966, p. 119). It means here that there is no connection between ‘*igal*’ (the form) to its substance (the act, the performance, etc.). It is only because the beholder of *igal* dance tradition (the Bajau Laut community) within their language group came to an understanding that the ‘form’ is called ‘*igal*,’ and they agree (or generally agreed) to which sequences of ‘substance of the form’ refers to an act of performing the dance.

³⁷ Saussure (1966, p. 122) note that “language is a form and not a substance.” Chandler (2006) expand this argument by considering that signs, as it exist within language systems, is also a form and not a substance, as it does not has ‘material’ characteristics.

Chandler (2006) explains Saussure's arbitrary nature of signs further by asserting that the form of the signifier is not determined by what it signifies. If we return back to the first example of a word 'close,' there is nothing 'closeness' about the word 'close.' Likewise, no such thing as 'igalness' in the signifier 'igal.' Chandler added that there is no specific signifier that is 'naturally' more suited to a signified than any other signifier; in principle, any signifier could represent any signified (pp.7-9). Therefore, to study *igal* within the concept of arbitrary nature of signs is to consider that there are other signifiers that signify the dance of the Bajau Laut (signified), and the signifier itself (*igal*), and may also signify other things rather than only signifying the dance of the Bajau Laut.

Saussure argues that language is "a system of formal relations whereby the entire mechanism of language lies with the oppositions and differences they imply" (1966, p. 119). By means of "oppositions and differences," Saussure suggests that a concept is defined negatively by contrast with other items in the same system. For instance, one *igal* performance differs from another (ritual and stage performance); one element in *igal* (e.g., dance movements) differs from another element (e.g., music); and one *igal* dance movement differs from another movement within the same system. The notion of differences implies that; (1) no unit or element has significance in and of itself, and (2) each element acquires meaning in conjunction with other elements.³⁸ Saussure argued that two signs are not different from each other, but only distinct. They are simply in opposition to each other. Therefore, in the context of *igal*, each of its elements (dance movements, music, and costume) acquire their significance through the oppositional relationship with the other elements and they can only work as a sign (to produce meaning) in combination with the rest.

³⁸ See Seiler, R. (2005). Semiology/Semiotics. Retrieved November, 29, 2005.

Saussure stressed that the signifier and the signified are interdependent suggesting that their value results from the simultaneous presence of the others. This means that both must be ‘there’ otherwise their counterpart has no value at all. In other words, the “signified” acquires its form from the existence of the “signifier” while the “signifier” acquires its meaning from the signified. Thus, in the context of this study, *igal* has no meaning in and of itself. Rather, the meaning of *igal* is determined by the relationship of *igal* to all of the other aspects that are involved in the dance.

According to Saussure, value is an element of signification whereby the latter is dependent upon, but distinct from the former (1966, p. 115). There are two main factors for the existence of values. They must be composed of: (1) a dissimilar thing that can be exchanged for the thing of which the value is to be determined; and (2) a similar things that can be compared with the thing of which the value is to be determined.

On the plane of analysis, Saussure suggest to look upon the “vertical” relationship linking a given signifier to a given signified with a specific sign and the “horizontal” relationship linking a given sign to other signs in a particular sign-system (1966, p. 114). The former refers to the signification of a sign, and the latter to refers to the value of a sign arising from its location in the sign-system. Therefore, a vertical analysis in this study will analyze the relationship linking three signifiers of *igal* (dance movements, music and costumes) to the concept of *igal* (the signified concept) with the sign (*igal*). On the other hand, a horizontal analysis will examined the relationship linking *igal* to other signs (*igal* in ritual, wedding, and stage performance). Both vertical and horizontal analysis will therefore reveal the multiple layers of meanings in *igal* through its signification and value.

2.3 Myth

This thesis is not just an effort to study *igal* (as a sign) at the first order of signification using Saussurian dyadic model of signifier and signified, but also attempts to expand the analysis of *igal* at the second order of signification by means of what Roland Barthes (1972) coined as ‘Myth.’

Barthes (1972) argues that at the first order of signification, a sign is self-contained. ‘Self-contained’ in Barthes’ sense is referring back to the Saussurian’s principle of linguistic sign nature which suggests that the sign is reduced to its element has no part shared with anything else, and is always complete in itself. In other words, each sign corresponds only to itself. Therefore, at the first order of signification, *igal* is self-contained, referring back to itself, and contains only one meaning (signified) – the dance of the Bajau Laut. According to Barthes, this is the denotative order of signification.

Barthes argued that signs could be studied from different levels of meaning or orders of signification. He was convinced that objects and events always meant more than themselves. When describing semiotics, Barthes went beyond Saussure's notion of semiology and regarded it as having the aim to:

[...] take in any system of signs, whatever their substance and limits; images, gestures, musical sounds, objects, and the complex associations of all of these, which form the content of ritual, convention or public entertainment: these constitute, if not languages, at least systems of signification. (Barthes, 1967, p. 9)

Barthes suggested a connotative order of signification to further explained the potential of the study of signs, known as the second order of signification. In this second order, a simple motivated meaning meets a whole range of cultural meanings that derive from the way society uses and values the signifier and the signified. In the case of the Bajau

Laut society, *igal* can signify the virility of a male dancer when he performs the dance accompanied by the *titik kuntu* or *titik lellang*.³⁹

This thesis adopts Roland Barthes's approach of semiotics in popular culture, which can be applied to study *igal* as a spectacle through its stage representation. In his collection of essays entitled *Mythologies* (Barthes, 1972), Barthes examined popular culture, applying semiotics to study activities and objects as signs. He also examined language as a way to communicate meaning. In *The World of Wrestling* essay, Barthes traces the deeper meaning of a wrestling event by treating the event as a 'text' to be 'read.' Barthes's 'reading' of the exaggerated gestures of wrestlers revealed that it was grandiloquence and a pure spectacle of excess.

According to Barthes (1967), signs in the second order of signification operate in two distinct ways: as mythmakers and as connotative agents. A sign is understood to be the relationship between, or the union of a 'sign-vehicle' and the 'signified.' A sign-vehicle, following Hall's definition, refers to the 'object,' an expression or form such as a word and sound, in a production of a message, or simply a conveyer of communication through the operation of codes (1973, p. 1). The signified in the second order of signification, refers to the notion or content conveyed by the sign-vehicle.

When signs move to the second order of signification, they carry cultural meanings as well as representational ones. At this point, signs itself becomes the signifiers of cultural meanings. In the context of this study, the connotative order can be explained with a simple example: *igal* denotes a dance, or a structured movement system of the Bajau Laut society (the first order signification), but connotes the dance for the ancestors in Bajau Laut rituals. When *igal* is performed at weddings, the denotative meaning remains, however, the connotative meaning has changed as it is

³⁹ A repertoire in *igal* that is performed only by male dancers with energetic pace that is firm and showcases the strength of a man, and is accompanied by *titik lellang*.

being performed at a different socio-cultural context. To the Bajau Laut community, *igal* performed at wedding occasions connotes communal celebrations expressed by means of dancing. Thus, in the connotative order, *igal* as signs signify values of the signifier and the signified, carrying cultural meanings of Bajau Laut society.

Barthes refers to the signs of cultural meanings as “myth” (Barthes, 1972). Myth, according to Barthes, “is a type of speech or a system of communication; a message that is defined by its intention” (1972, p. 107). Myth is a second-order semiotic system that “takes an already constituted sign (the associative total of a concept and an image) and turns it into a signifier” (1972, p. 113). Barthes argued that “myth cannot possibly be an object, a concept or an idea; it is a mode of signification, a form” (1972, p. 107) Barthes points out that myth – like a message – is something that arises from the relationship between the sound-image and the concept. As myth, the signs lose its specific signified and become a conveyor of cultural meaning. In other words, the signs in the first order of signification loses its meaning and becomes a signifier in myth (second order of signification), consequently becoming a sign-vehicle that carries cultural meanings.

In the second order of signification, Barthes suggests that myth is no longer dealing with mode of representation⁴⁰, but with a particular image given by its signification (1972, p. 108). Myth in fact “belongs to the general science, coextensive with linguistics (semiotics),” as semiotics is “not sufficient in dealing with meanings” (pp. 109-111). Barthes gives an example of a magazine cover which shows a young Negro saluting the French flag. At the first order signification, the picture is a signifier (an image) which denotes an event (a black soldier saluting a flag). But at the second

⁴⁰ Stuart Hall in *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices* developed the theories of representation and states that “representation is the production of meaning through language.” He focuses on the constructionist approach to explain representation, exploring how meaning is constructed ‘in’ and ‘through’ language (1997, pp. 15-26). Hall’s notion of ‘representation’ will be discuss in the following sub-chapter.

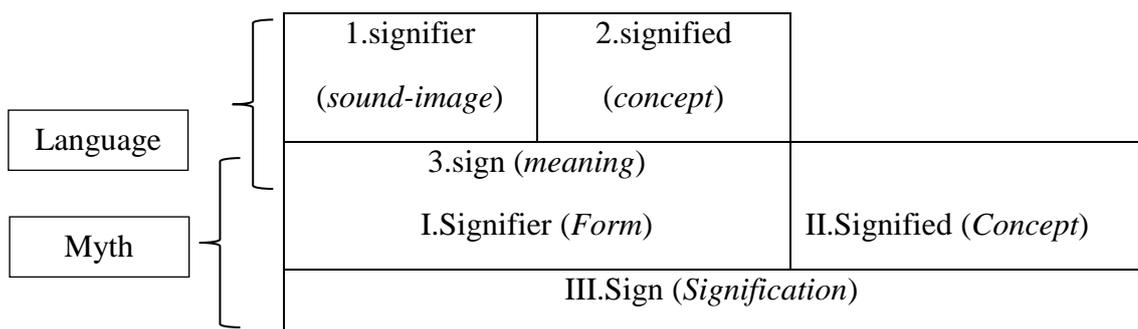
mythological level, it signifies something else: the idea of France as a great multi-ethnic empire, combining Frenchness and militariness (p. 115).

In myth, we find that the second order meaning is constructed from a semiological chain of the signifier, the signified, and the sign. Myth sees the mythical speech (language, photography, painting, posters, rituals, objects, etc.) only as a global sign – the sum of the signs, the signifier and the signified. Myth is a *metalanguage*, because it is a second language that turns language into a means of speaking about itself (p. 114).

On the plane of analysis, Barthes considers the signifier from two points of view: as ‘the final term of the linguistics system,’ or as ‘the first term of the mythical system’ (Barthes, 1957, p. 115).⁴¹ This thesis represent both systems (Saussure’s semiotics and Barthes’s myth) in the following diagram, as concluded from Barthes’s explanation:

Table 2.3

*Signification in language and myth.*⁴²



⁴¹ In his plane of analysis, Barthes (1972) refers the signifier, signified, and signs as the first term, second term and third (final) term respectively in order to facilitate his discussions.

⁴² From this point forward (but limited only to this sub-chapter), this thesis will use small letters (signifier, signified, signs) to indicate signs in linguistics system, while capital letters (Signifier, Signified, Signs) to indicate signs in mythical system. Note that the word ‘concept’ in both linguistics and myth systems are also typed differently.

As pointed out above (Table 1), the third term in the linguistic system is 'sign' (*meaning*), where it is the associative total of the signifier and the signified. However, Barthes suggests that in myth, the final term of linguistic system (the sign or *meaning*), works as a Signifier and should be termed as *form*. Conceptually, the Signifier in the myth system is formed by the signs of the language system. Barthes retained the term *Concept* to refer to the Signified. However, he refused to use the term 'Sign' as the myth's final term as it proposed ambiguity. Barthes therefore suggested the third term of myth: *Signification*.

The Signifier of myth works as a *Form*; filled with *meaning* in the linguistic system while empty in the myth. As a *meaning*, Barthes argued, it "postulates a reading, has a sensory reality, belongs to a history, and has its own value. When it becomes *Form*, the *meaning* leaves its contingency behind; it empties itself, it becomes impoverished, history evaporates, only letter remains" (1972, p. 116). It is a total regression when it shifts from the linguistic sign to the mythical Signifier. However, at the Signified level of myth, the history which drains out of the *form* will be wholly absorbed by the *Concept*. The *concept* has no fixity in its character as it is not totally an abstract, but "a formless, unstable, nebulous condensation, whose unity and coherence are above all due to its function" (1972, p. 118). The *Concept* is to be appropriated, corresponds to a function and quantitatively repeated (Barthes, 1957, pp. 118-119).

The second order of signification can generate a range of cultural meanings and cohere in the third order of signification into a cultural picture of the world. In the third order of signification, ideology reflects the broad principles by which a culture organizes and interprets the reality with which it has to cope. This mythology is a function of the social institutions and the individuals who make up these institutions. In this third order, *igal* forms an imagery of traditional performing arts of a rooted society.

The myths which operate as an organizational structure are themselves organized into a pattern which we might call mythology or ideology.

2.4 Representation

The following quote by Hall (1997) suggests two fundamental components in the concept of representation: language and meaning; “representation is the process by which members of a culture use language (broadly defined as any system which deploys signs, any signifying system) to produce meaning” (Hall, 1997, p. 61). Hall further states that representation “involves the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things” (1997, p. 15). He argues that there are three different approaches to meaning in representation: the reflective, the intentional, and the constructionist. In the reflective approach, language mirrors the true meaning, which reflects the object, person, idea or event that already exists in the real world. The intentional approach argues that language should mean what is intended or imposed by the author or speaker, which suggests that meaning is entirely a private and personal thought of the person communicating. The constructionist approach argues that meaning is constructed in and through language (1997).

According to Hall, both reflective and intentional approaches suggest flaws in explaining how the representation of meaning through language works. To explore how language is used to represent the world, Hall uses the constructionist approach which he draws from Saussure’s semiotic theories. In line with this approach, meaning is constructed from the representational systems of concepts and signs. This approach implies that meaning is constructed by people (individual users of the language) as things themselves do not able to produce meaning. Hall argues that the material world (such as people, objects and events) does not convey meaning, but it is the individual

users who use the language system (or any other system) to represent concepts in their minds (Hall, 1997).

Hall argues that the “production of meaning of the concepts in our minds through language” occurs because there is a “link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to the ‘real’ or even ‘imaginary’ world” (1997, p. 17). For instance, if we watch a dance performance and then walk out of the theatre, we can still visualize the dance in our mind even though it is not physically present in front of us. What we visualize is the “concept” of the dance. This concept is not able to “dance”, nor can it speak about the “actual” dance. However, we can use “dance” as a linguistic sign, for instance a word which is shared and understood among most English language users – DANCE – to refer to the performance of rhythmic movement patterns that we had just watched. According to Hall, this is where representation steps in (p. 17).

Hall suggests that there are two systems of representation (processes) involved in the production of meaning:

The first enables us to give meaning to the world by constructing a set of correspondences or a chain of equivalences between things – people, objects, events, abstract ideas, etc. – and our system of concepts, our conceptual maps. The second depends on constructing a set of correspondences between our conceptual map and a set of signs, arranged or organized into various languages which stand for or represent those concepts (Hall, 1997, p. 19).

He explains that the first system of representation is a system of correlation between the things we perceive with the concept or mental representation in our mind. Meaning is dependent on the relationship between things in the world and the system of concepts in our mind. System of concepts, according to Hall, is how the concepts are organized, clustered, arranged, classified and of establishing complex relations between them (1997, pp. 16-19). Our thoughts systematically use “the principles of similarity and difference to establish relationships between the concepts or to distinguish them from one another” (Hall, 1997, p. 17). For instance, our mind arranges and classifies the

concept of bodily movement systems (1) in ordinary life and (2) as structured movement systems. However, the mind, at the same time, can also differentiate between them both because one is reflective of daily life while the other refers to a performance. Hall suggests that this conceptual system is “not just a random collection of concepts, but concepts organized, arranged, and classified into complex relations with one another” (Hall, 1997, pp. 17-18). Therefore, the concept of structured movement systems in the Bajau Laut’s mind are organized, arranged and classified into a complex of relations, forming a conceptual map regarded as ‘*igal*.’

Hall refers the concepts of the mind as a “conceptual map” (1997, p. 18). This allows the Bajau Laut community to interpret the world in similar ways to one another because they share the same conceptual map. The Bajau Laut belongs to the same culture that understands, interprets and regards a set of movements performed to music as ‘*igal*.’ A shared conceptual map enables thoughts to be communicated, ideas to be expressed, and things to be interpreted – thus meaning can be constructed and produced through representation. Hall added that a shared conceptual map would be insufficient unless the same language is shared. A shared conceptual map must be translated into a shared language (the signs) to be able to “represent the concepts and the conceptual relations between them which we carry around in our heads and together they make up the meaning-systems of our culture” (Hall, 1997, p. 18). Thus, the second system of representation is indeed, the language. Hall suggests that the term ‘language’ is to be used in a broad and inclusive way. A language, from this point of view, is “any sound, word, image or object which functions as a sign, and is organized with other signs into a system which is capable of carrying and expressing meaning” (Hall, 1997, p. 19). Thus, in the context of this study, the ‘language’ is ‘*igal*.’

A shared conceptual map and a shared language system can only effectively produce meanings if the people of the same culture also “share the same way of

interpreting the signs of a language” (Hall, 1997, p. 19). The people of that culture must be able to tell which concepts should represent which objects or which words can effectively represents the said concepts. Meanings are constructed and fixed by codes which govern the relationships between concepts and signs. These codes tell the Bajau Laut to use the Bajau/Sama word ‘*igal*’ every time they think of a dance in their mind. According to Hall, the codes are fixed by social and cultural convention (1997). It “fix[es] the relationships between concept and signs” and “stabilize meaning within different languages and cultures” (Hall, 1997, p. 21). Hall added that “meaning depends on the relation between a sign and a concept which is fixed by the code” (Hall, 1997, p. 27). Thus, according to Hall, the meaning of signs is fixed by the codes (p. 27).

Through the application of Hall’s concept of ‘representation,’ this study will illuminate the correlations between *igal*, its concept and the signifying process are governed by the Bajau Laut’s cultural codes. *Igal* and its concept are both systems of representation constructed by the Bajau Laut community in the production of meanings. The interconnections between the two systems of representation (which Saussure called the signifiers and the signifieds) are associatively manifested as signs and organized into a form of expression, coded as a shared language known by the Bajau Laut community as ‘*igal*.’

