

SYMBOLIC ARTICULATION OF INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE SEEN AND THE UNSEEN THROUGH GONG MUSIC AND DANCE IN THE LOTUD MAMAHUI POGUN¹

Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan, Hanafi Hussin & Judeth John Baptist

Abstract

This discussion focuses on special gong ensemble music and dance, particularly in the ritual climax of the *Mamahui Pogun*, a community-wide ceremony of the Lotud Dusun from Tuaran, Sabah, Malaysia. This climax is the highlight of the whole ceremonial series that extends over several weeks, because it not only marks the conclusion but is believed to signify the complete merging of the physical and spiritual realms and ends with the sacrifice of three piglets. Gong ensemble music is essential as a medium that binds the seen and the unseen, and without it this major ritual series cannot proceed. In the climax, two particular types music are played—one (*ginandang popotumbui*) accompanies the solemn circular dancing of the priestesses (*tantagas*), and the other (*mojumbak*) expresses joy at the success of the ceremonies. The Lotud believe various deities participate in the ceremonial proceedings and are each represented by a *tantagas*. The solemn ritual dancing (*mangain*) accompanied by the gong music at the climax thus symbolizes the complete interaction between the physical and spiritual dimensions. The Lotud believe that their ritual gong music is of primary importance in the *Mamahui Pogun*, and that dancing accompanied by the music during the climax is a manifestation of the pact that is ratified between the human and spiritual worlds.

Keywords: gong music, dance, Lotud Dusun, rituals, Mamahui Pogun, traditional worldviews, tantagas, Sabah

Introduction

Traditional ritual ceremonies of indigenous Borneo societies may be generally viewed according to the levels at which they operate. At the household level, there are healing rituals, ceremonies for cleansing or dedication of the house (or longhouse apartment), life cycle rituals and ceremonies for crops, livestock and family heirlooms. At the longhouse or village level there may be ceremonies for averting attacks from spirits causing contagious illnesses and diseases of livestock and crops, while at the larger community level, major ritual series are occasionally organized

to cleanse the universe in times of severe calamity, such as extreme weather or widespread plagues. The names and procedures of these community-level ritual series vary according to the language and community concerned. Most of these ritual series are no longer extant, having gradually become redundant over the past century with conversion to Christianity and more recently in some cases to Islam. The Lotud of the west coast of Sabah, however, continue to hold the community-wide *Mamahui Pogun* or "Cleansing the Universe" every few years whenever they believe the universe has become impure and unbalanced, causing major environmental and social catastrophes.

In Sabah, gong ensemble music and dance are normally important elements in major ritual ceremonies, as in non-ritual social celebrations. Each community has its own distinct type of gong ensemble (which often includes a drum or two, according to the culture) and gong music. Most villages usually have their own ensembles of which the gongs are individually owned. In many cultures, such as among the Kadazandusun Sabah's largest indigenous group, the gong ensemble music and dance performed in ritual contexts may also be played at purely social celebrations. Among the Lotud, however, different ceremonies and ritual contexts have their own ritually-specific gong music. Secular instruments cannot be used in ritual contexts, and each type of ritual gong music must accompany the specific ceremony for which it is prescribed.

The Lotud are one of Sabah's many indigenous communities. They number approximately 10,000, and live mainly in the Tuaran District and Tamparuli Sub-District of western Sabah about 20 km north of Kota Kinabalu. Lotud is a separate language under the Dusunic Family of Austronesian Languages, but most Lotud people are also fluent in the languages of neighbouring peoples such as Kadazandusun and west coast Bajau, as well as the national language Bahasa Malaysia.²

Over the centuries they have also had extensive contact with the Iranun and Brunei. In addition to their distinct language, the Lotud differ from other Dusunic groups in terms of costume, belief system, oral history, ritual practices and music.

Like most indigenous communities in Sabah, the Lotud are an egalitarian society based on a bilateral kinship system, and they practice gender balance. They formerly lived in villages composed of longhouses, but nowadays dwell in single houses. The conjugal family headed jointly by mother and father is the traditional fundamental social unit and basis of the household. Marriage is legalized by bridewealth and is exogamous down to second cousins. Post-nuptial residence amongst the Lotud is bilocal.³

The community cultivates wet rice on the coastal plains and dry hill rice on the hills further inland. As in other indigenous communities in Sabah, rice is the staple crop and hence is ritually important. Each family's rice field is believed to be guarded by a spirit, known as *toguruwon* or *sinduan parai* in the Lotud language, and each rice grain is said to have its own soul. Rice is an essential element in offerings to the deities during the various rituals and ceremonies that are part of the Lotud traditional social and religious life.⁴

