

From *Sangbai* to *Sangbaian Pangigalan*: Tracing the Evolution of the Contemporary Sama-Bajau Song-Dance Tradition

Abstract. *Sangbaian pangigalan* is a contemporary linked song-and-dance expression found among the Sama-Bajau (Sama or Sinama-speaking) peoples of the southern Philippines and Sabah, Malaysia. It is usually performed during *lami-lamian* or merry-making evenings that precede *pagkawin* or wedding celebrations and other festive occasions. In this genre, a singer performs a song accompanied by an electronic organ or synthesizer while a dancer performs a modern form of *igal* dance. *Igal* is the Sama-Bajau traditional dance genre which is characterized by postures and transitional gestures that are reminiscent, among others, of those found in Balinese, Thai, and Khmer dance traditions. In the contemporary expression of *sangbaian pangigalan*, the singer and the dancer interact throughout the whole performance. How this song-dance expression is related to other performance traditions of the Sulu Sea area such as the *pangalay*, the *dalling-dalling*, and the *pagsangbay* is not clear. This article proposes to examine the relationship of the *sangbaian pangigalan* and these aforementioned forms through a critical review of dance studies literature, an examination of examples of the genre observed in the field, and an analysis of samples captured in commercial video recordings. Part 1 describes the initial encounters with the *sangbaian pangigalan*. Part 2 reviews literature that relates the *sangbaian pangigalan* to *pangalay*, *igal*, *pagsangbay*, and *dalling-dalling*. By way of conclusion, Part 3 presents a (re)construction of the lineage of the *sangbaian pangigalan* that incorporates data from past research and new forms observed in the field.

Key Words: *Sangbaian pangigalan*, Sama-Bajau performance, ethno-choreology, dance history

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Introduction:

Sangbaian Pangigalan in the Field and Other Spaces

I first encountered the *sangbaian pangigalan* in a wedding festivity in Sitangkai, Tawi-Tawi, Southern Philippines, on 25 April 2005. I was doing a dance research project titled, “Capturing Pangalay”, for the Institute of Philippine Culture (IPC) of the Ateneo de Manila University. The project took me and my colleagues, Cynthia Zayas, Adelina Amparo “Jina” Umali III, and Marta Lovina Prieto to the southernmost municipality of the Philippines. The encounter was not love at first sight. I expected to see traditional *pangalay* performances accompanied by the *kulintang* graduated knobbed gong ensemble. Instead, I saw a contemporary dance form called *igal pakiring*, which was performed together with a singer accompanied by an electronic keyboard. “Lolai”, was the title of the song sung by a male singer while a young lady in her twenties danced to it with a rather flirtatious *pakiring-kiring* or swaying of her hips. The joint performance struck me as loud, brash and lacking, or so I thought at the time, the subtle nuances of the traditional *igal*.

Fast forward seven years later, on 8 October 2012, I found myself attending another *lami-lamian*, this time in the water village of Bangau-Bangau in Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia. Arriving

at the site of the festivity with my host, Judeth John Baptist of the Department of Sabah Museum, we were immediately, “greeted”, through a *sangbaian pangigalan* performance by a very popular Sama-Bajau recording artist named Jenes. Apparently, aside from interacting with the dancers, the singer of the *sangbai* can also describe or bring attention of specific guests to other members of the audience. I was rather red-faced when he mentioned my name as well as my affiliation with the University of the Philippines’ Asian Center. Much later on during the evening, I was asked to dance *igal* to Jenes’ *sangbai*. The audience was quite tolerant of my performance. As I was not at all fluent in the Sinama language, I was unable to interact fully with Jenes who made up for my performance by simply describing my looks and movements (much to my embarrassment when I found out afterwards).

On the way back to Manila via Kota Kinabalu, I chanced upon and bought commercial VCD Karaoke recordings that featured the *sangbaian pangigalan* at the Wisma Merdeka Mall. One of these recordings was, “Sangbai 2: 12 Lagu-Lagu Hits Sensasi Bajau Pantia Timur Sabah” (Sky Laser Enterprise, 2010). Upon close examination, I noticed that the cover of the video album features a collage of the various artists in the foreground with images of *lepa* (Bajau house boats) decorated with *sambulayang* cloth banners in the background. The back cover of the album, apart from carrying the different song titles and credits, features a tableau of two pairs of male and female *igal* dancers. The use of the word, “*sangbai*”, in the titles, the traditional costumes worn by the artists, the *lepa-lepa* house boats, and *sambulayang* banners, among others, make the visual signification of the video product unabashedly, “Bajau”, in terms of design and identity. Interestingly, one of the most popular songs in this video album is not by a Bajau but by a Tausug singer named Kamis Sanaili. This song titled, “*Sangbaian Pangigalan*”, is featured as track no. 2 of the album (Mohd.Rashdey Hj.Sabardin, 2010, track 2). In

this track, Kamis is costumed in traditional Bajau-Malay clothes and sings in Sinama. He is accompanied by three pairs of male and female dancers who are wearing decidedly Sama traditional clothes. They all seem to be performing in a park. Kamis dances while singing at the same time. The credits note that the song and lyrics are by Mohd.Rashdey Hj.Sabardin. This is a departure from the traditional *sangbaian pangigalan* where the singer is also the lyricist. As such, the song is a, “dis-embedded *sangbaian pangigalan*”. The context of a particular performance, a particular event, and a particular dance performer is divorced from the video production number. This can be seen through an analysis of the lyrics of the song, which begins as follows:

Tagna ta lagu panangbaian,

ma allau magkaramaian.