2.5 Performativity and Restored Behaviour

J. L. Austin, a linguistic philosopher⁴³ who coined the term ‘performative,’ describes that the ‘performative’ is more than describing or saying something, it is the “doing of an action” (1962, p. 5). According to Austin, the term performative is derived from the verb “perform”; its noun, “action”, describes the utterances and indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action (1962, pp. 6-8). Austin coined

⁴³ Philosopher J.L. Austin’s (1911-60) lectures delivered in 1955 on the performative were published posthumously in 1962 as *How To Do Things With Words*.

the term “performative utterance” to situations where saying something reflected a doing (pp. 6-8). He underlined two conditions for a statement to become an utterance: (a) they do not ‘describe’ or ‘report’ or constate anything at all, are not ‘true or false’; and (b) the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would normally be described as saying something (Austin, 1962, p. 5). Austin stressed the importance of not assuming that an ‘utterance’ to be a statement that ‘describes’ the doing of an action, but rather, it is the state of doing it: “it is to do it” (1962, p. 6). According to Austin, performative utterances are like bets, promises, namings, and so on that actually do something that perform.

Schechner on the other hand, explains that the term performative is both a noun and an adjective (2002, p. 110). As a noun, the word indicates a doing while the adjective inflects what it modifies with performance-like qualities (p. 110). Schechner argues that the words ‘performativity’ and ‘performative’ have a wide range of meanings (2002, p. 110). Schechner added that the principle of performativity is the utterance, that when something is uttered, there is a becoming of the utterance and this is usually followed by an action. In other words, performative is a result of a combination between physical act and words (2002, p. 111).

The performativity in the context of this study are actions in the performance of *igal* which has an effect on the performers and the audiences. By ‘actions,’ this thesis means all the activity that has performance-like qualities; in Schechnerian’s (2002) term ‘showing doing,’ that exists in the performance of *igal* both in ritual and secular context. In chapter four, this study will also elucidate how the performativity in *igal* transcends its utterance to the invisible beings, which involves the ancestral spirits of the Bajau Laut community.

Performativity, according to Schechner, is similar to what he describes as “as performance.” This means that to understand performativity and how it works, one has to understand what is meant by “as performance.” Schechner defines performance as: Performances – of art, rituals, or ordinary life – are made of “twice-behaved behaviors,” “restored behaviors,” performed actions that people train to do, that they practice and rehearse (Schechner, 2002, p. 22).

To Schechner (2002), performances are made from fragments of restored behaviour. According to Schechner, “restored behavior” also referred to as “twice-behaved behaviour,” is “a physical or verbal actions that are not-for-the-first time, prepared and rehearsed” (2002, p. 22). At the point where the restored behavior is performed, the actor may not be aware that he or she is performing a restored behavior. Restored behaviors are actions that involve what Schechner characterized as the “doing” and “showing doing” in everyday life. Doing is the activity of all that exists, while showing doing is performing, displaying and emphasizing doing (2002, p. 23). Schechner suggests that doing and showing doing are always in flux, and always changing. Goffman (1959) however, described restored behavior as “a pre-established pattern of action which is unfolded during a performance and which may be presented or played through on other occasions may be called a ‘part’ or a ‘routine’” (as cited in Schechner, 2002, p. 23).

Restored behaviour is something that is constructed from behaviours previously behaved, and in fact, rearranged and shaped in order to suit specific circumstances. However, how do restorations of behaviour take place when every performance is different from every other? Schechner further explained that these behaviours are (1) recombined in endless variations, and; (2) no event can exactly copy another event (2002, p. 23). The notion of performativity and restored behavior in Schechnerian’s sense will be clarified in chapter four of this thesis.

CHAPTER 3

IGAL IN THE BAJAU LAUT CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

3.1 Introduction

This chapter firstly details the brief background of the Bajau Laut community in Semporna, Sabah from an ethnographic point of view. This chapter will also describe Bajau Laut belief systems and their worldview, as a means of providing a clearer understanding of how the Bajau Laut community interprets their world and interacts within it. By delving into the Bajau Laut worldview, an understanding of how the community perceives the physical and mental universe, society, and culture and be established. Connected to these elements are Bajau Laut rituals and dance – *igal* – which make up the Bajau Laut psyche.

This chapter classifies the descriptions of *igal* in both its sacred and secular contexts. It examines: (1) *igal* in rituals, (2) *igal* in wedding ceremonies, and (3) *igal* in stage performances. In every context, *igal* is described by its characteristic features including costumes and paraphernalia, functions, as well as the relationship between dance, instrumentation and music. The final section of this chapter elaborates the performance of *igal* at the Regatta Lepa festival and discusses some aspects of *igal* that have changed due to its new context as a stage performance.

3.2 The Bajau Laut in Semporna, Sabah

The term “Bajau” or “Sama-Bajau” is widely used in Malaysia to refer to both sea-oriented and land-oriented indigenous people⁴⁴ of Sabah⁴⁵ (see Figure 3.1) including

⁴⁴ The indigenous people of Sabah are descendants of Austronesian settlers who were believed to have settled in the region some five thousand years ago (Lapian, A.B. & Nagatsu Kazufumi, 1996).

⁴⁵ Sabah, Malaysia’s second largest and easternmost state, occupies the most northern part of Borneo Island. Sabah had been known as North Borneo during the nearly 80 years under the British rule by the British North Borneo Chartered Company (1881-1941), and as a British Crown Colony (1945-1963) and later resumed her own name “Sabah” in 1963, at independence.

agrarian communities that have a history of seafaring.⁴⁶ Although both were originally seafarers, they have evolved over the years into two major culture groups – the west coast Bajau and the east coast Bajau. The west coast Bajau, especially in the Kota Belud area, adopts sedentary agriculture such as rice farming, horse and cattle rearing and fishing. The east coast Bajau are mainly fishermen, dwelling on the coastal areas and small islands of Semporna. The west coast Bajau has been heavily influenced by the Iranun, a smaller but historically dominant indigenous maritime community while those along the east coast show strong Suluk (Tausug)⁴⁷ influences. Although the west coast and east coast Bajau are traditionally dependent on the sea, they differ greatly in terms of languages, culture and history.

⁴⁶ Clifford Sather in his chapter *Sea Nomads and Rainforest Hunter-Gatherers: Foraging Adaptations in the Indo-Malaysian Archipelago* grouped the term “Sama” and “Bajau” under one umbrella term; “Sama-Bajau” included both maritime and strand oriented communities, including the boat nomads, who together forms the most widely-dispersed ethnolinguistic group indigenous to Island Southeast Asia (Sather, 2006, pp. 256-257). Sather also cited Pallesen (1985) who proposed the general term “Sama-Bajau” to cover the various dialects and languages spoken by members of this widely scattered population (1997, p. 2).

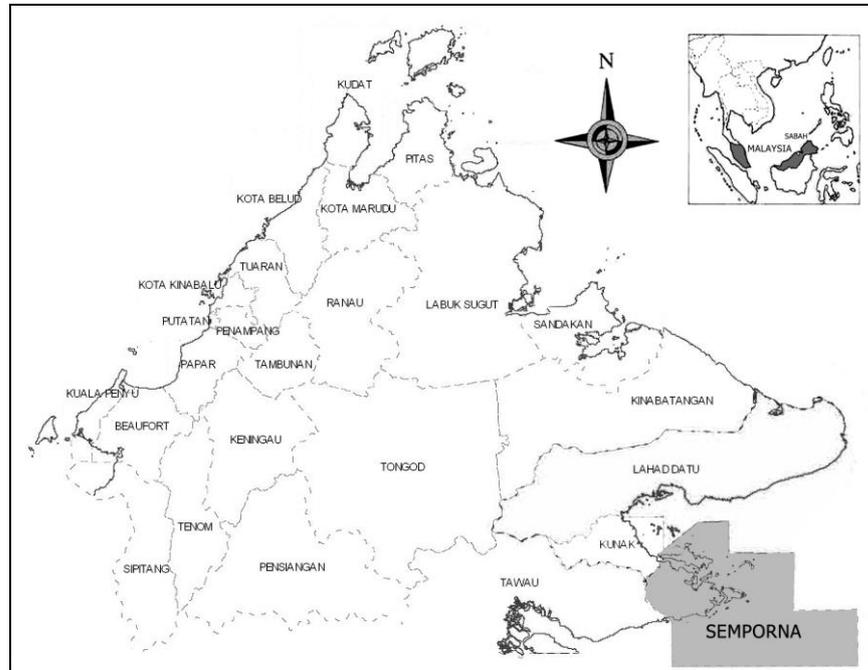
⁴⁷ Tausug or Taosug is a major ethnic group of the Sulu Archipelago. They eventually became socially and politically dominant in the Sulu region after forming a political state – the Sultanate of Sulu. The Sulu embraced Islam, attaining Islamic statehood and was declared a Darul Islam in 1450 AD (see Warren, 1985; Bottignolo, 1995; Gowing, 1979; and Majul, 1973).

Figure 3.1:

Map of Sabah (Highlighted: Semporna District)

Retrieved from:

*http://www.jtu.sabah.gov.my/homepage/themes/default/images/Ldu_Region.jpg
(The official website of Sabah Lands and Surveys Department)*



Sather notes that the Bajau community in Semporna are divided into a few subgroups, each associating themselves to a particular homeland, place of origin, or area of local settlement (1997, p. 30). The terms “Bajau” or “Sama” have always been used as toponymic modifiers to signify the community’s geographic origin with which they are affiliated, for instance, the Bajau Sibutu or Sama Sibutu from Sibutu Island. However, the Bajau in Semporna generally differentiate themselves as either Bajau Kubang or Bajau Laut. The Bajau Kubang, who are also known as the Bajau Sikubang, are said to be the largest Sama subgroup and most politically dominant in Semporna. The term “kubang” means “gathering” or “settling in groups.” According to their genealogies, the Bajau Kubang were considered as the earlier inhabitants of Semporna, traditionally settling on Omadal Island, then spreading to Lারণ and Bum-Bum Islands before finally settling on the mainland several generations ago. In contrast to the

Bajau Kubang, the Bajau Laut community are generally considered the most socially, economically, and politically deprived group in Semporna.

The Bajau Laut community in Semporna belong to a wider sea-nomadic boat culture, who lived without an exclusive land affiliation, and characteristically identify themselves as Sama Dilaut (sea-oriented Sama) (Sather, 1984, pp. 12-13). In Southeast Asia, the Sama Dilaut can be found scattered from south-central Philippines, throughout eastern Borneo and Sulawesi, in the islands of eastern Indonesia and in many small islands in the Celebes Sea. They are typically subsistence fishermen and aquatic foragers residing in pile-houses found in the fringes of urban areas, near coastlines, on islands and coral islets.⁴⁸ The members of this widely distributed population include maritime or strand-oriented communities and a small number of boat nomads. In Malaysia, the Sama Dilaut is widely referred to as Bajau Laut (Sea Bajau) to distinguish themselves from the more dominant land Bajau. At present, Bajau Laut are more diasporic in their demographic distribution but with increasing migration and settlement in urban centres, they have gradually abandoned their traditional fishing activities to work as civil servants or as businessmen.

⁴⁸ See Bottignolo (1995), Sather (1997), and Torres (2005).

According to Sather (1997), the Bajau Laut were scattered anchorage groups in Semporna during the founding of the Semporna station in 1887 (p. 64). By the 1930s, only three anchorage groups remained, all within three kilometers of Semporna town. Before the Second World War when British powers were still in control of Sabah, the primary moorage site of the Bajau Laut was near an islet named Samal-Samal, a site close to the Bum-Bum Island.⁵¹ When the Second World War reached Sabah in 1942, British forces attempted to escape the war and fled to the nearest islands around Semporna.

Sather (1997, p. 1) notes that in 1955, there was only a small number of pile-houses erected in Semporna. By 1964, they had grown into thirty-six pile-houses where 510 people resided, 440 of whom permanently lived in houses, while the remainder still lived on boats. In 1991, the Bajau (inclusive of Bajau Kubang and Bajau Laut) population of Semporna was nearly 24,000, out of approximately 139,500 of the total Bajaus in Sabah (Sather, 1997, p. 25). In 2010, Bajau population in Semporna increased to 133,164, out of 436,672 Bajaus in Sabah.⁵²

3.3 The Bajau Laut Belief System and Worldview

The term ‘worldview’ originates from the German word *Weltanschauung*, a shorthand term chained together from German word *Welt* for world and *Anschaung*, which is a fundamental concept of German philosophy and epistemology about worldview perceptions.⁵³ The word *Weltanschauung* first appeared in Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* published in 1790, though Kant’s original meaning to *Weltanschauung* is no longer retained by most scholars (Naugle, D. K., 2002, p. 58). *Weltanschauung* is “the common body of beliefs shared by a group of people about the world and their relationship to it” (Edgar & Sedgwick, 1999, p. 290). Within the

⁵¹ See Torres, W.M., 2005, p. 22.

⁵² The 2010 Population and Housing Census (Census 2010).

⁵³ Edgar & Sedgwick, 1999; MohdAnis, 2009; <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/Weltanschauung>

construction of the Bajau Laut's worldview, *Weltanschauung* can thus be understood within the framework of shared Bajau Laut ideals and beliefs, to which the community interprets and reacts to their world as they know it.

In the Bajau Laut worldview, the universe is controlled by powerful supernatural beings that are believed to have the power to influence Man's life. God (*Tuhan*) is the source of power, a supreme being that is far from distant. *Tuhan* is the bringer of good forces while evil forces are derived from the spirits (*saitan*⁵⁴). The concept of *saitan* however, has no negative connotations for the Bajau Laut. Instead, *saitan* are viewed as another form of absolute spirits, and considered at a lower level than *Tuhan*. *Saitan* dwells on earth, invisibly wandering where and when they want, but are able to physically manifest themselves through visible entities such as rocks or trees (Bottignolo, 1995, p. 39).

Tuhan created the first *mbo*⁵⁵ (human ancestors) as mortal beings, who would be transcendent beings after death.⁵⁶ To the Bajau Laut of Semporna, life does not end with the death of the physical body. Instead, *mbo*' is seen as the soul of the historical ancestor which is "invisible...but remain immediately present and forever accessible to their living descendant" (Sather, 1997, p. 18). *Mbo*' are ancestors who lived in the past and are still remembered by the Bajau Laut. Not all the dead can find a place among these ancestors, thus only those who live in the memory of the people are considered as *mbo*'. The spirits of these *mbo*' dwell in chosen living persons, known as *jin* (*jin*-spirit). These living persons bearing *mbo*' thus become a medium⁵⁷, also known as *jin* (*jin*-bearer). The Bajau Laut's traditional belief systems of *Tuhan*, *saitan* and *mbo*'

⁵⁴ The term *saitan* is not a Bajau word. It is derived from the Islamic version of *Saytan*, a rebel spirit who opposes Allah and seeks to mislead man (Bottignolo, 1995, p. 40).

⁵⁵ Also spelled *Umboh*, *Omboh*, and *Embo*'.

⁵⁶ Bottignolo (1995) notes that amongst the Badjao in Tawi-Tawi, '*Umboh*', the same concept of *mbo*', is a mythical being which will never die.

⁵⁷ Hereafter will be referred as 'spirit medium' or *jin*.

continued to prevail until the arrival of Islam, which then reshaped its perception of the universe.

Although the Bajau Laut of Semporna identify themselves as Muslims, they still uphold their traditional indigenous faith by revering the spirits and honouring their ancestors. Although the Bajau Laut have been Muslims for quite some time, the exact date of their conversion to Islam is not known. Tregonning (1958) notes that Islam was brought to Borneo by Indian and Arab traders through the sea-routes during the 15th or 16th centuries.⁵⁸ Perhaps the Bajau Laut's long history of nomadic life and seafaring saw to the encounters with Muslim traders, influencing them into embracing Islam. As Muslims, the Bajau Laut recognises God as *Tuhan* (a Malay term for God) or *Allah* (an Arabic term for Islamic God). However, they are also aware that their traditional observances do not coincide with the teachings of Islam. Neglecting traditional observances is important, lest they are attacked with ailments by evil spirits or punished with *tulah* (supernatural curse) by the *mbo'*.

According to the traditional worldview of the Bajau Laut, certain diseases are caused by malevolent or maddened spirits, resulting in illness to the body and soul that modern remedies and methods have proven ineffective. Illness, usually prolonged ones, results from attacks by the spirits or supernatural punishments by the *mbo'*. In such circumstances, the ill consult village healers who are the spirit-mediums or *jin*. The spirit-mediums (*jin*), either male (*jin lella*) or female (*jin denda*), will conduct ritual healings which serve to identify the spirit responsible and the reasons for its attack, aided by a personal spirit-helper known as *saitan jin*, or simply, *jin* (Sather, 1997, pp. 301-304). The Bajau Laut views such spirit mediums as exceptional healers of the spiritual and physical, as well as “comprising a separate category of being, distinct from

⁵⁸As cited in Yap Beng Liang. (1985). The Traditional World-views of the Indigenous Peoples of Sabah. In Mohd Taib Osman (Ed.), *Malaysian World-View* (pp. 47-76). Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

ordinary *mundusia* (humankind), as standing half-way between humankind and the spirits” (Sather, 1997, pp. 301-304). According to Sather, the *jin* is:

[...] an organized body of practitioners, with their own spokesman, the *nakura' jin*; special clothing; a ritual language and paraphernalia of their own; and responsibility for a complex body and private rituals. Above all, the mediums are thought to possess a unique ability that allows them to penetrate the supernatural world, and there make contact with its inhabitants, and so act as brokers or emissaries between ordinary human beings, the spirits and souls (Sather, 1997, p. 301).

Some *jin* bear strong and powerful spirits who can be unpredictable and must be dealt with cautiously. Bearing such spirits are hereditary, and passed on to another kinsman at the death of the *jin*. Nimmo (2001) notes that a *jin* may have never been interested in becoming one in the first place. Instead, one can become a *jin* after his/her father dies, and his/her father's spirit appears in a dream, telling him/her to become a *jin*. Additionally, this spirit-mediumship can also be obtained through apprenticeship under an experienced *jin* (Sather, 1997, pp. 301-303).

