

THE SAMA-BAJAUS OF SULU-SULAWESI SEAS: PERSPECTIVES FROM LINGUISTICS AND CULTURE

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Abstract

Major proponents of Austronesian studies argued on the origins of the Austronesian people who are now inhabitants of insular and peninsular Southeast Asia. Related to the Filipinos, the majority of Malaysian Austronesians are anthropologically, sociologically, and politically called Malays. The field of Austronesian studies has changed the basic tenets of Malayness lending a hand in redefining Filipino identity. Major Austronesian scholars such as Blust² and Adelaar and Pawley³ had made their arguments that these Austronesians of Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, New Zealand, and Malagasy migrated from within Asia. Their arguments aided in the rectification of the errors of H. Otley Beyer's conceptualization of Filipinos as Malays. Before the arrival of Christianity, the indigenous people of the Philippines were either animists, Hindus, or Muslims. It is the religion of Islam which made a very solid foundation earlier in Mindanao and gave the indigenes the sense of political unity under a sultanate. Where historicity is concerned, the Muslims in the Philippines were divided into thirteen ethnolinguistic groups collectively called Bangsa Moro wherein some of whom are residents of Sabah, Malaysia such as the Sama-Bajaus. This paper deals with the contesting and defining of identities of Sama-Bajau on both sides of Sulu-Sulawesi Seas from linguistic and cultural perspectives. This paper highlights the findings of various researches conducted in Sabah, Malaysia and Tawi-Tawi, Philippines among the Sama-Bajau groups.

Keywords: Austronesian, Sama-Bajau, linguistics, culture, pagkanduli, verb morphology

Introduction

The setting of this paper starts with the pre-colonial Sulu-Sulawesi Sea with which a group of people called Sama-Bajau generally refer to as the compass of their oceanographic civilization. The Sulu-Sulawesi Sea covers a vast area of around one million square kilometers and is situated in the geopolitical point connecting Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Before the arrival of the Western colonialists, the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea is the main point of orientation of the Sama-Bajau where they, as a functional unit, conducted their trade and commerce,⁴ entered into political alliances, carried on their daily mundane activities, and performed their sacred rituals according to their indigenous cosmology. Within this scope of the two seas, the Sama-Bajau considered the whole covered area as their ancestral home.

However, the picture changed drastically when the Western powers came to the region of Nusantara, the traditional area inhabited by the insular Austronesians, which encompasses the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea. The Western colonizers in this intrusive period introduced the new concept of political international boundaries which was totally alien to the inhabitants of the Sulu-Sulawesi region and in Nusantara at large. The once free-roaming oceanic people are now confined in the national boundaries dictated by the colonial masters. Called border-crossers, legal identities through citizenship became problematic to three nation-states and the Sama-Bajau themselves. Currently, the Sama-Bajau can be listed as nationals of the Republic of Indonesia, Republic of the Philippines, and Malaysia. Sather⁵ described the Bajau as the most widely dispersed ethnolinguistic group in maritime Southeast Asia which extends from the north in Luzon, Philippines to the south in northern Australia. This paper deals with the Sama-Bajau who are located on both sides of Sulu Sea, in particular, the Malaysian State of Sabah and the southwestern region of Mindanao, Philippines. This paper attempts to present an analysis and discussion on the postcolonial translocated identities of the Sama-Bajau from cultural and linguistic perspectives.

The Austronesians of the Seas: the Sama-Bajau

The Austronesian people form a large and diverse community occupying a very wide geography from the island of Taiwan to the islands of Madagascar and Easter Island in Chile. Majority of these people inhabit the Malay Peninsula, Indonesian archipelago, and the Philippine Islands which are collectively called Malay Archipelago in the literature. Among Austronesians, the Malayo-Polynesians comprise the biggest group in terms of population and language membership. This group of Austronesians mostly inhabits the countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines – known collectively as the Malay world.⁶ In Bellwood, Fox, and Tyron,⁷ the authors introduced the idea of phylogenetic relationship in conceptualizing the Austronesians in terms of “shared ancestry and subsequent divergence” within a big ethnolinguistic group. Inclusive in this idea is the identification of the shared genetic strand in the biological sense and the shared patterns of language and society in the cultural aspect. The same literature admitted the fact that there exist the “relatively high degrees of coordination and correlation” of the entities in terms of biology, culture, and language.⁸ Reading the same note in comparative Austronesian studies, Fox⁹ concedes that various fields of knowledge such as “linguistics, archaeology, anthropology, history and, in recent years, biological and genetic research” are involved in the attempt of elucidating Austronesia and its people. What is clear is that the Austronesians are as diverse as the languages they speak, the places they live, the cultures they value, and the collective memory they possess. The same picture is painted for these Austronesian people called the Sama-Bajau.

