

**PERFORMANCE AND IDENTITY AMONG THE DIASPORA  
MARITIME COMMUNITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: AN EXAMPLE OF  
SAMA DILAUT OF MALAYSIA**

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**Abstract**

Maritime communities in Southeast Asia have a close relationship with the sea. Traditionally, migration since ancient times has become a traditional practice known by various terms such as merantau, berdagang, etc. Despite continuing their lives as a diaspora, traditional cultural practices inherited from ancient times are continued to ensure that relationships with descendants continue. This paper will discuss the Sama Dilaut community or Bajau Laut, a diaspora from the Southern Philippines, through maritime migration, settling and continuing traditional practices inherited from ancient times, whether sacred or non-sacred. Through sacred performances, Sama Dilaut maintains its original cultural characteristics. They believe in ancestral practices, Omboh, as a source of power. The ancestral practices are performed through the spirit bearer, Jin, male and female (Jin Lella and Jin Denda). Through ethnographic research and observations, the sacred performances were observed and analysed. The study found that rituals, music, and dance-making are continuously performed due to the inheritance of the heirloom, the maintenance of the relationship with the ancestors, and the sustained sacred traditions among the Sama Dilaut diaspora. This paper will also discuss the participation of the younger generation of the Sama Dilaut community in exploring their ancestral tradition and practices into permissible dance and music performances, *igal* and *tagunggu'*. By doing this, the young generation appreciates their ancestral tradition, enabling them to continue Sama Dilaut or Bajau Laut as a diaspora generation.

**Keywords:** *diaspora, performance, ritual, music and dance, identity, Sama Dilaut, Malaysia*

## INTRODUCTION

Diaspora, which means dispersion, refers to a person or ethnic group who leaves their hometown and tries to ensure cultural development is still oriented towards their original culture. Diaspora has been involved in human development since ancient times, from hunting and gathering to nomadic activities. Events such as natural disasters, climate change, the domination of territories by other communities, or other lifestyles are common factors that cause people to migrate (Cohen, 1996). This phenomenon, also called migration, is one of the early things that became the primary concern of sociology. The early diasporas that occurred were primarily due to forced migrations, such as those that happened among the Jews who moved to occupy the Palestinian Territory or migrations that occurred in search of a better quality of life to other regions outside their homeland, which also resulted in the spread of language and culture because the migration that occurred did not leave behind the main elements of their lives, namely their language and culture (Cohen, 1996; Merriam-Webster, 2008; Freedictionary, 2008).

There are many criteria and characteristics of activities carried out by diaspora communities, including culture, language, religion, social, economic, political, educational, and others. Diaspora individuals can be identified or belong to a diaspora community in any activity they like to do together. However, some diasporas are only involved in activities involving fellow villagers or family. In contrast, others focus on other things, such as religious activities, sports, arts or patriotic activities, while business groups focus on economic activities. The focus given by these diaspora groups is either on one or several activities carried out together (Diacon, 2008). The characteristics or criteria of diaspora can be categorised into more than one type because the history of diaspora shows different motivations for leaving one's country at different times. First, the movement out of the place of origin to foreign territories; second, doing so under compulsion due to political and economic conditions and other problems; third, consciously and actively maintaining identity, cultural practices and beliefs, language and religion collectively; fourth, having feelings of compassion and sympathy for the same ethnicity who are in other countries, leading efforts to institutionalise international communication and networks and fifth, trying to maintain and continue various relations with the country of origin collectively. Overall, this definition is relatively narrow, but if any of these characteristics are met, the identified concept of diaspora will be broader (Choi, 2008). Therefore, diaspora refers to the dispersion of populations resulting from movement to certain places by sharing the same ethnic identity. They are forced to move or voluntarily leave their legal area and become residents in new areas that are usually far from their origin. It is also called nomadic culture and is more closely associated with refugee groups. However, while refugees may or may not live in a new geographical location, diaspora refers to permanent displacement and resettlement. By taking this simple definition of diaspora, this paper will discuss the diaspora that occurs among the