Jin is a ritual specialist who performs specific healing ceremonies to ask the spirits to abstain from prolonging illnesses. During the course of the rituals, the spirit-medium converses with the spirits using *ling saitan* (language of the spirits), done when they are in trance. Usually, the spirit-mediums have their assistant to translate the conversation into everyday *ling sama* (language of the Bajaus). The knowledge of *ling saitan* is exclusive to the spirit-mediums, where the “mastering [of] ‘spirit language’ is part of a spirit-medium’s apprenticeship [and they] ‘write’ *ling saitan* in pictographic characters on cloth banners (*panji*)” (Sather, 1997, p. 12). Sather suggests that the Bajau Laut *jins* of Semporna are more appropriately called “spirit-mediums” rather than “shaman” because they do not “undertake spiritual journeys while in trance nor send out his or her soul on healing missions into the cosmos” (1997, p. 303).

3.4 *Igal* in the Bajau Laut Traditions

3.4.1 *Igal, Angigal and Magigal – The Concepts*

The word *igal*, according to Bajau Laut language, may be translated as “dance”, while *magigal* refers to dancing (verb: to dance). The thesis uses the word *magigal* to refer to the act of performing the dance. The word *angigal* refers to the designated items of a given Bajau Laut dance repertoire – a dance or dances. When the word *angigal* is used it refers to all kinds of *igal* in the Bajau Laut cultural repertoire e.g. *angigal tabawan*, *angigal limbayan*, *angigal lellang*.

Igal performance is accompanied by a specific musical tune (*titik*) of the *kulintangan* played by a set of *tagunggu*’ ensemble. *Igal* can be slow and solemn, or fast and energetic depending on its musical accompaniment. A particular *igal* repertoire is recognized based on a musical piece that accompanies the dance. Musical pieces such as *titik limbayan*, *titik lellang* and *titik tabawan* are directly identified with dance repertoires such as *igal limbayan*, *igal lellang* and *igal tabawan*.

As a dance, *igal* emphasizes the mastery of hand gesture, body posture and subtle movements. The dance emphasis is on the upper torso, bent knee, the use of shoulders, hands and fingers. The mastery of the form rests on the skill in improvising the movement patterns and hand gestures, while sustaining the upward body postures. The movements contained within the Bajau Laut *igal* are abstract in quality, and do not carry meaning independently. Regardless of its performance context, a dancer’s countenance is almost expressionless with eyes downcast.

Igal performed during social occasions may utilise *bolak-bolak* (wooden castanets) as a dance property. *Bolak-bolak* comprises a pair of five by two and a half millimetre hard-wood castanets. Dances that use the aforementioned paraphernalia are often named after the *bolak-bolak* itself. For example, if the dance uses *titik limbayan*, it

will be known as the *igal limbayan dengan bolak-bolak* (*igal limbayan* with the *bolak-bolak*). *Bolak-bolak* are hand-held by the dancers, accentuating *igal* hand movements with them. At the same time, dancers use two pairs of *bolak-bolak* to create specific rhythmic patterns to accompany the *kulintang* ensemble. Dancers will need to maintain circular arm and wrist movements while playing the *bolak-bolak* – a skill which is difficult to master.

Figure 3.3:

Main informant - Intan Sulga K.K Tiring demonstrating igal with the use of bolak-bolak

Source: Fieldwork, 2009



Igal performance with the use of *bolak-bolak* is traditionally performed as part of a wedding celebration when the bride's wealth is presented to the bridegroom. Dancers move in and out of a linear formation as they clap their castanets. Mohd Anis notes that "the simplicity of moving to the prescribed floor plan, however, is made difficult when the upper torso and hand movements have to simultaneously display the

skills required in producing uninterrupted rhythmic patterns on the *bolak-bolak*” (Mohd Anis, 1998, p. 113).

While *igal* dance forms feature unique Bajau Laut characteristics, the nuances, however, show strong relationships with the neighbouring Tausug dance form, known as the *Pangalay*.⁵⁹ Similarities are most evident in the curling and flexing of fingers and palms, while differences can only be traced by those who understand the aesthetics of the dance. Early research views *igal* as an innovative, hybrid dance created by the Bajaus, who ingeniously invented the dance form out of the Tausug’s *Daling-daling*⁶⁰ and *Pangalay* to form their own dance performances.⁶¹ Similarities in these dance styles reflect the subtle cultural nuances of the Sulu Sea, and, in turn, indicate uniquely shared regional identities of traditional art forms.

3.4.2 *Igal* in *Magpaa-baha’u* Ritual

Dance and music forms an integral part of Bajau Laut ritual ceremonies. The Bajau Laut community incorporates dance and music in most of their cultural occasions, especially in rituals such as *magpaa-baha’u* and *magpaigal-jin*. They believe in the indivisibility of the physical world and in the spirits in of spiritual world. The Bajau Laut community respects the existence of spirits in the spiritual world because they believe spirits are bound to their ancestors or *mbo’*. While most of sedentarized Bajau Laut in Semporna are now Muslims, their worldview, however, is still traditionally pre-Islamic. Hence, many of their religious practices and rituals reflect a syncretic form of traditional and Islamic beliefs. Both rituals, the *magpaa-baha’u* and *magpaigal-jin*, are still performed by the Bajau Laut community in Semporna, albeit on a diminished scale

⁵⁹ According to Fernando-Amilbansa, L. (1983), “*Mangalay* ... means to dance (v.) or to move in rhythmic steps and glides and with rhythmic gestures, [while] *Pangalay* ... generally connotes dance (n.) or a piece of dancing, regardless of the function or form” (p. 13).

⁶⁰ This particular dance is said to be originated as a dance of the Suluk people. The Suluk, who originated from the islands of the Sulu sea, travelled extensively between Mindanao in the Philippines and the eastern shores of Sabah. The name of the dance is derived from the English word Darling (Mohd Anis Md Nor, 1998, p. 114).

⁶¹ See Fernando-Amilbansa, L. (1983); Mohd Anis Md Nor, (1998).

because of disapproval from religious authorities who argue that Bajau Laut go against the teachings of Islam.

Nevertheless, the Semporna Bajau Laut celebrate *magpaa-baha 'u*, an annual three-day harvest ritual, for which the timing and organization is planned and fixed by the head village medium (*nakura' jin*). This ceremony is held to maintain or repair relations of goodwill between the village or a house group with the ancestors and spirit world as a whole. According to the village *jin*, Sather (1997) notes that timing is dependent on “

The appearance of a constellation of stars above the north-eastern horizon of the sky, corresponding to the source of the north-east winds (*utalla' lo'ok*), called the *pupu* (Pleiades?), shortly after the sunset (*palawa' allau*). Once these stars appear in position, a group of mediums is sent inland to buy newly harvested rice (*pai baha 'u*, literally ‘new [unhusked] rice’) from local agricultural communities (Sather, 1997, pp. 304-305).

As the Semporna Bajau Laut do not cultivate rice themselves, the timing of the rite is thus determined by the harvest season of their fellow Bajau neighbours, usually after the *magpaa-baha 'u* is conducted in Sitangkai, Tawi-Tawi, Southern Philippines. In the past, the *nakura' jin* of Semporna used to participate in the rituals held by their relatives in Sitangkai. However, as the *nakura' jin* ages, he now sends his representative to Sitangkai to participate in the ritual there and to buy the newly harvested rice that would be brought back to Semporna. However, strict border security between Sabah and Southern Philippines, coupled with pirate attacks by armed groups in the Sulu Seas have prevented Bajau Laut *jin* and their kin from travelling to their places of worship such as Dangkan in Sikulan Island, Sitangkai.

Figure 3.4:

The preparation of the kulit mbo' for magpaa-baha'u ritual

Source: Fieldwork, 2009



The *magpaa-baha'u* ritual of the Bajau Laut replicates the same rituals observed by the Bajau Kubang in Bum-Bum Island.⁶² Basic amenities needed for a *magpaa-baha'u* include one mature green coconut (*lahing gaddung*), some newly harvested rice (*pai baha'u*), and a 75-90 centimetres high bark bin made from the *balunu'* tree (*Buchanania Sessilifolia*) called *kulit mbo'* (literally “the skin of the ancestors” – refer to Figure 3.4). Following the purchase of the newly harvested rice from Sitangkai, the first act of *magpaa-baha'u* is to prepare the bark bin on the morning of the ritual's first day. At midday, the bin is filled with the rice and placed on pandanus mats (*tépopote'*) at the head side of the house where *sablayan* and *hanayan* (ornamented hanging beams used by mediums, also referred to as *kayu jin*), and *ba'ul jin* (a wooden chest-box) is located. Also placed together with the bin and coconut are three pillows; two of them are yellow in colour (*u'an jin baning*) and are placed at the side of the bin and coconut,

⁶² Mohd Anis & Hanafi Hussin, 2012, p. 144

while the other is a green pillow (*u'an jin gaddung*) placed at the front-centre of the paraphernalia. During the night, the *jin*, together with his or her whole family, sleeps with their heads towards the bin.

Figure 3.5:

The preparation of the special cakes sanjata (magsanjata)

Source: Fieldwork, 2009



On the morning of the second day of the *magpaa-baha'u*, the *magsanjata* is held, where a portion of rice is pounded and made into special cakes (*sanjata*) (refer to Figure 3.5). These cakes are made using the same ingredients, but they differ in shapes. The Bajau Laut call these *kuih sahali bulan* (flat, round shaped cakes) and *kuih penyeram/panyam* (flat, crescent moon shaped cakes). At the same time, the rest of the rice is cooked and prepared as white rice (*amelah balas*) and turmeric rice (*amelah balas kuning*). It is squeezed and shaped to a cone and placed on as many as twenty-six⁶³ small and large plates (*la'ik arikik* and *la'ik aheya* respectively). This preparation

⁶³ Sather (1997) notes that *bottong* in the *magpaa-baha'u* ritual he attended was only prepared in eight plates. At the time when this research was executed, the offerings are shared amongst the village mediums which consequently make the number of plates greater than before.

is called *maghinang magbottong*. Four plates of rice are made specially; the *sanjata* are placed over its sides and accorded with a privileged status as head of the offerings. The prepared rice and cakes (*bottong*) are offerings to the souls of the ancestors (*amakan sumangat kembo'-mbo'an*). The offerings also include a bowl of drinking water (*pangana'an bohe'*) and burning incense (*tu'tugan*).

At midday after the *bottong* is prepared, the village mediums assemble at the house of the *nakura' jin* and sit along the floor.⁶⁴ An *imam*⁶⁵ is invited to open the ritual by performing *jikil* (Arabic chanting) and reciting the *baljanji*⁶⁶ (see figure 3.6). While the imam performs the chants, the spirit-mediums go into trance (*patika'*) and start invoking the ancestors. They honour the memories of the ancestors, asking for protection on their descendants from misfortune and calamity. According to Sather (1997), the ancestors at this point are said to be visible to all spirit-mediums, and they can converse freely with them. However, at one particular *magpaili-baha'u* held at Sulubaya's⁶⁷ house, the ancestors were not visible to other *jin*, rather, they were believed to be entering the *nakura' jin*'s body and conversing from within. The dialogue between the *jin*, spirits and ancestors are conducted using *ling saitan* (language of the spirits). The spirit-medium then invites their ancestors to eat and drink a meal prepared for them. As soon as the *nakura' jin* indicates that the ancestors have finished the meal, he then invites all guests to eat from the same plates.

⁶⁴ The researcher discovered that in Semporna, the *magpaili-baha'u* ritual is not necessarily held or hosted by the *nakura' jin* Garani Jikilani only. During his field research in 2009, the ritual was held by Sulubaya Jainullah, another *jin* in Kampung Bangau-Bangau.

⁶⁵ A spiritual leader or religious leader of a mosque or village prayer-house congregation.

⁶⁶ Literature in the form of rhythmic prose and poems by Jaafar al-Barzanji, which narrates the life of Prophet Muhammad P.B.U.H.

⁶⁷ One of the *nakura' jin* in Kampung Bangau-Bangau.

Figure 3.6:

The magpiai-baha'u ritual in progress – An imam reciting baljanji (most left), jin (spirit medium) Sulubaya Jainullah (most right) and attendees.

Source: Fieldwork, 2009



The length of dialogue between them may vary depending on how elaborate the *magpiai-baha'u* is. Sather notes that the session “lasts for some time, as a great many villagers typically gather to put questions to the spirits and ancestral souls” (Sather, 1997, p. 306). During this lengthy communication between the living and the spirits, the *jin* is able to transfer the spirit or ancestor guides and answers to questions, acting as an interpreter or intermediaries (*paganti'*). 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 performs the chant.

During the night that follows,⁶⁸ *magigal-jin* begins. A great number of the ancestor's spirits are said to be assembled by the *jins* (spirit-mediums), to be entertained with *magigal* (dancing) and *magtagunggu'* (music making). A special dance platform is

⁶⁸ Sather (1997) notes that according to Bajau Laut time reckoning, each new day begins at sunset. Therefore, this juncture marks the commencement of the third day of the *magpiai-baha'u* ritual.

prepared and the space is decorated with coloured flags (*panji-panji*) and sprinkled (*alaksian*) with perfume by the *limbagan* (*jin*'s assistant). Each spirit medium is aided by *limbagan*, usually a female member of a house group. As the *limbagan* sprinkle the platform with perfume, the *nakura*' *jin* call upon the spirits to take with them all the sickness and misfortune when they leave the village and return home. Then the *limbagan* fill the dance space and start *magigal* (dancing) accompanied by the *titik limbayan*. When they finish dancing, the spirit-mediums take the floor and starts *magigal*. Female mediums (*jin denda*) dance first followed by male mediums (*jin lella*). The female mediums dance accompanied by *titik limbayan* while the male mediums with *titik lellang*. Each medium dances singly, one after another. At this ritual, *jin* is believed to dance with spirit-possession, and their dance movement is controlled by the spirit. Each *jin* ends their dance when they fall into trance and collapse to the ground. At this point, the other *jin* or *limbagan* gather around to help the in-trance *jin* to recover from spirit possession.

The *magpaa-baha*'*u* ritual is a major ceremony held by the Bajau Laut as it also holds strong its religious significance to the whole society. In addition to the *magpaa-baha*'*u*, mediums perform dances in public during the year called *magpaigal-jin*. According to Sather (1997), *magpaa-baha*'*u* and *magpaigal-jin* “both correspond to [each other, and mark] major periodicities in Bajau Laut life” (p. 307).

3.4.3 Igal in Magpaigal-jin Ritual

Literally, *magpaigal-jin* means “performing *igal-jin*.” It is a ceremony purposefully carried out to maintain continued goodwill with the spirits and to entertain village ancestors and the numerous spirits believed to inhabit the surrounding region.

Such dancing in *magpaigal-jin* ritual is also thought to have a therapeutic virtue as the spirit guests are said to take on the various afflictions and woes that are suffered

by village members. The event takes place at night at an open site lit by the full moon. The Bajau Laut *jins* believe that the “nights-of-full-moon”⁶⁹ period is the perfect time to dance for their ancestors. Traditionally, “such dancing should be performed every lunar month, on the fourteenth or fifteenth night, during the full phase of the moon” (Sather, 1997, p. 307). At present, the timing for this ceremony is fixed by meetings between spirit-mediums.

Figure 3.7:

Jin lella (male spirit mediums) in white shirt and jin denda (female spirit mediums) in green blouse during magpaigal-jin ritual

Source: Research and Development Unit, Department of Sabah Museum. Printed with permission.



The *magpaigal-jin* is a ritual where *igal* is performed by the spirit-mediums represented by male spirit-mediums (*jin lella*) and female spirit-mediums (*jin denda*) (refer to Figure 3.7 and 3.8). The dancing in *magpaigal-jin* generally follows the movements of the common *magigal* as performed in the Bajau Laut social occasions, but the context is purely ritual (Bottignolo, 1995, p. 129). The spirit-mediums dances freely but turns to honour the *jin*-spirit of their ancestors. At intervals during the dance,

⁶⁹ The cyclic phase of the moon is used by the Bajau Laut to fix the time, and it serves as a major calendar (Sather, 1997; Bottignolo, 1995). According to their myths, the passage from one moon to another also symbolizes a cyclic mode of being, e.g: the moon dies (set) again and again, only to be reborn in the never-ending cycle (Sather, 1997).

seawater is offered to the dancer, who takes it only to spit it out on those present. When an *igal-jin*-bearer begins to dance, he/she slowly leaves his/her normal state and passes into trance, signifying the entrance of the spirit (*jin*) into the spirit bearer's bodies. A male spirit-bearing body may either become a male spirit (*jin lella*) or a female spirit (*jin denda*).

Figure 3.8:

Jin denda performing igal limbayan while a limbagan (jin's assistant) sprinkle perfume to the spirit medium's body during magpaigal-jin ritual

Source: Research and Development Unit, Department of Sabah Museum. Printed with permission.



The highpoint of dancing is reached when the body of the dancer begins to shake uncontrollably and he/she starts to fall down. This situation indicates that the spirit-mediums are dancing in trance (*patika*) and the ancestral spirits are also dancing together with them, through their bodies. Ancestors' spirits may have either male or female characters, regardless of the gender of the medium, and this is reflected in specific musical pieces played by the accompanying *tagunggu* ensemble. *Titik lellang* for example, is associated with the possession by a male *jin*, while *titik limbayan* is used to accompany the possession of a female *jin*. While dancing in a trance, the spirit-

mediums are unaware of anything that takes place around them. Garani states that the feeling of being in trance (*patika*) “is like ‘being without sightings’ (*buat halam pandogan*)” (Sather, 1997, p. 102). When this occurs, the other *jin* or *limbagan* would help the dancer recover from trance. Eventually, the dancer will slowly come out of the trance and return to normal.

3.4.4 Igal in Pagkawin

Pagkawin (solemnization) is a marriage ceremony held either at the bride’s parents’ house or at the house of the appointed representative (*wakil*) who acts during the arrangement of the bride’s marriage. In a more elaborate wedding ceremony described by Sather (1997, p. 253), the whole ceremony can last for two days. *Pagkawin* begins at the bride’s *wakil*’s house with an *anud dalaham*, a formal presentation of the bride’s wealth. Meanwhile, the groom’s family and relatives form a procession and travel by the village walkways, carrying the bride’s wealth in specially decorated containers to the *wakil*’s house. Following that, they then proceed to the bride’s house and escort her back to the *wakil*’s house, attending a wedding feast (*amakan*) there. Later, after sunset, dancing (*magigal*) and music making (*magtagunggu*) takes place at the open-platform in front of the house.