Nominal Ascriptions and Reference of the Sama-Bajau

Owing to the fact that the Austronesians are mostly insular, it is not surprising that the sea is conceptually and essentially important in relation to the islands. Where some of these Austronesians dwell in the sea with islands dotting the expanse thereof, this preferred location through political, economic, and historical processes substantiates the classification of some of them as sea-dwellers. Such are the Sama-Bajau, a diverse Austronesian people occupying the common maritime national boundaries of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Sather¹⁰ claimed that majority of the Sama-Bajau are land-based in comparison to those who are sea-based. Their geographical location gives them the name either Sama Dilaut or Sama Darat which basically means sea-oriented Sama and land-oriented Sama, respectively. It is with the former group that the sea is central to their lives and made them called as sea gypsies or sea nomads. It is the sea that unites them however dispersed and mobile they are.

Donohue¹¹ used the name Sama-Bajau to refer collectively to a group of maritime people called Sama or Bajau. Focusing on names, the Sama-Bajau call themselves Jomo Sama and other various names which can be based on the names of the islands and places they inhabit. This manner of self-ascription in terms of geographical location brings forth various names such as Sama Davao,¹² Sama Zamboanga, Sama Sitangkai, Sama Siasi, Sama Simunul, Sama Tuaran, Sama Semporna, Sama Sulawesi, among others, which points to the fact that these people are widely dispersed across the current political and international boundaries of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. This fact calls to the mind the question of these people's origins and areas of dispersion wherein postcolonial political boundaries were absent from the collective memory of the Sama-Bajau.

Origins and Dispersions

The Sama-Bajau in the Philippines always refer to the Sulu Archipelago as its place of origin. This is supported by historical facts wherein these people already inhabited the archipelago sharing it and were intertwined with the Tausugs and other indigenes even before the arrival of Islam. The political dominance of the Tausugs and the status of servitude of the Sama-Bajau are a complex construction which benefits only the dominant party. This picture came only when the Tausugs who eventually became dominant in the Sulu region embraced Islam and achieved a cohesive functional unit equivalent to a state. In fact, Sulu attained Islamic statehood and was declared a Darul Islam in 1450 AD.¹³ Once they were the majority in Sulu Archipelago, the Sama-Bajau people, who were considered least Islamized and dispersed vastly across the two sides of the seas, evolved as subjects in the newly-formed political state, the Sultanate of Sulu. But before the eyes of the colonialists, these two indigenous groups were described pejoratively as pirates and marauders who were the menace of the seas affecting the European trade from Singapore in the south to Manila in the north. For the Sama-Bajau themselves, their own myth says about their origin as quoted from Nimmo:¹⁴

“Long ago the ancestors of the Sama Dilaut lived in Johore, a place to the West near Mecca, in houseboats much like those they live in today in Tawi-tawi. One day as strong wind began to blow. To secure his boat, the village headman stuck a pole into what he thought was the sea floor and tied his boat to it. The other villagers, also fearing the wind, tied their boats to that of the headman’s. It turned out, however, that instead of going to the sea floor, the pole of the headman was stuck in the nose of a giant stingray that lay sleeping beneath the flotilla. That night as the Sama Dilaut slept, the ray awakened and began to swim, pulling the boats behind it. When the Sama Dilaut awakened the next morning, they were adrift on the open sea and did not know their way back to Johore. For one week, they drifted helplessly until finally the leader pleaded to Tuhan for help. Within minutes, Tuhan sent down a *saitan* [spirit] which entered the leader, who thus became the first *djinn* [shaman] among the Sama Dilaut. The *saitan* instructed the leader to sail for two days toward the East. The flotilla did as instructed and, on the second day, land was spotted. Upon reaching shore, the headman again stuck a pole [called *samboang* in Sinama] into the sea floor and all the boats were tied to it. This was the first mooring place in the Philippines for the Sama Dilaut and was consequently called “Samboangan.” Today it is still called this by the Sama Dilaut while the rest of the world knows it as “Zamboanga.” Shortly after their arrival in Zamboanga, the Sama Dilaut became subjects of the powerful Sultan of Sulu. During the course of his many marriages throughout Sulu, the Sultan gave groups of Sama Dilaut a bride wealth; thus, the Sama Dilaut became scattered throughout the Sulu Archipelago.