Sinangbai budjang manisan

ma allu maglasig-lasigan.

(Mohd.Rashdey Hj.Sabardin, 2010, track 2)

Let us begin the singing of the *sangbai*,
on this day of joy.

This beautiful lady is offered a *sangbai*,
on this day of joy. [Translation, mine]

It is not indicated in the video who the lady is, except that she is being offered the *sangbai*. It appears that the context of the original (improvised) composition of the lyrics of the song, which is most probably a wedding festivity or *lami-lamian*, is not portrayed in the video. There apparently is no attempt to recreate this original context as the video simply shows a singer being accompanied by back-up *igal* dancers. This disjunction is revealed even more in the second stanza.

Pabalik ta sinangbai si Dayang,

takium si randa kandiisan.

Min itu aku anangbaian igal-igal,

Abantug mapag lahatan.

(Mohd.Rashdey Hj.Sabardin, 2010, track 2)

[I] bring back the *sangbai* dear,
 when the lady with a mole smiles.
 I am here singing the *sangbai*,
 [I do this] so that all in this place may know. [Translation, mine]

It is apparent that the *sangbai* is dedicated to a lady with a mole who smiles gratuitously at the performing singer. Here, the lyrics reveal the inter-reflexive nature of the performance where the singer and the dancer improvise and take cues from each other. Once again, this is not seen in the production video. This cuing becomes even more noticeable in the series of commands contained in the refrain of the song.

Pahapun Dayang (4x) igalan nu.
Magbeya Dayang (4x) maka manis nu.
Palantikun Dayang (4x) baran nu.
Ameya Dayang (3x) malagu bai hinang ku.

Igal-Igal bangsa ta subai ka alloganta.
Daa sampai dayang takalipata.
Ni hinang pangentoman ai aie karamaian,
Sangbaian pangigalan. (Mohd.Rashdey Hj.Sabardin, 2010, track 2)

Perform your *igal* dance well, my dear.
 Combine it together with your beauty.
 Arch your body, my dear, [for it]
 to go with the song that I have composed.

We must take care of the *igal* dance of our people.
 Never, my dear, allow it to be forgotten.
 Memory-in-the-making [can be seen] in whatever celebration,
Sangbaian Pangigalan (the tribute song for the *igal* dance).
 [Translation, mine]

The lyrics seem to reveal a particular notion that the beauty of a person is best seen during the act of dancing. Kinaesthetics or, “beauty in motion or in dance”, is indicated by a specific aesthetic quality mentioned by the singer. In this stanza, the singer urges the dancer to arch her body. The act of arching or curving the body or parts of it is expressed in the verb *palantikun*. *Lantik* is often

used to refer to the beautiful arched fingers, wrists, and elbows of the dancer. This aesthetic of curvilinear forms in dance is well observed among the Sama, as well as other groups in Southeast Asia. In the second half of this stanza, the focus shifts from the dancer to the dance as the singer admonishes everyone listening to, “take care of the *igal* dance of our people”. In this manner, the lyrics link the act of dancing to the act of, “memory-in-the-making”, that in turn defines the identity of the Sama people.

Through observations and actions gleaned from the lyrics of a *sangbaian pangigalan* song, an interactive model of performance may be constructed (Refer to Table 1). Usually, a performance in a *maglami-lami* evening is preceded by a request for a song made by a dancer or a group of dancers. Once the song is decided by both parties, the dancer(s) take to center stage, usually fronting the wedding couple. The performance begins with a brief musical introduction by the instrumentalist on the keyboard/synthesizer. After a while, the singer starts usually by, “announcing the start of a song”, or by greeting the members of the audience. Before turning his attention to the dancer, the singer may explain the context of the event. “This song is performed for the wedding of so and so...” Afterwards, the singer may introduce the dancer(s) by weaving their names into the lyrics of the song. The dancer usually takes a few moments waiting for the singer to get on with the song before she starts moving or interpreting the music via her dance. At one point during the performance, the singer may describe the physical attributes of the dancer or perhaps give an indirect critique of the performance. (Direct criticism, which is considered to be culturally unacceptable, is unheard of). If the singer actually likes the dancer, he may flirt with her by describing the effect of her performance on him. The dancer in return reacts to the descriptive passages or the flirtation. The singer may then urge the dancer to perform certain movements. The dancer can then either perform these movements or reject the suggestion