Badjao or Sama Dilaut community from Sitangkai, Tawi-Tawi Philippines, who are called Bajau Laut community in Semporna, Sabah, by looking at how the maintenance and continuation of traditional practices are carried out.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This article is based on the researcher's long-term affiliation with the Sama Dilaut communities in Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia and Tawi-Tawi, Southern Philippines. In 1998, for the first time, the researcher conducted ethnographic fieldwork in the village Kampung Bangau-Bangau, Semporna, Sabah, to study their ritual arts, dances, and performances. The researcher revisited the community scores several times to discover different dimensions of their lives, especially those concerning their rituals and performances, music (*tagunggu'*), and dance (*igal*), which are indispensable in their daily lives. Simultaneously, the researcher has produced papers and presented many findings on various aspects of Sama Dilaut at different academic forums. Thus, this article is significantly based on the observations, participant observations and in-depth interviews with ritual practitioners, especially the the spirit bearers, Jin, male and female, the heirs of the ancestral heirloom (*langkapan*), the villagers, cultural practitioners, musicians and dancers. The primary data is documented and recorded based on the few fieldworks on ritual like *pagkanduli*, *magpai-bahau*, and celebrations like Regatta Lepa. The fieldwork notes were enhanced through in-depth interviews with important informants, the Sama Dilaut ritual practitioners in Semporna Sabah like Late Gerani Jikilani (Jin Lella) and cultural practitioners, music and dance, Hajah Intan Sulga. The interviews were also conducted with ritual practitioners in Sitangkai, Philippines, Wali Jin Jaafar (Jin Lella) and cultural practitioner Late Haji Musa Malabong. The secondary data was gathered mainly from literature and monographs on Sama Dilaut or Bajau Laut, especially on performance, ritual, music and dance.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Diaspora Sama Dilaut / Bajau Laut**

The Semporna Sama Dilaut or Bajau Laut (Sea Bajau), who live on the coast of Semporna, especially in a village named Kampung Bangau-Bangau, come from Sitangkai Island, Tawi-Tawi, Southern Philippines. They are called Badjao people in the Philippines, a sub-community of the Sama people, which is synonymous with the call of people who live in boats and sailors. This community primarily inhabits a wider maritime area in the waters of Southeast Asia, especially the southern Philippines, the eastern and northern areas of Borneo Island, the waters of Sulawesi and small islands in Sunda, Indonesia, and it is also

found in the Mergui Islands, in Southern Myanmar. The life lived as boat people and sailors have caused Western researchers to call them sea gypsies. However, H. Arlo Nimmo (1968) stated that the Badjao people came from the land and became boat people because of their work to find a source of income. Many researchers also say that the Sama people came from the coast and waters of Zamboanga and Basilan (Nimmo, 2016). There were large-scale movements south and west along the Sulu archipelago, Cagayan de Sulu Island, or Mapun, Tawi-Tawi, and the East Coast of Borneo. Other groups moved north to Zamboanga-Sibuguey. This lifestyle may have led to their spread to areas around Malaysia, where they formed a Bajau Laut diaspora. Thus, they formed a diaspora identity due to the migration itself (Clammer, 2002).

Another opinion says that the Badjao people live in boats and build stilt houses in areas with abundant fish resources. The above statement implies that their life was once like that of a gypsy, so they were also called by various names such as Bajau (sea people) and Sama Palau (Sama marginalised), which are words that are not liked by the Bajau Laut people, and several other words that demean them such as *lumaan* and *mabaho* (smelly people). Other names include *Sama Jengjeng*, *Lutao*, and *Orang Laut*. Nowadays, these names are not liked by them, especially for those who have already chosen the mainland or semi-land as their permanent residence, such as the Bajau Laut community in Kampung Bangau-Bangau, Semporna, Sabah. There is also evidence that the Sama group reached the mouth of the Agusan River at the tip of Mindanao, seeking protection from natural disasters such as thunder and lightning where they mixed with the natives such as the Butuanons, hence the exchange of mates, friendly visits and trade between the Sama of Sulu and the Butuanons based on Agusan. What makes the Tausug language is from the Butuanon branch. External social and cultural influence, mainly Spanish and American influence, is very little due to two factors: first, the Badjao live in Muslim-dominated settlements, although they were the latter to receive Islamic influence, and second, they are mobile and nomadic (Reyes, 2008). There is also a myth that says the Badjao legend originated from the waters of Johor, Malaysia, where they lived in houseboats. Therefore, the name Badjao (or Bajau) is associated with a Malay-Borneo word that refers to people who practice a sea-oriented life.

