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A Long Lasting Night Song ...

Nicole REVEL

Ateneo de Manila, 11 Avril 2023

In an oral culture, to be able to sing an epic as well as listening to it, are a profound collective experience.

Designated as 'Literatures of voice'¹, epics are in fact '**mental texts**'², or a 'pre-narrative', a pre-frame of reference (L. Honko, 1996), formerly heard and memorized, then conveyed to an audience by another singer of tales most often at night time.

In Palawan Highlands, the sung narrative has to come to a close as the first rays of the sun appear above the horizon. The performance may have last few hours, half a night, an entire night, but also 2 or 6 to 7 non successive nights.

We are in presence of a construction of a **mental model of human actions** and the plot leads to a **moral statement**. The task for the analyst is to comprehend the deep truth of the story and several interpretations might be brought to light.

The core of an epic, consists of two major narrative ganglia, namely, a **Quest for a wife** and **the Deeds and Ordeals** - an attack, a raid, a combat, a fight, a war - related to this quest. The conflict generates a chaos and as the it slowly comes to a close, the emplotment has to restore peace and harmony.

The numerous forms of poetic compositions in the Philippines are the seal of each national cultural communities, and perpetuate their respective language, their music, their ethics, a very peculiar way to inhabit poetically their world.

¹Nicole Revel, 2000, "The Teaching of the Ancestors", *Budhi*, pp. 100-110.

2005, *Literature of Voice: Epics in the Philippines*. [Proceedings of the 2000 Conference in Ateneo de Manila University], N Revel, ed., Office of the President Publication, 236 p., 32 photos, 1 video-disk of the performances.

² Lauri Honko, (1996, p.4.) has been defined a 'mental text' as a 'pre-narrative', a pre-textual frame, an organized collection of relevant conscious and unconscious material present in the singer's mind. It consists of: 1) textual elements and 2) generic rules for reproduction.

See also Nicole Revel "*Kudaman*. Oral Epic in the Palawan Highlands", ("Mental Text and the notion of Multiple Draft", Original title), A UNESCO Workshop in Turku, Finland, "*Epics Along the Silk Roads*", pp. 108-132 in *Oral Tradition* 11/1, Octobre, 1996, L. Honko special ed.

Part I

What does it imply in the body, soul and mind of a singer of tales

In spite of an immersion in a socio-cosmic context since infancy, singing a *tultul* requires a particular psychological profile, artistic skills, intellectual aptitude (high level of attention, mnemonic capacities, subtle and quick understanding of a plot while listening, a thorough wisdom, but also profound emotions linked to one's lived life.

It also demands a dedication and perseverance in training and performing.

This embodiment of an epic has been clearly perceived and expressed by Mäsinu Intaräy, a *Mänunultul* who received the *Gawad sa Manlilikha nang Bayan* (the 'National Living Treasure Award') in 1993, explaining me how he behaves while listening to another singer of tales singing a *tultul*:

*" I am listening attentively, I am not interrupting
I am not taking part in the 'tubag', (the feedback of the audience)
Silently, I listen to the voices and the story.*

Inwardly, I sing.

The next day, it is in my ear.

After a night of wake, when I doze, the voices are still there, in me...

And so, I remember them, I cannot forget the story and the voices.

Ulit-ulit ampang mägsunran na baran :

I repeat and repeat (the voices) in order to set their memory in my body'.³

When he decides to sing for an audience, he has already trained himself a lot in solitude as his vocal style is not innate, but has to be acquired. Observing the breathing of other singers of tales as they perform, then feeling and selecting the style of interpretation that is most suitable to his vocal register, his breathing capacities *ginhawa* and his rhythm in the syllabic delivery of a story, have to be discovered by him, have to be felt, experimented in the very body of a singer. He has to adjust his phonic, breathing and vibratory capacities as he simultaneously interiorizes and utters the words.

This act of imitation becomes slowly an act of appropriation. His voice has to project the story he re-composes, conducting rationally the plot and adjusting the various "voices", *lyäg* – "the melodic cells" - that are the sonic icon of each character.

This invites to variations that will become variants of the same *tultul* with the style and sensitive touch of each "author-performer" as the poet Muhammed Haji Salleh, (1991, 2008) qualifies a singer of tales.

In this respect, we think we can refer to a '**living memory**', adopting Paul Ricoeur's pointed formula⁴.