by executing alternate movements. The verbal-kinetic banter can go on for an indefinite period depending on the skill of both the singer and the dancer. The singer may react to the dancer's movement statements or may decide to be bold and express his feelings for the dancer. Reacting to the singer, the dancer may choose to continue her performance or may glance at the singer to signify her impending exit. The singer may implore the dancer to stay. The dancer may accept by continuing her performance or may decline altogether and prepare to exit. (In my experience, the dancer normally cues the singer by glancing at him and then executing alternate vertical waving motions of the arms at the sides. This movement is called *limbai*, or literally, "to swing or to wave the arms"). As the dancer moves towards the sides for her exit, the singer takes the cue and announces the end of the song and dance performance. The dancer usually tries to have a good timing for her complete exit with the singer ending the song, while the singer usually concludes the performance with an apology, an expression of thanks or a promise to sing again for another dancer or group of dancers.

Table 1

An Inter-active Model of *Sangbaian Pangigalan* Performance

<i>Sangbai</i> (Singer) Actions	<i>Igal</i> (Dancer) Actions
1. Starts performance, introduces self, the dancer and context	2. Kinetically interprets music/singing
3. Describes, praises or critiques the dancer or the dancing	4. Reacts to the singer's description
5. Urges dancer to perform certain movements	6. Accepts, rejects or provides alternate movements
7. Reacts to dancer's actions, expresses feelings	8. Chooses to continue or cues the singer of impending exit
9. Implores dancer to continue	10. Accepts by continuing or rejects by preparing to exit
11. Announces the end of the singing and the dancing	12. Times exit with the ending of the song.

What has just been described is a model of a contemporary *sangbaian pangigalan* performance. The following section explores earlier forms of performance from which the *sangbaian pangigalan* may have evolved.

The *Pagsangbay* and Other Related Traditions through Time

Studying the origins of the *sangbaian pangigalan* should take into consideration related traditions such as the *dalling-dalling* and the *sangbai* or *pagsangbay*. One of the first scholars to observe the *sangbai* is Faubion Bowers (1956) who presented the following detailed description:

...a dance program usually begins with the *Sangbai*. *Sangbai* is a rhymed and metrical chant to introduce the main dancer. In Jolo city [sic] which considers itself "international," the *Sangbai* is chanted very rapidly in three languages---the local Jolo dialect, Tagalog (the *lingua franca* of the Philippines) and English. One of the English ones I have heard---while it does not rhyme the way the others do nor even can for that matter---does give an idea of what the *Sangbai* rhythms and meanings are like.

Darling, darling
Is my darling.
Gentlemen, how do you do.
This lady is from Jolo
So nice you can
Kiss her every Sunday
She is attractive
When you touch her
She will love you
Sweetheart
Answer yes or no
Do you love her true?
My darling.

Meanwhile the xylophone of bamboo, the *bula* [sic] (a homemade violin played like a small cello), gongs, and drum sound the music, and the dancer quivers her or his fingers, slides the head sharply to one side or the other on the stem of the neck, cracks the elbow

double-jointedly, pulsates up and down from a stationary position or walks energetically around in a circle (p. 261).

From Bowers' discussion, we can infer that the early form of *sangbai* is an introductory chant that precedes a dance performance. The fragment of an English *sangbai* he documented shows that the song introduces the dancer, addresses the audience, and, in a rather flirtatious manner that liberally uses romantic language, connects the members of the audience to the dancer. Interestingly, Bowers notes that dancing in Jolo and Sitangkai, "belongs exclusively to a professional class of prostitutes and young men, whose lives are dedicated to it. These young men, most of them children of prostitutes, are castrated" (p. 260), and refers to these young male performers as "Suwa-suwa dancing boys" (p. 260). Equally interesting is the absence of the Tausug, "*pangalay*", tradition in Bowers' research in Sulu. Instead of "*pangalay*", Bowers encountered the dance label, "*joget*", a term which he says, "applies primarily to two eunuchs dancing together, usually singing at the same time" (p. 262). According to him, one type of *joget* that became popular is, "*Ma Dalin Ma Dalin*", or "My Darling, My Darling". Bowers observed two types of this dance which he describes as follows:

...[*My Darling, My Darling*] was invented twenty years ago while the Americans were in Jolo. There is no accompaniment for this dance, only the constant snap of the open heel sandals which the boys cleverly manipulate with their toes to snap against the floor. Against this steady percussion, the boys sing to each other a short couplet, and wiggle their fingers in teasing or erotic gestures. One goes: "How nice you are; I can hardly express my love for you." Another is: "A bird in the tree can hardly compare with your beauty." Another more seductive one says: "Come to an island; I will comfort you there." But in the language of Jolo they are immensely charming and full of double meanings. The movements of the hands look like sleight-o-hand tricks.