The Sama community that lives on land is called Sama Diliya, which means they are not categorised as Badjao who live in the waters. Their lives are based on land resources such as farming and other land jobs. Most of them are said to adhere to and practice Islam. A population census conducted by the National Museum of the Philippines found that the total Sama population is 320,000 people, with 118,000 people concentrated in the Provinces of Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, while most are now scattered in the Southern Philippines, including Davao, Surigao, Zamboanga and Basilan. This number does not include those in Borneo. In continuing their challenging lives, they also choose large cities such as Bohol, Cebu and Manila, as well as several towns in the northern Philippines (Reyes, 2008). The Bajau Laut Semporna, which is the diaspora of the Bajau

Laut or Sama Dilaut, also called the Badjao people in the Tawi-Tawi District, especially on Sitangkai Island (approximately 20 sub-groups as Balangingi, Pangutaran, Siasi, and Sitangkai, estimated 30,000 people), with most of them concentrated in Kampung Bangau-Bangau. This community's first and second generations were born on Sitangkai Island and are now permanent residents of Malaysia with temporary or permanent identity cards. According to Clifford Sather (1997), the first generation built the first house in this village in 1955. According to Hj Musa Malabong (April 2008), the first generation of Sama Dilaut moved from Sitangkai to Borneo on Omadal Island in the 1930s. Meanwhile, the third generation and onwards are, on average, already permanent residents and Malaysian citizens if their birth is registered at the National Registration Office.



**Figure 1: Maps of Bajau Laut settlement areas (in green) in Southern Philippines (Sitangkai, Tawi-Tawi) and Malaysia, North Borneo (Bajau Laut, Semporna, Sabah).**

(Source: Hussin, SAGE Open, Volume 9, Issue 4.).

In 1964, Bangau-Bangau was still a new village. The first house was built in 1955. Despite many changes, elements of the sea nomadic community's life remained. Approximately twenty-five percent of families were still on boats; fishing was the main activity, and most families still wanted to return to boats to live a full-time fishing life (Sather, 1997). However, the life of the Bajau Laut of Kampung Bangau-Bangau, with the tradition of living in boats, is no longer a common phenomenon in the 21st century. The

available boats are only necessary for catching fish for a few families there. Few own large boats and some of them are used to making long journeys to Sitangkai Island.

### Traditional Beliefs and Practices

The basis of the Bajau Laut community's belief is in the existence of God, followed by the existence of the first creature, *Omboh*, also spelt as Umboh, Ombo', Ombok or Mbo, who is considered to have high power. God and *Omboh* are surrounded by demons and spirits, or they call them *sumangat*. However, after the entry and development of Islam, the Sama Dilaut community believes in the existence of Allah as God in addition to the spirits of ancestors who also have certain powers. For those who do not believe and practice Islamic teachings, God is a source of power that does not have a specific name, with *Omboh* as the highest power in addition to demons and other spirits. Traditional practices based on belief in *Omboh* are known as *mag-omboh*. The beliefs and practices of *mag-omboh* in this community have been inherited since the time of their ancestors and have indirectly become their daily cultural practices that continue to be the Badjao identity.

The presence of *Omboh* in their lives is due to the inheritance of ancestral relics called *langkapan*. The Sama Dilaut community in Sitangkai and Semporna believes that the presence of *langkapan* among families shows that they inherit the ancestral heritage and the existence of *Omboh* in their family. *Langkapan* can be in the form of ancestral clothing and other items, such as the muqaddam book and the Quran, which are kept together with pictures of the ancestors and placed in a unique space called *duwaan*. As long as they keep this equipment, all forms of practices practised by the ancestors or *Omboh* must continue to be practised, such as *magpai-bahau* (*umbuh pai bha-o*), which is celebrating new rice, *pagkanduli* serving food (music and dance) to the spirit of the sea, *mag-paigal* which is serving and dancing or *mag-igal* with the spirits of the ancestors and so on.