³ Revel, Nicole, 2008: *The Song of an Epic. In the Words of Mäsinu Intaräy, a Palawan Singer of Tales, Chanter l'épopée. Témoignage de Mäsinu Intaräy, barde palawan / in Palawan, sous-titre en Fr.& Engl., Film, 22'12'*. Auteur scientifique & Réalisateur : N. Revel.
Images & Animations : Arghiro Paouri, Production LMS, CNRS, Villejuif.

⁴ "Life in Quest of Narrative", *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation*, D. Wood ed., London, G. Routledge, pp. 20-33., 270 p.

So *Mimêsis* as perceived by Aristotle in ancient Greek epic poetry and analyzed in “*Poetics*,” is fundamental in capturing voices, then in uttering the song of a tale at the perceptive and the sensorial levels, at the integrating as well as the retrieving levels.

I have pointed out how the singing of an epic is to be apprehended as a semi-conscious ‘*skilled activity*’ like playing chess or playing the piano.

It requires **mastery** (N. Revel, 2001, 2005, 2011, 2012).

Some of the main features of this listening activity are:

perception of pitch and perception of rhythm.

They are very significant events because they are configurations of relations within a sequence, and each listener re-presents them and mentally compares them while attending a night of performance⁵.

Mnemonic devices

Working on **mnemonic devices** present in the text that we establish after recording an epic performance, is one way to overcome the difficulty linked to how the memory of a singer of tales works.

They have been detected by the comparative method:

-‘**Themes**’, ‘**Formulae**’ or the ‘**formulaic Style**’ :“A group of words used regularly in identical metric contexts in order to express an essential given idea” as defined by Millman Parry and Albert Lord.

- ‘**Material Motives**’, ‘**Social Motives**’ as defined by Dr.Walter Heissig on Mongolian epics.

- ‘**Epic Moments**’ as defined by Dr. Arthur Hatto: “Epic poetry is apt to condense long drowned tensions into brief scenes of dramatic power enhanced by visual magnificence, that is an ‘**epic moment**’. (...) Possession of them in memory confers power upon the mature singer of tales to build up an episode or even a string of episodes”. “In addition to being great poetry, they are mnemotechnic elements of an epic and an order, that will therefore mark, or help to mark, **the structure of an epic**”.

I have implemented these devices analyzing the Palawan epic “*Mämiminbin*” and I found a ‘**crescendo of epic moments**’ leading to the **climax** of the story, in the two phases of the plot: 4 epic moments in the 1st phase, and 5 epic moments in the 2nd phase⁶ all building up through a mirror image in the quest for a wife;

- In the first half of the epic all actions of the hero are wrong with a crescendo of negative epic moments.

⁵ Neurosciences have started to work on the mechanisms of the brain and the aesthetic creativity of singular artists and the receptivity of people contemplating a work in the plastic arts, while others are focusing their inquiries on the musical brain. In addition to the linguistic gap between analyst and performer, the experiments are highly complex and difficult to conduct in the field. However, these are relevant queries.

⁶ N. Revel, 2000, *The Quest for a Wife. A Palawan Epic Sung by Mäsinu / La quête en épouse. Une Épopée palawan chantée par Mäsinu. Mämiminbin*, Paris, Editions UNESCO/Langues & Mondes-L'Asiathèque, 440 p., [édition trilingue palawan-français-anglais], 1 CD, illustrations graphiques, 8 photos de Quincy Castillo Revel, pp. 404-409.

- In the second half, all actions turn right and positive after the cure by Master Thunder, and the shamanic Voyage of the two protagonists to the middle space. Little by little, the good behavior that has to prevail in the quest for a spouse is conveyed to reach a perfect alliance of marriage.

In an attempt to capture the internal vision of the poet-narrator, I have proposed to sketch a three dimensions graph following the actions of the protagonists making up the story. In a chain of oral-aural transmission, this '**cognitive map**' - if you allow this blue print - is stamped on the memory of the listeners. Thus, **active thinking, attention and memory** combine in the embodiment of a plot during the fleeting moment of a *proferatio* and a chain of transmission is then set in motion as we shall see later.

Beyond the linear flow of the story, there is a **topological thinking**. The Pala'wan Highlanders speak of *dalan*, the "**paths**", and I think that this precise word reveals that they are aware of the causal connectivity as numerous retrieval **paths ways**⁷, or **logical links** connecting all the components of a story in order to build up a plot.