On the other hand, if linguistics is used to identify the place of origin of the Tausug people, the Tausug language shows that its close sister languages are those of the indigenes of Butuan in northeastern Mindanao and the Cebuanos of Visayas. This linguistic fact leaves the Sama-Bajau people as one of the original inhabitants of Sulu Archipelago. However, not all Sama-Bajau refer to the archipelago as their point of origin. The Sama-Bajau of Sabah, in particular the East Coast Bajau, have another traditional story to tell. Rutter¹⁵ presents this traditional account of origin below:

“Of the Islamic people by far the most important are the Bajaus, or Sea-Gypsies, of whom there are about 31,000, and unlike the pagans they have definite traditions of their origin. It is said several hundred years ago a certain Sultan of Johore had a beautiful daughter, Dayang Ayesha, with whom both the rulers of Brunei and Sulu fell in love. Ayesha herself favoured the suit of the Sultan of Brunei, but as his rival was the better match she was packed off to Sulu with a strong escort of men and war-boats. Thereupon the Brunei prince, nothing if not a dashing lover, led out his own fleet and gave battle on the high seas; when the fight was at its fiercest he brought his own *prahu* alongside that of the princess, took her aboard and sailed away before any of the

escort could stop him. The Johore people were aghast. Death stared them in the face whether they went on to Sulu or returned to Brunei. So cruising the seas, they picked up a living as best as they could, stealing their wives from unwary villages. Sometimes they settled on unfrequented islands, but mainly they lived as outcasts in their boats until gradually some of them formed scattered piratical communities along the coast of North Borneo.”

In parallel, another traditional account of similar theme is found in Van Dewall:¹⁶

“The Bajau originally came from Johore. Once a Johore princess disappeared during a storm at sea. The Sultan of Johore organized a group of people to search for her. However, the lost princess could not be found, and the people who were looking for her found themselves far away from Johore, and were unable to find their way back again, and so they settle down along the coastal areas of Borneo, Sulawesi, and in the Sulu Archipelago.”

These accounts are self-explanatory and speak of the Sama-Bajau people who used to serve in the Johore Sultanate and involved a princess who is either lost or abducted. It is however clear that they refer to a close affinity with their fellow Austronesian sea-dwellers occupying the Johore-Riau area. Moreover, these accounts deal with the seas and the sultanates with the former speaks further of them becoming outcasts who developed economic means making use of the sea and the latter of settlement in Borneo, Sulawesi and Sulu.

However juxtaposing these traditional accounts with historical facts, such traditional accounts would point to the existence of the Brunei and Johore Sultanates both of which did not exist in the 13th century AD. The Brunei Sultanate was established only in the 14th century AD and that of Johore only in the 16th century AD. Therefore the Sama-Bajau migration could have only existed 400 to 600 years ago which was just half a millennium ago. Shifting towards empirical evidence, Pallesen¹⁷ did a study on the migration of the Sama-Bajau and made use of dispersion hypothesis wherein chronology is set in 800 AD. This hypothesis claims that the current geographical site of origin is situated in Zamboanga, Mindanao and dispersed towards Basilan and Sulu and moved onwards to Borneo, Makassar, and Sulawesi. He posited that the arrival of the Sama-Bajau in Borneo was sometime in the 11th century AD which is 300 to 500 years earlier than the oral traditions of the Sama-Bajau.