The *magpaii-bahau* ritual, more popularly called *mag-omboh*, celebrates the new rice by offering it to the ancestral spirits or *Omboh* (Hussin, 2019), which must be done yearly. *Magpai-bahau* (figure 2) is the most complex ritual inherited by this community since ancient times and is passed down through descendants called *Jin*, who are the official heirs of the clan. The annual ritual they must celebrate is called *magpaii-bahau*, which Nimmo (1968) called *Magpai-baha-o* in Tawi-Tawi, Philippines. If this Bajau Laut community fails to hold it, the entire village will suffer misfortune in the form of various diseases called *busong* or plague, and the treatment for it is called *mag-omboh*. Therefore, to avoid *busong*, family members and villagers are always alert on performing *magpai-igal* and *magpaii-bahau*, quarterly and annually, meeting and celebrating with the ancestors with newly harvested hill rice (*paii-bahau*).



**Figure 2: Mag-paiibahau ritual of Sama Dilaut/Bajau Laut of Kampung Bangau-Bangau, Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia (left) and Sitangkai, Philippines (right).**

(Source: Author, 2005 (left), Takoro (right).).

*Pag-kanduli* is an annual ritual in which the spirit of the sea (guardian of the sea) or, called *Tuan Laut*, who is also named Muhammad Susulan (Hussin & Santamaria, 2008), will respond in the form of a good catch of fish and will not disturb the Bajau Laut fishermen who are working or sailing in the ocean. The offerings presented is music from *kulintangan* and dance (*igal*) by female jin (*Jin Denda*) and male jin (*Jin Lella*) with a variety of musical repertoire and *igal* (Hussin & Santamaria, 2008). For community members who have Islamic values, this spirit or *bansa* is considered a sea ghost because it is a spirit that guards the ocean. *Jin Denda* will perform *Igal Limbayan*, while *Jin Lella* will perform *Igal Jin* under the *Dangkan* tree, which symbolises the man, *Tuan Laut*, the husband of *Dayang Mangilai*, who is also in the smaller *Dangkan* tree on the nearby beach facing the Sulu Sea. They also performed music and *igal* in front of *Dayang Mangilai*. *Pagkanduli* ends with the traditional games of *magbesod kallat* (pull the rope), *mag-sipa* (takraw kick), *mag-laksu* (jump) and *mag-dundang* (play swing). All of them are said to be the favourite games of *Tuan Laut*, *Dayang Mangilai*, and his children (Wali Jaafar, 2008), and now traditional games for the Bajau Laut community.

*Mag-paigal* is a ritual held every full moon or full moon where the *Jin Lella* and *Jin Denda* gather to dance or *mag-igal* accompanied by *tagunggu*'s musical instruments. *Mag-paigal*, held every three months, is said to present a dance to the spirits of the ancestors. They will dance until they forget or are possessed, indicating that their ancestors' spirit has entered their bodies. This situation suggests that the spirits of the ancestors are also with them in the village. Their presence in the bodies of the jinn also shows that they are dancing or *magpa-igal*, as they once did during their lives. Their success in entering the bodies of the jinn also indicates that they are satisfied with their heirs' presentation of *tagunggu*' and *igal* music. This suggests that their existence in the

spiritual realm is still remembered and celebrated at designated times, and this shows that the jinn always take care of the heritage they inherited. Therefore, *tagunggu'* music and dances, especially *Igal Limbayan* and *Igal Jin*, will always live among the Sama Dilaut/ Bajau Laut generations.

### **The Preservation and Continuation of Sama Dilaut/Bajau Laut Traditional Practices in Semporna, Sabah**

At the beginning of the opening of Kampung Bangau-Bangau in 1955, most households and families had boat facilities for transportation and fishing. However, nowadays, most of the community no longer has a boat facility because life has changed, and most of the work has started to shift to the land. Fishing is only done by a few families. Although the lives of most families are no longer utterly dependent on marine resources, the traditional life pattern based on the Sea is continued, especially those involving beliefs and practices. Residents organise social relationships through joint activities, especially those involving rituals or large ceremonies held at specific times since the time of their ancestors. A calendar set, as discussed, involves specific heirs, namely the Jin Lella and Denda. The Jin, who act as the legitimate heirs of the ancestral practices, also perform and celebrate with their families. With that, the beliefs and traditional practices of the ancestors will be remembered by the family and descendants, and at the same time, they will preserve them until the next generation.