In an oral Tradition characterized by the absence of any written support, to 're-present' the story by a graph is no other that re-presenting a web of causal relations and reuniting oneself with an activity of '**mental text processing**'.

A narrative is a re-presentation of people in action

Singers of tales and listeners evolve in a closed world at the intersection of several sets:

Landscapes (forests, upland fields, homes, hamlets, villages, or kingdoms, high sea, middle space), Social institutions, Systems of attitudes, Moral Code, Customary law, Cosmogonies, Rituals, Verbal arts and Music Codes, a genuine world lived in.

In "*Mämiminbin*", four main narrative sequences follow each other, weaving a plot in 4 spaces: on earth, in the middle space, on the maritime space, and back on earth, in order to create a minimal social unit, a hamlet, founded by two men exchanging their sisters.

The symmetric exchange of sisters, *sambiq*, is the preferential marriage in this equalitarian society of South-East Asia. A similar affinity rule is valid among the Sea Nomads, *Sama Dilaut* and present in their *kata-kata*. A similar rule is attested in a stratified society such as the Ifugao, but is operative only among *Kadangyan* 'the Wealthy' class).

⁷ 'John. Miles Foley has chosen the word 'Pathways' or 'Routes to go through' to describe Homer and oral epics poets in their ability to explore and create. 'Oral tradition is a system of oral possibilities and consists of a link of pathways. It requires a co-creator and cannot be reduced to a text', "*Pathways Project Oral Tradition and the Internet*" International Conference on: '*Documentation and Archiving of Endangered Languages and Oral Tradition: Researches and Interdisciplinary Approaches*', May 19-20, 2011, Institute of Ethnic literature, Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS), Beijing.

The narrative is apprehended as a linear space with places to which one goes, where one enters, from which one departs, where one stops and visits, from which one goes up or comes, from, which one comes down, or across, which one moves. The villages or the islands contrast with the forest, the maritime space or the middle space and are as many landmarks in a territorial space and a wider but conceived cosmic space where actions take place, in which, step by step, a plot is being woven by the poet-narrator.

A structuring form, the simplicity of a synoptic view

A structuring form provides ‘a **mental scheme**’, implicit in the active thinking of the singer of tales as he composes in the here and now.

So, I perceive space and its landmarks as a **pre-textual framework** that provides a structuring form, a ‘**support system for composition in performance**’ as J. Miles Foley defines it (2003).

In other words, the linearity of successive events molds itself into a “**configuration of the plot**” (Paul Ricoeur, 1985, pp. 113-120).

The following graphs represent the pre-textual frameworks of two epics in two cultures of Sulu Sea, a *tutul* and a *kata-kata*. I refer to their respective ‘**macro-structure**’.

“Mämiminbin”, Composition of the plot

The central characters are *Mämiminbin* and Labit’s sister, both of whom the singer describes as literally “smoking” with desire / anger. A dramatic tension, central to the story, is illustrated here: on one hand, the risk of abduction by the river of the young sister of Labit by this audacious young man and on the other hand the risk of accusation of an incest between brother and sister as they live and share the same house.

The young man starts as an anti-hero, but step by step, the whole plot teaches him **seemliness**, train him to become an accomplished young man eligible for marriage. In this equalitarian society, according to the *Adat*, the two men have to engage in an **equal, fair exchange**. Hence a symmetric alliance **sambiq** between the two men exchanging their sisters is bringing the story to a close without resorting to a bride wealth. Besides, the little sister of Labit will not leave the house that will become the center of a new *rurungan*, the correct social space built by way of this plot.

The constant interaction between a mental text and a mental map are symbolized as followed:

Arrows, numbers and colors indicate the sequences of actions and the motions in time and space of each character, respecting the sequences. Red lightnings signal ordeals.

HERE Insert THE MACROSTRUCTURE OF MÄMIMINBIN & its legend

:

A single graph synthesizes the composition of the plot
Here symmetry prevails and stands as a metaphor
of the symmetric alliance of marriage.

All the *tutul* I was able to record and translate are singing an alliance of marriage and the various possibilities and prohibitions related to it. In this society and in these songs it is not filiation that is emphasized but rather affinity. As we are in presence of a bilateral society, a cognatic system with no genealogical depth, four genealogical levels are relevant.