One type of *Ma Dalin Ma Dalin Joget* is the *Kinjing Kinjing*, a sort of poking dance. As one of the pair turns his head up and down, to the left and right, around and around, the other pokes with his long pointed finger always just

missing his partner's nose and yet making a pretty pattern of movement with the other. Shortly after *Ma Dalin Ma Dalin* was started by the dancing troupes in Jolo, it became a rage and all the men on the island began to dance it. Some entrepreneur built a special dance hall in the center of the town, and night after night the boys danced while the women watched. Not long after, though, the building collapsed from the heavy pounding of the sandals on the floor. Since then the dance has returned to its monopoly by the professional dancers. (p. 262)

From Bowers' work we learn that the *Ma Dalin Ma Dalin* is a specific type of dance (categorized under the generic label of *joget*), which has two variants. In his description, both are accompanied by the dancers' own singing and percussive footwork, but the former appears to be a flirtatious (or even seductive) type of dance while the latter seems to be a highly evolved comic performance. Bowers also notes that no instruments accompany both performances. It is not entirely clear, however, if the singing that complements this dance is likewise called *sangbai*. As such, it appears that the early versions of the *sangbai* song and the *Ma Dalin Ma Dalin* dance do not relate to each other. It may be surmised that the two genres were later on fused to create a new tradition. Ricardo Trimillos (1972) comments on the not-unusual rise and fall of traditions in Sulu. Trimillos wrote:

...The capricious nature of Tausug musical life includes the birth and death of an entire tradition within one generation. The "*Darling-Darling*" was a popular *paggabbang* tradition which enjoyed popularity between 1920 and 1963, largely through the efforts of a single musician-dancer, Albani. Although the tradition had quite a following (Bowers, 1956) it is no longer performed... (p. 117)

Based on the passage quoted, Trimillos describes the *Darling-Darling* as a *paggabbang* tradition. This means that it is a vocal tradition accompanied by the *gabbang* music. His narrative, however, connects it to the indigenous practice of dance, particularly the *pangalay*, by mentioning the famed local artist, Albani. Though not clear from his brief description, it appears

that the song (that is, the *darling-darling* as a *paggabang* vocal tradition) is closely related to dance (which is most probably the Tausug *pangalay* or other related forms). Trimillos (1972a), in a separate work, also acknowledges the contribution of Albani to the development of what he calls, “*paggabang III*”, or “the tradition of short lyrical songs”.

...The composer, Albani, has contributed a number of songs to the repertoire. He was active as composer and performer shortly before the war, and is credited with inventing *darling-darling*, a song-and-dance entertainment which until very recently has been quite popular in Mindanao, Sulu and parts of Borneo. (pp. 72–73)

In this regard, we may conclude that Trimillos (1972b) refers to *Darling-Darling* as a, “*paggabang* (and therefore as a singing) tradition”, and as a, “song-and-dance”, entertainment, both of which are closely associated with Albani.

Peter Gordon Gowing (1979) appears to distinguish between the *dalling-dalling* and *pagsangbay* as two forms that somehow combine singing and dancing. Gowing wrote:

Tausug dancing is usually done by solo performers or in pairs. Group dancing was apparently popular in past centuries but has now nearly disappeared, possibly due to the influence of Islam and also the decrease of leisure time. The most commonly seen Tausug dances are *Dalling-dalling*, the *Pangalay* and the *Kuntao*. *Dalling-dalling* (*dalling* is a term of endearment equivalent to “dear” or “darling”) is a dance performed by two persons of opposite sex accompanied only by their own singing ---the male leading, the female echoing. It is popular at wedding celebrations...

There are a number of dances the Tausug and Samal peoples have in common. Among them are the *Pagsangbay*---a comic song-dance featuring crowned performers using fans, performing to *gabbang* music; and the *Pamansak*---a variation of the *Pangalay*. Featuring a female dancer atop twin bamboo poles borne on the shoulders of two men... (p. 125)

It is noteworthy that Gowing describes the *dalling-dalling* as a paired dance with the male leading the female. His description of the *pagsangbay* appears to evoke a more theatrical and comic

form of group dancing replete with fantastic costume and property. The following brief passage from Reynaldo G. Alejandro (1978) appears to support the idea of *dalling-dalling* (or *darling-darling*) as a paired dance: "...Another interesting dance-song of the Tausugs is the *Darling-Darling* which is performed by one or two pairs. The use of broken movement is predominant in this dance" (p. 183). What Alejandro exactly means by, "broken movement", however, is unclear because of the brevity of his description and the absence of verbal or movement notation.