Photo 1: *Tantagas* - Lotud Priestesses



Source: Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan, 16 June 2003

Priestesses and the Lotud Worldview

Among the indigenous groups of Sabah, gifted senior women are often traditional ritual specialists or priestesses. In Dusunic communities, these women are skilled in memorizing the *rinait* or long ritual chants and prayers to the spiritual realms. The most elderly priestesses are grandmothers, who have the greatest spiritual power and knowledge. Their main role is to mediate and maintain balance between the seen physical world and the unseen spiritual realm.

In the Lotud community, the priestesses are referred to as *tantagas*. These women are experts in the Lotud *rinait* and rituals, as well as the *adat* or customary norms of the society. A *tantagas* spends many years learning the *rinait* and rituals from a senior practitioner. Apart from her personal name, each *tantagas* has a ritual name which is the name of her first grandchild prefaced with the title *Odun* ("Grandmother").

In addition to the *tantagas*, the Lotud community also has men and women known as *libabou* or spirit mediums who function mainly as healers. A *libabou* has a familiar spirit (Lotud *libabou*, Brunei Malay *gimbaran*) and is able to communicate directly with the unseen world, without learning the *rinait*. Some of the most powerful *tantagas* are also *libabou*, but not every *tantagas* is a *libabou* and most *libabou* are not *tantagas*. Although *libabou* may play a secondary role in some ceremonies, they are not usually skilled in the *rinait* and are not respected for their knowledge

like the *tantagas*. This is somewhat different from other societies, such as the Kadazandusun where the priestesses or *bobolian* are always spirit mediums.

The traditional Lotud cosmology sees the universe as a sphere composed mainly of water.⁵ There are seven spiritual layers above the physical world. To the “north” is *Diwato*, the abode of the supreme deities Kinohoringan who created the sky and his wife Umunsumundu who, according to the *rinait*, created the earth. *Diwato* itself consists of seven layers and contains ten sections, to house the eleven offspring of Kinohoringan and Umunsumundu. The supreme deities themselves are believed to reside in the highest layer. Each of their offspring has a role in the spiritual and physical worlds. The term *diwato* may also be used for “good spirits” in the Lotud worldview.

To the “east” lies *Pongoluan* located in the lowest of the seven spiritual layers above the earth at Mt. Kinabalu. This is the resting place of the departed spirits of good people. Sometimes, these spirits wander into the human world and must be placated with certain offerings to send them back to their resting place. To the “south” in the centre of the earth is *Kolungkud*, the underworld guarded by the dragon Ombuakar. This is the final abode of the ghosts of bad people. To the “west” far across the sea lies *Random*, the abode of *rogon* or demons and also of the ghosts of especially evil people. The *rogon* often wander into the human world on the earth to inflict suffering, and require appeasing sacrifices. Apart from these, there are other wandering spirits in the earth and clouds, which can cause human suffering. Some of these are the ghosts of humans who did not receive an appropriate send-off to enter *Pongoluan*. They can attack humans and also require appeasement.

In the Lotud worldview, the ideal universe is one in which the physical and spiritual worlds are balanced. This state of balance is maintained provided people in the physical world do not offend the spiritual realms by careless or sinful actions against the physical environment and human society. Indiscriminate cutting of trees or clearing land for development, for example, may cause imbalance between the physical and spiritual realms. Humans are also expected to live morally upright lives, according to the *adat* of their respective communities as prescribed in their *rinait*. If they violate this, for example, by committing sexual sins such as adultery, fornication or incest (including marriage between close cognates), the universe will become spiritually hot (*alasu*) resulting in the disease and death of crops, livestock and communities. It is therefore necessary to make the universe “cool” (*osogit*) by cleansing it with the appropriate rituals and sacrifices (*sogit*). Calamities such as droughts, unmitigated rains and floods, epidemics, widespread war and murders, are believed to be caused by imbalance and impurity in the universe caused by human wrongdoing.

Cleansing the Universe (*Mamahui Pogun*)

Mamahui Pogun (“Cleansing the Universe”) is one of the major ritual series performed over several weeks during times of calamity, throughout the Lotud Dusun community (see Table 1). It is presided over by the *tantagas* and involves the compulsory contribution and participation of every individual and family in all the villages of the Lotud area, regardless of religious or ethnic affiliation. The *Mamahui Pogun* is

organized every five to ten years or so, whenever there has been an imbalance in the universe causing environmental catastrophes and human calamities.⁶ The series of rituals and ceremonies is performed according to the prescriptions contained in the Lotud *rinait*.