“*Silungan Baltapa*”, Composition of the Plot

As a narrative is the ‘**re-presentation of people in action**’ our task is to detect what are the immediate constituents of the ‘**sentence of action**’.

A synoptic view of a plot is at the same time analysis and synthesis. This ‘map’ - provides a mental scheme, implicit in the active thinking of the singer of tales as he is performing. So, space and its landmarks are a ‘**pre-textual framework**’ that gives a structuring form to the narrative. Therefore, here again the linearity of events molds itself into a ‘**configuration**’ of the plot (P. Ricoeur, 1985, pp. 113-120).

We are in the presence of twelve characters: in 210 stanzas, the singer of tales sets the plot and brings it to a close:

Four heroic characters:

- *Silungan Baltapa*, Shadowy Place for Prayer and Meditation , the sinless Hero.
- *Musa Dalmata*, The Only Pearl, the pure maiden who will become his loving and beloved spouse.
- *Ugbusan Sahaya*: « Source of Light », the mother of the hero, first lady in the plot she mores in the Island of love, the very center of the narrative.
- *Muslim Magkapala*: Supreme Muslim Lady, the sister of the hero, a protective *jinn* for her brother.

Four adjuvants:

- The male helper dedicated to the hero,
- The female helper of the mother,
- The *Nuli* birds, omens and messengers,
- The tiny cockatoo who brings back the santol fruit.

Four opponants:

- *Datu'Misil Balan*, “Datuq-hard Steel”, first pretender, the rival of the hero,
- The Pirates, dangerous interceptors on sea,
- Two *Galura* Birds, giant aggressive interceptors in the middle space.

Part I & II (stanzas 10 to 100): the travel of the hero, his quest for a wife, is made of five voyages (on the sea, to heaven and on earth) and five conflicts (on the sea, on earth and to heaven).

Part III, sings the beauty and vulnerability of the young pregnant wife, craving for a *santol* fruit, a desire fulfilled by a loving, caring, somehow worried, husband. Then the expected child comes to light, gifted with powerful spiritual qualities, just as his father. Three weeks after giving birth, the young mother dies. Laments and funerary rituals are then evoked and described (stanza 137).

Part IV (stanzas 154 -185), sings the Voyage to Heaven experienced by the hero.

Al-Mi'râj, Liber Scalae, «the Book of the Scale», is explicitly mentioned by the singer of tales (stanza 169). On the eve of the 27th day of *Radjab*, an annual event in the Muslim world, *Laylat al-Iasra wa al-Mi'râj*, is read in loud voice from a booklet in Arabic but expressed in various Sinama languages among the distinct Sama communities of the Sulu archipelago; simultaneously an Imam 'the guide in praying' (< ar. *Amma'* to guide', 'to shaw the way') comments⁸.

Part V, (stanzas 186 to 210): sings the very presence of Almighty God, who receives the imploration of the hero and appears and teaches a redeeming cure by invoking His Name together with a sweeping ritual.

“Silungan Baltapa” Composition of the plot

Here paste the 5 graphs in succession

This exemplary story sings dyadic loving relationships within a nuclear family unit, mother-son relationship; mother-daughter; brother- sister; husband-wife and father-mother-child. Among the Sama an unconditional love binds together husband and wife, parents and children. Orphans inspires them a deep compassion. Siblings are bounded by a reciprocal affection and a mark of respect for the eldest. The **Family alliance unit** as designated by Harry A. Nimmo, is a **pre-islamic** feature at the very core of the nuclear family and the closest kins: the siblings and their affines, *lpal and bilas*, just as among the Palawan *ipag and biras*.

A dead relative backs up the livings as long as they cultivate his memory. The beauty of a *kata-kata* appease the Ancestors, the souls of the departed ones who survive through the offerings of their off-springs with quids, cigarettes, perfumes and pennants, *amakan*

⁸ On March 1967, in Bongao, Harry Arlo Nimmo has been the witness of this teaching and recorded it . The transcribed text is present in the book (2005).

sumagat “feeding the souls” is a ritual to comfort the deceased, an act to reactivate their virtual presence in living memories.(A. Martenot, 2005).⁹

Part II

What does it arouse in the mind, soul and body of each listener?

Beyond a courteous entertainment, a thanksgiving and the pleasure one derives from listening to the song of an epic, I wish to invite you to reflect somehow further.