National Artist Leonor Orosa Goquingco (1980) brings to the fore the significant role of the Sulu-based dance master, Albani, in her discussion of the *pangalay* and *darling-darling*. She wrote:

In pre-war days, according to Mr. Edward Kuder, Albani was a high-school student. Mr. Kuder met him after 1922, by which time he (Albani) was regarded more as a master of a dance troupe than as a dancer... His Excellency Ambassador Abu Bakar, Philippine envoy to Kuala Lumpur and a grandnephew of Hadji Butu of Jolo, told this author that this "highly-skilled and highly-paid professional dancer, very much in demand" --- Albani--- had choreographed several dances, among them the *Darling-darling* and the *Sua-sua*...Both the *Pangalay* and the *Darling-darling* (dances of relatively recent origin) may be accompanied by song (*agarantunis*). (p. 165)

By referring to the *Darling-darling* and the *Sua-Sua*, Goquingco appears to distinguish between the two dance pieces that belong to the Tausug *pangalay* tradition. Perhaps this is because the two dances are accompanied by two different songs. *Sua-Sua*, in particular, was documented by National Artist Francisca Reyes Tolentino (1946, p. 229) in her seminal tome, *Philippine National Dances*. It is puzzling, however, that Goquingco puts *pangalay* and *darling-darling* as parallel and therefore separate dances in the following sentence. In my opinion, the *dalling-dalling* may be placed under the *pangalay* tradition. On the one hand, traditional *pangalay* dances are usually accompanied by the Tausug *kulintangan* ensemble. *Dalling-Dalling*, on the other hand, must always be performed with a song accompanied traditionally

by *gabbang* music. *Agarantunis* apparently refers to the verb form of *tunis-tunis*, a melodic vocal form of singing among the Tausug.

Adding to the confusion is Goqingco's narration of National Artist Abdulmari Imao's explanation of *pangalay* performances and his subsequent revival of the spectre of Albani.

On October 13, 1970, in spite of a howling typhoon, "Sening", Abdulmari Imao kept his promise to bring this writer some photos from Sulu.

During the conversation, he further expounded on the *Pangalay* as danced by the Samals and the Tausugs. Some figures, it seems, are motions imitative of the seagulls' flying over the sea. The dance is always done by dancers in even numbers (2, 4, 6 and so forth) who alternate at dancing and narrating; they describe what the seagull sees or does: it sometimes sees a fish, or it may skip and balance itself on one leg, and then on another. The narrator is called Pagsambay...

Mr. Imao---who, incidentally, demonstrated some figures to this author---concurs with Ambassador Yusup Abu Bakar's and Mr.Kuder's opinion (voiced to this author on separate occasions) that *Pangalay* was invented by Albani. (p. 173)

From the above-mentioned description of *Pangalay*, it appears that National Artist Imao is describing a specific dance belonging to the genre called *Linggisan*. Imao's description is important because it links a particular performance of a specific *pangalay* dance to a narrated form of performance called *Pagsambay*, which may very well be sung. As for Albani's invention of *Pangalay*, Imao clarified this issue with me, saying that he was not referring to an, "invention", but rather to the idea that, "Albani popularized the *pangalay*" (Abdulmari Imao, personal communication, 15 April 2011). In a separate discussion of the dances of the Sulu Archipelago, Goqingco (1980) once again mentions the "*pagsambay*" in her description of the repertoire of Ligaya Fernando-Amilbangsa's Tambuli Cultural Dance Troupe (TCDT) of MSU-Sulu College of Technology and Oceanography, Bongao, Tawi-Tawi. "...Also in the TCDT repertoire of dances are: the Pagsambay, a Tausug-Samal comic-song-dance in which

dancers sport (paper-and-feather) crowns, while they sing and dance to the accompaniment of the *gabbang*..." (p. 177).

It seems that the very close relationship between the *pagsangbay* as a genre of narrative singing accompanied by the *gabbang*, and the *dalling-dalling* as a specific type of dance has caused confusion or conflation between song and dance. This is seen in Ligaya Fernando-Amilbangsa's (1983) alternate usage of the term.

Pagsangbay or *Dalling-Dalling* (a corruption of the English word *darling*) is a comic song-dance entertainment attributed to Albani, a former runner in the pre-war track and field team of Sulu Provincial High School. According to Dr. Ronaldo "Rony" Bautista, anthropologist and authority on Filipino Muslim culture, Albani organized the first professional entertainment troupe in Sulu which became famous even in as far as Borneo and Indonesia. The troupe specializes in *Dalling-dalling*. Dr. Bautista theorizes that Albani must have adapted the dance after he saw the performances of the Bangsawan Troupe from Singapore which came to Jolo, Sulu before the last war. A similar dance is still popular in some parts of Borneo.

The most popular variant of this dance is performed by male and female dancers holding *kabkab* (folding fan) and wearing *panumping* (paste-board) crown), capes and fantastic make-up: the face is covered with Chinese white powder, lips are painted a deep red, eyebrows and hairline are outlined with carbon taken from burned matchsticks or cork, or from the bottom of a cooking pan or porcelain saucer held over a candlelight.

Simultaneously translated into dance are the lyrics of a local comic ballad to the accompaniment of *gabbang* (bamboo xylophone). A *biula* (locally-made violin) or a *sawney* (reed flute) is often a second accompanying instrument. The lyrics of the song and the corresponding dance interpretation tell the observer that sex, women, courtship, gossip, work, adventures etc. are popular preoccupations, just as in other communities where these often form part of the entertainment process and of community life.