As shown in Table 1, the ritual series takes place in three stages:

- (i) *Manawah do Turugan* (“balancing/neutralizing at the *turugan*”) which occurs inside and outside the *turugan* ritual house, consecutively in three key villages. Each of these three village represents a zone consisting of a group of neighbouring villages. Kampung Bantayan represents the inland zone. Kampung Marabhai represents the coastal zone, while Kampung Tutu Solupuh now represents the coastal zone (formerly Kampung Olung headed this zone).
- (ii) *Monumbui Sidangon* (“to sacrifice in the open air”), which involves the mass assemblage of the Lotud community at Kampung Bontoi (Tamparuli Market Ground), the mass *mangain* dancing of the *tantagas* and the sacrifice of a piglet
- (iii) *Monumbui Mahanton* or *Monombui Sisiron* (“to sacrifice on the coast”), which involves travel by boats down the Tuaran river and the mass assemblage of the Lotud community at Kampung Hampalan Laut (Kuala Tuaran), the mass *mangain* dancing of the *tantagas* and the sacrifice of three piglets (one for each zone) at the climax of the series.

Table 1: Process of the Lotud Mamahui Pogun

Phase	Event	Location	Activities	Instrumental Music
<i>Manawah do Turugan</i>	Construction of the <i>turugan</i>	Kg. Bantayan		
	<i>Manawah</i>		<u>Inside <i>turugan</i></u> 3.00 am drumming, setting up rice offerings, gong music, <i>rinait</i> chanting, donning the <i>manarapoh</i> and <i>mangain</i> by <i>tantagas</i> , exposure and bathing of <i>buliga ngadau</i> at noon, eating	<i>tumahan</i> <i>ginandang papatarok</i>
	<i>Tumabur</i>		<u>Outside <i>turugan</i></u> <i>rinait</i> chanting by <i>tantagas</i> ; eating at noon	<i>ginandang papatarok</i>

Phase	Event	Location	Activities	Instrumental Music
	<i>Manawah</i>	Kg. Marabahai	<u>Inside turugan</u> 3.00 am drumming, setting up rice offerings, gong music, <i>rinait</i> chanting, donning the <i>manarapoh</i> and <i>mangain</i> by <i>tantagas</i> , eating	<i>tumahan</i> <i>ginandang papatarok</i>
	<i>Tumabur</i>		<u>Outside turugan</u> <i>rinait</i> chanting by <i>tantagas</i> ; community members eating together at noon	<i>ginandang papatarok</i>
	<i>Manawah</i>	Kg. Tutu Solupuh	<u>Inside turugan</u> 3.00 am drumming, setting up rice offerings, gong music, <i>rinait</i> chanting, donning the <i>manarapoh</i> and <i>mangain</i> by <i>tantagas</i> , eating	<i>tumahan</i> <i>ginandang papatarok</i>
	<i>Tumabur</i>		<u>Outside turugan</u> <i>rinait</i> chanting by <i>tantagas</i> ; eating at noon	<i>ginandang papatarok</i>
<i>Monumbui Sidangon</i>	<i>Monumbui Sidangon</i>	Begins at Kg. Bantayan hall, then proceeds to main event at Kg. Bontoi (Tamparuli tamu ground)	Mass assembly of all villages; eating food, followed by mass <i>mangain</i> by <i>tantagas</i> , sacrifice of 3 piglets	<i>ginandang popotumbui</i> interspersed with <i>mojumak</i>
	<i>Modsuud</i>	Village headman's house, at Kg. Bantayan	3.00 am ritual by the <i>tantagas</i> to "send back" the spirits to their world	
<i>Mouombui Mahanton</i> (<i>Monumbui Sisiron</i>)	<i>Monumbui Mahanton</i>	Begins at Kg. Bantayan headman's house, then proceeds to Tuaran market and downriver to Kuala Tuaran	Mass assembly of all villages; eating food, followed by mass <i>mangain</i> by <i>tantagas</i> , sacrifice of 3 piglets	<i>ginandang popotumbui</i> interspersed with <i>mojumak</i>
	<i>Modsuud</i>	Village headman's house at Kg. Bantayan	3.00 am ritual by the <i>tantagas</i> to "send back" the spirits to their world	

Each of the three stages begins in Kampung Bantayan, an inland village on the Bantayan River. This was the location of the original *Mamahui Pogun* where the first *tantagas*, Luntar or Odun Jalin, was instructed in the rites by Umunsumundu who threw down from the sky two sets of sacred stones – *buliga ngadau* (“pearls of the sun”) and *buliga rasam* (“pearls of the rain”). During the *Manawah do Turugan*, the *buliga ngadau* is bathed at noon on the first day in Kampung Bantayan, which is the central village for all the inland Lotud villages along the Bantayan River.