An epic performance is an artistic event that happens in the here and now. However, it becomes genuinely endowed with meaning when the listeners relate the story they are listening to a remembrance, a personal experience, a feeling, a hope, even a wish in his deep self, I mean to say, if it is somehow related to his life in the past, or his life today or the life he is about to lived, like a wedding celebrated on the following day as we were the witnesses of in 1970.

The listeners are able to follow and internalize a long narrative as it configures a fictive reality similar to the world they inhabit, a natural, socio-cosmic space familiar to them, lived by them.

An epic gives an illustration of the customs and mores, of socio-cosmic views and alludes to historical events in an imagined but authentic manner.

Aristotle, has shown in “**Poetics**”, that: “*the time-space of a fiction is a Mimêsis of the time-space of the reality as lived by man*”.

I would like to focus on **the very peculiar Temporality** encapsulated in a *tutul* among the Pala’wan and I will also refer also to a *kata-kata* sung by the Sama Dilaut.

As the story unfolds, the listeners are not projected out of time, in time immemorial when, for instance, an adult chooses to tell the “teaching of the Ancestors”, *Tuturan at Kägungurangan*, and starts by saying “*Tagnaq....*” “Once upon a time”, “Long ago” and tells, the etiological myth of the stars, or of the earth, *tuturan ät lugtaq*.

Nor are the listeners in a system of computation of time, on the contrary, they are slowly entering the song of an epic, they are little by little immersed into a **temporal fuzziness**.

A *tutul* or a *kata-kata* are not a succession of anecdotes, like *tenes-tenes* among the Sama, nor a chronicle of miscellaneous news items. If an historical event is alluded to there are no precise dates to mark it, chronology is absent, the exact time references are blurred,

⁹ Alain Martenot, 2005, chapter on the Ethnography of the Sama of Sitangkai , in “ *Silungan Baltapa*” pp. ???

temporal imprecision prevails and the listener is rather entering in **an evanescent time**, the texture of a cloud ...such is the mark of these long sung narratives.

If some episodes are related to History, they widely overlap it: I would rather propose that Time in an epic is a **“Cyclic Time”**.

How?

Thanks to recurrent episodes, like the annual “Commemoration of the Master of Rice” *Tamwäy ät Ämpuq ät Paräy*, linked to the cultivation of rice in their *uma* exemplified in “*Kudaman*”, when men play the gongs, *basal*, and women dance the *taräk*, rice beer is drunk from a jar with bamboo straws, accompanied by joyful and courteous jars songs, then the idea of a **stable world**, that repeats itself yearly and a secure life in a long span, is conveyed.

A similar stability emerges from the alliances of marriage sung in every single epic as each marriage illustrates a precise modality according to the **Adat** (the Ethos) of a society¹⁰. Thanks to these episodes - necessary for the plot to unfold and harmony between the protagonists is restored - Morals is reiterated with precise and fundamental rules to follow to respect, hence providing a **stability** to the people’ way to conduct their life in this society.

However, a crisis of the world, of all possible worlds, is inherent to the composition of an epic and happens at the very core of it.

The **epos** can narrate an ancient event, but the listeners are rather interested in the characters and the **play of antagonistic values**. The world is polarized between two antagonist forces, as well as two psychological profiles and speech styles, between two sets of values.

In the numerous *tultul* I was able to listen to, recorded, transcribed and translated among the Pala’wan, this dramatic moment is expressed by the allusion to recurrent violent **raids**. It is a fact that Iranun Pirates from the coast of western Mindanao, Balangingi Samal from an island in Sulu or Iban from Borneo - were coming every year for tribute extortions and enslavement of the people living on the shore lines of Palawan. These are historical facts that took place in the 14th- 16th centuries as well as in the 18th-19th centuries have been well studied from written documents by historians¹¹ on the coastal people of the Visayas islands, Samar, Leyte, up to the north of the archipelago. In the 20th century we have been aware of some reactivation of piracy and extortions that took place with the Sipadan attack in 2000 and the Dos Palmas attack in 2003.

The feeling of insecurity and anguish experienced by the people is expressed in a **“Cyclic Time”** as well. From end of August to October, pirates use to come with certain winds

¹⁰ Nicole Revel, 2001, “Palawan Epics”, *Mining the Riches of Philippine Life and Culture A Festschrift in honor of Dr. William Henry Scott*, Jesus Peralta ed., Quezon City, Ateneo University Press, pp.133-152.