The day after, around midday, a formal solemnization takes place to legitimize the marriage. This is followed by a *magsanding* after sunset where the newlyweds sit side-by-side on specially made chairs set on a raised dais erected on a platform. Guests are dressed casually, gathering around to mingle and to honour the couple with dancing. It is a joyful festival where a large number of people gather: adults catching up with friends and relatives, the young seeking potential marriage partners, and children playing with their playmates. It is also a colourful event where the public area is decorated with colourful flags (*sambulayang*) and cloth banners (*panji*). The *pagkawin*

is held only for one day,⁷⁰ where all formal solemnization proceedings are done at daytime, concluding with a *magsanding* after sunset.

The apex of a traditional Bajau Laut wedding celebration is the *magigal* and *magtagunggu*' performances held during *magsanding* ceremony (refer to Figure 3.9). As the dancing begins, musical pieces are played by the *tagunggu*' musicians to warm up the space, as the crowd often seems a little shy and reluctant to be the first to take the stage. The newlyweds' family members then encourage their relatives to fill the dance space. Gradually, the dancing begins to flow organically when others enter the space. Dancing is done in groups of two to five people at a time due to the confined space between the newlyweds and guests who are sitting and watching the event, restricting the number of people who dance at once.

Figure 3.9:

Igal during magsanding in pagkawin ceremony.

Source: Fieldwork, 2009.



During the *magsanding*, *igal* is typically performed by women who are close relatives and friends. Non-relatives, no matter how good they are in dancing, are usually

⁷⁰ At the time when the researcher conducted his fieldwork in Kampung Bangau-Bangau in 2007 and 2009, the wedding was as elaborate as to what Sather (1997) described. However, it was only held for one day due to many reasons, mainly economic reasons.

unwilling to dance at this event. Men rarely dance at this event except for the bridegroom (*pengantin lelaki*) who dances with his bride. At this juncture, no other individuals will dance in the dancing space, giving way to the couple.

In contrast with *igal* performed in rituals, the *igal* during *pagkawin* celebrations no longer signifies the interconnection between Man and the spirit world. Here, *igal* is performed for pure pleasure in public view. The dance transforms from the emotional and in-trance oriented to a joyful participatory phenomenon. The dance movements are similar to those of the rituals except in weddings, trance dancing is not involved. The dancers strive to captivate the audience, commanding their attention by exhibiting their talents and skills in the delivery of a stylistic dance vocabulary. Dancers dance around and opposite each other, keeping a loose contact by never touching one another.

The *magsanding* ceremony is also a strategic place for people who want to earn some extra cash. These individuals perform the *igal* in honour of the wedding couple while guests, especially relatives of the newlyweds, show their appreciation by slotting money in between the dancers' fingers. On a good night, a dancer may earn up to fifty ringgit by performing the *igal* at the *magsanding*.

Among the Bajaus in Semporna, the wedding host may invite dance troupes from outside the village to perform for their wedding. Besides *igal*, *mangiluk*⁷¹ or *daling-daling* are other types of dances that are occasionally performed at weddings. The *Mangiluk* is relatively faster and livelier while *daling-daling* is performed at slower tempo with the accompanying song '*Mai daling-daling, oh mai daling-daling.*'

⁷¹ Mangiluk were brought to the shores of eastern Sabah through the fusion of Bajau and Suluk dance traditions. The dance is shared by both the Suluk and Bajau in the Semporna area and is performed by both ethnic groups with variants of their own (Mohs Anis Md Nor, 1998, p. 114)

3.4.5 Instrumentation and Music in *Igal*: The *Tagunggu*' Ensemble

Martenot and Maceda (1980) note that the orchestra of the Sama Dilaut in Sitangkai comprised:

(1) a set of seven to nine small gongs placed horizontally on two chords which are stretched over a low frame (*kulintangan*); (2) three hanging gongs (the narrow-rimmed *bua*, the wide-rimmed *pulakan*, and the *tamuk*, the largest of the gongs); (3) and a drum (*tambul*).

(Martenot, A., & Maceda, J., 1980, p. 2)

The description of the Sitangkai Sama Dilaut orchestra by Martenot and Maceda reflect similarities in the musical instrumentation of the Semporna Bajau Laut. There are three musical instruments used by the Bajau Laut in Semporna to accompany *igal* performances as well as provide music for entertainment at important social gatherings and ritual ceremonies.⁷² The full Bajau Laut ensemble consists of a set of one to three hanging gongs (*agung*), a double headed brass snare drum (*tambul*, *tambol* or *tambur*), a set of small kettle gongs or brass pot gongs ranging between six to eight pieces on a wooden frame (*kulintangan*) (refer to Figure 3.10). The *kulintangan* and *tambul* are played with two wooden sticks while the *agung* is played with a large wooden stick with cloth or rubber strips covering its end.

⁷² Another traditional Bajau Laut music instrument which is not discussed here is a wooden xylophone (*gabbang*). It consists of a series of bamboo bars, which are struck using a small wooden mallet. This instrument is not part of the *tagunggu*' ensemble as it is played as a solo instrument to accompany Bajau Laut folksongs (*kata-kata*).

Figure 3.10:

Complete tagunggu' ensemble owned by the Kumpulan Warisan Bajau

Source: Fieldwork, 2009



The *kulintangan* is regarded as a key instrument in the *tagunggu'* ensemble as it provides the main melodic line to a musical piece. The suspended gongs and drums are played in rapid strokes by male musicians, while the *kulintangan* is played by two female musicians: a principal player who plays the melodic-rhythmic motifs, and a second player who plays the *sulimbat*⁷³, an ostinato rhythm on one or two of the highest pitched pots, in time with the rhythm of the melody.⁷⁴ The *kulintangan* is tuned to a pentatonic scale with the first gong tone serving as pitch centre (Matusky & Tan, 2004, p. 172). In the coastal regions of Borneo and the Sulu Seas, the term *kulintangan* is a generic name that refers to the ensemble as a whole and is commonly associated to dance and music (Fernando, 2002, pp. 17-18). The ensemble is known by a variety of names including *tagung*, *magagung*, *sotogungguon*, or *tagunggu'* in Sabah, *genderiang* by the Melayu Belait in Brunei, and *kelinang* by the Lun Bawang in the Temburong district of Sarawak (Fernando, 2002, p. 18).

⁷³ Also spelled *solembat*.

⁷⁴ Fernando, S. (2002) notes that the *sulimbat* (which she wrote as '*solembat*') player played on one of the highest pitched gongs of the *kulintangan*. However, this research has observed that depending on the musical repertoires, the *sulimbat* player may improvise and change between the highest pitched to the second highest pitched gongs.

The complete set of these instruments are known as the *tagunggu*’ and the playing of the *tagunggu*’ ensemble is referred to as *magtagunggu*’ (music making). The musical repertoire of the *tagunggu*’ is known as *titik* (musical piece), reflecting the dance style that would accompany a particular *igal* repertoire. For example, musical pieces such as *titik limbayan*, *titik lellang* and *titik tabawan* identifies the dance repertoires that would accompany it: *igal limbayan*, *igal lellang* and *igal tabawan*. The *tagunggu*’ ensemble has a large repertory of pieces, each distinguished by names denoting the rhythm and pace of the piece. Names can vary from village to village. For instance, the Bajau Laut’s *titik to’ongan* is known as *titik da’ ilau* among the Bajau Kubang.

During a performance, the *tagunggu*’ ensemble is placed at the back of the performance space, allowing dancers to occupy the rest of the space. The *kulintangan* and gong players are seated on the floor, while the drummer stands with the drum suspended from the neck. In a typical performance at a Bajau Laut social event, the placement or arrangement of these three instruments are less important, as long as all instruments are placed next to each other.

3.5 Stage Performance of *Igal*: Regatta Lepa Festival

While traditional performing arts of the Bajau Laut continue to be maintained in their sacred and celebratory contexts, there is a vibrant scene where Bajau Laut performing arts play a vital role at the Regatta Lepa festival. The Regatta Lepa festival is an annual parade of Bajau (inclusive of the Bajau Laut and Bajau Kubang) traditional boats called *lepa*⁷⁵. The *lepa* is ornately decorated with colourful, decorative cloths called *tipas-tipas*, which are triangular shaped *sambulayang*. Or, they are decorated with *panji-panji*, a colourful rectangular shaped cloth which is normally used for festivities and weddings. The festival has been held annually since 1994 to boost the

⁷⁵Lepa is a fastly disappearing traditional Bajau Laut boat. Averaging eight meters in length it is designed to navigate in shallow, reefy waters. Usually decked with single or double outriggers, it accommodates residential for the nomadic Bajau Laut.

tourism industry of Semporna and to promote regional and national agendas through the cultural heritage of the Bajaus. The Regatta Lepa festival is sponsored by the Sabah State Government through Sri Pelancongan, a subsidiary of the Sabah Tourism Board (formerly known as Sabah Tourism Promotion Corporation).

The Regatta Lepa festival runs for two to three days in April, highlighting races between the *lepa* as a symbol of Bajau identity embodied in its material culture. There is also the *Ratu Lepa* (*lepa* beauty pageant) and *Ratu Igal* (dance queen) competitions, the *Rumah Tradisi* (traditional Bajau house) competition and the showcasing of *igal* dances throughout the festival. Dance and music performances take place in many different spaces, from the boats' prow to indoor stages, including specially constructed stages and open areas. In these spaces the audience, comprised of locals and foreigners, gather to watch and sometimes participate in the shows performed by local performers.

Igal performances at the Regatta Lepa festival can be divided into three different sub-categories; (1) A solo dance performance, (2) Choreographed pieces, and (3) A mass dance performance.

Figure 3.11:

Igal dancer (pang-igal) dancing on the boat's prow during the Regatta Lepa's lepa parade.

Source: Fieldwork, 2009



A solo dance performance at the Regatta Lepa is performed on the boat's prow during the *lepa* parade, while musicians perform the *tagunggu'* at the back of the decorated *lepa* that parades through the moorage/straits (refer to Figure 3.11). This marks the climax of the parade where all contestants exhibit their *lepa* with the accompaniment of dance and music.

Figure 3.12:

Igal dancer (pang-igal in blue blouse and red trousers) performs or dances as a soloist during Ratu Igal competition.

(Note that there are two different musical instruments used as accompaniment: tagunggu' music on the left and modern music at center and right side of the stage.)

Source: Fieldwork, 2009



Solo dances can also be seen during dance competitions held at the indoor stadium (refer to Figure 3.12). Both performance spaces are contests that exhibit the dancing skills of the solo performer although competitions held at the indoor stadium requires dancers to perform *igal* accompanied by both traditional *tagunggu'* music and contemporary Bajau songs.

Figure 3.13:

Choreographed version of igal dance being performed during the Regatta Lepa launching ceremony

Source: Fieldwork, 2009



Choreographed *igal* dances are performed by selected local cultural troupes at the launch of the Regatta Lepa festival (refer to Figure 3.13). There are several types of *igal* performed within this context including *igal limbayan*, which is performed only by female dancers; *igal tarirai*, which utilises *bolak-bolak*; and the fast-paced *igal tabawan*, performed by both female and male dancers. Performers employ similar steps and movements but vary in approach, dynamism, emphasis and spectacle. Dances are choreographed by the troupe's choreographer, employing dynamics in floor patterns, a concept that is foreign to the traditional nature of *igal*. These performances place more emphasis on the spectacular, engaging stylized but are recognizable versions of the *igal*.

Figure 3.14:

Dancers from all dance troupes in Semporna performing igal dance on-and-off stage.

Source: Fieldwork, 2009



Mass dancing occurs during the final section of the Regatta Lepa's launch, whereby it gathers all dancers that had previously performed to fill the dance space (refer to figure 3.14). During this section, the performers may include up to fifty young women and men performing on and off stage. Professional choreographers and instructors are appointed by the Sabah Cultural Board and the National Department for Culture and Arts, Sabah, to arrange the floor patterns and sequences of movements so that the vast number of *pang-igal* (*igal* dancers) will appear pleasant to the eye of the mixed audience.

Unlike the attire of ritual dancing where spirit mediums wear plain trousers and a top known as *sawwal jin* and *bajjud jin*, dancers performing in this festival are glamorously attired in bright and colourful costumes similar to bridal costuming. Female dancers wear vibrant and colourful wedding costumes, featuring the *bajjud alal* *bimbang* blouse with beaded butterfly collar decorated with *manik-manik* or strands of

small beads, silken *hoos* or *siyal* skirt, a sash or *sablay* and a *jabbang* (crown) headdress. The dancers' supple hand movements are accentuated by a set of long curved brass *saling kuku* finger caps.⁷⁶ Male dancers wear narrow-legged *tinanjak* costumes, in which the black top and trousers are decorated with *batawi* (gold buttons), *antuwilas* (gold lace), and *manik* beading.

The Regatta Lepa festival has brought about significant changes to the performative structure of *igal* because it deploys a large concert stage decorated with large *sambulayang* (jellyfish shaped sails) and *panji-panji* (pennants) complete with modern lighting and sound systems. In this eclectic performance space, local cultural associations including dancers and musicians from all over Semporna are called to perform their respective versions and interpretations of a staged presentational *igal*. The performance of *igal* on the Regatta Lepa stage shows clear distinctions of music and dance, a consequence of the urgency of the ruling government to revive these art forms as cultural symbols.

⁷⁶*Saling kuku* is a long metal artificial nails, which dancers wear on their fingertips. Also called 'Janggay' by the Tausug speakers as well as Badjao people in Tawi-Tawi.

CHAPTER 4

SEMIOTICS ANALYSIS: SIGNIFICATION OF *IGAL* AS A SIGNIFIER TO THE BAJAU LAUT'S PERFORMING ARTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will be focused on the analysis of *igal* through the use of Saussurean Semiotics (1966), Barthes' Myth (1972) and Hall's Representation (1997) to reveal the meaning of *igal* and its performative elements. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the deeper and multi-layered meaning of *igal* and to connect it to the cultural level of meaning and representation via the discussion of *igal* as sign, signifier and the signified.

As described earlier in chapter two, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is linked through denotation and connotation. Saussure (1966) concentrated on the denotative function of signs while Barthes (1972), contrastively pushed the analysis to a connotative level. These two terms describe the meaning signs convey.

In the first order of signification, *igal* (as a sign) is self-contained. In this context, *igal* means dance. This is a denotative order of signification that falls in line with Saussure's semiotic model. Denotation becomes an "obvious" meaning of *igal*. To all Bajau Laut people who share the same culture and language, *igal* is signified through dance. This denotative meaning will not change even if *igal* is performed at different times and places (in a ritual or stage performance). This is because there is a natural connection between *igal* (the signifier) and the dance (the signified) that is conventionalized, understood and recognized by the Bajau Laut who know what *igal*

represents. Even other observers from another culture, place or time who encounter an *igal* performance or see a photograph of *igal* would recognize, denotatively, that it is a dance without having to understand the cultural codes and symbolic attributes it possesses.

Prior to analysing the connotative meaning of *igal* in the second order of signification, this chapter firstly identifies the performative signifiers that make up *igal* and the process of signification that takes place. At this level of analysis, *igal* is a signified concept that consists of a structured movement system and music that forms an integral part of the concept of *igal* – which is psychologically embedded in the minds of the Bajau Laut people. If *igal* is the signified, what are the signifiers (according to the Bajau Laut community) that signify *igal*? How do these signifiers work in relation (or in opposition) to each other in order to signify *igal*? Section 4.3 of this chapter discusses the vertical relationship of the signifier and the signified according to Saussure's semiotic model, which enables *igal* to be conceived as a group of signifiers that will only be able to produce meaning through a series of performative differences such as dance, music and costume. On the other hand, the horizontal relationship of *igal* with other signs will be demonstrated in the explanation of *igal* in ritual and Regatta Lepa stage performance.

The analysis of *igal* is also carried out based on Barthes' "myth." In this analysis, *igal* is viewed as a sign in the second order of signification, which operates in two distinct ways: as mythmaker and connotative agent. In the analysis of "myth", the simple meaning of *igal* – dance of the Bajau Laut – meets a whole range of cultural meanings that derive not only from the sign itself but from the way the Bajau Laut community uses and values *igal* (the signifier) and the concept it signifies. When *igal* (as sign) moves to the second order of signification, they carry cultural meanings and representation, that is, the sign (*igal*) becomes the signifier of cultural meanings. At this

stage, Hall's concept of representation will be incorporated into the analysis, illuminating what *igal* represents when it is performed as ritual and as a stage performance.

4.2 Signifying *Igal*: The Performative Signifiers in *Igal*

4.2.1 The Structured Movement Systems⁷⁷

It is imperative to look at the source of movements separately as movement motifs represent *igal*'s structured movement system as a whole. The combinations of movement motifs are recognized as dance movements by the beholders of the *igal* dance tradition, but may not necessarily have specific labels to it. It is the conceptual map of the Bajau Laut's movement system – the way they distinguish movements from one another, “classified” and “arranged” according to their worldview.

The *igal* movement system employs a constellation produced by three parts of the body: shoulders, legs, and arms. These three body parts have a unique significance, patterns and variation. The shoulder is mainly used for style, while the patterns and variation of legs are simple. Arm movements are more elaborate, complex, varied, and are emically considered the most important part in performing an *igal*. Torso movements are not considered significant as structural elements denote that performing *igal* requires extensive movements of the upper torso while sustaining an upright body position. Knees are bent throughout the dance and hips moves sideways, naturally following leg movements.

Shoulder movements of *igal* are important as they add more style to the dance when the shoulders move back and forth in opposite directions to the fast beat of the music (*kidjutun/angidjut baha*). This increases the aesthetic value of the dance

⁷⁷ Dance movements in this sub-chapter are described using Labanotation terminology e.g; in place, side high, forward, backward, etc.