The *Manawah do Turugan* proceeds from Kampung Bantayan, to Kampung Marabahai the central village for all villages on the Tamparuli River, then to Kampung Tutu Solupu not far from the sea. Formerly Kampung Olung was the centre of the third zone of villages, but it no longer has space for a *turugan* ritual house.

The *Monumbui Sidangon* starts from Kampung Bantayan then proceeds straight to the Tamparuli Market Ground near the Tamparuli River, where every village assembles with their respective village flags and gong ensembles.

The *Monumbui Mahanton* also proceeds from Kampung Bantayan inland, down to Tuaran township where everyone boards boats with their flags and instruments and travels down to the river mouth at Kampung Hampalan Laut for the climax of the series. Formerly Kampung Gurangon at Dalit Beach was the site for the *Monumbui Mahanton*, but this is now occupied by the five star Rasa Ria Resort.

Thus overall the *Mamahui Pogun* proceeds from the inland upper river at Kampung Bantayan, to the lower Tamparuli River, to the mouth of the Tuaran River. This is to draw all the evil spirits and wrongdoing away from the inland, down the rivers, out to sea and back to *Rondom*.

Interactions between the Seen and the Unseen through Drumming and Gong Ensemble Music and Dance

The *Mamahui Pogun* is characterized by special ritual music, including both solo drumming and gong ensemble pieces played by members of the host village, and solemn ceremonial dancing by the *tantagas*. As will be shown below, different kinds of music are played at different stages of the series. The music awakens the spirit world and functions as a conduit between the seen and the unseen.

Similarly, the solemn circular *mangain* or dancing of the *tantagas* symbolizes the presence of the spiritual world. It occurs periodically throughout the *manawah* inside the *turugan* during the *Manawah do Turugan*, and is a major feature of both the *Monumbui Sidangon* and the *Monumbui Mahanton*. In these cases, the *tantagas* wear the full ritual costume or *manarapoh* and carry various ritual implements. The process of donning the *manarapoh* itself is a significant part of the *Manawah do Turugan* and symbolises the presence of the supreme deities as each *tantagas* is believed to represent a deity.

During the *mangain* of the large-scale *Monumbui Sidangon* and the *Monumbui Mahanton*, this is particularly significant. Each *tantagas* is believed to represent a particular deity, with the high priestess representing Umunsumundu herself. It is believed that the spirits of the upper world carry out their actions through the *tantagas* as their human agents.

Photo 2: Music ensemble for the *Mamahui Pogun*



Source: Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan, 16 June 2003

Photo 3: Gong ensemble played by members of Kg. Bantayan during *Manawah do Turugan*



Source: Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan, 16 June 2003

The Instruments Played in the Mamahui Pogun

In general, the Lotud distinguish between *basalon* (“metal sounds”) or ritual gong ensemble music which varies according to the ceremonies being performed, and *mojumbak* or secular music for pleasure. The instruments for *basalon* consist of several *tanyang* or small brass hanging gongs, several *tawag* or large heavy brass or bronze gongs, and the double-headed native drum called *gandang* which has tuning pegs (*binsolot*) inserted into cane binding around each head. Instruments used in the *Mamahui Pogun* include the traditional Lotud *gandang*, together with from two to five or more *tanyang* and from two to five or more *tawag*. The actual numbers depend on the availability of gongs brought along by the villagers. The instruments are played by skilled villagers, while the ceremonies and ritual dancing are performed by the *tantagas*.

The ensemble and its music are essential to the *Mamahui Pogun*. As one village headman said “You cannot have *Mamahui Pogun* without the *gandang*, and the *tanyang* and *tawag*.” Each of the instruments is said to be possessed by a powerful spirit or *dahau*. These *dahau* assist in calling the deities and other spirits to come down from the upper realms to participate in the ceremonies and receive the offerings. The *gandang* drum is of primary importance, both ritually and musically. When making a *gandang*, animal bones are placed inside the body to enhance its spiritual power. This spiritual power of a *gandang* is believed to increase the more it is played in ritual contexts.