¹¹James Warren, 1982, 2021. “*Sulu Zone from 1768 to 1898*”, 380 p.
2013, J. F. Warren, 2013, “The Role of Maritime Raiding or Warfare in the Economy of the Sulu Zone, 1768-1878”, *Philippines an Archipelago of Exchanges*, Catalogue of the Exhibition at Musée du quai Branly pp.147-151.

favorable to their annual rapid, violent raids, sacking hamlets, killing and capturing men women and children in order to enslave them.

In contrast to this behavior, a fundamental quality of the Pala'wan hero as "model of Man" and as a *Pagibutan*, is to avoid physical violence by all means: negotiating peacefully, thinking and discussing elegantly, refusing to enter a fight as violence is considered a moral fault. To disobey the Law of the supernatural powers or of the people and use violence is a mistake towards the other but particularly towards *Ämpuq* the Master, also referred to as *Nägsalad* or *Suminalad*, the Weaver, as well as towards other forces like Grand Father Thunder, *Upuq Kuyaw*, as sung in "*Mämiminbin*"¹².

Up to today the desolation, fear, despair, provoked by violent raiders resonate in the *tultul*.

Distinct from other epics centered on historical warfare against the Spaniards as sung in the *Ulaging* by the Talandig-Bukidnon¹³, then with the resistance to the Americans, followed by the evocations of contemporary political armed conflicts opposing groups as sung by the *Kissah* "true story" of the Tausug¹⁴, palawan *tultul* are constantly alluding to raids of the past.

These recollections echoes in the mind of the listeners and by way of the *tubag* they manifest to the singer of tales their interest for the plot but also their empathy, emotions and compassion for what happens to the characters of the story.

In a ludic and poetic manner, an epic is then the repository of customs and of ordeals re-actualizing, on the narrative mode, and reviving not only the ways of life, but also the ways the people behave and what they value in this equalitarian society, as well as the deeds and ordeals they had to face and may have to face and to overcome, in order to live harmoniously in their society, including in their very personal lives.

¹² 2000, (in collaboration with Mäsinu Intarây, *La quête en épouse / The quest for a wife. Mämiminbin*; Unesco, l'Asiathèque/Langues & Mondes, 440 p., édition trilingue, 1 CD, illustrations graphiques, 8 photos by Quincy Castillo.

¹³ 2003, "How to Project Time in Space in an Oral Composition; Introduction to a Tala-andig Bukidnon epic: *Ulaging: Tumulin ku Kayamag 'Strong Wind' "*, *Kinaadman "Wisdom"*, Silver Jubilee Issue, Vol XXV, n° 2, , pp 1-15.

¹⁴ 2017, "How Can an Epic Be Reliable for the Historian?" "Mindanao History in the Context of National History", *Journal of History* LXIII January-December 2017, Philippine National Historical Society, Inc., edited by Rolando O. Borrinaga (Issue Editor) and Bernardita Reyes Churchill (Executive Editor), pp. 109-132.

2005, Talib.L., Sangogot, "The Tawi-Tawi Sama Voice, *Literature of Voice: Epics in the Philippines*, N. Revel (ed.), Quezon City, Ch.3, pp. 59-73.

2005, Gérard, Rixhon, "A Journey into Sama Literature", *Literature of Voice: Epics in the Philippines*, N. Revel ed., Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City, Ch. 2., pp. 23-58.

1997, Clifford, Sather, *The Bajau Laut. Adaptation, History, and Fate in a Maritime Fishing Society of South-Eastern Sabah*. Kuala-Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 359 p.

All of this is re-actualized by way of a night long lasting song.

Thanks to a *kata-kata* sung by the Sama Dilaut, we can go further and see the impact of these songs on human psyche.

During a full moon night, a *wali jin* (formerly a midwife, *duwata*, now replaced by a man) will sing a *kata-kata* in an attempt to cure a sick person. As a matter of fact, these beautiful sung narratives versified in heptameters with rimes, have the power either to sweep away the “Evildoers of the Sea”, to seduce them or to repel their curses.

The inner ascension, the spiritual power of a person and the subtle link uniting words and music, are searched for by the *wali Jin* thanks to body postures, dance motions, and various breathing technics.