Sama Bajau Culture: Myths, Rituals and Music

Although the Tausugs considered that the Sama-Bajau are not so Muslim and that their Islamic faith is syncretized with the animistic tribal beliefs commonly practiced before the arrival of Islam, yet it cannot be denied that the Sama-Bajau possess knowledge of the Islamic teachings including that of the Al Miraj also known as the Ascension Night of the Prophet Muhammad. In one of the stories of the Sama-Bajau, one is particularly recorded by Rixhon¹⁸ which is quoted below:

“...Maka Burrak na bintang mbal niya’ dalowa na. Binatang langkaw min himar, sogoah siraka sab bagal. Bayhu’ na bate saga bayhu’ anak Apu’ Adam. Maka’ Baran na bate’; saga baran kura’. Hulas na manjadi pal-mata tipay. Mag-sinag sahaya na... Maka’ mata na kaduwa-duwa, bate’ mamahi durri. Bang papandang mata na, bate saga sinag ilaw. ‘Mbal ra atud pandang. Taga gallang tallu nay’ na. Halam niya’ maka gaos nipat ma iya, malaingkan dakayu’ kayu Tuhan...”

This story is the Sama version of the Ascension Night of the Prophet Muhammad wherein the Angel Gabriel invited Muhamamad to a journey riding the supernatural animal described as half-human half-horse called Buraq. This story is celebrated by Muslim believers and is a whole evening event for the Sama-Bajau the chanting of which is done with some accompanying instruments. The translation of the description of the Buraq is presented below as quoted from Rixhon:¹⁹

“...There is no animal like Burak. The face is just like that of the descendants of Grandfather Adam. It is taller than the deer, but it has the body of the horse. There is nothing stronger in this world. Its sweats drop like mother of pearls. Its saddle ornamented with rubies... Its two eyes are like shining stars. And when you peek into them, they reflect the sun’s brilliance. No one can stare at them. On three of its feet are bracelets but none on the right one. No one could describe it, save Allah...”

In the Islamic orthodoxy, the description of the Buraq from Sahih al-Bukhari is that of “a tall beast, larger than a donkey and smaller than a mule. In each stride who would place its hoof at a distance equal to the range of the vision...” For sure, various versions of the story of the Ascension Night abound in every corner of the Islamic world from Africa to Asia. It is in the process of acculturation that the versions are adapted where elements common in the natural setting of the adapting people are intertwined in the story in lieu of the non-translatable elements of the standard version. The same thing has happened in the version of Sama-Bajau where the indigenous word **pal-mata tipay**, translated ‘as mother of pearl’ and of the pre-Islamic word **Tuhan** which is roughly translated as the Arabic ‘Allah’ are mentioned and maybe accepted by the group as canonical.

Aside from the communally accepted stories which are common among the dispersed Sama-Bajau, their performing arts and rituals are remarkably identical. Some of these practices are bound by their common cosmological viewpoint even if they embraced the Islamic religion. These practices with animistic undertones due to the syncretized pre-Islamic elements made them despised by the more dominant the Tausug which treated them as less Islamic. From the cosmological viewpoint of the Sama-Bajau, the most supreme being is called Tuhan²⁰ who is not only in heaven but also in the sea and everywhere. There is *Umboh* who is the mediator between Tuhan and the Bajau. Some of the spirit beings are called *saitan* or *djin*.²¹ Included in the list are the spirits of the ancestors who are believed to be either benevolent or malevolent. Such characteristics play a role in the performance of rituals with the accompanying dance and music in the celebration of **pagkanduli**. Among regional

Austronesian speakers, the Sama-Bajau word **pagkanduli** comes from the word **kanduri** and is cognate to other diachronic reflexes such **kanduli** of the Manobo, Maguindanao, Maranao, Tausugs and the Yakans and **kenduri** among Malays and other Malayic people. To highlight the importance of pagkanduli in everyday life among the indigenes, the celebration of **pagkanduli**, which is also common among the indigenous communities of Mindanao and Sulu, is even exploited by peace-keeping bodies in the reconciliation among conflicting groups.²² The same **pagkanduli** is performed or organized for inter- or intra- communal purposes – be it social or religious. The same can be said of the concept of **pagkanduli** among Sama-Bajau, which is considered as one of the most peculiar identity markers of the group.