Ideally, the *gandang* should be accompanied by as many gongs as possible, especially during the *Manawah do Turugan* of the first week of the *Mamahui Pogun*, which takes place consecutively in and around the *turugan* ritual houses of three major villages. During the later *Monumbui Sidangon* and *Monumbui Mahanton*, the two mass assemblies of the Lotud community which climax in sacrifices of piglets to the spirits, less gongs (only two of each type) and the *gandang* are played by each village in the assembly. This is because the instruments, together with village flags, offerings and other paraphernalia have to be carried to the locations of the sacrifices.⁷

Music of the Mamahui Pogun

The *basalon* or instrumental music of the *Mamahui Pogun* not only indicates stages in the process of the ritual cycle, but signifies the presence of the supreme deities and their offspring who are believed to possess the bodies of the *tantagas*, especially during their circular *mangain* dancing.

There are five main types of instrumental music used in this cycle:

- (i) *tumahan*
- (ii) *ginandang papatarok*
- (iii) *mongigol*
- (iv) *mojumbak* (played on ritual instruments)
- (v) *ginandang popotumbui*.

These musical pieces are the means through which the physical and spiritual worlds merge. They create an opening in the boundary between the seen and the unseen dimensions, which enables the deities and other spirits to enter and interact with the human world.⁸

Tumahan

Tumahan means “announcing.” This is the early morning (3.00 am) drumming of the *gandang* by the village headman in the *turugan* or ritual house, at the start of the *manawah* in each zone of villages. It announces the beginning of the *Manawah do Turugan* to all the spirits. The drum is laid horizontally on the floor and struck with a stick in the right hand.

The *tumahan* consists of a two-motif phrase, strictly played 17 times to summon all the spirits from the seven layers and ten sections of *Diwato* the abode of the supreme deities and their offspring. Listeners count the number of drumming phrases by placing short lengths of cane on the floor, and occasionally call out a number to remind the drummer of where he is up to.

During the *Mamahui Pogun* of June and July 2003, the first motif of the *tumahan* at Kampung Bantayan consisted of 17 straight beats (unless the drummer miscounted), while the second motif began with a rapid four-beat semiquaver running figure (*ginandang*) followed by decelerating quaver beats. The first motif of the *tumahan* at Kampung Marabhai featured a rapid semiquaver then quaver figure (*ginandang*), while the second consisted of simple straight beats of various numbers.

Ginandang

Ginandang is the specific name for the short semi-quaver then quaver motif played by the *gandang* at the beginning and end of the *tumahan*, and also at the start and sometimes between the phrases of *ginandang papatarok*, the ensemble music that follows *tumahan* in the early morning in the *turugan*.

Ginandang Papatarok

Ginandang papatarok is very slow solemn music, played by the *gandang* and all the gongs immediately following *tumahan* (also 17 times), and periodically throughout the *Manawah do Turugan* while the *tantagas* chant their *rinait* and when they stand and circulate in the *mangain*. It signifies a highlight in the proceedings and indicates the presence of the supreme deities, which are represented by the *tantagas* and symbolically perform the ceremonies through their human agents.

The basic structure of *ginandang papatarok* is a distinctive two-motif phrase repeated many times. The *gandang* has the leading role in shaping the structure of the music, and its two beat figure at the start of the second motif is characteristic of this piece. The first motif usually begins with a single *gandang* beat, but sometimes an extended *ginandang* figure is used. The Lotud describe the sound of this music as follows:

mang top bung, mang top bung, top top bung-bungai top bung

Mongigol

While *ginandang papatarok* as a whole is only played during the *Manawah do Turugan*, its *mang top bung* motif known as *mongigol* (*popoigol* = to beat *mongigol*) is played at the start during the early morning of the *Monumbui Sidangon* as the *tantagas* begin their rituals from the village headman’s house in Kampung Bantayan before moving on to the Tamparuli market ground for the mass assembly of all the Lotud villages. It is also played occasionally during the final lead up to the climax of the *Monumbui*

Mahanton, as directed by the senior *tantagas*. (In other ritual contexts, *mongigol* accompanies the slow *mongigol* ritual dancing of groups of men and women.)

Mojumbak

Mojumbak signifies “rejoicing. It is played intermittently throughout the *Monumbui Sidangon* and the *Monumbui Mahanton* mass assemblies. It normally precedes a lengthy performance of the music *ginandang popotumbui*, except at the very end of the mass ceremonies to show rejoicing as balance is restored to the universe.