This situation shows that whatever beliefs and practices were carried out by ancestors since Sitangkai are still intact, preserved, and practised in Semporna. This situation means that there is still a relationship and brotherhood between the Bajau Laut in Semporna and the Sama Dilaut in Sitangkai Philippines, even though they have been separated for a long time. This can be seen in the fact that the head of the Jin in Bangau-Bangau will always visit Sitangkai because it is where their ancestors were born and buried. Although their spirits are said to be brought to Bangau-Bangau, especially in the ceremonies carried out, the spirit's place is still where their bodies are buried. The same goes for the Lord of the Sea, who needs to be worshipped on an island not far from Sitangkai, namely Sikulan. Therefore, it was found that until 2005, the head of *Jin* in Kampung Bangau-Bangau, Gerani Jikilani, had to return to Sitangkai Island to complete the *magpai-bahau* there. Because of his extensive experience conducting rituals in Bangau-Bangau and Sitangkai, he is also considered the head of the Jin because he is a descendant of the head of the Jin. Every year, he has to return to Sitangkai to start the *magpai-bahau* ritual and return to do the *magpai-bahau* in Semporna after doing the *mag-paigal* with the Jin on Sitangkai Island (interview, 2004). However, lately, his health has not allowed him to return to Sitangkai to do this annual ritual, and this task has been started by Wali Jin Jaapar, the genie who always helps him in Sitangkai. Meanwhile, the latest news is that



after the *Pagkanduli* ritual in Sikulan, he also expressed his desire to move to Semporna to continue his life (Wali Jaafar, 2008).

This *magpai-bahau*@*mag-omboh* is celebrated for a month throughout the month of Rejab (the seventh month of the Islamic (Hijri) calendar. Every family identifying as Jin, whether Jin Lella or Jin Denda, will ensure they hold a *magpai-bahau* among their families. Therefore, in Kampung Bangau-Bangau, they take turns celebrating this *magpai-bahau*. The Bajau Laut community in Semporna will not start the *magpai-bahau* until the leader Jin, Gerani returns to Semporna or the *magpai-bahau* has not been performed in Sitangkai Island, Philippines. Other Jins in Semporna will perform the *magpai-bahau* successfully after the Jin Gerani allows them to do it among their family members which is called *magpai-bahau pagturul*.

From time to time, the Sama Dilaut/Bajau Laut community has tried to preserve the practice of celebrating this *magpai-bahau*. It begins with getting new rice traditionally obtained from the nearby island of Pulau Bebang during the bright moon called the *Nilui* Moon. They believe that the ancestors used the first rice harvested to celebrate *magpai-bahau*, which is the first rice harvest. After the rice was obtained, several men in a boat went to the nearby forest to get a wooden bark called *belunui* to be used as a place to store the rice. The *belunui* bark was made like a basket, and prayers (*duaa*) were recited, followed by the arrangement of *langkapan* and other ritual equipment. The new rice obtained must be pounded (*magtaparahu*) using a mortar. This traditional method is the same as that practised by their ancestors. This is followed by a process called *magtapapaii*, which cooks new rice. New rice is cooked to make yellow rice (*buwas*), while pounded rice is cooked to make *sahalibulan* cakes. After everything is cooked with ritual utensils (*langkapan*), a meal of *buwas* kuning (yellow rice) and *sahalibulan* cakes is served, called *pagombohan* as a symbolic meal for Ombloh (figure 2). After the Imam, his assistants, and the head of the Jin, Jin Lella and Jin Denda, and community members in Kampung Bangau-Bangau have gathered, the *pagduwaa* or feast and prayers are held.

*Pagkanduli*, an annual event, presents music and dance to Tuan Laut and his wife Dayang Mangilai at the Dangkan tree in Sikulan. However, not all members of the Bajau Laut community in Semporna can do it in Sikulan, Tawi-Tawi. This is due to several factors, especially economic factors. Their journey from Bangau-Bangau to Sikulan would involve much money to sail their boats there. Security is also a factor that prevents them because, to cross Tawi-Tawi, they need valid travel documents involving immigration. Since most of them do not have these documents, this does not guarantee their safety in the middle of the ocean, which is always facing threats from the Abu Sayyaf, who hover in the sea between Sabah and the southern Philippines. Since their journey to Sitangkai takes 10-12 hours, security is not guaranteed, preventing them from travelling there. Having a few people go there as representatives can be done. Considering that the Sama Dilaut community in Sitangkai is made up of relatives and friends who share the same

traditions, it is sufficient for them to do so, and the blessings given by Tuan Laut and Dayang Mangilai for the sea catch and also for not being disturbed while doing work at sea will also be felt by them.