For the past couple of years, scholars from the University of Malaya and the University of the Philippines, in particular, Hanafi Husin and Matthew Santamaria, respectively, headed a research team conducting studies on the Sama-Bajau on both sides of Sulu Seas. The studies dealt with comparative ethnography, performing arts, and cosmology of the Sama-Bajau in Sabah, Malaysia and Sulu, Philippines. In their study on the cosmology and the associated performing rituals of the Sama-Bajau, various cultural semblances were taken into account. They found out that pagkanduli is celebrated by two groups of Sama-Bajau across the international boundary between Malaysia and the Philippines in particular those of Semporna, Sabah and those of Sitangkai, Tawi-Tawi. The elements in the celebration of pagkanduli in the two groups are identical and are carried out in the same fashion. Pagkanduli includes the elements of rituals, music and dance and the participants. The main participant is the *wali djin*, which roughly translates to a spirit medium, who performs the *igal-djin* ‘dance of the djin’ in a trance. Music is made possible by playing the traditional instruments such the pulau ‘flute’, gabbang ‘xylophone’, kulintang ‘set of graduated gongs’ which is an ensemble of graduate gongs in playing the music for *tanggunggu* which normally accompanied with a dance characterized by the rhythmic movement of the body and hands. Hanafi Hussin conceptualizes that the *Pagkanduli* ritual “...reconstitutes the community in their processes of memory making through the passing of narratives, their shared experiences in communing with sacred as embodied in the dancing of the *djin* who co-dwells with the spirits, and their shared realization that ritual in a significant way informs their *pusaka* or heritage of identity that sets them apart from others...” It is also in the **pagkanduli** that the Sama-Bajau perform music and songs since these are an indispensable integral part in the accomplishment of the event. To this event, the Sama-Bajau have the repertoire of vocals and chants for the spiritual purpose.

On the social aspect of everyday life among Sama-Bajau, some musical pieces include the famous love songs of *dalling dalling*, *duldang duldang*, *pakiring pakiring*, among others, which are collectively called *sangbayan*. Talib Lim Sangogot²³ defined *sangbayan* as a “song that inspires dancers to dance artfully”. These songs gain popularity in the virtual community such as blogs and video-sharing websites like YOUTUBE. In fact it is in YOUTUBE where these Sama-Bajau songs are of wide circulation and currency. Such popularity does not only ensure circulation and currency but also discussions on identity and language across the international boundary. Perhaps the most widely discussed and argued among these songs are that of *pakiring pakiring* which also known as *Dayang Dayang*. The *sangbayan pakiring*

pakiring as a title by itself has received 59 comments since three years until two days ago (17 Sept 2010). The dual title *Pakiring/ Dayang Dayang* has received 165 comments since three years ago until last month in August 2010. The version with the only *Dayang Dayang* as the title itself has 11 versions and performances with total viewership of 2, 249, 994 and an average of 204,555 views. Such numbers indicate the fact that indeed it is popular among the people on both sides of Sulu-Sulawesi Sea.

Focusing on the comments posted on the webpage, the comments range from discussions on the origin of *Pakiring/Dayang Dayang*, the meaning of the title itself, history and people of Sabah, argumentation between Tausugs and Sama-Bajau, Islamic terrorism, language differences and varieties, and even mundane comments such as cursing the other commenters. It is interesting to note that the word Sama or Bajau occurs more than 25 times in the comments as well as the word Tausug in arguing that either of them originates the said song. Observe the selected posted messages below which are written three years ago quoted verbatim:

- [bunga19](#)
3 years ago
Let me just say that the populations of Sabah east coast in Malaysia have much similarity in terms of culture, traditions, languages & delicacy as of the Tawi-tawi in the Philippines. Similarly as in Peninsular Malaysia and some parts of Indonesia. I am a Malaysian Bajau myself and do understands some of those similarities between the Malaysian or the Philippines Bajau. History tells...nothing sucks! Similar...but still different thou
- [skibunnyme](#)
3 years ago
The malaysian vid of this sucksss.. I am tausug.. check out my vid "Idol ko Sinolayan" ... this is the real stuff
- [jhulzzz](#)
3 years ago
zafpra was right "pakiring" refers to a wiggling body and arm, im also tausog and this is one of the common dance of our tribe :)
- [Haerrio](#)
3 years ago
Ano po ba ang ibig sabihin ng "Pakiring"?
- [zafpra](#)
3 years ago
I'll try and answer this as best as I can. Im a Tausug. That song *Pakiring* is in Siamal or Badjao dialect and the term "pakiring" refers to the wiggling body and arm movements seen in the dance.