Mojumbak has been adopted from neighbouring coastal Bajau communities. In secular non-ritual contexts, the *jumbakon* or instruments for *mojumbak* include the *kulintangan* row of small kettle gongs, one or two *tanyang*, two *tawag*, and a pair of red barrel-shaped double-headed *gandang parang* drums. *Mojumbak* is lively and rhythmic, and is played for entertainment at small non-ritual social gatherings.⁹ The *mojumbak* played in the *Mamahui Pogun*, however, has the same basic rhythmic pattern as the secular *mojumbak*, except that the *kulintangan* and the two *gandang parang* are not used. Instead, the sacred instruments *tanyang* and *tawag* play their parts from the secular music, while the *gandang* beats the composite rhythm of the two *gandang parang*.

Ginandang Popotumbui

Ginandang popotumbui means “summoning the spirits,” while *popotumbui* (“to sacrifice”) comes from *monumbui* (“the sacrifice”). It follows *mojumbak* and accompanies the mass circular dancing or *mangain* of the *tantagas* during the *Monumbui Sidangon* and the *Monumbui Mahanton* assemblies. It does not occur during the *Manawah do Turugan*.

The basic phrase for *ginandang popotumbui* is based on two repeated motifs. The second, with its repeated quaver-like *tawag* figure (*bungai*) and third *gandang* beat (*top*) is a variation of the first. The Lotud describe the *ginandang popotumbui* as:

mang mang top bung, bungai mang top bungai

This basic phrase is played throughout both the *Monumbui Sidangon* and the *Monumubui Mahanton*, until the ceremonies at the sacrificial grounds. During the mass *mangain* when all the village ensembles perform in unison, only the second motif with its characteristic *tawag* figure is played. The repetition of this motif accompanying the slow rhythmic steps of the *tantagas* as they shake either their *giring-giring* bells or their *tutubik* brass plate rattles during the *mangain*, produces a dramatic build up to the sacrificial climax in each ceremony.

Dance in the Mamahui Pogun (mangain)

In the *Mamahui Pogun*, dancing for the spiritual world called *mangain*. Performing the dance in the ritual series is very important, because it symbolizes the presence of the spiritual world and the active participation of the good spirits in the proceedings. It also symbolizes sending over the offerings to the spiritual world for both the good or benign spirits, as well as for the bad or malevolent ones. It is necessary to “feed” and appease the spirits, otherwise they will become angry and the upset the balance of the universe.

Mangain always occurs in a circle formation, because the circle symbolizes the shape of the universe. It also represents the interaction and union between the physical and spiritual realms. In the *Monombui Sidangon* and the *Monombui Mahanton*, the *mangain* is a dance by the *tantagas* which circulates around the collected offerings from each village that are marked by their respective village flags. The dance is divided into two alternating parts, the first proceeding clockwise (said to represent the *diwato* from the upper world) and the second anti-clockwise (said to represent sending back all the impurities and *rogon*). Each part consists of 13 rounds that represent the two supreme deities, Kinohoringan and his wife Umunsumundu, and their entourage of 11 accompanying *diwato*.

During the *mangain*, each *tantagas* represents one of the 13 spirits. The dancing thus indicates the presence of the spiritual deities and their entourage. It is believed that these 13 benevolent spirits are helping the priestesses to “feed” and appease the *rogon* or evil spirits. The dance is thus the manifestation the presence of the spiritual realm, which is complimented by the chanting of the *rinait* and the accompanying gong ensemble music. The symbolic articulation of the dance as an interaction between the seen world and the unseen, is emphasized by music of *ginandang popotumbui* (“summoning the spirits to receive the sacrifice”) and the use of ritual paraphernalia such as the hand-held *giring-giring* sets of small bells and *tutubik* plate rattles.

While slowly circulating, the priestesses shake the *giring-giring* in their right hands and gesture with their left palms moving inward to symbolize the summoning of the supreme deities and their 11 member entourage to perform *mangain* together with them in 13 rounds. The *giring-giring*, which was also used throughout the *Manawah do Turugan*, thus functions as a physical device to attract the attention of the deities, and the shimmering sound of its bells is associated with the good spirits of the upper realms.