Meanwhile, *mag-paigal* is still practised by the Jin Denda and Jin Lella in Semporna. On the night of the full moon, these jins and the public will gather in front of the platform of the Head Jin's house to *mag-igal*. *Igal Limbayan* and *Igal Jin* begin to be danced when the *tagunggu'* music is played. They will *mag-paigal* until they forget, which indicates that the spirit has entered the jins. This suggests that the spirits are around them and are satisfied with the ceremony held for them. This *mag-paigal* can still be continued by them in Semporna, especially in Kampung Bangau-Bangau, because the *langkapan* they bring with them indicates that the spirits of the ancestors or *Omboh* are also with them. Therefore, as long as the *Omboh* is around them, the *mag-paigal* offering must continue to be carried out every three months. Therefore, *magtagunggu'* or music making and dance (*mag igal*) among the Sama Dilaut diaspora in the Sabah, Malaysia, will be sustained as long as *langkapan* and rituals are kept in their belief system and practices. Sharing the repertoires, music, and dance among Sama Dilaut in Sitangkai, Philippines, and Sama Dilaut diaspora in Semporna, Sabah, continues.

The musical tunes of *titik lellang*, *titik limbayan* and *titik lubak-lubak* (played as *titik tabawan* by other Sama-Bajau community). The music tune are played with corresponding dancing styles known as *igal lellang*, *igal limbayan* and *igal tabawan* (using *titik lubk-lubak*) the *magpa-igal* ritual. Only *titik limbayan* and *titik lellang*, are played for the dances of *igal lellang* and *igal limbayan*. These music tunes are specific for the spirit mediums (*jins*) (Nor & Hussin, 2011). In the *magpa-igal* and *pagkanduli* rituals of Sama Dilaut in Sitangkai (the Southern Philippines) and Bangau-Bangau of Semporna (Sabah, Malaysia), only three tunes (*titik*) are known. These tunes are the *titik jin*, *titik limbayan* for *jin denda* (female spirit bearer) and *titik lellang* for *jin lella* (male spirit bearer as can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1: Tunes (*titik*) in the rituals of *Magpaigal* Sama Dilaut (Semporna, Sabah) and *Pagkanduli*, Sama Dilaut, Sitangkai, Philippines**

Type of tune/ <i>titik</i>	Magpa-igal (Sama Dilaut of Semporna, Sabah and Sitangkai, Philippines)	Pagkanduli (Sama Dilaut of Sitangkai,
Tunes for Female Jin	Titik limbayan	Titik limbayan
Tunes for Male Jin (Jin Lella)	Titik Jin Titik Lellang * <i>Titik lubak-lubak</i> marks the end of <i>magpa-igal</i> and is played for the leader of the male spirit bearer.	Titik Jin Titik Lellang

(Source: Hussin, H., fieldwork, 2008, 2019..).

Sacred soundscape and musicscape among Sama Dilaut community are more vibrant as the music-making among this community is frequently played either in Semporna, Sabah or Sitangkai, Southern Philippines, in the *magpa-igal* ritual (performed quarterly) and *pagkanduli* ritual (performed annually in Sitangkai Island. It is common in the rituals of *magpa-igal* and *pagkanduli* that *titik limbayan* is played by the *tagunggu*/'*kulintang* ensemble in the beginning repertoire of female spirit bearers (*jin denda*) who perform the *igal limbayan* dance. The dance is followed by *titik jin* for the dance of *igal jin lella* (the male spirit bearers); after that, the tunes of *titik tabawan* or *titik lubak-lubak* are played for female spirit bearers who perform the dance of the *igal lellang* (Hussin & Santamaria, 2008). Therefore, tunes of the *tagunggu*/'*kulintang* correspond to gender-specific dances of the spirit bearers. The male tunes of *titik lellang* for male Jin (Jin Lella) or male dancers are linked to the thunderous gongs and beating of the drums to facilitate and encourage trance dancing during the ritual peak performance. In a trance state, the Jin dance energetically and constantly stamping their feet on the floor, which echoes the energetic movements of the male spirit in the body of the male Jin (John Baptist & Regis, 2012).