- [roypower14](#)
3 years ago
this song is very common in the East Coast part of Sabah, Malaysia. Its performed by Bajau-laut race during occasions, like gatherings, or cultural nights..
- [anak1](#)
3 years ago
omg! u guys in Malaysia also know about the Pakiring Dayang-Dayang song?? LOL the original is onp youtube somewhere
- [nyvs18](#)
3 years ago
waray ak kaintindi.....ambot kun aanu la daw adto...pero ok man an sumayaw...
- [anak1](#)
3 years ago
@ nyvs18: Because its from Sulu: its either Samal or Badjao dialect. btw, rinda05, could you add "philippine" or "filipino" into the tags, as you spelt "philippine" with only one "p". thanks :-)

The comment given by the commenter **bunga19** reflects the fact that the audiences are not only from Mindanao but also from Sabah as claimed by **bunga19**. On the other hand, the commenter **jhulzzz** claims that the song belongs to them the Tausug. The same is refuted by another Tausug commenter **zafpra** who wrote that the song is written in Sama-Bajau and further defined *pakiring* as "the wiggling body and arm movements seen in the dance." The commenter **roypower14** confirms the commonness of the song in the "East Coast part of Sabah, Malaysia" and continued writing about it is "performed by "Bajau-laut race during occasions, like gatherings, or cultural nights". The range of the comments shows that even in the song and dance, the two groups – Sama-Bajau and Tausugs – are assuming the origin thereof. Perhaps this fact accentuates the intertwined existence of the two groups not only in Sulu but also in Sabah.

Linguistic Perspective

In linguistics, the Sama and the Bajau, as a whole, belong to the same family of language classified as Austronesian. With total number of 319,000 speakers across the borders, each of these groups speaks a variant of the Sama language with mutual intelligibility set at 77% to 89%, hence, a dialect to each other.²⁴ This language is typologically verb-initial and morphologically agglutinative which shows combination of features of an accusative and an ergative language, thus, making the language a Philippine-type. Sama-Bajau language exhibits the regular word initial [m] and [p] complementary distribution which is common in Philippine languages. Observe the samples presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Samples of Mag- and Pag- Derivatives

Number	Rootword (Category)	Gloss	Mag – derivative	Pag – derivative
1	addat (N)	<i>Custom</i>	mag-addat	pag-addat
2	billi (V)	<i>to buy</i>	magbilli	Pagbilli
3	bulus (V)	<i>to reciprocate</i>	magbulus	pagbulus
4	butang (V)	<i>to place</i>	magbutang	pagbutang
5	dakup (V)	<i>to seize</i>	magdakup	Pagdakup
6	igal (N)	<i>dance</i>	mag-igal	pag-igal
7	gumpit (N)	<i>scissors</i>	maggumpit	Paggumpit
8	kumkum (V)	<i>to hold</i>	magkumkum	Pagkumkum
9	kutkut (V)	<i>to scratch</i>	magkutkut	Pagkutkut
10	tai (N)	<i>excrement</i>	magtai	Pagtai
11	tulak (V)	<i>to push</i>	magtulak	Pagtulak
12	tuman (V)	<i>to fulfill</i>	magtuman	Pagtuman
13	ulan (N)	<i>rain</i>	mag-ulan	pag-ulan
14	umboh (N)	<i>ancestor</i>	mag-umboh	pag-umboh
15	upas (N)	<i>peel , skin</i>	mag-upas	pag-upas