Nevertheless, Amilbangsa's lengthy description is important for several reasons. First, it galvanizes Albani's role in the development (perhaps not entirely the "invention") of the *pangalay* and the related genre of the *pagsangbay*, along with the specific dance

called the *dalling-dalling*. Second, it connects the *dalling-dalling* to the *Bangsawan*, a Southeast Asian form from the Malayan Peninsula practiced by peoples of many ethnicities. Third, it characterizes the *dalling-dalling* as a popular dance-theatrical form replete with associated costumes, make-up, and other properties. Fourth, it emphasizes the interactive relationship of the lyricist and the dancer who, “simultaneously”, interprets the lyrics kinetically. It indicates that the *pagsangbay*, as a genre of singing, is a sub-genre of the *paggabbang* vocal tradition. Fifth, it emphasizes that the *paggabbang* is associated with male singers, a trend which is apparently continued in the more contemporary *sangbaian pangigalan* genre.

Amilbangsa refers to the *Pagsangbay* as a form of ballad in the earlier part of her book where she describes the Linggisian dance.

Linggisian imitates a bird in flight. The female dancer’s arm movements are smooth and flowing; the postures are vivid representations of the subject. Originally this dance was an interpretation of a set of lyrics in a *Pagsangbay* series of nine ballads, performed by a pair of male and female dancers to the accompaniment of the *gabbang* (bamboo xylophone). Nowadays this impressive and very pictorial dance is performed independently (from the *Pagsangbay* performance) by a solitary female dancer to the accompaniment of a *kulintang* ensemble. (p. 28, underscoring mine)

The distinction between *dalling-dalling* as dance and *pagsangbay* as song is further strengthened by a brief descriptive passage on Tausug performing arts written by Carmen Abubakar and G.E.P Cheng (1994) who wrote: “...The art of singing to the *dalling-dalling* dance is called *pagsangbay*. The song usually dictates the movement that the dancers should follow” (p. 391).

Apart from distinguishing *pagsangbay* and *dalling-dalling*, Abubakar and Cheng’s brief description also emphasizes the interactive relationship between the singer and the dancer. The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) Sama dictionary entries also support the distinction between song and dance that is made

above. The following is the entry for *dalling-dalling* from an on-line SIL-Philippines Sama Sibutu Dictionary (2012).

Dalling-dalling

‘dance’ a type of dance.

This dance is performed by two couples, and a singer who taps out a rhythm on a drum. The singer instructs the dancers through his lyrics. The women hold fans in both of their hands. The partners face each other and usually don’t touch unless the singer tells them to touch hands briefly to make a pattern. The dancers wear crowns and shiny attire including the *badjuhdkih*. Unfortunately this dance is becoming now rare.

To dance the **dalling-dalling**.

Igal

This entry helps construct a general but nevertheless clear picture of the *dalling-dalling* dance genre: a) the genre requires paired dancing, presumably of a man and a woman; b) the dancers interact with a singer who every now and then sings out dance instructions; c) folding fans held in each hand are the main features of the dance; and d) the theatrical costumes consisting of crowns and flashy attire complete the production design. From the SIL entry, the use of a drum as an accompanying instrument instead of a *gabbang* constitutes the main divergence from the usual *pagsangbay*. This may be a Sama reinterpretation of the genre, as the *gabbang* is associated with Tausug performances. Another reason for the use of the drum, which is most probably a Spanish-derived *tambul*, is simply the absence or the unavailability of the *gabbang*. Since this is a Sama dictionary entry, instead of *pangalay*, *igal* is seen as the operative dance tradition.

Finally, the SIL-Philippines Central Sinama Dictionary (n.d.) for “*dalling*” reaffirms the song-dance relationship, as well as the apparently definitive role of male transvestites:

Dalling v. *AStat pag-*. To perform the *dalling* dance, an art form in which the performer also sings, frequently performed by male transvestites. **Gram:** *AStat. pag-*

A rare video footage of the *dalling-dalling* performed by transvestites is captured in a documentary titled, “Dance of Life: Sabah, Malaysian Borneo” (Coma, n.d.). The *Suluk* (Tausug) transvestite performers in this video are seen performing what seem to be the two forms mentioned by Bowers. In the first part of the performance, the two transvestites are accompanied by a transvestite singer playing a *gabbang*. He is joined by a percussionist, likewise a transvestite, who plays a rhythmic pattern with two sticks on a wooden plank. In the second part of the performance, the two perform *Kinjing Kinjing* the, “poking dance”, that Bowers mentioned. This time, the dancers take turns in singing and dancing. Even rarer are footages of *dalling-dalling* found in the pre-war talkie, “Zamboanga” (Tait and Harris & De Castro, 1936), and the silent film, “Brides of Sulu” (Nelson, 1934). In the former, the chanting of lyrics, “*ma dalling-dalling*”, at the start of the song is quite audible. As the wartime period forms the time frame of the films as well as the location shoot of the two films, which was in Jolo, I would like to think that the male dancer in these two films is none other than the famous *pangalay* master Albani.

