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IGAL CAMPUR: INTERROGATING HYBRIDITY IN SAMA TRADITIONAL DANCE
(Lightning Paper)

Introduction

Igal is the dance tradition of the Sama or Sinama-speaking peoples of maritime Southeast Asia. It is traditionally accompanied by a *kulintang* ensemble which is composed of a *kulintang* set of graduated knobbed gongs arranged in a single row, two (*agung* or *tamuk*, large, wide-rimmed gongs) or three (a *tamuk*, a small and wide-rimmed *bua*, and a narrow-rimmed *pulakan*) hanging gongs, and a Spanish-derived *tambul* drum. The relationship between *igal* dance and *kulintang* music is extremely close in such a manner that it may be described as exclusive (Santamaria, 2012). Scholars of Sama music and dance have observed that specific *kulintang* music called *titik* define the dance as well as its label (Hanafi Hussin, 2008; Hanafi Hussin, 2012; Hanafi Hussin & Santamaria, 2008). As such, most specifically in the context of ritual performances, *Titik Limbayan* exclusively accompanies *Igal Limbayan*; *Titik Djin* exclusively accompanies *Igal Djin*, and so on.

In recent times, the exclusivity of the relationship between *titik* and *igal*, among others, appears to be increasingly eroded via contemporary artistic experimentation. Dance styles or movement vocabularies which used to be specific to or associated with certain island communities are combined to create new dances. Music(s) or specific *titik* are either interchanged or combined in various dance performances. Music(s) or songs from other ethnic groups are used to create new *igal* performance pieces. Costumes or property deviate from traditional forms or are appropriated from other groups. These practices, among many others, have contributed to the rise of new hybrid forms which may be categorized under the label of *igal campur* [Sama *igal* + Malay *campur*, meaning “to mix” or “mixed”] (Babylyn Kano-Omar, personal communication, July 15, 2012) or *igal lamud-lamud* [Sama *igal* + Sama *lamud-lamud*, meaning “mix-mix”] (Al-shadat Mohammad, Focused Group Discussion, May 15, 2012), invariably meaning “hybrid *igal*.”

Sites of Construction

Igal campur or *igal lamud-lamud* may be observed in two types of “sites of performance construction.” The first type refers to geographical sites of cultural nexus. Bongao, Tawi-Tawi Province, Philippines and Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia are two important local sites of cultural nexus of various Sama groups coming from diverse island communities. These two veritable “melting pots” of Sama cultures churn out new forms, both desirable and non-desirable ones, during yearly festive events where *igal* performances figure prominently: the Kamahardikaan Festival of Bongao and the Regata Lepa-Lepa of Semporna. In these two sites, these researchers have observed hybridity in willful abandon. In Semporna, dancers can be seen with their costumes and property decorated with multi-colored Christmas lights. It is also in this site where these researchers heard a candidate for *Ratu Lepa-Lepa* (Lepa Queen) proclaim her love for dancing *Igal Lelang*, a dance associated with male spirit mediums. In Bongao, performers can be seen dancing to *kulintang titik* combined with marching band music. It is also here where these researchers observed a choreographed *pas de deux* version of *Igal Tarirai*, a solo version usually associated with female dancers.

What accounts for hybridity in these two geographical sites of cultural nexus? Future research may support or refute the following three possible explanations. First, participants to these two festivals largely come from the younger generation. A movement from the island community to the regional melting pot also