The 15 samples shown in Table 1 include nominal category (N) and verbal category (V) of which seven are nouns and eight are verbs. Basically, the affix *mag-* is verbalizing affix when it is affixed to a nominal rootword such as the words in (1), (6), (7), (10), (13), (14), and (15). The same affix functions for the inflection of agentive subject as in the resulting verb forms in (2), (3), (4), (5), (8), (9), (11), and (12). All the derived verbs require an agentive subject and inflect any of the three aspects, namely, contemplative, imperfective, and perfective. In the case of the affix *pag-*, this affix has dual function: (1) to derive a nominal and (2) to inflect for objective focus in the sentential construction. The *pag-* derived nominal signifies process or act of doing or accomplishing something, hence, the act or process of doing X, where X is the semantic load of the root. So that for example, the rootword *billi* ‘to buy’ in (2) when affixed with *pag-* the derived nominal *pagbilli* carries the meaning: *the act or process of buying*. And so on and so forth. The second function of the affix *pag-* works with the affixation of the said prefix with verbal rootwords. The resulting verb form inflects for the imperfective aspect and requires a theme or object to occupy the subject position with the implied second person agent. When this *pag-* derived verb is projected in the sentential structure, the resulting sentence is an imperative construction.

Moreover, there are other verbalizing affixes in Sama-Bajau languages which are common in Philippine languages. Among these are the suffix *-in* and the suffixes

-un, and **-an**. The affix **-in** marks the verb for aspect and a theme or a logical object in the subject position. The suffix **-un** inflects the verb with imperfective aspect and object-focus. The verb with suffix **-an** projects a benefactive, locative, or goal sentential construction. These morphosyntactic properties are considered universal in Philippine-type of languages.

As mentioned earlier, Sama-Bajau language exhibits verb-initial characteristics which means that the canonical sentential construction starts with verbs as in the case of the accusative verbs **boo** 'bring', **inum** 'drink', and **mapi** 'to cook'. Observe the samples below:

1. **Boo Rabang bohe e.**
bring Rabang water Det
Rabang brought water.
2. **Inum Ali bohe e.**
drink Ali water Det
'Ali drank water.'
3. **Mapi buas denda tu.**
cook rice woman Det
'The woman cooks rice.'

In sentence (1), the verb **boo** 'bring' requires an agentive and a theme arguments in the projection. The agent is realized by **Rabang** and the theme by **bohe** 'water'. In sentence (2), the verb **inum** 'drink' requires an agentive and a theme argument in the projection. The agent is realized by **Ali** and the theme by **bohe** 'water'. The last sentence in (3) has another accusative verb **mapi** 'cook' which requires both agentive and theme arguments in the projection. The agent is realized by the argument **denda** 'woman' and the theme argument by **buas** 'rice'. All these accusative constructions show the verb-initial constructions resembling all the Philippine-type canonical clause structure.

Conclusion

The Sama-Bajau are as dispersed as the islands of Southeast Asia and that with this wide dispersion, there is still the binding unit which unites them: the seas. On the both sides of Sulu-Sulawesi Seas, these people live are separated not only by the sea but also by international boundaries of Malaysia and the Philippines. The translocation of the Sama-Bajau does not prevent them from being identified as such for the same groups possess the identities characteristic of the people irrespective of geographical location. History has shown that these people travelled and migrated to various places of the Nusantara following the seas for economic and social purposes. Culturally, these people perform the same rituals, chants, and other vocals for religious and social reasons. As many as the islands and shores they visit and explore, so is the variety of the dialects they speak. Their histories, myths, rituals, music, dances, nominal ascriptions, and language point to the same people: they are the Sama-Bajau.

Endnotes

¹ This paper was presented in the 2nd International Conference on Filipino as a Global Language at Hilton Hotel, San Diego, California, USA on January 15-18, 2010. The original title of this paper was *The Other Filipinos: Teaching Philippine Culture in Malaysia*.

² Robert Blust, *The Austronesian Languages*, (Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, 2009).

³ A. Adelaar and A. Pawley, *Austronesian Historical Linguistics and Culture History: A Festschrift for Robert Blust*, (Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, 2009).

⁴ Even today in southern Mindanao, Philippines, the Bajaus are noted for being skilled divers, fishers, and for gathering and selling of pearls, and other sea products.