(*amalanu' igal* – to make the dance more pleasing and beautiful), and differentiates good dancers from weaker dancers. Shoulder movements allow the performance to be more aesthetically pleasing, but its occasional omission does not make the dance 'wrong' or 'different.' Shoulders movements, together with the torso, hips and knee positioning can be considered a style rather than part of the structure of *igal*.

In *igal*, some leg movements and positions are significant to the dance, such as the *pagginsil tapik* and *angengkek-ngengkek*. *Pagginsil tapik* refers to the moment when dancers slide their legs to the left or right while keeping both legs close to one another. Another movement variation for *pagginsil tapik* is that the execution starts with the positioning of heels together and toes apart, the right heel and left ball of the foot slide together to the left, bringing the feet to a position of toes together and heels apart. This is followed by a slide of the right ball of the foot and left heel simultaneously, to bring the feet back to starting position. The *pagginsil tapik* is used by dancers to pivot around one's own axis. This movement is similar to the *geser*⁷⁸ leg movement found in many Malay dances such as Joget Gamelan⁷⁹. On the other hand, *angengkek-ngengkek* refers to the bending (*leko'in*) of the support leg while the other gestures by touching the ball of the feet (sometimes toe) to the floor. When *angengkek-ngengkek* is executed, the toe is gestured close to the inner side of the supporting leg. This movement is regarded as the most basic leg movement and is also used as a foundation to move forward, backward or sideward while dancing.

⁷⁸ *Geser* is one out of three general types of feet movements in Joget Gamelan. Others are the *trisiq* and a simple walking movement. The *geser* refers to a lateral sliding movement – with toes curled up and knees slightly bent, the dancer slides their feet sideways (See D'Cruz, M.F., 1979, p. 47).

⁷⁹ Joget Gamelan is the term used to describe a female classical dance tradition of Malaysia which once performed in the royal courts of the east coast states of Pahang and Terengganu (formerly written as 'Trengganu'). Many of the repertoires are taken from the Javanese Panji cycle, which were nurtured through the royal patronage in Pahang and eventually in Terengganu by Tengku Ampuan Mariam, the royal consort of Tengku Sulaiman (See D'Cruz, M. F., 1979).

Figure 4.1:

*Kumpulan Warisan Bajau dancers demonstrating igal limbayan
(with costume & salingkuku fingercaps)*

Source: Fieldwork, 2009



The third and most important part of the body is the arms. In *igal*, a significant arm movement can be seen when one arm slightly bent towards the body while the other extended to side high. The wrist moves in a circular (internal or external) rotation (*angaleburan*) with fingers slightly flexed (*amalantik*). Both palms move in reciprocal motion⁸⁰ (*holiga'un tangan*) to add more aesthetic value. This particular arm movement, combined with any leg movement, forms the primary movement of *igal* dance. However, emic terminology of these movements does not exist. The Bajau Laut simply regards these movements as *angigal* or *igalan* as the execution of these moves signify “dancing the *igal*” (refer to Figure 4.1).

Another arm movement is the *angalimbayan tangan*. Arms are extended, waving slowly from side low to side high while fingers remain flexed but accented when reaching side high. In a typical *igal* performance, especially at wedding celebrations, the dance movement to enter and exit the dance space is made up of

⁸⁰ An anatomical term of alternating motion in opposing directions, such as the elbow alternating between flexion and extension.

angengkek tapik and *angalimbayan tangan*. During ritual performances, spirit-mediums (the performer) make their entrance with normal walking steps, and exit when they fall into trance. However, at stage performances of the Regatta Lepa festival, dance troupes' entrance to the stage may vary according to their choreographies. Some enter with *angengkek tapik* and *angalimbayan tangan*, while some may not.

Arm and leg movements are common motifs that represent the “culturally grammatical sequences of movement” (Kaeppler, 2007, p. 89) in *igal* dance. These motifs are combined and constellated by the performer, occurring simultaneously and sequentially to form a “culturally grammatical choreographic unit” (Kaeppler, 2007, p. 89), which are put together to form choreographed phrases of *igal* dance movements. The choreography of *igal* within village settings are normally improvised and spontaneous although it is pre-set during stage performances.

From the above description, signifiers of *igal* dance can be traced down to the level of combined motifs. However, in order for these motifs to produce meaning, the Bajau Laut organize these motifs into a system of movements embedded in the conceptual map of their mind that is fixed by their cultural codes. These Bajau Laut codes recognize the constellations of motifs as “*igal*” because they have embedded the concept of *igal* dance motifs in their minds. The cultural codes define the rules that govern the classification, organization, and arrangement of dance motifs, which values *igal* as signifiers to the *igal* dance tradition.

4.2.2 Music

Musical instruments are assets to the Bajau Laut. They are *pusaka* – a tangible property which is transmitted through inheritance, passed from one generation to another. Traditionally, the most musically proficient individual is usually chosen as the rightful heir of the instrument. If no one is chosen, the Bajau Laut implicitly understands that gongs (*agung*) and drums (*tambul*) are the property of a male while

kettle gongs (*kulintangan*) belong to the female. One can therefore infer that music making (*magtagunggu*) in Bajau Laut society is a reflection of their *pusaka*’ tacit agreement – men playing gongs and drums while women play the *kulintangan*. All instruments play a role and one is as important as the other. The instruments are played alone. Without one of these instruments, there will be no music. In the event when musical instruments are not complete or damaged, the Bajau Laut will borrow the instruments from relatives or friends to complete the musical ensemble.

One of the most interesting phenomenon of *igal* is the unique relation between dance and music. Although dance and music may be regarded as separate entities, *igal* materialises in the unity of dance and music. In other words, dancing (*magigal*), whether in rituals or social celebrations, cannot happen without the musical accompaniment played by the *tagunggu*’ ensemble (*magtagunggu*’ – music making). The importance of music and music making among the neighbouring Bajau community has been noted by Mohd Anis and Hanafi Hussin (2012), where they observed the *Magduwata* ritual of the Bajau Kubang community in Bum-Bum Island, Semporna. Similarly, *magtagunggu*’ or music making is also significant to *igal* performances of the Semporna Bajau Laut as it signifies much more than just its function as musical accompaniment to the dance. Music is important during the rites, and can be heard all day long around the village. When the *panagunggu*’ (musicians) starts playing the *titik* (musical piece), it serves as a signal to all *pang-igal* (dancer) to begin dancing.

Musical tunes of the Bajau Laut, known as *titik*, act as a signifier that indicates the dance repertoire that will be performed. More than just serving as a musical accompaniment, these instruments lend their tonalities and rhythms to the quality of the movements and accents of the *igal* dance. They determined what and how the *igal*

repertoire is to be performed. For example, if *titik lellang*⁸¹ is played, the Bajau Laut spontaneously understands that the *igal* that is to be performed will be the *igal lellang* and female dancers should not enter the dance space as the piece is only meant for men. For the men on the other hand, knowing that *titik lellang* will be played, it triggers a response that if they are going to dance, they must dance at a more energetic pace that is firm and showcases the strength of a man. Other musical pieces such as *titik limbayan*, *titik tabawan*, and *titik tarirai*⁸² respectively signify the *igal*'s repertoire: *igal limbayan*, *igal tabawan* and *igal tarirai*.

In trance dancing during rituals, musical pieces signify the gender of the spirits. Spirits of the ancestors, who were once human beings, are gender specific. Pieces such as *titik lellang* is reserved for male spirit mediums, while *titik limbayan* is linked to possession by female spirits.

Of all *tagunggu*' repertoire performed by the Bajau Laut, only three musical pieces play significant roles in the rituals. They are *titik limbayan*, *titik tabawan* and *titik lellang*, which are accompanied by the *igal limbayan*, *igal tabawan* and *igal lellang* dances. These musical pieces represent the repertoire for *jin* or spirit mediums (*titik jin*), and provide conduits in the invocation of ancestral spirits during rituals. Despite its ritualistic connotations, *titik limbayan* and *titik tabawan* are also performed to accompany dances at non-ritual celebrations, sometimes using the *bolak-bolak* (wooden castanets). However, during the course of this research, *titik lellang* was rarely performed by the Bajau Laut to accompany dances at occasions other than rituals.

⁸¹ *Titik lellang* is also referred to as *titik kuntu* by one music troupe in Kampung Bangau-Bangau. On the other hand, the *Warisan Bajau* troupe has another version of *titik kuntu*, which specifically accompanies *igal* for men, namely the *igal kuntu* where the dancer uses a spear and shield in the dance motives to depict the martial arts movement.

⁸² *Titik tarirai* is a foremost repertoire for wedding celebrations, usually played to accompany *igal* with the use of *bolak-bolak* (wooden castanets).

4.2.3 Costume

How is a dance costume performative? Schechner (2002) stressed that the “performative” could occur in “situations” not traditionally viewed as the performing arts, implying that certain acts (such as dress-up) would still construct social realities (pp. 110-142). From his explanation, it can be understood that costumes do not behave (or behaving), rather, they can be viewed “as performance” (Schechner, 2002). It is “performative” because it embodies “a ‘concept’, the ‘idea of’ performance suffusing an act or activity” (Schechner, 2002, p. 142).

The Bajau Laut’s costume for *igal* can be classified into two different groups according to their functions and purposes of Bajau Laut culture. Costumes can be categorized according to ritual purposes or stage performances. Both are traditional, but are distinct from one another. How these costumes are worn is culturally coded within the Bajau Laut landscape.

Ritual attire especially for the *jin* was and remains a static entity. It has never encounter changes. Ritual clothing is inherited from one generation to the next and serves not only to fulfil a fundamental human need but is essential to performing the ritual itself. Bajau Laut rituals can never be conducted without the *jin* wearing their inherited *sawwal jin* (trousers) and *badjud jin* (blouse). The importance of wearing this complete attire is a basic code understood by all Bajau Laut *jins*. By putting on this specific costume during a ritual setting, *jins* become a part of the spirit world. Failure to wear the complete clothing will cost them *katulahan* (supernatural curse).

In Bajau Laut rituals, the performer’s body (*jin*) is dressed in symbolic, communicative, and embedded aesthetic roles. The attire is especially meaningful to the society, fulfilling social and psychological functions that simultaneously express the aesthetics of the Bajau Laut’s ancestral beliefs. The *jin*’s attire acts as a reinforcing

agent, characteristically distinctive in nature, to carry significant meaning that will reinforce the *jin*'s imagery and responsibilities.

The colours of the spirit medium's attire are white, green and yellow. In most countries within Southeast Asia, yellow is considered the colour of royalty, and is often associated with wealth and supremacy. Green is the colour of life, signifying freshness, and is synonymous with vegetation. The green coconut used in the *magpaiti-baha'u* ritual is but one symbolical manifestation of a seed, representing life's characteristics. White reflects the colour of rice grain. Together, rice and the coconut are images of wealth and fertility. Both reflect the symbol of life that derives from the earth and maintains links with the world of nature.

Food, especially rice, is a precious commodity for the Bajau Laut considering the community's poor living conditions as boat dwellers where rice is not often a part of their daily diet. Cassava is part of their staple diet, while rice is significant to great feasts and festivities. To the Bajau Laut, as Bottignolo (1995, p. 77) suggests, rice contains its own spirit, thus its white colouring represents the colour of the spirit. The colours of the spirit medium's clothings worn at rituals are codes used by Bajau Laut spirit mediums to signify that they are separate from their ordinary life. These codes transform their bodies, assuming identities as *jins* and conducting rituals to fulfill obligations required by their ancestors.

In the context of a stage performance, many factors influence the final product of Bajau Laut costumes, including the development of costuming by the other indigenous groups in Sabah, demands of the tourism industry, and last but not least, the cultural sentiments of the society itself to ensure their continuation. All of these have influenced the development and transformation in the quality, aesthetics and the presentation of Bajau Laut costuming. Costumes used for stage performances do not always represent the traditional attire of the *igal* dance, but the onstage image

demonstrates the Bajau Laut's cultural identity and socio-cultural dynamism through the gaze of tourism.

Dancers' costume during a stage performance often reflects "commonly assumed" notions of what indigenous traditional costuming should look like. These notions are often exotic to the eye of the outsider, including the Sabah state government who, ironically, controls what is represented on stage. At the Regatta Lepa festival for instance, traditional wedding attire of the Bajau Laut is used as the most "appropriate" costuming for its stage performances. It is obviously inappropriate, yet these costumes are still seen on stage because it stands out in a "spectacular" fashion. Yet, what is portrayed as "spectacular" is deceptive. It exaggerates indigenous aesthetics through embellishments of costumes. On one level, it displays the misinterpretations of what is considered an "appropriate" outfit for *igal* when in reality does not represent the rich and vibrant culture of Bajau Laut society.

4.3 *Igal as Culture, Igal as Ritual*

To the Semporna Bajau Laut, the world they live in is not just an ecosphere encompassing their physical lives, but is a shared space with invisible beings, spirits and souls of their ancestors. This particular worldview and belief system of the Bajau Laut community is reflected in their traditional performing arts. *Igal* is rooted in a deep layer of Bajau Laut belief, which signifies the community's *Weltanschauung*. *Igal* is manifested through healing rituals conducted by the spirit-mediums who restore the imbalance between man and spirits. Illness is seen as a disparity believed to be derive from malevolent spirits, or *sumangat*. In such healing rituals, dance is not merely an act where *jins* (spirit-mediums) dance to music (*titik*). The entire event is a healing performance, which sees *jins* pleading with the *sumangat* not to prolong the ailments. The ritual is constructed out of indigenous Bajau Laut animistic beliefs and shamanism, and shares commonalities with some natives dances of Sarawak and early forms of the

Malay healing theatre including *Bagih*, *Main Puteri*, *Ulik Mayang* and the Orang Asli's *Belian* ceremonies.⁸³

Roy A. Rappaport defines the term “ritual [as] the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers” (1999, p. 24). Based on Rappaport's definition of ritual, there are five key features⁸⁴ that can best be reflected when considering *igal* within the ritualistic context of the Bajau Laut:

1. The ritual is encoded by other than the performers and spirits;
2. Formalized behaviour;
3. Invariant performance;
4. Performance (ritual and other performance forms);
5. Functional and physically efficacious.

Igal performed as ritual dance in the *magpaigal-jin* or *magpaili-baha'u* ritual adheres and reflects Rappaport's first key feature: the encoding of the ritual by other than the performers. *Igal* performed by the spirit mediums in Bajau Laut ritual is coded behaviour, for which the encoding is not established by the spirit mediums themselves, rather by the ancestors who lived before them and spirits of their ancestors who reside among them. The performance of *igal* by spirit mediums is thus an “order” that the mediums must obey to ensure the balance between man and the spiritual world.

The second key feature of Bajau Laut ritual is its formalized behaviour, which Rappaport described as “formal characteristics;” a “formality” that adheres to “form” (1999, p. 33). In the context of ritual, Rappaport defined “formal” as “decorousness, punctiliousness, conformity to form, repetitiveness, regularity, and stylization” (1999, p. 46). When performing *igal* in ritual, there are sequences of movements that are enacted

⁸³ Yousof states that these earliest art forms are healing performances, deriving from an ancient origin which is rooted in the Malay-Polynesian belief system (2004, p. 10).

⁸⁴ See Rappaport, R. A. (1999). *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*: Cambridge University Press., (pp. 32-50).

as “liturgical orders”⁸⁵ throughout the performance. Although spirit mediums perform *igal* dance motifs spontaneously, the actions and gestures are stylized, repetitive, and fixed (in terms of movement motifs and not the constellation of motifs), thus reflecting a “form” and “conformity to the form.” Rappaport suggested this as an important aspect of all rituals; “there is no ritual without formality” (1999, p. 37).

The performance of *igal*'s movement motifs in Bajau Laut rituals have never changed, and reflects Rappaport's third feature of ritual. Invariance in *igal* performance during rituals is marked by the continuity and participation among spirit mediums who perform the dance at these rituals. Another ritual invariance is what Rappaport (1999, p. 263) coined as the “hierarchical dimension of liturgical orders” of performing *igal* in rituals. The hierarchy of Bajau Laut spirit mediums comprises *nakura' jin* (spirit medium leader), *jin* (spirit medium), and *limbagan* (spirit medium's assistance). This structure is important because the sequences of performing *igal* are laid out within the hierarchy of *nakura' jin-jin-limbagan*. Such an order is also reflective of the Bajau Laut as hierarchically organized community.

Performing *igal* in Bajau Laut rituals is an expression of movement motifs that fulfil the beholder's desire in maintaining balance with the spiritual world. In Schechnerian (2002) terms, *igal* performance at rituals is a “showing-doing” of a “restored behavior” enacted through bodily movement systems. *Igal* is a restored behavior that becomes a “twice-behaved behavior” (Schechner, 2002) when it is presented and expressed as liturgical orders in the Bajau Laut rituals. Thus, this conforms to Rappaport's fourth feature of rituals that require rites to be enacted by “acts” that are performed.

⁸⁵ “Liturgical orders” is referred to as sequences of rituals in Rappaport's sense (see Rappaport, 1999, p. 169)

In traditional Bajau Laut society, dance and dancing also serves to provide entertainment. It is clear that *igal* is both a ritual and constitutes an important part of a ritual performance. In the *magpaigal-jin* ritual, *igal* is the most important component. It is through *igal* that ritual acts are accomplished. Dance is essentially meant to appease the invisible beings who once lived amongst the Bajau Laut community. In particular, the community is actively conscious of the connection with the past and fulfilling its obligations to the deceased ancestors through dancing.

The performance of *igal* is also vital to the wellbeing of the *jin*. Within the context of a *magpaigal-jin* ritual, *igal* is not merely a dance event held during the full moon of every three months. Rather, it is an urge of the *jin* to fulfil their responsibilities to honour the ancestors. This is an important role for the *jin*, who performs the role themselves. By carrying out this responsibility, *jins* will avoid being cursed by their ancestors.

Among the Bajau Laut, spirit-mediums (*jin*) dance at the *magpaigal-jin* ritual to honour their ancestors' spirits in the present and for the future. The arbitrary relationship of both dancing and honouring relies heavily on the community's belief that the value of honouring one's ancestors is done through dancing.

In chapter two, this thesis noted that signification is the relationship between the signifier and the signified where one is dependent on the other. The signification between dance and honour can also be observed in the above paragraph. But that is not the end of the matter. In the case of dancing the *magpaigal-jin* ritual, it does not merely illustrate the community's obligation to the ancestors' spirits; rather, dancing is undertaken as an obligation for the present and the future. This indicates that dancing within Bajau Laut society is an established continuum of pledge to keep their promises.