The anti-clockwise dance is said to symbolize the processes of the *diwato* sending back all the *rogon* and impurities that caused the calamities (droughts, floods, fatal accidents, wars and so on). During some anticlockwise sections, the *tantagas* shake their *tutubik* plate rattles, and move their left palms outwards to symbolize sending back all the bad spirits to their respective places. The loud clanging sound of the *tutubik* is thus a means of addressing and chasing off the *rogon*.

As the final climax approaches, the music called *mongigol* (taken from the first motif of *ginandang papatarok*) is played. The *tantagas* now remain silent. As they solemnly circulate, they stamp their feet in time to the slow beat and move their left hands up and down. The solemn manner of their performance indicates the immediate presence of the supreme deities and their entourage.

The performance of the *mangain* dance is thus a series of symbolic gestures to confirm the presence and activities of spirits in the unseen world. Apart from this, only actual *libabou* can feel the presence of the spiritual realms. During the *Manawah do Turugan*, one or two *libabou* stand away from the *turugan* addressing and feeding the *rogon* and wandering spirits to prevent them from entering the *turugan* to disrupt proceedings. In the *Monombui Sidangon* and *Monombui Mahanton*, however, the *libabou* may also participate in the activities. Dressed in men’s ceremonial costumes with

Photo 4: *Mangain* – dancing for the spiritual world, during the *Monumbui Mahanton*



Source: Hanafi Hussin, 7 July 2003

head cloths and long tubular skirts, the *libabou* sometimes follow the circular *mangain* before lining up along the shoreline to send off all the *rogon* to their respective places.

Significance of the *Monumbui Mahanton* in the *Mamahui Pogun*

The *Monumbui Mahanton* is the climax and solemn conclusion to the whole *Mamahui Pogun*. It is believed that the spiritual and physical realms totally merge together through this final day of ceremonies.

Throughout the afternoon, each round of *mangain* is accompanied by the music of *ginandang popotumbui* played together by all the gong ensembles from all the villages. Between the sets of 13 rounds, the ensembles play *mojumbak*, which symbolizes rejoicing. At certain points towards the climax, the senior *tantagas* will instruct the gong players to beat the *mongigol* music.

The alternation of long periods of solemn *ginandang popotumbui* accompanying the *mangain*, with short bursts of *mojumbak* and the occasional *mongigol* motif produces a build-up in dramatic tension that climaxes with the sacrifices of the three piglets. As the animals are speared by the high priestess, the *mojumbak* music erupts to signify the total union of the seen and the unseen and to express the joy and relief of the entire community in the restoration of balance in the universe.

In addition to the combined gong ensemble music from each village, the chanting of the sacred *rinait* texts by the *tantagas* throughout the *mangain*, the central

offerings of rice balls (*pinisi*), betel nut (*siri*), coconut wine (*bahar*) together with the piglets (*wonggian*) surrounded by the flags (*tunggul*) from each village, all contribute to the invocation of the supreme deities and the relevant spirit realms as prescribed in the long chanted *rinait*.

The geographical location between the sea and the river mouth signifies a symbolic focal point between the physical and spiritual worlds. The open sea represents the journey to the spiritual realms as prescribed in the long chanted prayers by the *tantagas*, while the land symbolizes the physical world of humans.

Thus, the symbolic interactions between the seen and the unseen are climaxed in the *Monumbui Mahanton*. The gong ensemble music functions as a conduit between the spiritual and physical worlds, the circulating *mangain* based on sets of 13 rounds and the *manarapoh* worn by the *tantagas* indicates the direct participation of the deities, the use of the *giring-giring* and *tutubik* together with significant hand gestures symbolizes activities in the spiritual realm. Similarly, the seaside location and directional movements in the *mangain* point to events taking place in the unseen world.

Conclusions

From the foregoing, it can be seen that gong ensemble music and dance are fundamental to the structure, process and essence of the *Mamahui Pogun*. This is clearly shown in the *Monumbui Mahanton*, as the solemn climax to the whole ritual series.

The music is believed to provide a medium through which the seen and unseen worlds merge. This merging becomes complete in the *Monumbui Mahanton*. The music undergirds the activities of the *tantagas* as mediators between these worlds.

The ensemble music also marks the procedure of the whole ritual series with different music for each stage, as prescribed in the chanted *rinait* texts. In the *Monumbui Mahanton* it provides the impetus for the dramatic climax, and symbolizes acceptance of the offerings by the spirit world through patterns of structured sound.