From the literature on dance scholarship that I have presented, several inferences may be made about the contemporary forms of *pagsangbay*, *pangalay*, *dalling-dalling*, and *igal*. First, the *pagsangbay* refers to the performance of a song. In contrast, *pangalay*, *dalling-dalling*, and *igal* are dance labels. Second, in terms of instrumentation, the *pagsangbay* is usually accompanied by the *gabbang*. Support instruments such as the *biula* native violin or the *sawney* reed instrument may back up the *gabbang* in a *pagsangbay* performance. In some cases, as seen in Sama performance events, the *gabbang* may be replaced by the *tambul* drum or improvised drums made of PVC pipes and tin cans. Third, the *pagsangbay* cannot stand alone as a song. It must always accompany a dance which can either be the Tausug *pangalay* or

the Sama *igal*. Both labels may be understood as generic terms for dance. They may also refer to specific dance traditions, *pangalay* for the Tausug and *igal* for the Sama. As specific dance traditions, they possess distinct repertoires, as well as styles in performance. These distinctions, however, do not overrule the existence of overlaps between the two traditions, with one overlap found in their common performances with the *pagsangbay*. This overlap is understandable given the shared cultural spaces of the Sulu and Tawi-Tawi archipelagos. As such, the *pagsangbay* may accompany a Tausug *pangalay* or a Sama *igal* dance performance.

By means of the data I have assembled, which largely substantiated my field research, I can conclude that although traditionally performed to *kulintang* ensemble music, the *pangalay* may be performed to a *pagsangbay* song. In performance practice, it appears that the *dalling-dalling* is used as a substitute label for the Tausug *pangalay* and also the Sama *igal* dances that are performed to *pagsangbay* songs. The performance of the *dalling-dalling* may also be referred to as *pagdalling*. Specific dances such as the *linggis* and the *sua-sua* apparently are performed to specific *pagsangbay* songs that may bear the same name or title. The *linggis* through time has apparently evolved independently of the *pagsangbay* and is now performed with *kulintang* music. Furthermore, the term *dalling-dalling* may also refer to two specific forms of dance pieces that are performed differently. First, there is the *dalling-dalling*, which comes in the form of a performance by paired male and female dancers who take their movement cues from a singer. The accompanying song is probably a specific composition bearing the same title of *dalling-dalling*, which the singer uses as a template from which to improvise lyrics. Second, there appears to be a *dalling-dalling* that comes in the form of paired male and female dancers or transvestite dancers who sing and dance during the performance.

The discussions that I have made so far indicate that elements found in the traditional *pagsangbay*, *pangalay*, *igal*, and *dalling-dalling* have been combined to create the contemporary form which is called the *sangbaian pangigalan*. In the concluding section, I will attempt to reconstruct the lineage of this contemporary form of expression.

[Re]Constructing a *Salsilah* of *Sangbaian Pangigalan*

In this article, I have described the *sangbaian pangigalan* as observed in the field as well as in commercial video productions. Proceeding from this description of the genre, I have presented an interactive model of the performance that may be observed mainly between the singer and the dancer. I have also presented an exploration of the relationship of the *sangbaian pangigalan* to performance forms such as the *pagsangbay*, *dalling-dalling*, *pangalay*, and *igal* as discussed in earlier works on dance and music in the Sulu Sea area. At this juncture, I would like to bring this discussion to a conclusion by attempting to [re]construct a *salsilah* or lineage of the *sangbaian pangigalan*. In so doing, I hope to achieve a rectification of labels and contexts that gives recognition to the emergence of forms of expression in particular periods in time. (Refer to Table 2).

In terms of transformation leading to the emergence of the contemporary *sangbaian pangigalan* and its continuing evolution, four major phases may be observed. The first period roughly corresponds to the pre-war period from early 1910s leading to the 1940s. I base this on Bowers' reference to the period, "...invented twenty years ago while the Americans were in Jolo". In this early phase, the *sangbai* as documented by Bowers (1956, p. 261) was performed as an introductory chant to, "*ma dallin ma dallin*" dances that were categorized under the generic label of, "*joget*". Song and dance were therefore separate. Through a song, a singer introduces the dancer. The singing stops and then segues to the music of the *gabbang*, *kulintangan*, and *tambul* (drum) ensemble