Igal in ritual is “performative” (Austin, 1962). It is not a mere doing the act of ‘dancing’ but brings into being the action of ‘honouring’. It is a performative act of bringing honour. In line with Rappaport’s characteristics of ritual, *igal* can thus be viewed as a “formal characteristic of ritual [that] enhance the chances of success of the performatives they include” (Rappaport, 1999, p. 115). “Honouring” is an inward and spiritual act, and the utterance is signaled by conformity to ritual observances embodied in the *igal* dance.

Igal in the *magpaigal-jin* ritual also signifies an outward expression of Bajau Laut belief. However, belief, according to Rappaport, is an inward state. He suggest, this belief is “a mental state concerning, or arising out of, the relationship between the cognitive processes of individuals and representations presented to them as possible candidates for the status of true” (Rappaport, 1999, p. 119). In the context of the Bajau Laut community, they believe that they live in a world controlled by God (*Tuhan*), who brings good forces, and the spirits (*saitan*) that are capable of bringing harm to their lives. The Bajau Laut also believes that the soul of their ancestors (*mbo*’) remains present, invisible but accessible, and dwell in chosen living persons (*jin*). This account supports the Bajau Laut’s involvement in ritual and dancing, encapsulated in their acceptance of the existence of the *mbo*’ and their capability to influence Man’s life. This inward state of believing that spirits exist among the Bajau Laut community is expressed through the act of dancing, which ensures that goodwill with *mbo*’ is kept in balance and to avoid imbalance that may cause them to be punished with *tulah* (*supernatural curses*).

Rappaport also suggests that a key principle to ritual is time (1999, pp. 169-170). For the Semporna Bajau Laut, the moon is traditionally recognized as the only way to calculate the time.⁸⁶ In order for a specific rite to grasp its maximum efficacy, being within the right timeframe is critical, yet is not enough. The rite has to take place in a symbolically “favourable moment,” either during the night or day. The day is reserved for the living while the night is dedicated to the realm of the dead. During the night, not all moments are equal. A full moon, which represents the most intense moment that overpowers darkness, is a particularly favourable time to honour the spirits with dancing. While a full moon is not considered sacred, it still holds symbolic value for the Bajau Laut.

4.4 Meanings Altered: *Igal* in the Regatta Lepa Festival

This thesis also examines *igal* within a contrasting context, that of the Regatta Lepa festival held annually in Semporna. What messages do the *igal* of the Regatta Lepa intend to communicate? What concepts do they signify?

In a study of *igal*'s dance culture, *igal* is seen as an art form which has clear links to ancestral beliefs practiced within an exclusive sphere of the Bajau Laut worldview. In 1994, a new form of *igal* and *tagunggu*' music were introduced to large scale of audiences at the Regatta Lepa, which eventually became a part of the Bajau Laut's cultural artefacts commodified for tourism purposes. The year 2010 marked the point where Bajau Laut dance and music were brought to the national platform during Sabah Fest 2010.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Although Bottignolo (1995) noted that the Badjao in Tawi-Tawi depend on the sun as a primary calendrical source, the Bajau Laut in Semporna, as noted by Sather (1997), is very much dependent on the moon and lunar cycle, especially in determining important traditional events.

⁸⁷ At this festival, *igal* was the main performance, which saw the performance of the Bajau's “legendary quest” of ‘*Arung Salamiah*,’ a beautiful maiden on the island of Boheydulang, in the bay of Semporna. The apex of the festival was held on May 1st-2nd at the Sutera Harbour Resort, Sabah.

The Regatta Lepa festival is a multifaceted phenomenon that fulfills numerous functions, primarily showcasing Bajau culture and entertaining audiences through *igal* performances, performance styles and formats. The performances serve different purposes in different performance settings, thus adding to the multiple layers of meaning within the context of Bajau Laut culture. At the Regatta Lepa festival however, the number and types of audiences vary from local audiences who are in a position to judge the authenticity and skill of the performance, sponsors and governmental agencies who must ensure that they are progressing in their respective agendas, and to a wide variety of spectators with different concerns and ways of evaluating the performances. The Regatta Lepa festival reflects and promotes regional and national agendas, simultaneously negotiating cultural preservation and ethnic identities in Semporna.

Yousof (2004) states that in Malaysia, Islam constitutes one of the most important cultural influences on traditional Malay performing arts. The impact of Islamic influences can be found in many aspects of traditional Malay theatre, music and dance. An example can be drawn from Zapin, a dance form developed from the dance traditions of the Hadramis⁸⁸ that combines both Middle Eastern and Malay elements (Mohd Anis, 2004a, p. 102). Both dance and the music of Zapin display Islamic ethics and aesthetics such as the arabesque patterns in the symmetrical and repetitive dance motifs, signs of its Islamic influence (Mohd Anis, 2004a, p. 102). This example clearly showcases how art forms of the Malay Peninsula have developed and shaped under the auspice of Islamic cultures, Middle Eastern and Islamic influences.

Islamic influences can also be reflected in the development of the *igal* at the Regatta Lepa festival in Semporna. In the first chapter, this thesis proposed that stage performances of *igal* at the Regatta Lepa festival prescribed to the idea that the Sabah state government invoking the notion of presenting indigenous dance traditions that

⁸⁸ The Arabs of the Hadramaut.

were constructed to be in line with the National Cultural Policy (NCP). While the Islamic influences have developed, shaped and represented Malay Muslim's art forms in the Malay Peninsula, Islamic influence expressed through the principles of the NCP have impacted *igal* in other ways.

Significantly, the third principle of the NCP restricts and limits dance within the confines of Islamic tenets and values. This has resulted in abridged versions of stage *igal*, whereby choreographers draw on motifs to construct dance repertoires, completely sidestepping trance elements and pure improvisations, both crucial *igal* characteristics within its traditional landscape. On stage, *igal* has consequently become a dance solely to be viewed rather than a participatory one. Although the traditional forms of *igal* may still be seen in village settings, the new *igal* at the Regatta Lepa include choreographic elements, floor plans, new music and costumes that seemingly represent Bajau Laut culture. While the NCP was intended to focus on fostering national unity, its heavy emphasis on Malay culture and Islam are challenging for the Bajau Laut community when creating new *igal*.

The challenges of the NCP can be seen in the re-construction of the *igal lellang* repertoire, a male dance form. The NCP covertly tuned down suggestions for more sturdy and energetic elements of the dance, introducing instead more controlled movements in the dance. Consequently, the *igal lellang* (refer to Figure 4.2) repertoire has never been staged at the Regatta Lepa, and repertoire performed on this stage are selectively chosen to present graceful characteristics that can be found in dances such as the *igal limbayan*, *igal tabawan*, and *igal tarirai*.⁸⁹

The principles of the NCP also imply that suitable and foreign cultural elements can be embraced, but must be linked to Malaysian society. The NCP was

⁸⁹ Other repertoires performed at the Regatta Lepa stage performance are *igal sayau* and *igal panansang*, which are the repertoires for the Sempona Bajau Kubang community.

formulated to emphasise more on “performing Malayness” unless the Malays were not able to conserve their own culture. Superiority of the Malays in Malaysia as implied in the “Ketuanan Melayu”⁹⁰ must be taken into consideration, as is the ministry/government having hegemonical power to control what can or cannot be presented on stage.

Figure 4.2:

A Bajau Laut boy demonstrating igal lellang

Source: Fieldwork, 2009



At the Regatta Lepa Festival, indigenous elements as well as foreign influences from both within and outside Malaysia, have shaped and reshaped the way Semporna Bajau Laut represent their culture during stage performances. These influences have

⁹⁰ Ketuanan Melayu (Malay Supremacy) denotes the supremacy of the Malay race over other races in Malaysia. This notion has been questioned by the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Gerakan), arguing the privileges of the Malay race. The on-going tensions sparked off racial riots in 1969, erupted in Kuala Lumpur after the National General Election.

reached them via various channels, from their interactions with neighbouring communities as well as with the outside world. The impact of these influences upon their ways of life is certainly noticeable, consequently impacting Bajau Laut performing arts. This has manifested in the development of Bajau Laut dance and music repertoires. Both have bore witness to excessive expansion as a result of synthesizing, fusing, and blending foreign elements into Bajau Laut arts, resulting in new hybridized forms of dance and music. The result of such influences, however, has not always been positive. Indigenous beliefs, especially those connected with the realm of the spirit world, has been denied, neglected and abandoned.

Within the context of the Regatta Lepa, Bajau Laut performers are often seen dressed in “traditional clothing” to perform their “traditional” dances for audience in a complicated display of staged Bajau Laut authenticity. Performers play the role as cultural representative of the Bajau Laut, staging formalized behaviours of “restored behavior” (Schechner, 2012) to alter its meaning: emphasizing the “doing” in order to “express something” rather of the Bajau Laut culture. Instead of dancing to celebrate or to achieve efficacies in rituals, the “Bajau Laut culture” is performed through the enactment of traditional dance, music, and costume, transmitting the idea that “this is Bajau Laut culture,” while simultaneously trying to convince audiences that what they are viewing onstage is authentic. Viewers are supposed to believe that the Bajau Laut are indeed “showcasing the real thing” within their traditional setting. *Igal* performance within this setting is an example of what Schechner would term “showing doing” (Schechner, 2002).

CHAPTER 5

***IGAL* AS A REPRESENTATION TO THE BAJAU LAUT TRADITIONAL PERFORMING ARTS**

5.1 Summary and Overall Discussion

Throughout the discussions from the previous chapters, this study has examined and interpreted the meanings and concepts of *igal* within the Bajau Laut psyche, from its practice in traditional settings to a staged performance. Furthermore, three main objectives have been fulfilled.

The first objective was achieved in Chapter 2, which is to elucidate the conceptual frameworks and its applications to the study in order to arrive at a profound and comprehensive manner of understanding the *igal* dance within the Bajau Laut culture. Chapter 2 begins with a discussion of how semiotics can be applied as a framework of analysis as well as outlining principles in semiotics based on Saussurian's (1966) semiotical analysis in the linguistics system. This study however, realized that Saussurian's semiotical manner will only arrive at a denotative meaning of signs, where *igal* as "sign" is a dance of the Bajau Laut community. The chapter expands its discussions to Barthes's concept of 'myth' (1972) as well as Hall's 'representation' in order to scrutinize the argument that *igal* as a dance carries deeper and multi layered cultural meanings which also works as a system of representation to the Bajau Laut community. In the final section of Chapter 2, this study also provided a discussion on Schechnerian's 'performativity' and 'restored behavior' (2002) as the following chapters of this thesis illuminates how *igal* as a 'restored behavior' of the Bajau Laut community is performative in both ritual and stage performance contexts.

After fulfilling the thesis's first objective in Chapter 2, the second objective was achieved in the Chapter 3. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, the second objective is to discuss *igal* practice within two contrasting Bajau Laut landscape; (1) its traditional practice within the Bajau Laut community, and (2) its representation at the Regatta Lepa festival in Semporna, Sabah. These two contrasting *igal* practice in the Bajau Laut performance settings have been meticulously described in the chapter three. The said chapter begins with the ethnography findings and is followed by the Bajau Laut belief system and worldviews to allow the reader to have a clearer understanding of who the Bajau Laut community are from the ethnographic point of view as well as how they interpret the world and interact with it. The third chapter proceeds its discussions on the concepts of *igal* (dance), *angigal* (the dance) and *magigal* (performing the *igal*) and how *igal* is practiced among the Bajau Laut in the context of ritual enactments specifically at *magpaa-baha'u* and *magpaigal-jin* rituals and social occasions found at *pagkawin* (wedding) ceremonies. Following that, this thesis described different categories of *igal* performances at Regatta Lepa festival; (1) as solo dance performance, (2) as choreographed pieces, and (3) as a mass dance performance.

The third objective of this study has been fulfilled in Chapter 4 of this thesis. The final objective was to examine the denotative and connotative meaning of *igal* in the first and second order of signification. In chapter four, the study has analyzed *igal* in two distinct methods: a vertical and a horizontal analysis of signification and value of signs which adhere to Saussure's method of analyzing a given sign within its sign-system. In the vertical analysis, this study analyzes the relationship linking three signifiers of *igal* (dance movements, music and costumes) to the concept of *igal* (the signified concept) with the sign – *igal*. On the other hand, the horizontal analysis examined the relationship linking *igal* to other signs (*igal* in ritual, wedding and stage performance). Both the vertical and horizontal analysis revealed that the simultaneous

presence of the performative signifiers in *igal* dance traditions are sign-vehicles that signify multiple layers of meanings in *igal*.

5.2 Concluding Remarks and Further Study on the *Igal* Dance Tradition

Information gathered from oral interviews (formal and informal) with key informants and practitioners of *igal* (musicians, dancers, ritual experts) have generated a corpus of knowledge pertaining to the multiple layers of meaning on Bajau Laut performing arts, sacred and secular performance traditions, syncretic practices of Islam and ancestral beliefs as necessary inter-connective mediators in representing the Bajau Laut's performance tradition in relation to the larger culture of the former nomadic community of the Sulu Seas. Even with the wide dispersion of Bajau Laut throughout the islands of the Southeast Asia, they are still bound together linguistically and culturally by means of the performing arts. Culturally, the Bajau Laut community performs the same rituals, dances, music and other performative activities that shape their performing arts in religious and social contexts.

As practiced today, *igal* is a significant and substantial element of rituals observed by the Bajau Laut which embody a complicated performance traditions and structure with the music of an accompanying *tagunggu*' ensemble. In this study, *igal* has been demonstrated as both sacred and secular performances which indicate that the dance, being practiced and performed at different context of performances, signifies different meanings and concepts. In both performance context, the performative signifiers of *igal* dance tradition are not different, but only 'distinct' and appropriate to its performance context, thus signifying distinct meanings to the Bajau Laut community, and simultaneously working as a representation of the Bajau Laut's culture.

As discussed in Chapter 3, an important element of traditional Bajau Laut *weltanschauung* is the belief in the indivisibility between man and spiritual beings,

which has survived for innumerable years and continues to persist, affirming the fact that there exists associative relations between cultural and religious beliefs embodied in traditional Bajau Laut performing arts. Continuity in the indigenous performing art practices, embedded in incessant ritual observances, often look to the past, present and future in codified behaviour and ceremonial practices held by these cultural beholders. This asserts the shared cultural memories of an esoteric quality that is deeply rooted in the performing arts of the Bajau Laut community.

Igal as Bajau Laut art form remains intact in its ritualistic context. The existence and practice of *igal* in rituals reveals that the Bajau Laut believes in the supernatural beings and power. The esoteric connection of *igal* with the spiritual belief and social order is clearly seen within the practice of *magpaa-baha'u* and *magpaigal-jin* rituals. Even if the original context is no longer widely (or openly) practiced, because they appear to be contrary to the teachings of Islam, they continue to be practiced by a small number of people. Due to modernization and strong influence in Islamic beliefs, the phenomenon of cultural transformation upon *igal* has become enormous and unavoidable. These has brought new dimensions on how the Bajau Laut perceives the world around them and shaped the new way of thinking among the contemporary Bajau Laut.

Igal is a manifestation of how the Bajau Laut view themselves, the world, and beyond. Their intimate relations with the sea have had a significant impact to the movement idioms, which are represented in the flora and fauna existing in the ocean. The ocean is not just a mere landscape. It shapes the Bajau Laut way of living, organically influencing their behaviour. Bajau dance heritage, which has evolved from years of cross-cultural exchanges between peoples and tradition, continues to see its survival in the changes from sea-dwelling to sedentarized communities. Though the

Bajau Laut use dance as a showcasing instrument, they continue to keep the art form within their indigenous practice for themselves.

Analysis on the new context of Bajau Laut performance seen at the Regatta Lepa festival have yielded significant connections to performative signifiers between village-based and re-choreographed version of *igal* as representations of the Bajau Laut's performative dance traditions, surviving in different magnitudes and qualities that are emblematical to the Bajau Laut's cultural adaptiveness.

Igal as a stage performance continues to evolve with subtle new movements introduced into the dance, still viewed to be representative of the original dance form. Other dance troupes are also doing the same, well aware of the need to attract new and different audience members. Thus, local dance troupes and choreographers have modified the traditional way of performing *igal*. With the development of the tourism industry in Semporna, manifested especially through the annual Regatta Lepa Festival, *igal* has shifted from being a traditional and communal performance to a modern and eclectic stage performance. This has required *igal* to grow and to be reinvented to meet new performance contexts. Modern choreographic elements and other influences⁹¹ have been incorporated into this traditionally sacred dance space to create and present “spectacular” performances for wider audience members with different needs and expectations. The festival itself has brought *igal* to another level of performance, which, at the same time, strives to preserve some aspects Bajau dance aesthetics within the context of traditional *igal*.

This movement for change, a quest for strengthening Bajau Laut identity, and the need to preserve heritage while moving forward in creative ways, have been helmed by the present generation of Bajau Laut performers as well as local practitioners.

⁹¹ Other influence such as Malay dance aesthetics has been incorporated into the dance when it is brought to the stage performance in Regatta Lepa festival (See Hafzan Zannie, 2012).

Indeed, the Bajau Laut performing arts within the context of the stage has borrowed many foreign elements, but continues to develop its unique identity, creating a niche for itself in the regional performing arts scene, particularly with the experimentation, fusion, synthesization, and hybridization that continues to the present day. Government policies, including that of the National Culture Policy (NCP), have undoubtedly led to the dampening of authenticity and originality as it fails to recognise how traditional Bajau Laut performing arts have been vibrant products of a dynamic syncretism between Islam and indigenous beliefs. The NCP, through the state government of Sabah, has reshaped the performing arts of the Bajau Laut by removing the ritual elements from their repertoire that are seen as “unacceptable” from the viewpoint of Islam. Due to the restrictions imposed by the state government, a new *igal* has begun to emerge along with the “reinvented origin” of the dance as a manifestation of how the Bajau Laut imitate the ‘flying eagle’ as they fish in the open sea. This move does not recognise the Bajau Laut’s belief system that has long been embedded in the dance. However, spearheaded by positive opportunities of creativity, local troupes have begun to experiment with new ways of showcasing and performing the Bajau Laut *igal*.