Failure to do so will make the *Omboh* unhappy and constantly disturb the jinn; if they are often disturbed, they will be uneasy. Over time, they can fall ill, and this condition is said to be a plague or called *busong* and should be treated using certain rituals once the cause is known (Hussin, Pugh Kitingan, Baptist, 2018). The Sama Dilaut diaspora has reasons for continuing traditional practices that their ancestors have practised since Sitangkai. The beliefs held and the requirement that they be practised continuously (efficacy) have become a permanent ritual for them. The older generation, especially the Jin group, mostly maintains and continues these traditional practices.

As discussed, the sacred music and dance are continuously performed through ritual practices by the *Jin Lella* and *Jin Dnda* (Table 2). The dance, *igal limbayan*, in the slow turn to quick movement after the body cologne sprinkled onto the *Jin Denda*, marking the unification with the spirits. Likewise, processes are also witnessed in the dance performed by the *Jin Lella* when *titik lellang* (for Sama Dilaut of Kampung Bangau-Bangau, Semporna, Sabah) or *titik jin* (for Sama Dilaut/Bajau Laut of Sitangkai) are played during *magpa-igal* ritual.

**Table 2: Dance (Igal) repertoire in the rituals of Magduwata, Magpaigal and Pagkanduli**

Jin (spirit bearers) of Sama Dilaut	Magpaigal (Sama Dilaut Semporna, Sabah and Sitangkai)	Pagkanduli (Sama Dilaut, Sitangkai, Philippines)
Dance for Female Jin (Jin Denda)	Igal Limbayan	Igal Limbayan
Dance for Male Jin (Jin Lella)	Igal Jin	Igal Jin
	Igal Lellang	Igal Lellang

	Titik Tabawan- played in the middle of the ritual, enabling <i>Jin Denda</i> and <i>Jin Lella</i> to dance together at the same time.	Titik Tabawan- played in the middle of the ritual, enabling <i>Jin Denda</i> and <i>Jin Lella</i> to dance together at the same time.
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**Figure 3: Magpaigal Jin of Sama Dilaut of Bangau-Bangau, Semporna, Sabah (left) and Igal Limbayan by Jin Denda and Igal Jin by Jin Lella and Jin Denda in Pagkanduli Ritual of Sama Dilaut, Sitangkai Island, Southern Philippines (centre & right).**

(Souce: Judeth John Baptist, Sabah Museum [left] & Hanafi Hussin, fieldwork, 2008 [centre & right].)

Dance and music (tunes) in the rituals have become necessary for the Sama Dilaut to maintain relationships with the ancestors and spirits, especially at the peak moments in the intense rites of the given ritual, cathartic and salutary to the spirits of the ancestors (Nor & Hussin, 2012b). The venue where the ritual performance takes place is always considered a sacred and temporary space.

### **Continuity and Changes among the Young Generation**

Globalisation exposes society constantly to developments in various aspects of life. Foreign culture strongly influences the younger generation, and they will quickly act to apply what they observe in the context of rituals that they also observe and celebrate with the older generation, which they do not practice fully. However, the sense of identity as heirs of the Bajau heritage is still strong and the desire to preserve the Bajau Laut practices and culture is also carried out. The preservation they do is only in the form of representing

music and signal dances as performed by the jinn, but it is done in the form of performances for the audience. The younger generation, which performs the Bajau Laut traditional dance, shows the emergence of a new identity due to the changes that have occurred. This is common because diaspora is also a relationship between groups from different countries with shared things stemming from the exact origin. Still, there will be changes, namely constructing a new identity in a new place (Anthias, 1998). This Igal dance performance is performed on certain occasions, such as weddings and festivals like the Regatta Lepa.



**Figure 3: Igal Limbayan danced by the younger generation of Sama Dilaut in Semporna, Sabah in1999 (left), 2016 (right).**  
(Source: Author, 1999, 2016.).

There is a variety in the types of music and dances. The music or songs called titik are created and some are borrowed from other Bajau communities such as titik to'ongan, titik tabawan, titik limbayan, titik tagunggu' da'ilau, titik lelang, titik tarirai, titik Ya'anang mansuhurah, titik sappit and titik kuntaw.