The *mangain* dancing, especially in the *Monumbui Mahanton*, articulates events in the spiritual world through action. The circular directional movements of the dance and the hand gestures, as well as the sounds of *giring* and *tutubik*, symbolize the activities of the deities that are represented by the *tantagas* who are dressed in their full ceremonial *manarapoh*. In this context, the dance is a means of visibly acting out the invisible actions of the unseen world.

Thus, music and dance in the *Mamahui Pogun*, as exemplified in the *Monumbui Mahanton*, are symbolic articulations in sound and movement of interactions between the visible world of humans and the invisible world of the spirits.

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Endnotes

¹ This is an edited version of the paper entitled "The Symbolic Articulation of Interactions between the Seen and the Unseen through Gong Ensemble Music and Dance in the Mamahui Pogun of the Lotud Dusun of Tuaran, Sabah, Malaysia," that was presented at the 40th ICTM World Conference that was held in Durban, South Africa, from 1 to 8 July 2009.

² John Banker and Elizabeth Banker, "The Kadazan/Dusun Language," in Julie King and John Wayne King (eds.), *Languages of Sabah: A Survey Report*, Pacific Linguistics C (78), (Canberra: Department of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University, 1984), pp. 297-324; and Carolyn Miller, "The Dusun Language – Dialect Distribution and the Question of Language Maintenance," Paper presented at Conference on Dusun Culture in the Context of National Development, Kota Kinabalu, 1988, pp. 1-2.

³ Doris E. Blood, "The Lotud," in Sherwood Lingenfelter (ed.), *Social Organisation of Sabah Societies. Studies from six societies: Bonggi, Ida'an, Lotud, Makiang, Tagal, Timugon*, (Kota Kinabalu: Department of Sabah Museum and State Archives, 1991), pp. 63-90.

⁴ See for example, Patricia Regis and Judeth John Baptist, "The Monumbui Rinait of the Lotud," Paper presented at *Borneo Research Council 2nd Biennial International Conference*, Sabah Museum, Kota Kinabalu, 15-18 July 1992; Patricia Regis and Judeth John Baptist, "Kuasa Beras dan Magisnya di Kalangan Masyarakat Lotud" (Rice Power and Its Magic Among the Lotud), in Nik Safia Karim (ed.), *Segemai Padi Sekunca Budi ke Arah Menghayati Budaya Padi* (Kuala Lumpur: Akademi Pengajian Melayu, Universiti Malaya, 1993); Patricia Regis and Judeth John Baptist, "The Creation Story of the Lotud," Paper presented at *Borneo Research Council 4th Biennial International Conference*, Tanjungpura Universitas, Pontianak, 1994; Patricia Regis and Judeth John Baptist, "Two Perspectives of Lotud Ritual Responses to Changes in the Local Landscape," Paper presented at *Borneo Research Council 7th Biennial International Conference*, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Kota Kinabalu, 15-18 July 2002.

⁵ Judeth John Baptist, "Causes and Consequences: Dealing with the Unseen for Secular Restitution among the Dusun Lotud of Tuaran District," in Masaru Miyamoto and Judeth John Baptist (eds.), *Legal Culture in South-East Asia and East Africa*, Sabah Museum Monograph No. 11, (Kota Kinabalu: Department of Sabah Museum, 2008), pp. 3-5; Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan and Judeth John Baptist, "Music for Cleansing the Universe—Drumming and Gong Ensemble Music in the Mamahui Pogun Ceremonies of the Lotud Dusun of Tuaran, Sabah," *Borneo Research Bulletin*, 40, (2009), pp. 251-252.

⁶ See Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan and Judeth John Baptist, "Music for Cleansing the Universe," pp. 253-254; Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan, Hanafi Hussin and Judeth John Baptist, "A Conduit between the Seen and the Unseen: Comparing the Ritual Roles of Drumming and Gong Ensemble Music in the *Mamahui Pogun* of the Lotud of Tuaran and the *Monogit* of the Kadazan of Penampang, Sabah, Malaysia," *Tirai Panggun*, 9, (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 2009), pp. 100-105.

⁷ See Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan's and Judeth John Baptist's work, in *Ibid.*, pp. 264-267; the work of Pugh-Kitingan, Jacqueline, Hanafi Hussin and Judeth John Baptist is worth looking into, see *Ibid.*, pp. 106-108.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 267-271; It was also noted in the work of Pugh-Kitingan, Jacqueline, Hanafi Hussin and Judeth John Baptist, see *Ibid.*, pp. 108-111.

⁹ Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan, *Selected Papers on Music in Sabah*, (Kota Kinabalu: Kadazandusun Chair, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, 2004), pp. 20-21.