Among the Bajau Laut, *igal* is an expression of life. It is a vehicle of socialization for both performers and spectators. *Igal* as a ritual dance, is a culture of the Bajau Laut community. It serves to appease ancestors, cure ailments, and mark life’s milestone such as marriage. It also serves as an entertainment for the Bajau Laut’s social occasions and performed at the Regatta Lepa festival’s stage performance as a representation of the Bajau Laut’s rich and vibrant culture.

This study has presented a systematic and detailed semiotic analysis of *igal*, paying particular attention to its traditional practice and stage performances as well as its interrelationship with other performative elements such as music and costume. Through the vertical and horizontal analysis on *igal*, the study reveals that *igal* has

extrinsic and intrinsic values, which contrastively gives different meanings to the Bajau Laut community. Extrinsically, *igal* is a performative expression of dance and music commonly performed in the Bajau Laut's social celebrations and stage performances. Intrinsically, *igal* is a performative expression that embodied implicit coded aspects of Bajau Laut culture, embedded with spiritual belief manifested in sacred practices and represents the beholder's culture. Hence, *igal* is both extrinsic and intrinsic performance representing the Bajau Laut traditional performing arts at two different levels of performativity; as a performative social expression inclusive to all members of the society, and, as a spiritual enactment of ancestral belief exclusive to the spirit mediums and related members who adhere to the traditional *Weltanschauung* of this community.

Based on the findings of the study as mentioned above, several suggestions can be made for future researches on *igal* dance. First and foremost, future studies on *igal* dance traditions should be viewed from the emic perspectives, allowing the dance to be viewed from the beholder's point of view and social reality that truly signifies and reflects the people's manifestations of dance culture. Future researches should consider the socio-cultural dynamics that interconnect and co-exist within the dance practices. The dance cannot be studied in isolation from circumstances that surrounds its existence and must also consider its explicit and implicit configurations that forms its existence.

Lastly, *igal* dance research and writing is still limited to brief narratives, which represent the dance as folk repertoires. Therefore, different trajectories of studying *igal* should be engaged such as applying dance notations as tools of structural analysis and the anthropology of dance within critical theories of performance studies should be considered in order to view this particular dance tradition from different perspectives and multi-disciplinary approaches.

APPENDICES A:

Bajau Laut Musical Repertoires

No.	Items	Descriptions
1.	<i>Titik To'ongan</i> (also called <i>Titik Jaman</i> or <i>Titik To'ongan Jaman</i>)	In Bajau language, <i>to'ongan</i> means 'real' or true'. This piece is usually played as an opening piece, played early in the morning to indicate that ritual rite will soon take place. It is similar with the Bajau Kubang's <i>Titik Da' Ilau</i> .
2.	<i>Titik Limbayan</i>	Played on the occasion of weddings and ritual observances of the Bajau
3.	<i>Titik Tabawan</i>	Laut. In rituals, these pieces are reserved for women, however, in secular celebration, male dancer may also performed <i>igal</i> with these musical pieces.
4.	<i>Titik Tarirai</i>	A foremost repertoire for wedding celebrations usually played to accompany <i>igal</i> with the use of <i>bolak-bolak</i> (wooden castanets).
5.	<i>Titik Lellang</i>	Also refer to as <i>Titik Kuntau</i> by one music troupe in Kampung Bangau-Bangau.
6.	<i>Titik Kuntau</i>	The <i>Warisan Bajau</i> troupe has another

		version of this repertoire, which is specifically to accompany <i>igal</i> for men, namely <i>igal kuntu</i> , where the dancer used a spear and shield and the dance motives depict the act of martial arts movement.
7.	<i>Titik Jin</i>	General terms to refer to all <i>titik</i> played to accompanied <i>igal</i> performance by spirit mediums. However, the <i>Warisan Bajau</i> troupe has their own specific version of <i>titik jin</i> .
8.	<i>Titik Tenes-Tenes</i> (also refer to as <i>Titik Tunis-Tunis</i>)	Tenes literally means quick, fast or rapid. The pieces' name reflect its' fast rhythmic tempo.
9.	<i>Titik Merendang Sayang</i>	A new arrangement by the <i>Warisan Bajau</i> troupe.
10.	<i>Titik Sumping-Sumping</i>	<i>Sumping</i> means flower.
11.	<i>Titik Pama'iran</i>	A closing musical piece to mark the ending of an event of musical performances.
12.	<i>Titik Hawagan</i>	Played to announce, or to invite people to come to the event.
13.	<i>Titik Yanang Manshuhurah</i>	
14.	<i>Titik Sappit</i>	
15.	<i>Titik Sua'-Sua'</i>	

16.	<i>Titik Ligaya</i>	
17.	<i>Titik Sikkad-Sikkad</i>	
18.	<i>Titik Tagunggu'</i>	
19.	<i>Titik Awal Masa</i>	
20.	<i>Titik Deo' Saloka</i>	
21.	<i>Titik Lillal-Lillal</i>	

* The repertoires listed here are based on three Bajau Laut music troupes in Kampung Bangau-Bangau and one troupe in Kampung Labuan Haji, Bum-Bum Island

*Does not include the musical pieces by *Gabbang* instrument.

APPENDICES B:

Photographs



Photo No. 1: Main entrance of Kampung Bangau-Bangau, Semporna
Source: Fieldwork, 2010



Photo No. 2: Informant – The late Sinyalhati K.K Tiring (Indigenous leader of the Bajau Laut, a ‘Native Chief’ by the appointment from the Semporna District Office. Deceased 2013)
Source: Fieldwork, 2010

APPENDICES B:

Photographs (cont.)



Photo No. 3: Informant – Intan Sulga K.K Tiring demonstrating *igal limbayan* at the porch of her house at Kampung Bangau-Bangau, Semporna
Source: Fieldwork, 2009



Photo No. 4: Informant – Sulubaya Jainullah (a *jin*/spirit-medium) after praying for his ancestors during *magpaa-baha'u* held inside his house at Kampung Bangau-Bangau, Semporna.
Source: Fieldwork, 2009

APPENDICES B:

Photographs (cont.)



Photo No. 5, 6 & 7: Scene at *Pagkawin* (wedding reception) – Crowd occupied the space (top), enjoying *mag-igal* performance (middle and below) performed with both the *tagunggu*’ and Bajau pop music accompaniment.

Source: Fieldwork, 2009

APPENDICES B:

Photographs (cont.)



Photo No. 8: Extemporaneous construction of *igal* dance motifs by *Warisan Bajau* dancers

Source: Fieldwork, 2009



Photo No. 8: Dancers and musicians of Danawan island (also known as Dinawan island), approximately three hours travel by boat from Semporna.

Source: Fieldwork, 2010

APPENDICES C:
Regatta Lepa 2008 program book



TUAN YANG TERUTAMA
YANG DI-PERTUA NEGERI SABAH
TUN DATUK SERI PANGLIMA HAJI AHMADSHAH BIN ABDULLAH
S.M.N., S.F.D.K., F.G.D.K., A.S.D.K., K.M.N., J.F.



YANG AMAT BERBAHAGIA
TOH PUAN DATUK SERI PANGLIMA HAJAH DAYANG MASUYAH
BINTI AWANG JAPAR



APPENDICES C:

Regatta Lepa 2008 program book (cont.)

Safarung Buaif
 PENERUSI DAN AHLI-AHLI JAWATANKUASA
 PERAYAAN REGATTA LEPA XV 2008 SEMPORNA
 MERAKAM UCAPAN SETINGGI-TINGGI PENGHARGAAN DAN
 TERIMA KASIH KHASNYA

kepada

Kementerian Perpaduan, Kesenian, Kebudayaan dan Warisan Malaysia
 Kerajaan Negeri Sabah
 Kementerian Pelancongan Malaysia
 Kementerian Perdagangan Dalam Negeri Dan
 Hal Ehwal Pengguna Malaysia
 Kementerian Pembangunan, Alam Sekitar,
 Sains dan Teknologi
 Jabatan Kebudayaan dan Kesenian Negara
 Jabatan Kebudayaan dan Kesenian Negara Negeri Sabah
 Sabah Tourism Board dan Sri Pelancongan Sabah
 Jabatan-jabatan Persekutuan & Negeri
 Jabatan Kelus Menteri
 Badan-badan Persekutuan dan Negeri Daerah Semporna
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PENERAJU HARGA RENDAH TERUNGGUL DI MALAYSIA

Di Malaysia, nama Giant sudah menjadi sinonim dengan harga rendah untuk lebih berkesan. Giant telah dan juga memulakan operasi yang kedua di Sabah dengan membuka Giant di Semporna, Sabah. Dengan memulakan operasi ini, Giant akan menjadi pilihan utama untuk membeli keperluan harian di Semporna.

Dalam usaha memulakan operasi, Giant telah memulakan operasi di Semporna dengan membuka Giant di Semporna, Sabah. Dengan memulakan operasi ini, Giant akan menjadi pilihan utama untuk membeli keperluan harian di Semporna.

Pada bulan April tahun ini, Giant akan lagi tidak melupakan kegiatan dengan memulakan program 'Harian' untuk penggiat rasmi yang melibatkan semua golongan masyarakat di Semporna. Dengan adanya program ini, Giant akan menjadi pilihan utama untuk membeli keperluan harian di Semporna.

Giant memulakan program pembangunan untuk memulakan operasi di Semporna dengan membuka Giant di Semporna, Sabah. Dengan memulakan operasi ini, Giant akan menjadi pilihan utama untuk membeli keperluan harian di Semporna.

Maklumi bahawa Giant adalah satu-satunya Giant di Semporna, Sabah. Dengan memulakan operasi ini, Giant akan menjadi pilihan utama untuk membeli keperluan harian di Semporna.

APPENDICES D:

Regatta Lepa 2009 program book



Kandungan

- Gambar Tuan Yang Terutama Tun Datuk Seri Panglima Haji Ahmadshah bin Abdullah, Yang di-Pertua Negeri Sabah dan Yang Amat Berbahagia Toh Puan Datuk Seri Panglima Hajah Dayang Masayah binti Awang Japar 2
- Perutusan Yang Amat Berbahmat Datuk Seri Panglima Musa Haji Aman, Ketua Menteri Sabah 3
- Sekapur Silih Yang Berbahmat Datuk Seri Haji Mohd. Shafie bin Haji Apdal, Ahli Parlimen P.189 Semporna, Sabah 4
- Seulas Pinang Enick A.M. Ibnu Haji A.K. Baba, Pegawai Daerah Semporna 5
- Jawatankuasa Induk dan Jawatankuasa Kecil Panitia Air Regatta Lepa Ke-XVI dan Program Merayakan Seri Budaya 2009 6
- Atur Cara Festa Air Regatta Lepa Ke-XVI dan Program Merayakan Seri Budaya 2009 8
- Atur Cara Malls Pertandingan Lepa dan Sukan Laut 2009 9
- Gambar-gambar Kenangan Regatta Lepa Ke-XV 2008 11
- Penghargaan dan Sekelung Terima Kasih 16



Perutusan

Yang Amat Berbahmat Ketua Menteri Sabah

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh dan Salam Sejahtera.

Terlebih dahulu saya mengambil kesempatan ini untuk merakamkan ucapan syabas dan tahniah kepada seluruh Ahli Jawatankuasa Pengantar ofas komitmen dan semangat bagi menganjurkan Regatta Lepa buat kali yang ke-XVI ini dengan jayanya.

Regatta Lepa yang telah memasuki tahun ke-XVI ini terbukti telah berjaya memantapkan budaya dan tradisi masyarakat Lepa di daerah Semporna. Sebenarnya penglibatan, kerelahan dan perpaduan semua lapisan masyarakat bagi menjayakan perayaan Regatta Lepa ini telah memberikan keuletan dan ilham kepada Kerajaan Negeri untuk terus memajukan industri pelancongan tempatan yang kaya dengan keunikan budaya dan tradisi yang menarik.

Sesungguhnya Kerajaan Negeri komited menjadikan Regatta Lepa Pilihan Raya sebagai perayaan tradisi masyarakat tempatan semata-mata, bahkan memujanya sebagai prospek pembangunan bertaraf dunia yang mampu menjana kemakmuran kepada rakyat.

Saya yakin dan percaya Regatta Lepa ini akan terus menjadi penggerak dan pemangkin kepada berbagai aktiviti ekonomi, sosial dan budaya masyarakat tempatan dan seterusnya menyumbang ke arah kemajuan negeri dan kehormatan masyarakat secara keseluruhannya.

Sekian dan terima kasih.

Datuk Seri Panglima Musa Haji Aman

APPENDICES D:

Regatta Lepa 2009 program book (cont.)

Sekapur Sirih

**Yang Behmat
Ahli Parlimen P.189 Semporna, Sabah**

Assalamualaikum dan Salam Sejahtera.

Saya ingin merakamkan penghargaan dan ucapan kepada Jawatankuasa Induk serta Jawatankuasa Pelaksanaan Regatta Lepa Ke-XVI yang telah merencanakan serta bersedia melaksanakan pengangkutan pada tahun 2009 ini.

Regatta Lepa adalah satu produk pelancongan unik yang dilahirkan dan ditajuk oleh masyarakat Semporna sendiri, yang mana saban tahun menyaksikan pengunjanya semakin mencapai tahap antarabangsa.

Sudah tiba masanya Regatta Lepa keluar daripada kepemandangan secara pelancongan domestik. Sebagaimana itu, dalam mendedahkan wawasan majlis Regatta Lepa sebagai destinasi pelancongan unik, Regatta Lepa Ke-XVI ini adalah pemanggil kepada pengangkutan Semporna ke peta pelancongan dunia.

Justeru, dalam mengemili arca paradigma ini, saya menyeru seluruh masyarakat Semporna khususnya dan rakyat Sabah umumnya, untuk bersedia melonjakkan industri pelancongan daerah ini dengan menjadikan kesediaan usaha memajukan seni warisan kita, memelihara eco-tourism sedia ada, dan seterusnya memajukan Semporna sebagai produk pelancongan bertaraf antarabangsa.

Wasalam.

Datuk Seri Haji Mohd. Shafie bin Haji Apdal

Seulas Pinang

Pegawai Daerah Semporna

Assalamualaikum dan Salam Sejahtera.

Alhamdulillah bersyukur kita ke hadirat Allah SWT kerana dengan lán-Nya juga kita dapat mengunjai Pesta Regatta Lepa Semporna kali ke-XVI pada tahun 2009.

Saya bagi pihak Jawatankuasa Induk Regatta Lepa Ke-XVI mengucapkan terimakasih kepada semua pihak yang telah berkolaborasi dengan Kerajaan Negeri Sabah dan Kementerian Perpaduan, Kebudayaan, Kesenian dan Warisan bagi menjadikan pesta ini dan menjadi pengumpul bersama dengan Pejabat Daerah Semporna.

Daerah Semporna telah dikenal pasti sebagai sebuah daerah yang mempunyai potensi pelancongan domestik yang amat baik kerana pada tahun ini, Pujak Semporna telah dicatatkan sebagai salah satu keajaiban dunia menurut pengiraan "The New Seven Wonders of Nature" yang diadakan dan dijalankan bermula awal tahun ini sehingga 7 Julai 2009 di www.n7w.com.

Pelancongan pembangunan industri pelancongan di Semporna akan lebih maju apabila Pesta Regatta Lepa Semporna ditajukkan dalam waktu terdekat ini. Dengan ketubuhan puiat itu kelak, saya yakin pertumbuhan industri pelancongan di daerah ini akan lebih pesat dan berkualiti.

Bagi pihak semua Ahli Jawatankuasa Pesta Regatta Lepa Ke-XVI Tahun 2009, saya mengucapkan Selamat Datang ke Semporna - Selamat Ah-Takka N'Semporna - Seikan dan terima kasih.

A.M. Ibnu Hj. A.K. Baba

Jawatankuasa Induk Regatta Lepa Ke-XVI 2009

PENJAJANG:
YB Datuk Seri Haji Mohd. Shafie bin Haji Apdal
Ahli Parlimen P.189 Semporna

PENJAJANG:
YB Datuk Haji Nasir bin Tun Sokoran
ADUN N.53 Serapiang

PENJAJANG:
YB Datuk Dr. Muzahid bin Masruki
Ketua Setiausaha
Kementerian Perpaduan, Kebudayaan,
Kesenian dan Warisan Malaysia

**YB Datuk Haji Harman bin Haji Mohammad
ADUN N.52 Subayan**

**YB Datuk Haji Romlee bin Marahabon
ADUN N.54 Bugaya**

YBhg. Datu' Mohamed bin Mohd. Daud
Timbalan Ketua Setiausaha (Kebudayaan)
Kementerian Perpaduan, Kebudayaan,
Kesenian dan Warisan Malaysia

YBhg. Datuk Nor Azmal bin Mohd. Nasir
Timbalan Ketua Setiausaha (Warisan)
Kementerian Perpaduan, Kebudayaan,
Kesenian dan Warisan Malaysia

YBhg. Datu' Norliza bt Rofi
Ketua Pengarah
Jabatan Kebudayaan dan Kesenian Negara
Kementerian Perpaduan, Kebudayaan,
Kesenian dan Warisan Malaysia

PENGERUSI BERSAMA:
Encik A.M. Ibnu Hj. A.K. Baba
Pegawai Daerah Semporna

Tuan Haji Zaini Nyak Othman
Ketua Penolong Pengarah
Jabatan Kebudayaan dan Kesenian Negara
Kementerian Perpaduan, Kebudayaan, Kesenian
dan Warisan Malaysia

TIMBALAN PENERUSI BERSAMA:
Encik Bonus Kuntong
Penolong Pegawai Daerah (Pembangunan)

Encik Mohadi bin Haji Alindal
Penolong Pegawai Daerah (Perkhidmatan)

Encik Salehuddin bin Md. Saleh
Pengerusi
Jabatan Kebudayaan dan Kesenian Negara,
Negeri Sabah

URUS SETIA:
Pejabat Daerah Semporna
Jabatan Kebudayaan dan Kesenian Negara,
Negeri Sabah

Jawatankuasa Kecil Regatta Lepa Ke-XVI 2009

**JAWATANKUASA KECIL ISPADAT,
SAMBUTAN DAN PROTOKOL**
Pengerusi:
Protokol Negeri Sabah dan TDM (Cawangan
Semporna)

**JAWATANKUASA KECIL JEMPUTAN
DAN PENGINAPAN**
Pengerusi:
Encik Bonus Kuntong
Penolong Pegawai Daerah (Pembangunan)

**JAWATANKUASA KECIL JAMUAN VVIP
DAN JEMPUTAN**
Pengerusi:
Puan Hahaj Norliza Tommy
PUSPANTA Cawangan Semporna

**JAWATANKUASA KECIL KEBERSIHAN
DAN KECEKISIHAN**
Pengerusi:
Encik Jooar bin Haji Ahmad
Majlis Daerah Semporna

**JAWATANKUASA KECIL PUBLISITI
DAN PROMOSI**
Pengerusi Bersama:
Pegawai Pemubutan Awam KKAW dan
Jabatan Permerangan Semporna

JAWATANKUASA KECIL MALIS PERASMAN
Pengerusi:
Tuan Haji Zaini Nyak Othman
Ketua Penolong Pengarah
Jabatan Kebudayaan dan Kesenian Negara

**JAWATANKUASA KECIL PEREMBAHAN
DAN PENYELARASAN AKTIVITI**
Pengerusi Bersama:
Encik Salehuddin bin Md. Saleh
Pengerusi
Jabatan Kebudayaan dan Kesenian Negara,
Negeri Sabah

**JAWATANKUASA KECIL PERGIAN TEMPAT
DAN TEKNIKAL**
Pengerusi:
Encik Salehuddin bin Md. Saleh
Pengerusi
Jabatan Kebudayaan dan Kesenian Negara,
Negeri Sabah

**JAWATANKUASA KECIL JEMPUTAN DAN
PENGINAPAN**
Pengerusi:
Encik Bonus Kuntong
Penolong Pegawai Daerah (Pembangunan)

JAWATANKUASA KECIL PAMERAN
Pengerusi Bersama:
Pegawai Perhubungan Awam KKAW dan
Encik Zakariah bin Ramli (AKN)
JKKN Negeri Sabah

ATUR CARA Majlis Pertandingan Lepa dan Sukan Laut 2009 Semporna, Sabah

Ahad, 19 April 2009

Sesuai Hotel, Semporna

Masa Acara

7:30 pagi : Kelabon Dif-dif Jemputan.