A *kata-kata* is initially thought by the Ancestors, *Mboq*, but can be transmitted by a mother to her adult son. It is said that an error in chanting the verses would offend the Ancestors. Here, the transmission demands a faithful memory of the sung measured narrative, performed as a thanksgiving after a hardship encounter on sea or an ordeal in life.

The song has the power to call favorable winds for fishing or moving on the ocean, to bring good luck and chase away bad luck. As mediums, *wali jin*, have the power to communicate with Evildoers, they also have the task to detect the cause of an illnesses, or of misfortune, they have to be able to bring back luck and repel misfortune. (A. Martenot & J. Maceda, 1980 ; Martenot 2005 ; H. A. Nimmo, 1990, 2000; C. Sather, 1997)¹⁵.

Seated by the side of the sick in the very presence of his relatives and friends, the mediums call the Ancestors. One of them lies supine and is about to sing a *kata-kata*. *Suling*, the flute, will be played by another *wali jin* close to him and he will stop as the singer is about to enter into a trance. As an expert he has to master several magic formulas and medicinal plants, he has to have a beautiful voice as these epics are imbued with a sacredness inherent to the realm of the Ancestors and gifted with a symbolic efficiency.

As they are endowed with singular capacities, mediums keep on trying to increase their supra-sensitive powers by attracting new “tutelary spirits”, *jin*. The supreme hope is to have access to *Berduri Tree*: “the Tree of Life, is steeped in the Knowledge of the Absolute...”; “l’Arbre de Félicité est enraciné dans les Abysses de l’océan ...»¹⁶.

For the Sama Dilaut, a *kata-kata* cannot be sung except at night time with the full moon: then, and only then, *jins* alight from the open sky and dance on the platform of the medium’s house... These are exceptional nights of *magical jin*, when the *Ancestors* enter the bodies of the livings. Trance is the signal of their very presence.

In Sampornah, among the Bajau, *suli-suli Jin* “Djin’ stories” is the word for *kata-kata*.

¹⁵ 2001, Harry, Arlo, Nimmo, *Magosaha. An Ethnography of Tawi-Tawi Sama Dilaut*, Ateneo University Press, Quezon City.
2005, Alain, Martenot, *Ethnography of the Sama of Sitangkai*, Chapter ?? pp.???? in *Silungan Baltapa*.

¹⁶ 2005, *Silungan Baltapa* Preludes 1, 2, 4, 5 : Stanzas 1, 52, 160 et 192.

In Sitangkaï, as well as in Tawi-Tawi, the song of a *kata-kata* is gifted with a magical, spiritual, pacifying and healing power: It acts on the psyche of a person who is facing physical, moral or psychological ordeals or sufferings.

The therapeutic function of the song of an epic is also present among Tala-andig Bukidnon and among Subanun, two societies that have not been islamized.

I have never been aware of a similar function with the *tultul* or the *dagäy* performance among the Pala'wan.

The song of a *kata-kata* overlaps the pleasure of a simple listening. The symbolic function and the teachings enshrined in epics are expected gifts, however, the emotions emanating from these ephemeral sung speech acts may also have the power to calm the mind and to cure the body and soul of a sick person.

Memory and Artistic Creativity¹⁷

“The mind continually re-organizes sensory data into meaningful wholes”

F. Zialcita, *Chanted Landscapes*, 2011, p.3

The wealth of oral epic poetry rests on an infinite number of combinations, the virtual result of the interaction between landscapes, customary stories, cosmogonic views and rituals together with personal lived experiences and remembrances of the people.

In a given culture, in the midst of a knowledge base and ethical values¹⁸, very deep sediments combined with the dynamic intelligence, the peculiar sensitivity and artistic skills of each singer of tales and each listener, a singer to be.

Symbiotic life, memory and sung narratives go on...and on...and on...

¹⁷ 2013, Nicole Revel, “Nature and Creative Inspiration. Reverberation» / « La nature et l’inspiration créatrice. Résonances », *Philippines, an Archipelago of Exchange/ Philippines, Archipel des Echanges*, Catalogue de l’exposition au Musée du quai Branly, (ouverte le 8 avril 2013) (ed. Fr.) ; (ed. Eng.), Actes Sud, Arles, pp. 25-35.

¹⁸ 2013, Leovino. Ma. Garcia, “Paul Ricoeur’s Hermeneutics of Capable Human Being: Ethical Implications of Epic Narratives”, *Songs of Memory in Islands of Southeast Asia*, N. Revel (éd.), Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 17-25.