Table 2**A [Re]Construction of *Sangbaian Pangigalan* Lineage**

Phase	SONG	SONG/MUSIC ATTRIBUTES	DANCE	DANCE ATTRIBUTES	PERFORMANCE CONTEXT
1	<i>Sangbai</i>	Unaccompanied chanting or vocal singing	Joget (Ma Dalin Ma Dalin etc)	Primarily boys/eunuchs and female prostitutes/dancing girls	Live in situ
2	<i>Pagsangbay</i>	Singer or singers/dancers accompanied by <i>gabbang</i> (possibly with <i>biula</i> and/or <i>sawney</i>) or drum (<i>tambul</i>)	Dalling-Dalling (Pangalay and/or Igal)	Paired dancers (male and female) or transvestites	Live in situ
3	<i>Sangbaian Pangigalan</i>	Primarily male singers accompanied by a synthesizer or electronic organ	Igal (and/or Pangalay)	Primarily female dancer/s	Live in situ
4	<i>Sangbay-Igal</i>	Individual singers of any gender accompanied by a synthesizer or electronic organ	Igal (and/or Pangalay) mixed with other dance forms	Any individual of any gender; any paired combination or groups	Recorded, spliced or Composite product, separated context

music. In this phase, we also see the development of *ma dallin dallin* as a comic song-dance number that was not accompanied by instrumental music.

The second phase corresponds to the period from the 1920s to the mid-1970s. I base this chronology on an early (1920 to 1963) periodization made by Trimillos (1972, p. 117), as well as on the period from the mid-1960s up to the early 1970s when Amilbansa lived and researched about the *pangalay* in the Sulu Archipelago.

Martial Law in the Philippines was declared in 1972, and the burning of Jolo occurred two years later in 1974. The increasing militarization of the Sulu area led to massive outmigration and

disruption of cultural life. There is an obvious overlap with the first phase. I believe that during this overlap, which corresponds to the period from the 1920s to the 1940s, Albani experimented with his version of the *dalling-dalling*. Relying on conversations with old-time residents of Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, I believe that the Albani version reached the zenith of its popularity in the immediate post-war period. In this phase, we see the development of, “*pagsangbay*”. In this genre, the dancers are accompanied by their own singing or by specialized singers who also serve as instrumentalists. In this phase, the *gabbang* is the main accompanying instrument. Vocal singing also appears to have been largely un-amplified.

The third phase corresponds to the period from mid-1970s to the early 2000s. The mid-1970s was a time of economic decline. During this period, the *gabbang* and *kulintangan* ensemble were slowly replaced by the electronic keyboard (Ellorin, 2011, p. 74). The *pagsangbay* was transformed after being, “de-linked”, from the *gabbang* and un-amplified vocal music when the synthesizer or electronic organ, together with the microphone and amplifier, took their place. This new form is what we now know as, “*sangbaian pangigalan*”, performances found in *maglami-lami* evening festivities. This also seems to be the period when the livelier *igal pakiring* emerged and became the dominant genre among the youth.

Finally, the fourth and current phase runs from the early 2000s to the present. This period has seen the advent of inexpensive video-recording technology that has further dis-embedded the *sangbaian pangigalan* from its live performance context. The latest form is found in many of the VCD/DVD products produced mostly in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia. On the Internet, the new label referring to this genre is called *sangbaiigal* or *sangbay-igal*. The hyphen, “-” semiotically separates the contexts of the song and dance performances. The splicing of unrelated images

and sounds to create new, easily reproducible, and commercial artifacts characterizes this present phase.

Other processes of linking and de-linking will continue to transform the tradition through time thereby underscoring the very dynamic nature of cultural production among the Sama-Bajau of the region.

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End Notes

¹ The Sama or Sinama-speaking peoples constitute a highly diverse ethnolinguistic group living in the central region of maritime Southeast Asia. They call themselves “AaSama” (Sama people). In the Philippines, outsiders differentiate, “Samal”, as land-dwelling Sama, and the “Bajau” (also Badjaw, Badjao or Badjaw) as sea or boat-dwelling Sama. In Malaysia, they are all grouped together under the term “Bajau,” while in Indonesia, they are called, “Bajo”, (also, Baju or Bajoe). As only specialists on Sama studies know about these distinctions, I have decided to use the term, “Sama-Bajau”, to as a general label referring to all Sama or Sinama-speaking peoples.

² Translation: *Sangbai 2: 12 Sensational Song Hits of the Bajau of East Coast Sabah*.

³ The costume appears to be quite, “syncretic”, featuring a Sama *bajulapi* and loose pants called *sawwalkantiu*. The cloth used appears to be that of the Malay *songket* textile.

⁴ I am indebted to Mr. Adzmail A. Tahamil, a Sama who hails from Bakong, Simunul, Tawi-Tawi, for translating the *sangbai* songs in this article from Sinama to Filipino. The methodology for translation is as follows: 1) a literal word-for-word translation of all lyrics is first done; 2) a literary translation is done for each sentence or autonomous phrase; 3) an English translation is done from the Filipino text while doing a word check via the on-line Summer Institute of Linguistics Sama Sibutu and Central Sinama dictionaries.

⁵ <http://www-01.sil.org/asia/philippines/prog/ssb/dict/index.html> (Accessed 13 June 2014).

⁶ Leon Coma, *Dance of Life: Sabah, Malaysian Borneo* (Kota Kinabalu: Videographics Productions, SDN BHD, n.d.).

⁷ This researcher has seen this substitution in some Sama communities in Batangas and Pampanga provinces.

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