**Table 4: Music (Tagunggu') repertoire played by the Sama Dilaut of Kampung Bangau-Bangau, Semporna**

	<b>Name of the Music Repertoire (Tagunggu')</b>	<b>Interpretation of the repertoire</b>
1	Titik To'ongan	Local music repertoire
2	Titik Tabawan	a song or music used during a wedding ceremony followed by people dancing or performing igal.
3	Titik Limbayan	For female Jin, songs or music are used in Bajau Laut rituals to attract Igal Limbayan in any <i>magomboh</i> ceremony.
4	Titik Tagunggu' Da'ilau	the music or song played during a wedding
5	Titik Lelang	The song or music played to accompany the male Jin or jinn lela attracts <i>igal lelang salam</i> during any <i>magomboh</i> ceremony.
6	Titik Tarirai	A song to accompany the <i>Tarirai</i> dance is danced using wooden sticks called bola'-bola, which were inherited from the Bajau Laut ancestors of Sitangkai.



7	Titik Ya'anang Mansuhurah	A song that connects women from the word <i>ya'anang</i> .
8	Titik Sappit	<i>Sappit</i> means a small boat of the Bajau people. This song tells about the activities done on the <i>sappit</i> .
9	Titik Kuntaw	<i>Kuntaw</i> is a martial art, and this song is usually played during a martial arts performance.

(Source: Intan Sulga, 2004.).

Part of this tagunggu' repertoire is also used by children of Bajau Laut heritage to accompany dances that they adopt from *igal* danced in rituals, namely *Igal Limbayan*, *Igal Jin*, *Igal Lellang*, etc. New *igal* creations are also done, such as *igal tarirai*, which takes from natural phenomena. It is clear that globalisation has caused the production of cultural elements to occur but is lifted from the traditional ones. The output of this hybrid cultural phenomenon and the understanding of new ethnic concepts usually appears among the diaspora, especially among young people with essential socialisation that has taken a central place in the cross-cultural phenomenon that is happening now. The cultural practices and identities that develop among young people are often done by themselves consciously, syncretically, and beyond a traditional heritage (Vertovec & Cohen, 1999).



**Figure 4: Igal Limbayan performances in the public spaces. *Igal Limbayan* in the wedding ceremony (lef) and *Igal Lellang* and *Igal Limbayan* performed in the 2024 Andong International Mask Dance Festival, South Korea (right)**

(Source: Author, fieldwork 2024)

## CONCLUSION

Diaspora is not static. Day by day, their number increases for many reasons other than demographic reasons; it is also because each individual involved wants to feel like they

are the same as the people in their place of origin, and migration is only a reason for the change, especially in economic aspects. Bajau Laut who live in Kampung Bangau-Bangau, Semporna, are the same diaspora as Sama Dilaut, who came from Sitangkai Island, Tawi-Tawi, Philippines, have the exact reason for their migration, which is to improve the quality of life—with the beliefs and traditional practices inherited from the practices of their ancestors brought from there, especially the *langkapan*, the bond with the ancestral spirit known as Omboh continues. With the *langkapan*, this Bajau Laut community also believes that offering to Omboh must continue to be done to balance their lives with the spirits of their ancestors or those who inhabit the spiritual realm around them.

This situation makes traditional practices continue, and the preservation and preservation of this traditional heritage can continue. The preservation of these traditional practices indirectly becomes a symbol of the identity of this community, and the Jin, namely Jin Denda and Jin Lella, specifically the leader of the Jin, become a symbol or icon of the identity of this community. The continuity of the practices carried out by the Jin will allow the Bajau Laut identity to survive occasionally. The changes that occur are a challenge to preserving these traditional practices and a threat to preserving the Bajau community's identity based on traditional practices. It turns out that the social changes that occur among societies in the world also affect the Bajau Laut community. Adaptation to new elements that permeate the Bajau Laut community with new forms of cultural practices has been applied to the culture of this community. The Bajau Laut community has also formed new forms of performing arts that can be adapted as public performances. The dance or *igal* that was originally danced for Jin and the Gods has been modified with elements of performance for the stage that emphasise spectacular elements for the contemplation of the general audience by including new *igal* dance movements that are more dynamic.

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