7:45 pagi : Kelabon Encik A.M. Ibnu Hj. A.K. Baba, Pegawai Daerah Semporna.

7:50 pagi : Kelabon YBhg. Datuk Dr. Muzahid bin Masruki, Ketua Setiausaha, Kementerian Perpaduan, Kebudayaan, Kesenian dan Warisan Malaysia dan YBhg. Datu' Seri.

7:50 pagi : Kelabon YB Datuk Seri Haji Mohd. Shafie bin Haji Apdal, Ahli Parlimen P.189 Semporna dan YBhg. Datu' Seri Panglima.

8:00 pagi : Keberangkatan Iba Tuan Yang Terutama Tun Datu' Patinggi Abang Haji Muhammad Salehuddin, Yang di-Perlu Negeri Sarawak dan YABhg. Toh Puan.

8:10 pagi : Keberangkatan Iba Tuan Yang Terutama Tun Datu' Seri Panglima Haji Ahmadah bin Abdullah, Yang di-Perlu Negeri Sabah dan YABhg. Toh Puan Datu' Seri Panglima.

8:10 pagi : Para Tetamu Kehormat dan Jemputan menyaksikan Pertandingan Lepa dan Sukan Laut.

11:00 pagi : Keberangkatan balik Tuan Yang Terutama Yang di-Perlu Negeri Sarawak dan YABhg. Toh Puan serta Tuan Yang Terutama Yang di-Perlu Negeri Sabah dan YABhg. Toh Puan Datu' Seri Panglima.

ATUR CARA Pesta Air Regatta Lepa Ke-XVI dan Program Merayakan Seni Budaya 2009

Sabtu, 18 April 2009

Padaig Pelan Semporna

Masa Acara

7:15 min. : Kelabon Dif-dif Jemputan.

7:30 min. : Kelabon Encik A.M. Ibnu Hj. A.K. Baba, Pegawai Daerah Semporna.

7:45 min. : Kelabon YBhg. Datuk Dr. Muzahid bin Masruki, Ketua Setiausaha, Kementerian Perpaduan, Kebudayaan, Kesenian dan Warisan Malaysia dan YBhg. Datu' Seri.

7:50 min. : Kelabon YB Datuk Seri Haji Mohd. Shafie bin Haji Apdal, Ahli Parlimen P.189 Semporna dan YBhg. Datu' Seri Panglima.

8:00 min. : Keberangkatan Iba Tuan Yang Terutama Tun Datu' Patinggi Abang Haji Muhammad Salehuddin, Yang di-Perlu Negeri Sarawak dan YABhg. Toh Puan.

8:00 min. : Keberangkatan Iba Tuan Yang Terutama Tun Datu' Seri Panglima Haji Ahmadah bin Abdullah, Yang di-Perlu Negeri Sabah dan YABhg. Toh Puan Datu' Seri Panglima.

8:00 min. : Lagu Negeraku dan Lagu Sabah Tanah Airku dimainkan.

8:00 min. : Persembahan Menyambut Tetamu-Selamat Datang.

8:00 min. : Ucapan-Au-kuand Pegawai Daerah Semporna merangkap Pengerusi Jawatankuasa Induk Pesta Air Regatta Lepa Ke-XVI 2009 dan Program Merayakan Seni Budaya.

8:00 min. : Persembahan Selangan.

8:00 min. : Ucapan YB Datuk Seri Haji Mohd. Shafie bin Haji Apdal, Ahli Parlimen P.189 Semporna.

8:00 min. : Persembahan Selangan.

8:00 min. : Ucapan YB Datu' Seri Panglima Mudo Haji Aman, Ketua Menteri Sabah.

8:00 min. : Molla Penyempurnaan Pelancongan oleh Tuan Yang Terutama Tun Datu' Seri Panglima Haji Ahmadah bin Abdullah, Yang di-Perlu Negeri Sabah.

8:00 min. : Penyempurnaan Cenderamata kepada Tuan Yang Terutama Yang di-Perlu Negeri Sarawak dan Tuan Yang Terutama Yang di-Perlu Negeri Sabah.

8:00 min. : Persembahan Kesenian Tempatan dan Jemputan.

8:00 min. : Penghujungannya Pesta Lepa 2009.

8:00 min. : Persembahan Penutupan.

8:00 min. : Keberangkatan balik Tuan Yang Terutama Yang di-Perlu Negeri Sarawak dan YABhg. Toh Puan serta Tuan Yang Terutama Yang di-Perlu Negeri Sabah dan YABhg. Toh Puan Datu' Seri Panglima diikuti oleh Dif-dif Kehormat yang lain.

8:00 min. : Majlis Bersura.

APPENDICES D:

Regatta Lepa 2009 program book (cont.)

Jawatankuasa Kecil Regatta Lepa Ke-XVI 2009

JAWATANKUASA KECIL PENYERTAAN AKTIVITI
SUKAN LAUT
Pengerusi: Tuan Haji Fadzil bin Haji Saipol (PKR N.52, Subangayan)
BATU LEPA/LEPA CANTIK
Pengerusi: Tuan Haji Mohd. Tahr bin Amir (PKR N.53, Senalang)
SUMPAH TRADISI
Pengerusi: Tuan Haji Musa Saabani dan Yng. Datuk Melai Haji Moe (Ketua Daerah)
SAMBULAYANG
Pengerusi: Tuan Haji Hasbullah Datuk Haji Raudan (PKR N.54, Bugaya)
KONVOKA MICROBIAL
Pengerusi: Enik. Basri Haji Shahril

JAWATANKUASA KECIL KESELAMATAN
Pengerusi: DSP Amin Khan, Abdulah Ketua Polis Daerah Semporna
JAWATANKUASA KECIL PERTOLONGAN CEMAS
Pengerusi: Enik. Ghulam Mearom, Jabatan Kesihatan Semporna
JAWATANKUASA KECIL KEWANGAN
Pengerusi Bersama: SUB (P) KPKW, Tuan Haji Zaini Nyak Othman (UKBN), Enik. Basri Kasim, Puan Hajah Nuning Awang

Gambar-gambar Kenangan Regatta Lepa Ke-XV 2008

Gambar-gambar Kenangan Regatta Lepa Ke-XV 2008

Gambar-gambar Kenangan Regatta Lepa Ke-XV 2008

UNDILAH VOTE! X

PULAU SIPADAN MALAYSIA Untuk 7 Keajaiban Dunia!

NEW 7 WONDERS OF NATURE
<http://www.n7w.com>

Sipadan Island
PULAU SIPADAN
GROUP B - ISLANDS **Current Rank: 17**

SIPADAN'S SECRETS
 The natural treasures of this island are its greatest assets. Here, you can still find wild deer in secluded caves. Dugongs, a cousin of the American manatees were known to swim the seas. Now they are hardly ever seen but are still held as one of Semporna's secrets.
 Diving Sipadan's reefs, Jacques Cousteau was spellbound. "Go to Sipadan to see the schooling barracuda, to Mabui to see the seahorses and the endless reefs of Kopada to marvel at the devil-like leaf fish" divers were told. Still today you will find turtles resting under your beach hut on stilts and giant coconut crabs climbing the branches of a coconut palm. It has been said that the number of creatures on these reef surpass that of the tropical rainforest.
 Now it is time to show the world that Sipadan deserved to be ranked as "One Of The Seven Wonders Of Natural World". Vote Sipadan. Do your part to support this campaign. **Malaysia Boleh!**

VOTE NOW
<http://www.new7wonders.com>
<http://www.new7wonders.com/nature/n7w/n7wmes/asia/c/sipadanisland/>

Lagu Tema Regatta Lepa 'LEPA SAMPULNA'

ALAMI SAB REGATA LEPA
 MALANIT TA MALANIT SAMPULNA
 HINANG TAKUNAN BA AHEYA
 PANIMPUNAN BANAN LEPA
 AHEYA BATU GIBAN LEPA
 BULI PIRAS, MAKA BAKA
 SAPPIT BU SAB BA AHEYA
 AHEYA YA TARUA NA
 CJO, TIPAS-TIPAS PANON PANU AHEYA
 SAMBULAYANG MAKA SALINGGURUH
 SALLIVANG SANGKI NINNA' MAPANGAH
 IYANA PAKAKAS LEPA
 SULLI TA SAB BA NICANAN LEPA
 ITI BAWAYAN SAGA MATOJA
 SUVAVA NI KALLOGAN HEH TA
 MANIARI PUSAKA BANGSA
 TIPAS-TIPAS PANON PANU AHEYA
 SAMBULAYANG MAKA SALINGGURUH
 SALLIVANG SANGKI NINNA' MAPANGAH
 IYANA PAKAKAS LEPA
 SULLI TA SAB BA NICANAN LEPA
 ITI BAWAYAN SAGA MATOJA
 SUVAVA NI KALLOGAN HEH TA
 MANIARI PUSAKA BANGSA
 Lirik: Abdi, Garang Awang
 Lagu: PETRAS/Jani Yakuib

Tema Sambutan Perayaan Regatta Lepa Semporna

- 6 Februari 1997
Lepa-lepa Penggerak Masyarakat Daerah Semporna
- 29 Mac 1998
Lepa Pendukung Wisata
- 11 April 1999
Lepa Teras Kehidupan Masyarakat
- 8-9 April 2000
Lepa Semporna Wisata Kita
- Lepa Penanaman Bangsa Di Pentas Dunia
- 8 April 2001
Lepa Wisata Bangsa
- April - 2002, 2003 & 2004
Lepa Dijana Budaya Dimartabatkan
- 16-17 April 2005
Wisata Lepa Mewarisi Budaya Dan Pelancongan Global
- April - 2006, 2007 & 2008
Lepa Pendukung Pelancongan Global
- 18-19 April 2009
Lepa Ke Arah Lantakan Industri Pelancongan Dan Seni Budaya Hegara

APPENDICES D:

Regatta Lepa 2009 program book (cont.)



APPENDICES E:

Excerpt from Series of Interviews

(Translation from Malay to English by the researcher)

Tape E, Time:	Question and answers
47:49 – 51:53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sama Dilaut – recent days - Difference between 40 years ago and now - (In English)
52:00 – 54:27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The history of the Bajau Laut. The Bajau Laut (in Semporna) were not just coming from the Philippines. Before the Japanese came (war), they has been living in Semporna since the 1930s. They are found at numerous islands in Semporna, especially Pulau Danawan, Pulau Omodal, Pulau Siamil, Pulau Ligitan, Pulau Mabul and Boheydulang. However, most of them are staying at the Bangau-Bangau and Labuan Haji. - During that time, Bajau Laut resides at several areas in Semporna. They live in Kampung Samal-Samal, near the Kampung Balembang. Before the opening of Kampung Bangau-bangau, some of them are staying in Labuan Haji and Kampung Sama (in front of the fish market). This village (Kampung Sama), were founded before the Japanese war. - There was a time when they were attacked by the pirates, they (Bajau Laut/Sama Dilaut) to an island called Pulau Bangau-Bangau (there is a school in that island nowadays). Hence, the Bangau-Bangau Village is established (around 1956). That is why most of the Bajau Laut nowadays can be found/are living in Kampung Bangau-Bangau.
54:28 – 56:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The difference between the Bajau Laut and Bajau Kubang is that the Bajau Kubang resides at the coastal area in Pulau Bum-Bum while Bajau Laut lives and built their houses on the water/open sea. Economically, they're the same. In the old days, the Bajau Kubang and Bajau Laut earn their living by fishing. However, in the 1950s, the Bajau Kubang change their lifestyle and started to farm because they have their own land, unlike the Bajau Laut who do not own any land to farm. - Q: Is there any difference in their culture? A: Culturally, the Sama diLaut and Bajau Kubang shares the same culture, eg: dance & music. They both use Gabbang and Tagunggu, but most of them does not have/own the Gabbang instrument anymore. Maybe there's only one or two family who still own the Gabbang.
56:31 – 59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difference between 50 years ago and now: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 50 years ago, Sama Dilaut did not earn much; luckily goods/retail price was quite cheap compare to now.

	<p>Nowadays, their life is much better than 50 years ago even though the standard of living is increasing. Their earning is good enough (more than sufficient) and they are able to buy cars, houses and television. In the old days, they can't afford to buy this thing as their daily income was only at RM20.00 to RM30.00.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 50 years ago, all Bajau Laut kids does not have the opportunity to get an education compared to now, sama dilaut kids gets a proper education and some of them are successful at university level and we (sama dilaut) are very proud of it.
58:53 – 01:00:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Q: Does modern technology such as television, astro (satellite tv), VCDs and DVDs are part of the factors that changes Bajau Laut's culture? - A: Yes, they contribute to the changes of the Bajau Laut's culture. Modern equipment like television, astro, mobile phones and cars are part of the changes to the Bajau Laut people. - Q: In your opinion, does modern technologies, educations, religion etc. are part of the contributing factors that changes Bajau Laut's culture? - A: Yes. Especially to their way of life. In terms of our culture, in the old days, we (Bajau Laut) do not know about Malay dance. Now, we can watch Malay dance in the television and even in town. From there, they (Bajau Laut) learn about Malay dance and they are aware of the development of the dance. -
01:00:47 – 01:01:40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Their acceptance to the cultural performance/activity is good. This is because; nowadays they (the musicians) are using different musical instruments. Decades ago, they only use tagunggu' and gabbang, but nowadays, modern instruments has been added and the availability of VCDs and DVDs (of the music and dance) has attract the youngsters especially in dance.
01:01:42 – 01:03:48	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Q: In your opinion, does the inclusion of modern instrument have made more youngsters to be interested in their dance and music? - A: Yes and maybe because they are more interested in the modern instruments. There might be a slight changes in their acceptance (to the instruments/music/dance) - Q: Are they (youngsters/new generations) aware of the existence of Djinn, and rituals like Magpaigal and Magpaiibahau? Are they aware of it, or they do not know nothing at all? - A: Older people is still practicing the rituals like magpaigal and magembo', but possibly the youngsters may not know about it. - Q: why do they not know about it? - A: Because they seldom watch cultural practices like this. - Q: why? Are they not interested, do not like at all or prohibited from watching it? - A: Their parents do not prohibit them from watching the rituals but actually they (youngsters) are not really interested in taking

	<p>part in the rituals. This is mainly because of the changes in life especially the islamization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Q: They do not interested or they do not believe (of the rituals) at all?- A: This is not about believed, but mainly because they do not interested.
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APPENDICES F:

Regatta Lepa Theme Song

<p>In Bajau Language:</p> <p><i>Alami isab regatta lepa Malahat ta malahat sampulna Hilang tahunan ba aheya Pagtipon banan lepa</i></p> <p><i>Aheka baitu ginisan lepa Bulih pinasil maka bisa Sappit itu sab ba aheya Aheka va tarua'na</i></p> <p><i>c/o: tipas-tipas panon panji aheya sambulayang maka salingguruh saluvang sangkil ninna' mapangah Iyana pakakas lepa</i></p> <p><i>Suli ta sab ba nionan lepa Iti bayanan saga mattoa Suvaiva ni kallogan heh ta Manjari pusaka bangsa</i></p> <p>Lyrics: Abd. Garang Awang Song: PETRAS/Jasni Yakub</p>	<p>English:</p> <p>So lively <i>Regatta Lepa</i> In our district named Semporna The big event every year Gathering of numerous <i>Lepa</i></p> <p>Showcase of a variety of <i>Lepa</i> <i>Penasil Lepa</i> is made traditionally Large boat named <i>sappit</i> With large load capacity</p> <p><i>c/o:</i> Huge flags waving alongside the <i>tipas-</i> <i>tipas</i> <i>Sambulayang</i> and <i>salingguruh</i> Together with the pikestaff The perfection of <i>Lepa</i> equipment</p> <p>This is the story of the <i>Lepa</i> The legacy of our ancestors Let's take care of this heritage As our nation's heritage</p> <p>Translation: Hafzan Zannie Hamza</p>
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