⁵ C. Sather, *The Bajau Laut: Adaptation, History, and Fate in a Maritime Fishing Society of South-eastern Sabah*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁶ Among the people in these three countries, the concept of **serumpun** 'of the same race' mutually applies to each other. The phenotype of these three groups is characteristically similar – brown skin, black hair, medium height, and the overall "Malay" features. Their languages all belong to the Malayo-Polynesian branch within the family of Austronesian languages.

⁷ P. Bellwood, J. Fox and D. Tyrone, *The Austronesians: historical and comparative perspectives*, (Canberra: Dept. of Anthropology, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1995).

⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

⁹ J. Fox, "Current Developments in Comparative Austronesian Studies" (paper presented at International Symposium Austronesia III, Program Linguistik dan Kajian Budaya, Program Pascasarjana Unud dan Balai Bahasa Denpasar, 2004).

¹⁰ C. Sather, *The Bajau Laut: Adaptation, History, and Fate in a Maritime Fishing Society of South-eastern Sabah*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹¹ M. Donohue, "Bajau: A Symmetrical Language", *Language* 72, no. 4 (1996), pp. 782-793.

¹² In Davao, Mindanao, both the locals and the indigenes themselves use the term Badjao to refer to the group. The name Sama is used exclusively for the ethnic group indigenous to Samal Islands in Davao Gulf in Mindanao. The Badjaos in Davao are also boat-dwellers and are engaged in selling pearls, shells, and other sea-based products. While the older generation speaks Badjao language, the younger ones are also able to speak Cebuano, the lingua franca in Davao and Filipino, the national language of the Philippines.

¹³ C. Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1973); P. Gowing, *Muslim Filipinos: Heritage and Horizon*, (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1979).

¹⁴ Nimmo (2001:22-23) H. A. Nimmo, "Reflections on Bajau History", *Philippine Studies* 16, no. 1 (1968), pp. 22-23

¹⁵ O. Rutter, *British North Borneo: An Account of Its History, Resources and Native Tribes*, (London: Constable and Co Ltd, 1922), pp. 73-74.

¹⁶ V.H. Van Dwall, *Aanteekeningen Omtrent de Noordoostkust van Borneo*, (Batavia: Lange & Co, 1885), p. 446.

¹⁷ K. Pallesen, *Culture Contact and Language Convergence*, (Linguistic Society of the Philippines Monograph Series, No. 24, Manila: Linguistic Society of the Philippines, 1985).

¹⁸ G. Rixhon, "A Journey into Sama Literature", in N. Revel (ed.), *Literature of Voice: Epics in the Philippines*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), p. 37.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Some scholars including Rixhon proposed that the word *Tuhan* is from the Malay language. *Tuhan* is common among Austronesian languages in the region for this reason the same word is used by the various indigenous communities in the Sulu region which refers to a different notion of a deity not identical with the Islamic or Christian god. However, for the Malays *Tuhan* is synonymous with Allah. See Rixhon, G. "A Journey into Sama Literature," N. Revel (ed.), *Literature of Voice: Epics in the Philippines*.

²¹ B. Bottignolo, *Celebrations with the sun: an overview of religious phenomena among the Badjaos*, (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1998).

²² In fact from a collaborative report funded by World Bank Post Conflict Fund, **pagkanduli** is one of the strategies employed for the community building and reconciliation among displaced indigenous population, see D. Daguino, and Jamail Kamlian, *Transition Interventions with Internally Displaced Persons: From Conflict toward Peace and Development in the Southern Philippines*, (Manila: Community and Family Services International, 2003). The same conflict resolution mechanism is employed in Sabah among the Sama-Bajau, see W. Torres, "Voyages and Ethnicity across Reordered Frontiers: Conflict Resolution and Leadership in the Dynamics of Ethnic Identity Formation among the Sama Dilaut of Semporna," In *The Work of the 2002/2003 API Fellows*, (Tokyo: Asian Public Intellectuals Program, 2005), p. 30.

²³ Talib Lim Sangogot, "The Tawi-Tawi Sama Voice," in N. Revel (ed.), *Literature of Voice: Epics in the Philippines*, p. 72.

²⁴ M. Paul Lewis, ed., *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 16th ed. (Dallas, Tex.: SIL International, 2009), Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com/>.

